

Choosing and assessing an IT Support provider isn't an easy task



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*We've created a short guide to help give you a clear understanding of the different types of IT Support providers available. Find out what they charge, what level of service delivery you can expect from them and why **Focus Technology Solutions** is the best IT Support provider for your business!*

What are the different types of IT providers?

The first type of providers are mainly focused on 'reactive' support – you bring an issue to them and they try to resolve it.

- They often say they have a proactive approach, but this will be limited, they may have software installed on your machine that does some alerting and limited updates, but these aren't reliable or reported on.
- Their staff tend to have limited technical knowledge, with a lot of junior engineers.
- This results in a lot of googling for answers, trial and error at your expense, and bigger issues can take a long time to fix.
- The focus will be on technical ability not customer service skills.
- Although they will have a ticketing system, they're unlikely to have clear service processes developed, which results in inconsistent service.
- You may experience the same issue again and again with these types of providers and find yourself chasing for updates on issues.
- Account Management is unlikely to be developed, with review meetings happening irregularly usually when you have an issue, they want to sell you something or they want more money.
- The upside is that these providers should be charging lower rates as a result, so if your budget is limited this may work for you for now.



- This proactive approach however is limited to tools and systems, and not considered through their day to day service delivery.
- They will have more senior staff now to complement junior engineers that allow for some escalation and will start looking at customer service skills rather than just technical.

- Type two providers are usually let down by their processes – they don't have clear escalation paths, their communication internally leads to confusion and delays for you, and the communication to you maybe great one day, but terrible the next.
 - They often create targets for engineers that encourage the wrong behaviour, such as targeting the number of tickets they close in a day, which cause quick fixes without actually resolving the issue or confirming you are happy.
 - They also haven't encountered business growth themselves yet so are likely to struggle to scale without impacting service.
- Account Management happens more regularly. It's likely there will also be some sort of IT assessment when you meet with your provider.

However, the account managers are Sales People with sales targets, so these 'improvements' are generally opportunities for them to sell to you, rather than looking at your entire environment, including service delivery, for improvements that don't cost money.



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Within the price bracket of £15-25, you will be working with type 1 providers.

They can offer a service at this price because they have lower cost, less experienced staff, and don't expect to invest time and resources into proactively reducing your issues or giving you the correct advice your business needs.

They provide a low-cost option, but you compromise on service and getting the right advice. Expect slow and inconsistent responses, technical knowledge limitations, and the need to manage a fair amount of your IT internally.

This could be a good option if you have an in-house IT guru who needs some low-level support occasionally that isn't time sensitive.

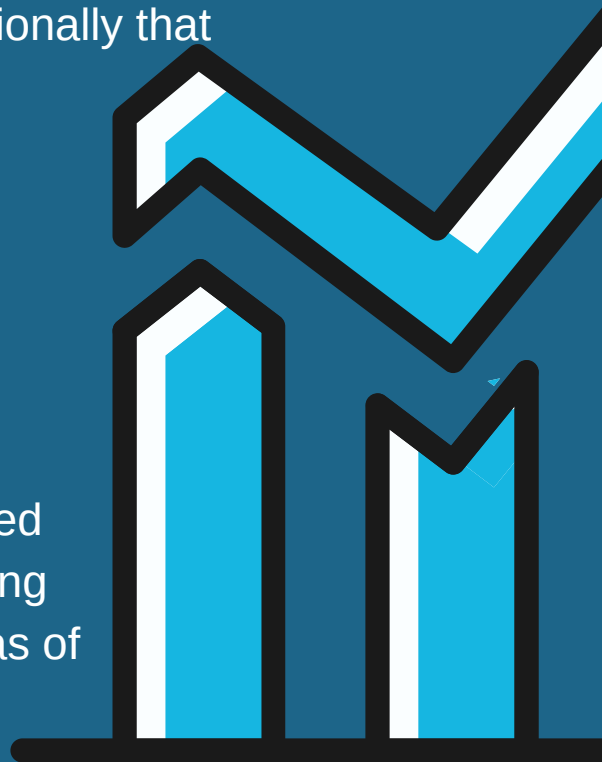
For £25-£35, you can expect a type 2 type provider.

Here you will see an improvement in technical knowledge and proactive maintenance of your machines.

Although front-line technical staff have increased in competency, the company will not be investing in effective Service Management, or other areas of the service delivery process, that improve the consistency of those technical staff.

They also are not looking to invest in technology that can improve your experience, making your life easier. Miscommunication, poor communication, and delayed responses are likely.

This, along with the fact they're focus doesn't include all aspects of your technology environment, will mean internal staff are still needed to perform and manage some IT-related tasks.



For £35-£45 you should expect a tier 3 provider.

Due to their maturity as a business, they have invested in good technical staff and strong leadership and training, which has created efficient processes.

This, coupled with the right investment in technology to help automate and streamline the business, has meant they can provide best-in-class service while keeping operational costs low and passing this on to partners.

They also realise that investing time proactively into partners through assessment and consultancy is costly but pays off long term by reducing issues and risks and benefits everyone.

At £45+ You should expect a tier 3 provider.

However, unless you are an enterprise size business of 150 staff or more you shouldn't expect to pay this much.

It's true that price can dictate service quality, however a provider charging this amount means they are not running the business effectively or utilising technology to help streamline their business – which for a technology consultancy should be concerning!

It could also mean that they're simply looking to maximise profits at the cost of all else, which could mean future acquisitions and the associated service disruptions are on the way, or a board of shareholders to keep happy.



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Couple of final things to consider around pricing and contracts:

PAYG or Block hour contracts are a no-go. They're financially incentivised not to fix your issues quickly, prevent problems from arising or give you good advice – more time spent means more money for them.

Watch out for contracts that can only increase monthly but not reduce as your employee or device count fluctuates.

Also, check for contracts that lock each new employee increase into a new annual term.

Consider that low costs providers are not looking to invest back into the business to improve your experience, so think long-term if you are looking for a partner.

Now do bear in mind that prices can vary, don't always assume a cheaper provider means lower service levels.



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