

Benefits of Managed IT Services for your business

An Overview

wanstor

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Introduction

Business and not for profit organisations are increasingly reliant on technology in order to maintain effective day-to-day operations. Unfortunately, most organisations are reliant on a relatively small number of people in the IT department to care for every service request, project, and programme of work.

As technology has become more prevalent in business, the IT departments workload has increased significantly. This has led to increased time in resolving IT issues, technology and business projects being delayed, and systems and processes struggling to cope with the increase in user demand.

This, plus the fact that there is a shortage of skilled IT people in the industry, means that many businesses are having to use significant amounts of budget just on staffing costs for daily IT operations. This results in less value for money from IT investments.

The traditional IT practice in many business and not for profit organisations often follows a *'break-fix'* methodology: when technological infrastructure fails - servers, laptops, a network access point - the IT team receive a call and an engineer (if one is employed) is dispatched to fix it. If, that is, they have the time available around business-as-usual activities.



This usually means a longer lead time in resolution for such issues. Alternatively, businesses may buy engineering time from independent consultants, who arrive on site, resolve an issue, and then return to base.

At Wanstor, we find quite often that such technicians operating on an ad-hoc basis are not familiar with the intricacies and the scope of individual business's IT needs. This can lead to misdirected support, resulting in more billable time.

Depending on individual employee roles in a company, this could lead to missed opportunities, lower productivity and necessary overtime in order to meet deadlines - all of which cost the business money. A simple IT outage can add up to a large, unexpected expense very quickly.

Two formulas that can help calculate what the loss to your business over the course of an IT outage could be are as follows:

Productivity Loss Formula

$$P = (\text{Number of users affected}) \times (\% \text{ of Productivity Loss}) \times (\text{Average salary per hour}) \times (\text{Duration of downtime})$$

Revenue Loss Formula

$$R = (\text{Number of users affected}) \times (\% \text{ of Revenue Loss}) \times (\text{Average profit per employee per hour}) \times (\text{Duration})$$

Overall Loss Due to Downtime

$$P + R = \text{£££}$$

Of course, each business is different, and different business models will have different staff affected by IT outages. But by using the two formulas above, decision makers can soon determine the substantial cost of an IT outage using traditional IT support models.

A better way: Outsourcing IT Services

If the traditional IT *'break-fix'* model isn't working, there must be another way. At Wanstor, we believe that there is - one where IT can demonstrate value back to the business, and one which also takes a proactive approach to IT.

Wanstor's philosophy behind a modern day IT service is based around simple, proven methodologies and practices, including:

- + Regular maintenance reviews of all IT equipment to prolong usability and performance of computer systems
- + Making sure security patches and software updates protect the network and endpoints from both issues and threats
- + Setting up remote technical support with dedicated teams who understand your users and wider organisation
- + Proactive monitoring and early detection to identify and resolve issues before causing downtime and disruption
- + Ensuring documentation and network maps provide an in-depth overview of IT needs, streamlining support visits
- + Reporting and tracking to segregate problematic devices for replacement

By partnering with a specialist Managed IT services partner, businesses can adopt service methods which provide a much higher quality service for users.

At Wanstor, we have three objectives front of mind when providing IT support to any business:

Elimination of downtime to maximise employee productivity:

Allowing our support customers to focus on business and growth objectives by ensuring staff can access the right IT tools & systems

Best practices adopted as standard: Developing a relationship with our customers by understanding each business, each IT roadmap and the objectives of each individual IT department. Our engineers and support personnel continuously cross- and up-skill, ensuring that customers receive the best advice and support

A proactive approach: Wanstor works with customers to understand existing IT estates, detecting issues and implementing fixes before these become critical. This leads to shorter downtime and lower support costs in the medium to long term with incidents identified before their impact spreads to the wider business

Ten reasons for outsourcing IT support to a Managed Services Partner

In the previous section we compared the traditional break / fix IT model to Wanstor's proactive methodology, providing an overview to each approach.

Now we have defined the background to Wanstor's IT Service Management approach, it is time to cover the ten reasons why Wanstor believes organisations of all sizes could benefit from outsourcing their IT support.



An IT Managed Services Partner supplements your IT department

Many organisations treat IT infrastructure like a white goods appliance. When it breaks, they pay someone to fix it or they hire additional engineers to solve immediate problems and service a basic level of demand. This means that internal IT teams never really overcome IT issues, often missing targets and business objectives around the IT services they provide and projects they are tasked with.

