



# ARIZONA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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*BUYER'S  
GUIDE*

***THE ARIZONA BUSINESS OWNER'S  
GUIDE TO I.T. SUPPORT AND SERVICES:***

**WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT  
TO PAY FOR I.T. SUPPORT  
FOR YOUR BUSINESS**

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

**READ THIS GUIDE AND YOU'LL DISCOVER:**

- The three most common ways I.T. 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 I.T. services; you'll learn what it is, and why you need to avoid agreeing to it.
- Exclusions, hidden fees, and other "gotcha" clauses I.T. 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.
- 20 revealing questions to ask your I.T. support firm BEFORE giving them access to your computer network, e-mail, and data.

**From the Desk of:**

**Sean Oseran**

**CEO**

**Integrated Axis Technology Group**

Suppose you are the owner of a business in Arizona that is currently looking to outsource some or all of the I.T. support for your company. In that case, 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 Sean Oseran, CEO of Integrated Axis Technology Group Inc. We've been providing I.T. services to businesses in the Tucson area for over 20 years. You may not have heard of us before, but I'm sure you're familiar with one or more of the other businesses that are clients of ours. A few of their comments are enclosed.

One of the most common questions 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 three reasons.

I wanted:

- 1.** An easy way to answer this question and educate all prospective clients who come to us on the most common ways I.T. service companies package and price their services and the pros and cons of each approach.
- 2.** To bring to light a few "industry secrets" about I.T. service contracts and SLAs (service level agreements) that almost no business owner thinks about, understands, or knows to ask about when evaluating I.T. service providers that can end up burning 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.** To educate business owners on how to pick the right I.T. company for their specific situation, budget, and needs based on the VALUE the company can deliver, not just the high or low price.

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

Dedicated to serving you,

Sean Oseran

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Sean attended the University of Arizona as an undergraduate and studied law at California Western School of Law. After working several years for the Pima County Superior Court in alternative dispute resolution, he switched gears by moving into the information technology field. As a young IT professional, Sean created and sold two IT support businesses, the second of which sold to Integrated Axis Technology in 2009, where he came on board as its Director of Sales and Account Management. Sean is a tennis enthusiast who trains dogs in his spare time. He's been married for 26 years and has two adult children.



## **ABOUT INTEGRATED AXIS TECHNOLOGY GROUP, INC.**

We are an employee-owned company with a leadership team dedicated to providing exceptional IT support and customer service for your business. We have mastered the triple threat of efficiency, productivity, and security, to optimize and safeguard your company's technological environment. Our job is not done until your technology runs precisely as it should.

## **SPECIAL THANKS TO...**



# **COMPARING APPLES TO APPLES: THE 3 PREDOMINANT I.T. SERVICE MODELS EXPLAINED**

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

## **1. SOFTWARE VENDOR-SUPPLIED I.T. SERVICES**

Many software companies will offer I.T. 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 and all the applications and devices connected to it. If your problem resides outside their particular software or the server it's hosted on, they can't help you and will often refer you to "your I.T. department." While it's usually 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 complete I.T. services and support most businesses need to stay up and running.

## **2. MANAGED I.T. SERVICES**

This is a model where the I.T. services company takes the role of your fully outsourced "I.T. department." An I.T. managed service provider not only installs and supports all the devices and P.C.s that connect to your server(s) but also offers phone and on-site support, antivirus, cyber security, backup, and a host of other services to monitor and maintain the health, speed, performance, and security of your computer network.

## **3. TIME & MATERIALS**

In the industry, we call these "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 fixing a problem with your e-mail, or it may encompass a large project, like a 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.

When looking to outsource your I.T. support, the two service models you will most likely have to choose between are the "managed I.T. services" and "break-fix" models. Therefore, let's dive into the pros and cons of these two options and the typical fee structure.

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## **MANAGED I.T. 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 some form of managed I.T. is essential for every business.

In our company, we offer different plans to fit the needs of our clients. In some cases, where the business is small, we might offer a very basic managed services plan to ensure the most essential maintenance is done, then bill the client hourly for any support used. Our smallest clients often find this the most economical. But for some of our mid-sized organizations, we offer a fully managed approach where more comprehensive I.T. services are covered in a managed plan. By doing this, we can properly staff their accounts and ensure they get the fast, responsive support and expertise they need.

