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QUESTIONS

TO ASK A

Managed
Services
Provider



MYTECH
PARTNERS



Selecting a new Managed Service Provider (MSP) is a daunting task. The flashy products and services can all sound the same and feel very complex – and different MSPs will emphasize different aspects. **One helpful tactic is to find an MSP whose priorities match your own.** As you search for a new provider, we want to help you ask tough questions of each potential IT partner, to determine for yourself how their actual methods align with your organization's needs.

There isn't a single "correct" answer to any question on this list. These questions are conversation starters, and can help you assess what's most important for your organization. If a given area doesn't seem as important to you as the others, you can use that as an indicator: regardless of cost or size, **an MSP that invests heavily into areas you don't prioritize probably doesn't align with your needs.**

1

What do you think would be trickiest about supporting our organization?

This question can help you gauge an MSP's ability to **evaluate and understand your needs.**

- Share some of the tech issues you've had. What kind of clarifying or follow-up questions do they ask?
- How focused are they on learning what's important to you, instead of just selling themselves?

2

What does your 'average client' look like?

MSPs serve many different kinds of small- and medium-size businesses, but each one will often have a **target profile** they serve best.

- Do they serve specific industries or meet a particular tech need/focus?
- How big is their average client? What would "too big" and "too small" look like for them?
- How do they determine if an organization's profile fits their capabilities? How hard are they trying to get every opportunity, regardless of whether they could actually deliver on promises?

3

What does your IT budgeting & planning process look like?

Having a clear plan for their clients' IT investments is often a sign that an MSP has a **long-term strategy, instead of just short-term ad hoc solutions.**

- When you talk about the future, how do they ask about your tech goals?
- What does their plan for buying new equipment look like? Do those recommendations change based on your specific needs?

4

Have you ever had a major breach or tech disaster?

Just like “what’s your greatest weakness?” in a job interview, **the way an MSP answers this question is often far more important than the actual answer.**

- How would they define a major breach or disaster? Does it match your own definition?
- If they have experienced one, how did they learn from it? What safeguards do they now have in place?
- If they haven’t experienced one yet, how are they preparing for those worst-case scenarios?
- Many MSPs hope to allay their clients’ fears, but there is no such thing as 100% perfect, guaranteed security. Do they acknowledge this?

5

How would you explain your big-picture IT security approach to a non-tech person?

IT security is about far more than simply having the shiniest, most complex solution. Focus on the MSP’s security mindset, not just the tools they use.

- How does it compare to your own business risk philosophy, especially regarding budget, planning, and time investment?
- How do they approach cost-benefit analysis? A less robust cybersecurity solution, for instance, is not necessarily “bad” if it suits the organization, its needs, and its available resources.

6

Can we come visit your offices, and meet the people who’d support our team?

Visiting an MSP’s office location is a great way to both **learn about the company’s culture, and also understand how your IT support would be delivered.**

- Who would be your main point of contact?
- How do the IT teams keep track of support requests and make sure they’re addressed quickly?
- How many different techs would serve your organization? A rotating team of 5-7 is much more likely to remember your organization’s specific needs than someone at random from a call center of 100.

7

How would you record and analyze my tech issues?

Clients often have repeat problems. Some MSPs will simply resolve these problems as they reoccur, while others will **invest time and energy behind the scenes to record, remember, and prevent them in the future.**

- How do they document their clients’ support requests?
- If you desire a preventative approach, listen for terms like “root cause analysis” – the practice of diagnosing a tech problem’s deeper cause, rather than just treating the symptoms over and over.

8

What are your Service Level Targets (or Service Level Agreements)?

SLTs (or SLAs) are a measure of how quickly your team members would receive tech support on an issue. **Clearly defined SLTs/SLAs are often a sign of greater maturity and accountability** in an MSP.

- How are more severe requests handled? What about after-hours requests? Or emergency requests?
- How quickly does an actual person view each support ticket? Watch out for any gaps or uncertainties in their process where a problem could slip through the cracks.

9

Would you ever come on-site to our office? What would that look like?

If you want a more personal touch from your MSP, routine in-person visits to your office can help your team members feel more supported and connected.

- Do they talk about scheduled or routine visits for proactivity's sake, or do they only consider on-site visits a last resort for troubleshooting?

10

Do you do any trainings or educational events? What kind?

Most MSPs advertise expert trainings for your team members, but **those trainings can take many different forms**. Ask for specifics! Some examples include:

- One-time cybersecurity video courses, to cover the basics as part of onboarding for new hires
- Ongoing cybersecurity video courses, to maintain awareness against both classic & evolving threats
- Simulated phishing campaigns, to test team members' savvy and awareness on email security
- Productivity resources, such as blogs & webinars, to improve use of technology
- In-person, targeted trainings & consultations to educate on client-specific topics

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