

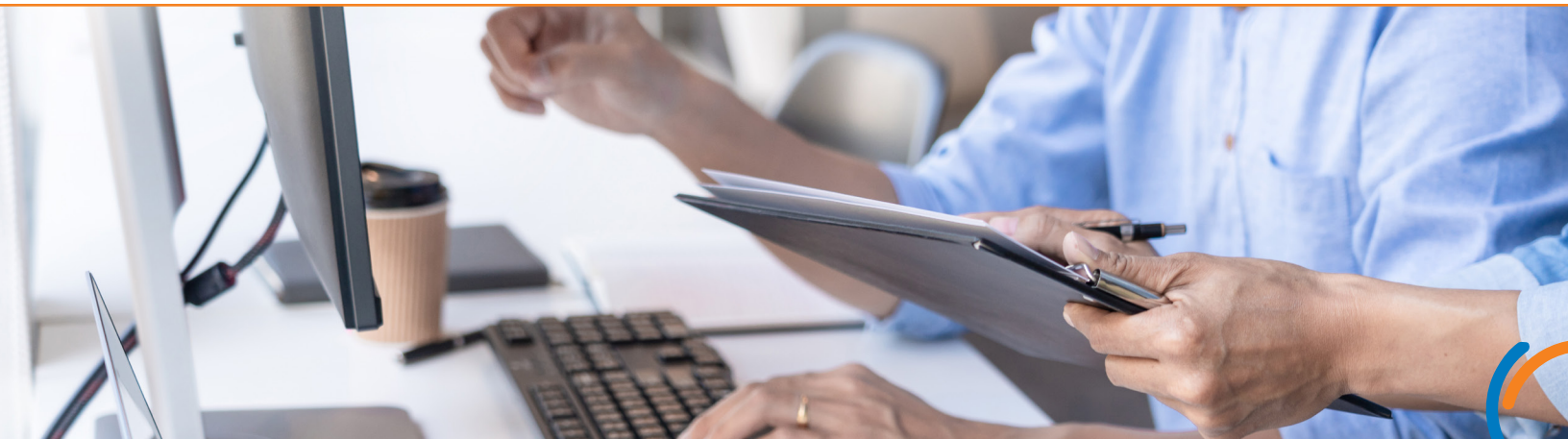
IT: The Key Differentiator

In a recent industry survey, it was found that one of the biggest factors holding back smaller and mid-sized firms from achieving their business goals was IT. One may argue that smaller businesses lack the capital that the bigger players have to invest in their business, but even with all other aspects being more or less equal, the difference brought about by their lack of investment in IT was found to be a key differentiating factor-far more than other elements such as marketing, human resources and even industry expertise.

Many small or mid-sized businesses don't focus much on IT as they should. For a lot of them, the focus is on customers, ensuring they have enough staff to meet their client needs, expanding their business and driving revenue by selling. IT comes into the picture initially when the business is being set up. Once they have their IT infrastructure up and running, it tends to take a backseat. The typical mid-sized or small business owner seems to prefer the firefighting approach to IT-meaning, they reach out to an IT service provider only when they have an IT problem.

Interestingly, this is the key difference between the average SMB and best-in-class SMBs. The best-in-class SMBs tend to adopt a more proactive approach towards IT. They either have an in-house IT team or sign-up with a Managed Services Provider to take care of their IT needs on a regular basis. In contrast to the average SMB, the best-in-class almost always has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with a reputed MSP.

Now, let's discuss how having an MSP on board can help the average SMB transition to the best-in-class category. More time to focus on the operational aspects of the business





More time to focus on the operational aspects of the business

Having a dedicated MSP-partner to take care of all IT needs helps businesses give 100% to other areas that help the business grow. With IT issues off their shoulders, management can focus more on clients, brand and market expansion.

