



21 QUESTIONS TO ASK EVERY IT SERVICE PROVIDER

Provided as an educational resource by:

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What Every Business Leader Must Know About Choosing A Trusted, Expert, Responsive, and Fairly Priced IT Partner

This Business Advisory Guide Will Arm You With 21 Critical Questions You Should Ask Any IT Consultant Or Company Before Giving Them Access To Your IT Systems

Read this guide and you'll discover:

- The “dirty little secret” of the IT services industry that most people don't know and will never be told by their IT team (this will surprise you).
- 21 revealing questions that will help you instantly spot an unethical or grossly incompetent IT services provider in minutes.
- 4 costly misconceptions most business owners have about IT services – and what you need to consider when selecting an IT firm.
- Hackers, ransomware and data theft: what you REALLY need to know to protect yourself from a costly, devastating ransomware attack.



An Open Letter To Business Leaders Evaluating Their IT Partnerships

From The Desk of: Adam Barney, President Framework IT



Dear Fellow Business Leader,

Choosing the right IT partner is a daunting task. Pick the wrong one and you could end up locked in a contract where frustrations and costs mount as you get hammered with constant IT problems and horrible service.

Pick the right one and you'll breathe a sigh of relief as you gain complete peace of mind that your data and company are protected. The problem is, they all sound good and promise to be proactive, responsive and professional, but **how can you know who the great ones are until you sign a contract and turn over the keys to your company?**

It's hard, and that's why we wrote this executive guide. We want to help business leaders avoid the frustration and losses caused from hiring the wrong IT firm by asking the right questions and knowing what to look for upfront. There are signs, but you have to know what to look for.

Sadly, there's no shortage of horror stories about incompetent IT "gurus" bungling projects and causing more problems as a result of their incompetence, lack of qualified staff and poor cyber security skills. I'm sure if you talk to your colleagues you will get an earful of the unfortunate experiences they have encountered in this area.

Part of the problem is that the IT services industry is not regulated like many professions, which means ANYONE can claim they are an expert. **This means you must be far more diligent about whom you choose as your IT partner and arm yourself with the information contained in this report.**

From misleading information to poor management and terrible customer service, we've seen it all...and we know they exist in abundance because we have had plenty of clients come to us to clean up the disasters caused by the wrong IT vendor.

This guide is provided to give YOU useful information to protect your business, data, and reputation against the many unethical and incompetent IT companies out there.

Dedicated to serving you,

Adam Barney

About the Author



Adam Barney is President of Framework IT and has more than 15 years of executive experience in managed services and telecommunications. During his career, Adam has consulted over 1,000 companies, including smaller organizations, and those such as Rush University Medical Center, Northwestern Mutual, and many more, helping them transform and streamline their technology.

Founded in 2008, Framework IT is a Chicago-based company that empowers your people to do more by helping you get IT right. We do this by specializing in IT support, strategy, and cybersecurity for small and mid-sized businesses nationwide. Together, our team of 30+ engineers acts as an extension of your business to proactively prevent IT issues, so your team has more time to focus on what really matters.

Framework IT has been listed on the Inc. 500 & 5000 Fastest Growing Private Companies in America seven times in the last 10 years and has also been honored with a place on the Best and Brightest Places to Work in the Nation several times.

Outside of work, Adam is a husband, father of two daughters, an avid reader, and a travel and fitness enthusiast. Adam also consults with journalists, analysts, and investors eager to learn and explore business technology and managed IT services. Adam's expertise has been featured in the Washington Post, Fox 32 Chicago, and the Harvard Business Review.

21 Questions You Should Ask Your IT Services Company or Consultant Before Hiring Them For IT Support

1) What makes your company unique?

Our Answer: Many IT companies offer generic answers to this question and don't provide any meaningful and accountable guarantees. Framework IT stands out with a truly unique value proposition: a combination of our distinctive pricing model and unwavering commitment to mutually-beneficial partnerships, as evidenced by our 11 Partnership Guarantees.

Other IT providers offer win-lose partnerships; they either don't tell you how to improve your technology, and continue to profit off your pains/inefficiencies. OR, they suggest improvements, you pay to implement them, and then you're still paying the IT provider the same for service, if not more!

We are proud to cultivate proactive, win-win partnerships. We do this with our innovative pricing model: The Business Optimization Framework. We reward business leaders who adopt technology that is proven to make everyone's lives easier. Our data-driven IT best practices create an average of 30% fewer IT issues, and when issues arise, they're faster and easier to resolve. That's more time for your team to focus on what really matters: their jobs. ALSO, our job as your IT partner becomes easier!

That's why we decrease your monthly pricing as you align with these IT best practices. It's similar to an insurance company rewarding positive behavior with a "Safe Driver Discount." By implementing these IT best practices, you eliminate cybersecurity risks and establish a more standardized and scalable technology environment.

2) What are your Partnership Guarantees?

It's common for IT companies to avoid providing partnership guarantees. However, at Framework IT, we provide **11 Partnership Guarantees demonstrate our commitment to quality service.** We understand that many IT firms are unresponsive and require your constant follow-ups to resolve issues. To prevent this, we guarantee 30-Day Money-Back, Try Us Before You Commit, and a 100% Satisfaction.



