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Criteria for selecting the right IT Managed Service Provider for your business

White Paper



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Introduction

Evolution in technology has meant users expect 24/7 access to devices, information and choices and they expect to be able to work anytime, anywhere.

Businesses in turn are initiating their own digital transformations to create new business models that align with growing consumer expectations and commercial pressures. Companies that once embraced digital transformation are now also rapidly adopting emerging technologies like AI to enhance their operations.

Adopting these technologies is resulting in a complex IT environment and the pace of change is unlike anything we have ever seen. It spans multiple delivery models, vendors, processes and data. Managing such a complex environment can be challenging, particularly as companies continue to face flat or shrinking IT budgets.

Combined with inflexible or siloed IT systems and rising management costs, many businesses are simply unable to deliver on the digital transformation agendas that their organisations require.

As a direct result of this, businesses of all sizes are examining their IT strategies.

They are assessing if an IT managed services provider can offer more value, efficiency and effectiveness for the IT services that they currently provide internally.

IT managed services span a range of capabilities, creating options for IT and business teams looking to benefit from externally provided services. By taking external IT services it will allow them to focus on more business-critical issues and strategic activities, gaining significant business and IT agility and add greater value.

This white paper examines the range of IT managed services available in the market today. It helps establish the most important qualifications IT and business leaders should consider in choosing a managed services provider, before outlining a strategic approach to making IT service sourcing decisions.

What are IT managed services?

By definition, IT managed services comprise remote monitoring and management of a customer's selected hardware, software or networks, which can be located on premises, hosted in a third-party data centre or the cloud.

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In the past, these services typically included password resets, monitoring and alerts, patch management, problem resolution, proactive problem prevention and IT security. But with advances in technology, businesses are seeking more from their managed service providers.

At Wanstor we have a broader view of what IT Managed Services should be offered apart from these basics. We believe true IT service management offerings should include cloud, networking, communications, security, data backup and recovery, disaster recovery, mobility, help desk and technical support. We believe these are the true core components of IT operations. All are essential IT services that consume significant resources and should be managed and optimised proactively.

Indeed, over 70% of budgets in many businesses are allocated to simply 'keeping the lights on' for IT. Additionally, the underlying technology for delivering and managing each service area continues to evolve.

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At Wanstor we understand that making the best use of technology innovation to provide continuous improvement and cost reduction over time requires constant development and / or the recruitment of advanced IT skills.

Staying up to date on technology and gaining ready access to necessary or scarce skills by using managed services from an experienced provider can help your business meet its IT need.

Why should businesses use IT Managed Services?

Several factors drive the need for IT support from managed service providers (MSPs) as opposed to developing internal IT teams.

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To satisfy user needs, reduce risk and manage costs while adopting modern technologies, IT teams need to have both technology expertise and an understanding of business objectives. They also need to ensure that ongoing IT operations continue smoothly and efficiently during any change.

The fast rate of change across all technology areas makes it harder for internal business IT teams to assess new technologies and decide if they will give them an edge, or just increase the burden on their already busy IT systems and teams.



Learning how IT service providers create value around these goals helps to develop a business case for outsourcing IT managed services vs keeping them in-house.

Cost Reduction

Cost reduction, economies of scale and industrialising service delivery help managed services providers meet a lower cost point than most businesses can achieve with in-house IT teams. Additionally, many provider's costs, from infrastructure to senior technical staff, are shared across multiple customers.

Capital expense reduction

Businesses are continually challenged with forced capital expenses. Decisions on where to invest capital are difficult, and typically focus on revenue generating activities. Similar to the way many companies lease real estate rather than purchase, delivery models like cloud and managed services can help businesses free up capital by shifting IT costs to operating expenses.

Enhanced efficiency

An IT managed services provider can deliver new value in hybrid environments through brokerage, best practices, standardisation, analytics and automation capabilities, delivering more efficient, tighter IT controls.

A managed services provider can deliver better value in complex IT environments by helping you plan, procure, govern and manage IT services across multiple suppliers.

Increased access to skills

The need to find, retain and build skills that you need to support a constantly evolving IT environment is relentless. MSPs can reduce skills-related risks for internal IT because the responsibility for attracting and retaining skilled individuals falls on the managed services provider.