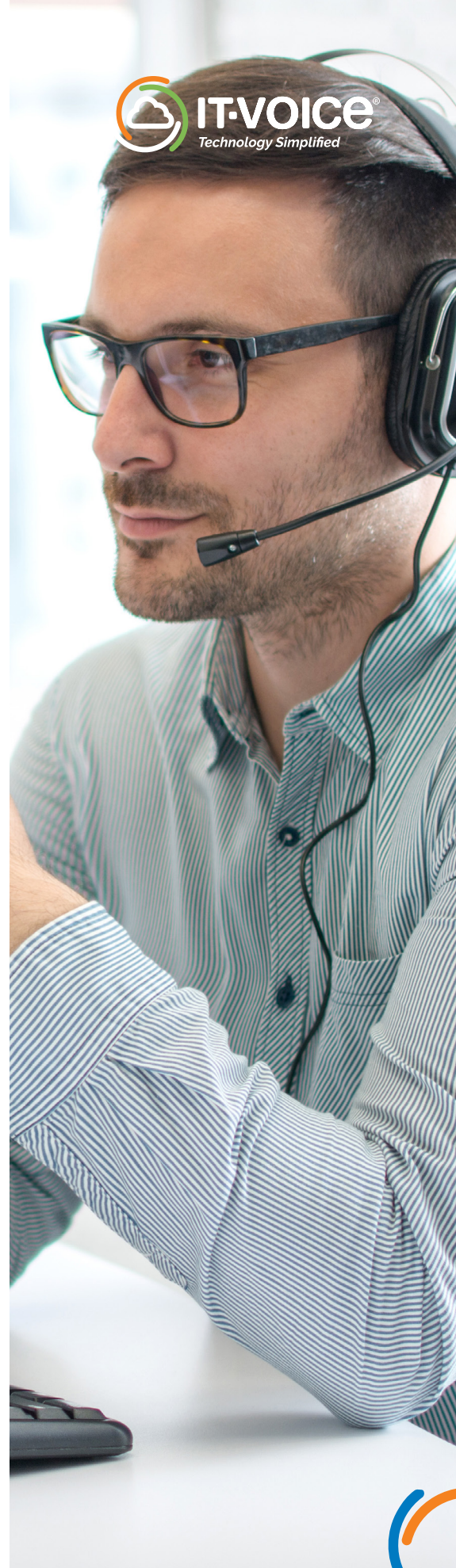
An MSP can help a business reduce their IT expenditure

There's no denying that IT plays an important role in keeping any business running. Ignoring the IT infrastructure can prove disastrous, but maintaining an in-house IT team to take care of it can be expensive-especially for SMBs. By outsourcing IT to a trusted MSP, businesses can benefit from significant cost savings that arise from not having to hire an entire IT team in-house.

The second instance where having an Service level agreement (SLA) with an MSP helps is in cases where the business doesn't have an in-house IT team. Calling on an IT service provider at the time of crisis or having one-time transactions when the need arises will prove expensive.

There's more flexibility with an MSP

Businesses with in-house IT teams find it challenging to grow their IT teams to match their growing business requirements. IT personnel are expensive, but nevertheless important, especially as the business grows. However, in a smaller business, they may not be always utilized to their full capacity. Having an SLA with an MSP gives such businesses the flexibility and scalability they need to meet their growing IT requirements without worrying about additional resource costs or less-than-optimal IT resource utilization.





IT emergencies will be less in number and severity

When businesses have SLAs, the MSP will be regularly monitoring their IT infrastructure. A typical service agreement will cover regular backups, periodic network monitoring for latency issues, timely security updates and patch application, etc.. This means the chances of severe IT issues cropping up will be drastically reduced. Most of the time, the problem can be identified much sooner before it becomes a full-blown issue. And, in the event of an IT emergency, a client having a service agreement will be prioritized by the MSP rather than one who contacts them for a one-off resolution.

Access to the latest in the IT industry

Businesses that have service contracts with MSPs have access to the latest technology. The IT industry is constantly evolving and managed service providers are well aware of the changes. They know it first when a new technology is gaining widespread adoption across various industry verticals and can advise their clients accordingly. On the other hand, the in-house IT team may be too busy handling the day-to-day IT requirements to be able to focus on new technology and the various ways in which it can be applied to benefit the business. This specialized focus of MSPs also makes them a great asset to have on board when implementing new technologies or deploying new IT projects within the business.

Irrespective of whether there's an in-house IT team or not, MSPs can add tremendous value to SMBs by bringing scalability, flexibility and innovation to the average SMB's IT set-up and equip them with the IT footing they need to compete with the bigger players in their industry.

Contact us today to get started.