

BEST PRACTICE FOR BUYING MANAGED SERVICES



+1 (877) 800-7672

www.qosmsp.com



Buying Managed IT: A No-Nonsense Guide for Business Owners

Finding a Managed Service Provider (MSP) that answers the phone when your server crashes at 2:00 AM is the hard part. Over the years, I've seen businesses get locked into "gold-tier" contracts that offer nothing but basic ticket-taking.

To avoid buyer's remorse, use this realistic framework.

1. Stop Buying "Everything."

Don't walk into a meeting asking for "IT support." You'll get overcharged for services you don't use.

- **The Reality Check:** Audit your biggest headaches first. The Bottom Line: Next Steps? Or is your current "tech guy" just too slow?
- **Pro Tip:** If you have specific compliance needs, mention them upfront. If they flinch at paperwork, they're not the right fit.

2. Proactive vs. "Break-Fix" (The Trap)

Most providers claim to be proactive, but many are just "reactive" with a better marketing budget.

- Ask to see a sample of their Quarterly Strategic Review (QSR). A human-led provider will show you a roadmap for growth; a robot-led provider will send you a list of patches.
- Look for 24/7 monitoring and proactive hard drive replacement. You want someone who replaces a failing hard drive *before* it crashes your database.

3. Security: Demand Proof, Not Promises

"We include security" is a danger phrase. In today's climate, "standard" security is often insufficient.

Red Flag: If they don't mention Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) or Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) within ten minutes, keep walking.

4. The "Culture Fit" (The Most Overlooked Factor)



You're hiring a remote department. If your team is fast-paced and uses Slack, but the MSP only communicates through a formal web portal, you'll hate the partnership.

- Ask to meet the lead engineer who will handle your account. Don't just talk to the salesperson.

5. Decoding the SLA

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are often written to protect the provider, not you.

- Response vs. Resolution: "Response" means they acknowledged the email. You care about Resolution, how fast the problem goes away.
- Check their "After-Hours" policy. Many MSPs charge a premium for weekends, even if you're a 24/7 business.

6. Scalability: The "Golden Handcuffs"

I've seen companies outgrow their MSP in eighteen months. You need a partner that can handle you from 10 to 50 employees.

- Ask how they handle off-boarding. A confident provider won't make it impossible to leave.

7. Pricing: Look for the "Hidden" Line Items

AI-generated guides tell you to "review pricing." Don't just review pricing; watch out for the onboarding fee.

- **Flat Fee vs. Per-Device:** "Per-user" pricing is usually the most transparent. It allows you to predict costs as you hire.
- The "Gotcha": Does the monthly fee include project work, or is that billed at \$200/hour on top of your contract?

The Bottom Line

Don't sign a three-year contract on day one. A good MSP should earn your trust over a 90-day pilot or a one-year initial term. If they push for a long-term commitment before auditing your network, they're more interested in your checkbook than your uptime.

Next Steps? Before calling anyone, make a list of the top 3 times your technology failed you last year. If a provider doesn't ask about those failures, they're not listening.