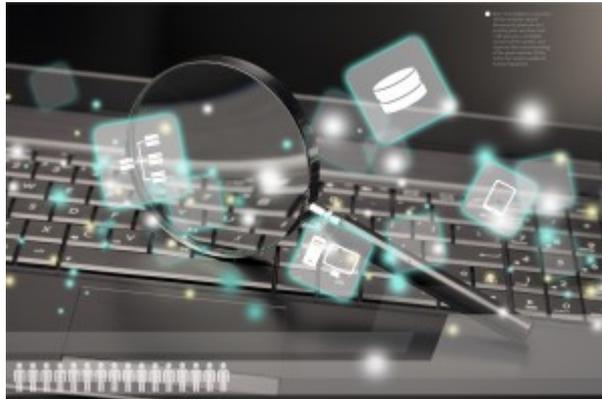


A Small Business Owners Guide to Managed Services



Martin Hynes - Commercial Director

What Is Managed Services? - Business Computer Solutions



Managed Services is a relatively new term in the small business arena. It often gets referred to by its acronym MSP which stands for Managed Services Provider.

Wikipedia describes managed services as:

Managed services is the practice of outsourcing on a proactive basis management responsibilities and functions and a strategic method for improving operations and cutting expenses.

So what does this mean to a small business?

Old School IT

Previously IT support was very much the re-sale of new computer equipment. This was supported by the break and fix support agreements that meant when something did not work, you could contact a support desk who would then attempt to fix the problem, or schedule an engineer to visit to solve/fix/replace the problem.

This is what we call the break and fix model. It is very reactive by nature and can lead to down time and frustration if there are no engineers available, or parts are not in stock. The bigger IT providers attempted to solve this with more stock and more engineers.

What Is Managed Services? - Business Computer Solutions

The way forward

Managed services on the other hand takes a very different view on how to provide IT support.

True managed services prevent and resolve problems before they exist.

Sure there are help desks in place for when things are not working as they should.

However, in terms of systems being up and operational, managed services not only work to keep the lights on, but are actually taking pro-active action to streamline and improve systems and processes.

The tables have turned

The tables have turned in many senses, in that where previously IT suppliers would make their money when things go wrong, Managed Services make their income by ensuring things don't, your company IT systems just work and your staff remain productive.

Spotting a real Managed Services Provider

There are many IT support services that will wear the hat of an MSP without really offering a true MSP service.

- A true MSP will offer fixed transparent pricing and not base future pricing on how many support tickets you logged. It is the job of the MSP to reduce support tickets in order to be profitable by ensuring the tickets never need to be raised in the first place.
- A real MSP will have dedicated resources for proactively working on efficiency and systems and processes that extend the life of your IT investments and ensure systems are working at their peak abilities at all times.
- The best MSP will offer 24/7 365 support as their objective is ensure your business is operating and able to serve your clients at all times. More and more companies are finding that the traditional 9-5 is slowly being eroded away. Ensuring your IT systems are up and running every single day of the year is what a true MSP will provide.

What Is Managed Services? - Business Computer Solutions

What is in it for you?

Using an MSP instead of a traditional IT provider will provide you with the following:

- A provider that is financially motivated to keep things working.
- A fixed price that is clear and transparent with no hidden surprises
- Peace of mind that you have outsourced your IT to a provider that is always working with your best interests to ensure your business continuity.
- A strategic partner

How does Managed Services work?



Being quite a new term to the IT scene it may not be completely clear exactly how Managed Services works.

Most people are familiar with the way traditional IT works, something stops working and you call the IT support desk and they jump on it and start trying to resolve the issue until its fixed.

Well to start if you are benefiting from a Managed Service you can still call in the same way if you think you have a problem, so nothing changes there.

The likelihood is that we already know about the issue and are most likely already working on a fix.

We run a very intelligent support system that puts a very small programme on all of your IT equipment that enables the system to know what is happening with every server, PC, and Laptop in your business.

The software then monitors everything that happens in your IT environment and seeks out even the smallest problems automatically. If it spots something unusual or not right it does one of two things:

How does Managed Services work?

1) For some well-known issues, the system will attempt to fix the issue itself without any human involvement. This does not affect how you work at all and you would never have known any better other than your systems are still working just fine.

2) If it is something that the system cannot fix itself, it will log a ticket with our support desk on your behalf. This will then be attended to in under the same response times under our Service Level Agreement as if you have logged it yourself. That's right the system is working for you!

This means that we are probably logging more tickets than you are and probably getting them resolved before you ever even noticed an issue in the first place. All of this happens in the background and you unlikely to have been affected or even noticed.

