



The Business Owners' Guide To IT Support Services And Fees

What You Should Expect To Pay For IT Support For Your Business

(And How To Get Exactly What You Need Without Unnecessary Extras, Hidden Fees and Inflated Contracts)

Read this guide and you'll discover:

- The 3 most common ways IT services companies charge for their services, and the pros and cons of each approach.
- A common billing model that puts ALL THE RISK on you, the customer, when buying IT services; you'll learn what it is and why you need to avoid agreeing to it.
- Exclusions, hidden fees and other "gotcha" clauses IT companies put in their contracts that you DON'T want to agree to.
- How to make sure you know exactly what you're getting to avoid disappointment, frustration and added costs later on that you didn't anticipate.
- 15 revealing questions to ask your IT support firm BEFORE giving them access to your computer network, e-mail and data.

Provided as an educational service by:

Donna Hall | Director of Business Development
OnPar Technologies
4819 Emperor Blvd. Ste. 400, Durham, NC, 27703
(919) 926-9619

Never Ask An IT Services Company, "What Do You Charge For Your Services?" Instead You Should Ask, "What Will I Get For My Money?"



From The Desk of: Jeremy McParlan
CEO, OnPar Technologies

Dear Colleague,

If you are the CEO of a business that is currently looking to outsource some or all of the IT support for your company, this report contains important information that will be extremely valuable to you as you search for a competent firm you can **trust**.

My name is Jeremy McParlan, CEO of OnPar Technologies and author of IT Buyers Guide. We've been providing IT services to businesses for over 10 years now.

One of the most common questions we get from new prospective clients calling our office is "What do you guys charge for your services?" Since this is such a common question — and a very important one to address — I decided to write this report for 3 reasons:

1. I wanted an easy way to answer this question and educate all prospective clients who come to us on the most common ways IT services companies' package and price their services, and the pros and cons of each approach.

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2. I wanted to bring to light a few “industry secrets” about IT service contracts and SLAs (service level agreements) that almost no business owner thinks about, understands or knows to ask about when evaluating IT service providers that can end up saddling you with hidden fees and locking you into a long-term contract when they are unwilling or unable to deliver the quality of service you need.
3. I wanted to educate business owners on how to pick the right IT services company for their specific situation, budget and needs based on the VALUE the company can deliver, not just the price, high OR low.

In the end, my purpose is to help you make the most informed decision possible so you end up working with someone who helps you solve your problems and accomplish what you want in a time frame, manner and budget that is right for you.

Dedicated to serving you,

Jeremy McParlan

About The Author

OnPar Technologies’ focus is earning our reputation as our clients’ trusted technology partner. We apply our expertise to help our partners unleash opportunities and address issues using tailored, relevant and innovative technologies. Our dedicated team of solution specialists have a deep understanding of business. We know it’s the bottom line that matters to you and that’s why we take an outcome-based approach to business transformation.

OnPar Technologies has assisted a wide range of businesses from many different backgrounds find IT solutions to help their company succeed. We’ve helped legal service firms, financial service institutions, healthcare professionals, non-profit organizations and many other business types find the right technology for them. At OnPar Technologies, we understand that no two businesses, even those in the same field, have the same technology requirements.

We deliver unique and adaptable cloud centric solutions tailored to your need and budget. We have more experience than our competi-

tion in the latest cloud technologies and the business savvy to know what you require. We’ll help with IT budgeting and cost control while allowing your company to enjoy improved productivity and efficiency.

As a Microsoft Certified Gold Partner, we have the knowledge of and access to business solutions that ensure your business operates securely, reliably and proactively. We’re also proud of other partnerships with trusted brands such as Datto Business Continuity and Lenovo as well as our A+ rating from the Better Business Bureau.

