




# BEYOND THE QUOTE

The 11 Critical Questions That Save  
Businesses Thousands in Hidden IT  
Costs



facettech.com  
(309) 689-3900



# FINDING THE TRUE BOTTOM LINE

**Dear Fellow CEO or IT Leader,**

We understand that choosing a managed service provider becomes complicated quickly. That's why we're creating this free guide for business owners looking for an IT partner. It may be tempting to only look at the quoted monthly price, but some pricing is deceptive.

We aim to explain the basic services we include in our managed services packages, and how to find the "true" bottom line number from a potential provider.

One of the most common questions we get from new prospective clients is, "What do you charge for your services?" Unlike most industries, there is no "standard" pricing for IT services, even though most services appear the same on the surface level. This makes it nearly impossible to compare IT providers on their fees alone.

There are a few dirty secrets about IT service contracts that "cheaper" IT firms use to discount their services, but leave you at a higher risk for cyber attacks, or allow for exorbitant fees to be tacked on once you're in contract. Since few people know exactly what to look for or what questions to ask a potential managed service provider, "cheaper" firms continue to get away with this.

I aim to help business owners pick the right managed service provider for their specific situation, budget, and needs based on the value the company can deliver, not just the price--high or low.

**Dedicated to Your Success,**

*Brian Ford*

**Brian Ford**

President, Facet Technologies, Inc.



## MANAGED SERVICES:

What You Should Expect to Pay,  
and What You Should Get for  
Your Money

# MANAGED AND CO-MANAGED IT

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**Managed IT services** is a pricing model where a managed services provider, or MSP, takes on the role of your fully outsourced IT department. In this model, they handle everything related to your IT “infrastructure.”

- Includes helpdesk support for everyday issues
- May include on-site support (sometimes incurring a trip charge)
- Provides at least some cybersecurity protections and ongoing monitoring.

**Co-managed IT** (or CMIT) is a pricing model built for organizations that already have some internal IT support, whether that is a single IT director, or a full team. In this model, the MSP provides support dependent upon your needs. The function of CMIT is not to take away the role of internal IT, but to provide necessary tools, helpdesk support, or project advisement in a structured, budget-wise way.

A good MSP will provide you with an IT Roadmap and budget for necessary projects to further secure your network and improve the stability and availability of critical applications, and ensure your IT systems are compliant with various data protection laws (HIPAA, PCI, etc.). They also ensure your cyber protections meet the standards on any cyber insurance plan that you have.

These projects are not included in day-to-day maintenance and are typically planned out in advance, based on the growth of your organization, your risk tolerance, operations, business model, etc.

Managed IT, whether fully outsourced or co-managed, is generally priced per workstation or device. In a market like Peoria, IL (where our headquarters is located) that generally falls somewhere between \$100 to \$200 per workstation.

## WHY SUCH A RANGE IN PRICE?

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It often comes down to the services included, and how far they “stretch” their tech team. If you are in a highly regulated industry, you may have compliance considerations, which usually means more security requirements, and a great MSP will be upfront about what costs to expect. They may offer you tiered pricing, with different security options at each level.

Perhaps the most important consideration for business leaders choosing an IT firm is transparency and care when learning about your needs

- Is the provider upfront about costs?
- Do they understand your network and pain points before quoting, or do they simply send a basic price sheet?

It makes a difference in the long run and allows for better planning and budgeting.

In the following pages, we provide our top ten questions we recommend asking before signing on with an MSP to assist you in this process.



# ELEVEN QUESTIONS

You Should Ask Before  
Choosing a Managed  
Services Provider

# KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR INDUSTRY

**You should ask: Do you have clients in my industry, or do you specialize in my industry** (i.e., manufacturing, ag, medical, etc.)? Do you have experience working with my line-of-business applications?

Does the provider understand your industry and the attention it requires? For example, a medical office will need special attention to HIPAA guidelines, whereas a manufacturing facility needs knowledge of industry software to ensure uptime.

When you have a software issue, you don't want to wait for a technician to learn your program from scratch. It's helpful if the company you work with has experience with your software programs or has worked as a liaison between other clients and the software provider in question.



# FIREWALL

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**You should ask: Does your quote include a managed firewall?** Will I have to pay to replace my firewall in a few years when my current device is outdated?

Firewalls, considered to be one of the most crucial cybersecurity protections every business should have in place, are not always included in a quoted managed services contract.

Facet recommends a hardware-as-a-service (HaaS) plan for firewall management. Why? With a HaaS agreement, you never lift a finger or come out of pocket for a new firewall or firewall-related projects. We manage your firewall for you, including updates, configurations, and replacement every two years with the latest models for enhanced protection.

# HELPDESK

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**You should ask: How does your helpdesk work?** Is it in-house or outsourced? Do you offer emergency or after-hours support?

It's important to understand how a potential provider's helpdesk works. When you need assistance fast, do you want to wait hours for assistance from an overseas, overloaded helpdesk? In-house teams know your system, have documentation at their fingertips, and want to solve your issue, instead of just getting off the phone as quickly as possible.

Our helpdesk is 100% in-house, in-office in Peoria. Our team works together to resolve IT issues quickly and thoroughly. Facet clients love our friendly, knowledgeable experts and we are certain your team will, too. We offer after-hours emergency support from in-house technicians 24/7/365, because we know that work goes beyond 5:00PM.



## ON-SITE SUPPORT

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**You should ask: Do you include on-site support visits with the managed services agreement?** If not, what is your trip charge?

Occasionally, you may require on-site support. You should establish if these visits will be an additional cost, and if so, find out the amount of the trip charge.

Trip charges are a standard practice for many IT providers, but it's smart to factor in how much you will spend before signing an agreement.