The benefits of this for you are really quite simple. Your IT systems run faster and problem free for longer.

There is no thumb twiddling for our engineers as tickets come in automatically and with our Guaranteed response time of 15 mins for anything that stops you working and 1 hour for anything else, there is always work to be done.

Fixed pricing means it is in our interest to keep your systems up and running and keep the ticket numbers low.

This is why we include our preferred antivirus software in the price and this forms part of another of our guarantees. If you follow our best practices as well as run our antivirus software and still contract a virus of any kind, we will remove it and ensure your PC is running as it should be at 100% our cost, even in the event of a complete rebuild.

This gives you peace of mind that the fixed price will enable you to budget for IT support far more effectively.

How does Managed Services work?

Being a true managed services provider means doing more than just fixing problems. Our Net admin team do not respond to tickets that are user or system generated at all. They are a dedicated team looking to spend time improving your systems. They look for trends and other longer term solutions that will actually improve the experience you have of IT and extend the useable life of your IT assets.

We understand that having your systems up and running for longer is without a doubt a positive but we also believe in the value of improving your staff's knowledge of the Microsoft suite of applications we use every day.

The [learning zone](#) was created just for this. As part of our Managed Service we also provide training workshops almost every single week that you can send two members of your team to attend all as part of the service. This again is another of our guarantees. Should you make use of our learning zone and send your staff to the training sessions we guarantee that they will know more about the subject and how to apply it to their everyday role than before they started.

So Managed Services is so much more than IT support. We consider ourselves as genuine technology partners to our clients.

We will continue to evolve and invest in our services, staff and accreditations to ensure we continue to be the leading Managed Services provider in Kent.

Does this sound good? Do you think Managed Services is something your company would benefit from? If so give us a call and let's have a chat about how we can help you?

Managed Services Vs Traditional IT Support



The purpose of this blog post is to give you an idea of the differences between managed services and traditional IT support. If you are unsure on what is managed services, then please check out this blog post here explaining [what is managed services](#).

If you are sure what managed services are, then read on!

Reactive or proactive

The biggest difference between the two is how the support company typically reacts to the need for support.

Traditional IT Support gives you access to a team of experts who are ready to solve your IT woes. This is typically a reactive support model where the customer would contact the IT support company when something goes wrong, or is not working as expected.

To be fair, there are often some proactive elements in place that will alert the IT Support company such as an alert for a failed backup or the fact that a server has gone down. However, these are normally picked up at the time the event happens or if overnight not responded to until the following morning.

The fix though is reactive in that it is not until it has happened that the IT support company will then attempt to resolve or fix the issue.

Managed Services Vs Traditional IT Support

Managed Services operate quite differently. A managed service provider is continually and proactively monitoring and making changes to your IT systems to ensure that things do not go wrong in the first place.

There are intelligent systems in place that enable the help desk staff to start working on fixes behind the scenes and ensure you remain productive without ever knowing there could have been a problem in the first place.

Managed Services will also have in place dedicated resources (we call this our 'Net Admin Team') that are continually working on improving and streamlining your systems to ensure maximum performance enabling productivity.

The Net Admin team are working on improving your system and not picking up on known problems. The result of course is less problems and less cost.

This is the huge difference between the two types of IT support – Managed Services have dedicated resources for performance and reliability and do not just for responding to problems as they occur.

Pricing

Pricing for traditional IT Support varies and comes in different flavours. Some negotiate an annual fee for unlimited access to a help desk. These are often then renegotiated each year based on how many calls were previously logged with the support desk.

Managed Services Vs Traditional IT Support

Some pre-pay for block hours and draw down on them as and when the customer needs them. This offers a low cost entry in IT support and access to a help desk only when you really need it. This model can suit much smaller companies who do not rely on their IT systems being operational in order to do business.

Managed Services pricing is very different. It involves a transparent and fixed monthly fee for only the equipment and devices you have at any time. So if your company unexpectedly downsizes and you lose 5 members of staff who were using PCs there will be direct effect on your costs. You truly only ever pay for what you use in any given month.

In a Managed Service model, help desk tickets are created on your behalf automatically and the same Service level agreement (SLA) response times are applicable (15 mins for business limiting).

It is in the interests of the Managed Service Provider to keep ticket numbers down and response times fast due to the fixed pricing model, keeping your systems working for longer and more efficiently.

On our support PLUS packages we will even include the hardware (servers, workstations and notebooks) that are less than 5 years old in the price, delivering true peace of mind, whatever happens.

