TECH TIPS
TECHNOLOGY INSIGHT THAT BUILDS BUSINESS

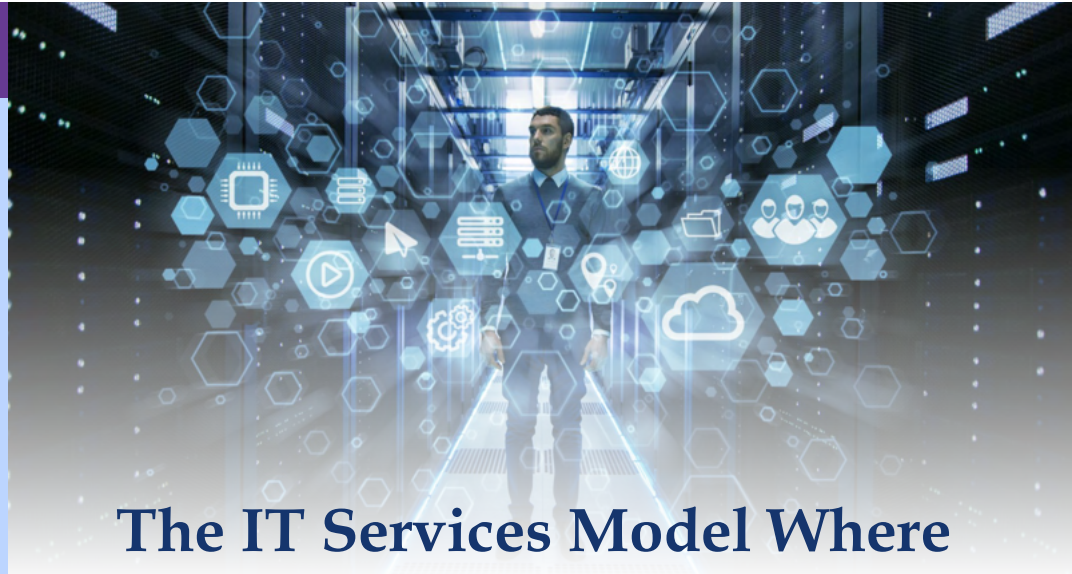**HODGSON** CONSULTING & SOLUTIONS

Inside This Issue

March 2022

This monthly publication provided courtesy of Robert Zehnder President of Hodgson Consulting & Solutions.

Our Mission:
To eliminate every technical frustration, obstacle and inefficiency for companies with multiple locations and/or a remote workforce.

The IT Services Model Where Everyone Wins – And The One Where You Lose Big

If you're a business owner, there's probably a good chance you spent time figuring out the IT needs of your business. It's not as easy as searching online and picking the cheapest option or the company with the best reviews. The cheap option may not provide the services you need to keep your business at the top of its game, and the best-reviewed business may be too expensive or offer services that are completely unnecessary for your business.

To put it simply, if you want to get the most out of your IT support services, you must do some research. If you haven't spent a lot of time in the world of IT, it can be difficult to figure out where to even begin with your research. If you've found yourself in this situation previously or are preparing to open a new business and are interested in your IT support options, we've got you covered.

We've put together the three most common forms of IT support and explain the benefits and drawbacks of each so you can confidently decide on the best option for your business.

Managed IT Services
In this option, the IT services company takes over the role of your in-house IT department for a fixed and agreed-upon monthly rate. They'll install, support and maintain all the users, devices and PCs connected to your network on a routine basis. They will even take care of your hardware and software needs for an extra cost. If you're trying to plan for a monthly budget or want routine maintenance and IT support, this option will work wonders for your business.

It's my sincere belief that the managed IT approach is undoubtedly the most cost-effective and smartest

option for any business. With managed IT services, your business will be protected from IT-related problems, and they will keep your systems up and running. They can prevent common "disasters" such as lost devices, hardware failures, fires, natural disasters and a host of other issues that can interrupt or outright destroy your IT infrastructure and the data it holds.

Technology As A Service
Another option that might work really well for your business is using a company that offers technology as a service. With these companies, you'll get everything that managed IT services offer but with the addition of new hardware, software and support. This service ensures that your business is always up-to-date with the newest software and hardware. The greatest benefit of technology as a service is that you'll avoid the heavy cost of new hardware and software when you need it, but you will be paying far more for the same hardware and software over time. You'll also need to pay attention to the services they offer to ensure they can provide what you need and that it does not cost extra.

Time And Materials
Time and materials are often referred to as the "break-fix" method. This essentially means that you pay an

> **"If you want to get the most out of your IT support services, you must do some research."**

agreed-upon hourly rate for a technician to "fix" a problem when something "breaks." It's a simple and straightforward way to pay for IT services but often doesn't work in your favor and can lead you to pay more for basic services.

I would only recommend the time-and-materials approach if you already have an IT team and you need additional support for a problem that your current IT team doesn't have the time or expertise to handle. Under the break-fix model, the IT company has no immediate need to stabilize your network because they are getting paid hourly. The break-fix model is unable to supply ongoing maintenance and monitoring, which computer networks need to stay secure.

