



What Questions Do You Need to Ask When Choosing an IT Company?

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Biography

Gary David Smith is Co-founder of Prism Solutions (www.prism.uk.com). Since its formation in 2001, the Prism team – led by Gary David Smith and Richard Alexander – have worked hard to build an enviable reputation as one of the UK's premier outsourced Managed Service IT Providers.

Specializing in the small to medium-sized business market, Prism prides itself on being able to support a broad range of businesses, users, technologies and locations with flexibility and professionalism.

Innovation has always been part of the fabric of the business as early adopters and implementers of technology within the business community through to an award winning CSR strategy.

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Abstract

You're in business and have just decided to outsource your IT needs rather than trying to juggle it all in-house. So where exactly do you start in terms of choosing an IT company – or as we like to say nowadays, a Managed Service Provider (MSP)?

Introduction

The process of recruiting an IT company can be like finding a needle in a hay stack. For even the most seasoned procurers, faced with so much choice, the process can be somewhat overwhelming. What questions exactly do you need to ask yourself to ensure you have the right selection of potential suppliers in front of you? Let's start by taking this question back a few steps.

When choosing any supplier, a basic amount of due diligence and care clearly needs to be considered, but I'd rather allow someone in risk management to pick up that thread.

That said, as we all look to procure services that help us start, run or scale a business, whether its a supplier to assist meet regulatory demands, productivity or another necessity such as IT, the deciding factor will so often default to being about cost savings or emotional.



Analysis

If those are your fundamental drivers in the decision making process, the chances are that the choices you make could be wrong.

Your decision making must born out of a forensic understanding of the specific nuances of what various suppliers deliver in any particular space.



Managed Service Providers

For instance, the Managed Service Provider (MSP) space that Prism occupies has seen a dramatic increase in demand of late.

This has brought a number of growing pains for our customers as a plethora of businesses now evolve from owner/manager local outfits and quickly scale to meet the needs, and demands, of more and more customers. IT suppliers for these scaling companies often provide them with bespoke solutions that aren't necessarily suited to any other business.

It is not uncommon to meet IT providers who specialize in a vertical or regional market, most by accident and tenure. This can be a positive but also it can mean missing a trick. You don't want to unwittingly be stuck with all that baggage.

So as a potential procurer of IT services, you first need to ask yourself, can the MSP meet your needs, not just today, but also tomorrow? What are its priorities?



What are its specific services? What do they have in place in terms of back up should something go wrong? Who are its customers?

All savvy procurers need to understand the shape of their own business today but also that of their supplier and project that over the coming months and years.

Most procurement decisions in the IT space can last for many years based on knowledge transfer, perceived disruption and appetite to change. So identifying the main reason why you are choosing a particular type of MSP can dramatically alter the type of businesses with which you engage.

There can be quite a gap between the ability and deliverables between a consultative, managerial or a strategic IT supplier. Some are analytical but hands off. Other are very hands on. Some are a mixture of both.

It is important to note that this sometimes gets lost as the client brief evolves or changes, sometimes multiple times, during the procurement process.

You must be crystal clear about what it is precisely that you are choosing in terms of your IT supplier.

Hybrid

The industry is moving at absolutely break neck speed and reinvents itself often. Five years ago, telecoms and IT were completely separate. Today they are very intertwined with most MSP's being a hybrid of both telecoms and IT.

Choosing a MSP today that specializes in break fix regional service may find their model consumed by the next demand or exterminated through economics.

Either way the service you procured today may no longer exist commercially tomorrow.

Lastly, you need to be sure about who the team is behind the service description. People ultimately buy people. We are often told, if the teams don't gel the relationship may not last anyway.