



12 Things You Should Look for with Managed Services

Manage Services Overview

Managed Services is becoming more and more popular as a way to dramatically reduce TCO and Capex costs for IT Infrastructure and Clouds. With evolution of cloud many companies are moving towards an Opex spending pattern and model with IT Services and Administration. This is starting to fuel Manage Services opportunities. You have all different kinds of solution providers proposing and selling different solutions for services. In a lot of cases there are things you need to pay close attention to. It's critical that before you sign or enter in any contract for Managed Services you have all of the details clearly defined and that there are no hidden surprises. Pricing will vary from solution provider to solution provider depending on what they are offering within their solutions and services. This document highlights the top 12 things you should know and ask for with your potential Managed Services Solution provider that you are potential going to enter in negotiation and contract with.

1) Current TCO, Capex and Opex Cost Information Prepared Before Your First Meeting

Have a detailed overview of your current IT Operations Costs for your IT infrastructure and Cloud. These costs should contain Total TCO, Capex, and Opex costs for IT Staffing, Special Projects, Maintenance, and ongoing Operations. Having your costs clearly defined up front will allow your potential solution provider to have information that they can use to more accurately calculate your potential new TCO, Capex, and Opex expenditures that will be coming with your new Managed Services Business Model. Be well prepared to have meaningful discussions at the very beginning.

2) Have Key Players Engaged from The First Meeting

Have all of your key C-Level Management of your Management Organization in the first meeting along with other key managers. Members of your Management Organizations that should be included is CFO, CIO, and your Network, Development and Infrastructure Operations Managers. Bringing these key players into the fold from the very beginning will allow your management teams to be immediately engage and ask key questions up front to help determine quickly if the solution provider that you are meeting with will bring true IT Transformation, provides real value and will cut costs that provide a better overall TCO for your IT Infrastructure and Organization.

3) Should Meet with at least 3 Managed Services Solution Providers

Meet with at least 3 solution providers to see what the initial offerings are. Determine which of the 3 has the most extensive solution that will bring the most value and potentially have the highest level of cost reduction as well as bring the Highest Level of Expertise that will be responsible for managing your Technology Infrastructure.

4) Trusted Advisor

When meeting with your potential managed service provider for the first time they should give you the feeling and impression that they are fully competent and on point with full capability to meet all of the requirements to successfully manage your infrastructure. They should give the feeling of Strong Ethics, be completely Transparent, and make you feel like you are in good hands with them being your trusted advisor. And any solution they present in the future will be the right solution based on your needs and not their own and will meet all of your business and service level requirements.

5) The Most Complete Managed Services Solution

Not all solution providers will be able to provide management and operations support for all systems. If you find yourself in this situation and you still want to work with this solution provider they should have a contingency plan and solution mapped out to cover everything even if they need to do staff augmentation and bring in consultants with strong skillsets to manage key systems in your account.

6) 2-Day Discovery Workshop – Second Meeting

Have a detailed list of questions and a PowerPoint with details concerning your environment and formally Present your IT Environment to the Managed Service Provider. Be well prepared in advance to have meaningful discussions early on in this second meeting. If the solution provider still seems like they might be a good fit after you have presented your Infrastructure. Don't wait to meeting 3 before you start getting answers to key questions you have with your Managed Services Providers solutions and services they can offer. You should know early on during the workshop whether this solution provider will be able to effectively address all of your needs and critical business requirements for all of your Business Technology Systems and Platforms.

Have your Network, Development and Operations Managers present as much detailed information about the environments they manage so that the full scope is communicated and defined by the end of the workshop.

Information to include would be the following:

- Number of Datacenter's and Office Locations and Users
- Infrastructure Security and Compliance for Identity and Access Management
- Network Topology, Security, and Management policies
- Number of Servers, Endpoints, and associated Maintenance requirements and Policies
- Business Applications, and Development Systems that are in productions
- Storage Environment
- Data Protection Solutions, Backups, and Recovery Policies
- RTO/RPO, Disaster Recovery Design, and Plan
- Patching Solution(s) for Servers, and Endpoints
- Virus, and Malware Prevention
- Critical Documentation for the Network, Production Operations, Development, and Cloud and Microservices

