KIRKHAM
IRON TECH

EBOOK

4 Signs You've Outgrown Your Current IT Support Provider

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Table of Contents

IT support can be the key to your business success, it provides the solid foundation for all daily operations and ensures optimal functionality. That being said, you cannot settle for a provider that does not fulfill all of your growing business needs. As your company grows, changes happen, and you make an effort to assure all other aspects of your business are equipped to make and thrive within that change.

Why should your IT support provider be any different?

Here are a few signs, your IT support provider just isn't cut out for your business necessities anymore.

It's A Fact Of Life That We Outgrow Many Things. However, IT Support Providers Should Not Be One Of These Things.

The right IT support provider scales alongside the client's organization.

The right IT support provider is able to stay in tune with developments in the market and provide the fresh support and services needed to stay ahead.

A great IT support provider regularly reassesses and reappraises the way they work to ensure that the services the customer receives are the very best.

So, with this in mind, how do you know that your IT support partner is doing the business? How will you know when the time has come to make a change?

Read on to learn the four signs you need to look out for. If you spot even one of these signs, it may be time to part ways with your current provider.

Sign #1: Your Current IT Provider Doesn't Communicate With You Consistently

Communication is absolutely crucial for any business partnership. When it comes to IT support provision, this is even more crucial and is not something you can afford to be without. This is why we have made this our number one sign that you have outgrown your IT providers – that your provider does not communicate with you consistently.

When was the last time you saw your IT support partner? Think about this question and answer it carefully. Was it:

- Today when they came around to the office for a quick chat

- This week when they came over for their regular meeting

- This week when they came over to fill you in on their latest proactive security or support strategy

Or was it:

- A few months ago after you had that period of shut-down and downtime at your business

- Last week when you finally got through to them on the phone and convinced them to pay you a visit

- So long ago you can't even remember

If any of the first three scenarios apply to your business, then great, it sounds like you have yourself an IT support provider you can rely on. If it is the latter three situations that seem more familiar, you may have a problem.

An IT Provider or an IT Partner

The provider model is tried and tested and is as old as the business IT industry itself. So, what's the problem? Why mess with what works?

Because, often, it doesn't work. Just like we discussed above, adopting the wrong approach to IT support could be leading your business into trouble.

What you need is an IT partner. An IT partner is just that – a partner who is beside you every step of the way. Rather than simply "providing a service," they are co-creators of strategies with you and your business, growing your capability, applying their expertise, and listening to yours.

So, what are the practical differences here? Well, an IT provider has the answers, sure, but it's what they do with them that can cause problems. You may find yourself raising issues to your provider, which the provider subsequently addresses. But, you have lost money during this delay, and there's no guarantee that the same or similar issues won't strike again further on down the line.

A partner works differently. A partner will keep their ear to the ground for you and will actively stay ahead of the curve. You will hear about issues from them, not the other way around, and you might even be enjoying the solution before you even knew there was a problem. This is the model that you, and your business, team, and stakeholders, deserve.

What Are the Dangers of Poor Communication?

We've touched on why you need a partner for your IT services, but let's take some time to get to the bottom of exactly why this is. When you and your IT

services provider or partner are not communicating properly, you run the risk of encountering some of the following dangers.

You Experience Downtime.

Your business is only functioning as it should be when it is up and available, 100 percent, to its customers. Anything else is simply not acceptable, and your IT provider should agree. They should be working to get as close to a 100 percent uptime guarantee as possible.

Subverting this with communication: While 100 percent uptime, guaranteed around the clock is still something of an impossible dream for businesses, a good IT provider can get very close to providing this guarantee. Most will offer uptime guarantees of above 99 percent.

You Lose Money.

This is probably the first issue you will notice: acute loss of revenue. It's hard to put an exact price tag on an incident of office downtime or an IT failure, as such things are so wide-ranging. However, the consensus is clear – it could cost you a lot, and your IT support should not be allowing this to happen.

