

# IT BUYERS GUIDE

What Every Business  
Owner **MUST**  
Know About IT  
Support Services  
And Fees



**What You Should Expect To  
Pay For IT Support For Your  
Business And How To Get**



# **The Business Owners' Guide To IT Support Services And Fees**

## **What You Should Expect To Pay For IT Support For Your Small Business**

(And How To Get *Exactly* What You Need Without  
Unnecessary Extras, Hidden Fees And Bloated  
Contracts)

### **Read this guide and you'll discover:**

- ✓ The 3 most common ways IT services companies charge for their services, and the pros and cons of each approach.
- ✓ A common billing model that puts ALL THE RISK on you, the customer, when buying IT services; you'll learn what it is and why you need to avoid agreeing to it.
- ✓ Exclusions, hidden fees and other "gotcha" clauses IT companies put in their contracts that you DON'T want to agree to.
- ✓ How to make sure you know exactly what you're getting to avoid disappointment, frustration and added costs later on that you didn't anticipate.
- ✓ 21 revealing questions to ask your IT support firm BEFORE giving them access to your computer network, e-mail and data.

### **Provided as an educational service by:**

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## Never Ask An IT Services Company, “What Do You Charge For Your Services?” Instead You Should Ask, “What Will I Get For My Money?”



From The Desk Of: Willie Kerns  
President, SmartPath Technologies

Dear Colleague,

If you are the owner of a business in the Tri-State Area that is currently looking to outsource some or all of the IT support for your business, this report contains important information that will be extremely valuable to you as you search for a competent firm you can **trust**.

My name is Willie Kerns, President of SmartPath Technologies. We’ve been providing IT services to businesses in the Tri-State Area for over 12 years now. You may not have heard of us before, but I’m sure you’re familiar with one or more of the other local businesses who are clients of ours. A few of their comments are enclosed.

**One of the most commons questions we get from new prospective clients calling our office is “What do you guys charge for your services?”** Since this is such a common question — and a very important one to address — I decided to write this report for 3 reasons:

1. I wanted an easy way to answer this question and educate all prospective clients who come to us on the most common ways IT services company’s package and price their services, and the pros and cons of each approach.
2. I wanted to bring to light a few “industry secrets” about IT service contracts and SLAs (service level agreements) that almost no small business owner thinks about, understands or knows to ask about when evaluating IT service providers that can end up burning you with hidden fees and locking you into a long-term contract when they are unwilling or unable to deliver the quality of service you need.
3. I wanted to educate business owners on how to pick the **right** IT services company for their specific situation, budget and needs based on the **VALUE** the company can deliver, not just the price, high OR low.

In the end, my purpose is to help you make the most informed decision possible so you end up working with someone who helps you solve your problems and accomplish what you want in a time frame, manner and budget that is right for you.

Dedicated to serving you!

Willie Kerns



## About The Author



Willie Kerns has been working in the computer support and IT industry for fifteen years, and has owned a computer consulting company for the past 13 years. Willie has obtained certifications from CompTIA, Microsoft, and Cisco Systems, and spends over 100 hours a year performing continuing education. He and his wife, Kristy, formed SmartPath Technologies in 2008 to serve the technology needs of the business community in the Tri-State Area. With a customer driven focus, Willie has pioneered the concept of preventative maintenance programs – allowing businesses to properly budget for IT expenditures while focusing on what it takes to prevent your computers and network from having problems in the first place. Through innovative technology and proper planning, his clients simply don't experience the down time – and if they do, it's minimal.

Willie is a state certified Firefighter, who volunteers as a fireman in Calvert City, KY. He also serves on the board of the Jackson Purchase Firefighters Association and serves his community as a member of the Calvert City Zoning Board of Adjustments. His daughter, Brooke, occupies the majority of his free time.

Besides IT services, Willie has multitudes of real world management experience, including serving as General Manager to the largest radio station licensed to the state of Illinois. This multi-industry experience gives him a unique perspective to not only address clients IT and technology issues, but also to work with those clients to use technology to better automate and manage their business.

## Special Thanks To...

My employees who always give 110% day in, and day out, to keep everything running smoothly. I would not be able to do everything we do without a good solid team to help.

All of our clients who trust us with their networks. Your confidence in us means more than words can say.



## Comparing Apples To Apples: The Predominant IT Service Models Explained

Before you can accurately compare the fees, services and deliverables of one IT services company to another, you need to understand the 3 predominant service models most of these companies fit within. Some companies offer a blend of all 3, while others are strict about offering only one service plan. The 3 predominant service models are:

**Time and Materials.** In the industry, we call this “break-fix” services. Essentially you pay an agreed-upon hourly rate for a technician to “fix” your problem when something “breaks.” Under this model, you might be able to negotiate a discount based on buying a block of hours. The scope of work may be simply to resolve a specific problem (like removing a virus), or it may encompass a large project like a computer network upgrade or move that has a specific result and end date clarified. Some companies will offer staff augmentation and placement under this model as well.

