

# NOVI

Technology for Business

Whitepaper

# Gaining the competitive edge through IT Managed Services



# Gaining the competitive edge through Managed Services



## How Can Your Business stay Competitive?

How to stay competitive is the big question on the minds of many business owners. Size no longer matters! With today's global economy and easy access to ecommerce many smaller companies are much better able to compete with their bigger rivals. The playing field may be levelling but the challenges for all companies remain the same - shrinking budgets, improving operational efficiencies, capitalising on rapidly changing technology and keeping on top of ever evolving security threats. Managed Service Providers (MSPs) can help companies tackle these issues, while staying one step ahead of competition and keeping costs low.

## What are the key focus areas for today's IT Managers?

There are four key areas that companies need to focus on to manage their technology and maintain a competitive advantage:

1. **They need to keep their data secure**
2. **They need to manage the complexity of their tech**
3. **They need to stay ahead of any threats or outages**
4. **They need to do it all at a predictable and managed cost**

An IT manager can have a lot on their plate, from dealing with a steady stream of emails and phone calls from employees to tasks that demand all of their attention. This makes an IT Manager's role **reactive** rather than **proactive** and it becomes hard for them to focus on maintaining, monitoring and planning their IT, creating an unstable environment.

With a strong strategic IT partner it is possible to have a well-managed and well-maintained IT environment without maxing out budgets. An MSP allows you to focus on running and growing the business instead of dealing with continual user issues.

Just like larger companies, small businesses need technology to operate efficiently and to compete effectively. But as reliance on IT grows, the resources to support an increasingly complex IT environment may not. In many small businesses, IT resources are scarce, and can be quickly overwhelmed with the day-to-day responsibilities of keeping the IT infrastructure that the business depends on up and running.

If you fall behind in keeping up with things such as backups, patches and security, the odds are that you'll face an IT outage or another problem down the road that will negatively impact your business.

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## Gaining the competitive edge through Managed Services



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### What are Managed Services and why should I consider it?

Managed IT Services involves outsourcing **some** or **all** of your IT requirements to a Managed Services Provider (MSP). Using an MSP gives a company the peace of mind that their IT is being looked after from all sides, be it solving user issues, updating systems or the ongoing proactive monitoring ensuring the stability of systems and networks. This is particularly important in the case of cyber security as threats evolve at an alarming rate and the damage that a data breach can do to a company both reputationally and financially is extreme. A good MSP will help a company stay on top of their IT security and monitor the ongoing health of all systems and networks while making it an affordable option for the company. Most MSPs offer a bespoke service whereby a company can select which services they require. Some may outsource all their IT requirements and allow the MSP to become their virtual IT department while others may choose to only engage on a user support level with occasional project work. Every company will have a differing set of requirements based on the number of employees, their budget, their existing IT resources and their systems and infrastructure

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### How an MSP can save costs

The anomaly of engaging with an MSP is that the investment in additional IT Services often reduces the annual IT spend. Some companies are deterred from utilising the services of an MSP as they assume it will lead to additional IT spend. But the reverse is often the case once the right strategy is in place.

**IT ROADMAP:** A good IT Services provider will devise an IT roadmap based on fact finding from key business stakeholders. The roadmap will support the business needs currently and into the future allowing for scalability and flexibility at an affordable rate.

**EXPERTISE:** Access to the latest expertise that an MSP allows enables the business to harness the power of new and emerging technologies at a fraction of the cost it would be to hire such expertise in-house.

**PROACTIVE MAINTENANCE:** Downtime is expensive. Unplanned system outages can be reduced by a massive 87% with regular, scheduled maintenance on networks. Internal IT managers are usually so stretched dealing with end user requests that the overall maintenance of systems and devices becomes reactive. A proactive approach, that an MSP would adopt, would save money in the long run by pre-empting issues before they take hold, most importantly in the case of a potential cyber breach.

**INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY:** An MSP offers vast experience in harnessing technology to deliver better operating efficiencies and economies of scale across varying types of companies. This experience and expertise cannot be matched in house. The learnings an MSP can bring to a business can reduce running costs by making them operationally leaner, make staff more productive and improve the level of service they deliver to their customer base making them all round more profitable.

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### Selecting an MSP: No two are the same

Every IT MSP is different: they can be different sizes, partner with different IT companies, have different core competencies, operate in different locations and more. So how do you choose the right one for your company? Here are our 8 top tips for selecting the right MSP for your business.