Subverting this with communication: When you are communicating well, problems become much easier to spot, and you won't find yourself losing out.

You Lose Customers.

What happens if you cannot provide the services your customers expect? Well, what would you do if a business you were working with was suddenly not able to keep up with demand? You'd go elsewhere. Don't expect your customers to stay with you. While 58 percent of millennials say they will

stay with their chosen brand, no matter what, that still leaves 42 percent of customers who may be susceptible to churn. This is a worryingly big number.

Subverting this with communication: Just like with the example of losing money, close communication will make your business more effective, leading to happier, more loyal customers.

You Pay Twice For Solutions.

Your IT provider connects your business with a solution, and you benefit from that solution. The trouble is, you have a solution like this one already in place. You are essentially paying twice for service, with no additional benefit. This may not happen every time, but it's a serious possibility for businesses.

Subverting this with communication: Your IT support partner should not just be adding solutions at random. Each solution should be designed to pre-empt or patch up a potential problem, and close communication will eliminate the risk of installing something twice.

Your Business Is Dangerously Exposed.

The flipside of possibly paying for solutions twice is not paying for solutions at all and not receiving the coverage you need. Without a comprehensive approach to security, and without high levels of communication in place, you could be leaving your business dangerously exposed. Don't let this happen.

Subverting this with communication: Your IT support partner should be reaching out to you and learning what you need. If not, how can they be sure that all eventualities are covered?

Sign #2: Your Current IT Support Provider Can't Keep up With Changing Technology
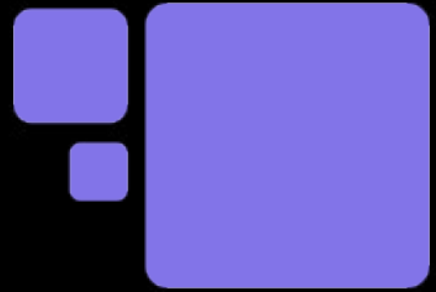
This is not the first time you have heard this bit of information, and nor will it be the last: Technology is changing, and changing fast.

Great, you think. You know this already, so why the need to hear it again? Well, because this is at the heart of what makes IT support services so important, and what makes a truly great IT support provider so valuable.

Let's say that you have invested heavily in the hardware and software of your business, building a digital and physical infrastructure that you can really rely upon to get the job done. The trouble is, this will not remain in the same "ready for action" state forever. It will fall into disrepair, become usurped by new solutions that are positioned closer to the cutting edge, and – if it does not become wholly obsolete – it will at least need updating and upgrading on a regular basis.

Fortunately, you don't need to worry about this – or not unduly, anyway. Your IT support provider has their finger on the pulse, as well as on the trigger, ready to make the moves required to future-proof your business and to keep you ahead of the game.

"Your IT support provider has their finger on the pulse, as well as on the trigger, ready to make the moves required to future-proof your business..."
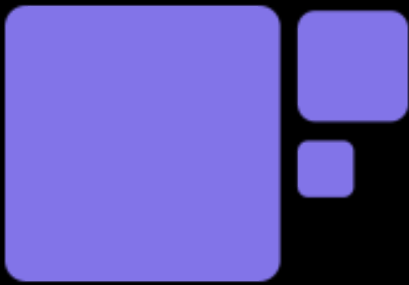
At least, that's what they should be doing. If they are not able to keep ahead of – or at least up to date with – the latest developments in the industry, then the time has come to find someone who can.

What Can Happen to Your Business If Your IT Support Provider Falls Behind?

There are many dangers that can arise if your IT support provider is not able to stay ahead of the curve. We've included some of the most pertinent:

Cybercriminals or viruses may strike. The IT industry is in a constant race with "the forces of evil," i.e., malicious hackers and other criminals. Developers are releasing updates, patches, and a new version of technology all the time to keep ahead of the game. If you're using older stuff, without the requisite protection, you are in danger.

