



Solutions, Support, Training and more....

Can Managed Services benefit your Organisation?

A Discussion Whitepaper

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Contents

Contents.....2

Managed Services - Overview.....3

 Introduction 3

 What are Managed Services? 3

Why managed services are overlooked by those who could benefit most?4

 Are Managed Services for you? 6

 Determine your needs..... 6

 Making the best of an outsourced solution 6

 Examples of Managed Services 7

 Managed Services - Benefits 7

 Managed Services - Costs..... 8

 Selecting a Managed Services Provider..... 8

Service Level Agreement (SLA)9

Managed Services - How Deverill Can Help..... 10

A selection of Deverill Managed Services..... 11

Contact Details 12

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Can Managed Services benefit your Organisation?

Managed Services - Overview

Introduction

IT Services – ***In-house or outhouse?*** - The main question in the decision-making process always remains, whether to manage IT systems in-house or turn to an outside service provider to help meet an organisation's unique needs and business goals.

Most business people have heard the term '**managed services**', but are not always aware of the benefits it can offer. The problem is that there is much confusion about the term, in the past many of today's managed services were previously referred to as consulting, maintenance, support, professional or outsourced services.

Today, **managed services** are defined as a suite of services that are designed to help companies cost efficiently cope with the complexities and frustrations of managing their Information and Communication Technology infrastructures.

What are Managed Services?

Companies often find that they cannot efficiently and effectively manage their ICT systems with their own in-house resources. They might struggle to find the right skill sets for their existing infrastructure and often find it difficult to also acquire the skills necessary to take advantage of new technologies. In addition they need to constantly manage the ever growing and changing needs of the users whilst trying to protect the ICT infrastructure from the increasing threat of hackers, spam, viruses and other serious matters.

Recognition that a company cannot successfully manage all of these challenges by themselves is the first step in the process of identifying that a Managed Services approach may be the solution.

By adopting a managed service approach **a company can outsource some, or all, of the day-to-day operations and ongoing management of its ICT infrastructure to a dedicated, highly skilled, Service Provider.** The adoption of this approach will immediately release ICT personnel for tasks more in line with company objectives, such as increased growth and profitability, by passing responsibility for more routine day-to-day operations such as management, monitoring, and maintenance to an external service provider.

The final component of this definition is around the differences between *managed services* and *outsourced managed services*. Managed services are those services, which are rendered by a third party under a contracted Service Level Agreement (SLA), outsourced managed services are a specific type of managed service, which involves the transfer of people from the served to the serving organisation.

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Can Managed Services benefit your Organisation?

Why managed services are overlooked by those who could benefit most?

The term managed service is often incorrectly used to simply mean the same as outsourcing, however the two terms describe two different approaches to IT management which, while undoubtedly related, are in reality quite distinct in nature.

On the one hand, outsourcing is an approach which involves the entire IT function of an organisation being transferred, lock, stock and barrel to a third party to manage. This type of approach is most commonly associated with large global organisations and is typically driven by a relatively straightforward desire to reduce internal operating costs.

The managed services approach on the other hand, involves selectively outsourcing the management of only specific parts of the support of an organisation's IT infrastructure, such as end user support, implementation projects and new product introductions, without the removal of any control from the organisation. Furthermore, unlike outsourcing, **the managed services approach is typically driven by a desire to improve the availability, performance, resilience and security of an organisation's IT systems and/or to take away the management burden.**

Therefore, in contrast to the total outsourcing approach, which is relatively prohibitive in terms of cost and scale to all but the very largest organisations, the nature of the managed service model makes it ideally suited to meet the needs of the mid-market organisation, where the pressure to deliver a high quality service is high, but where in-house resources and specialist skills are typically thinly spread.

While most large enterprises are focussed firmly on reducing costs, mid market organisations have a wider agenda to address. For them, the challenge of keeping costs to a minimum is coupled with a relatively small in-house IT team which brings with it additional problems surrounding the shortage of specialist IT skills; the cost of IT training; and the impact of holidays, illness and staff changes on business continuity and competitive advantage. In addition there is the challenge of how to balance the day-to-day IT systems administration necessary to keep the business functioning, with the more strategic IT development that will help drive forward the business for the future.

