

The Accounting Business Owners' Guide To IT Support Services and Fees

What Your Accounting Business Should Expect to Pay for IT Support (And How To Get Exactly What You Need Without Unnecessary Extras, Hidden Fees And Bloated Contracts)

Read this guide and you'll discover:

- 1) The 3 most common ways IT services companies charge for their services, and the pros and cons of each approach.
- 2) A common billing model that puts ALL THE RISK on you, the customer, when buying IT services; you'll learn what it is and why you need to avoid agreeing to it.
- 3) Exclusions, hidden fees and other "gotcha" clauses IT companies put in their contracts that you DON'T want to agree to.
- 4) How to make sure you know exactly what you're getting to avoid disappointment, frustration and added costs later on that you didn't anticipate.

Who Am I?

Before we dive into this guide, you're probably wondering who I am, and why you should listen to what I have to say. My name is Trent Milliron, Founder and CEO of Kloud9 IT. I have been in the IT industry for over 20 years and founded Kloud9 in 2006. Throughout this time, I have worked with multiple accounting firms. I authored the Amazon Best Selling Book - *Cyber Storm... How To Protect Your Business From A Data Breach And The Resulting Cyber Storm Of Fines, Lawsuits & Customer Loss*. I was also featured on the cover of MSP Success Magazine and awarded a Notable in Technology by Crain's Cleveland Business Magazine. Needless to say, I have a pretty in-depth understanding of how to help support the IT needs of accountants and can offer some valuable insight into the process of choosing an IT company that is right for you.

Comparing Apples To Apples: The Predominant IT Service Models Explained

Before you can accurately compare the fees, services, and deliverables of one IT services company to another, you need to understand the 3 predominant service models most of these companies fit within. Some companies offer a blend of all 3, while others are strict about offering only one service plan. The 3 predominant service models are:

Time and Materials: In the industry, we call this “break-fix” services. Essentially you pay an agreed-upon hourly rate for a technician to “fix” your problem when something “breaks.” Under this model, you might be able to negotiate a discount based on buying a block of hours. The scope of work may be simply to resolve a specific problem (like removing a virus), or it may encompass a large project like a computer network upgrade or move that has a specific result and end date clarified. Some companies will offer staff augmentation and placement under this model as well.

Managed IT Services: This is a model where the IT services company takes the role of your “IT department” and not only installs and supports all the devices and PCs that connect to your server(s), but also offers phone and on-site support, antivirus, security, backup and a host of other services to monitor and maintain the health, speed, performance and security of your computer network.

Software Vendor-Supplied IT Services: Many software companies (like Thomson Reuters) will offer IT support for their customers in the form of a help desk or remote support, for an additional fee. However, these are typically scaled-back services, limited to troubleshooting their specific application and NOT your entire computer network and all the applications and devices connected to it. If your problem resides outside of their specific software or the server it’s hosted on, they can’t help you and will often refer you to “your IT department.”

While it's often a good idea to buy some basic-level support package with a critical software application you use to run your business, this is not enough to provide the full IT services and support most businesses need to stay up and running.

Why Regular Monitoring And Maintenance Is Critical For Today's Computer Networks

The fact of the matter is, computer networks absolutely, positively, need ongoing maintenance and monitoring to stay secure. The ever-increasing dependency we have on IT systems and the data they hold – not to mention the type of data we're now saving digitally – has given rise to very smart and sophisticated cybercrime organizations, who work around the clock to do one thing: compromise your networks for illegal activities.

In most cases their intent is to access financial information and passwords to rob you (or your clients), create fake identities for credit card fraud, etc. In other cases, they may want to use your computer network to send illegal spam, host pirated software, spread viruses, etc. And some do it just for the “fun” of being able to make computer systems inoperable. These criminals work around the clock in teams, constantly finding and inventing new ways to get around your antivirus software and firewalls; that's why you have to remain ever vigilant against their attacks.

Of course, this doesn't even take into consideration other common “disasters” such as rogue employees, lost devices, hardware failures (which are the #1 reason for data loss), fire and natural disasters and a host of other issues that can interrupt or outright destroy your IT infrastructure and the data it holds.