MSPs are required by software vendors and solutions providers to continually update their knowledge and achieve certifications to retain partner designations or reseller status, which means they have the latest skills and expertise in delivering solutions.

Most often, MSPs are in the best position to pool and use their resources among multiple customers, offering access to a greater set of skills than might be available to them at a lower cost point.

Better service levels and reduced risk

The value that an MSP can deliver is service quality. This should be guaranteed by contractual SLAs. MSPs have a motivation to build the tools, processes and governance they need to provide reliable services to their customers, in a cost-effective way.

Moreover, because they offer IT services for customers from different industries and sectors, they will have access to insights and expertise that are hard to develop in an internal IT team. They are likely to have encountered these problems before, and know how to solve them quickly, reducing the time it takes to resolve IT issues.

The outcome is a more consistent, trustworthy, and secure IT environment that can satisfy users' service availability and performance expectations.

Improved security & compliance management

Security challenges and a complicated technology environment make it hard for smaller internal IT teams to meet the changing security demands. IT Managed services are often considered as most suitable for small and midsize businesses that have small IT departments and limited resources.

Managed services can effectively deal with critical IT areas that involve reducing risks related to security, business continuity and compliance. Security especially is a growing area for IT service providers and customers.

An MSP can bring proven processes, procedures and infrastructure resources to help clients restore critical systems and data within timeframes required by regulatory standards. Providers that cover these areas can also help organisations combine functions for a more holistic approach to IT risk management.

Access to technology innovation

MSPs have the skills and resources to implement modern technologies quicker, enabling customers to exploit IT innovations to provide new business value. Furthermore, demand for innovation fosters healthy competition among services providers, helping drive down costs and create a market environment focused on what businesses and their users actually need. An MSP also assumes most of the risk of new technology innovation by taking on the investment in costs, training and implementation.

Flexibility and scalability

MSPs can scale the scope, size and range of managed services based on a business's needs. This allows companies to align IT with business operations and improve speed time to market with the faster provisioning of new resources.

What should you consider when selecting an IT managed services provider?

The potential benefits of IT managed services can be achieved by selecting the right provider.

At Wanstor we believe customers should choose an MSP who can demonstrate the ability to provide skills, processes and resources that exceed your in-house IT capabilities.

When you evaluate IT managed service providers, we believe the following areas should be considered carefully before making an informed IT outsourcing decision.

Skills and experience

Any MSP should have skills that go beyond basic operating system maintenance and availability management.

You should ask your MSP about skill levels related to managing change, delivering Modern Work solutions, high availability, network technologies, cross-platform integration, mobility, security, data engineering, AI and cloud.

Business leaders and IT Directors should look to ask questions about certifications and headcount, scalability and availability of staff with specialised skill sets, how specialists are organised, how do they share knowledge, and how IT best practices are communicated.