Comparing Apples to Apples: The Predominant IT Service Models Explained

Before you can accurately compare the fees, services and deliverables of one IT services company to another, you need to understand the 3 predominant service models most of these companies fit within. Some companies offer a blend of all 3, while others are strict about offering only one service plan. The 3 predominant service models are:

- **Time and Materials.** In the industry, we call this “break-fix” services. Essentially you pay an agreed-upon hourly rate for a technician to “fix” your problem when something “breaks.” Under this model, you might be able to negotiate a discount based on buying a block of hours. The scope of work may be simply to resolve a specific problem (like removing a virus), or it may encompass a large project like a computer network upgrade or move that has a specific result and end date clarified. Some companies will offer staff augmentation and placement under this model as well.
- **Managed IT Services.** This is a model where the IT services company takes the role of your “IT department” and not only installs and supports all the devices and PCs that connect to your server(s), but also offers phone and on-site support, antivirus, security, backup and a host of other services to monitor and maintain the health, speed, performance and security of your computer network.
- **Software Vendor-Supplied IT Services.** Many software companies will offer IT support for their customers in the form of a help desk or remote support for an additional fee. However, these are typically scaled-back services, limited to troubleshooting their specific application and NOT your entire computer network

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and all the applications and devices connected to it. If your problem resides outside of their specific software or the server it's hosted on, they can't help you and will often refer you to "your IT department." While it's often a good idea to buy some basic-level support package with a critical software application you use to run your business, this is not enough to provide the full IT services and support most businesses need to stay up and running.

When looking to outsource your IT support, the two service models you are most likely to end up having to choose between are the "managed IT services" and "break-fix" models. Therefore, let's dive into the pros and cons of these two options, and then the typical fee structure for both.

Managed IT Services Vs. Break-Fix: Which Is The Better, More Cost-Effective Option?

You've probably heard the famous Benjamin Franklin quote, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I couldn't agree more — and that's why it's my sincere belief that the managed IT approach is, by far, the most cost-effective, smartest option for any business. The only time I would recommend a "time and materials" approach is when you already have a competent IT person or team proactively managing your computer network and simply have a specific IT project to complete that your current in-house IT team doesn't have the time or expertise to implement (such as a network upgrade, installing a backup solution, etc.). Outside of that specific scenario, I do not think the break-fix approach is a good idea for general IT support for one very important, fundamental reason: you'll ultimately end up paying for a pound of "cure" for problems that could have easily been avoided with an "ounce" of prevention.

Why Regular Monitoring and Maintenance Is Critical For Today's Computer Networks

The fact of the matter is, computer networks absolutely, positively need ongoing maintenance and monitoring to stay secure. The ever-increasing dependency we have on IT systems and the data they hold — not to mention the type of data we're now saving digitally — has given rise to very smart and sophisticated cybercrime organizations and who



work around the clock to do one thing: compromise your networks for illegal activities.

In most cases their intent is to access financial information and passwords to rob you (or your clients), create fake identities for credit card fraud, etc. In other cases they may want to use your computer network to send illegal spam, host pirated software, spread viruses, etc. And some do it just for the "fun" of being able to make computer systems inoperable. These criminals work around the clock in teams, constantly finding and inventing new ways to get around your antivirus software and firewalls; that's why you have to remain ever vigilant against their attacks.

Of course, this doesn't even take into consideration other common "disasters" such as rogue employees, lost devices, hardware failures (which are the #1 reason for data loss), fire and natural disasters and a host of other issues that can interrupt or outright destroy your IT infrastructure and the data it holds. Then there's regulatory compliance for any business hosting or touching credit card or financial information, medical records and even client contact information such as e-mail addresses.

Preventing these problems and keeping your systems up and running (which is what managed IT services is all about) is a LOT less expensive

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and damaging to your organization than waiting until one of these things happens and then paying for emergency IT services to restore your systems to working order (break-fix).

Should You Just Hire A Full-Time IT Manager?