So which type of support is right for my business?

The answer is really quite straight forward.

How much does your business rely on your IT systems being operational?

Another way of looking at it is to ask how much money would your business lose if your systems were down for 1 day or even 2 or 3 days?

Managed Services Vs Traditional IT Support

If your company really does require your IT systems to be up and running in order to serve your clients, then a Managed Service Provider may just be a better choice.

This is even more so if you require 24/7 365 support.

Another reason is that you like to control your costs and know you have that peace of mind support whatever happens.

Smaller companies

However, if you are a smaller company that does not really have a budget for IT support then a pay as go model with pre-paid models will suit your budget and your needs much better.

You may sit somewhere in between and would just like access to a help desk 9-5 Monday to Friday and are happy with the reactive nature due to the fact that your business is not wholly reliant on your IT systems. In this case you may prefer a traditional break and fix support company of which there are many.

So whatever your company size and IT support requirements we hope that this has proven to be a useful guide to understanding the key differences between Managed Services and Traditional IT Support.

How Much Does Managed Services Cost?



If you are not familiar with the concept of managed services, we suggest checking out [this blog here first](#).

Done? Great, now let's talk about how much it costs and how that can work for your business.

Old IT Support Pricing

Historically, IT Support has been one of those lines in the budget that never seems to stay on target. This was due to the way IT support worked. If something went wrong it generally meant cost.

Remote IT support changed that somewhat in that you had access to a helpdesk who you could call when something went wrong and they would leap to attention and solve your issue as quickly as possible.

If the system had gone down completely it would sometimes require a site visit to get things up and running and again in most cases that meant cost.

How Much Does Managed Services Cost?

Managed Services

Managed Services is a very different model altogether. As you have realised by now Managed Services is a very pro-active service.

Not only do our systems detect potential problems and create tickets automatically, we also have dedicated resources in our Net-Admin team who are tasked with improving and streamlining your IT systems rather than waiting to respond to problems as they occur.

The reason I am telling you all of this is to demonstrate how the Managed Services model is built- it is in our interests to keep your systems running as smoothly as possible.

We charge a transparent and simple fee per user per month across the board.

Service Level Agreements

We operate two levels of support tickets:

P1 – Business Limiting – This is an issue that is stopping you do your work.

P2 – Administration – Such as adding new users

P1 tickets have a 15-minute response time with an average response time of just 6 minutes

P2 tickets have a 60-minute response time.

How Much Does Managed Services Cost?

Pricing

We have 2 flavours of support in order to make it really simple for you to understand:

The main difference between the two is the 365 IT Support Plus includes Hardware Support.

This covers you for any hardware failures of your servers, workstations and notebooks. Those listed under the agreement will be repaired including both materials and labour. Due to the nature of Managed Services, if we detect an imminent hardware failure we will plan and replace the item before it causes you any business disruption. This comprehensive support extends until the equipment is 5 years old.

IT SUPPORT PLANS

BCS delivers fixed price IT support through 2 feature rich plans

365 IT Support

365 IT Support Plus

Plan Feature	365 £27 per system* per month	365 ⁺ £32 per system* per month
Account Management and Quarterly Reviews	○	⊕
Detailed Network and Security Assessment	○	⊕
24/7 End User Support	○	⊕
Response Times	○	⊕
Monthly Reporting	○	⊕
Surveys	○	⊕
Dedicated Teams	○	⊕
Reactive Tasks	○	⊕
Proactive Tasks	○	⊕
Guaranteed Endpoint Protection	○	⊕
Hardware Failure and your Peace of Mind	○	⊕
Vendor Requested Software Audits	○	⊕
Learning Workshops	○	⊕
Client Feedback	○	⊕
Bespoke Training	○	⊕
On-boarding	○	⊕
You won't outgrow BCS	○	⊕

*A system includes servers, workstations and notebooks across all of your sites. Home users' systems who need remote connection or support would be included in these total numbers so we can ensure security of their connection into your network.

Discounts apply for clients with more than 50 endpoints and for annual payments made in advance.

Given the vast amount of services we provide irrespective of the number of computer systems, there is a minimum contract value.

How Much Does Managed Services Cost?

This simple and easy to understand pricing gives you genuine peace of mind knowing that whatever happens BCS are on the case and probably before you would even know about it.

Our intention is to create a no-brainer IT support package that does not leave you wondering if your covered or profits when seemingly good and relatively new equipment suddenly goes wrong.