**Managed IT Services.** This is a model where the IT services company takes the role of your “IT department” and not only installs and supports all the devices and PCs that connect to your server(s), but also offers phone and on-site support, antivirus, security, backup and a host of other services to monitor and maintain the health, speed, performance and security of your computer network.

**Software Vendor-Supplied IT Services.** Many software companies will offer IT support for their customers in the form of a help desk or remote support for an additional fee. However, these are typically scaled-back services, limited to troubleshooting their specific application and NOT your entire computer network and all the applications and devices connected to it. If your problem resides outside of their specific software or the server it’s hosted on, they can’t help you and will often refer you to “your IT department.” While it’s often a good idea to buy some basic-level support package with a critical software application you use to run your business, this is not enough to provide the full IT services and support most businesses need to stay up and running.

When looking to outsource your IT support, the two service models you are most likely to end up having to choose between are the “managed IT services” and “break-fix” models. Therefore, let’s dive into the pros and cons of these two options, and then the typical fee structure for both.



## **Managed IT Services Vs. Break-Fix: Which Is The Better, More Cost-Effective Option?**

You've probably heard the famous Benjamin Franklin quote, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I couldn't agree more — and that's why it's my sincere belief that the managed IT approach is, by far, the most cost-effective, smartest option for any small business. The only time I would recommend a "time and materials" approach is when you already have a competent IT person or team proactively managing your computer network and simply have a specific IT project to complete that your current in-house IT team doesn't have the time or expertise to implement (such as a network upgrade, installing a backup solution, etc.). Outside of that specific scenario, I do not think the break-fix approach is a good idea for general IT support for one very important, fundamental reason: you'll ultimately end up paying for a pound of "cure" for problems that could have easily been avoided with an "ounce" of prevention.

### **Why Regular Monitoring And Maintenance Is Critical For Today's Computer Networks**

The fact of the matter is, computer networks absolutely, positively need ongoing maintenance and monitoring to stay secure. The ever-increasing dependency we have on IT systems and the data they hold — not to mention the *type* of data we're now saving digitally — has given rise to very smart and sophisticated cybercrime organizations and who work around the clock to do one thing: compromise your networks for illegal activities.

In most cases their intent is to access financial information and passwords to rob you (or your clients), create fake identities for credit card fraud, etc. In other cases they may want to use your computer network to send illegal spam, host pirated software, spread viruses, etc. And some do it just for the "fun" of being able to make computer systems inoperable. These criminals work around the clock in teams, constantly finding and inventing new ways to get around your antivirus software and firewalls; that's why you have to remain ever vigilant against their attacks.

Of course, this doesn't even take into consideration other common "disasters" such as rogue employees, lost devices, hardware failures (which are the #1 reason for data loss), fire and natural disasters and a host of other issues that can interrupt or outright destroy your IT infrastructure and the data it holds. Then there's regulatory compliance for any business hosting or touching credit card or financial information, medical records and even client contact information such as e-mail addresses.



Preventing these problems and keeping your systems up and running (which is what managed IT services is all about) is a LOT less expensive and damaging to your organization than waiting until one of these things happens and then paying for emergency IT services to restore your systems to working order (break-fix).

## **Should You Just Hire A Full-Time IT Manager?**

In most cases, it is not cost-effective for companies with under 50 employees to hire a full-time IT person, because you can outsource this function of your business far cheaper and with a lot less work; but you DO want to hire a professional to perform basic maintenance just as you would hire an attorney to handle your legal matters or an accountant to prepare your taxes. **And if you truly understand the cost of your TIME and factor in employee productivity, the managed IT services model is considerably less expensive over time than the “break-fix” model.**

## **Why “Break-Fix” Works Entirely In The Consultant’s Favor, *Not Yours***

Under a “break-fix” model, there is a fundamental conflict of interests between you and your IT firm. The IT services company has no incentive to stabilize your computer network or to resolve problems quickly because they are getting paid by the hour; therefore, the risk of unforeseen circumstances, scope creep, learning curve inefficiencies and outright incompetence are all shifted to YOU, the customer. Essentially, the more problems you have, the more they profit, which is precisely what you DON’T want.

