How IT Professional Services Can Help Your Business

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Introduction

There is no doubt that IT is critical for any modern business. We use technology to communicate with internal and external stakeholders, to manage budgets and accounts, to market our business, and to promote our products. IT is not only essential to business success, but it's also a significant investment. Globally, we will spend $3.46 trillion on IT in 2020, with $952 billion of that being on IT services.

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What are
IT Professional Services?

IT professional services are a set of high-level services that assist businesses to meet their technology goals. IT professional services are delivered by highly skilled professionals, who are experts not only in IT but also in specific aspects of the industry.

IT professional services fit within the broader sector of professional services – external, expert services that companies use to address a particular need. Professional services can span a wide range of industries to include virtually any type of consultant. The term "professional services" can be broadly applied, and is sometimes defined as any kind of service that requires a particular certification. Typically, businesses will use professional services in areas such as finance, legal, marketing, and IT. One of the key differences between professional services and other suppliers is that rather than a tangible, physical product, they provide knowledge and expertise.

Using professional IT services can be highly beneficial to businesses, allowing them to fill gaps in their organization's expertise, and give them a competitive advantage. This is particularly advantageous for small businesses, who are likely to have a more narrow knowledge base. When running a small business, business owners often become a "Jack of all trades," needing to take care of multiple aspects at the same time, and often skilling up in these areas as required.

However, there are certain highly technical areas where it simply doesn't make sense to try to cover in-house. Law, accountancy, IT, and specific aspects of marketing and management require a degree of specific, niche knowledge that is only possible after years of experience. For example, a small business may not be able to afford an in-house IT department with a high level of strategic knowledge, but they can access this expertise through IT professional services.

Additionally, these providers are specialists in one area, focusing solely on one type of service and therefore can keep up to date with the latest developments in technology and regulations. For these reasons, it is not only small businesses without dedicated IT teams that use these kinds of services, but also larger enterprises in the corporate sector that recognize the value of niche expert knowledge.

IT professional services deal with comprehensive, in-depth projects, and the scope of these projects can extend from planning and strategy to implementation, adoption, training, and sometimes even ongoing support. Generally, an IT professional service provider will have established guidelines, systems, and practices that they apply to each project and client in order to provide the best possible IT solutions. Good providers constantly reassess and refine their policies and processes in order to deliver the highest level of services that meet their clients' requirements.

IT professional services can vary depending on the service provider's expertise and the needs of the business. A service provider may implement a specific project such as integrating new software into the business's systems or provide strategic advice and direction. Different providers also use a range of agreement types with different fee structures.

Managed Services vs. Professional Services

Professional IT services can sometimes be confused with managed IT services. There are some similarities – both are types of outsourced IT. However, these two types of services are quite distinct, and it is important to understand the differences in order to determine which is right for your business.

Professional IT services address specific challenges that your business may face and are usually focused on one specific project. You might engage IT professional services to handle your cloud migration or implement new hardware, for example. It should be noted that while these are distinct projects, they are also highly comprehensive projects that can have a very wide scope. In a nutshell, businesses most often use professional IT services to resolve a particular problem or pain point to help them to meet their business goals.

Managed IT services, on the other hand, work with businesses to cover their ongoing IT needs as part of a comprehensive service provision. Managed IT typically assists companies with day-to-day IT operations, maintains their systems over the long term, and resolves smaller issues and problems as they come up. Although fee structures can be based on a monthly retainer or an as-needed basis, businesses usually engage a managed IT provider for ongoing support over the long term.

This can cover a wide range of services from help-desk support to ongoing strategy and planning. Managed IT services typically use a combination of remote support and on-site visits to ensure systems are well-maintained and troubleshoot any issues. In this way, managed IT services can support businesses to improve their ongoing operations, achieve their objectives, and promote better efficiency, maximizing growth.

Although every business's situation is different, generally, you should choose professional IT services if:

- You have a one-off, comprehensive project with a set end date.
- Your project requires specific expertise with a high level

  of detail.
- You want to engage professional services over a set

  period only.
- You are happy to maintain and monitor the project after its

Managed IT services are a good fit when:

- You are looking for comprehensive IT services covering a range of

  areas rather than one specific project.
- You want ongoing, on-call IT support.
- You are looking for a long-term relationship with your service provider.
- Both professional IT services and managed IT services can be highly

  beneficial to businesses. Neither is superior to the other – they simply

  address different sets of needs.

What IT Professional Services Can do for Your Business

IT professional services can help you to not only execute specific projects but also to build and orchestrate a strategy that supports your entire organization. In 2020, technology is essential to every business, and organizations fundamentally rely on technology in order to meet their goals.