Outsourcing IT support gives you the best of both worlds.

By outsourcing to a specialist partner, your own IT team may undertake business critical projects while your managed IT service provider ensures that your IT service meets users' needs. It falls to the chosen IT service provider to make sure that the right staff are available at the right time in support of your business.

Many organisations cannot employ the staff they require for day-to-day maintenance.

This leaves issues with IT and technical support, management of new implementations not happening, and upgrades or service improvements not executed as planned. To cope with short term demand, many organisations employ managed IT providers as consultants on short term contracts. However, employing a managed service partner for the short term

provides short term results. By developing a strategic partnership with your IT provider many organisations could benefit from service desks that truly understand their users and their business.

A managed IT service provider should understand your entire IT infrastructure. This includes specific needs and requirements, and the goals that your technology should be helping you to reach.

Instead of a reactive approach, managed service providers should be proactive. Identifying potential issues before they appear, a managed IT provider should offer advice and take proactive steps in all aspects of technology, from infrastructure to vendor management, maintenance to upgrades, and consulting on solutions to increasing productivity. Your internal IT function can focus on business growth and your organisation's technology roadmap, so that you hit revenue and customer satisfaction targets.

In summary, by outsourcing your existing IT services to a specialist managed services partner, you benefit from an in-house IT department without paying for one or more dedicated employees, with full access to professional support, goal-oriented solutions and IT infrastructure maintenance focused on preventing downtime.

Detect to prevent

Common issues that Wanstor has observed amongst customers in a range of businesses where staff only cover day-to-day IT issues include:

- + Hard drive failure warnings ignored
- + Hard drive fragmentation and disk space warnings ignored
- + Malware and Spyware deployed on devices, leaving them vulnerable to hackers and malicious behaviour by bad actors
- + Antivirus updates slipping, with users struggling (or unable) to download relevant patches or upgrades
- + Outdated Windows patches leaving machines vulnerable to security risks, with Microsoft operating systems operating below optimum effectiveness
- + Windows version update failures and licensing issues
- + Duplicate network addresses appearing
- + Unexpected changes in hardware as users deploy unchecked equipment which has not been correctly logged
- + CPU and Memory issues leading to slow performance of data across the business
- + Event and error logging unenforced, leaving IT service teams exposed without knowledge management of undocumented issues while presenting the opportunity for incorrect fixes and upgrades across the IT estate

Users may fail to detect minor issues with devices or equipment they are using; such issues, if left unchecked, can eventually lead to major IT outages, leaving staff unproductive and customers unable to access your products or services.

From Wanstor's experience these IT issues can, if not addressed, snowball over time - resulting in large scale IT outage leaving users with limited access to the tools they require.

By outsourcing your IT to a specialist partner such as Wanstor, your business gains access to IT monitoring and management tools, meaning that both your IT department and managed service provider are capable of detecting anomalies across the IT infrastructure - allowing development of an action plan before these affect either IT or user performance.

Access to both IT monitoring and management tools allows you to detect anomalies across the IT infrastructure