Minimum Spend

Our packages start with a minimum fee of £270 +VAT per month due to the investment we make into being able to provide you with such a service.

Learning Zone

Our commitment to the enhance the experience of your IT extends with access to our Learning Zone. We run regular courses every month and any customer can send along 2 of your team to any or all of the sessions as part of the agreement. Topics include Excel, Word, Outlook, PowerPoint and Publisher all at basic and Intermediate levels.

Summary

We believe we have created a truly unique offering that is exactly what business owners are looking for. A round the clock service offering 27/7 365 IT support that is simple to understand and easy to budget for. Our customers think so too.

We are one of only three certified managed service providers in the UK and the only provider in Kent. To learn more about our [CompTIA Managed Services accreditation and what that means to you click here](#).

5 Reasons Why Managed Services Might Not Be For You

1. **Price** – Let's get this one out of the way first – Our Managed Services comes with fixed and transparent pricing – 2 simple options that are easy to understand. We charge support per machine, not per user, which includes servers, workstations and laptops. For some companies what they really want is a pay as you go option. This often is a block of pre-paid hours where you can call upon a provider and they can take a look at your IT problem if one occurs. The advantage of this is you only pay when you need IT Support. The downside is you may find your IT systems are down for long periods of time due to the reactive nature of this kind of support.
2. **You have less than 10 computers** – if you have just a handful of PCs and laptops, it may not be necessary to have a Managed Services team working around the clock to support you. Don't get me wrong, they will be the best managed PCs and laptops out there but it really won't be cost effective for you or us.
3. **You have a great relationship with your current provider** – Not every IT support company provides Managed Services. Some still provide a break and fix service or a reactive IT service. This provides access to a helpdesk whenever you need it. If you have a great relationship with your provider and things seem to be working, then switching to a Managed Service Provider may not be on your radar just yet.
4. **Everything works just fine** – “If it is not broke, don't fix it” This is the opposite of Managed Services where our team and systems are working 24/7 365 to ensure nothing goes wrong in the first place. However, If you are happy and confident things won't go wrong then investing into Managed Services is not for you.
5. **You run an Apple Mac Environment** – If your office is full of the latest Apple iMacs and MacBook Airs, then Managed Services from BCS is not for you. Our expertise is based around Microsoft based Servers, PCs and Laptops.

5 Reasons To Consider Managed Services

1. **You need to control your costs** – In today's economic environment, IT budgets have been dramatically reduced. However, a cut in IT spending doesn't come with a cut in demand for IT services. As a result, you have to do the same amount of work with fewer resources. Although Managed Services might cost more in the short term, they cost far less in the long term once you take into consideration the domino effect of lost productivity and customer dissatisfaction.
2. **IT complexity is increasing** – The breadth of information technology a company requires places small to medium size businesses at a distinct disadvantage. Equipment is constantly upgraded in the market, and new IT related specialities are emerging in a variety of areas, from telephony to networking. It is difficult for small businesses to maintain the expertise necessary to properly manage these new technologies.
3. **IT is not your speciality** – One of the main reasons to consider Managed Services to look after your IT requirements may be that IT is not your speciality. If managing your IT infrastructure is becoming too much, why wouldn't you outsource it to an IT organisation? By implementing Managed Services, you can utilise your internal IT resources for other purposes, such as supporting your strategic business objectives.
4. **Your existing solutions are inefficient** – In today's world, a one or two person in house IT department simply cannot control IT related issues, to as and when they will happen. In many cases, employees have to wait in line to receive assistance. As a result, not only are your employees less productive, their morale is also decreased which in turn leads to less productive employees.
5. **Industry compliance requirement** – More companies are finding themselves subject to regulatory compliance and smaller businesses may not have the resources to fully understand the requirements of these regulations.

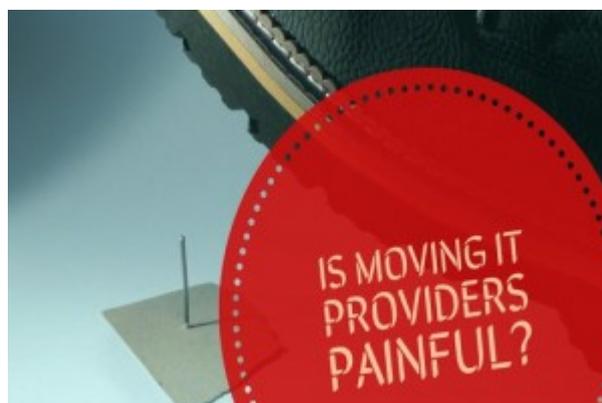
5 Reasons To Consider Managed Services

Statistics have revealed that:

- 46% of organisations have cut IT expenses by 25% or more as a result of taking on Managed Services.
- The number of organisations moving to Managed Services to meet their IT requirements has risen 51% since 2011.
- 58% of IT leaders are using Managed Services to reduce costs and overheads.