### 8 Top Tips for Selecting the Right MSP

#### 1. Solid Strategy

Technology underpins the day-to-day efficiency of any organisation. It's an enabler for practically all transactions business wide, from accounts to sales and marketing to warehousing and manufacturing. As it is an integral operational component of any business it should be given a strategic approach, especially for future growth plans of the company and how it would support such plans cost effectively. As IT Managers fall into a break/fix cycle they rarely have room for strategic planning. A good MSP will help you build an IT strategy for your company, considering scope of operations, future plans and budget. At Novi we begin every new client relationship with an IT review and the development of an IT roadmap unique to their business.

#### 2. Response Times

Technology is 24/7 and always on! Unscheduled downtime and IT problems can cost a business money and reputation damage. An IT Manager is always conscious that it is their job to make sure that everything works and they are the first port of call when an issue arises. A speedy and timely resolution is paramount. Talk to your MSP about their response times. How do you report problems? What support agreements and SLAs do they adhere to? What are their existing KPIs for problem resolution? What is their protocol for out-of-hours support? Asking questions like these will help you determine the level of support they can deliver.

#### 3. Data Security

Security is one of the biggest concerns for today's IT Managers. Nowadays businesses are spread across multiple locations with employees accessing secure servers remotely. Each employee accessing the server poses a security risk. Today's business owners should realise that data theft and cyber-attack are very real threats which can be very costly for a business in terms of time, money and reputation. Check that whatever MSP you are talking to has reputable and robust data security solutions.

#### 4. Company Experience

When evaluating MSPs, it is a good idea to consider their current client base. How long on average does a customer stay with them? What is their customer retention rate? An MSP should take on the role of a trusted partner. The longevity of customers is a good indicator of the level of service they provide. Happy customers will stay, unhappy ones will move on. A word of warning - don't assume that the number of employees that an MSP has determines the level of service; instead base that evaluation on their expertise, current customer base and who they partner with. Often the mid to smaller sized MSPs deliver a more personalised and diligent service and get to really know your company and your employees.

#### 5. Industry Partnerships

It is important to consider who an MSP's partners are when reviewing their suitability for your company. You should recognise the names, i.e. they should partner with the leading global providers. For example, if your company runs a Cisco system it would make sense for the chosen MSP to be a Cisco certified partner. Their list of partners will be a good indication of the breadth of services they deliver and support. An increasing number of MSPs are partnering with IT security providers as this has evolved as an area of huge importance to businesses. Partnering with an MSP that has IT and data security services in conjunction with traditional IT services means businesses can get a comprehensive service from one supplier.

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### 6. Evolving Skillsets

A good MSP will always invest time in training staff to keep their knowledge cutting edge. This is good news for their customers as it means they have easy access to an ever-expanding skillset much more cost effectively than acquiring those resources in-house. At Novi, our staff spend 10% of their time learning about new technologies and passing that knowledge on to customers, equipping them with the latest information and know-how they need to embrace digital transformation and improve the pace of business growth. Always ask a potential MSP what their strategy is for supporting staff growth and development.

### 7. Crisis Response and Management

The better MSPs will have a disaster recovery service that will ensure business continuity in the event of a natural disaster like a flood or a fire or any severe outage. Check with any potential MSP what their strategy and procedure is in the event of a crisis. Look for providers that support file and image level back up and also essential server operating systems, applications and configuration settings and copies them to the cloud. The latest ransomware attacks actively target on-site backup solutions, this extra layer of security will allow them to quickly restore their servers to a pre-determined recovery point.

### 8. Ongoing Proactive Maintenance

As the saying goes, prevention is the best cure! The best way to prevent issues arising is to make sure a stable IT environment is maintained over the long-term. This can be achieved with regular, scheduled and structured proactive maintenance. The days of an MSP providing break/fix care only are gone. The modern MSP must engage in regular site maintenance combining on and off-site care. Findings need to be communicated back to the customer with recommendations and deliverables. This type of proactive maintenance will deliver huge benefits - from helping strategic planning for the future, to improving the lifetime value of your IT investment and keeping users happy!