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Also, our help desk of 30+ technicians ensures your service phone calls are always answered live by trained Service Coordinators; we guarantee that clients will **Never Leave a Voicemail** with a Service Coordinator. If they do, we provide a \$25 credit on their next invoice. This level of accessibility and responsiveness sets us apart from other IT service companies.

We guarantee **No Surprise Billing** as we do not charge you extra for small tasks or projects such as setting up new computers, or the IT onboarding or offboarding process. This prevents you from getting those unexpected IT bills; our clients never pay for hourly or project invoices that were not pre-approved. Proactive IT strategic planning with your vCIO (virtual Chief Information Officer) is included at no extra charge to align your technology with evolving business needs. Our **Commitment to Strategic Planning** means we will schedule at least two Strategic Business Reviews per year, and if we fail to meet this, we credit the client's account \$500 at the end of the contract year. Or, if you're searching for a truly comprehensive solution for all IT management and projects, our enhanced managed services plan includes all projects as part of your monthly fee.

Finally, we guarantee **Comprehensive Cybersecurity** at no additional charge to protect our clients' businesses. This includes EDR, MDR, 365/G Suite Security Monitoring, Managed Application Control, Dark Web ID, SIEM Logging, Email Security, Security Awareness Training, and 365/G Backups. We take information privacy seriously, maintaining the confidentiality of your proprietary business information with the same degree of care as our own. To ensure our own cybersecurity remains best-in-class, we retain a third-party Security Operations Center to conduct ongoing monitoring and assessment of our cybersecurity posture. This robust approach to security safeguards the interests of the businesses we support and provides peace of mind.

3) How many engineers do you have on staff?

Our Answer: Many IT companies shy away from disclosing the number of engineers. At Framework, we're proud to have 30+ engineers ready to help your team.

This is a mixture of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 engineers. Meanwhile, our strategic consulting is provided via our expert vCIOs who all have IT engineering backgrounds.



4) When I have an IT problem, how do I reach out for support?

Our Answer: Many managed services providers have inadequate, or unnecessarily complex, workflows for you to get IT helpdesk support.

With Framework IT, we provide flexibility with ticket submission methods to make your life easier. When an issue arises, your staff can reach out to us via a couple different mediums. Each of these are answered live and all route into the same ticketing system. The two most commonly used methods are calling our service hotline phone number (most important for emergencies). Or, for staff to send an email via their inbox. They can also leverage a computer agent/icon which lives in the home navigation bar on their computer, to open a ticket. Finally, they can submit a ticket via the portal in their web browser.

All these methods route into the same ticketing system to ensure your staff has the best support experience. Meaning, all of these ticket submission methods speak to each other, which provides continuity of notes and info transfer so your team has access to our team of IT experts in the manner that best suits the nature of their work, or the issue at hand.

5) Do you provide unlimited remote AND onsite support for IT issues?

Our Answer: Many managed services providers, even those claiming to offer “unlimited support” for issues, do not include onsite support within the monthly fee. Instead, it is often charged extra, by the hour, with onsite minimums. Then, you’re stuck checking each invoice to make sure you were not overcharged, and your staff might prefer to hold onto their issues to avoid being overcharged for support.

This practice leads to conflicts of interest, misaligned incentives, and unexpected expenses, all of which create friction in the relationship

At Framework, we’re proud to provide unlimited remote & onsite support for all IT issues. We define “Issues” as ‘the performance interruption or degradation of one or more technology services or systems.’ This definition is taken from ITIL ITIL (The IT Infrastructure Library), the leading authority of IT Management.



So when your technology isn't working right, staff are more encouraged to get help when they need it. This helps enable your team's productivity and eliminate unpredictability and uncertainty regarding your IT budget.

At Framework IT, we avoid conflict, misalignments, and surprise bills by covering onsite support for issues. We install remote monitoring and management (RMM) software on all your staff computers.

This software enables us to proactively monitor performance and securely access and troubleshoot devices remotely. As a result, we're able to resolve approximately 97% of issues without needing to be physically present at your site.

If onsite support is necessary, based on Framework's assessment, to troubleshoot and resolve incidents on covered systems, we include this service for company offices as part of our service agreement. However, please note that we do not cover onsite support at your employees' homes.

For offices within driving distance of our location, we send our engineers onsite. However, for instances requiring rapid onsite support at your office(s) that are far from Chicago, Framework partners with third-party national dispatch organizations.

These organizations can rapidly dispatch qualified engineers to act as our 'smart hands' on the ground, backed by the expertise of our senior engineers remotely. For larger projects or new office deployments, we send our own engineers to ensure everything is set up correctly and operates smoothly.

In short, our aim is to provide efficient, effective support, whether remotely or onsite at your company offices, to keep your operations running smoothly.



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6) What are your help desk hours? Do you offer emergency or after-hours support?

Our Answer: Other managed IT providers only cover issues 8 AM - 5 PM, Monday - Friday. We understand that modern work does not follow a traditional schedule, and so we've designed our help desk hours to cover 99% of our clients' needs so your employees can stay productive.