Remote technical support reduces IT costs with shorter resolution times

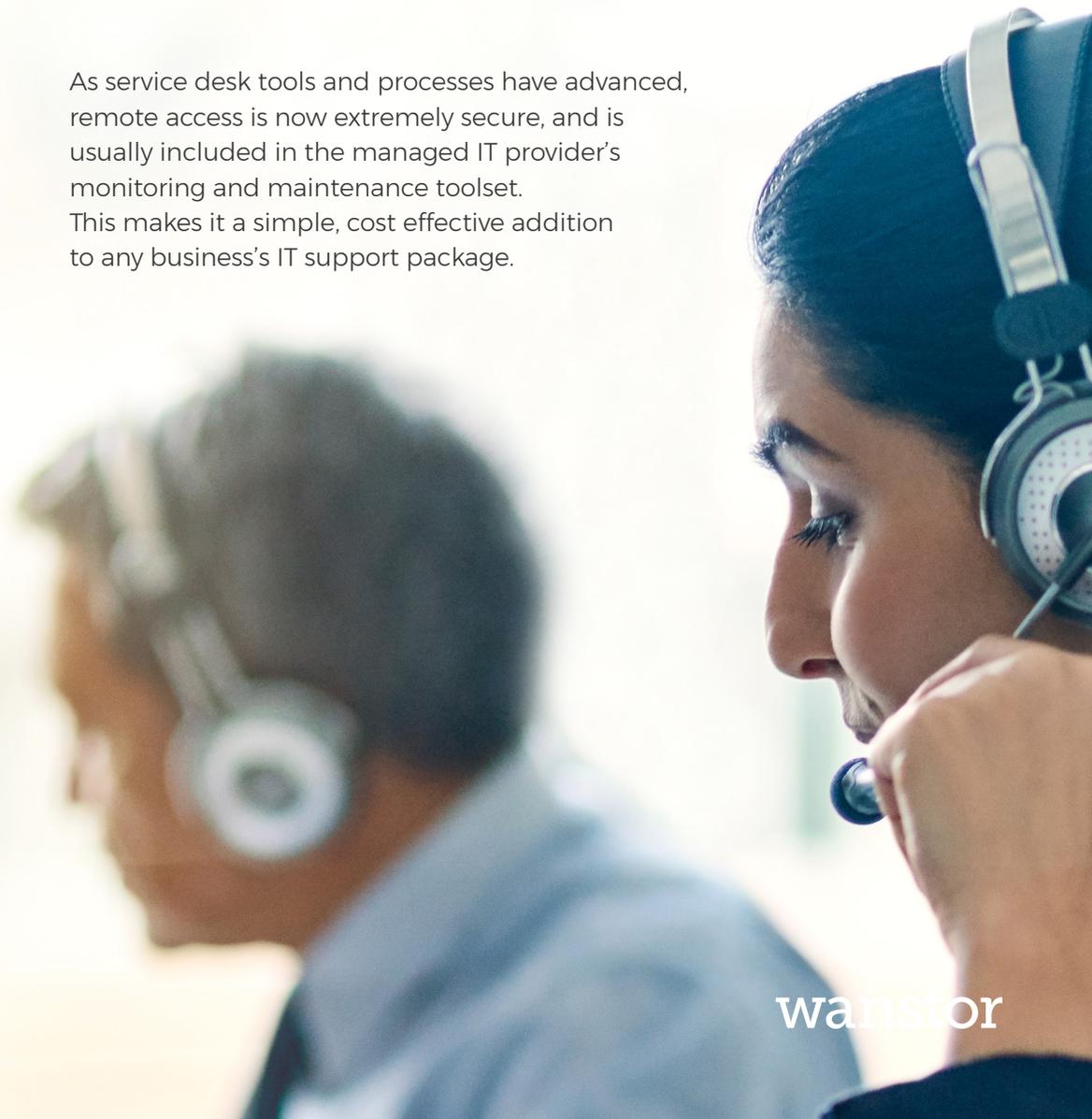
IT service desk tools and processes have improved immeasurably over the past five years. In today's business environment, IT managed service providers can in many cases address issues remotely without the need for on-site engineering.

Remote access reduces expenses to IT providers as there are no travel costs or lengthy engineering time required to identify an issue at site, meaning the IT service call costs less to resolve. This cost saving can be passed back to your business, and also results in faster response times, with no need for engineers on-site.

Whilst remote technical support is not new, the ability to evaluate IT issues swiftly without dispatching an engineer to site means valuable time and operational costs are saved.

At Wanstor we often see issues that could easily be addressed via remote support being reported to IT. There is no need to involve your internal teams around issues such as user error in accessing applications, password resets, application upgrades and support questions from users unfamiliar with certain types of IT equipment.

As service desk tools and processes have advanced, remote access is now extremely secure, and is usually included in the managed IT provider's monitoring and maintenance toolset. This makes it a simple, cost effective addition to any business's IT support package.



Don't believe the vendor hype: Get the truth from a managed IT supplier

When technology fails, many IT teams simply contact the vendor for as much free support as possible within the terms of the warranty. But many vendors offer remote support from large call centre operations, who do not understand your business or the users of IT within your business.

A typical example of vendor support includes making one or more lengthy phone calls where your users or IT team are cycled around a call centre. Quite often, issues remain unaddressed or are partly resolved, due to language barriers and a lack of understanding regarding your business within vendor support teams.

This means that you are back to square one when the vendor's resolution doesn't work.

By employing a managed IT service partner, business and not for profit organisations gain access to a wealth of information, knowledge and experience in dealing with a range of vendor products and solutions. As the managed service provider deals with vendors on a regular basis, it is likely that they will have a much stronger relationship with the latter than your own organisation.

This means that things which are often overlooked by IT teams or seen as too troublesome, such as warranty and support agreements, can all be handled by your outsourced IT firm, instead of by your IT employees.