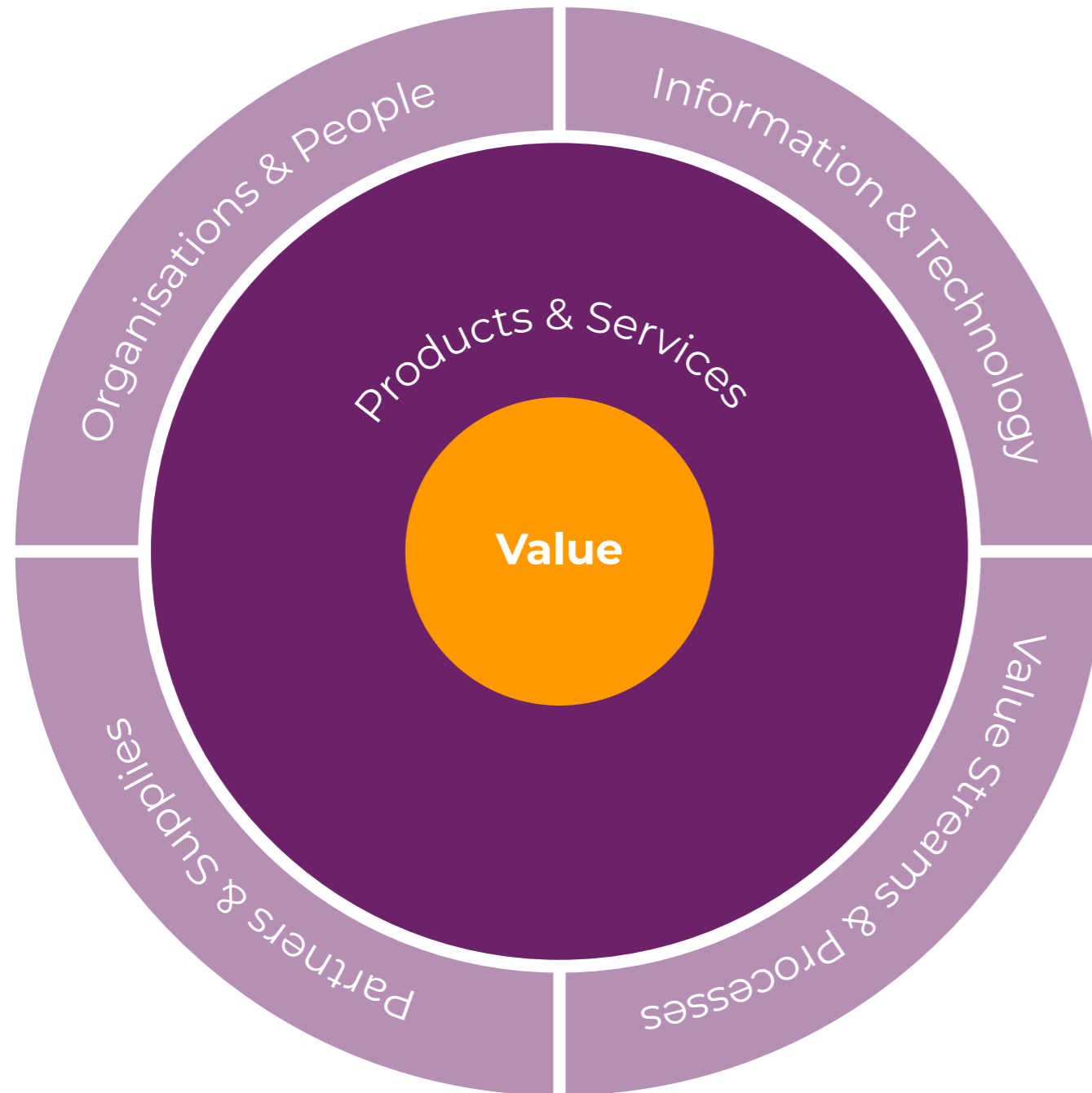
Additionally, MSPs should have expertise across all delivery models, including not only managed services but also traditional IT and strategic outsourcing.

A proactive approach to IT service management

Take the time to discover if the MSP has a 'break & fix' mentality or a proactive approach that emphasises problem prevention and continuous improvement.

We suggest you interact with providers that go beyond simple monitoring and device management; ask if they use analytics for incident prevention for example.

The four dimensions of service management



At a basic level, the MSP should employ sophisticated back-end technology like automation across all offered managed services.

Look for technologies that provide alert mechanisms, automated workload categorisation, incident escalation and remediation. Additionally, assess to what degree the services provider uses automation and AI to improve self-service and reduce human intervention and improve quality and productivity.

Are they using industry standard methodologies?

One of the key tenements to achieving a more reliable, highly available IT infrastructure is to fully optimise day to day IT management.

Particularly they should be aligned with the ITIL approach to IT service management (left). ITIL best practices encompass problem, incident, event, change, configuration, inventory, capacity and performance management as well as reporting.

Consistent processes, knowledge management and consolidated service visibility

Consistent service delivery is built on consistent processes based on a repeatable methodology. Your MSP should be willing to share examples of policy and process documentation and explain how they are replicated across multiple delivery centres.

Additionally, the MSP should have a detailed and documented knowledge management system that enables staff from any location to access historical problem and resolution information.

Also important is the means by which the services provider gives you visibility into the health of your IT infrastructure and the performance of your IT managed services.