Framework IT offers the following covered support hours for Managed IT Services:

- Standard Help Desk Hours: M-F, 8 AM - 5 PM CT
- Option for Extended Support: M-F, 5-9 PM CT, weekends 8 AM-5 PM CT.
- Emergency support (High Urgency/High Impact)
 - Critical Issues are still covered outside of the Standard Help Desk Hours and Extended Support Hours noted above.
 - Medium and Low Priority tickets are billable outside of the Standard Help Desk Hours and Extended Support Hours noted above.

See [this matrix](#) to learn how we prioritize tickets & determine emergency support

- Impact - Measures the severity of an issue as it relates to critical business processes
 - Low - More of an irritation than a stoppage
 - Medium - Business is degraded but there is a reasonable workaround
 - High - Major business processes are stopped
- Urgency - Measures the number of users that are affected by the issue
 - Low - One user or a small group of users are affected
 - Medium - Departments or a large group of users are affected
 - High - Entire company is affected

7) What is your written, guaranteed response time?

Our Answer: Many IT companies hide their written, guaranteed Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for Response Times deep in a contract hoping you won't see it. Or, perhaps there are none!

At Framework IT, we're specific in how we define **Response Time** as the time from receipt of a support ticket until a Framework IT Service Coordinator has triaged the issue and determined an appropriate next course of action.



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Our Service Coordinators always triage by determining which helpdesk engineer has the best expertise, and capacity, to resolve the issue. This helps your issue get into the best hands the first time, and your staff back to work ASAP.

Here is a table showing our Response Times using the same matrix as question 6 to determine priority levels:

Priority Level	SLA Response
Priority 1 (Critical)	30 Minutes
Priority 2 (High)	1 Hour
Priority 3 (Medium)	2 Hours
Priority 4 (Low)	4 Hours

8) How do you improve our strategic technology planning and budgeting?

Our Answer: Many managed services providers claim to offer strategic consulting, but often this means making ad-hoc suggestions or holding meetings focused on selling you products you don't need. Rarely do they have an actual engineer take a comprehensive strategic approach, develop detailed plans, and assist with budgeting.

At Framework IT, you have your dedicated Virtual Chief Information Officer (vCIO), an engineer with 10+ years of expertise. Your vCIO delivers formal strategic planning meetings and budgeting assistance as part of the Managed IT Services. These happen 1x per quarter at no additional cost. The vCIO's key responsibility is to assist your IT and executive leadership team with technology planning, lifecycle management, and budgeting.



Our vCIOs use specific software that integrates data from various Framework systems (Lifecycle Insights). This not only streamlines the technology planning and budgeting process but also provides you with a comprehensive and easy-to-understand report. This report, along with ongoing collaborative discussions, will guide your technology planning and budgeting efforts.

Rest assured, our team will support your annual technology budget development every step of the way. Framework IT guarantees that we will stay on top of the proactive strategic planning!

9) Do you have a feedback system in place for clients to provide "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" ratings on your service? If so, can I see those results?

Our Answer: Many IT companies lack a formal, comprehensive client feedback process. At Framework, your satisfaction is paramount, and we are so committed to it that we offer several guarantees focused on your experience.

Framework IT employs a multi-faceted, formal feedback process. CSAT (Customer Satisfaction) ticket surveys are sent after every completed ticket, and the results are reported back to you and discussed in vCIO meetings. Net Promoter Score (NPS) surveys on the Help Desk and vCIO performance are sent to you at least once annually.

During Strategic Business Reviews, your vCIO is not just an expert engineer there to help you with IT strategy. They also regularly solicit qualitative feedback from you and other members of your team about what is working well and what could be improved. Your satisfaction and retention are key metrics for vCIOs, so they are encouraged to cultivate a trusted bond that results in long-term partnership. vCIOs also identify opportunities to improve the partnership and collaboratively discuss adjustments to facilitate a more seamless experience for both parties.

Annual Partnership Review Meetings are conducted once a year, where key leaders on your team with your vCIO, and other Framework IT staff as needed, to discuss how both parties can enhance the partnership.



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10) How do you handle an employee's IT onboarding or offboarding? Does that cost extra?

Our Answer: Many managed IT service providers charge extra for onboarding new employees and setting up new computers, which messes up your budget. With Framework IT, employee IT on/offboarding is included at no extra charge.

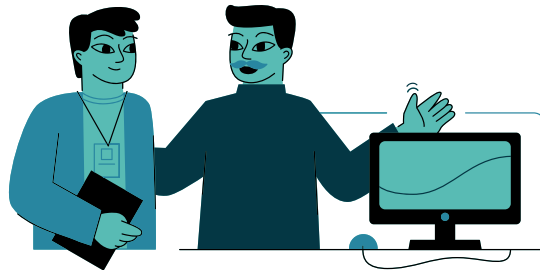
During the Partnership Transition Process, Framework will collaboratively develop the IT on/offboarding standard operating procedure (SOP) specific to your organization. We use these SOPs to build custom on/offboarding forms which serve as customized checklists with specific onboarding details such as full name, email address, direct dial number (if applicable), cell phone, role, responsibilities, software installation or access requirements, accounts/services to configure, and any additional peripheral hardware needing installation.

