

Do You Have Bad IT?

How to measure the success of your IT team.

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Many small businesses don't realize where their IT falls short.

You don't need to micromanage IT every day. If they're doing their job well, you don't need to check in much at all. But whether you have an in-house IT team or managed services provider, there are key reporting metrics you should know and have access to.

This guide will assist you in building and managing a successful relationship with your IT team.

You'll learn how to recognize poor IT, including common scenarios that businesses encounter, key IT reporting metrics you should have access to and tips for a healthy IT partnership.

What Is "Bad IT"?

Identifying poor IT services can feel overwhelming, especially if you don't have a technical background.

But you don't need to be an IT administrator to know if there's a problem.

Think about the health of your IT environment. Are you experiencing constant downtime? Systemic or recurring issues? Employee complaints? These issues could be a sign of poorly managed IT.

A managed services provider (MSP) or IT team protects your data and ensures business applications run securely and smoothly so you and your employees can successfully perform their jobs. Anything hindering that objective should be addressed.

Signs of Poor IT

Here are some common, real-life examples of poor or mismanaged IT.

Ignoring Standard IT Maintenance

It's easy to get distracted with daily IT issues and sweep maintenance tasks under the rug. But ignoring IT maintenance delays inevitable crashes and can incur huge costs and headaches down the road.

Poorly Managing Tickets and Help Desk Requests

Managing and responding to help desk requests are the bulk of daily IT work. It's a crucial component to keep

operations running smoothly, but it's often mismanaged. Here are three elements every IT team should address..

1. **Ticket system:** Either they don't have a ticket system, manage it manually or don't utilize it properly.

Manually handling tickets is inefficient and easily gets out of hand. All issues should be tracked from end-to-end through a ticket system. It holds IT staff accountable, ensures nothing is missed and provides metrics to improve on performance and support in the future.

2. **Escalation and alert process:** IT staff often respond to tickets in the order they arrive. But not all support tickets are created equal. Tickets should be prioritized based on business impact and urgency. If an email server is down, that takes precedence over helping a new employee set up their computer.
3. **Balancing act:** Handling the influx of help desk requests is great, but that isn't the only priority. Without ongoing IT strategy and maintenance to build a strong foundation, the IT environment will eventually crumble. Focusing on only IT tickets will cause major problems in the future.

Signs Your Help Desk is Poorly Managed

- ✓ The same support tickets submitted with no long-term resolution — if you hear the same ones over again, it's probably a recurring issue.
- ✓ Delayed ticket response and resolution time.
- ✓ Employee complaints.
- ✓ Lack of transparency into ticket system and reporting. Whether an MSP or IT tech, there should be a system in place to manage, prioritize and resolve help desks requests.

Not Dedicating Resources to IT Support

In small businesses, the CEO is also often the salesperson, IT admin, administrative assistant and every other job that arises. It leaves little time for IT support. But forgoing IT support can have significant consequences. Remember WannaCry?

The [WannaCry ransomware](#) attack targeted computers running Windows operating systems. It affected more than 200,000 computers across the globe, including the U.K.'s National Health Service.

Three months before the attack broke out, Microsoft released a patch for the exact vulnerability that WannaCry exploited. Many companies delayed or failed to patch their system. The attack could have been easily prevented with professional, proactive IT support from an MSP.

Using Equipment Designed for Homes

This happens more often than you'd think. Many small businesses use routers, modems and other residential equipment in the office.

While it may seem like a cost savings opportunity, home equipment has no reporting or monitoring capabilities, giving you zero insight into the IT health of your business and leaving you unable to properly monitor, manage or secure your environment.

Failing to Document Your IT Environment and Changes

Many companies don't have proper documentation for their IT infrastructure.

We have a client in Temecula, California, who came to us looking for MSP support. Its software developer and IT manager left at the same time, leaving the company in a tech bind.

There was zero documentation. No password management or network documentation. No one at the company knew how the applications or infrastructure were connected to one another — over 10 years of IT and software knowledge.