## MFA

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**You should ask: Does your quote include multi-factor authentication for my team?** What about single sign-on capabilities?

Multi-factor authentication (MFA) is proven to be the most effective way to prevent brute force attacks, man-in-the-middle attacks, session hijacking, and privilege escalation, but it's not always included in a managed services quote.

We include security tools like MFA for our managed services clients. Why? It's our job to keep your systems running smoothly. Hacks, ransomware lockups, and stolen data lead to downtime, sometimes days of downtime, for you and your team. MFA is a simple-to-use, proven solution, and should be part of your security strategy by default. Single Sign-On (SSO) solutions make the MFA/login process quicker and easier.



## ENDPOINT PROTECTION & ANTIVIRUS

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**You should ask: Does the quote include endpoint protection for each workstation?** What technology are you using?

Similarly, you may have to confirm if the quote includes endpoint protection. Modern, next-gen endpoint protection is more than an antivirus. It's proactive, vs. a reactive antivirus: instead of looking for "known" malware entities, next-gen protection scans constantly for pattern changes—and responds accordingly.

In the same vein, you may wish to look for 24/7 Security Operations Center (SOC) or Managed Detection and Response (MDR) offerings, especially if you are a business with more than 30 employees. These are staffed options and offer enhanced protection and an additional "human" element for increased security. Facet offers these services as part of our Advanced Security Suite, which are additional services separate from the base-level protections we include as part of every managed IT agreement.

## HARDWARE REPAIRS

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**You should ask:** What will you do if a device requires hardware repairs? Will these be an additional cost?

When devices need a charging port replaced or other hardware-based repairs, how will your IT provider respond? Some will not repair hardware, and will insist upon replacement.

Facet has a staffed repair bench at our headquarters where we perform repairs, hardware upgrades, and set up workstations. We believe that if a repair is cost effective, our customers should have a simple process to have the repair completed in-house. While parts may incur a cost, we do not charge for repair hours.

## EMAIL HOSTING, MIGRATION AND EMAIL SECURITY

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**You should ask: Is email security included in your quote?**  
Will there be project fees for email migration, or hosting fees?

Depending on your current email hosting provider, you may need to consider an email migration project. Emails ending in “@gmail.com,” “@yahoo.com,” or any other free email program, are not eligible for enhanced protection and email security (a necessary precaution when the majority of business attacks come through email). A transparent IT provider will let you know upfront to expect extra costs for migrations, and an ongoing monthly or yearly fee for hosting.

Some IT providers, in a hurry to sign a new customer, will push back hosting projects until after you’ve signed an agreement, leaving you on the hook for an unplanned migration project.

## EMPLOYEE TRAINING

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**You should ask: Do you offer employee training initiatives and materials?** How about phishing simulations?

Research shows that training your employees reduces your risk for cyberattack significantly—regular training has been shown to reduce phishing risk from 60% to 10% over 12 months.

The Facet team conducts regular phishing simulations for our managed services clients as well as providing educational videos and materials through our partners. We also offer a bi-weekly newsletter with cybersecurity training and tech tips that can be used as a training tool.

## SERVERS

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**You should ask: Should I expect a large server project in the next few years?** Do you support both physical servers and cloud environments?

Surprise server projects can cause a hit to your bottom line—and you should know about them in advance. Some providers do not provide a comprehensive evaluation, relying instead on quick network scans or other virtual “assessments” that do not provide a full picture of your network. This can lead to overlooked areas or projects you did not anticipate when you signed on with an MSP.

If you have a physical server that is reaching end-of-life, an MSP may recommend moving to a cloud solution. Cloud servers avoid the large upfront costs and other pitfalls of physical servers, but you need a provider that understands cloud servers and can configure them properly. If you’re currently on the cloud, or thinking of moving to it, make sure your MSP can provide guidance and expertise.

# PROJECTS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

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**You should ask: What is your process for planning and quoting projects?** Will you provide an “IT plan” for the year to minimize surprise costs?

You may choose to ask this question, but it may be better to simply look at the time and care the IT provider put into preparing your quote/proposal. The IT provider should be able to give you an idea of what your expenses will be throughout the next year, and include any projects that need completed soon.

Some MSPs do not offer onsite assessments, which give a full picture of your network and systems. If the MSP is not willing to come onsite to quote you, it is likely that they will find projects and additional costs for you during onboarding.

At Facet, we offer strategic IT support, not just helpdesk or reactive fixes. The most cost-effective way to manage IT and cybersecurity is through a proactive approach from a trusted partner who knows your network, respects your work, and offers transparent pricing.





## About Facet, the Publisher of This Guide

Facet Technologies is a trusted managed service provider based in Peoria, IL with over 30 years of experience in the IT industry. We provide comprehensive IT solutions with a focus on cybersecurity, delivering peace of mind through our commitment to treating customer data as if it were our own.

Our services span from essential IT support through our in-house helpdesk and proprietary Provoptix monitoring system to advanced cybersecurity solutions including AI endpoint protection, managed firewalls, and 24/7 Security Operations Center monitoring. We offer everything from cloud solutions and backup services to compliance consulting for PCI, HIPAA, FEDRAMP, and CMMC standards.

What sets us apart is our dedication to building long-term partnerships based on honesty, transparency, and exceptional customer service. With our live answer support during business hours and 24/7/365 on-call technicians, we ensure immediate response when you need it most.



# Contact Facet

For a Custom Business IT and  
Cybersecurity Report:

**Facet Technologies, Inc.**

Call us: (309) 689-3900

Email us: [info@facettech.com](mailto:info@facettech.com)

Fill out our form: <https://facettech.com/contact-us>

Visit us: 3024 W. Lake Ave., Peoria, IL 61615