The vCIO will work with you to determine whether it makes sense to repurpose an existing device or procure a new one. The vCIO can provide quotes for equipment or advise on recommended specifications and the type of computer to procure.

Detailed procurement and shipping processes depend on what works best for your specific situation. We can ship the device directly to Framework first, to your office location, or to new hires directly.

If you do not have dedicated storage for equipment, the computers are typically delivered to Framework's office first for pre-configuration and storage until deployment is required. We will configure it to be as plug-and-play as possible for the new staff member. We will then remotely assist the new hire in turning on the device, connecting to the internet, and completing any remaining setup.

To ensure optimal outcomes, we ask for five days' notice (ideally), or longer, especially if hardware needs to be procured. There are often shipping delays beyond our control that must be considered.



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11) How do you handle computer procurement?

Our Answer: Some IT companies are rigid in their approach to computer procurement. Framework IT, however, understands that clients have diverse needs and aims to customize the process to suit your requirements while standardizing as much as possible to streamline your experience.

The vCIO will collaborate with you to determine whether it makes sense to repurpose an existing device or procure a new one. The vCIO can provide quotes for the equipment or advise you on recommended specifications and the type of computer to procure. Detailed procurement and shipping processes will be tailored to what works best for your specific situation. We can ship the device directly to Framework first, to your office location, or directly to new hires. If you lack a dedicated storage location for equipment, the computers are typically delivered to Framework's office first, regardless of who handled procurement, for pre-configuration and storage until deployment is required.

If Framework receives the device first, we will configure it to be as plug-and-play as possible for the new staff member. We will then remotely assist the new hire or a local contact at the office to get the device turned on, connected to internet, and complete any remaining setup. To ensure optimal outcomes, we ideally ask for at least 5 days' notice, or longer, especially if hardware needs to be procured. We must also consider potential shipping delays that are out of our control.

12) How do you manage the health & lifecycle of our tech?

Our Answer: While many IT companies use a Remote Monitoring and Management (RMM), very few have actually invested in additional solutions designed to aid technology planning and budgeting. Our RMM software, deployed on each managed computer, reports hardware and OS specifications, resource utilization and performance. We can compare this info to ticketing data to determine which machines should be prioritized for replacement based on a combination of OS supportability, hardware specifications, performance, and the quantity and nature of service issues. Our vCIO team also uses Lifecycle Insights, a software for lifecycle management that highlights security gaps and best practices alignment, and helps forecast budgets. The vCIO will review this data and present recommendations to the client as part of Strategic Business Reviews and planning/budgeting meetings.



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13) How do you protect us from cybersecurity threats?



Our Answer: Many managed services providers only include anti-virus/anti-malware software in their managed services plans.

Framework IT understands that this is insufficient to protect our clients from threats and to ensure compliance with their insurance policies. Therefore, Framework IT includes holistic cybersecurity defenses for all clients as part of the standard managed services plan.

This approach reduces risk, avoids surprise expenses, and provides you with peace of mind.

Remote Monitoring & Management (RMM): The RMM is used to automate proactive maintenance, updates, and security patches, as well as to monitor performance, trigger automated alerts based on performance and availability, and to facilitate efficient remote access for support.

Endpoint Security: Endpoint Detection & Response (EDR). EDR provides businesses with advanced threat detection and response capabilities, enabling us to quickly identify and mitigate security incidents. This proactive approach helps minimize downtime, protect sensitive data, and ensure compliance with industry regulations, ultimately enhancing overall business resilience. EDR is increasingly required by cyber insurance companies.

Managed Detection & Response (MDR): Contextually aware breach detection & response with expert management from 24x7 Security Operations Center. MDR provides businesses with continuous monitoring and expert analysis of security threats, ensuring rapid detection and response to incidents. This enhances overall security posture, reduces the risk of breaches, and allows businesses to focus on their core operations while maintaining peace of mind.

Cybersecurity operations and incident response platform: Detect & stop cyberthreats in real time with live visibility & awareness. This provides businesses with real-time threat monitoring, detection, and response capabilities, ensuring swift action against potential security breaches. This proactive approach minimizes the impact of incidents, protects sensitive data, and enhances overall business continuity and resilience.



Cloud Response: Cloud Response extends Managed Detection & Response into Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace, providing continuous monitoring of the cloud environment. This ensures immediate and active responses to anomalous behavior, enhancing security, defending against account breaches, and protecting sensitive data in real-time.

Identity Response for Azure: Protect Azure SSO logins: Identity Response for Azure enhances security by protecting Azure Single Sign-On (SSO) logins, ensuring that only authorized users can access critical resources. This proactive measure helps prevent unauthorized access, safeguarding sensitive data, and maintaining compliance with security policies.

Managed Application Control for Windows devices: Managed Application Control enhances security by preventing the download of risky applications, thereby reducing the threat landscape. This proactive approach helps prevent unauthorized software from running, ensuring a safer and more controlled IT environment.