Under this model, the IT consultant can take the liberty of assigning a junior (lower-paid) technician to work on your problem who may take two to three times as long to resolve an issue that a more senior (and more expensive) technician may have resolved in a fraction of the time. There is no incentive to properly manage the time of that technician or their efficiency, and there is every reason for them to prolong the project and to find MORE problems than solutions. Of course, if they’re ethical and want to keep you as a client, they *should* be doing everything possible to resolve your problems quickly and efficiently; however, that’s akin to putting a German shepherd in charge of watching over the ham sandwiches. Not a good idea.

Second, it creates a management problem for you, the customer, who now has to keep track of the hours they’ve worked to make sure you aren’t getting overbilled; and since you often have no way of really knowing if they’ve worked the hours they say they have, it creates a situation where you really, truly need to be able to trust they are being 100% ethical and honest AND tracking THEIR hours properly (not all do).



And finally, it makes budgeting for IT projects and expenses a nightmare since they may be zero one month and thousands the next.

## **What To Look For In A Managed IT Services Agreement And What You Should Expect To Pay**

**Important!** Please note that the following price quotes are industry averages based on a recent IT industry survey conducted of over 750 different IT services firms. We are providing this information to give you a general idea of what most IT services firms charge and to help you understand the VAST DIFFERENCES in service contracts that you must be aware of before signing on the dotted line. Please understand that this does NOT reflect our pricing model or approach, which is simply to understand exactly what you want to accomplish FIRST and then customize a solution based on your specific needs, budget and situation.

**Hourly Break-Fix Fees:** Most IT services companies selling break-fix services charge between \$125 and \$250 per hour with a one-hour minimum in the western Kentucky area. In most cases, they will give you a discount of 5% to as much as 20% on their hourly rates if you purchase and pay for a block of hours in advance.

If they are quoting a **project**, the fees range widely based on the scope of work outlined. If you are hiring an IT consulting firm for a project, I would suggest you demand the following:

1. **A very detailed scope of work that specifies what “success” is.** Make sure you detail what your expectations are in performance, work flow, costs, security, access, etc. The more detailed you can be, the better. Detailing your expectations up front will go a long way in avoiding miscommunications and additional fees later on to give you what you REALLY wanted.
2. **A fixed budget and time frame for completion.** Agreeing to this up front aligns both your agenda and the consultant's. Be very wary of loose estimates that allow the consulting firm to bill you for “unforeseen” circumstances. The bottom line is this: it is your IT consulting firm's responsibility to be able to accurately assess your situation and quote a project based on their experience. You should not have to pick up the tab for a consultant underestimating a job or for their inefficiencies. A true professional knows how to take into consideration those contingencies and bill accordingly.

**Managed IT Services:** Most managed IT services firms will quote you a MONTHLY fee based on the number of devices they need to maintain, back up and support. In Tri-State Area, that



fee is somewhere in the range of \$200 to \$400 per server, \$80 to \$100 per desktop and approximately \$9 per smartphone or mobile device.

If you hire an IT consultant and sign up for a managed IT services contract, here are some things that SHOULD be included (make sure you read your contract to validate this):

- Security patches applied monthly, if not weekly, for urgent and emerging threats
- Antivirus software, as well as updates and monitoring
- A firewall, including firewall updates and monitoring
- Backup monitoring and test restores
- Spam-filter installation and updates
- Spyware detection and removal
- Monitoring disk space on workstations and servers
- Monitoring hardware for signs of failure
- A hosted e-mail solution such as Office 365 or Google Apps
- Optimizing systems for maximum speed
- An online backup solution including backup monitoring and regular test restores from backup

The following services may **NOT be included** and will often be billed separately. This is not necessarily a “scam” or unethical UNLESS the managed IT services company tries to hide these fees when selling you a service agreement. Make sure you review your contract carefully to know what is and is NOT included!

- Hardware, such as new servers, PCs, laptops, etc.
- Software licenses and new software
- Office Moves
- Incidents that involve an insurance claim
- Network wiring

**Warning! Gray areas of “all-inclusive” service contracts.** In order to truly compare the “cost” of one managed IT services contract to another, you need to make sure you fully understand what IS and ISN’T included AND the “SLA” or “service level agreement” you are signing up for. It’s VERY easy for one IT services provider to appear far less expensive than another UNTIL you look closely at what you are getting.

The following are 21 questions to ask your IT services provider that will clarify exactly what you’re getting for the money. Some of these items may not be that important to you, while others (like response time, adequate insurance and uptime guarantees) may be critical. Make sure you fully understand each of these items before making a decision about who the right provider is for you; then make sure you get this IN WRITING.