For the mid market organisation, a managed service can help address many of these issues by enabling the routine, yet business critical, systems management tasks to be taken care of by a suitably qualified and committed third party thereby freeing up in-house staff to focus on the strategic developments that will add real benefits to the business.

The fact that IT systems have become increasingly complex, regardless of company size, gives rise to another mid market argument in favour of the managed services approach. The tools now needed to manage these complex systems and ensure the high levels of performance, resilience and security required for today's on demand business, are, in themselves, expensive, difficult to use, and require specialist IT skills to interpret their results. For large organisations, this is not generally a major issue as most will have the resources to invest in both software such as IBM Tivoli, HP OpenView or CA Unicenter, and

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the staff to deploy and run this software successfully. This approach is not usually a viable option for the mid market organisation.

However, with the managed services approach, the service provider, not the company, invests in these software tools and skills and simply spreads the cost among all of their managed customers. As a result, the mid market organisation can take advantage of all the benefits of these tools, without the associated costs.

Coupled with increasing IT complexity, is the fact that today organisations are now more reliant than ever on their IT systems. Email and internet downtime, once seen as having little impact on the business, can now have a dramatic effect on the business' ability to remain operational and can result in the loss of literally thousands of pounds per hour of downtime. For medium-sized organisations the threat of down time can arguably be even more severe than for a large corporate organisation, as they frequently do not have the spare capacity or facilities to cope with problems, or indeed the time and skills to pre-empt them. By using a managed services provider to monitor and manage systems and provide regular analytical and predictive reports, the mid-sized business can mitigate the risk of downtime and pre-empt potential problems, rather than trying to recover from them after they have happened.

So why, in light of all of these apparent benefits for the mid market, is it that on the whole only large organisations are currently utilising managed services and not the medium sized organisations that could realise a greater level of benefit from this approach?

The answer is simple - a lack of understanding about what managed services are; how they are delivered and what the costs are. The perception is that the managed services approach is not suited to mid-market needs, when in fact the opposite is true, and as a result, mid market organisations simply do not have managed services on the business or IT agendas.

There are now managed services providers such as Deverill, that have identified this gap in perception and are determined to raise awareness of the advantages of managed services for medium sized organisations; and we anticipate a change in the market as a direct result of this. The Deverill approach is to respond to the ever changing needs of the customer through a high flexible approach to the building of a solution that is tailored to meet the unique business and IT requirements of each of its customers. This approach means that the managed service offering can easily scale to support business and IT growth and scope.

Today, some medium-sized UK organisations are beginning to understand the value and feasibility of adopting a selective managed services approach. They have selected service providers focussed on the mid market and we anticipate that in the future there is likely to be a major shift towards managed services as understanding and recognition of the services and the benefits grows and becomes more widespread.

Just as today, many mid market organisations outsource the day-to-day running of elements of the finance function, such as pay roll and debt collection, so in future, mundane IT tasks such as performance monitoring, event log analysis and routine system administration and maintenance will all become functions that are, as a matter of course, contracted to specialist service providers.

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Are Managed Services for you?

Start by addressing these questions:

- Can you quickly deploy new technology?
- Can you meet the career development needs of the IT staff?
- Can you manage the IT department effectively?
- Can you provide a scalable, secure, and highly available infrastructure that ensures a high level of service quality?
- Can you continually provide the availability and operational requirements to meet your business needs?
- Are the management and operational costs predictable?
- Can you measure availability and performance of your IT systems?

If you cannot answer with 'Yes' to most of these questions, Managed Services should be considered.

Determine your needs

- First of all, understand your own business' requirements. Determine what you are using, evaluate the quality of service you are currently getting, and then what the business actually needs.
- Make sure your decision is based on business reality rather than emotion.
- The key to ensuring that you get what you pay for is in the definition and agreement of a good SLA. However, an SLA is meaningless unless you can measure and enforce it. It is always recommended that a rigorous measuring or monitoring process is put in place.

