Predict IT costs and do more with less?
It's possible with Managed Services.

by Deb Hypolite of Pyron Technologies

Managed Services is today's business buzzword. You hear about it on the airwaves and read about it in just about every business publication that comes across your desk. But what is it? Managed Services can take on different shapes and forms depending on the vendor offering it. However, in its purest form Managed Services is nothing more than transferring the day-to-day management of information technology responsibilities to an outsourced provider in order to achieve better IT efficiency.

That all sounds good. But what does that really mean to you, the business owner?   Typically, the business owner starts out purchasing PCs, creating a small network in order to share files and printers. Then, unexpectedly, this technology blossoms into databases, Internet connections, remote access, multiple servers, extended offices, etc, etc. The days of the "I can set this equipment up and handle it" environment has rapidly grown into configurations that are beyond the single manager's ability to control. So, an employee is hired to manage the equipment or these new needs are outsourced to a vendor. For the most part, this model works, except there is always unexpected downtime, the upgrades and technology have outgrown the skill sets of the traditional employee, and the costs are difficult if not impossible to predict because growth isn't always treated as a strategy and downtime is never planned.

Today, these older support models are rapidly being replaced with a new model called Managed Services, which is transforming the way businesses view information technology. Most businesses cannot afford downtime. Today's business owner is looking for ways to be proactive in terms of monitoring, support and planning strategies for their technology environment. The most cost effective way of achieving this in today's technology climate is through Managed Services.

Managed Services provide a team of information technology experts ranging from network engineers and database administrators to on-call Help Desk support technicians.   The costs for the business owner to employ a similar team are usually cost prohibitive, whereas the Managed Services provider can make their team available to the business owner at any time. This is a great asset to the business owner, allowing them to augment their in-house IT staff with a second tier of knowledge and monitoring support or to provide a viable replacement if the business owner is not in the position to hire technical staff.

Managed Services provide service level agreements guaranteeing computing up-time, remote monitoring for security and critical device availability as well as providing 24 x 7 support. Many vendors also provide on-site support. This creates a single contact for the business owner for all information technology related issues and transfers the responsibility to the Managed Services provider. This ultimately releases the business owner to focus on how to grow his business into a successful enterprise rather than striving to be the resident technology expert.

More and more, information technology is treated as a true business asset rather than an after thought. Managed Services allows for one monthly expense rather than attempting to budget for the unexpected.

Managed Services is becoming more of the mainstream in today's business. The bottom line is that it allows the business to do more with less. Businesses rely implicitly on technology today and Managed Services provides additional technology resources at a planned expense rate, which leads to improved delivery and increased utilization of the businesses computing resources.

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