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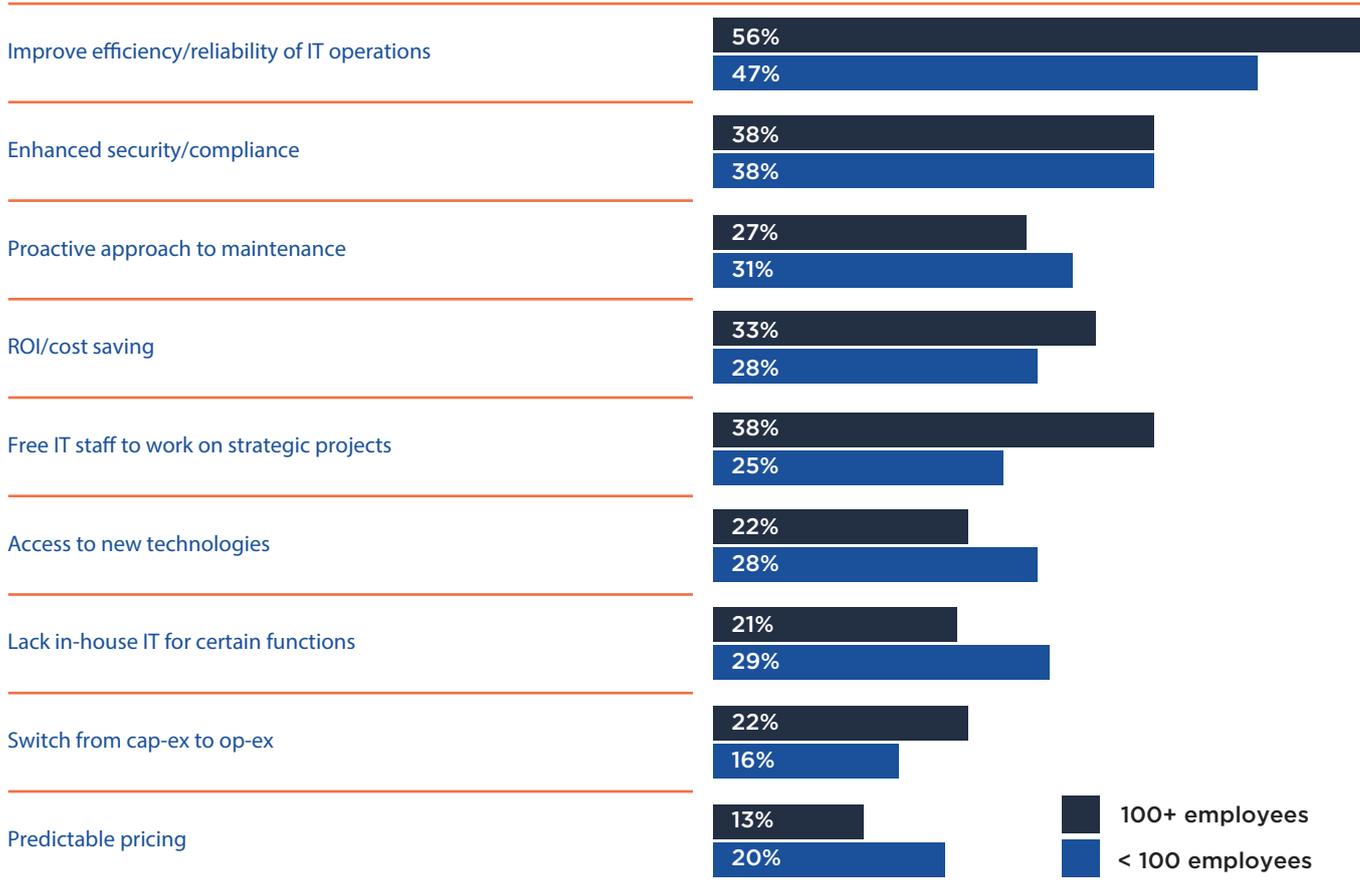
### Why Managed Services give businesses a competitive edge

- Save money and reduce IT running costs
- Reduce IT risk
- Stay focused on core competencies
- Greater flexibility and scalability
- Approach IT with sound strategy
- Get instant access to a large, experienced team
- Recover quickly from a crisis
- Greater compliance and security
- 24/7 Support
- Proactive approach to maintenance

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### Main Factors Driving End User Managed Services Decision



Source: CompTIA Poll in 2015 showing the main reasons why businesses have chosen to appoint an MSP

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### About Novi

At Novi, we are always on – ensuring our customers are too - helping them to use integrated IT solutions to create innovative, competitive and growth oriented enterprises of the future. Our consistent proactivity and highly structured support systems reduce IT risks and burden, helping customers to grow faster. Through regular, scheduled onsite visits, coupled with proactive 24/7 network monitoring and sophisticated data analytics, we detect issues before they become a problem, reducing unplanned system outages by a massive 70%.

IT security and data protection are vital components of our holistic service, which has been designed to reduce IT risk by an average of 93%. All organisations are under constant threat from ever-evolving cyberattacks. We partner with Fortinet, the leading IT security company, to deliver flexible, multi-layered, managed security solutions. We work round-the-clock on our customers' behalfs to prevent data breaches which can result in regulatory non-compliance, as well as brand and reputational damage.

We are passionate about helping customers to grow through better, safer and more reliable IT. Customers benefit from more structured and streamlined operations, enabling them to boost efficiency, gain competitive advantage and reduce running costs. That is why we have a 97% client retention rate, with customers typically staying with us for 10 years and longer.