We had to start from scratch deciphering and piecing together the system, causing huge time and resource delays.

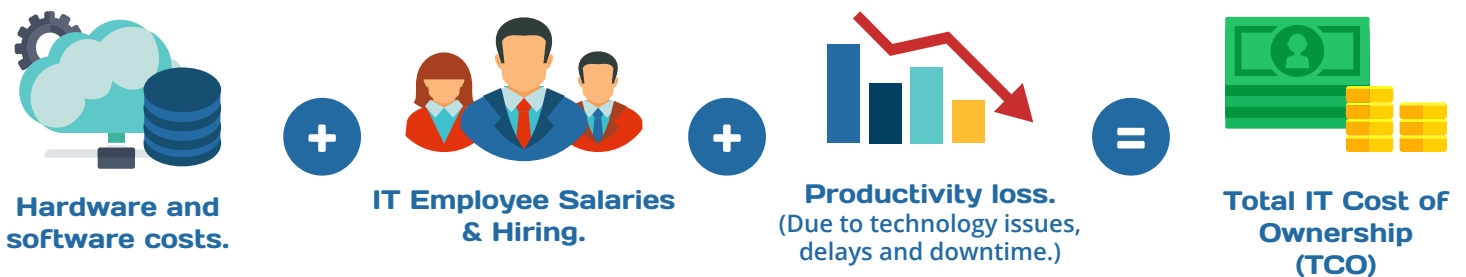
Not Testing Backups and Restores

Many businesses set up backups and forget about them. But as your business evolves, many applications, data centers and other elements of your IT environment will change but aren't accounted for in your backup strategy.

Most business owners assume backups are working until an emergency strikes and they can't recover their data. Backups and restores should not only be set up and maintained, but tested regularly to ensure your data can be restored when you need it most.

The Cost of Bad IT Support

There are three main areas that drive IT costs for businesses — the hardware and software you need to run your business, support team to manage it and employee productivity loss due to technology issues and downtime. Gartner defines it as [total cost of ownership, or TCO](#).



Many companies don't actively manage their TCO. Here's how bad IT support affects your business.

Defining Hardware and Software Costs

Businesses today are required to be digital operations. You need certain programs and equipment to run your

business. But many employers purchase the equipment, set it up and forget about them until there's an issue.

They don't account for maintenance costs or updates. There is no plan to scale their IT infrastructure in the future. The result? An outdated, poorly functioning IT system that drains productivity and requires huge costs to overhaul.



Managing IT Support

Great in-house IT support is expensive. Hiring a full-time team isn't always feasible, especially in small businesses. Many businesses owners take IT on themselves. But skimping on IT puts your business at risk of losing important data.

Many IT issues aren't discovered until you experience a crisis. Backups fail and companies lose essential financial data. Employees jump ship without documenting processes and leave their company in a bind.

The majority of IT issues and unnecessary costs can be mitigated with proactive, professional IT maintenance. If you can't hire full-time IT staff or if you want to supplement your team, a MSP is a great option.



Hurting Employee Productivity

IT isn't perfect. There will always be technical frustrations to contend with, even in the best IT environment.

But chronic IT issues hurt employee productivity. It's more than a distraction or annoyance. IT issues can delay tasks, disrupt activity and distract employees from the work they're trying to accomplish — and that affects your bottom line.

Think about your car. You can get the oil changed and keep up with regular maintenance. Or you can leave it to its own devices. Eventually it will leave you stranded, most likely at a huge expense and much larger inconvenience than the price of a few oil changes.



How to Measure the Success of Your IT Services Provider

Now that you know the consequences, here's how to evaluate whether your IT support provider is providing high-quality, proactive service.

Know Who You're Hiring – Managed Services vs. Break-Fix

Before you can evaluate a managed services provider or IT staff, you need to know who you hired. Many IT companies offer break-fix IT services — which suck time and money.