We suggest IT and business leaders look for a security-rich, web-based portal that consolidates related services into a single dashboard with access to real-time service visibility and flexible reporting capabilities.

Experience at providing IT support for complex multi-vendor IT environments

Today's IT infrastructures are complex and are typically made of hardware, software, SaaS solutions and network products, along with and public and private clouds from a variety of vendors.

An MSP should have at minimum proven experience working within multi-vendor, multi-cloud environments and more importantly, have relationships with leading vendors to ensure they have access to expertise, and visibility into product roadmaps.

A real vendor-independent MSP should be able to play the role of an unbiased vendor broker, helping you plan, buy, manage and operate across multiple IT models and providers that provide the best fit for your business.

Consistent service delivery, via local resources

Choosing an MSP who has consistent delivery capabilities offers many advantages, including rapid implementation in new locations, the ability to effectively manage customer projects that span operations in multiple geographies, and in-country location of resources and data to help address regulatory and legal requirements.

Performance-based SLAs


One of the main advantages of IT managed services is that responsibility for performance rests with the MSP. Focus on what the provider delivers rather than how the service is performed. This helps the provider innovate, improve service delivery and reduce costs for mutual benefit.

In turn, the services provider should be willing to commit contractually to meeting your service-level requirements and be prepared to back up those commitments with financial penalties or other consequences if those SLAs are not met.

Portfolio of IT managed services aligned to your business

Because your business and IT needs are continually changing, you want the flexibility to add managed services without adding unnecessary cost and complexity to your sourcing strategy.

Many businesses find that services fragmentation (using multiple managed services suppliers) can become costly and complex.

 Although sourcing by process may seem optimal because it allows you to hire *'best in breed'* for a particular activity, it can perpetuate silos, hinder agility and make change more difficult.

Additionally, it is suggested that you look for an MSP that offers flexibility in doing business with you, such as giving you the option to retain your current equipment and, where it makes sense, your current processes.

Your Finance Director, for example, might want a managed services provider that can offer a pay-per-use option, allowing the business to scale up or down to match peaks and troughs in business demand for IT services.

Managed services can also offer a new financial approach to deploying IT

A clear path for innovation

With strategic partnering becoming increasingly prevalent, it's important to consider the impact sourcing relationships can have, not only on business outcomes but also on a company's core business model and corporate culture.

- + **If innovation and transformation are critical components of your business strategy, how can a prospective managed services provider contribute?**
- + **Can a managed service provider have insights or experiences that can help evaluate where certain technology markets are moving to?**
- + **What competitive advantages could you gain from accessing, or even better, collaborating with, the provider's research and development function?**
- + **How can the provider's expertise, assets, reach and partner network help you develop new business models or expand into new markets?**

Financial stability and reputation

Whether you are considering a short-term, or long-term MSP relationship, a prospective MSPs financial stability is crucial. Today, an MSPs length of time in the market is no longer enough or a reliable predictor of future longevity.

At Wanstor we suggest business leaders undertake due diligence of any MSP before signing a contract. Research annual reports, financial statements and opinions offered by business and IT industry press and analysts. Ask for references and quantified success metrics.

Making choices about delivery models

As the world of IT Managed Services expands, so does the choice of delivery models. Wanstor has developed a framework designed to help customers choose the services and delivery models that are right for individual organisations.

This framework is built around three critical decision points: business design, service levels and deployment characteristics (see opposite).

Strategic Decisions



Business Design



Service Levels



Deployment Characteristics

Considerations

- Outcomes
- Economics
- Accountability

- Availability
- Security
- Performance

- Flexibility
- Shared
- Location

How does delivery model choice work?

Wanstor business and technology specialists work with you to understand your business requirements, service-level objectives and deployment choices, and match the right mix of delivery models to your business needs.

Business design

When analysing the business design, your focus needs to be on outcomes, accountability and economics.

What level of control do you want, and who is responsible for what after the transition to managed services?

Which pricing arrangement makes the most sense?

Is your company moving away from fixed-cost expenses, and can you capitalize on a variable-expense model based on usage?

Can you reduce capital expenses by taking advantage of the operating-expense model that managed services offers?