Then there's regulatory compliance for any business hosting or touching credit card or financial information, medical records and even client contact information such as e-mail addresses.

Preventing these problems and keeping your systems up and running (which is what managed IT services is all about) is a LOT less expensive and damaging to your organization than waiting until one of these things happens and then paying for emergency IT services to restore your systems to working order (break-fix).

Why “Break-Fix” Works Entirely In The Consultant’s Favor, Not Yours

Under a “break-fix” model, there is a fundamental conflict of interests between you and your IT firm. The IT services company has no incentive to stabilize your computer network or to resolve problems quickly because they are getting paid by the hour; therefore, the risk of unforeseen circumstances, scope creep, learning curve inefficiencies and outright incompetence are all shifted to YOU, the customer.

What To Look For In A Managed IT Services Agreement And What You Should Expect To Pay

Important! Please note that the following price quotes are industry averages based on a recent IT industry survey conducted of over 750 different IT services firms. We are providing this information to give you a general idea of what most IT services firms charge and to help you understand the VAST DIFFERENCES in service contracts that you must be aware of before signing on the dotted line. Please understand that this does NOT reflect our pricing model or approach, which is simply to understand exactly what you want to accomplish FIRST and then customize a solution based on your specific needs, budget and situation.

Hourly Break-Fix Fees: Most IT services companies selling break-fix services charge between \$150 and \$200 per hour with a one-hour minimum. In most cases, they will give you a discount of 5% to as much as 20% on their hourly rates if you purchase and pay for a block of hours in advance.

If they are quoting a project, the fees range widely based on the scope of work outlined. If you are hiring an IT consulting firm for a project, I would suggest you demand the following:

- **A very detailed scope of work that specifies what “success” is.** Make sure you detail what your expectations are in performance, work flow, costs, security, access, etc. The more detailed you can be, the better. Detailing your expectations up front will go a long way in avoiding miscommunications and additional fees later on to give you what you REALLY wanted.

- **A fixed budget and time frame for completion.** Agreeing to this up front aligns both your agenda and the consultant's. Be very wary of loose estimates that allow the consulting firm to bill you for "unforeseen" circumstances. The bottom line is this: it is your IT consulting firm's responsibility to be able to accurately assess your situation and quote a project based on their experience. You should not have to pick up the tab for a consultant underestimating a job or for their inefficiencies. A true professional knows how to take into consideration those contingencies and bill accordingly.

Managed IT Services: Most managed IT services firms will quote you a MONTHLY fee based on the number of devices they need to maintain, back up and support. In Ohio that fee is somewhere in the range of \$200 to \$300 per server, \$135 to \$225 per desktop and approximately \$15-\$20 per smartphone or mobile device.

If you hire an IT consultant and sign up for a managed IT services contract, here are some things that SHOULD be included (make sure you read your contract to validate this):

- Security patches applied weekly, if not daily, for urgent and emerging threats
- Antivirus updates and monitoring
- Firewall updates and monitoring
- Backup monitoring and test restores
- Spam-filter installation and updates
- Spyware detection and removal
- Monitoring disk space on workstations and servers
- Monitoring hardware for signs of failure
- Optimizing systems for maximum speed
- Employee Security Protection

The following services may NOT be included and will often be billed separately. Make sure you review your contract carefully to know what is and is NOT included!

- Hardware, such as new servers, PCs, laptops, etc.
- Software licenses
- On-site support
- SOC team
- CMMC Compliance

A Final Word And Free Assessment Offer To Show You How To Eliminate System Slowness, Crashes And Viruses And Drastically Lower Your IT Maintenance Costs

I hope you have found this guide helpful in shedding some light on what to look for when hiring a professional firm to outsource your IT support to. As I stated in the opening of this report, my purpose in providing this information was to help you make an informed decision and avoid getting burned by incompetent or unethical firms luring you in with cheap prices.

Below you will find information on how to request a FREE IT Optimization Plan for your company as a next step in engaging with us. There is no cost or obligation, and I guarantee you will find this consult to be extremely valuable and eye-opening.

Looking forward to your call!