Choosing the right IT option for your business can take time and is certainly not something you want to rush into. Take your time and do your research to find the best option to fit your needs. If you're unsure of where to even begin – or need some help navigating the sometimes confusing world of IT support – give us a call. We would be glad to help you find the IT support you need.
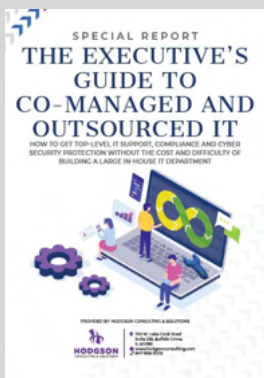
Building Your Marketing Plan – Where Do You Start?

A strong marketing strategy is one of the most difficult things for new businesses to implement correctly. Many new business owners know how important marketing is but are unsure of how to make their plan successful.

One of the biggest mistakes new business owners make is trying to ensure that their marketing plan is perfect from day one. It's impossible for your marketing to truly be perfect since it's iterative and needs constant optimization. Instead of trying to make your marketing perfect, just try to get it done. Feedback will tell you what worked and what didn't, and you can adjust your strategy based on that.

Before you can even start planning your marketing strategy, there are a few things you need to figure out first. Before anything else, you need to figure out who your audience is. This will allow you to find a certain niche that will help you build a solid marketing plan. If you try to target everyone as your audience, you'll end up targeting nobody.

Once you have found your target audience, you need to create a message that resonates with them. Test your ideas on your current customer base, and if you find one that fits, implement the wording into your marketing campaign. Don't try to sell in your advertisements; instead, have them fill out a form or give your business a call.

Furthermore, once you've found your target audience and crafted your message, you'll need to find the perfect place to broadcast. Through your research in finding your target audience, you should have a general idea of where to publish any marketing. Don't be afraid to use multiple platforms to reach a wider audience.

Backup and Disaster Recovery
Are You Protecting the Right Data?

You're ready to purchase a BDR. You've done all of the research, found a company you're confident in and are excited to finally have peace of mind. Now, you start thinking about exactly what you need to back up. Is all of your data necessary or should you salvage a little server room? Most businesses want to back up everything - you never know when you'll need it, but sometimes that is cost prohibitive.

Depending on what kind of BDR you've purchased, you will first need to delegate what data is stored, is not stored, and how often. There are three different kinds of backup in today's tech world: straight to cloud services, software-based products, and a hybrid approach that combines on-site hardware and software with the cloud. The amount of data you can back up, how you can segment that data, how often it's backed up, how it's backed up (all the data every time creating enormous backups, versus incremental backups that key-in on changes) and how easy it is to access will be affected based on the solution you chose. It's not always necessary to back up everything daily, but there are some things you will want to consider.

First is credit card transactions or receipts. Your accounting software should keep an eye on this and automatically back up this data. This also includes things like invoicing, receivables, payroll and just about anything that is financially related. All financials are incredibly important, even one lost invoice could really hurt your business.

Second, protect all intellectual property.

Unless you're rocking an amazing vault to store a famous recipe like Coca-Cola or KFC, make sure that you back up everything that brings you a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Anything with hackable data or items that could be compromised need to be backed up daily as well.

Next, you will want to back up any client files. Not only is it invaluable to keep this information safe, but it would certainly affect your client confidence if anything was lost or stolen. In addition to client files, make sure you're backing up your client and prospect lists (anything that you're storing in your CRM, really). You spend a great deal of time developing your list for marketing purposes. Losing this information is one of the major reasons companies go out of business within six months of experiencing data loss.

Finally, you must back up all project management software. Anything that your business uses to keep track of daily activities and work being done needs back up to make sure that you can maintain progress in the event of a data loss and you maintain a "paper trail" on project communication.

When it comes to BDR, you ideally want to back up every piece of data that you have. Sometimes, though, this is impossible based on the cost involved in maintaining that hefty data chain. At the bare minimum, keep these items in mind and you should never have to deal with a business killing disaster.

■ Meta-WHAT?! What You Need To Know About The Metaverse

In 2014, Facebook purchased Oculus, a company that designs and produces virtual reality headsets and games. This would end up being the first step in Facebook's change to their new identity: Meta. Recently, Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, unveiled the Metaverse with the goal of creating an "immersive Internet experience" that he hopes will lead to a "world of endless, interconnected virtual communities."

This idea would essentially allow people to meet with each other, play games and even work by using augmented reality glasses or virtual reality headsets. Ideally, people will have virtual office spaces where they can communicate with coworkers and virtual homes where they can host friends for get-togethers.

The biggest concern with Meta is privacy. If people are living their lives in a virtual world, how will the information they share be protected? Only time will tell how Meta handles the privacy challenges of the Metaverse, but it's certainly an exciting time in the world of virtual reality.

■ It Isn't Luck, It's SEO – Improve Your Conversion Rates Using SEO

Search engine optimization (SEO) and conversion rates go hand in hand. SEO helps bring people to your website, but conversion rate optimization (CRO) helps make those visits more meaningful. If you aren't getting the desired conversion rates for your website, there are a few tips you can implement to get more from your SEO and CRO.

- **Speed Up Web Page Load Times:** If your website does not load within three seconds, there's a good chance that customers won't wait for your site to load.

- **Improve Your Visuals With Creative Designs:** You want your website to grab a user's attention and encourage them to click through the site.

- **Utilize Videos And Visual Aids:** If users are not staying on your website for a long period of time, add some videos. Users are more likely to stay on your site if there are things for them to watch or look at.

- **Use Strong Calls To Action:** A call to action is a great way to connect with your customer base and will make it easier to track the return on your investments.

"... and Brian, down there, is just here to even out our grid."

CartoonStock.com