Support for specific hardware and software can also be handled via the management of one supplier rather than several. This gives your IT staff a single point of contact for all technical support needs. Managed IT providers such as Wanstor will also have access to specialised solutions and services not always offered to any business, such as bulk licensing and enhanced support options.

Having the ability to manage all of your IT support through one supplier and support number alleviates stress and reduces hassle for IT teams requiring support, and a good IT managed services provider should be able to offer your IT team impartial advice and solutions that provide a good fit your business's needs.

Do not lose money on traditional 'break / fix' solutions

IT issues can become expensive very quickly, especially if not addressed promptly. Network and server outages may leave employees stranded or unable to function, especially if heavily reliant on email and online access. Traditional 'break / fix' IT service models usually mean a business pays employees for work they cannot complete because the necessary IT tools are unavailable.

This doubles the financial penalty to your company, with staff essentially being paid to do nothing and resourcing expensive engineers in order to resolve issues with IT.

The key element of a managed IT service is not paying for issue resolution, but rather for issue prevention. With managed IT, you pay to prevent downtime and to maintain your expensive IT infrastructure.

Wanstor's extensive experience in dealing with IT managed services for over 100+ customers illustrates that regular maintenance has a huge impact on the stability, performance, security and longevity of both the IT infrastructure and those devices connected to it.

Consider that when your business suffers downtime resulting from IT issues, this is an emergency. The nature of your relationship with a managed service provider means that IT issues preventing business operation are losing your service provider money - failing to meet their Service Level Agreements means penalties paid to you, the customer, for sub-standard service.

No business can afford to lose money.

This means that managed service providers are driven to employ the very best practices in operation, hosting 'always on' maintenance and reporting tools so as to prevent downtime and detect incidents in advance.

This results in most cases with issues being swiftly resolved, leaving measures in place to prevent reoccurrence.



IT support at an agreed rate simplifies operational cost management and reduces hidden expenditures

A major downfall of traditional in-house IT service models is unexpected costs in critical technology failure and repair. During downtime, you are still paying employees despite a loss in productivity, along with support fees to resolve the problem. A managed IT service is based on a payment model designed to prevent downtime, with a clear understanding of what you are paying for in terms of the service over duration of a contract.

When IT expenses vary greatly from month to month, it can be difficult to plan and budget accurately - with a standardised payment model for IT managed services, your finance team can eliminate recovery costs covered under your service agreement, simplifying management of the IT support budget.

With most issues covered, monthly payments to your managed IT service provider are predictable and accurate, meaning no surprises

By having these predictable costs for IT services in place, it means the IT and Finance teams can start taking a proactive approach to budgets, and align spend with your IT roadmap.

A good IT managed service provider should offer a transparent commercial model to your business, at the user level. Regular maintenance and monitoring should allow your provider to proactively manage your network, servers and devices. This approach to problem solving should reduce the prospect of future incidents or outages, or provide insight and early warning around issues allowing your IT Team to plan ahead in allocating budget around prospective solutions.

Depending on the agreement with your IT provider, most issues that you face should be covered by a flat rate fee, with the exception of new hardware and software. These costs should be streamlined in advance, as most maintenance tasks are standardised, proceduralised and easily repeatable through automation.

Alignment of goals between Business and IT

When IT infrastructure works, it increases user productivity, ultimately helping your business achieve its objectives.

Your managed IT services provider should, in addition to resolving issues in IT, serve as consultant on business development around how technology can drive your business forward - from new solutions to improving internal procedures, these goals can be achieved with professional management of your technology.

For your managed IT provider, simply ensuring that workstations, networks and data centres are operational is not enough; technology must function for the good of your business. Service providers should gain insight into daily business processes and best practice, ensuring that IT is closely aligned to your business objectives.

Wanstor works with customers in the capacity of a consultant along with IT managed services we provide, to help establish long term implementations for business through new solutions, security, training and best practice that can improve business process and ultimately revenue streams and profitability.

To add value by identifying and implementing technology which improves productivity, Wanstor offers customers in-depth quarterly reviews. This ensures that we gain the knowledge of and insight around your organisation and IT requirements, and that any recommended IT solutions fall in line with your business vision.

Outsourcing IT correctly reduces overall IT expenses

In simple terms, when a business cares for its information technology, this function fails less and, in doing so, returns lower operating costs.

By the same token, the benefits of managed IT lead to lower operational costs for a business. Networks, Data Centres and devices are monitored continuously, with ongoing maintenance ensuring good health of the IT infrastructure.

