SELECTING YOUR
NEXT IT PARTNER

Groff NetWorks

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Part I

These questions were created to help determine if you're talking to a professional organization who truly has the capacity and experience to solve your information technology needs.

Describe the process for ensuring our network data is properly backed up?
Checking a backup log is not enough. You are looking for enterprise-class backup software used with data validation and backup testing. Require a documented process to ensure recovery point objectives and recovery time objectives are aligned with the needs of the business. Use the right tools and process to de-dupe, monitor, and validate backups with encrypted on and offsite storage.

How would you go about creating a Disaster Recovery (DR) or Business Continuity for us?
Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Planning are a key part of technology management, and they should be able to describe their process.

Describe the process a support request goes through from start to finish?
You are looking for something that is ITIL (IT standards) based:
· Support request is made
· A ticket is created in their ticketing system
· Ticket acknowledgement is sent to client end user
· Engineer is assigned
· The ticket is worked to resolution
· A notification is sent to client informing them of the status through the process
· There is a follow-up to ensure quality control and the ticket is only closed when the client acknowledges the issue is resolved.

Describe your escalation process for an unresolved support request?
They should have a simple, but well-defined escalation process that they can articulate to you. The key is that there is accountability and transparency that prevents your issues from "slipping through the cracks". Also, you want to know that 'setting expectations' is as important as 'technical resolution'. You want to know and be kept in the know as to what the outcomes can be.

Tell me about your onboarding process for new clients.
A well-defined onboarding process managed as a project is critical to building a foundation for good support.

Part II

Next, these questions help you uncover if they have the kind of process that would set you up for success with technology, with a proactive, planned engaged approach that is more than just a sales pitch.

Again, if you only need better support, then read no further, you should be able to get what you need with the above. These questions are for sorting out and uncovering: are they truly a pre-emptive company that sees technology as something that helps you with your success potential? Can they actually help you with a roadmap and where your technology really needs to go in order to help you succeed?

What IT support programs will you offer us?
Your provider should deliver a program that is tailored to fit your business requirements. Raise a red flag when they offer you a one-size fits all, silver, gold, platinum package, or any service that is less than their best. If they are not willing to go "all-in" on their service offering, then buyer beware. This is especially true for block hours and time and materials arrangements, as they are purely reactive.

What is your Security expertise?
Find a provider that emphasizes cybersecurity protection with real experience, implementing multi-tiered security best practices, not just knowledge. They should be able to clearly explain the details of their program, tools used, and transparency so you can trust AND verify.

Describe the process for keeping us informed about the general status of our network.
Do they send you automated reports, or will they have someone meet with you on a regular basis? Do they have a well-planned process that includes identifying & communicating risks?

Do they have a dedicated, onsite role for proactive work? If they aren't sending someone onsite for at least 6-12 times per year for full days solely dedicated to finding and preventing problems, you will just be changing names of your IT vendor. If they are truly bringing in a different process, they will show you a detailed process of how and what they look at.

How professional is the presentation and sales process? That doesn't matter as much as how professional *the process* is. There are some very professional organizations in the area and will do a great sales presentation, but their process is still just about closing tickets and setting up new cloud services and servers. They are probably good at patching too, but a proactive service requires *dedicated, hands-on* time.

Do they talk about a different process? Or are they simply telling you their ticket and support process is way better and they have project management? Again, if this

is all you need, then that is all you need. But strategy and prevention come out of a completely different process. The bonus is that the former (support and projects) get WAY better as well when there is a dedicated preventative process solidly in place.

IF they have a dedicated proactive role then: **How long has their entire client base been receiving it?** If they have been doing this for less than three years or less than 85% of their client base is receiving this type of process, then they are early in developing this. Their non-proactive clients are going to greatly hinder your results. They won't be able to get your and other clients' tickets reduced, spend time on consulting with you in a planned sort of way, and push you forward in cyber security.

How do you measure success in IT?
Response time and uptime should not be the driving factors. They should be able to provide concrete success criteria and tie this to productivity. Keep an eye out for fancy marketing that is essentially "fixed-fee reactive IT support," by making them show you a disciplined process.

How is your team structured?
World class IT cannot have proactive and reactive support people in the same roles. A firefighter that practices prevention will always be consumed with putting out fires. Look for a company that is 50-80% staffed with proactive roles dedicated to preventing problems.

Describe the process you use to ensure our network is compliant with industry accepted best practices.
This should be a documented process that is completed on a regular basis, not just a reactive series of site visits.

How frequently will an inventory of our technology assets be reviewed and updated, and what is your process to maintain documentation?
It is important that they are doing it without you needing to prompt them and that they can articulate how it's maintained. Do they have process and systems built around capturing and maintaining documentation? Is it always current and readily available?

In addition to any automated monitoring, you may be doing, how else will you be ensuring our network is not at risk?
There should be process and checklists to go onsite and review critical parts of your network on a regular basis in addition to automated tools. Relying on automated tools alone puts your organization at risk. Is there a repeatable process in place to manage your risks?

How frequently will someone meet with us to give us a big picture overview of our technology? What does that meeting looks like?
There should be recurring scheduled meetings to review the overall state of your technology and we recommend quarterly. They should be able to describe the meeting

outcomes and the deliverables that are produced through reports, action plans, technology plans, IT budget recommendations, etc. Raise a red flag if the provider's CIO and the CEO are the same person because their focus will be divided.

Describe the process you use to develop our technology budget and how you will contribute to the business side of IT.
Do they have a process? Do they have a strong business acumen sensitive to cashflow requirements and ability to forecast IT spend with CAPEX vs. OPEX options? Will they leverage the cloud as appropriate and seek cost-benefit/ROI focused solutions? It is important that they play the role of a trusted advisor and understand the business impact of technology-- strategy, not just geek speak.

If you're interested in a free 30 minute consultation to discuss any of aspects of the services described above, please go here to schedule at convenient time.

Thanks for reading and your interest!