In most cases, it is not cost-effective for companies with under 50 employees to hire a full-time IT person, because you can outsource this function of your business far cheaper and with a lot less work; but you DO want to hire a professional to perform basic maintenance just as you would hire an attorney to handle your legal matters or an accountant to prepare your taxes. **And if you truly understand the cost of your TIME and factor in employee productivity, the managed IT services model is considerably less expensive over time than the "break-fix" model.**

Why "Break-Fix" Works Entirely in the Consultant's Favor, Not Yours

Under a "break-fix" model, there is a fundamental conflict of interests between you and your IT firm. The IT services company has no incentive to stabilize your computer network or to resolve problems quickly because they are getting paid by the hour; therefore, the risk of unforeseen circumstances, scope creep, learning curve inefficiencies and outright incompetence are all shifted to YOU, the customer. Essentially, the more problems you have, the more they profit, which is precisely what you DON'T want.

Under this model, the IT consultant can take the liberty of assigning a junior (lower-paid) technician to work on your problem who may take two to three times as long to resolve an issue that a more senior (and more expensive) technician may have resolved in a fraction of the time. There is no incentive to properly manage the time of that technician or their efficiency, and there is every reason for them to prolong the project and to find MORE problems than solutions. Of course, if they're ethical and want to keep you as a client, they should be doing everything possible to resolve your problems quickly and efficiently; however, that's akin to putting a German shepherd in charge of watching over the ham sandwiches. Not a good idea.

Second, it creates a management problem for you, the customer, who

now has to keep track of the hours they've worked to make sure you aren't getting overbilled; and since you often have no way of really knowing if they've worked the hours they say they have, it creates a situation where you really, truly need to be able to trust they are being 100% ethical and honest AND tracking THEIR hours properly (not all do).

And finally, it makes budgeting for IT projects and expenses a nightmare since they may be zero one month and thousands the next.

What to Look For In a Managed IT Services Agreement and What You Should Expect To Pay

Important! Please note that the following price quotes are industry averages based on a recent IT industry survey conducted of over 750 different IT services firms. We are providing this information to give you a general idea of what most IT services firms charge and to help you understand the VAST DIFFERENCES in service contracts that you must be aware of before signing on the dotted line. Please understand that this does NOT reflect our pricing model or approach, which is simply to understand exactly what you want to accomplish FIRST and then customize a solution based on your specific needs, budget and situation.

Hourly Break-Fix Fees: Most IT services companies selling break-fix services charge between \$120 and \$200 per hour with a two-hour minimum. In most cases, they will give you a discount of 5% to as much as 20% on their hourly rates if you purchase and pay for a block of hours in advance.

If they are quoting a **project**, the fees range widely based on the scope of work outlined. If you are hiring an IT consulting firm for a project, I would suggest you demand the following:

- **A very detailed scope of work that specifies what "success" is.** Make sure you detail what your expectations are in performance, work flow, costs, security, access, etc. The more detailed you can be, the better. Detailing your expectations up front will go a long way in avoiding miscommunications and additional fees later on to give you what you REALLY wanted.
- **A fixed budget and time frame for completion.** Agreeing to this

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up front aligns both your agenda and the consultant's. Be very wary of loose estimates that allow the consulting firm to bill you for "unforeseen" circumstances. The bottom line is this: it is your IT consulting firm's responsibility to be able to accurately assess your situation and quote a project based on their experience. You should not have to pick up the tab for a consultant underestimating a job or for their inefficiencies. A true professional knows how to take into consideration those contingencies and bill accordingly.

Managed IT Services: Most managed IT services firms will quote you a MONTHLY fee based on the number of devices they need to maintain, back up and support. This fee is somewhere in the range of \$100 to \$300 per server, \$50 to \$75 per desktop and approximately \$10 per smartphone or mobile device.

If you hire an IT consultant and sign up for a managed IT services contract, here are some things that SHOULD be included (make sure you read your contract to validate this):

Security patches applied weekly, if not daily, for urgent and emerging threats

- Antivirus updates and monitoring
- Firewall updates and monitoring
- Backup monitoring and test restores
- Spam-filter installation and updates
- Spyware detection and removal
- Monitoring disk space on workstations and servers
- Monitoring hardware for signs of failure
- Optimizing systems for maximum speed

The following services may **NOT be included** and will often be billed separately. This is not necessarily a "scam" or unethical UNLESS the managed IT services company tries to hide these fees when selling you a service agreement. Make sure you review your contract carefully to know what is and is NOT included!

