



HOW MUCH SHOULD I BUDGET FOR IT SUPPORT? 5 STEPS TO SUCCESS

Despite being crucial to the success of their business, many businesses are still getting IT support wrong. Companies tend to underestimate the cost of good, reliable support and think of IT support as a service that is needed only after things have gone wrong. With that in mind how do you define what you need (and how much you should pay) when choosing an IT support provider?

1. What is my business currently using?

Many businesses start with a handful of computers and rapidly add hardware and software to cope with growing demand. Without a proper strategy it is hard to tell what hardware and software is being used, by whom and for what task.

It is easy to go through your offices and draw up a list of all of the software and hardware that is being used. You may be surprised by what you find, particularly as employees start using their own smartphones and tablets to work more efficiently.

Most good IT support providers will work with you to help draw up this list as part of their initial planning.

2. What's included in the offer?

Now you know what you have and how it fits into your business processes, you must assess what IT support providers are offering to see where and how they match up with your support needs.

Not all support providers are the same; some will support your computer hardware, but they may exclude your software. Others will agree to support your company PCs, but not

your smartphones and tablets. Carefully check support contracts, so you're clear on exactly what is and isn't covered.

Be aware that most providers charge on a "per device" basis which works out very expensive for staff equipped with a computer, a tablet and a smartphone. With the growth of cloud computing some providers offer a "per user" basis support service, which can offer significantly better value. Make sure you know how the quote breaks down according to your audit list created in step 1.

3. What's the cost of getting it wrong?

This consideration boils down to a single calculation – how much will it cost your business if a key system goes down and you are unable to get the support you need, when you need it? Most businesses can absorb a few hours of downtime, but without the right support, that could easily stretch to days – which could be financially fatal for many.

The costs quickly mount up when you consider:

- Staff wages.
- Overtime incurred catching up on lost productivity.
- Costs associated with failure to deliver on customer contracts.
- Lost sales.

By accurately estimating these costs, you will better understand the value of the available IT support options. You should also remember that you incur these costs every single time you have an outage.

4. Will they save me money/help me grow?

Your choice of IT support partner could have a major influence on the success of your business. Through varying levels of service, most providers should be able to keep your business ticking along. But how many will work alongside you to grow your business using technology?

A good IT support provider will help you:

- Understand how to get the best from your current investments.
- Identify solutions that will help your business achieve new efficiencies and cut costs.
- Help you transform IT from an unavoidable expense to become a key resource which drives business change and strategy.

Your growth and profitability should be one of their primary concerns.

5. So how much should I budget?

As you can see, not all IT support services are the same. Unsurprising then that they are all priced differently. Just like everything else though, when it comes to IT support, you get what you pay for.

Realistically you should budget around 2% of your annual turnover to guarantee a proper level of service. Obviously this may sound like a lot of money (and there may be cheaper options available) but if you do not get the service you need, you are looking at a false saving. If you're in any doubt, refer back to the figure you calculated in step 3 above.

Putting it together

So there you have it. To get the service you need and to accurately estimate an IT support budget, you need to:

- Audit your IT systems to identify those of greatest value to the business.
- Carefully assess potential IT support service offerings to make sure they cover the systems you need.
- Calculate the cost of downtime and outages, and how they affect your bottom line.
- Look for support providers who will proactively work towards helping your business become more successful.

Assign a sensible budget – around 2% of turnover to deliver the service you need.

Next Step

Does your business need IT Support? Kimbley IT offer a range of next generation IT Support services in Birmingham. And as a Google service partner your business and employees can work the way you live with cloud computing from Google Apps for Work.