Trent Milliron
CEO, Kloud9 IT

Give Me 30 Minutes, And I Can Show You How To Eliminate System Slowness, Crashes, Viruses And A Host Of Other Annoying IT Problems – And How To Never Pay For Unnecessary IT Expenses And Repairs Again

Do you have a nagging suspicion that your current IT provider isn't delivering the quality of service you're paying for?

Maybe you're experiencing chronic problems with your computer and phone systems that your IT provider just never seems to resolve.

Maybe it has become easier to find a work-around or try to fix IT problems yourself, rather than to call your IT provider.

Or maybe you're sending a check every month for their services, but don't really know what you're paying for.

Could they really get you back up and running after a disaster? Are they truly maintaining critical security updates for your IT systems? Have you outgrown their ability to adequately support you?

It's very common for businesses to be unhappy with the quality of service and support they're getting from their current IT company, but they tolerate it simply because they don't know who else to call, or they're just too darn busy to take the time to find someone else.

Free Customized IT Optimization Plan And 57-Point IT Systems Security And Performance Assessment

If I just described your situation, I want to give you a customized IT Optimization Plan for free that will reveal what's REALLY going on in your computer network and show you the fastest and most efficient way to get your systems working the way they're supposed to, saving you a great deal of time, aggravation and money. Briefly, here's what I have in mind...

First, I want to perform our proprietary Kloud9 IT Systems, Security, And Performance Assessment on your computer network (one that's taken me nearly two decades to perfect).

There's no charge for this, and it only requires a 30- to 60-minute meeting with me and one of my top IT consultants. After doing this type of thing for nearly two decades, we've truly perfected a process for helping companies like yours get their IT systems working the way they are supposed to.

After Conducting This Free Assessment, We'll Be Able to Answer Your Top Questions, Such As:

- Are your IT systems truly secured from hackers, viruses and rogue employees?
- Are your backups configured properly to ensure that you could be back up and running again fast in a disaster?
- Are you meeting the Ohio Safe Harbor Law requirements to avoid litigation in case of a data breach?
- Could you utilize cheaper and more efficient cloud-computing technologies to lower IT costs and make it easier to work remotely?
- Are your systems optimized for maximum speed and performance? (I can tell you, 99% of the computer networks we review are NOT.)

Once we have a clear picture of the state, health and performance of your current IT systems, we'll then deliver a customized IT Optimization Plan that will show you how to eliminate every single nagging problem, enable you to work faster and easier and lower IT costs wherever possible.

At The End Of This Assessment, One Of Three Things Will Happen:

You love the plan and decide to implement it on your own. If this is the case, we'll wish you the best of luck and ask that you keep in touch with us to let us know how you're doing.

You love the plan and ask to become our client so we can personally help you implement it ASAP. If that's the case, we'll knock it out of the park...and that's a promise.

Or finally...

In the unlikely and unprecedented event that you feel like you wasted your time, and that we don't find a way to dramatically improve your situation, **we will send you a check for \$100 immediately.** No questions asked. Your time is your most valuable asset, and I respect that. To date, we've NEVER had anyone say that we've wasted their time, so I feel completely comfortable making this guarantee to you.

Think about this...

The "worst" that can happen is you get \$100 for "wasting" an hour having an independent third party validate and review the security, speed and health of your computer network. The best that can happen is we work together to finally take all IT complaints off your plate.

Here's How This Will Work:

First, you'll fill out a brief IT Analysis Questionnaire on our website:

www.kloud9it.com/cybersecurityscorecard

This gives us the basic information we need about you to prepare for our meeting.

Once you complete this, Bob from our office will call you and set up a convenient time for us to come to your office and perform our Kloud9 IT Systems, Security, and Performance Assessment.

After that initial meeting, we'll prepare a **customized IT Optimization Plan and a "Report Of Findings"** that will reveal any vulnerabilities in your backups and security, as well as show you how to optimize your IT to increase everyone's productivity in the fastest, most efficient way possible.

And like I said, there's no charge for this.

So Why Would We Offer This For Free?

For one simple reason:

It's the fastest and easiest way for us to demonstrate the value we can deliver without any risk to you. Frankly, it's how we get the happy clients you've seen all over our website and have probably heard about before.

