

Asking the right 10 questions

What you really
need to know
about your future
tech partner.

Finding the right IT partner for your business is tough. It always helps to ask the right questions, so we have put together our top ten that will help you to successfully gauge the personality and capability of the MSPs you are considering.

Here's 10 questions you need to ask before signing a contract.

1 Why should we work with your firm?

Start with the low hanging fruit: Why should your company work with theirs? Be on the lookout for canned or generic answers they say to everyone. If they answer with specifics about your business or industry, that's a step in the right direction. It's a good sign if they're doing their homework prior to making the sale.

BONUS: Why shouldn't we work with your firm? No company is perfect. Is there any reason you should NOT work with them? If they give an honest answer it should count for them, not against them, unless it's truly concerning.

2 What are the biggest challenges to a strong partnership?

This is for both parties. Hear what challenges could arise in the partnership, and what you need to bring to the table. This will also give you insight into the personality and work ethic of the MSP. Getting honest feedback will start the partnership off on the right foot.

3 What specific services are included in your IT support package?

Make sure they offer everything you need. Understand the scope of services they provide as a part of a monthly contract, such as helpdesk support, network monitoring, cybersecurity, and software updates. Are there any services you need that are priced separately or are defined as additional project support?

4 How do you prioritize support requests?

This is crucial. Make sure you clarify the expected response and resolution times for both everyday hiccups and critical issues.

There may be times where the Help Desk does not escalate to higher tiers quickly enough for your organization. Prioritization often comes from the IT firm, but what if you want to supersede this decision? Do they have an escalation process?

BONUS: Do you offer 24/7 support? Determine whether the company provides round-the-clock support and how after-hours issues are handled. Will after-hours requests incur an additional fee?

5 What is your process for handling system downtime or emergencies?

Understand their disaster recovery plan and how they ensure business continuity during major incidents.

No IT provider can guarantee you won't be hit with a cyber-attack, natural disaster, or server failure. However, the most mature MSPs have a defined response should the worst happen. Make sure to ask this question so you know if there will be a plan in place to get your business running— and how quickly that can happen. If the MSP can't answer this question confidently, move on to the next one.

6 What reports are sent to the management team, and how often?

Good communication is mission-critical. You should receive monthly reports. This is nonnegotiable. While it is a partnership and you do trust your provider to be monitoring and managing your systems, getting reports will help you gauge what is (and maybe isn't) getting done. If they do not have an answer to this question, or they do not provide any reports, this is a red flag that they are not a mature organization.

7 How do you ensure scalability as our business grows?

We have a new employee starting, what does that process look like for your team? What should we expect and what would we expect from us? The lack of a defined onboarding and offboarding process will cause major headaches! This is a check box question. Can you tell if they have a process in place?

BONUS: Discuss their ability to support your business as it expands in other ways, including adding new managed services, servers, or locations. How often do they meet with partners to discuss future planning?

8 How do you handle contracts?

Make sure you clarify all costs involved, including potentially hidden fees for additional services or emergency support. Also be sure you understand the terms for ending the contract or modifying services, including any notice periods or penalties.

BONUS: How often do you raise prices and when did you last raise prices for customers? This question can help you identify if they are aggressive with raising prices. While it may not be a deal breaker, you won't want to go through this process every couple of years due to being priced out of their service.

9 What does a transition to your service look like?

Is there a set plan in place to handle transitions?

Transitions are scary for anyone. They should have a set onboarding process, including an onboarding support team and a well-defined playbook to help your transition go smoothly. Ideally, this should be a checklist that covers every relevant aspect of the technology at your business. Understanding what they'll need BEFORE signing up will make the transition easier.

10 Can you provide references or case studies from similar clients?

Do they serve clients that look like you?

While no two businesses are identical, many industries have similar tech needs or security requirements. Requesting examples of their work with companies similar to yours will help you gauge their experience and reliability with companies your size or within your industry.



NOC has a team that is capable of both sophisticated projects and consistent daily support. The service they provide lets me know that we are not just a number, we are valued.

—Mike Hildebrand
President & Owner,
Solidus Equipment Systems



**Ask me
about
silent
success.**

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