## **21 Service Clarification Questions You Should Ask Your IT Services Firm Before Signing A Contract**

### **Customer Service:**

**Q1: Do they answer their phones live or do you always have to leave a voicemail and wait for someone to call you back?**

**Our Answer:** We answer our phones live from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and give all clients an emergency after-hours number they may call if a problem arises, even on weekends. Why? Because many of the CEOs and executives we support work outside normal hours and find it the most productive time they have. If they cannot access their computer network AND can't get hold of anyone to help them, it's incredibly frustrating.

**Q2: Do they offer a written, guaranteed response time to your calls?**

**Our Answer:** We provide all of our clients with a guaranteed time frame we will be working on their issue, a time frame if they have an emergency and no one can work, and we report monthly to the client how well we achieve these SLA time frames. Do NOT hire an IT company unless they provide you monthly proof that they are meeting the time frames you agree to. Most of the time, we far exceed the time frames we specify – often times beginning to work on issues in under an hour.

**Q3: Do they take the time to explain what they are doing and answer your questions in terms that you can understand (not geek-speak), or do they come across as arrogant and make you feel stupid for asking simple questions?**

**Our Answer:** Our technicians are trained to have the “heart of a teacher” and will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms. We are passionate nerds and we don't use geek speak. You have to understand what your IT provider is talking about! Just look at what Millie Dotson, General Manager at Collier Electrical Service had to say:

“One of the things I like most about dealing with SmartPath Technologies is I can actually understand them! They don't use a lot of geek speak – LAN this, Ethernet that, topology over here – instead, they explain things in plain English and use easy to understand analogies. I know they can



make technology work for my business – but explain it to me in a way I can understand!”

**Q4: Do they consistently (and proactively) offer new ways to improve your network’s performance, or do they wait until you have a problem to make recommendations?**

**Our Answer:** We conduct quarterly review meetings with our clients to look for new ways to help improve their operations, lower costs, increase efficiencies and resolve any problems that may be arising. Our goal with these meetings is to help our clients be more profitable, efficient and competitive. In addition, we work with clients to develop processes and procedures to improve various areas of business efficiency.

**Q5: Do they provide detailed invoices that clearly explain what you are paying for?**

**Our Answer:** We provide detailed invoices that show what work was done, why and when, so you never have to guess what you are paying for. We also double-check our invoices for accuracy before they are sent to you. However, if you are a managed services client, you typically should only receive one invoice a month – but you should still receive an explanation for ALL work done. Will the IT provider your considering provide a monthly or weekly report of all work performed in easy to read format? We do!

**Q6: Do they have adequate errors and omissions insurance as well as workers’ compensation insurance to protect YOU?**

**Our Answer:** Here’s something to consider: if THEY cause a problem with your network that causes you to be down for hours or days or to lose data, who’s responsible? Here’s another question to consider: if one of their technicians gets hurt at your office, who’s paying? In this litigious society we live in, you better make darn sure whomever you hire is adequately insured with both errors and omissions insurance AND workers’ compensation — and don’t be shy about asking to see their latest insurance policies!

True Story: A few years ago Geek Squad was slapped with multimillion-dollar lawsuits from customers for bad behavior by their technicians. In some cases, their techs where accessing, copying and distributing personal information they gained access to on customers’ PCs and laptops brought in for repairs. In other cases, they lost a client’s laptop (and subsequently all the data on it) and tried to cover it up. Bottom line: make sure the company you are hiring has proper insurance to protect YOU.

We cover at minimum a 1 million dollar errors and omissions policy and a 1 million dollar liability insurance policy with a carrier who understands our business and how we perform service. We



will list our clients on the policy as “additionally insured” – will your IT company do that? They should!

**Q7: Do they guarantee to complete projects on time and on budget?**

**Our Answer:** All projects are fixed-priced and guaranteed to be completed on time, in writing. This is important because many unethical or incompetent computer guys will only quote “time and materials,” which gives them free rein to nickel-and-dime you as well as take as much time as they want completing a project.

**Maintenance Of Your Network:**

**Q8: Do they insist on remotely monitoring your network 24/7/365 to keep critical security settings, virus definitions and security patches up-to-date and PREVENT problems from turning into downtime, viruses, lost data and other issues?**

**Our Answer:** Yes; our remote network monitoring system watches over your network to constantly look for developing problems, security issues and other problems so we can address them BEFORE they turn into bigger problems.

**Q9: Do they provide you with a Monthly report that shows all the updates, security patches, and status of every machine on your network so you know for SURE your systems have been secured and updated?**

**Our Answer:** Every month our clients get a detailed report that shows an overall health score of their network and the updates to their antivirus, security settings, patches and other important network checks (like hard-drive space, backups, speed and performance, etc.).

