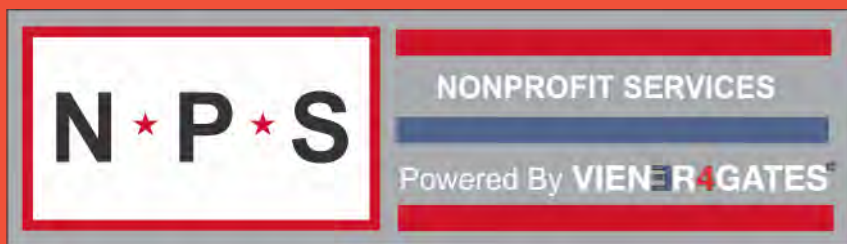


**27 QUESTIONS
THAT WILL HELP YOU HIRE THE
BEST INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY (IT) PROVIDER FOR
YOUR ORGANIZATION**



National Association of Nonprofit Organizations & Executives (NANOE)
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WHEN

You're a Business Owner & Organizational Leader, the last thing you want to think about is solving IT Technical problems.

You're already busy with day to day operations!

Whether you decide to outsource your IT or even hire an in-house technician, you want to work with a professional you can trust. A Provider that assists you through the process, we've created a list of critical questions that will help you choose the right IT provider for your business.

START THE INTERVIEWS!



1. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN BUSINESS?

You want to deal with an experienced provider who's got a few technical issues under their belt.

2. DO YOU HAVE CLIENTS IN OUR LINE OF BUSINESS?

It's important that your IT professional understands the special needs of the industry you work in. The more they know about your industry, the more proactive they can be in solving your potential IT issues.

3. DO YOU HAVE REFERENCES WE CAN SPEAK TO WHO HAVE A SIMILAR BUSINESS PROFILE TO OURS?

This should tell you if the IT person you're considering is really qualified to help you. If they are confident about sharing their client contacts with you, that's a very good sign. And, if their references are satisfied with the Company performance, chances are you will be, too.

4. DO YOU CARRY OUT A NETWORK, HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE AUDIT OR SOME KIND OF IT ASSESSMENT BEFORE TAKING ON A NEW CLIENT?

Your provider should take the time to assess your IT before agreeing to service your account. This will tell you a lot about their expertise and professionalism.

5. HOW DO YOU DELIVER AND CHARGE FOR MANAGED SERVICE PLANS (MSP)?

First of all, not all IT professionals offer managed services. Make sure your future provider offers this full coverage solution before proceeding any further. If they do offer managed services, you have to know what their offer covers and how you'll be billed for IT Services (Fixed Cost or "A La Carte" pricing).

6. HOW DO YOU HANDLE SUPPORT SERVICES: BREAK-AND-FIX SUPPORT, PRE-SOLD TIME BLOCKS, SUBSCRIPTIONS, OR BY CONTRACT SERVICES?

Some providers will only support you when you call with a specific problem. Others presell their support in time blocks and still others offer regular managed services as part of a flat monthly fee. Find out what your potential provider is offering.

7. ARE YOUR SOLUTIONS FLEXIBLE AND CUSTOMIZABLE? HOW SO?

Can your IT guy look at your processes and build custom solutions for your business? Or, does he prefer to stick with tried and true methods that he uses for all his customers? You're looking for a custom solution, because your business is unique!

8. WHAT KIND OF CLOUD SERVICES, IF ANY, DO YOU PROVIDE?

Knowing which technology your potential provider uses and can provide you is very important. You want to make sure they've kept up with advances in technology and are equipped to offer a wide range of cloud SaaS and IaaS solutions, as well as quality hardware.

9. WOULD YOU STILL BE ABLE TO HELP ME UNDER THE SAME CONTRACT TERMS IF MY COMPANY GREW VERY QUICKLY?

You want to make sure that your IT professional is flexible enough to grow with you so they can support your current and future needs. For example, if you have to hire a lot of new employees, you want to know that they can provide the extra bandwidth or hardware you'll need to accommodate everyone along with engineering and Consulting Support to get you to the next level. This is particularly important if you're a start-up company!

10. DO YOU HAVE A TICKET SYSTEM IN PLACE AND DOES IT PRIORITIZE TICKETS BASED ON MY NEEDS?

Most IT professionals operate with a ticket system to keep track of support requests. Find out how they deal with emergencies first, or if they just process tickets on a first come, first served basis.

11. DO YOU ANSWER YOUR PHONE WITH A LIVE PERSON IN THE UNITED STATES?

Find out if you can talk to a real person when you call. You don't want to be directed to an online knowledge base or help site. Certainly you don't want to listen to an answering machine when you call with a technical problem. **The provider's support technician should be available to help you 24/7 if necessary.**

12. WHO WILL BE OUR DAY-TO-DAY CONTACT? DO WE HAVE AN ACCOUNT MANAGER?

You want to make sure that your IT professional is flexible enough to grow with you so he can support your current and future needs. For example, You would like to have a dedicated person or Account Manager who knows your Business and the issues or challenges you have or are currently experiencing. Re-telling your history to a different Tech each time wastes critical time and resources. This is particularly important if you're a start-up company!

13. WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO MY DATA?

You want to know what kind of security standards are in place regarding confidentiality and your data. Ask if you'll be informed if and when the IT professional authorizes access to your data to a third party for scheduled system analysis, monitoring, updates and upgrades. This is particularly true if you're in an industry that is subject to compliance. You also want to make sure the technician who has your passwords is reliable. Ask what would happen if they were to leave the company.

14. HOW PROACTIVE IS YOUR SERVICE? DO YOU MONITOR MY NETWORK AT ALL TIMES, TO KEEP CRITICAL SECURITY SETTINGS, VIRUS DEFINITIONS, AND SECURITY PATCHES UP TO DATE?

You shouldn't have to call your IT professional to make sure he's monitoring your network. Make sure this is part of their MSP for your Organization.

15. DO YOU PERFORM PERIODIC TESTS TO RESTORE MY BACKUPS TO ENSURE THE DATA IS NOT CORRUPTED AND COULD BE RESTORED IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER?

A backup plan isn't worth anything to you if it doesn't work when you need it. Make sure your IT professional tests all back-up versions of your systems on a regular basis. You'll know that if something happens, they can restore your data as part of your backup and recovery plan. They should also be able to implement a Disaster Recovery plan before a bad situation gets out of control.

16. DO YOU PERFORM SERVICES REMOTELY AND IF SO, WHAT PERCENTAGE?

If your IT guy can provide remote services, such as support, network monitoring, maintenance and system updates, this means they will be more effective. And, if they can perform these services without being on-site each time, they will be able to respond to your problems a lot faster. Find out if your IT professional offers remote services. Some do not.

17. WHAT ARE YOUR TECHNICAL SPECIALTIES AND ARE THERE TECHNOLOGIES THAT YOU CANNOT SUPPORT?

If you have a specific problem, you want to be sure your IT professional is qualified to help you. It's also good to know if your potential provider has a preference or specific aptitude for some technologies that can be used for your company's IT.

18. DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE ANY ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATIONS?

You want to know that you're dealing with people who are experts in their field. Some IT professionals hire "jack of all trades" support staff who don't really have specific skills to deal with complex projects. Experience in the field is important, but certifications are proof of that they've made an effort to keep up with the latest changes in technology. Ask to see their credentials if necessary.

19. WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS DATA SECURITY POLICY?

With the recent wave of ransomware incidents, data security has become a big issue. You have to be assured that if something happened to your data, your IT Guy has a plan to deal with it. Find out if they have a strict policy in place.

20. WHAT ARE YOUR SERVICE STANDARDS AND MANAGED SERVICE PLANS (MSP) OR SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS?

Ask them about their standard response times – as well as any other specifics-- so you know what to expect from them. Some providers will commit to a precise uptime percentage, delivery time, monitoring or other IT services in their contracts.



21. DO YOU INCLUDE ON-SITE SUPPORT WITH YOUR MANAGED SERVICE PLAN (MSP)?

You want to make sure you can hire someone who is willing and available to come on-site to help you deal with tough problems when needed.

22. DO WE GET A REPORT WITH PERFORMED UPGRADES, IMPLEMENTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS? HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEND THE REPORT?

You want to know what you're paying for. The report will tell you exactly what was done, including upgrades. When you outsource your IT, you want to work with someone you can trust. Find out what details will be in the report and how often you can expect to receive it.

23. WHAT TYPES OF INVOICES DO YOU SEND AND HOW DETAILED ARE THEY?

Will the invoices be sent electronically or by mail? Does the provider work on a fixed, annual contract? Ask the provider if you'll get invoices every month and if they include all the services they provided. And if the service guidelines change, what kind of notice will they give you?

24. WHAT TYPE OF INSURANCES DO YOU HAVE, IF ANY, AND HOW MUCH?

It's important to be insured when a disaster occurs, whether it's man-made or natural. You have to know what would happen to your data. Ask if data recovery is part of the standard package or if you will have to pay extra for this type of coverage.

25. WHAT TECHNOLOGY DO YOU USE FOR YOUR OWN BUSINESS? IS IT THE SAME YOU WILL BE USING FOR MINE?

If the technology he uses in his own business is the same technology he's offering you, you're in good hands! Look for a provider who is using top-of-the-line equipment. You don't want to work with someone who is using seriously out-of-date equipment just to cut costs.

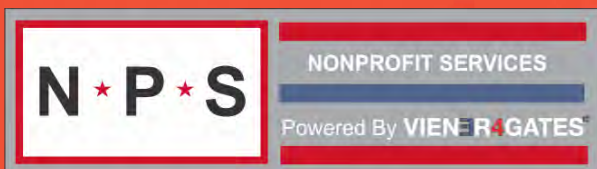
26. HOW WILL YOU MANAGE MY EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING LEGACY EQUIPMENT?

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27. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE STOPPED DOING BUSINESS WITH YOU? DO YOU HAVE AN ESTABLISHED EXIT PROCESS, HOW ABOUT A PASSWORD HANDOVER POLICY, DATA POLICY, ETC.?

You want to make sure you have the right to recover your data, passwords and IT in a reasonable timeframe after the service agreement has ended. Also, make sure the handover will be carried out within this same timeframe.

Talking about this before you sign on the dotted line means no bad surprises!



Find more information on us here:
<http://www.npsbusiness.com>