By maintaining a proactive monitoring and management approach through a managed IT services partner, many unforeseen costs are eliminated with the root cause of incidents and issues tackled before being able to manifest. Early detection means fewer emergencies, resulting in fewer support calls.

In addition to better performance, less downtime, and fewer issues, properly managed IT services are cheaper than traditional in-house IT team 'break / fix' service models; it takes less to maintain technology than it does to repair it. The business benefits from access to professional support without individual charges for isolated incidents.

A good managed IT support partner will outline a breakdown of calls, engineering time and solutions available under terms of a contract before any agreement is reached, meaning no surprises for financial controllers.

Additionally, your business now maintains greater control over IT rather than the reverse being true. A good IT support partner should be fully accountable for uptime, issues and emergencies covered under a transparent commercial agreement.

Service provider accountability for uptime, incidents and emergencies should be covered in a transparent commercial agreement

Take advantage of large business solutions

Running the IT department for a business or not-for-profit organisation doesn't mean that you have to choose the lowest cost option for IT support at all times. Instead you should evaluate your managed IT services partner through the value they can bring to your organisation over the length of a contract. By partnering with a specialist MSP like Wanstor, your organisation can take advantage of enterprise-level support and solutions through third parties and Wanstor engineers.

This in turn helps your business stay ahead of the competition and transform technology from being a business inhibitor to a business enabler.

When partnering with a managed IT service provider, you are able to access technology solutions normally reserved for large corporate enterprises, but at a cost tailored to your own individual budget.

At Wanstor, we offer enterprise-level IT solutions across the following areas:

- + Data Backup, Disaster Recovery, Business Continuity
- + Firewall and Security Solutions
- + Web Content Filtering
- + Virtual Private Networks
- + Networking: LAN, WAN and Wi-Fi
- + Cloud: Public, Private & Hybrid
- + Data Centre: Co-location, storage and servers
- + Application Management
- + Smartphone and Mobile Device Solutions
- + Security Policy Management and Administration
- + Voice over IP phone systems and Telecoms
- + Email hosting and Spam Protection
- + Software Licensing

Free up resources and focus on your core business

Standard IT operations consist of many critical yet repetitive technical tasks that take time and experience to perform. The traditional *'break / fix'* methodology within IT is now out of date, and no longer sits well with the agile nature of business today.

This means that standard, day-to-day tasks such as updates and running antivirus, applying and testing Windows security patches, and monitoring the health of data backup solutions, become the responsibility of the employee or are not undertaken at all.

At Wanstor, we believe employees should be able to focus on the essentials of their assigned roles without fear of having to deal with IT issues in the workplace.

When left in the hands of users, many IT tasks are not completed correctly, resulting in additional issues, security breaches and costly downtime.

A managed IT service provider can easily perform repetitive maintenance tasks through automated tools and monitoring applications capable of reporting back on various issues.

Through following best practice and documentation of procedure, routine tasks can be performed quickly and cost-effectively without needing to take an employee offline; tasks that require device reboots or scan resources can be scheduled after work hours.

With managed IT services, your staff do not need to focus on keeping devices current with Windows updates, running disk defrags or virus scans, or wasting time on endpoint maintenance.

This means that employees can focus on mission critical projects, while your IT is handled by experts at all times.

Final thoughts

A strong managed services strategy means that you can expect new or existing IT managed services to grow along with your business and your users' needs. Wherever you start on your IT managed provider journey, your partner should offer a range of services that include only what you need for an efficient IT operation in an open and transparent manner.

Your IT services provider should work with you to define a strategy pinpointing your position on the IT maturity curve, and how managed services fit within your existing and future requirements. At Wanstor, we believe businesses are stronger when they have an IT managed services provider they trust to embrace breakthrough productivity and accelerate the creation of value.

Why Wanstor?

Wanstor brings industry leading expertise and capabilities to bear in helping businesses of all sizes manage diverse and often complex IT environments. We have the technology and business knowledge to help you understand and identify your IT service requirements both now and into the future.

Wanstor can help your business deliver efficiencies across your IT infrastructure with a broad range of capabilities.

Additionally, we offer our customers the flexibility to select the degree of support required for each layer of infrastructure - from basic monitoring and management, to long-term arrangements based on innovation paths designed to replace aging or inflexible infrastructure with new technology.

For more information on how Wanstor can provide your business with the right IT managed service model, call us on 0333 123 0360, email us at info@wanstor.com or visit us online at www.wanstor.com

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