**Q10: Is it standard procedure for them to provide you with written network documentation detailing what software licenses you own, critical passwords, user information, hardware inventory, etc., or are they the only person with the “keys to the kingdom”?**

**Our Answer:** All clients receive this in written and electronic form at no additional cost. We also perform a quarterly update on this material and make sure certain key people from your organization have this information and know how to use it, giving you complete control over your network.

Side Note: You should NEVER allow an IT person to have that much control over you and your company. If you get the sneaking suspicion that your current IT person is keeping this under their control as a means of job security, get rid of them (and we can help to make sure you don't



suffer ANY ill effects). This is downright unethical and dangerous to your organization, so don't tolerate it!

**Q11: Do they have other technicians on staff who are familiar with your network in case your regular technician goes on vacation or gets sick?**

**Our Answer:** Yes; and since we keep detailed network documentation (basically a blueprint of your computer network) and updates on every client's account, any of our technicians can pick up where another one has left off. We also utilize a team approach – your business is serviced by the same team of engineers day in and day out. They are familiar with your business, with your network, and with YOU. All engineers report to our service director, who is also intimately familiar with your network. Ask the IT company you are considering for their organizational structure and how your account will be serviced. Be wary if they tell you “any of our technicians can take care of you”. While that's true for us, we try to siphon 98% of all issues through the engineering team assigned to you.

**Q12: When they offer an “all-inclusive” support plan, is it TRULY all-inclusive, or are their “gotchas” hidden in the fine print?**

**Our Answer:** Our “all-inclusive” support plan is just that — all-inclusive. One of the more popular service plans offered by consulting firms today is an “all-inclusive” or “all-you-can-eat” managed services plan. These are actually a good thing because they'll save you a lot of money in the long run. HOWEVER, make sure you REALLY understand what is and isn't included. Some things to consider are:

- Is phone/e-mail help desk included or extra?
- What about network upgrades, moves or adding/removing users?
- Is hardware and/or software included?
- What about 3<sup>rd</sup>-party software support? (We recommend that this IS included.)
- What are the costs/consequences of early cancellation?
- What if you aren't happy with their services? Do they offer a money-back guarantee?
- If the hardware and software is included, what happens if you cancel the contract?
- Are off-site backups included? To what degree?
- If you have a major disaster, is restoring your network included or extra?
- What about on-site support calls? Or support to remote offices?
  - Are they testing your backups? How often?
  - What about mobile devices (iPads, phones, tablets?)
- Are home PCs used to access the company's network after hours included or extra?



## **Backups And Disaster Recovery:**

**Q13: Do they INSIST on monitoring an off-site as well as an on-site backup, or are they letting you rely on outdated tape backups?**

**Our Answer:** We do not allow our clients to use tape backups because tape backups are incredibly unreliable. We make sure all of our clients are aware of the issues and offer our backup solution AssureSafe. We encourage our clients to have BOTH on-site backups for quick restores and automated off-site backups (AssureSafe) to get your data back in the event of major disaster such as fire, tornado, and flooding. AssureSafe, LLC is a **locally owned** disaster recovery and business continuity. The ownership of SmartPath Technologies also has partial ownership of AssureSafe, LLC.

**Q14: Do they INSIST on doing periodic test restores of your backups to make sure the data is not corrupt and could be restored in the event of a disaster?**

**Our Answer:** We perform a quarterly “fire drill” and perform a test restore from backup for our clients to make sure their data CAN be recovered in the event of an emergency. After all, the WORST time to “test” a backup is when you desperately need it. How often is your current IT support TESTING your backup?

**Q15: Do they insist on backing up your network BEFORE performing any type of project or upgrade?**

**Our Answer:** We do, and that’s simply as a precaution in case a hardware failure or software glitch causes a major problem. Often times, we’ll simulate your network in a lab environment to test things like new software, patches, etc. before we deploy them live on your servers and workstations. How does your current IT support test things before they upgrade, install, or make changes to applications and your server?

**Q16: If you were to experience a major disaster, do they have a written plan for how your data could be restored FAST and/or enable you to work from a remote location?**

**Our Answer:** All clients receive a simple disaster recovery plan for their data and network. We encourage them to do a full disaster recovery plan for their office, but at a minimum, their network will be covered should something happen.

## **Technical Expertise And Support:**



**Q17: Is their help-desk U.S.-based or outsourced to an overseas company or third party?**

**Our Answer:** We provide our own in-house help desk and make sure the folks helping you are friendly and helpful. We consider this one of the most important aspects of customer service, plus we feel it's important to keeping your data secure.