Making the best of an outsourced solution

- Define which services you are going to manage by yourself and which services you are going to leave someone else to manage. Is it going to be more effective if you manage it yourselves or if you outsource that task to specialists? The key here is to be selective and to decide where you really do need help, and where not.
- In addition, you have to decide how you are going to manage the third party provider. In order to successfully use managed services, you must be able to manage the technology life cycle and manage any outside service providers.
- Concentrate on managing your service provider, i.e. you have to start moving your focus from day-to-day IT management tasks to the management of service providers and relationships.

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Examples of Managed Services

There are many different managed services available:

- Managed End User Helpdesk Service
- Managed Hardware Maintenance
- Managed Hosting
- Managed Data Services
- Remote Managed Services
- Managed Anti-Virus / Anti-Spam
- Managed Backup Service
- Managed Search Engine Optimisation
- Managed Security & VPN services
- Managed Firewalls
- Managed Intrusion Detection
- Managed Content Security
- Managed Business Continuity Services
- Managed WAN Services
- Managed Projects and Installations

Managed Services - Benefits

- **Ability to focus on core competencies** - Monitoring for faults, changing configurations, updating documentation and understanding how to use diagnostic or analytical network management tools often draws skilled resource away from more strategic or business focussed tasks. Managed services take away the burden of the management of the support activity, freeing resource for more constructive activity.
- **Access to expert skills** with detailed knowledge of your network will give you the information and help. Turning to a service provider offers access to skills and resources not available internally, such as modern up-to-date technology and skilled human capital.
- **Faster deployment of technology** - By turning to the experts with additional resources, a company can deploy their technology faster, improving time to market
- **Higher quality service, as well as improved efficiency** - Managed services can help customers increase their operational efficiencies
- **Greater flexibility** - The flexibility gained by relying on a service provider for operations management will help a company react quickly to changing market conditions, fluctuating demand cycles, and increased competition. Turning to a provider that offers both short-term and long-term solutions will provide added flexibility
- **Lower operational expenditures and greater productivity** - Costs for IT expertise in specialised areas are reduced. Time is saved by not worrying about what to do if something goes wrong. Instead you can focus on more important things.
- **More predictable cash flow** - You pay via a regular fee.
- **Competitive advantage** - With managed services, you get access to the best technology, enabling you to compete on a level playing field with the very largest enterprises.
- **Reduced risk** - By not having to invest in new or replacement headcount to run the service.

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Managed Services - Costs

The cost of managed services varies depending on the type of service. Usually there is a set up fee and a regular monthly, quarterly or annual fee based on the number / volume of users or services being managed.

Selecting a Managed Services Provider

So once you have decided to use a managed service, how do you make a credible vendor decision?

We recommend that you make your decision in the following order:

Committed partner

- How well do you know and trust your partner?
- How long has the partner been strategically providing these services?
- How well does the partner understand the unique needs of your business?
- Is the partner prepared to handle your company's growth and change in needs?

Vision / Viability

- Can the partner add value to your business through advanced access to new technologies?
- Is the partner focussed on your business goals?
- Is the partner a viable business and which will be around in 12 months time?

Services & Solutions

- What is the vendor's track record in offering these solutions?
- Do the services meet all of your requirements?

Price

- Is the partner competitively priced?
- Would you be getting value for money?

Selecting a provider

- Decide which services you wish to outsource to a provider
- Talk with the sales and technical staff. Are you comfortable with them? This is important as they will be part of your extended team.

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Other important criteria:

Can you trust your managed service provider to be around tomorrow? Are they a strong robust, stable provider? Have they proven their ability to support your needs? To make sure you have selected the right service provider, who will meet your needs, ask them the following questions:

- How long have they been *strategically* serving your type of company
- Do they proactively monitor all aspects of the service they are providing?
- What do their clients say about them? (Past & present)
- Who takes full responsibility for the efficiency of your service provider's services?
- Will their technical support meet your needs?
- How quickly can they provide your services?
- Do they provide a single point of contact?
- Do they have a dedicated account manager?
- Do they ensure service quality work to ITIL best practice and provide comprehensive reporting?

