

# HOW SMART BUSINESSES UTILISE IT MANAGED SERVICES



# What is “Managed Services”?

IT managed services is the practice of obtaining IT services from an external IT company to Manage, Monitor, Assist, and Oversee operations within an IT environment.

This arrangement may entail the utilisation of outright managed services (where the third party operates exclusively within a business) or partnered managed services (where the third party works alongside other IT staff within a business).

Quite often, managed services are adopted by a business to either reduce the overall cost of IT, or to acquire a diverse set of skills that would otherwise be difficult to attain and manage.

Managed services providers will provide service level agreements (SLAs) which will outline their response time to incidents and parameters in which they perform their duties.

In other words, the SLAs will outline how timely or how comprehensively the managed services provider will perform their responsibilities.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### **A common misconception about IT managed services**

is that they are out-sourced offshore and the businesses utilising these services receive nothing more than generic phone support from someone located overseas. This is commonly untrue. At any stage throughout a contract, or indeed during the decision making process, ask to meet the managed services team and take a walk though the managed services office.

Most providers will be happy for you to meet their team and view their facilities.

# Exclusive & Partnered Managed Services Explained

**Exclusive managed services** refers to the arrangement between the client and the provider where the provider supplies all IT related services and support that a client may require. In this model, the client will likely have a bare minimum number of in-house IT personnel (if any). This model is popular amongst businesses with complex IT environments that require a range of diverse skills, businesses looking to reduce IT costs, or new businesses who don't have the initial resources to develop a pool of in-house talent.



**Partnered managed services** refers to the arrangement between a client and a provider where the provider supplies support and services that covers a skill-void or vacancy, as a short or long term solution. Partnered managed services entails that the provider works alongside the client's current IT staff in partnership, undertaking specific duties as outlined by the client. This model is popular with businesses that have a reliable in-house team but are looking to expand, or require diverse or as-required support.

# Specialty Managed Services

In some cases, a business may only require the assistance with a specific element of their IT environment. Below are a few of the more common examples.

**Overflow Services:** Clients that have a functional IT team may only require an overflow service which keeps the workload of the in-house team manageable. The overflow service works by assigning additional support cases to a provider during unusually busy periods.

**Monitoring Services:** Monitoring services utilise the services of a provider to monitor the general operations of an IT environment. Items such as disk usage, computer resource usage, and patch and security requirements will likely be covered in a monitoring service.

**Security Services:** Security services outline a provider's responsibility to oversee a client's environment to ensure that data and networks are free from malicious software. In this case, a provider's primary duty is to ensure all measures are taken to prevent a client's environment from becoming compromised by external or internal threats.

**Archiving/Backup Services:** Archiving and backup services describe the task of ensuring that a client's data is secure and safely stored on a regular schedule. This may involve an onsite strategy, a cloud strategy, or a combination of the two depending on what best suits the client.

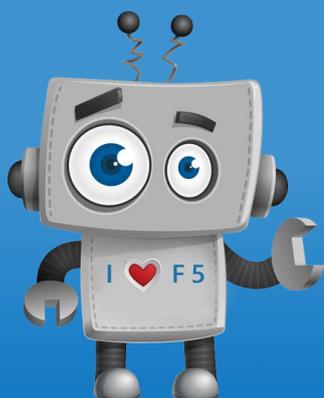
# Diversity Drives Managed Services

As customised IT environments are developed to address business limitations, the cost of operational overheads and the need to diversify skills becomes more complex. From the business perspective, keeping skills relevant and up to date can be costly and may create staff-based bottlenecks.

Complex solutions are built at a great rate, but with every solution variation, new skills are required to ensure the longevity of the technology.

Business capabilities driven by IT require great commitment to skilling and resourcing to maintain the IT environment. Businesses are discovering that the processes that in-house teams undertake to “up-skilling” are a commodity that vendors already provide as part of an IT managed service.

The move to managed services is becoming common place, driven by the complexity and business costs involved in keeping dedicated personnel skilled. In most cases, quality in-house staff will continue to drive business, but the adoption of a managed service may assist in the growth or expansion of a client’s operations.



**Flexibility will be one of the most important aspects of a managed service for most businesses.**

There will be cases where a managed service framework can apply to like businesses but for a lot of businesses, they may need something more refined. Ensure that your managed service meets the specific requirements of the business, rather than compromising to the provider’s skill-set.

# Eliminating the Anxiety

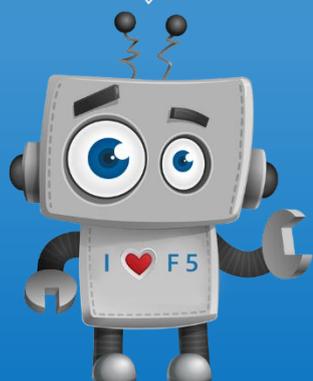
For businesses who are across IT managed services and various capabilities of the different providers, IT managed services is just another part of doing business.

For businesses who are not, the idea of handing over the management of their IT environment to another business may not be as straight forward.

Businesses that are considering utilising an IT managed service in some capacity are encouraged to request references and trials of the services before committing to a contract. Most reputable providers will provide references, engineer skill-sets, and demonstrations of how their systems work to ensure that the business is comfortable with their decision to utilise the provider's services.

Businesses should ensure that the provider they choose matches up against their business ambitions rather than compromising to suit the provider's skills. Most providers will have the flexibility to ensure that a client is taken care of the way they wish to be taken care of, without compromise.

Hey  
I like coffee too!



**Having a social chat or even a coffee with a provider's head of operations** will help a business to gauge if the provider is suitable for them. Most providers should present you with a trustworthy and professional approach to catering for your businesses IT needs. When in doubt always ask for a trial run or have your questions answered in writing, most providers will back their quality of work up with a contracted SLA.

# What to Look for in a Provider



**Skill-set of Engineers** Ask to see an outline of the skills available within the managed services team you are considering utilising. Most technical résumés will be available to potential clients.



**Business History, Structure, and Background** Ensure that you are partnering with a trusted business to help with your IT by having a look over their history. Ask to speak to one of their older clients to get an idea of the kind of business you may be about to partner with.



**Cost Comparison** Ask the provider in question to run up an Inhouse vs Managed Services cost comparison. This will assist in determining any cost benefits.



**Contract Length and SLAs** Ensure that the SLAs associated with the managed service suit your business. If you are not completely comfortable, request a trial period before committing to a contract.



**A good Managed Services Provider understands** that the job is half technical and half customer service. While every IT director or executive is going to demand that the MSP fulfil the responsibilities outlined in the contract, not enough demand an exceptional customer experience.



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