Your business falls behind. The latest updates and the most recent technology pieces are not simply the safest; they are also the most effective. The modern-day consumer is becoming increasingly savvy, which also means they are raising their expectations. They are not going to settle for second-best, third-best, or worst, which is exactly where you will find yourself if your IT is not up to scratch.

You miss out on potential opportunities. Not being able to rely upon top-quality IT is going to hinder you in the short term, but it's going to do far more harm in the long term. Tuning into the latest opportunities means staying on top of changes in the IT landscape. If you cannot do this, your business will find itself further and further behind the times.
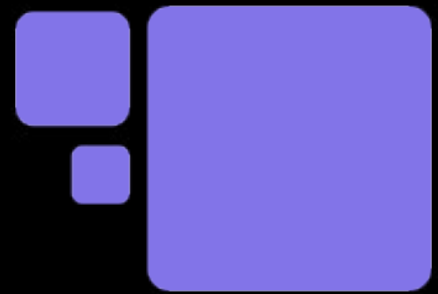
What Are the Benefits of Working With a Forward-Thinking Provider?

We've dealt with the negative, what about the positive? What can you expect from your IT support provider when they are firing on all cylinders? In other words – what benefits come from an IT provider actually doing their job the right way?

Your business is more agile and flexible. Agility and flexibility are crucial in modern business. Far from being mere buzzwords, these two concepts will be your driving force as you connect with new markets, diversify revenue channels, and make your business more robust. Both can only be achieved when your IT infrastructure is similarly forward-thinking.

You do not suffer the anxiety of impending disaster. We've discussed the potentially disastrous implications of allowing your IT to fall behind the times. Even if such a disaster does not strike, you will find yourself anxious and depressed as you wonder about when, where, and how bad. Imagine not having to deal with any of this negative energy – that's the benefit of working with IT support professionals who stay up to date with modern technology.

Your business enjoys the position of an industry leader. If you are playing catch-up, you are going to struggle to develop the authority and prestige that your business needs if it is to be seen as an industry leader. Find the right partner, enjoy the benefits of the right technology, and occupy this position in your field.

Revenue is protected at both ends. Sure, staying on top of the latest technology requires a degree of investment, but this is all part of growing your revenue. The reduced costs, better efficiency, and increased opportunity that this investment brings will protect your existing revenue while attracting more.

Sign #3: Your Current IT Provider Isn't Proactive

All of us use certain words to describe ourselves. Confident, assertive, proactive – all of these words demonstrate the positive aspects of our character and make us seem like the go-getters that we undoubtedly are. Of course, in private moments, we may not always feel so assertive.

This is because we are human beings. For an IT support provider, the bar is set higher. They need to be superhuman (something that shouldn't be too difficult to achieve for a team of expert professionals), and they need to be proactive all the time.

Let's think about other groups of people who are seriously proactive, all the time.

Cybercriminals are proactive, adjusting their practices to focus on quieter stealth attacks that will go under the radar. This is a means for hackers to continue to pursue their own operations in the face of increased security measures.

Your consumers are also proactive, adjusting their shopping preferences as they see fit. This means they may decide to head elsewhere if you cannot provide them with what they need.

So, it looks like you need a proactive IT support partner. If they cannot provide the levels of proactivity you expect, then it is time to look elsewhere for a team that is willing to go the extra mile.

What Happens to Your Business If Your IT Partner Is Reactive Rather Than Proactive?

Have you ever had to get in contact with your IT provider to tell them about a problem? This is a complete inversion of what should be happening. A truly proactive partner will be reaching out to you – not the other way around – and will be telling you not only what the problem is but also what they are already doing to put it right.

With this in mind, consider some of the dangers that can befall your business with a reactive, rather than proactive, IT partner.

You fall foul of real problems with IT. Yes, certainly, many of your IT problems will be small-scale issues that are easy to spot and easily fixed. No major harm is done. But, what about when "the big one" comes? What happens when a real IT issue strikes? This is when your business is in real danger, and your reactive IT provider is not going to be much use.