The only time I would recommend a "time and materials" approach is when you already have a competent I.T. person or team proactively managing your computer network and simply have a specific I.T. project that your current in-house I.T. team doesn't have the time nor expertise to implement (such as migrating to a cloud-based solution, implementing a cyber security plan, etc.). Outside of that specific scenario, I do not think the break-fix approach is a good idea for general I.T. support for one very important 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 that computer networks absolutely, positively need ongoing maintenance and monitoring to stay secure. The ever-increasing dependency we have on I.T. 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 that work around the clock to do one thing: hack into your network to steal data or money or to hold you ransom.

As you may know, ransomware is at an all-time high because hackers make millions of tax-free dollars, robbing one small business owner at a time. But that's not their only incentive. Some will attempt to hack your network to access bank accounts, credit cards, or passwords to rob you and your clients. Some use your computer network to send spam using YOUR domain and servers, host pirated software, and spread viruses. Some even do it just for the "fun" of it.

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And don't think for a minute that these cybercriminals are solo crooks working alone in a hoodie out of their basement. They are highly organized and well-run operations employing teams of hackers who work together to scam as many people as possible. They use advanced software that scans millions of networks for vulnerabilities and use readily available data on the dark web of YOUR usernames, passwords, e-mail addresses, and other data to gain access.

Of course, this isn't the only I.T. danger you face. Other common "disasters" include rogue employees, lost devices, hardware failures (still a BIG reason for data loss), fire and natural disasters, and other issues that can interrupt or outright destroy your I.T. 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 I.T. services are all about) is a LOT less expensive and damaging to your organization than waiting until one of these things happen and then paying for emergency I.T. services to restore your systems to working order (break-fix).

## ***SHOULD YOU JUST HIRE A FULL-TIME I.T. MANAGER?***

In most cases, it is not cost-effective for companies with under 100 employees to hire a full-time I.T. person for a couple of reasons. First of all, no one I.T. person can know everything there is to know about I.T. support and cyber security. If your company is big enough and growing fast enough to support a full-time I.T. lead, you probably need more than one guy. You need someone with help-desk expertise as well as a network engineer, a network administrator, a C.I.O. (chief information officer), and a C.I.S.O. (chief information security officer).

Therefore, even if you hire a full-time I.T. person, you may still need to supplement their position with co-managed I.T. support using an I.T. firm that can fill in the gaps and provide services and expertise they don't have. This is not a bad plan; what is a lousy plan is hiring one person and expecting them to know it all and do it all.

Second, finding and hiring good people is difficult; finding and hiring skilled I.T. people is incredibly challenging due to the skill shortage for I.T. And if you're not technical, it will be tough for you to interview candidates and sift and sort through all the duds out there to find someone with good skills and experience. Because you're not technical, you might not know the right questions to ask during the interview process or the skills you need to do the job.

More often than not, the hard and soft costs of building an internal I.T. department for general I.T. support doesn't provide the best return on investment for the average small to midsize business. An internal I.T. department typically doesn't make sense until you have closer to 100 employees OR you have unique circumstances and need specialized skills, a developer, etc., but not for day-to-day I.T. support and maintenance.

## **WHY “BREAK-FIX” WORKS ENTIRELY IN THE CONSULTANT’S FAVOR, NOT YOURS**

Under a "break-fix" model, you and your I.T. firm have a fundamental conflict of interest. The I.T. services company has no incentive to prevent problems, stabilize your network, or resolve issues quickly because they are getting paid by the hour when things stop working. 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, precisely what you DON'T want.

Under this model, the I.T. consultant can take the liberty of assigning a junior (lower-paid) technician to work on your problem –one who may take two to three times as long to resolve an issue that a more senior (and more expensive) technician might decide in a fraction of the time. There is no incentive to manage the technician's time adequately, and there is every reason for them to prolong the project and 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 issues 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 must keep track of the hours they've worked to ensure you aren't getting overbilled. Since you often have no way of knowing if they've worked the hours they say they have, it creates a situation where you really need to be able to trust they are being 100% ethical and honest tracking THEIR hours properly (not all do).

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

## **WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT TO PAY?**

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

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## **HOURLY BREAKFIX FEES:**

Most managed I.T. services firms will quote you a MONTHLY fee based on the number of devices they need to maintain, back up, and support. In the Arizona market, that fee is between \$250 to \$325 per server, \$60 to \$150 per desktop, and approximately \$15 per smartphone or mobile device. If you hire an I.T. consultant and sign up for a managed I.T. services contract, here are some things that SHOULD be included (make sure you read your agreement to validate this):

- A very detailed scope of work that specifies what “success” is. Make sure you detail what your expectations are in performance, workflow, costs, security, access, etc. The more detailed you can be, the better. Detailing your expectations upfront will go a long way toward avoiding miscommunications and additional fees, later on, to give you what you REALLY want. A fixed budget and time frame for completion.
- Agreeing to this upfront aligns with both your agenda and the consultant’s. Be wary of loose estimates allowing the consulting firm to bill you for “unforeseen” circumstances. The bottom line is this: It is your I.T. 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 consider those contingencies and bill accordingly.