Dark Web Monitoring: Dark Web Monitoring helps businesses identify exposed domains or credentials, providing early detection of potential security breaches. This proactive measure allows organizations to take immediate action to protect sensitive information and prevent unauthorized access.

SIEM (Security Information & Event Management System) Logging: SIEM Logging provides a hyper-efficient logging solution that meets most insurance requirements, ensuring comprehensive monitoring and compliance. This enhances security by enabling real-time detection and response to potential threats, safeguarding sensitive data and maintaining regulatory standards.

Automated External and Microsoft 365 Vulnerability Scans: Automated External and Microsoft 365 Vulnerability Scans enhance security by increasing visibility into potential vulnerabilities within the environment. This proactive approach allows businesses to identify and address security weaknesses promptly, reducing the risk of breaches and ensuring a more secure infrastructure.

Advanced Email Security: Advanced Email Security protects your inbox from spam and phishing by thoroughly scanning all emails, links, and attachments for potential threats. This proactive measure ensures a safer email environment, reducing the risk of cyberattacks and safeguarding sensitive information.



Security Awareness Training & Mock Phishing: Trains your employees to avoid potential threats.

Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA): Enforce MFA for all Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace accounts.

14) Does your cybersecurity package meet the standards required by most cybersecurity liability insurance policies?

Our Answer: A lot of managed IT service providers over-promise and under-deliver cybersecurity protections. This leaves you uncertain of what is too much, what is too little, and what is just right to meet your cybersecurity liability insurance policy and risk tolerance.

Or, perhaps you learned the hard way: assuming your IT company was meeting those standards, then something was off, and you had a cybersecurity incident. As a result, your cybersecurity liability insurance policy didn't cover the incident, or only provided a fraction of the payment, while you were left frustrated with a tarnished reputation.

At Framework, our goal is to help you achieve the most cost-effective approach to reduce risk. We focus on what types of cybersecurity are going to provide the best ROI for risk reduction (see our responses to question 11 for an outline of our cybersecurity).

Before we enter a partnership, we always ask to review your current cybersecurity liability insurance policy.

Luckily, our standard cybersecurity provided to all organizations we support does meet 95% of those cybersecurity liability insurance policies out there. If your industry, or nature of work, requires more extreme cybersecurity to meet very strict compliance standards, i.e. government contracts, then the vCIO would discuss with you what other solutions would make sense to meet your needs.

Overall, you achieve peace of mind knowing your cybersecurity is architected to prevent threats in the first place; however, if they do arise you have the confidence you actually meet your cybersecurity liability insurance policy.



15) What data and reporting do you provide?

Our Answer: Reporting from IT vendors often falls short, either being completely absent or offering little to no value. At Framework IT, we understand how much business leaders value accurate data and reporting. It not only assures them of our accountability but also continually demonstrates the value of our services. Over half of our work is proactive, taking place behind the scenes and focusing on preventing issues, so you can concentrate on growing your organization!

Your Standard Reporting with Framework IT:

Executive Monthly Management Report monthly

- The report includes approximately 15-20 Key Performance Indicators, such as CSAT, Response Time, and Issue Categorization. At Framework, we can customize this report and provide additional, more detailed technical reporting upon your request. We can also provide a sample Executive Monthly Management Report during your vetting process, allowing you to see what you can expect.

Lifecycle Insights

- The vCIO team utilizes Lifecycle Insights, a powerful software for lifecycle management. This tool not only highlights security gaps and aligns with best practices but also aids in budget forecasting. Lifecycle Insights enables us to deliver detailed strategic reporting on systems and structure recommendations to address both current and future gaps. During your vetting process, we can provide a sample Lifecycle Insights report, giving you a clear expectation of what we offer.

Cybersecurity Reports

- During Strategic Business Reviews, the vCIO will present a report detailing the threats addressed by the Managed Detection & Response solution so you can see the value in our proactive, robust cybersecurity.



Additional Reporting Based Upon Specific Client Requests:

Framework IT's Remote Monitoring and Management (RMM) tool and Network Monitoring solution offer over a hundred reports on various technical metrics, including hardware performance, uptime, bandwidth utilization, patch statuses, and much more. This level of reporting is not provided as a standard for all clients, as it's often too granular and technical to be helpful to most. However, if you would like specific technical reports delivered routinely, we will accommodate your request, provided the reports are available in our toolset.

16) In which aspects of our technology management will the vCIO advise us?

Our Answer: Many managed services companies position themselves as providers of strategic guidance and virtual CIO services. However, their proactive guidance often does not extend beyond basic infrastructure recommendations, or worse, it turns into a regular sales pitch for additional services their organization offers. In fact, many managed services providers offer sales commissions to the people in these roles, creating a potential conflict of interest.

At Framework IT, we view the Virtual CIO's proactive consulting as an integral part of our service delivery. We aim to provide advice that goes far beyond basic infrastructure recommendations.