Service Level Agreement (SLA)

SLAs address the fundamental questions of: what is delivered; where is it delivered and when is it delivered?

Here are some tips:

- Set objectives that support your business objectives and requirements
- To guarantee customer satisfaction, SLAs also have to include remedies for missing established service levels. These remedies need to help make sure you get back on track quickly. SLAs and metrics have to be achievable and a win-win for both parties
- Ask service providers for examples of SLAs they have used with other customers who ha similar business needs.



Can Managed Services benefit your Organisation?

Managed Services - How Deverill Can Help

Companies considering outsourcing usually have several objectives:

- To reduce or avoid the IT management burden
- Improving service levels from IT to the rest of the business
- Improve access to skills and flexibility
- To extending or expanding IT service coverage
- To release resources to focus more on strategic functions.

These are all good drivers and reasons to consider outsourcing, but they are not enough to execute it.

At Deverill we have developed a detailed understanding and gained extensive practical experience in helping our clients understand all of the implications, options, risks and most importantly the present and future costs that must be considered when looking to utilise managed services.

Deverill has very good experience in helping our clients look for the best options to:

- Improve services
- Reduce costs
- Improve flexibility
- Consolidate data centres
- Implement new technologies or retiring old ones
- Standardise processes or technologies

We provide a flexible and modular approach to system management, ranging from single system management to a complete IT infrastructure managed service, maintaining the operational efficiency and reliability of your ICT infrastructure within a defined services delivery framework.

Our experience and significant investment in tools, technology, processes and system automation allows us to often deliver a much better service at a lower cost than organisations could themselves.

Our flexible portfolio of service components enables you to outsource as little or as much as of your IT management overhead as needed, either on a selective or a progressive basis. Our advanced consultancy skills set us apart from traditional managed service providers. As a leading HP, Microsoft, Symantec, Citrix and Cisco partner, Deverill provides you with an effective lifecycle approach to outsourcing, ensuring the benefits of new technologies are evaluated as part of an integrated consultative review process, identifying where and when your IT environment should be enhanced to enhance its contribution to your business objectives.

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A selection of Deverill Managed Services

Helpdesk Service Desk & Client Management

Providing end users with a single point to raise requirements or issues. Our advanced support systems ensure users are provided with a highly responsive and efficient service wherever they are. Integration with field based services for desk-side assistance and proactive outbound communications ensure clients are regularly informed of progress on any escalation. In addition 3rd party contracted support service relationships can be efficiently managed as part of a client request, delivering a seamless service delivery model to end users.

Systems Management

Full system administration service for configuration management, system processes maintenance, availability and performance monitoring of key systems, maintaining system availability and operational effectiveness

Application Management

Support and administration of business applications, integrating operating system, back office application and line of business solution skill sets within a single service delivery framework. Managing 3rd Party Business specific application vendors

Managed Network Services

Management of IP communications infrastructure, in line with a guaranteed service level response. We deliver a modular approach from fault, utilisation & performance network monitoring services to identify network service trends, through to a full outsourced management service for proactive configuration, security and QoS management.

IP Telephony Management

Our expertise in IPT, network & collaboration systems, means Deverill is well suited to maintain both your voice servers and associated application services, such as unified messaging, contact centres and video conferencing.

Managed Security Services

Management & support of security systems requires particular emphasis on policy as well as system management. Our inclusive approach to developing a security policy framework coupled with active security monitoring and high skilled system management services provides a partnership approach to delivering a reliable enterprise security framework.

Software Patch Management

Maintain system security and reliability, ensuring systems are continually updated under change control with all vendor critical software updates.

Configuration Backup Management

Remote automated storage of system or network device configurations.

Inventory Management

Regular auditing of IT systems and deployed software assets.

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