Warning! Beware the gray areas of “all-inclusive” service contracts. In order to truly compare the “cost” of one managed I.T. service contract with another, you need to make sure you fully understand what IS and ISN’T included AND the SLA (service level agreement) you are signing up for. It’s VERY easy for one I.T. services provider to appear less expensive than another UNTIL you look closely at what you’re getting.

## **MANAGED I.T. SERVICES:**

Most I.T. services companies selling break-fix services charge between \$100 and \$200 per hour with a one-hour minimum. In most cases, if you purchase and pay for a block of hours in advance, they will discount 5% to as much as 20% on their hourly rates. If they quote a project, the fees range widely based on the scope of work outlined. If you are hiring an I.T. consulting firm for a project, I suggest you demand the following:

- 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 and will often be billed separately. This is not necessarily a “scam,” or unethical UNLESS the managed I.T. 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 new servers, PCs, laptops, etc.
- Software licenses
- Special projects
- Professional Services

# **20 QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOUR I.T. SERVICES COMPANY OR CONSULTANT BEFORE HIRING THEM FOR I.T. SUPPORT**

The following are 20 questions to ask your I.T. 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.

## **SECTION 1: CUSTOMER SERVICE**

### **1. WHEN I HAVE A PROBLEM, HOW DO I GET SUPPORT?**

#### **IA'S ANSWER:**

When a client has a problem, we “open a ticket” in our I.T. management system to correctly assign, track, prioritize, document, and resolve client issues. However, some I.T. firms force you to log in to submit a ticket and won't allow you to call or email them. This is for THEIR convenience, not yours. Trust me; this will become a significant inconvenience and thorn in your side. While a portal is a good option, it should never be your ONLY option for requesting support.

Also, ensure they have a RELIABLE system to keep track of client “tickets” and requests. If they don't, I can practically guarantee that your submissions will sometimes get overlooked, skipped, and forgotten.

Requesting support should also be EASY for you. So be sure to ask how you can submit a problem to their support desk for resolution. We make it easy. Calling, emailing, or submitting a ticket via our portal puts your I.T. issue on the fast track to getting resolved.

### **2. DO YOU OFFER AFTER-HOURS SUPPORT, AND IF SO, WHAT IS THE GUARANTEED RESPONSE TIME?**

#### **IA'S ANSWER:**

Any good I.T. company will answer their phones LIVE (not voice mail or phone trees) and respond from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every weekday. But many CEOs and executives work outside normal “9 to 5” hours and need I.T. support both nights and weekends. Not only can you reach our after-hours support any time and any day, but we also GUARANTEE a response time of 60 minutes or less for everyday problems and within 60 minutes for problems marked “emergency,” such as a network being down or critical issue that is significantly impacting your ability to work.

### **3. DO YOU HAVE A WRITTEN, GUARANTEED RESPONSE TIME FOR WORKING ON RESOLVING YOUR PROBLEMS?**

#### **IA'S ANSWER:**

Most I.T. firms offer a 60-minute or 30-minute response time to your call during regular business hours. Be very wary of someone who doesn't have a guaranteed response time **IN WRITING** – that's a sign they are too disorganized, understaffed, or overwhelmed to handle your request. Our written, guaranteed response time is one hour or less. A good I.T. firm should also be able to show you statistics from their PSA (professional services automation) software, where all client problems (tickets) get responded to and tracked. Ask to see a report on average ticket response and resolution times.

### **4. WILL I BE GIVEN A DEDICATED ACCOUNT MANAGER?**

#### **IA'S ANSWER:**

Smaller firms may not offer this due to staff limitations, and the owner may tell you they will personally manage your account. While that sounds like great customer service, the owner is usually so busy that you'll only be given reactive support instead of proactive account management. Rest assured, from the initial call to the final resolution, you will work with our **SAME** dedicated account manager who will know you, your business and your goals.

