5 Ways to Get More from Your Managed Services Partnership

As part of your strategy to tap into the benefits of technology and protect valuable data assets, you have engaged the services of a managed services provider (MSP). You did your research, choosing an experienced provider that offers the services you need. Now, consider the following tips to help you get the most out of your managed services partnership.

1. Define Expectations Up Front

From the very beginning, take time to discuss your business needs with your MSP. Better yet, involve your provider in assessing your IT infrastructure. Are there certain processes that absolutely must stay in place? What IT requirements do you have, including industry regulations? Clearly identify your needs and priorities.

Additionally, you will need to develop a clear picture of what effort will be required from your staff. For instance, in an email migration, your organization will need to provide detailed input on email policies and make decisions about what data to transfer. When you know up front the time and work expected from your staff, you can plan around that.

Finally, read the fine print on the service level agreement (SLA). The SLA should specify how to report a problem, as well as the minimum time it will take for a technician to respond. It should also detail which areas the MSP will monitor and maintain, how to handle after-hours issues, and so forth.

2. Implement Disaster Recovery Plans

No matter what, at some point, your data will face risks. The MSP should play an integral role in planning, implementing, and updating your disaster recovery plan. This must include regular, reliable data backups, as well as a detailed communication plan. [Business continuity](#) is a basic, but critical, service that an MSP can provide.

3. Keep Communication Channels Open

From the beginning, schedule regular meetings with your MSP. These meetings will provide a forum to obtain updates and plan future strategies. They will also allow you to communicate changes in business needs.

Also, ensure continuity in your communication with your provider. Identify contact people in both organizations, updating as necessary to account for employee turnover. Specify best practices for obtaining a timely response.

As with any relationship, your managed services partnership may need adjustments from time to time. If a process or a strategy no longer works, communicate that to your provider. Likewise, let them know when something works particularly well.

4. Focus on Building a Partnership

For an MSP relationship to work best, consider the MSP as part of your team. For example, in some cases, it may work best to retain some of your existing IT team, enabling the MSP to complement their work. This then frees up your employees to focus on strategic projects.

Further, remember that MSPs make it their business to keep up with new technologies, cyber security threats and IT best practices. Tap into that expertise to add to the knowledge you already have on staff. In fact, a quality MSP will offer advisory services. They can even act as a virtual CTO to help you evaluate processes, as well as identify and implement strategies.

5. Look Beyond the Basics of your Managed Services Partnership

Even after you have entered a partnership with an MSP, continue to do your research. Explore the various solutions your MSP has to offer. You may have initially contracted with them to conduct a cloud migration or provide network monitoring. But they may be able to provide additional valuable services, such as helping you implement comprehensive cyber security.

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