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While technology can open up a range of opportunities, its increasing use also involves significant risks. Failure to properly implement and maintain IT systems and equipment, or to inadequately resolve any problems, can cost businesses significantly in terms of human resources, financial costs, lost productivity, and damage to reputation.

This makes IT solutions that manage these risks – whether introducing new technology, maintaining IT infrastructure, or addressing problems – are invaluable to businesses. Many businesses are finding that as technology develops faster than ever before, their IT needs are growing. Additionally,

these needs cover more and more niche areas that require specific knowledge, such as cloud data storage, advanced data analytics, AI (artificial intelligence), and IoT (Internet of Things).

With these tasks requiring increasing levels of specific knowledge, few organizations have adequate resources in-house to execute this effectively and therefore rely on professional IT services. Working with a service provider to ensure that your IT project is well-executed allows you to manage risks, and helps you to meet your goals and objectives. Because IT is so central to your business, proper management of IT projects will be critical to achieving every goal.

Professional IT services not only help you to manage risks that may threaten other projects or your overall operations, but they also promote better business efficiency. Working with a niche expert can allow your business to more rapidly adopt cutting-edge technology that can allow you to take your business to the next level in a range of areas. Professional IT services can help you to painlessly implement new software, or train your staff to use new technologies, giving you a competitive advantage.

Professional IT services also free up your team to focus on your core business and allow them to spend time on tasks and projects that drive your business forward. Rather than dealing with IT issues, or spending time trying to skill up in complex, niche areas, your team will be able to drive your business forward and take it where you want it to go.

Categories of
IT Professional Services

The term " IT professional services" encompasses various kinds of services, each playing a different role in supporting your business. The main categories of IT professional services are consulting, problem-solving, strategy, and project management services.

Consulting

This is probably the most common category of IT professional services, and the type of service most frequently used by businesses. Consulting services allow businesses to meet specific needs and fill gaps in their in-house expertise without needing to hire a costly team of internal experts to cover every niche. This can give you access to the latest, up-to-date information on one of many, specific niche areas of IT, such as new technologies, AI, IoT, Blockchain, high-velocity ERP (enterprise resource planning), cloud technologies, and cybersecurity.

Technology in these areas develops extremely quickly, and laws and regulations are extremely complex, as well as being updated all the time. This makes it virtually impossible for businesses to keep up with the latest information in each niche area. A consultant who specializes in that topic, however, is up to date with the latest developments and knows how to apply them for the benefit of your business.

The role of a professional IT consultant is to apply their knowledge of the latest technologies and allow their clients to use this knowledge to further their business goals. These technologies may be used to improve existing processes, reduce costs and overhead, manage risks, or explore new

opportunities that deliver new benefits. Beyond simply providing information and advice, the role of an IT consultant may include facilitating the implementation of new technologies, creating processes or documentation, and monitoring new systems.

Problem-Solving

Anyone who has used a computer knows that problems and errors go hand in hand with IT. However, on a large scale, these issues can cripple an organization, threatening performance, productivity, and the bottom line. Some problems can be addressed in-house. However, IT professional services can help businesses to quickly resolve a system-level emergency, or to find a solution to ongoing issues that are holding the company back.

Service providers often need to take initiative in order to solve problems and make key decisions on their client's behalf. It is simply not workable to refer every question back to the client as the project progresses. And, this would take up the client's resources, therefore minimizing the benefits of outsourcing the project. In order to make decisions on your behalf, it is critical that your provider has a deep and thorough understanding of your business needs and objectives.

Strategy

IT strategy is quite different from business strategy. Therefore, planning in this area requires niche expertise. Strategy services may include developing a technology strategy for your business, managing regulatory and compliance issues, cost optimization, IT risk management, or all of the above. IT professional services can help your business to develop a more effective strategy not only through their specialist knowledge but also by bringing an outside perspective.

It is common for businesses to stick to a narrow vision when developing strategy, and restrict their planning to how they can better do the things they are already doing rather than how to add new tactics and approaches. An IT professional service provider can introduce new software and technology that will help to carry your business to the next level. Additionally, they can facilitate a shift in mentality that will allow you to break free from things that are holding your business back and give you a competitive advantage.

Project Management

The final key category of IT professional services is project management. Proper project management is essential for well-functioning IT systems that will support your business goals. However, IT projects can also be difficult to manage, and this is something that is not always executed well in-house – only 55 percent of IT managers say they have an understanding of their IT projects' business objectives. IT projects also tend to be vast, given that IT is central to all business operations.