### **5. DO YOU HAVE A FEEDBACK SYSTEM FOR YOUR CLIENTS TO PROVIDE "THUMBS UP" OR "THUMBS DOWN" RATINGS ON YOUR SERVICE? IF SO, CAN I SEE THOSE REPORTS?**

#### **IA'S ANSWER:**

If they don't have this feedback system, they may hide their lousy customer service results. If they have one, ask to see the actual scores and reporting. That will tell you a lot about the quality of service they are providing. We are proud of our positive client feedback scores and will gladly show them to you.

## **SECTION 2: I.T. MAINTENANCE:**

### **6. DO YOU OFFER TRUE MANAGED I.T. SERVICES AND SUPPORT?**

#### **IA'S ANSWER:**

You want to find an I.T. company that will proactively monitor for problems and perform routine maintenance on your I.T. systems. If they can't do this, or they don't offer it, we strongly recommend you look somewhere else. Our remote network monitoring system watches over your network 24/7 so we can address issues and concerns **BEFORE** becoming more significant.

## 7. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN YOUR MANAGED SERVICES AGREEMENT?

### **IA'S ANSWER:**

Another “gotcha” many I.T. companies fail to explain is what is NOT included in your monthly managed services agreement that will trigger an invoice. Their so-called “all you can eat” option is RARELY true – there are limitations to what’s included, and you want to know what they are BEFORE you sign. It’s widespread for projects not to be included, like a server upgrade, moving offices, adding new employees, and, of course, the software and the hardware you need to purchase.

**But here’s a question you need to ask: If you were hit with a costly ransomware attack, would the recovery be EXTRA or included in your contract? Recovering from a cyber-attack could take HOURS of high-level I.T. expertise. Who is going to eat that bill? Be sure you’re clear on this before you sign because surprising you with a big, fat bill is totally unacceptable.**

Other things to inquire about are:

- Do you offer a truly unlimited help desk? (Make sure you are not nickel-and-dimed for every call.)
- Does the service include support for cloud services, such as Microsoft 365?
- Do you charge extra if you have to resolve a problem with a line-of-business application, Internet service provider, phone system, leased printer, etc.? (You want an I.T. company that will own the problems and not point fingers. We will call the vendor or software company on your behalf.)
- What about on-site support calls? Or support remote offices?
- If our employees had to work remotely (due to a shutdown, natural disaster, etc.), would you provide support on their home PCs, or would that trigger a bill?
- If we were to get ransomed or experience some other disaster (fire, flood, theft, tornado, hurricane, etc.), would rebuilding the network be included in the service plan or considered an extra project we would have to pay for? (Get this IN WRITING. Recovering from such a disaster could take hundreds of hours for your I.T. company’s techs, so you want to know how a situation like this will be handled before it happens.)

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## 8. IS YOUR HELP DESK LOCAL OR OUTSOURCED?

### IA'S ANSWER:

Be careful because smaller I.T. firms may outsource this critical function. Even some of the bigger IT companies outsource support to other countries. As a result, you may get a tech unfamiliar with you, your network, previous problems, and personal preferences. Or worse, they may not be as qualified. This can be frustrating and lead to the same issues cropping up over and over longer resolution time, and you have to spend time educating the tech on your account. Fortunately, we provide a dedicated technician to your account who will get to know you and your company, as well as your preferences and history. When you work with our local help desk technician, they'll be more capable of successfully resolving your I.T. issues and handling things the way you want.

## 9. HOW MANY ENGINEERS DO YOU HAVE ON STAFF?

### IA'S ANSWER:

Be careful about hiring small, one-person I.T. firms with only one or two techs or outsourcing this critical role. Everyone gets sick, has emergencies, goes on vacation, or occasionally takes a few days off. We have more than enough full-time techs on staff to cover in case one cannot work.

ALSO: Ask how they will document fixes, changes, and credentials for your organization so that if one tech is out or unavailable, another can step in and know your network settings, history, previous issues, etc., and how those issues were resolved. This is important, or you'll be constantly frustrated with techs starting over to fix a known problem or may screw up something because they don't understand or have a blueprint of your computer network.

## 10. DO YOU OFFER DOCUMENTATION OF OUR NETWORK AS PART OF THE PLAN, AND HOW DOES THAT WORK?

### IA'S ANSWER:

Network documentation is exactly what it sounds like. Maintaining detailed technical records about the assets you own (computers, devices, software, directory structure, user profiles, passwords, etc.) and how your network is set up, backed up, and secured. Every I.T. company should provide this to you in written and electronic form at no additional cost and update it every quarter.

