



IT PARTNER

DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT IT PARTNER?

Have you ever dreamed of a business relationship in which a vendor helps your organization take the right steps to grow?

If this remains a dream, you may be seeking a partner relationship with an entity that actually is only a supplier. A supplier sells you a product or service, and once you've purchased, their efforts mostly end unless the product or service has a problem.

On the other hand, an IT Partner can take technology issues and IT security worries off your team's plate and allow them to focus on rapid growth and market share for your organization.

Even when a non-technology business has in-house IT staff, a partnership with the right IT vendor can make your IT team less stressed, more productive, and more strategic.

Global management consulting firm Deloitte released a study in 2018 that found executives relied on outsourcing to get ahead of their competitors. Hiring an expert in a field generally got their need resolved faster, with fewer errors and an up-to-date solution. In short, the executives chose outsourcing to "do better" and "go faster."

Outsourcing technology issues to an IT partner





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can help you in areas where your firm lacks the resources or expertise. Many times issues arise in IT where an outside perspective of an experienced expert can help you resolve problems faster and implement improvements sooner.

For example, you may not be able to find an expert to hire in-house to tackle technology issues tied to growth. While people may respond to your opening, industry experience for small to medium enterprises is that knowledgeable people with the right expertise are rare birds who command high salaries. Even if you get them on board, they tend to leave after one or two years for more prestigious, higher-pay positions.

Relying on an IT Partner takes that issue off your plate.

An IT partner also can help you manage your IT budget. You may not realize how much your organization spends on IT. And if you don't realize that, you may not be getting the return on investment at best – and at worst, have the wrong technology for your goals.

Also, an IT partner can help your team avoid burnout by picking up some cybersecurity responsibilities. As the SolarWinds Orion cyberattack shows, the threats and attacks continuously evolve, requiring nearly

continuous attention to just cybersecurity alone.

Unless your organization is in the cybersecurity business, you're better off handing that responsibility to a partner who understands the current threat trends and current recommended protections.

Finally, you need a partner who can help your business stay current with ever-changing regulations. Regulations come with documentation processes – and audits to check if you are doing what you say you do in your documentation.

Does your team have the time and expertise to meet all the compliance standards? Will they cover all the bases?

Our society is highly litigious – with attorneys trained to pick apart systems and practices. You want to be sure you are buttoned up before someone sues – or a regulator levies a fine.

When you outsource non-core functions such as technology to an outside party, you are paying for their expertise, their ability to do something faster and better than you, and hopefully, their ability to give you predictable costs for which you can budget.

A partner will help you propel your business forward, get you to market faster, and attract and retain the customers and employees you want.

So how do you find the right partner?

Here are some ways you'll know you have the right partner in an IT vendor.

1 DID YOU LEARN OF THE VENDOR THROUGH REFERRALS?

The business world's best relationships start when a colleague or peer who knows you and your organization suggests you talk with a specific vendor. Maybe you confide in the colleague or peer about a problem you're having. Perhaps they've had a similar experience and can recommend someone who can help. Often a referral gives relationships a head start because the referrer knows both parties and can see a fit.



2 IS YOUR VENDOR INTERESTED IN YOUR BUSINESS AND ASKING ABOUT GROWTH PLANS?

Again, this is the difference between a supplier and a partner. Think of it as finding a car repair shop versus a trusted mechanic. The repair shop will fix your car and give you a bill. The mechanic will do the same but also mention that the brakes might need replacing in a couple of months or that the repair is not worth it given the car's condition.

A partner looks at the longer horizon for your business and helps you see what's needed ahead.



3 DO YOU TRUST THE VENDOR?

A vendor willing to offer helpful, on-point advice is a good partner. You know you can ask them about something, and they will provide you with the best guidance, even if it may be counter to their financial interests. A vendor who always responds by steering you back to their products is a sign of a vendor in it only for themselves.

4 DO YOU FEEL THE VENDOR "HAS YOUR BACK?"

Is getting support taking forever? Are you not getting the right solutions and thus having continued problems? Are you concerned your vendor is not helping you meet regulatory IT requirements? These could be symptoms of a vendor who has shifted priorities away from you, a vendor who doesn't have the capacity to support you or lacks the knowledge to provide you the right solutions.



5 WHEN PLANNING A MAJOR INITIATIVE, WOULD YOU TURN TO THE VENDOR FOR GUIDANCE?

As your team identifies and plans new initiatives, you'll need advice on the technology aspect.

Is it automatic to reach out to your IT vendor to discuss the initiative and get their thoughts? Or do you think you have to turn to an outside consultant for guidance?

A vendor's business expertise can be invaluable beyond suggesting equipment and software options.

6 DOES THE VENDOR HAVE THE EXPERTISE YOU NEED?

One way to assess this is to ask what certifications your vendor's team possesses. An important one is the CISSP or Certified Information Systems Security Professional. This credential, which must be renewed annually, assesses and certifies the holder's expertise in areas such as security and risk management, security architecture and engineering, security assessment and testing, and security operations.

7 DOES THE VENDOR HAVE A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO OPTIMIZE YOUR SYSTEMS?

Promises are easy to make. You need someone who has processes in place which guarantee your systems will stay up-to-date, promptly address vulnerabilities, and proactively addresses developing problems. Can your vendor show you how they achieve that?

8 ARE THEY KEEPING YOUR DATA SECURE?

Finally, an IT partner will work hard to ensure your data remains secure, your systems updated, your data backed up, and used in compliance with regulatory requirements. A mere vendor may sell you a security solution but doesn't stay in touch. Cybersecurity requires your solutions to maintain strong protection as your business develops and changes. A "set it and forget it" approach will likely get you a regulatory fine -or your data stolen – sooner rather than later. You want a partner who proactively manages your security and your regulatory requirements by assessing your risks on at least an annual basis.

Business technology has become the lifeblood of organizations today, so it's essential that your company secure a great IT partner.

A managed IT services provider such as ImageQuest can be a great choice because we

focus on serving a specific client type. Our focus helps us build the expertise – and attention – you need, when you need it.

A managed IT services provider can either be your IT team or add depth to your existing IT bench. ☞

Learn more by contacting us today!