As a Managed Services Provider, we take care of the requirements of small to medium sized businesses, looking after the needs of 120 organisations and over 2000 systems. Most IT companies focus solely on technology, telling you that you need to upgrade your systems just because they are old. Here at BCS, we are different. Our approach is very much around the flow of information – **accessibility**, **security** and **recoverability** – and how this can enhance your bottom line. The technology is just a component of that solution.

Use of the [BCS Learning Zone](#) is also included in your agreement with BCS. Subject to availability, you can send along two members of your team to any (or all) of the 3 hour sessions we run. Training staff is expensive and often ineffective. The move from 'push' training to 'pull' learning ensures a more effective experience with the workshop session being tailored to the needs of the participants. These sessions have a value of £50 including VAT each. All of our sessions can be seen at www.bcslearningzone.co.uk.



Is moving IT providers painful?

IT suppliers are like accountants – you only change provider when you really have to. We understand that your existing provider knows you and your business and that makes the idea of changing really hard.

Most of the time people only change due to a compelling event or reason. To consider moving IT provider, things have to be pretty bad or perhaps you really feel you are not getting value for money.

But companies do move providers and it is a little bit like going for a jog, the thought of it is far worse than actually doing it.

Will there be disruption to my workforce?

When done right, there should be no disruption at all. The only change will be a different voice at the end of the phone but I promise we are super friendly and within no time at all, you will see that.

We take the time to understand your company and I know we all say this but we genuinely do not see ourselves as suppliers but as strategic partners to our clients.

First month of support

Now I nearly wrote the first month is free. But that is not what this is about. The first month of support is in fact run in tandem with your existing provider so that we can oversee a smooth transition with no break in service. It also enables us to deploy our monitoring tools, getting everything in place to provide a robust support service. This provides us with invaluable information about your systems, giving us a heads up on what is needed to keep you trouble free. Oh, and yes, we do provide this first month at our cost, not yours.

Is moving IT providers painful?

How does your support work?

For a start, we provide Managed Services, which is a form of IT support where we are in fact working on your behalf 24/7 365. We do not wait for you to phone us with a problem... we're always on the look-out for issues that you're probably not even aware of and aim to get these resolved without you even realising. For more on Managed Services check out this [blog post here](#).

There will be issues that arise, no matter how much we're working in the background for you and you'll need to call us. We are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for all 365 days of the year. Your business does not stop and neither do we.

Our customers are allocated to a specific team of engineers. This means you'll only ever deal with the same engineers from this small team. We find this provides continuity and means our customer get to know the engineers and they get to know you and your systems.

Once an issue has been resolved, we review the ticket to ensure the best possible service was given and then an email will be sent out summarising the steps taken, and asks the person who raised the ticket if they were satisfied with their support. The user responds by clicking one of three faces Happy, Neutral or Sad. This gives really valuable feedback to the engineers and the leadership team. Each response we receive goes into a prize draw with some amazing prizes to say thanks for giving us the feedback and the opportunity to improve.

Is moving IT providers painful?

What else makes you different?

Other than being the best looking Managed Services providers in the world you mean?

Well we have our amazing Learning Zone where we have over 100 workshops every single year on subject matters such as Office 365, Word Excel and PowerPoint and a whole host of others. Oh and did I mention our customers can send two delegates to each workshop as part of their support agreement?

We also host monthly Lunch and Learn sessions where we provide a speaker to talk to you about all kinds of business topics. Past sessions have covered Cloud Computing and Inbound Marketing for example. Again, this is all part of the support agreement and is all part of our mission to become great teachers and strategic technology partners to the best companies in Kent.

Are you the cheapest?

Yep I said it. I said the word cheapest. I am addressing it because again this is part of our philosophy in being transparent. The answer is probably not. We aim to be the very best teachers and providers of Managed Services in Kent and to this end, we are continually investing in better technology and people to provide that.

If you want the cheapest provider, then we are probably not a good fit for you but if you are looking for great value for money and an amazing service then maybe we should have a chat?

Does Managed Services sound like something that could benefit your organisation? Maybe you have more questions? Whatever the reason please feel free to reach out and contact me direct on either martin.hynes@365itsupport.co.uk or call me on 01843 572600