Why is this important? There are several reasons:

- First, it shows professionalism and integrity in protecting YOU. No I.T. person or company should be the only holder of the keys to the kingdom. Because we document your network assets and passwords, you have a blueprint you can give to another I.T. person or company to take over if necessary.
- Second, good documentation allows the engineers working on your account to resolve problems faster. They don't waste time fumbling around your network to find things and uncover statements, hardware, software licenses, etc.
- Third, if you had to restore your network after a disaster, you'd have the blueprint to putting things back in place as they were quickly.

All our clients receive this in written and electronic form at no additional cost. We also perform a quarterly update on this material and make sure certain key people from your organization have this information and know how to use it, giving you complete control over your network.

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

## **11. DO YOU MEET WITH YOUR CLIENTS QUARTERLY AS PART OF YOUR MANAGED SERVICES AGREEMENT?**

### **IA'S ANSWER:**

To us, there's nothing more critical than face-to-face time with our clients. Therefore, we prioritize meeting with all our clients at least quarterly (sometimes more often) to provide a "technology review." In these meetings, we provide you with the status updates of projects you're working on and the health and security of your network. We also make recommendations for new equipment and upgrades you'll be needing soon or sometime shortly. Our quarterly meetings with you are C-level discussions (not geek-fests) where we openly discuss your business goals, including your I.T. budget, critical projects, compliance issues, known problems, and cyber security best practices. Our goal in these meetings is to help you improve operations, lower costs, increase efficiencies, and ensure your organizational productivity stays high. This is also your opportunity to give us feedback on how we're doing and discuss upcoming projects.

## **12. IF I NEED OR WANT TO CANCEL MY SERVICE WITH YOU, HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN, AND HOW DO YOU OFFBOARD US?**

### **IA'S ANSWER:**

Carefully review the cancellation clause in your agreement—many I.T. firms hold their clients hostage with long-term contracts with hefty cancellation penalties and will even sue you if you refuse to pay. We would never "force" clients to stay with us if they are unhappy. Therefore, we make canceling your contract easy, with zero contention or fines. Our "easy out" agreements make us work much harder to exceed your expectations daily, so we keep your business.

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## SECTION 3: CYBERSECURITY

### 13. HOW DO YOU LOCK DOWN OUR EMPLOYEES' PCS AND DEVICES TO ENSURE THEY'RE NOT COMPROMISING OUR NETWORK?

#### IA'S ANSWER:

As mentioned above, the question may get technical. The key is that they HAVE an answer and don't hesitate to provide it. Some of the things they should mention are:

- 2FA (two-factor authentication)
- Advanced end-point protection, NOT just antivirus
- Security Awareness Training
- VPN Access When Required

Because combining these lockdown strategies is essential to protecting your network and data, we employ ALL of these for our clients. Adequate cyber security should never compromise between choosing this OR that. It should feature every weapon in your arsenal.

### 14. WHAT CYBER LIABILITY AND ERRORS AND OMISSIONS INSURANCE DO YOU CARRY TO PROTECT ME?

#### IA'S ANSWER:

Here's something to ask: if THEY cause a problem with your network that causes you to be down for hours or days, to lose data, or get hacked, who's responsible? What if one of their technicians gets hurt at your office? Or damages your property while there? In this litigious society we live in, you better make darn sure whomever you hire is insured with both errors and omissions insurance, workers' compensation, and cyber liability- and don't be shy about asking them to send you the policy to review! If you get hit with ransomware due to their negligence, someone has to pay for your lost sales, the recovery costs, and the interruption to your business operations. If they don't have insurance to cover YOUR business interruption losses, they might not be able to pay, and you'll have to end up suing them to cover your costs. If sensitive client data is compromised, who's responsible for paying the fines that you might incur and the lawsuits that could happen? No one is perfect, so you need them to carry adequate insurance.

True story: A few years ago, a company that shall not be named was slapped with several multimillion-dollar lawsuits from customers for bad behavior by their technicians. In some cases, their techs accessed, copied and distributed 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) and tried to cover it up. First, ensure the I.T. firm you're hiring has proper insurance to protect YOU. Rest assured, we prioritize carrying all the necessary insurance to protect you, including errors and omissions, worker's comp, cyber liability insurance, crime, and dishonesty policies when required. Simply ask, and we will gladly show you a copy of our approach.

## 15. WHO AUDITS YOUR COMPANY'S CYBER SECURITY PROTOCOLS, AND WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME THEY CONDUCTED AN AUDIT?