- Hardware setup, such as new servers, PCs, laptops, etc.
- Software licenses (such as Microsoft Office 365)

- On-site support
- Project work
- Consulting fees

Warning! Gray areas of "all-inclusive" service contracts. In order to truly compare the "cost" of one managed IT services contract to another, you need to make sure you fully understand what IS and ISN'T included AND the "SLA" or "service level agreement" you are signing up for. It's VERY easy for one IT services provider to appear far less expensive than another UNTIL you look closely at what you are getting.

The following are 15 questions to ask your IT services provider that will clarify exactly what you're getting for the money. Some of these items may not be that important to you, while others (like response time, adequate insurance and uptime guarantees) may be critical. Make sure you fully understand each of these items before making a decision about who the right provider is for you; then make sure you get this IN WRITING.

15 Service Clarification Questions You Should Ask Your IT Services Firm Before Signing A Contract

Customer Service:

Q1: Do they answer their phones live or do you always have to leave a voicemail and wait for someone to call you back?

Our Answer: We answer our phones live from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and give all clients an emergency after-hours voicemail.

Q2: Do they offer a written, guaranteed response time to your calls?

Our Answer: We guarantee to have a technician working on a problem within 4 hours or less of your call. This is written into every service agreement we give to our clients because it's standard procedure.

Q3: Do they take the time to explain what they are doing and answer your questions in terms that you can understand (not geek-speak), or do they come across as arrogant and make you feel stupid for asking simple questions?

Our Answer: Our technicians are trained to have the "heart of a teacher" and will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms. Just look at what this one client had to say:

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"OnPar is super responsive no matter the time of day, always very courteous and helpful, never short with our people who aren't tech savvy. OnPar always works with us until any issues are resolved, and are willing to help with new projects when we ask without being over bearing or pushy. Thanks OnPar!"

- Jamie Bartholomaus with Foothills Brewing

Q4: Do they consistently (and proactively) offer new ways to improve your network's performance, or do they wait until you have a problem to make recommendations?

Our Answer: We conduct annual technology reviews with our clients to look for new ways to help improve their operations, lower costs, increase efficiencies and resolve any problems that may be arising. Our goal with these meetings is to help our clients be more profitable, efficient and competitive. We want our clients to maintain their infrastructure and never be caught off-guard.

Q5: Do they have adequate errors and omissions insurance as well as workers' compensation insurance to protect YOU?

Our Answer: Here's something to consider: if THEY cause a problem with your network that causes you to be down for hours or days or to lose data, who's responsible? Here's another question to consider: if one of their technicians gets hurt at your office, who's paying? In this litigious society we live in, you better make sure whomever you hire is adequately insured with both errors and omissions insurance AND workers' compensation — and don't be shy about asking to see their latest insurance policies!

True Story: A few years ago Geek Squad was slapped with multimillion-dollar lawsuits from customers for bad behavior by their technicians. In some cases, their techs were accessing, copying and distributing personal information they gained access to on customers' PCs and laptops brought in for repairs. In other cases, they lost a client's laptop (and subsequently all the data on it) and tried to cover it up. Bottom line: make sure the company you are hiring has proper insurance to protect YOU.

We have proof that can be provided to any client to certify we are properly insured.

Q6: Do they guarantee to complete projects on time and on budget?

Our Answer: All projects are fixed-priced and guaranteed to be completed on time, in writing. This is important because many unethical or incompetent computer guys will only quote "time and materials," which gives them free rein to nickel-and-dime you as well as take as much time as they want completing a project.

Maintenance Of Your Network:

Q7: Do they insist on remotely monitoring your network 24/7/365 to keep critical security settings, virus definitions and security patches up-to-date and PREVENT problems from turning into downtime, viruses, lost data and other issues?

Our Answer: Yes; our remote network monitoring system watches over your network to constantly look for developing problems, security issues and other problems so we can address them BEFORE they turn into bigger problems.