"Cybercriminals are proactive, adjusting their practices to focus on quieter stealth attacks that will go under the radar."

You experience costly delays. If you have to wait until an event has already taken place before your IT provider springs into action, this is no good. We have already discussed how costly these delays can be, and the knock-on ramifications can be dire for a small business. Reactive is not enough, and it is damaging your organization.

You pass danger on to all stakeholders. It is not only you that is exposed to risk when you work with a substandard, wholly reactive IT services provider. It is everyone involved in your company. From the customer who may have a vital service suddenly made unavailable to them to the remote worker who may have records compromised by a malware attack, right through to managers and CEOs who may find their livelihood put at risk, no one is immune here.

Agility and flexibility go right out of the window. How can you stay ahead of the curve unless you are forward-thinking and future-focused? How can you make the moves you need to make if you are always a couple of steps behind? You can't. This also applies to your IT. Stay proactive, and work with an IT partner who embraces proactivity, or risk falling behind.

Supporting Business Outcomes With Proactive IT

Let's think positively. Let's consider how much of a benefit proactive IT can really provide to your organization – and to your strategic business objectives in particular.

A clearer route to strategic outcomes. You can't plan in a reactive fashion. Instead, planning needs to be proactive, and it needs to reflect your growing needs as a business. This is true for all aspects of your business, but particularly the IT partner you work with. This partner will help you develop and then realize your long-term version.

No impediments or barriers to business. Imagine everything going well, and you think you are moving effectively towards your desired outcomes, only for disaster to strike. With a more proactive approach, you can pre-empt such impediments and never be caught on the hop.

Getting the basics right leads to big results. You cannot achieve any of your big, grandiose business aims if you are not getting the basics right first. Be proactive and build the right foundation for success in your field rather than finding you need to address what should be bread-and-butter problems further down the line.

Proactivity does not mean "set in stone." Your IT support partner can gain a pretty good idea of what will need to be done in the future. However, this does not need to be set in stone. By planning for the future, but remaining open to responsiveness if required, your partner achieves the best of both worlds.

If your IT partner is unwilling or unable to embrace the right approach to your information technology solutions, then you know how to respond. They are simply not right for you.

Sign #4: Your Current IT Support Provider Hasn't Conducted a Cybersecurity Check in a While

Business continuity is very important as we move into the third decade of the 21st century. This is because more and more businesses are realizing that it only takes one major incident to knock even a relatively robust firm out of business.

Despite this, spending on business continuity has remained largely static in recent years, with around 48 percent of business owners saying that their own spending did not change between 2018 and 2019.

But, throwing money at an issue like business continuity is not always the answer. You can take serious steps towards protecting your business from downtime or even disaster by working with the right IT support provider.

But, where is this provider? And, what have they done lately to protect your business?

If you are unsure of the answer to either of these questions, you need to find out. The right IT support partner is an active member of your organization, doing what you need them to do, every step of the way.

Strategizing Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity

Earlier in this e-book, we talked about the importance of an IT support provider as a partner – as someone who will be beside you as you develop your IT strategies and keep your business safe.

Here, we are going to look at how the right IT provider will go beyond this. They will be able to help you learn more about your company's risk profile, risk tolerance, and risk appetite, and also help you understand how to keep your business functioning as it should do, even if the worst should happen.

This means that you have a foundational plan that you can use to build your business continuity strategies going forward.

Your IT support provider will then:

Work to help you develop a culture of business continuity and recovery within your organization. You will have to do much of this yourself, but your IT support partner can work with you to help educate and train your team in continuity and disaster recovery, and in making sure all the necessary behavioral changes are made.

Put in place the hardware and software designed to secure continuity. Cloud-based storage, automated updates, and other technological concepts are crucial to effectively protecting business continuity in the long term. Your partner will have the expertise and resources to do this, while also managing the necessary updates as and when required.