### **IA'S** **ANSWER:**

Nobody should proofread their own work, and every professional I.T. consulting firm will have an independent third party reviewing and evaluating their company for airtight cyber security practices. Many companies offer this service, so whom they use can vary (there are several good ones out there.) If they don't have a professional cyber security auditing firm doing this for them quarterly, or if they tell you they get their peers to audit them, DO NOT hire them. That shows they are not taking cyber security seriously. You can be confident in the effectiveness of our cyber security because Cyberlogic Security audits us. We were just recently audited in August 2022.

## 16. DO YOU HAVE A SOC AND RUN IT IN-HOUSE OR OUTSOURCE IT? IF OUTSOURCED, WHAT COMPANY DO YOU USE?

### **IA'S** **ANSWER:**

Our Answer: A SOC (pronounced "sock"), or security operations center, is a centralized department within a company to monitor and deal with security issues pertaining to a company's network. What's tricky here is that some I.T. firms have the resources and ability to run a good SOC in-house (this is the minority of outsourced I.T. firms out there.) Others cannot, and outsource it because they know their limitations (not entirely a bad thing).

But the critical thing to look for is that they have one. Less experienced I.T. consultants may monitor your network hardware, such as servers and workstations, for uptime and patches, but they might not provide security monitoring. This is particularly important if you host sensitive data (financial information, medical records, credit cards, etc.) and fall under regulatory compliance for data protection. Rest assured, we have an in-house SOC to provide proactive security monitoring for our clients to prevent a network violation or data breach better.

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## SECTION 4: BACKUPS & DISASTER RECOVERY

### 17. CAN YOU PROVIDE A TIMELINE OF HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE TO GET MY NETWORK BACK UP AND RUNNING IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER?

#### **IA'S** **ANSWER:**

There are two aspects to backing up your data that most business owners aren't aware of. The first is "failover," and the other is "failback." For example, if you get a flat tire, you would fail over by putting on the spare tire to get to a service station where you can fail back to a new or repaired tire. If you were to have a disaster that wiped out your data and network –be it a ransomware attack or natural disaster –you want to make sure you have a fail-over solution in place so your employees can continue to work with as little interruption as possible. This fail-over should be in the cloud and locked down separately to avoid ransomware from infecting the backups as well as the physical servers and workstations. But, at some point, you need to fail back to your on-premises network, and that's a process that could take days or even weeks. If the backups aren't done correctly, you might not be able to get it back at all. So, one of the key areas you want to discuss with your next I.T. consultant or firm is how they handle both data backup AND disaster recovery. They should have a plan in place and be able to explain the process for the emergency fail-over and restoring your network and data with a timeline. In this day and age, regardless of natural disasters, equipment failure, or any other issue, your business should ALWAYS be able to be operational with its data within six to eight hours or less, and critical operations should be failed over immediately. We understand how important your data is and how getting your team up and running quickly is essential to your business's success. Therefore, in any disaster, we can confidently bring your network back up and running in a few hours or less.

### 18. DO YOU INSIST ON DOING PERIODIC TEST RESTORES OF MY BACKUPS TO MAKE SURE THE DATA IS NOT CORRUPT AND COULD BE RESTORED IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER?

#### **IA'S** **ANSWER:**

A great I.T. consultant will look at your backup systems every day to ensure that backups are occurring and without failures. However, in addition, your I.T. company should perform a monthly randomized "fire drill" test to restore some of your files from backups to ensure your data CAN be recovered in an emergency. After all, the WORST time to "test" a backup is when desperately need it. If you don't feel comfortable asking your current I.T. company to test your backup OR if you have concerns and want to see proof yourself, just conduct this little test: Copy three unimportant files onto a thumb drive (so you don't lose them) and delete them from your server. Ensure one was newly created that same day; one was completed a week earlier and the last a month earlier. Then call your I.T. company and let them know you've lost three critical documents and need them restored from backups as soon as possible. They should be able to do this easily and quickly. If not, you have a problem that needs to be addressed immediately! Verifying your backups daily and testing them regularly is a cornerstone of a successful overall I.T. strategy. We go to these lengths for all our clients, including multiple random "fire drill" test restores to ensure ALL your files are safe because they are always backed up.

## 19. IF I WERE TO EXPERIENCE A LOCATION DISASTER, PANDEMIC SHUTDOWN OR OTHER DISASTERS THAT PREVENTED ME FROM BEING IN THE OFFICE, HOW WOULD YOU ENABLE ME AND MY EMPLOYEES TO WORK FROM A REMOTE LOCATION?