For this reason, businesses often choose to outsource the management of their IT projects to professional management services. The service provider will then cover all aspects of IT project management (ITPM), including developing the project plan, overseeing organization and implementation, and managing accountability of the project against its goals. This helps to avoid IT project failure that can significantly cost business both time and money.

Although ITPM applies many of the same principles of general project management, projects in this field are quite distinct and require a specific approach. ITPM manages the project lifecycle in a particular way to suit the unique nature of IT projects. This means that using a specialist IT project manager will give your project the best chance of success.

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Benefits of
IT Professional Services

From increased efficiencies and building competitive advantage to cost savings, using IT professional services has many advantages for businesses of all types and all sizes.

Better Performance

Businesses rely on technology for almost every aspect of their operations. This means that when things stop working, it can have serious consequences. Internet connectivity problems, lost emails, corrupt data, and system downtime or failure are all too common occurrences. System downtime, even for just a few minutes, can result in serious losses in terms of lost business or productivity, and other technological failures can have equally devastating results.

Working with IT professional services can improve your systems and eliminate issues, in turn greatly reducing systems downtime. Professional IT service providers can introduce high-level strategies to ensure that your systems are maintained properly and function well with limited failures. Combining solid strategies with remote systems monitoring and comprehensive issues response can often completely eliminate downtime.

You may also use IT professional services to train your staff in specific areas of IT, filling gaps in your team's knowledge, and increasing in-house expertise. This will increase your team's capacity to resolve issues as they come up and strengthen processes. Building your team's skills will increase your business's overall capacity to run new projects and pursue opportunities.

Lower Costs

Another major advantage of IT professional services is that they can represent significant savings for businesses. Although using a professional service provider requires an initial investment, many companies find that there is a high return on that investment. Using professional IT services helps you to reduce your overheads. By using expert consultants rather than trying to maintain that expertise in-house, your business has less payroll and benefits expenses. Additionally, operational costs are reduced as recruitment, training, and administration costs are eliminated. Furthermore, it is easier to control expenses as the cost of an IT professional service is a known, fixed cost that can be factored into your budgets. Employees, on the other hand, involve various unknown costs, from sick days to staff turnover.

Moreover, using IT professional services allows you to be more targeted in how you spend your IT budget, which also contributes to reduced costs. You can engage a service provider on an as-needed basis and only pay for them when their services are required. This generally represents significant savings compared to maintaining expert staff in-house full-time and provides the flexibility to ensure your business's needs are met.

Establish Strategic Direction

A professional IT service provider can allow you to establish a solid IT strategy and provide vital strategic direction and overview. A comprehensive, high-level IT strategy is essential. All too often, businesses focus on reacting to problems and surviving day to day, rather than taking the big-picture view. In doing so, they are holding back their business and putting a ceiling on their potential.

Establishing strategic direction allows your business to be proactive and drive your IT systems forward in a way that will best support your goals. These strategies can help to identify potential issues and avoid them before they occur, rather than spending resources on resolving problems. Furthermore, strategic direction will allow you to put the IT infrastructure in place to foster business growth.

Focus on Core Business

Another advantage of using professional IT services is that it gives you the opportunity to delegate the things your business is not so good at. As such, you can play to your strengths, and focus on the things you excel at, which will likely include your core business. New technologies and systems emerge all the time, and often involve a high degree of specialist knowledge. Skilling up in any of these, not to mention multiple niche areas, requires a great deal of time and often money.

By spending less time on complex IT that is not in their wheelhouse, your team will be able to spend more time on the things that will drive your business forward. Rather than struggling with technology, they can spend time looking for new revenue-generating activities or business opportunities. This means you are better using the resources at your disposal and are more likely to reach your business goals.
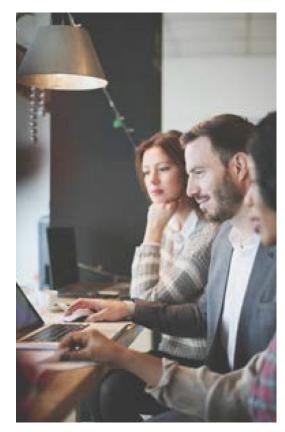
Increased Efficiency

IT professional services can also benefit your business by making it more efficient. They can help you to implement new technology that will increase your team's performance. New tools and equipment are being released all the time, such as new broadband technologies, mobile platforms, email communications, file storage, and more. These can improve processes in a wide range of areas, from customer service and accounting to team collaboration and digital marketing, making your staff more productive and more effective. Gaining full advantage of these new technologies requires proper planning, implementation, and monitoring. This is best done by a specialist IT professional services provider with experience and knowledge of best practices.