**Q18: Do their technicians maintain current vendor certifications and participate in ongoing training — or are they learning on your dime?**

**Our Answer:** Our technicians are required to keep the most up-to-date vendor certifications in all the software we support. Our offices holds CompTIA A++, Microsoft, Cisco, CCNA, C, C++, MCSE, Novell CNE and Networking certification. Plus, our hiring process is so stringent, 99% of the technicians who apply don't make it through. (Guess who's hiring them?) In addition – as mentioned above we work with our clients not only to solve technology problems but business process problems – and we'll share our hiring process with YOU, so you can have a simple yet stringent hiring process in your business. Does the IT company you are considering offer these additional business consulting services?

**Q19: Do their technicians arrive on time and dress professionally?**

**Our Answer:** Our technicians are true professionals that you would be proud to have in your office. They dress professionally and show up on time, and if they cannot (for some odd, unforeseen reason), we always notify the client immediately. We believe these are minimum requirements for delivering a professional service.

**Q20: Are they familiar with (and can they support) your unique line of business application?**

**Our Answer:** We own the problems with all lines of business applications for our clients. That doesn't mean we can fix faulty software — but we WILL be the liaison between you and your vendor to resolve problems you are having and make sure these applications work smoothly for you.

**Q21: When something goes wrong with your Internet service, phone systems, printers or other IT services, do they own the problem or do they say, "That's not our problem to fix"?**

**Our Answer:** We feel WE should own the problem for our clients so they don't have to try and resolve any of these issues on their own — that's just plain old good service and something many computer guys won't do. We are a single point of contact – you don't need to referee the internet provider blaming your software and your software blaming your internet provider – we do that for you. Often times this service alone saves businesses



thousands of dollars in lost productivity because they have an office manager or staff member handling all of these vendors!

## **A Final Word And Free Assessment Offer To Show You How To Eliminate System Slowness, Crashes And Viruses And Drastically Lower Your IT Maintenance Costs**

I hope you have found this guide helpful in shedding some light on what to look for when hiring a professional firm to outsource your IT support to. As I stated in the opening of this report, my purpose in providing this information was to help you make an informed decision and avoid getting burned by incompetent or unethical firms luring you in with cheap prices.

**Below you will find information on how to request a FREE IT Optimization Plan for your company as a next step in engaging with us.** There is no cost or obligation, and I guarantee you will find this consult to be extremely valuable and eye-opening.

Looking forward to your call!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Willie Kerns', is positioned above the contact information.

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## **Limited Free IT Optimization Plan:**

**Give Me 30 Minutes, And I Guarantee I Can Show You How To Eliminate System Slowness, Crashes, Viruses And A Host Of Other Annoying IT Problems — And How To Never Pay For Unnecessary IT Expenses And Repairs Again**

From The Desk Of: Willie Kerns,  
President, SmartPath Technologies  
Calvert City, KY

Dear Colleague,

Do you have a **nagging suspicion** that your current IT provider isn't delivering the quality of service you're paying for?

Maybe you're experiencing **chronic problems** with your computer and phone systems that your IT provider just never seems to resolve.

Maybe it has become easier to find a work-around or **try to fix IT problems yourself** than to call your IT provider.

Or maybe you're sending a check every month for their services **but don't really know what you're paying for**. Could they really get you back up and running after a disaster? Are they *truly* maintaining critical security updates for your IT systems? Have you outgrown their ability to adequately support you?

It's very common for businesses to be unhappy with the quality of service and support they're getting from their current IT company, but they tolerate it simply because they don't know who else to call, or they're just too darn busy to take the time to find someone else.

## **Free Customized IT Optimization Plan And 27-Point IT Systems Security And Performance Assessment**

If I just described your situation, I want to give you a **customized IT Optimization Plan for free** that will reveal what's REALLY going on in your computer network and show you the fastest and



most efficient way to get your systems working the way they're supposed to, saving you a great deal of time, aggravation and money. **Briefly, here's what I have in mind...**

First, I want to perform our proprietary **27-Point IT Systems Security And Performance Assessment** on your computer network (one that's taken me over 6 years to perfect).

There's no charge for this, and it only requires a 60-minute meeting with me and one of my top IT consultants. After doing this type of thing for almost 12 years, we've truly perfected a process for helping companies like yours to get their IT systems working the way they are supposed to.

**After conducting this Free Assessment, we'll be able to answer your top questions, such as:**

- Are your IT systems truly secured from hackers, viruses and rogue employees?
- Are your backups configured properly to ensure that you could be back up and running again fast in a disaster?
- Are you unknowingly exposing your company to expensive fines and litigation under new Kentucky data-breach laws?
- Could you utilize cheaper and more efficient cloud-computing technologies to lower IT costs and make it easier to work remotely?
- Are your systems optimized for maximum speed and performance? (I can tell you, 99% of the computer networks we review are NOT.)

