



TOP 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR IT OUTSOURCING SERVICES PROVIDER

BY GEORGE LOURIS

For organizations looking to simplify their IT operations, outsourcing can be a tremendous help. Having one provider, one network, one point of contact, and one level of expected quality can be a tremendous boon to the organization's productivity and bottom line.

Why Outsource?

Outsourcing allows your organization to focus your existing IT staff on core, strategic initiatives. It also allows you to tap into the select specialized skills of external resources that would not cost justified for you to build internally. The ability to work with outsourcing partners that have deep technical know-how reduces risks, increases your IT department's contribution, and greatly improves organizational security and control.

By selecting the right partner, your organization can:

- Ensure IT reliability and continuity.
- Make IT costs predictable.
- Experience significant cost savings by not having to chase the latest technological trends or operate second and third shifts.
- Concentrate scarce resources on mission-critical projects, focus on strategic planning while reducing management burden, and increase customer satisfaction by providing extra service—*all can be done when your staff is freed up through outsourcing.*
- Leverage the provider's relationships with other technical product and service providers.

The Questions

The key to receiving the full benefits of outsourcing is singularly dependent on selecting the right service provider. First and foremost, you are looking for a firm that will treat you as a partner and has the flexibility to put a support solution in place that is customized for your organization.



Beyond this critical factor, there are 10 key questions to ask a prospective service provider. They are:

1. Does your firm background check, criminal check, drug screen, IQ test, and technical test all your candidates?
2. Does your firm provide only “proven” (have previously worked successfully in another area of the business) people for its full-time on-site positions?
3. Does your firm provide trained backups in instances where the full-time person is unavailable due to illness, emergency, or other?
4. Does your firm provide technical support to your full-time on-site personnel so they don’t spend hours working on a specific problem?
5. Will your firm save me tens of thousands of dollars per year on IT projects by being able to provide only the requisite subject matter expertise to your on-site teams?
6. Does your firm to have the ability to provide 24 X 7 X 365 network monitoring and management as well as after hours response?
7. Does your firm have significant numbers of additional technical personnel that can be brought in for projects, subject matter expertise, or emergency?
8. Does your firm have a vast network of manufacturer and industry contacts that can be leveraged when necessary?
9. Does your firm have the ability to provide product procurement, warranty, and parts logistics services?
10. Does your firm have dedicated Service Delivery managers that oversee your solution, the SLA’s, and your full-time on-site personnel?

If you’re not satisfied with the answers, keep looking. The right partner is out there.

George Louris is the Director of Support Services for Custom Computer Specialists, Inc. (www.customonline.com), a Long Island, New York-based technology consultant and solutions provider that specializes in reducing IT complexity and the true cost of IT for clients. Reach him at glouris@customonline.com.
