



A lot of businesses use Managed Service Providers. Small businesses don't usually need a full-time staff member to fix occasional tech problems, so they turn to groups of IT professionals that offer services for a flat-rate price. Whatever you do, don't waste this opportunity. It's your chance to form a working relationship with experts who can make your business operate more efficiently with technology that matches your unique needs.

Set a Meeting With the Managed Service Companies Owner or Manager

Before you even decide which Managed Services Provider you want to use, set up meetings with each company's owner. Meeting with the owner, or a high-level manager, shows several things. It shows that:

- You're interested in forming a long-lasting, mutually beneficial relationship
- You take your IT options seriously
- You want expert opinions on what IT options could benefit your business most

It also gives you a chance to get on a first-name basis with the owner. That way, you never have to talk to peons when you need some work done ASAP. You can call the office and ask for someone who can get things done quickly.

Side tip: Once you decide which company you will use, schedule a brief meeting with the owner. Tell him why you choose his business (everyone likes flattery) and leave him with a small gift of appreciation. That way, he'll remember your name when you call.

Get to Know the IT Guy Who Serves Your Office

Once you hire a Managed Services Provider for your business, an IT professional will come to your office regularly to make sure everything is running properly. Use this time to get to know your IT guy. Chances are, he's the same person who will keep coming back month after month. He might even be the same person who handles your emergency situations.

This guy is far from the top of the organization. He can't make any decisions, but he knows what he's doing.

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Buddying up to him is an easy way to get a crash course in the technology that would benefit your business best. He's likely to tell you that you're spending too much money on a service that you don't really need or offer you services that will solve your business problems or needs for less money.

Learn the Lingo

IT pros are more apt to listen to your ideas if you know how to use their lingo. Spend a few hours exploring the technologies that other businesses like yours use. That way, you can have a coherent conversation with your



Managed Services Provider. He might change the way he sees your relationship based on this one conversation.

When you hire a quality Managed Services Provider, you are hiring an IT professional you can trust. It helps to start by choosing a company that cares about its customers. After that, it's all about building relationships.



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