

What Can Managed Services Mean for Your Organization?

You have probably read and heard with increasing frequency the last few years the term “Managed Services.” What does this really mean? How can it truly help organization? Is this just another “technology fad?” Read on for the answers to these and other questions.....

Let’s start with the definition of Managed Services. While there are many variations of this definition, all generally align with the following: *Managed Services is the proactive remote monitoring and management of a computer network which, when combined with scheduled on-site maintenance, insures optimal network performance, minimizes unscheduled downtime, and maximizes IT productivity - all at a predictable monthly cost.*

Obviously, we have all dealt with IT problems. It is particularly frustrating when these problems cause you to become distracted from pursuing your organization’s primary mission. The above definition of Managed Services probably sounds pretty good to you. You might ask: Why has our IT department or IT service provider not delivered this before now?

Managed Services has exploded the last few years primarily as a result of: (a) ubiquitous broadband internet connectivity, and (b) sophisticated new tools and computer hardware enhancements that provide the ability to remotely monitor and manage the various layers of a computer network.

Fundamentally, Managed Services Providers (MSP) are able to set-up a secure high-speed connection via the internet to your network, and to a “network management appliance” that is installed in your organization’s network. MSP’s are then able to remotely monitor on a 7x24 basis a long list of functions that are mission critical to your business. Network and services components that are commonly monitored to insure around the clock operation and availability include email, critical software applications, security systems, data backup, and IP Telephony systems.

Proactive remote management functions typically include virus protection updates, server and desktop operating system patch management, and many other network maintenance tasks.

Proactive Managed Services is typically complemented by a “help desk” staff provided by the MSP who are able to immediately address ad-hoc issues your users face throughout the day. These help desk staffs typically have “remote control tools” whereby they can take control of your user’s desktop if necessary in order to correct the issue. These tools allow MSP’s to immediately address an end-user issue without them having to wait for the once traditional “site-visit.”

Managed Services support models do not eliminate the need for on-site visits. But on-site visits are much less frequent, and typically scheduled in advance, which result in significant cost savings for both your organization and the MSP. Typical services provided during on-site visits include major software release installations, hardware break/fix, and network management which cannot be performed remotely.

Finally, regular reporting is a key component of Managed Services relationships. By being about to monitor a computer network 7x24, MSP's are able to better identify trends which will require proactive action before a problem occurs. For example, capacity issues relating to process, storage, or disk utilization can be identified. Action to address these issues can be planned rather than reacted upon in an emergency. Managed Services Reports are typically generated monthly and complemented by periodic executive business reviews.

Is Managed Services just a technology fad? Absolutely not. It will continue to evolve.

What organizations need Managed Services? Any organization that wants to maximize computer systems availability, security, and performance.

Does an organization need Managed Services if they already have an IT staff? It depends. But consider that most organizations do not receive the comprehensive proactive management of networks as outlined above with their existing IT staff. Managed Services can be a very effective compliment to your organization's IT staff.

Think about it...All of the above can be had for a fixed and reasonable monthly price. Can Managed Services help your organization? For more details, please contact any member of the Computer Service Partners team.