### IA'S ANSWER:

If Covid taught us anything, work-interrupting disasters CAN and DO happen when you least expect them. Fires, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes can destroy a building or location. Covid forced everyone into lockdown, and it could happen again.

We could experience a terrorist attack, civil unrest, or riots that could shut down entire cities and streets, making it physically impossible to get into a building. Who knows what could be coming down the pike? Hopefully, NONE of this will happen, but sadly it could.

That's why you ask your prospective I.T. consultant how quickly they got their clients working remotely (and securely) when Covid shut everything down. Ask to talk to a few of their clients about how the process went.

## 20. SHOW ME YOUR PROCESS AND DOCUMENTATION FOR ONBOARDING ME AS A NEW CLIENT.

### IA'S ANSWER:

The reason for asking this question is to see if they HAVE SOMETHING in place: a plan, a procedure, a process. Please don't take their word for it. Ask to SEE it in writing. What's important here is that they can produce some type of process. Further, they should be able to explain how their process works.

You will need to discuss in detail how they will take over from the current I.T. company –mainly if the current company is hostile. It's disturbing how many I.T. companies or people will become bitter and resentful over being fired. They will do things to screw up your security and create problems for the new company as a childish way of getting revenge. (Sadly, it's more common than you think.) A good I.T. company will have a process in place for handling this.

If you consider us as your next I.T. services firm, we will gladly share our new client onboarding process and documentation. I think you'll be impressed.



TIP: Ask your I.T. provider about the “3-2-2” rule of backups, which has evolved from the “3-2-1” rule. The 3-2-1 rule is that you should have three copies of your data: your working copy and two additional copies on different media (tape and cloud), with at least one off-site for recovery. That rule was developed when tape backups were necessary because cloud backups hadn't evolved to where they are today. Today, more sophisticated cloud backups and BDR (backup and disaster recovery) devices exist. Therefore, we recommend three copies of your data...

## SECTION 5: ADDITIONAL ITEMS

### ARE THEY GOOD AT ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS IN TERMS YOU CAN UNDERSTAND AND NOT IN ARROGANT, CONFUSING “GEEK-SPEAK”?

#### IA'S ANSWER:

Good I.T. companies won't confuse you with techno-mumbo-jumbo; they certainly shouldn't make you feel stupid for asking questions. All great consultants have the “heart of a teacher” and will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms. As you interact with them in the evaluation process, watch for this.

Our technicians are trained to take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms. Just look at what this one client had to say:



"Working with Integrated Axis provides Casa De Los Niños with peace of mind knowing our organization's IT needs are met with a phenomenal company and staff. IA is exceptionally knowledgeable and communicative. Their team fits seamlessly into our existing company culture. Selecting IA was one of the best business decisions we ever made. I am happy to say they have exceeded expectations and make daily management of our technology simplistic."

Emily Ballard, VP of Operations, Casa de los Niños

### DO THEY AND THEIR TECHNICIANS PRESENT THEMSELVES AS TRUE PROFESSIONALS WHEN THEY ARE IN YOUR OFFICE? DO THEY DRESS PROFESSIONALLY AND SHOW UP ON TIME?

#### IA'S ANSWER:

If you'd be embarrassed if YOUR clients saw your I.T. consultant behind your desk, that should be a big red flag. How you do anything is how you do everything, so if they cannot show up on time for appointments, are sloppy with paperwork, show up unprepared, forget your requests, and seem disorganized in the meeting, how can you expect them to be 100% on point with your I.T.? You can't. Look for someone else.

Our technicians are true professionals you would be proud to have in your office. They dress professionally and show up on time, and if they cannot be there on time (for some odd, unforeseen reason), we always notify the client immediately. We believe these are minimum requirements for delivering a professional service.

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## DO THEY HAVE EXPERTISE IN HELPING CLIENTS SIMILAR TO YOU?

**IA'S  
ANSWER:**

Do they understand how your business operates and the line-of-business applications you depend on? Are they familiar with how you communicate, get paid, service your clients, and run your business? We have several partners, and here's what a few had to say:



"The pricing model offered by IA has made annual budgeting for IT so simple. They have eliminated my need to micro-manage user support requests to control our IT spending. Thanks to their knowledgeable and communicative engineers, our support requests are met with fast and successful resolutions."