After all, if you like what you see and we show you how to solve a number of IT-related problems in your company, why wouldn't you want to work with us? Of course, we will approach this with no expectations or heavy sales pressure of any kind. I don't like pushy salespeople any more than you do – and we stand on the belief that providing extreme value in advance is the best way to showcase our services and win new business.

In fact, here's my "VALUE IN ADVANCE PROMISE" to you...

You'll Find This Consultation To Be Incredibly Valuable Or We'll Send You A Check For \$100 To Compensate You For Your Time

Now, obviously this is an amazing offer that you'll probably never see from any other IT company or computer expert in the world. But I'm SO confident that we can deliver extreme value that I have no concerns with putting this type of guarantee on our time together.

The ONLY catch is that we can't help everyone, so we have a strict (but reasonable) set of criteria that need to be met in order for us to proceed.

Here it is:

1. You have to have at least 5 workstations.

If that's not you (or if you are a brand-new startup), we might be able to help you through a different process. Call the office and we'll direct you from there: 1-844-KLOUD9IT (5568394).

2. You must be the owner of the business.

Due to the nature of the advice we'll give you, it will be actionable only for the owner or key executive.

3. You must value having an IT team that enables you to focus on running your business and increasing revenue.

If you feel as though you do not want to relinquish control of all of your IT or you just want the 'cheapest' solution, then we are probably not a fit for you.

If You Meet The Criteria Above, Here's How We Get Started:

Step 1: Go to the web site below to complete our IT Analysis Questionnaire. Don't worry, it's simple and unobtrusive; if you don't know the answers to certain questions, just put "I don't know" as your answer:
www.kloud9it.com/cybersecurityscorecard

Step 2: Once we've received your application and reviewed it, one of our Business Enablement Specialist from our office will call you and set up a time for us to meet. The initial meeting will be between 30 and 60 minutes. This is where we really begin working to figure out exactly what you want and how to make it happen. We'll also initiate our Kloud9 IT Systems, Security, And Performance Assessment.

Step 3: After that initial meeting, we'll prepare a customized IT Optimization Plan and a "Report Of Findings" that will reveal any vulnerabilities in your backups and

security, as well as show you how to optimize your IT to increase everyone's productivity in the fastest, most efficient way possible. This second meeting should be a real eye-opener for you.

If you see the value in engaging beyond that, great! We can talk about it at that time. And if you don't want to become a client – that's OK too. By the way, we've never had anyone feel like their time was wasted. EVER. That's why we can make this offer. WE DELIVER.

So, unless you are 100% happy with the IT support you are getting and absolutely confident that your network is secure, backed up properly and running at optimal levels, why wouldn't you give this a try?

Do it now and you'll be glad you did: www.kloud9it.com/cybersecurityscorecard

Dedicated to your success,

Trent Milliron
CEO, Kloud9 IT

What Clients Say About Our Team

Like Having Our Own Internal IT Department

“Lawyers are expected to work in real time constantly and they do not have time to be down. Kloud9 IT provides quick response times and consistent service. Their highly skilled team is able to orchestrate our network in such a way that all of our applications work seamlessly together. Whenever we have a problem with anything I can call in and you guys easily get on our computers to resolve the issue. We look to you guys as the equivalent of own internal IT department like we have computer engineers onsite standing by like a police department waiting for our call. We call the IT department and say hey and its fixed quickly.”

- Nick Phillips, Senior Partner, Phillips & Mille Law Firm

If You Are On The Fence, Call Kloud9 IT

“Kloud9 offers a myriad of services that provides support to our staff 24/7. No question or issue goes unresolved. If you’re on the fence, know that you can call Kloud9 IT to assist your company with all of your technology needs. From networking, database, email, and complicated business solutions. Integrating systems, record retention and day to day issues their IT team will handle your IT professionally.”

- Leslie Hoffman, CFO, Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad

Responsive, Competent Team

“The biggest benefits to our company since moving to the cloud has been a savings on infrastructure costs (not having to house/ host servers), dedicated help desk support, and the ability to access information from any location. To someone sitting on the fence about using Kloud9, I would say the team has been responsive, and the techs are high quality.”

- Jim LaFleur, Vice President, Business Underwriters Associates