How to Get More Hours in Your Day:
A Managed IT Service

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How many staff hours would your business reclaim by outsourcing network maintenance and support?

A managed service provider (MSP) can handle it for you around the clock—remotely monitoring your network, proactively averting problems, updating and patching systems, and responding to tech support calls. And it would probably save you money too.

Reallocating Management Time

Have you calculated how much management time (and salary) is being eaten up by IT problems?

"The IT management at one of our client companies had been assigned to the director of finance, because he was the best qualified employee to do it," says Austen Clark, sales director at Clark Integrated Technologies (CIT). "But he realized that he was spending 70 percent of his time—over US$55,000 of his salary—dealing with IT issues rather than managing the company's financials. So he outsourced the IT responsibilities to us.

"CIT's cost was less than half of what the director had been spending by backfilling his finance responsibilities," says Clark. "Plus we introduced advanced technical skills and provide proactive technology management, or as he said, 'I bought my company a whole IT department.'"

Clark Integrated Technologies, formerly Clark Computers, is a Cisco Select Certified Partner that specializes in integrated business technologies. Its MSP maintenance and support service uses the cloud-based Cisco OnPlus™ tool to remotely see and monitor every device on the network that has an IP address, enabling CIT to proactively identify and remediate problems.

Cutting IT Equipment and Labor Costs

Your company may prefer to have an in-house IT department. But the cost to sustain in-house network maintenance and support can be shocking.

The capital expense (CapEx) for a management system could easily be $50,000 to $250,000, or more, for the software and servers that provide continual monitoring, updates, and backups.

The annual cost for the in-house expertise is also large. The starting salary, taxes, and benefits for one network administrator are at least $75,000; that doesn't include the expenses to recruit and hire, and to regularly fund new skills training. Do you need 24/7 coverage? That's four network administrators, for a minimum cost of $300,000.

You could avoid incurring some staff costs by relying on an IT service that charges by the hour to respond to service calls. These "break-fix" IT services have disparate levels of expertise and customer satisfaction.

"It's very hard for a service that provides only occasional support to really understand your business operations, and to align the technologies that your business really needs," says Kelly Smith, vice president of operations at Eclipse Technology Solutions. A Cisco Premier Certified Partner,

Eclipse specializes in providing multi-site, multi-application solutions and services.

"Break-fix is frustrating for everyone," says Clark. "A business network needs help instantly, but the break-fix personnel may not be available when the client calls. The expertise required by the range of products or technologies involved may be incomplete." The client has to manage the process, often including the communications with product vendors. "It's very inefficient. The client always incurs costs that are unexpected, and often big."

Outsourcing maintenance and support to an MSP can eliminate all of these problems.

Unlike a break-fix service, an MSP continually monitors and maintains the entire network, proactively preventing service calls and expenses, as well as downtime.

Unlike in-house staff, the MSP assumes responsibility for the CapEx and the IT labor costs.

Focusing IT Staff on Projects That Add Value

How many hours of your IT staff's time is eaten up in responding to problems?

Outsourcing day-to-day maintenance and support allows your techies to augment their IT skills and work on projects that improve your business.

"For example, many of our customers have expertise in data LANs but struggle with voice and contact center technologies," says Smith. "Our Cisco Smart Care Service provides technical support for the customer's entire network, including voice and wireless mobility."

"Customers develop a collaborative relationship with their Eclipse support engineer. They learn new troubleshooting techniques and develop more sophisticated skills," she says. "I frequently hear our engineers say, 'You could use this feature to do that,' and help customers expand their understanding of functionality. We become customers' trusted advisers; techies often tend to ask us for input before talking to senior management about their projects."

How to Get Started

When evaluating a maintenance and support MSP for your business, be sure to:

· **Investigate the MSP's customer references and technical certifications.** Cisco Certified Partners combine industry-leading network technical training, tools, and resources with an in-depth understanding of the customer's business.

· **Clearly define the services you want.** For example, for software updates and patches, "some of our customers have a rigorous change management process," Smith says. Also define problem levels, guaranteed response times, and the reports that your company will receive.

· **Review the depth and breadth of the MSP's staffing.** Six full-time engineers staff the service desk at CIT. "We remediate more than 80 percent of faults remotely," says Clark. "We also have a team of professional services engineers on standby for onsite support."

· **Get demonstrations** of the customer web portal, help desk, and remote monitoring and management dashboard that the MSP will use for your network.

Ready to put time on your side?

Next Steps:

How much time are you losing in your IT operation? If you want to work smarter and reduce the burden, contact **Clark Integrated Technologies**—a leader in delivering IT managed services.

Be proactive, contact Clark Integrated Technologies today:

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