Once we have a clear picture of the state, health and performance of your current IT systems, we'll then deliver a **customized IT Optimization Plan** that will show you how to eliminate every single nagging problem, enable you to work faster and easier and lower IT costs wherever possible.

## **At The End Of This Assessment, One Of Three Things Will Happen:**

**You love the plan** and decide to implement it on your own. If this is the case, we'll wish you the best of luck and *ask that you keep in touch with us to let us know how you're doing.*

**You love the plan and ask to become our client so we can personally help you implement it ASAP.** *If that's the case, we'll knock it out of the park...and that's a promise.*



Or finally...

In the unlikely and *unprecedented* event that you feel like you wasted your time, and that we don't find a way to dramatically improve your situation, **we will send you a check for \$50 immediately.** No questions asked. Your time is your most valuable asset, and I respect that. To date, we've NEVER had anyone say that we've wasted their time, so I feel completely comfortable making this guarantee to you.

Think about this...

The "worst" that can happen is you get \$50 for "wasting" an hour having an independent third party validate and review the security, speed and health of your computer network.

**The best that can happen is we work together to finally take all IT complaints off your plate.**

## Here's How This Will Work:

First, you'll fill out a brief IT Analysis Questionnaire on our web site:

[www.smartpathtech.com/SPBlog/itsurvey](http://www.smartpathtech.com/SPBlog/itsurvey).

This gives us the basic information we need about you to prepare for our meeting.

Once you complete this, our office will call you and set up a convenient time for us to come to your office and perform our **27-Point IT Systems Security And Performance Assessment.**

After that initial meeting, we'll prepare a **customized IT Optimization Plan and a "Report Of Findings"** that will reveal any vulnerabilities in your backups and security, as well as show you how to optimize your IT to increase everyone's productivity in the fastest, most efficient way possible.

And like I said, *there's no charge for this!*



## So Why Would We Offer This For Free?

**For one simple reason:**

**It's the fastest and easiest way for us to demonstrate the value we can deliver without any risk to you.** Frankly, it's how we get the happy clients you've seen all over our web site and have probably heard about before. (See attached.)

After all, if you like what you see and we show you how to solve a number of IT- related problems in your company, why wouldn't you want to work with us? Of course, we will approach this with no expectations or heavy sales pressure of any kind. I don't like pushy salespeople any more than you do — **and we stand on the belief that providing extreme value in advance is the best way to showcase our services** and win new business. In fact, here's my "VALUE IN ADVANCE PROMISE" to you...

## **You'll Find This Consultation To Be Incredibly Valuable Or We'll Send You A Check For \$50 To Compensate You For Your Time**

Now, obviously this is an amazing offer that you'll probably never see from any other IT company or computer expert in the world. But I'm SO confident that we can deliver extreme value that I have no concerns with putting this type of guarantee on our time together.

The ONLY catch is that we can't help everyone, so we have a strict (but reasonable) set of criteria that need to be met in order for us to proceed. Here it is:

**1. You have to at least have a server and 5 workstations.**

Our services and advice work best for companies that have at least 1 server and 5 workstations. If that's not you (or if you are a brand-new startup), we might be able to help you through a different process. Call the office and we'll direct you from there: 270-205-4709

**2. You must be the owner or decision maker of the business.**

Due to the nature of the advice we'll give you, it will be actionable only for the owner or key executive.



## If You Meet The Criteria Above, Here's How We Get Started:

**Step 1:** Go to the web site below to complete our IT Analysis Questionnaire. Don't worry, it's simple and unobtrusive; if you don't know the answers to certain questions, just put "I don't know" as your answer:

[www.smartpathtech.com/SPBlog/itsurvey](http://www.smartpathtech.com/SPBlog/itsurvey)

**Step 2:** Once we've received your application and reviewed it, our office will call you and set up a time for us to meet.

The initial meeting will be 60 minutes. This is where we really begin working to figure out exactly what you want and how to make it happen. We'll also initiate our **27-Point IT Systems Security And Performance Assessment**.

**Step 3:** After that initial meeting, we'll prepare a **customized IT Optimization Plan and a "Report Of Findings"** that will reveal any vulnerabilities in your backups and security, as well as show you how to optimize your IT to increase everyone's productivity in the fastest, most efficient way possible. This second meeting should be a real eye-opener for you.

If you see the value in engaging beyond that, great! We can talk about it at that time. And if you don't want to become a client — *that's OK too*. By the way, we've *never* had anyone feel like their time was wasted. EVER. That's why we can make this offer. WE DELIVER.

So, unless you are 100% happy with the IT support you are getting and absolutely confident that your network is secure, backed up properly and running at optimal levels, why wouldn't you give this a try? Do it now and you'll be glad you did!