Service levels

To maintain service levels in an IT managed services environment, it is critical for both you and your services provider to have a clear picture about the performance metrics, security tools and policies and resiliency level your business requires.

Balancing your performance and service-level requirements with costs is an important exercise.

Determining the right level of availability, security and resiliency for a particular service helps make sure that you are not paying a premium for a service level not required by your business or allowing a crucial business process to be poorly protected.

Deployment characteristics

Today your IT infrastructure can be dedicated, whether it resides in-house or is hosted by a services provider, or it can be part of a shared environment (which is often the usual choice). This evaluation starts with the following questions:

Do you need a customised environment or can you take advantage of the agility and scalability within a standardised environment?

Where should your IT assets live?

Who should own them?

Our IT service delivery framework as outlined above is designed to guide clients step-by-step through the considerations involved in transforming IT infrastructures. It should help IT and business leaders determine the sourcing solution that best fits their needs.

Most likely, answers will differ depending on infrastructure components and applications, services and business processes they support.

For that reason, your business will need an MSP that can offer solutions that integrate multiple delivery models, including managing a traditional IT environment, shared private cloud services and shared public cloud services.

How does delivery model choice work?

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Taking the right path for IT Managed Services adoption

A strong and business relevant IT managed services strategy means you can expect your new or existing IT managed services arrangements to grow with your business and IT usage needs.

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You can start with a flexible staffing arrangement, taking advantage of the managed services provider's skilled resources. This model brings the skills you need into your business for special projects or to just provide the resources you need for day-to-day IT services.

The next level of commitment to an MSP strategy can be to adopt selected managed services for your IT infrastructure. This approach allows certain IT infrastructure functions, such as backup and recovery, server and storage management or security, to be managed by a provider while you retain other infrastructure responsibilities and manage your applications.

As you move through your strategic IT services outsourcing journey, you can advance from having some services, to all services provided by an IT managed services provider.

You can use your infrastructure and configure it as a traditional IT environment or as a private cloud, which provides more virtualization and standardization.

Your provider should be able to offer a range of services, from basic to advanced.

You can also ask the service provider to manage everything, up to and including the facility itself, or you could move your infrastructure to a hosted or shared environment that is owned and managed by the services provider.

Wherever you start, your provider should offer a range of services that includes cloud as well as basic and advanced managed services.

Your ability to act on technology innovation with confidence is stronger when you have a services provider you trust to embrace breakthrough productivity and accelerate value creation.

An overview of Wanstor Managed IT Services

Wanstor Managed IT Support Services

Providing predictive and preventive maintenance services to help optimise IT availability and achieve measurable business continuity results; supports a variety of hardware and software products, and virtualised and infrastructures

Wanstor IT Outsourcing

Delivers a thorough stack of sourcing services from infrastructure to applications to business processes; implementation approaches include managed services and cloud - selected, tailored and integrated to meet client needs

Managed Intune & Autopilot for Zero Touch Deployment

Intune and Autopilot are part of the Microsoft Enterprise Mobility + Security (EMS) suite designed by Microsoft to be an intelligent mobility management and security platform. These products help protect and secure your organization and empower your employees to work in new and flexible ways.

Managed Office 365 / Microsoft 365

Wanstor's Managed Application services for Office 365 and Microsoft 365 provides proactive management of your core business application set. Wanstor will manage access permissions, licence assignment and product support. Wanstor is a Tier 1 Microsoft Cloud Solution Provider (CSP) partner.

An overview of Wanstor Managed Cloud Services

Azure Migration Assessment Consultancy Services

As the first major step in any migration is to determine exactly what you have in your compute environment. An Azure Migration Assessment will help you determine whether it makes sense to migrate to Azure and which application or system dependencies to consider.

Azure Transformation and Migration

Wanstor's Azure migration service is based on Microsoft's Cloud Adoption Framework that includes building an environment with best practice configuration, deployed using infrastructure as code that has been pre-built and deployed to the customers' tenancy in minutes, reducing the cost of deploying cloud infrastructures and increasing security and compliance.