Here are some areas where the vCIO can assist your organization:

- Aligning IT solutions and strategies with business goals and objectives.
- Recommending IT products and strategies that support your business needs.
- Conducting Strategic Business Reviews each quarter, accounting for 5 of the 9 allocated hours, to plan and forecast technological growth and budget management.
- Overseeing technology budget as part of the Strategic Business Review.
- Lifecycle management of hardware resources.
- Assistance in managing and negotiating vendor contracts.
- Enhancing the overall partner experience with Framework IT.
- Advising on technical training for end-users to enhance skill sets.
- Please note this is not an exhaustive list, and Framework has expertise in network administration, cloud services, systems administration, cybersecurity, and certain compliance frameworks.



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17) What technology training is provided for our team?

Our Answer: Many Managed Service Providers (MSPs) overlook the critical importance of training their clients and lack a formal education plan for the client's staff. This oversight can significantly increase your security risks, as untrained staff may be more susceptible to threats. Additionally, without proper training, support delivery becomes less efficient and effective, as clients may struggle with basic issues that could have been resolved with adequate training.

At Framework IT, we provide comprehensive documentation for staff on opening tickets and best practices for ticketing. This includes knowledgebase articles, client-specific documentation, and Standard Operating Procedures. While our training resources primarily focus on working effectively with Framework IT, the knowledgebase and client-specific documentation also cover technical troubleshooting and processes.

In addition to these resources, we offer technology security education as part of our standard security package for all clients. This is delivered through the KnowBe4 Security Awareness Training and mock phishing solution, managed by our virtual Chief Information Officer (vCISO). The vCISO will consult with you to set up a suitable training curriculum for your staff, which can be adjusted based on your input. KnowBe4 provides animated micro-learning episodes, each 3-4 minutes long, focusing on a single attack vector to avoid confusion. These episodes, inspired by real security breaches, are designed to engage users with Hollywood voice actors and Emmy-winning writers. A new episode is released every 30 days, focusing on current and prolific threats, and each episode is accompanied by a blog post for deeper understanding and a comic strip to reinforce the message. This story-based learning method is effective because it keeps users engaged, makes lessons memorable, and promotes a culture of awareness in your organization. While we manage the training software, we recommend some client involvement to maximize the effectiveness. This includes reviewing reports to identify staff members who may need further intervention to manage internal security accountability.

Additionally, we provide all clients with access to a technology training library from ClipTraining, which includes general technology training on Microsoft systems and other solutions, not limited to cybersecurity. A flyer about the KnowBe4 training is included at the end of this document for your reference.





18) How do you support our business applications?

Our Answer: Far too many IT companies overpromise and underdeliver when it comes to supporting your business software. While all IT companies can support the systems running the software, many overstate their expertise in software administration. The reality is, except for the most specialized IT vendors, this claim is largely untrue. They're often just trying to secure a sale and will falter in providing expert support within the software. Moreover, critical business software should be purchased with vendor support to ensure your team receives genuine expert assistance for these essential productivity tools. Integrity is a core value at Framework IT, and we strive to set honest and fair expectations.

Regarding software support, we manage and fully support office productivity solutions such as Office 365 and Adobe. For standard business applications, we provide comprehensive support for the Microsoft 365 suite, Microsoft Office Suite, Adobe, and G Suite. This includes addressing any issues or queries you may have regarding these applications. However, the clerical and administrative tasks within those systems will remain your company's responsibility. Examples include inserting email signatures, setting out-of-office replies, creating and sending meetings or invites, data entry tasks, and maintaining file share organization (such as determining which files belong in which folders).

For Line of Business (LOB) applications, such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and accounting systems, our support is more limited to the hosting environment and access. We focus on supporting the underlying system on which the LOB application is installed. This includes supporting the performance and accessibility of that underlying system, provided that it is owned and operated by you, the client.

Our aim is to ensure your business LOB applications run smoothly and effectively. However, we do not perform software administration tasks within the applications themselves. We recommend that you leverage the internal software champions, the software vendor, or third-party expert consultants for application administration. If an IT company claims to provide expert management of both your computer systems and software, be sure to vet their expertise and references in both areas. These are entirely different fields, and too often, we see competitors making promises they can't deliver on.



19) How do you approach IT project management to reliably meet deadlines and budget?

Our Answer: It's common for IT companies to delegate IT projects to engineers who are unfamiliar with your environment and/or inexperienced to do the job.

At Framework IT, your same vCIO who leads your strategic planning and budgeting is also the lead IT Project Manager on all projects we complete in your environment.

vCIOs lead our team of engineers to ensure everyone brings the following best practices into every project:

Defining Clear Goals and Objectives: Since they lead your Strategic Business Reviews, they will bring that intimate understanding of your business into every interaction with you and your team. They work with you and our engineering team to outline the project's objectives, deliverables, and milestones to provide a clear roadmap for the entire team.

Resource Management: They ensure optimal use of engineering resources on our team to ensure your money and time are well spent. They keep track of resource usage and adjust as necessary to avoid overruns.

Risk Management: They identify potential risks and create contingency plans to manage them. This can help to avoid delays or budget overruns.

Regular Monitoring and Reporting: They conduct regular project reviews to monitor progress against the plan. Any deviations from the plan are promptly addressed. They regularly update your team on the project's status.

Communication: They maintain open and transparent communication with all stakeholders. This helps to manage expectations and to keep everyone informed about the project's progress.