Q8: Is it standard procedure for them to provide you with written network documentation detailing what software licenses you own, critical passwords, user information, hardware inventory, etc., or are they the only person with the "keys to the kingdom"?

Our Answer: All clients receive this information per their request and during their annual technology review.

Side Note: You should NEVER allow an IT person to have that much control over you and your company. If you get the sneaking suspicion that your current IT person is keeping this under their control as a means of job security, get rid of them (and we can help to make sure you don't suffer ANY ill effects). This is downright unethical and dangerous to your organization, so don't tolerate it!

Q9: Do they have other technicians on staff who are familiar with your network in case your regular technician goes on vacation or gets sick?

Our Answer: Yes; and since we keep detailed network documentation (basically a blueprint of your computer network) and updates on every client's account, any of our technicians can pick up where another one has left off.

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Backups And Disaster Recovery:

Q10: Do they INSIST on monitoring an off-site as well as an on-site backup, or are they letting you rely on outdated tape backups?

Our Answer: We do not allow our clients to use tape backups because tape backups are incredibly unreliable. We make sure all of our clients have a backup solution that provides both onsite and cloud data storage. This solution can have a client back up and running within an hour of a disaster.

Q11: Do they insist on backing up your network BEFORE performing any type of project or upgrade?

Our Answer: We do, and that's simply as a precaution in case a hardware failure or software glitch causes a major problem.

Q12: If you were to experience a major disaster, do they have a written plan for how your data could be restored FAST and/or enable you to work from a remote location?

Our Answer: Our backup solution provides that a virtual environment with all necessary data can be up and running within an hour of a disaster. Since this is a virtual environment displaced workers could work remotely in the event the primary office structure was destroyed.

Technical Expertise And Support:

Q13: Is their help-desk U.S.-based or outsourced to an overseas company or third party?

Our Answer: We provide our own in-house help desk and make sure the folks helping you are friendly and helpful. We consider this one of the most important aspects of customer service, plus we feel it's important to keeping your data secure.

Q14: Do their technicians maintain current vendor certifications and participate in ongoing training — or are they learning on your dime?

Our Answer: Our technicians are required to keep the most up-to-date vendor certifications in all the software we support, such as Microsoft products, Cisco networking, etc. Plus, our hiring process is so stringent, 99% of the technicians who apply don't make it through. (Guess who's hiring them?)

Q15: When something goes wrong with your Internet service, phone

systems, printers or other IT services, do they own the problem or do they say, "That's not our problem to fix"?

Our Answer: We feel WE should own the problem for our clients so they don't have to try and resolve any of these issues on their own — that's just plain old good service and something many Managed Services Providers won't do.

A Final Word And Free Assessment Offer To Show You How To Eliminate System Slowness, Crashes And Viruses And Drastically Lower Your IT Maintenance Costs

I hope you have found this guide helpful in shedding some light on what to look for when hiring a professional firm to outsource your IT support to. As I stated in the opening of this report, my purpose in providing this information was to help you make an informed decision and avoid getting burned by incompetent or unethical firms luring you in with cheap prices.

Below you will find information on how to request a FREE IT Optimization Plan for your company as a next step in engaging with us.

There is no cost or obligation, and I guarantee you will find this consult to be extremely valuable and eye-opening.

Looking forward to your call!

Donna Hall

Director of Business Development

Phone: (919) 348-4532

Web: www.onpartech.com

Free Network Security And Performance Assessment

If I just described your situation, I want to give you a **Free Network Security and Performance Assessment** that will reveal what's REALLY going on in your network infrastructure.

There's no charge for this, and it only requires a 30- to 60-minute meeting with me and one of my top IT consultants. After working for the IT industry for almost 15 years, we've truly perfected a process for

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helping companies like yours to get their IT systems working the way they are supposed to.

After conducting this Free Assessment, we'll be able to answer your top questions, such as:

- Are your IT systems truly secured from hackers, viruses and rogue employees?
- Are your backups configured properly to ensure that you could be back up and running again fast in a disaster?
- Are you fully compliant with the regulations for your industry, such as HIPAA, PCI, etc. Or are you unknowingly exposing your company to expensive fines?
- Could you utilize cheaper and more efficient cloud computing technologies to lower IT costs and make it easier to work remotely?
- Are your systems optimized for maximum speed and performance? (I can tell you, 99% of the computer networks we review are NOT.)