7) Infrastructure and Cloud Assessment

If any solution provider is not doing an assessment upfront before the new potential business model is presented they should be immediately excluded. It is Absolutely Critical that the entire On-Premise Infrastructure and or Cloud(s) are assessed at the very least for the following:

- 1) Unresolved Problems that have potential to impact business operations
- 2) Security and Compliance Standards for identity and Access to everything in the Infrastructure and network
- 3) Design flaws with over of under provisioning
- 4) Hardware Standards
- 5) Architecture and Best Practices for Hyper Visors, Servers, and Endpoint Operating systems
- 6) Storage Architecture and Performance for Applications and Servers
- 7) File Shares and associated File System Security

- 8) Virus and Malware Prevention
- 9) Data Protection with Backup and Recovery and associated policies
- 10) Disaster Recovery Plans and Designs for all key Technology Business Platforms and Applications
- 11) Design and Performance of Database Platforms and Systems
- 12) Architecture and Deployment of Email, Collaborations, and Unified Communications Platforms
- 13) Architecture, and Design for Production and Applications Development Servers in the environment
- 14) Telco Providers and Office Phone Systems
- 15) Private, Hybrid, and Public Cloud Design, Deployment, and Business Continuity
- 16) Production Devops environment and solutions being leveraged such as Chef, Puppet, and Ansible
- 17) Microservices Architecture and Deployment
- 18) Critical Business Documentation
- 19) Server and Application Licensing information for the environment
- 20) Current Vendor Support Contracts

8) Expertise and Response to Problems and Incidents

Anyone working on the account and managing any part of the technology Infrastructure should have high expertise. Skillsets should include On-premise as well as Cloud technology experience to have high efficiency in support and operations for both you and the managed service provider. There should also be a clear line of escalation if the Systems Operator or Administrator needs to escalate an issue to a higher level of support within the Managed Services Organization. This path should be clearly documented and communicated to you so you are fully aware of escalation process and procedure. Professional Service offerings should be a big plus and added benefit when deciding to go with a Managed Services provider.

9) Account Managers

Having the right account manager is critical to making sure that your account is being properly managed and services level delivery is meeting Service Level Agreements in the contract. They should be assessable, and Highly Responsive at all times to any inquires, requests, or complaints about service levels. They should have regular communications with you IT Organization and provide Monthly reports and hold quarterly status meetings with you to go over Service Delivery, Problems, Response Time and Resolution to support incidents.

10) Deep Monitoring and Proactive Response to Developing System Problems

If the solution provider has the right solution for monitoring there should be monitoring of Windows, Linux, and Mac logs in addition to hardware Up Down Alerts. The Manage Providers monitoring solutions should alert and become aware of a problem before you do. Proactive Monitoring and response to solution is a must have for any Managed Service solution that you are going to decide to go with.

11) Subscription Based Pricing

Every month you should have a steady spend with a recurring monthly Bill that does not change for the length of the contract unless you increase the number of services that are being managed. You should not be paying for things by the drink. Build in a bucket of hours into the subscriptions that you will have for special requests and small deployments. There should only be 3 scenarios where there can be a monthly increase in subscriptions costs. They are as follows:

- a. Cloud Storage Consumption for backups and data have grown and exceeded past what was agreed in the signed contract. Adequate planning and rate of change in the data environment should be properly measured before your subscriptions rate and cost is defined in your contract and signed off on. Plan for data growth based on real information based on measurement. Also define proper data retention and life cycle policies to control the growth of data being retained to control and avoid unexpected growth.
- b. You have to add new applications or platforms that increase the amount of technology to be managed
- c. And finally, if the customer decides to totally outsource all of IT operations and the internal help desk.

Critical Note: Contingencies for new On-premise or Cloud services to be added to the list of managed Services, as well as rate increase and type should be stipulated and agreed upon in advance before the contract is signed and the Managed Services provider takes ownership of the Infrastructure.

12) Have an Efficient, Practiced Methodology for the Onboarding Process

Onboarding should be properly planned, scheduled in phases and executed when there will be the least amount of impact to production systems while management agents are deployed. A formal written process should be provided to the Network, Development, and Infrastructure Operations Manager to reach consensus and agreement on the onboarding process prior deploying any agents into the environment.