Customer-Centric Approach: Ultimately, they are committed to delivering successful projects that make your life easier. They understand that each project is unique and requires a tailored approach. They are flexible and adaptable to meet your needs.



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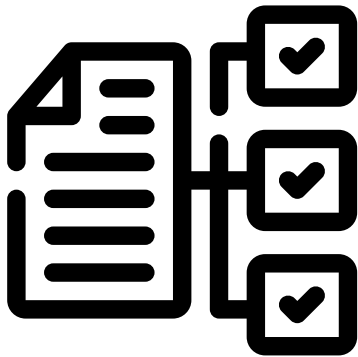
20) How do you handle project quoting?

Our Answer: IT companies have various methods for quoting projects. Some provide estimates and bill by the hour (or via pre-purchased hour blocks), while others may quote a flat fee for a particular project.

Be cautious of companies that quote estimates and bill by the hour, as you, the client relying on their expertise, are taking the risk that they poorly scoped the project and run over budget, leading to unanticipated costs. For projects outside of our standard support agreement, we typically offer a Fixed Fee quote, as we have found this to be the easiest for our clients to plan and budget for.

Project quotes are prepared by your virtual Chief Information Officer (vCIO) and Senior Engineers, who assess the project's scope and determine the necessary skill level for each task within the project work plan.

This Fixed Fee is calculated based on our hourly rates and applied to the estimated time required for each task. This method ensures that the project can be scoped and budgeted for accurately.



21) Do you use outsourced or contractor resources?

Our Answer: Some IT companies outsource support and project engineers to contractors or offshore resources to keep costs low. This can undermine service and project delivery execution, leading to poor customer service experiences and dissatisfaction for your team.

However, outsourcing select services is not inherently a negative. In fact, it can be the opposite. High operational maturity managed services companies often partner with cybersecurity firms to ensure that cybersecurity solutions are managed and monitored 24x7x365 by highly specialized experts. This benefits your organization via delivering enhanced security defenses and greater risk reduction.

Framework IT uses a Security Operations Center (SOC) to monitor and manage the following cybersecurity solutions, all of which are included for all clients at no additional charge:

- Endpoint Detection and Response
- Managed Detection & Response
- Vulnerability Scanning
- Dark Web Monitoring
- Microsoft 365 & G Suite Monitoring
- Managed Application Control
- Security information and event management logging
- Cybersecurity operations and incident response platform

This SOC partnership enhances your cybersecurity by offering 24x7x365 monitoring and managed detection and response to potential cybersecurity incidents by expert, specialized cybersecurity engineers. In the event of a threat detection, the SOC partner immediately moves to isolate the threat from the rest of your network, notifies the Framework IT help desk, and provides expert guidance on the threat and recommended remediation steps. You will not need to interact directly with Framework IT's SOC partner, which holds a SOC 2 Type 1 Certification. This approach ensures you receive top-notch cybersecurity within your budget.

All other services, including all support delivery services, are provided in-house by Framework IT employees.

The 4 Most Costly Misconceptions About IT Services

Misconception #1: My IT network doesn't need regular monitoring and cyber security maintenance (managed services).

This is probably one of the biggest and most costly misconceptions that small business owners have. Usually this is because they've been fortunate enough to have never encountered a major system failure that caused data loss from human error (or a disgruntled employee), failed hardware or even a ransomware attack.

That's just like someone thinking they don't need to wear a seat belt when driving a car because they've never had an accident.

IT networks are complex and dynamic systems that need regular updates and maintenance to stay up, secure, running fast and problem-free – especially now with the proliferation and sophistication of ransomware and hacker attacks. Here are just a FEW of the critical updates that need to be done on a weekly – if not daily – basis:

- Cybersecurity patches, updates and management
- Antivirus updates and monitoring
- Firewall updates and monitoring
- Backup monitoring
- Spam-filter updates
- Vulnerability management
- Dark web monitoring
- Microsoft 365 / Google workspace security monitoring
- Operating system updates, management
- Monitoring hardware for signs of failure or performance degradation



If your IT support tech does not insist on some type of regular, automated monitoring or maintenance of your network, especially for cyber protections, then DO NOT HIRE THEM.

1. Either they don't know enough to make this recommendation, which is a sure sign they are grossly inexperienced and unprofessional, or...
2. They recognize that they are profiting from your IT problems and do not want to recommend steps toward prevention, which would reduce the number of issues they are being paid to resolve for you.

Either reason is a good one to get as far away from that person or company as possible!

Misconception #2: You shouldn't have to pay "that much" for IT services.