Plan for future developments in the field and then work to realize these plans. We know that technology does not stand still, so it makes sense that business continuity tech will also not standstill. Your support partner needs to be working with you to understand future developments in the industry and then putting these in place without delay.
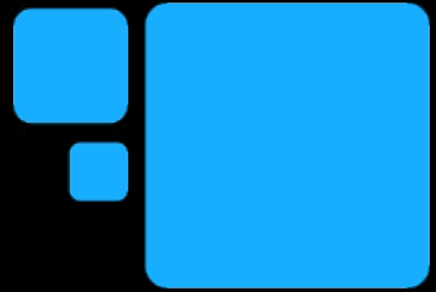
Leap into ac tion when required. The best disaster recovery plans are those that never need to be enacted. However, don't count on this. Instead, assume that your plan may need to be put through its paces, for real, eventually. When this time comes, your IT support partner will be instrumental in making sure that the plan is activated in the right way, that everyone is following their set roles, and that the best results are being achieved.

Your business continuity – both long-term and short-term – depends upon the efficacy and proficiency of your IT support team. If they haven't conducted a security scan or check in a while, or if you think they may be going through the motions with your protection, chances are they are not looking after your business continuity strategy in the right way either. It's probably time to make the switch.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Why the Wrong IT Support Provider Can Hurt Your Business

Well, there you have it: the four signs that tell you what your IT support provider is not fulfilling their role in the right way. Four signs that prove to you that it is time to make a change.

But, why bother? After all, your IT provider is bumbling along OK, and you've not had any major issues yet. Why should you go to the expense and trouble of sourcing a new partner?

Because the alternative can be seriously dangerous. We've covered quite a lot of this danger already in the e-book, but it's worth mentioning again as the point cannot be overstated: Your business is at risk if you do not choose the right IT support partner.

What risks are these? Read on to learn about the most devastating ones.

Harm to the Bottom Line

Your business is a commercial entity, and so the bottom line is very, very important indeed. If you are leaking out costs like a sieve, or if you are not managing to target the latest opportunities when they arrive, you are not going to last very long as a business.

Frequent Downtime

Think about your electricity at home. From time to time, the electricity provider may suffer a power outage. If this happens once every couple of years, you don't think too much of it. If it happens every week, you're not happy! Your customers feel the same about your services, and downtime will prove seriously costly.

Increased Cyberattacks

Cyberattacks are serious issues. In January 2020, an attack cost the City of New Orleans $7.2 million. You deserve the right protection for your business. You deserve an IT support team that is up to the task.

If you have encountered any of the signs we've covered in this e-book, or perhaps even all of them, please don't waste time and take the steps you need to take. Don't settle for anything but the best – give your business the protection it needs.

"In January 2020, an attack cost the City of New Orleans $7.2 million."

Why Working With a Committed IT Support Provider Can Improve Your Business

The field of IT support and assistance are changing. No, this is not true – it has changed. It has changed already, and those providers who have not followed suit? Well, they are lagging behind.

Make sure it is not you who must pick up the cost of these IT partners who are unable to change. Make sure it is not your business that is exposed to risk as a result.
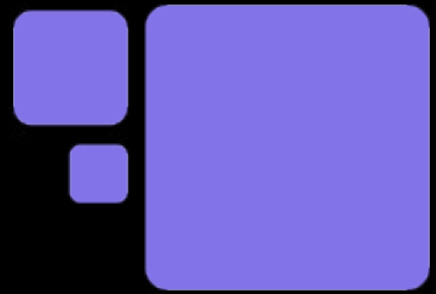
It may be time to make the change and to shift your IT services to a partner who is equipped to handle them.

This is where our team comes in. We are the team of experienced IT professionals you need, and we have been serving businesses just like yours for years. This means we understand what it means to be a true partner to our clients, but this does not mean that we are set in our ways.

We stay proactive, stay ahead of the game, and stay equipped to meet the changing needs of the market. Try us on for size – reach out to our team today and let's begin moving towards a more efficient, more proactive, and more effective way to approach IT support.

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