Your service provider may also troubleshoot issues to make sure that your system runs better without suffering outages. Less downtime and better functioning systems allow your team to be more productive. This, in turn, will help your business to meet its objectives and ultimately reach its goals.

Additionally, IT professional services enjoy better economies of scale and increased purchasing power, making your IT projects themselves more efficient. Because these service providers focus solely on IT, they have more purchasing power that gives them lower project costs. Additionally, their in-depth, specific knowledge coupled with extensive experience means they are better equipped to execute IT projects as efficiently as possible. They have developed best practices over countless previous projects and can deliver better outcomes for your business at a lower cost.

Take Advantage of Niche Expertise

IT professional services include highly specialized professionals who are experts in their particular niche. Even larger companies are rarely able to maintain an in-house team that has this level of expertise in every aspect of IT. Furthermore, as technology continues to develop, this is getting harder than ever. Working with an IT professional services provider gives you access to experts specialized in your current area of need. Furthermore, if you do want to develop these skills within your team, the service provider can provide training to them.

The nature of IT – whether software, hardware, or systems – means that it is highly complex, as well as rapidly changing. Specialized experts know everything there is to know about their field, and are up to date with the latest developments and regulations. Without this level of in-depth and up-to-date expertise, projects are likely to fail, new technologies may not be properly implemented, and your business will be exposed to a range of risks.

Introduce New and Improved Technology

Keeping up to date with the latest developments in technology can be challenging, given the rapid pace of new developments. Effectively implementing the latest tools and technology is even harder without specialist experience. Your IT professional services provider can recommend and implement the latest technology, allowing your business to gain a competitive edge in the marketplace.

IT professional services providers make it their business to be across the latest developments in their field and can therefore give advice on the latest tools and technologies. This means making recommendations not only on the

tools that will benefit your business, but also which ones to avoid because they are a waste of money or have a negative impact on your business. Furthermore, professional services providers are experts in implementing this technology so your company can adopt it as quickly and seamlessly as possible, boosting performance, setting you apart from your competitors, and encouraging business growth.

Working with IT professional services also gives you access to vendor support that would otherwise be unavailable. Connections are everything in business, and IT is no exception. IT professional services providers have long-standing relationships with technology vendors and manufacturers. This means that they have access to a level of support that few end-users experience, and can facilitate priority access and better support for your business.

Better Staff Retention

Staff retention is one of the biggest problems facing modern businesses, especially those in competitive fields. Attracting and retaining quality staff helps your business to perform better, be more effective, and, ultimately, reach its goals. Staff turnover represents significant costs associated with recruiting new staff and getting them to speed, not to mention lost productivity.

Having the latest technology that makes it easier for your staff to perform better will contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction. This, in turn, will assist with staff retention, as well as encourage the recruitment of higher-quality applicants who will be attracted by the cutting-edge technology that your business is using. If you use these IT professional services to train your team in the latest technology – by upskilling your team and growing their skills – you will be providing them with value that will encourage them to stay rather than looking for another job.

Manage Risk

Running a business involves a large range of risks, from financial and legal risks to security and infrastructure risks. A key part of business success is, if not eliminating these risks, at least managing them as well as possible to minimize negative impacts on your business. There are a number of risks for businesses associated with technology, from the risk of system downtime to cybersecurity risks.

Cyber threats are one of the biggest areas of concern for modern businesses. Businesses are targeted with hacking, data theft, malware, phishing, and other cyberattacks every year, all of which can cost companies thousands or even millions of dollars. Like many other aspects of IT, cyber threats are constantly evolving. Therefore, working with a cybersecurity specialist equipped with the latest knowledge of potential threats allows your business to best manage this risk.

Gain a Competitive Advantage

The benefits mentioned above will allow your business to gain a competitive advantage, reaching a higher level of performance that would not have been possible without implementing new technologies. Your staff will be able to work more efficiently and be more productive, and you will be able to offer a higher level of service to your customers. You also might be able to add to new products to your service offering.

Additionally, new tools and technologies may give you access to new markets, helping you to reach more customers and better build your brand. All of this will allow you to stand out from your competitors and eclipse your competition. By working with a professional IT services provider, you can implement these new technologies effectively and ensure that they continue to perform in a way that best serves your business.

Final Thoughts

IT professional services can help businesses in a number of ways. Along with reducing costs and overhead, managing risks, improving performance and efficiency, and encouraging staff retention, IT professional services help businesses to gain competitive advantage and, ultimately, reach their goals.

Contact us to learn more about how our professional IT services can help your business to use the latest technology to achieve its goals.

516-876-8200

14 Plaza Road
Greenvale , New York 11548

www.ptg.co