Backup as a Service (BaaS) Archiving, Backup and Disaster Recovery

Wanstor's offsite backup service enables virtual and physical servers to be backed up offsite to our multiple, highly resilient, state-of-the-art data centres. The process is fully managed end-to-end, with a UK wide IT support team checking and maintaining backups on a daily basis.

Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) and Private Cloud

Wanstor provides Infrastructure as a Service from highly resilient, state-of-the-art data centre locations. The platform offers customers a virtual infrastructure environment using VMware ESX for all elements required to deliver a flexible, secure, easy-scaled solution to customer requirements.

Azure Optimisation & Managed Service

Wanstor's Managed Azure and Optimisation and Consultancy services manage your environment in a high quality, stable and efficient cloud architecture. The services are built upon Azure's Well-Architected Framework, which is designed to optimize your platform in five key areas: Security, Reliability, Performance, Operational Excellence, Cost and Best Practice.

An overview of Wanstor Managed Networking Services

Managed SD-WAN

Our managed SD-WAN service has been designed to ensure your business connectivity is always available and that the right applications have the right priority on the network, delivering a great experience for users. SD-WAN keeps everybody secure and productive and adapts over time as needs change.

Managed Wide Area Network (WAN)

In the cloud era, your Internet connection/WAN becomes fundamental to service provision. Wanstor's Managed WAN service provides the deployment and 24/7 management, monitoring and support of ADSL, FTTC, FTTP, Ethernet, MPLS and SD-WAN for reliable and resilient connectivity. Our continuous upgrade service ensures you always receive the best connectivity.

Microsoft 365 Backups

Microsoft provides powerful services within Microsoft 365 – but comprehensive backup of your data is not one of them. Wanstor's Backup for Microsoft 365 eliminates the risk of losing access and control over your Microsoft 365 data, including Exchange, OneDrive and Teams – so that your data is always protected and accessible.

Network, Infrastructure and End User Monitoring & Management

Proactive Managed IT Services for your Network, Infrastructure and End Users. Wanstor's Managed Services include 24/7/365 Service Desk and Network Operations Centre (NOC) Management, Patch Management, Proactive Health Checks of the infrastructure, Threat & Vulnerability Scanning and Technology Road mapping services. They are designed to proactively improve your IT estate.

An overview of Wanstor Managed Security Services

Protective Security Monitoring

As part of an effective Cyber Security strategy, it is important to continually collect and analyse security events to determine if your organisation is under attack. Wanstor's Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) services (Sentinel / Log360) helps your organisation to log, analyse and alert on common cyber security attacks.

Cyber Essentials Plus Assessment and Managed Service

Cyber Essentials is a government backed scheme that provides simple guidance to help you to protect your organisation, whatever its size, against a whole range of the most common cyber-attacks. Wanstor's Cyber Essentials Managed Service, helps you to maintain your organisations security posture to a Cyber Essentials standard continuously.

Patch Management (Servers and Desktops)

Wanstor's Patch Management service provides for the capability to remediate all high-risk or critical security updates across your server and desktop estate to CE+ standards. Wanstor will deploy an agent onto each of your Servers / Desktops and setup an agreed patching schedule to ensure that your devices are regularly patched.

Threat & Vulnerability Management

An effective threat and vulnerability management system is one of the most important functions to mitigate cyber-attacks. Executive teams must have readily accessible information on major vulnerabilities / risks within their business to make decisions. Wanstor's Threat and Vulnerability scanning service helps your organisation to discover and track vulnerabilities within your systems.

Why Wanstor?

A Managed IT Service Provider in London, Wanstor brings industry leading expertise and capability.

Along with meeting criteria in each area of consideration when selecting a managed IT services provider, Wanstor has experience in helping customers manage diverse and often complex IT environments. We have the technology and business knowledge to help you understand and identify your IT and business requirements at every stage in your IT Managed Service journey.

We specialise in each type of delivery model, including managed services, cloud, traditional IT and strategic outsourcing. In other words, we help you realise an integrated multi-sourcing IT strategy. We offer the flexibility to select the degree of support you want for each layer of infrastructure, from basic monitoring and management to designing and delivering a roadmap to digital transformation.

For more information on how Wanstor can help your business and IT department achieve its objectives, just request a call back using our Form at the link below.

[Request a call back](#)

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