

## Managed Services

### What Are Managed Services?

Here is our definition of Managed Services.

*A defined set of services delivered to the client designed to take the burden of IT management from business assets and place it with IT experts.*

The role of Managed Services in the small business world is becoming more prevalent because business owners are becoming more aware of the need for a stable and productive IT infrastructure. Most businesses cannot endure even short periods of downtime because so much of business today is computerized. The problem is that most small business owners are not equipped to handle IT emergencies and have to call someone in to fix problems. That takes time – usually hours – which the business can't afford.



In the IT business we call this reactive model the break/fix model. It breaks...you call someone to fix it. This is the most inefficient model but one that most business owners subscribe to. They do it because they think it is cheaper...but when you factor in things like lost productivity, travel time for the technician, time dealing with the issue *before* someone is called, it really isn't. It is purely reactive and relies on the belief by the business owner that the IT infrastructure will remain stable with only a few problems now and then. The problem with that outlook is that infrastructure can be stable one day and unstable the next with little or no warning. It *is* going to break sometime. It is not a question of *if* but of *when*.

There are also the issues of stability and optimal performance. If it isn't broken but users have to spend a lot of time getting their data, or trying to connect to a resource (from inside or outside), etc., it isn't doing the business much good.

### Uptime

The most visible part of managed service is the uptime. While no one can really guarantee 100% uptime, we can reduce the amount of downtime you experience and the loss of productivity this impacts. This is a product of the proactive, remote management of your IT environment and the expertise of the staff seeing the overall picture of your IT environment and making improvements in it to create the stability and optimal performance required to have the most uptime possible.



## Stability

Keeping the infrastructure stable is a key element of Managed Services. Making sure all devices are up and running and working at their optimal levels makes sure that sudden problems are kept to a minimum. Most Managed Service Providers (MSP) use several tools to help them be proactive with the devices and infrastructure and allow them to not only keep everything running, but fix things remotely, reducing the time to repair the problems. These include tools to monitor and manage the overall system including,

memory, disc drive, server response and health, user response time, network throughput and more. There are also tools to allow the technicians to remote into your systems and allow them to see all the information and make changes to your system without the need for a time consuming physical visit.

Making the environment stable and keeping it that way is one of the tenets of Managed Services.

## Optimal Performance

Performance is the key to user experience and productivity. Most small business owners don't really know what can affect performance. Is it a faster server, network, or internet connection? It could be one or all of those things and the well intentioned business owner may spend money on improving the wrong one and then wonder why it made no difference, wrongly accusing the technology of being deficient. What an MSP does is look at all of these factors and make recommendations as to what the options are and what each will affect. It could be upgrading a server, adding a server, upgrading the LAN, or any number of things. The point is a good MSP will provide solutions and options, not just a new piece of hardware and "see how it does". The IT environment has to be looked at as a whole.

## Proactive vs. Reactive

In the common reactive mode, things come to a crashing halt before anyone is called in to fix it. The time it takes to get it fixed includes travel time, reaction time, diagnostic time as well as the time to find and implement a solution. The problem may persist for several hours before it is even addressed, much less solved and fixed. As stated earlier, this is the mode most businesses work in.

On the other hand, being proactive means that the MSP can sometimes, but not always, see problems ahead of time and correct them before they become noticed by the user community. Since almost all Managed Services work is done remotely, the reaction time to problems is reduced greatly. There is no travel time (or paying for it). The software used by the Managed Services provider will usually immediately and automatically create a service ticket which will route to the first available



technician, not a specific account manager who may not be available. Since the MSP technicians are not usually out on a call at another site, someone will be able to take the call right away and begin diagnosing and solving it. This occurs automatically and behind the scenes. Many times the users are not even aware that there was a problem so they experience no downtime.

Also, in a proactive model such as Managed Service, spares may be kept or other technologies employed so that when something drastic occurs there are no logistic elements that may slow down the solution (getting a new physical server, hard drive or workstation). Everything is done to keep the business going all the time.

### **Vendor Management**

One of the unique things about a good Managed Services program is the management of IT related vendors. Most IT non-professionals struggle to work with a number of vendors like the internet providers, phone systems, copier/fax service, applications, operating systems, hardware vendors and a host of others. A good MSP takes responsibility for these relationships and manages them for you. This means less time talking to vendors, figuring what needs to be ordered, sales call, etc. It also means not having to completely understand all the technology being presented. Is it a good thing? Will it work for you? How does it work? The MSP will deal with it and present options that will enhance your business and discard those that won't – without you being involved at all. If you want, they can tell you of all encounters and why they weren't presented to you each month, but there is no need to deal with them on a daily basis.

By managing the vendor relationships, the MSP can not only save time, but better coordinate services and minimize finger-pointing when there is a problem.



### **Service Level Agreements**

One of the most important aspects of the Managed Services contract is the formal Service Level Agreement or SLC. This spells out how long it will take to react and begin to diagnose an issue. As I said, many times the nature of Managed Services is to detect and solve problems before they are noticed by a client, but there will be times when things happen that can't be noticed beforehand. The SLC gives you confidence that the MSP will react quickly and has everything in place to address and solve the issues that come up, especially those which impact the productivity of your business.

## Companies Who Use Managed Services

There are three basic structures of companies that can benefit from an MSP. They are:

1. Companies who have no IT professionals – typically your smallest of companies, these companies may have a “resident geek” who takes care of little things, but it impacts on his/her productivity since whenever they are fixing problems, they aren’t doing what they are best at and were hired to do.
2. Companies who have IT professional but they aren’t computer maintenance experts – this is typical of high tech and engineering companies who’s knowledge of computers is fairly high but they are really supposed to do other things with their time, like programming or designing. Again, any time they spend away from their primary function is wasted time to the company, and they may not have the expertise to fix certain things.
3. Companies who have a single IT professional that is overwhelmed – typical of medium sized companies, they tend to hire a single professional but no staff. He or she is quickly overwhelmed with the workload and spends all their time putting out fires and are not able to spend time keeping things running optimally... a typical unintended reactive model.



A good MSP *is* the IT department including maintenance, support and help desk.

## Summary

Is the Managed Services model for you? Maybe, maybe not, but it is worth looking at. It may cost you less annually than you spend today on reactive solutions. Or it might cost you more dollars and give you better efficiency and productivity which translates into more business dollars making it well worth the investment. Only a close and detailed look will make sure.

## IntelleManage

IntelleManage is KML Computer Services brand of Managed Services. Please give us a call and we will be happy to do an analysis of your IT operation and help you decide. There is no risk or obligation. We only want to do what is best for you and your business.

Call: 248-504-6671

Email: [info@kmlcs.com](mailto:info@kmlcs.com)

Web: [www.kmlcs.com](http://www.kmlcs.com) click on “Contact Us” near the top of the page