-Laura Nachtraub, Administrative Services Manager,  
Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona



"Integrated Axis will always be my first choice to increase productivity and reduce headaches. I would never go anywhere else-you cannot beat their minimal downtime, fast response times, excellent customer service, and great training. They are always available and here to help us."

-Austin Jackson, IT and Special Projects, D&H Air  
Conditioning and Heating Company, Inc.



"With its premier services and reasonable prices, Integrated Axis is hands down the best IT company. Their team provides us with peace of mind- they take the time to listen to our needs and always provide clear and efficient solutions. They are knowledgeable and prompt to serve our needs so we can focus on our expertise. IA rocks!"

- Sara Alexander, Chief Compliance Officer  
Sonoran Investment Management

## ***A FINAL WORD AND FREE OFFER TO ENGAGE WITH US***

I hope this guide sheds some light on what to look for when hiring a professional firm to outsource your I.T. support. As I said in the opening of this report, I'm hoping to help you make an informed decision and avoid getting burned by incompetent or unethical firms luring you in with low prices. The next step is simple: call my Tucson office at 520-391-9999, or Phoenix at 602-491-9999 and reference this letter to schedule a brief 10-to-15-minute initial consultation. On this call, we can discuss your unique situation and any concerns you have, and answer any questions about us. We'll schedule a convenient time to conduct our proprietary I.T. Optimization Plan if you feel comfortable moving ahead. This Assessment can be done with or without your current I.T. company or department knowing (we can give you the full details on our initial consultation call). At the end of the Assessment, you'll learn the following:

- Where you are overpaying (or getting underserved) for the services and support you are getting from your current I.T. company or team.
- Whether or not your systems and data are truly secured from hackers and ransomware and where you are partially or totally exposed.
- If your data is actually being backed up in a manner that would allow you to recover it quickly in the event of an emergency or ransomware attack.
- How you could lower the overall costs of I.T. while improving communication, security, and performance, as well as the productivity of your employees.

Fresh eyes see things that others cannot—so, at a minimum, our free Assessment is a cost- and risk-free way to get a credible third-party validation of your I.T. systems' security, stability, and efficiency.

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With appreciation,

Sean Oseran  
CEO  
Integrated Axis Technology Group, Inc.

## **7 REASONS TO CHOOSE INTEGRATED AXIS**

- 1. WE RESPOND WITHIN 5 MINUTES OR LESS.**

The average time it takes for one of our clients to get on the phone with a technician who can start resolving their problem is 3.5 minutes. We know you're busy, and we have sincerely committed to ensuring your computer problems get fixed FAST. And since most repairs can be done remotely using our secure management tools, you don't have to wait around for a technician to show up.
- 2. NO GEEK-SPEAK.**

You deserve answers to your questions in PLAIN ENGLISH, not in confusing technical terms. Our technicians will also not talk down to you or make you feel stupid because you don't understand how all this "technology" works. That's our job!
- 3. 100% NO-SMALL-PRINT SATISFACTION GUARANTEE.**

If you are unhappy with our work, we'll do whatever it takes to make it right to YOUR standards without charging you for it. And if we can't make it right, the service is free.
- 4. ALL PROJECTS ARE COMPLETED ON TIME AND WITHIN BUDGET.**

When you hire us to complete a project for you, we won't nickel-and-dime you with unforeseen or unexpected charges or delays. We guarantee to deliver precisely what we promised, on time and on budget, with no excuses.
- 5. LOWER COSTS, WASTE, AND COMPLEXITY WITH CLOUD SOLUTIONS.**

Utilizing cloud computing and other advanced technologies can eliminate the cost, complexity, and problems of managing your in-house server while giving you more freedom, lowered costs, tighter security, and instant disaster recovery.
- 6. WE WON'T HOLD YOU HOSTAGE.**

Many I.T. companies do NOT provide their clients with simple, easy-to-understand documentation outlining essential network resources, passwords, licenses, etc. By keeping that to themselves, I.T. companies hold their clients "hostage" to scare them away from hiring someone else. This is both unethical and unprofessional. As our client, we'll provide you with complete, written documentation of your network and all the resources, software licenses, passwords, hardware, etc., in simple terms so YOU can understand it. We keep our clients by delivering exceptional service –not by keeping them in the dark.
- 7. PEACE OF MIND.**

Because we monitor all our clients' networks 24/7/365, you never have to worry that a virus has spread, a hacker has broken in, or a backup has failed. We watch over your entire network, taking the management and hassle of maintaining it off your hands. This frees you to focus on your customers and business operations, not your I.T. systems, security, and backups.

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