Reactive Thinking

These companies operate on an as-needed basis and do little to thwart future IT issues. You experience an IT problem, and they fix it. It's that simple.



Misaligned Incentives

The break-fix model actually incentivizes IT issues. The company only gets paid for resolving IT issues, not preventing them.



Slow Response Times

Reactive support also affects response time. Depending on the workload, break-fix IT companies don't have the resources to respond immediately to every issue. They can't respond as quickly as you need them to, increasing response and resolution time. And because they operate on an hourly basis, there's no Service Level Objective (SLO) that highlights the expected services or response time, potentially leaving you in a bind.

What Does a Good MSP Look Like?

If you're looking for additional IT support, managed services providers go beyond the break-fix model. They focus on not only maintaining your IT environment, but automating and enhancing your business operations.

In addition to daily IT management, MSPs manage cloud security, network operations, applications, data backup and recovery, storage and computing. They manage assets, act as a CIO to align technology to support business initiatives, provide help desk services with issue tracking and accountability and application monitoring and alerts.

Whether they serve as your entire outsourced IT department or work with in-house IT staff, a great MSP has a ripple effect across the organization.

Here are the benefits of hiring a great MSP:



Proactive Management

Most examples of poor IT above were the result of zero proactive maintenance. MSPs monitor your systems 24/7 and provide proactive support including patching.



Strategy and Support

MSPs are experts at their craft and often have combined years of experience, certifications and expertise that few small businesses could afford. From a strategic level, they can create an IT road map that aligns with your business goals.

How the City of Menifee Rebuilt Their IT Infrastructure From Scratch.

When the city of Menifee's IT manager resigned, the city was left in a bind with no documentation or insight into its infrastructure.

After a comprehensive audit of their system, Helixstorm discovered the city of Menifee had deferred IT maintenance for nearly three years, leaving the hardware, software and operating systems severely outdated.

Helixstorm outlined a plan to resolve maintenance issues and update the infrastructure, centralize IT support, consolidate their storage systems and avoid future data loss.

To coincide with the city's budget, Helixstorm created a rollout plan to attack the most critical elements first and a road map to rebuild their IT infrastructure.

"Having such breadth of experience and access to people 24/7 gives you comfort that if anything does come up, those items will be taken care of promptly."

- Jeff Wyman

Acting Assistant City Manager, city of Menifee

[Click here to read the full case study.](#)

Boosted Productivity

By managing your IT environment and reducing downtime, MSPs free up your time to focus on other tasks and increase employee productivity.

Predictable, Recurring Costs

An MSP gives you predictable, recurring IT costs to better manage and forecast your budget. You also don't have to hire in-house IT support, helping you save even more.

Fast Response Time

Proactive IT support means the number of IT issues will diminish, but they'll also be resolved quicker. Depending on the services outlined in your Service Level Objective, you may also have a guaranteed response time.

Backup and Recovery

MSPs also implement and manage disaster recovery so you're protected if anything happens to your IT environment.

Why Helixstorm for Managed Services?

You can't afford to wait hours for IT issues to be resolved. We track everything to give you the best customer experience and fastest issue resolution response time possible:

Here's a peek into what our managed IT services clients usually see:

86%

ISSUE RESOLVED ON
FIRST CONTACT

20 min

AVG. TICKET RESPONSE
TIME

1.87 hrs

AVG. RESOLUTION TIME

99.93%

SYSTEM UPTIME

Grade Your MSP With These IT Reporting Tools

It's possible to measure the success of your MSP, even with no IT experience. First, you need to understand the big picture. Ask:

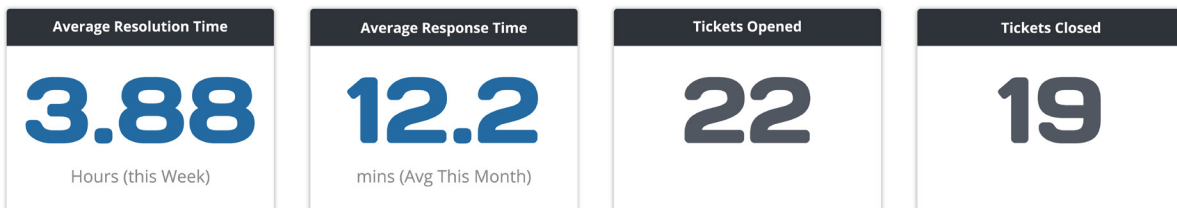
- **Do you know what your MSP does to manage your IT environment?** How do you know these tasks are being completed?
- **Is your IT environment scalable for future growth?** Where will your business be in five years? What do you need to do to get there?



IT REPORT CARD

Your IT staff or MSP should be able to provide real-time, updated reports on these key metrics.

- ✓ **Tickets.** How many tickets are submitted? What is the average response time? If it's an outside vendor, were all tickets responded to within the time frame outlined in your Service Level Objective?



- ✓ **Backups.** Backups are reported as Pass/Fail on two key factors. Was the backup successful? Second, is the backup being tested to ensure it's not corrupted and can be restored if necessary?
- ✓ **Workstations and servers.** All servers and critical services (SQL, web servers, DNS, etc.) should be monitored 24/7.
- ✓ **System uptime.** System uptime should be monitored 24/7. Your MSP should be able to give you system uptime percentage.

Tips for Managing Your MSP

You hired an MSP to save you time — not add to your daily to-dos. But reporting isn't enough. A successful partnership involves a time investment on your part.

Here are a few tips to manage your MSP and guarantee a smooth long-term relationship (these can also be applied to managing any IT staff):

1 Identify Your Business Needs and Communicate Those to Your MSP

As the business owner or decision-maker, you need to quantify what you have. Analyze the business applications, financial management tools and IT infrastructure you use every day. How much data can you lose before it affects your business? What's the maximum amount of downtime you can endure before incurring serious loss? (An MSP can also help you identify this.)

The smaller the window, the more expensive the maintenance. Understanding your business needs is crucial to identifying the success of your MSP and managing IT costs.

2 Ask Questions

IT can be intimidating. Don't be afraid to ask your MSP to explain different services, technology, even IT strategy. Make sure you thoroughly review the Service Level Agreement and understand exactly what you're getting.

3 Set Up an IT Reporting Structure in the Beginning

Before onboarding an MSP, ask how they report on IT issues and tasks. If you get blank stares, the team likely isn't hyper-focused on tracking and improving their level of service.

Look for IT support companies that offer transparent reporting and hold their team accountable to metrics. You'll gain a higher level of service and peace of mind that your systems are well-managed and protected.

4 Assign Someone to Check in Regularly

You may not have time to review regular IT reports or follow up on the items listed above. If that's the case, assign an employee, such as an operations manager or administrative assistant, to review key IT metrics on a regular basis. They can ensure everything is running smoothly and alert you if any issues arise.

MSPs invested in your business success will also offer monthly or quarterly strategy briefings to understand your business priorities and how IT can help drive them.

The Helixstorm Difference

Many MSPs don't publish a ticket resolution time or provide detailed reporting. It's hard to guarantee.

At Helixstorm, we embrace the challenge. We built a custom backend dashboard to monitor just that.

The number of tickets, system uptime, resolution time, even how long it takes for support tickets to be acknowledged. Real-time, instant data delivered to you every month so you know the exact stats and the health of your system.

But it's not just about the metrics.

You need an IT partner take your business goals, align them to IT strategy and create a custom IT road map to get you there. That's where we come in.

Leveraging over 50 years of collective industry experience, we'll help you reduce operational costs, optimize performance and agility and guide your business through any IT obstacle you encounter.



Have more questions about this guide? Or want to discover what a great MSP can do for your business?

CONTACT US FOR A [FREE NETWORK ASSESSMENT](#).

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