We all know you get what you pay for. A cheap hourly rate or a very low managed services fee usually means a cheap job, low service quality, a lack of capacity or specialized expertise, inadequate cybersecurity, and ultimately, an unsustainable relationship that will not meet expectations. Like every other profession, good IT engineers and techs do NOT work for cheap because they are in high demand. When you see low IT services fees, it's because of one of the following:

- They are a small shop just getting started. Usually they will have only a handful of techs working for them (or they are a solo shop). That size of company may be perfectly fine for a startup business that is not regulated, doesn't have sophisticated IT requirements and/or has fewer than 10 PCs to support. This would not be a good choice for a scaling organization that needs professional IT services for their growing company and values protecting their team's productivity and managing their risk effectively.
- They are hiring inexperienced (cheap) college kids or newbie technicians because they will work for next to nothing, OR they allow interns to support your network because they don't have to pay them at all – but what you don't realize is that an inexperienced technician like this can end up costing more because:



- They improperly diagnose problems, which means you're paying them to fix the wrong thing and they still won't resolve your issue. Case in point: A few years ago a TV reporter went undercover to IT services companies in LA with a perfectly working PC, but simply disconnected a cable in the back (a fix that the average tech would have caught in minutes with a visual inspection). Several companies improperly diagnosed the problem and wanted to charge them \$275 to fix it!
- They could take three to five times as long to do the same troubleshooting that versus an experienced technician. Again, you're paying for those extra hours AND you're frustrated and unproductive while you wait for the SAME problem to be fixed!
- They could do things that put your security and data in jeopardy. True story: An inexperienced engineer of a competitor turned off all security notifications his client's network was producing because it was "too much work" to sift and sort through them. Because of this, the company got hacked and ended up having to pay a ransom to get their data back, not to mention suffered downtime for days while they scrambled to recover. Don't let a cheap, inexperienced tech do this to your organization!
- With your client data, accounting records, e-mail and other critical data at stake, do you REALLY want the lowest-priced company working on your business critical technology?

We take the view that most people want value for their money and simply want the job done right so they can enjoy peace of mind. You will find that we are not the cheapest, but we don't apologize for that, as we're focused on delivering best-in-class service to our partners.

As the owner, I decided a long time ago that I would rather explain our higher rates ONE TIME than make excuses for POOR SERVICE forever. That said, we're not the most expensive either. We simply feel that we should offer a great service at a fair price that creates a sustainable win-win relationship.

That's why we have been able to stay in business for 16 years, won numerous industry awards, and have several hundred clients who've been with us for a very long time!



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Misconception #3: An honest IT services company should be able to give you a quote over the phone.

I wish this were true, but it is not. Just like a good doctor, an honest, thorough, and professional managed services provider needs to get to know your organization and assess your technology before providing a quote.

Thorough and detailed discovery and assessment upfront is a widely recognized best practice among the best-in-class and highest operational maturity firms in our industry.

Understanding the importance of detailed discovery prior to engaging in a client relationship, Framework IT has invested significant time and effort in developing an extremely thorough and diligent discovery process.

On average, we spend over 40 hours absorbing information about a potential client and engaging in thoughtful, consultative conversations to ensure we have a deep understanding of client's business and are aligned on partnership expectations BEFORE we enter a partnership.

Many potential clients have told us that we took far more time than any competitor to get to know them and dig into the details of their technology.

This allows us to put together a transparent strategic roadmap that aligns them with best practices and achieves more efficient managed services pricing.

We strongly believe that an in-depth exchange of information upfront, before we engage in a partnership, leads to a stronger, more fruitful relationship!



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Misconception #4: Managed Services from different companies is more or less the same because they all offer IT support and cybersecurity.

We understand that managed services can be confusing to assess, and on the surface, they may initially seem undifferentiated to the untrained buyer. However, this could not be further from the truth.

While multiple managed services plans may appear similar upon cursory review, they are almost always materially different, and the quality of service delivery varies widely in this industry. Every managed services provider has varying levels of operational maturity, which is the ability to consistently deliver ideal results.

Achieving operational maturity requires in-depth processes, robust systems, and highly trained employees. Not all managed services providers are created equal in this regard, and determining the difference in quality requires thorough questioning and diligence.

Moreover, many managed services providers do not offer proactive strategic consulting, or, even worse, they claim to but lack the formal systems or processes to effectively deliver on this promise.

Additionally, the amount of cybersecurity services included in managed services providers' offerings varies greatly. Many only include basic anti-virus/anti-malware tools, which are insufficient in the modern threat landscape.

Framework IT prides itself on offering one of the most comprehensive managed services plans in the industry.

This ensures our clients have a seamless support experience, receive regular proactive strategic consulting, and enjoy the peace of mind that comes with world-class cybersecurity.



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A Final Recommendation

I hope you have found this guide to be helpful in shedding some light on what to look for when outsourcing IT for your organization. As I stated in the opening of this report, my purpose in providing this information was to help you make an informed decision and avoid getting burned by the many incompetent firms offering these services, overpromising, and underdelivering.

Changing an IT services provider is a cumbersome process. Take the time to engage in thorough mutual discovery with every company you're considering and ask them the questions we've provided in this report, as well as your own additional questions. Do not rush this process! As you're digesting potential vendors' answers to your questions, keep an eye out for red flags, such as:

1. Ambiguity in their responses
2. A lack of confidence in their answers
3. Incomplete answers
4. A lack of transparency
5. Poor communication
6. Rushing to make the sale before they've obtained adequate information or had thorough conversations to align with you on expectations for the partnership

We have a helpful comparison chart that you can use to aid your IT vendor vetting and comparison process. Lastly, please take the time to hear what our clients have to say, and review our Testimonials booklet!