Once we have a clear picture of the state, health and performance of your current IT systems, we'll then deliver a customized IT solution that will show you how to eliminate constant issues, enable you to work faster and easier, and lower IT costs wherever possible.

So Why Would We Offer This For Free?

For one simple reason:

It's the fastest and easiest way for us to demonstrate the value we can deliver without any risk to you. Frankly, it's how we get the happy clients you've seen all over our web site and have probably heard about before.

After all, if you like what you see and we show you how to solve a number of IT-related problems in your company, why wouldn't you want to work with us? Of course, we will approach this with no expectations or heavy sales pressure of any kind. I don't like pushy salespeople any

more than you do — **and we stand on the belief that providing extreme value in advance is the best way to showcase our services and win new business.**

Now, obviously this is an amazing offer that you'll probably never see from any other IT company. But I'm SO confident that we can deliver extreme value that I have no concerns with putting this type of guarantee on our time together.

The ONLY catch is that we can't help everyone, so we have a strict (but reasonable) set of criteria that need to be met in order for us to proceed. Here it is:

1. You have to at least have 10 workstations.

Our services and advice work best for companies that have at least 10 workstations. If that's not you (or if you are a brand-new startup), we might be able to help you through a different process. Call the office and we'll direct you from there: (919) 926-9619

2. You must be the owner of the business or a decision maker for the business.

Due to the nature of the advice we'll give you, it will be actionable only for the owner or key executive.

If You Meet the Criteria Above, Here's How We Get Started:

Step 1: Go to the web site below to complete our IT Analysis Questionnaire. Don't worry, it's simple and unobtrusive; if you don't know the answers to certain questions, just put "I don't know" as your answer:

www.onpartech.com/itnetworkquestionnaire

Step 2: Once we've received your questionnaire and reviewed it, someone from our office will call you and set up a time for us to meet.

The initial meeting will be between 30 and 60 minutes. This is where we really begin working to figure out exactly what you want and how to make it happen. We'll also initiate our **Free Network Security And Performance Assessment**.

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Step 3: After that initial meeting, we'll prepare a report of our findings that will reveal any vulnerabilities in your backups and security, as well as show you how to optimize your IT to increase everyone's productivity in the fastest, most efficient way possible. This second meeting should be a real eye-opener for you.

If you see the value in engaging beyond that, great! We can talk about it at that time. And if you don't want to become a client — that's OK too. By the way, we've never had anyone feel like their time was wasted. EVER. That's why we can make this offer. **WE DELIVER.**

So, unless you are 100% happy with the IT support you are getting and absolutely confident that your network is secure, backed up properly and running at optimal levels, why wouldn't you give this a try? Do it now and you'll be glad you did:

www.onpartech.com/itnetworkquestionnaire

Dedicated to your success,

Donna Hall

Director of Business Development | OnPar Technologies

Phone: (919) 926-9619

See What Other Businesses are Saying:



Manish Patel with Avance Care

OnPar Technologies assisted with our transition to SharePoint Online and completed an email migration to Exchange. It was a large project, so we appreciate the prompt, quality service we experience from OnPar sales and technical staff.



Cori Schmidt-Zdrzil with Member Business Solutions, LLC

Outline the story of the testimonial here. Remember, all testimonials should either validate a claim you are making and/or overcome an objection and should be directly related to your cloud solution.



Dean Koch with Stone Transport

Besides migrating our Microsoft SQL database, OnPar managed a server migration from Server 2003 to Server 2012. We've trusted OnPar to build and maintain our complex network and assist with cloud migration services for our 300+ employee transportation company for over 10 years.



Debra Braden with Americraft Carton

I have used OnPar for several years now. They have a level of expertise and professionalism you can depend on. OnPar keeps our company Network up and running and are always there when I need them.