

## **Virtual IT Anyone?**

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Running a business requires top-flight skills in many areas. The problem for a small business is that there are less people to share knowledge. In fact, people may mean “you”! Not everyone can be an expert in everything.

In a large business you can afford to hire individuals to specialize, a smaller business cannot. What do you do when you need to be everything from the graphic artist to the network administrator to the janitor?

For starters, you need to identify the activities that only you can do. Then get help for the ones you can delegate. And delegate them!

Unless you run an IT company, your computer support is one area you can delegate.

Say you spend four hours per week working on or fixing computer problems. Over the course of a year, that is more than 200 hours! Problems like printer issues, virus cleaning, spyware removal, email issues, training your new employee on your software and a whole host of other annoyances.

How much time is lost when spyware makes your computer take five minutes to open a program that should take less than one?

Computers can greatly enhance the productivity of your business; however, they can cause a loss of productivity when not properly maintained.

While the 200 hours can be a huge investment in your time, it is only a fraction of the time worked by one fulltime IT support person. In fact, you would be paying a fulltime support person for approximately 1880 hours per year for doing virtually nothing. At \$20.00 per hour, that is well over \$37000.00. With all the associated employment costs, it could be over \$50000.00 per year!

Here is where a Virtual IT Support Agreement can save you time and money, and increase your productivity. What is virtual IT?

Virtual IT is where you contract with a third party to provide just the services you really need. Why pay \$37000.00 when you could pay \$4000.00 instead?

A sample contact could offer services like this:

- Service Level Agreement Four hour response time Eight hour response time Twelve hour response time
- On-site desktop support
- Help Desk services
- Project management
- Computer Training
- Network security

### **Service Level Agreement**

A service level agreement is a contractual response time. For example, a four-hour response time would mean that a technician would be onsite within four hours of you initiating a call for assistance.

### **On-site Desktop Support**

Here the technician actually goes out to your place of business and performs his duties.

### **Help Desk Services**

Not every call requires a technician to go out to the customer's location. Often the issue can be resolved over the phone. This allows your employees to get back to work faster and saves you money. Typically, phone support costs less than on-site support.

For example, a typical desktop support call in a large corporate environment could cost about \$150.00 per incident. While a call to the same corporation's help desk might only cost \$50.00 per incident. That is 300% less!

### **Project Management**

While the services of a project manager are required infrequently, they can quickly prove their worth. A good project manager will save you time and money. His job is to coordinate and put all the pieces together.

### **Computer Training**

You can have all the latest and greatest computer hardware and software and still not have a very productive staff. In order to get the maximum value of your investment your employees need to know how to use your equipment.

What good is Excel if you do not know how to setup simple formulas? Would you rather your admin person type addresses on 500 letters, for you new marketing campaign, or do a merge and cut the time down to almost nothing?

Simply put, training increases productivity. Increased productivity translates to increased profits!

## **Network Security**

Security is a big issue in today's business environment. Inadequate security can jeopardize your business in several ways:

- Allow intruders to steal customer data
- Allow employees to steal customer information
- Allow intruders to use your computers to commit other crimes
- Cause a loss of productivity

None of this is good for the survival of your business.

Every business owner should take security seriously, even if it is only to reduce potential legal liability.

Small business owners often spend their early years forced to handle every task themselves. They just do not have the money to delegate most of their work. As the business grows, this becomes more and more of a burden. Delegation of activities is a crucial task that some never learn to do.

Pick your experts carefully and it will free up your time so you can grow your business.