[www.smartpathtech.com/SPBlog/itsurvey](http://www.smartpathtech.com/SPBlog/itsurvey)

Dedicated to your success,

Willie Kerns  
President, SmartPath Technologies  
Phone: 270-205-4709



## See What Other Business Owners Are Saying

“Just finished at my house enabling me to get into office computer. Aaron did a great job! He also set up a new printer & installed company update to QuickBooks on my laptop. It is one of the very few times that I had a computer guy working on stuff that I didn't want to pull my hair out. He explained everything in language I could understand & the instructions are great.” –**Yvonne Holsapple, Bryant Law Office**

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“We love the fact that you are a local business, who takes care of our IT needs. I was “WOW” with the fact I could turn the technical computer stuff over to you and know that you have my back. This allows me to concentrate on other aspects of my job. You take the time to communicate and check in with us. I feel like a partner with SmartPath, my computer is critical to the operations of this office.” –**Debbie Buchanan, Marshall County Chamber of Commerce**

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“I like being treated as a rational person, who just happens to not know much about IT. They maintain quality personal. They understand the whole problem in context, not just fixing the current bug with no regard to how the “fix” affects the system. I am very pleased with the philosophy and business practices of SmartPath.” - **Tim Ferrell, Marshall CO-OP**

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“We feel fortunate to have SmartPath Technology as our IT partner. When there is a problem they respond quickly, a live person actually picks up the phone, and they actually work to understand how our computers and network impact our business. Often times, we don't even know we had a problem – they just see problems proactively and fix them! I wish we could get the same level of service from all of our vendors.” - **Nichole Hall, Office Manager/Paralegal, Law Office of Brian S. Katz**



## **The Top 10 Reasons Why You'll Want To Outsource Your IT Support To Us:**

1. Our customer satisfactions surveys are above 96%. We believe in customer satisfaction so much that we have built the survey tool right in our ticketing system. This is to allow our clients to give us immediate feedback. Their responses are immediately reviewed and shared with each technician.
2. We have a great relationship with our vendors and this allows us to test new hardware and software technologies and ensure products will work in our client's environments even before they are officially release to the public.
3. We monitor your systems 24/7 with tools that identify almost immediately when a problem occurs. Many of the problems that do occur can be fixed remotely. More often than not, that is what happens. We fix the problem, document it and quickly get you back to being productive. Many times the best news about keeping your computers up and running is "No news at all".
4. Have you ever been surprised by large bills for your IT consultant? Are you afraid of calling your technician because you don't know how they bill and how much your bill will be at the end of the day? We give you a financially flexible options:
  - A. Our ITWorks allows the 24•7 monitoring your network for one fixed fee. We also have all you can eat options which eliminate any surprise bills. You know what you will pay every month.
  - B. Standard time and materials at agreed pricing and rates can cover anything else.
5. Having a competitive advantage in your business is the key to long term success. Often times problems with computers are due to slowness, downtime and viruses, which can make your most productive employee useless. Our goal is to minimize your downtime, provide services that enable you to have efficient and fast systems. We believe that there is "No time for down time."



6. We meet with you on a regular basis to strategize and discuss long term growth of your company. This allows us to plan the following:

- A. Computer networks that grow with you as your business grows.
- B. Workstation management lets you optimize your office machines and allows distribution of new machines to employees with the most need.
- C. Monitoring of systems growth can predict long term need for technology and get a handle on cost.

7. Our Business Continuity Services is the number one “Tested” solution for disaster recovery and backup services. In 2012, the same technology we use for backup was tested by Joplin, MO. after the tornado. Even though business there were completely gone, the backup system had them up and running 100% in 5 hours. We have taken the state of the art backup systems and incorporated them with a virtual cloud technology to ensure fast and efficient recovery of your business even if your business is completely gone.

8. Our ITWorks Remote Solutions allows access from anywhere has often been a luxury of large enterprise companies. At SmartPath Technologies we can allow your staff secure, easy remote access to your systems. Does the sales staff need to pull up a quote at 7 pm? ITWorks remote solutions are simple, secure, and can efficiently get your team working.

9. Our managed security services allow you to be protected from threats that lurk around the internet, while saving money by managing your staff’s internet habits. Have you wondered where your staff is going during the day while they are working on your dime?

A. System reporting and monitoring. How much time is your staff spending on the internet? How much time is wasted by playing games, answering personal emails or just cruising on Facebook?

B. Content filtering is a key to controlling and reducing risk and Liability to your business. As an integral part of our managed security services we can prevent your employees from accessing inappropriate sites, reduce the



wasted bandwidth and limit the risk of legal liability. Furthermore we can block over 200 different categories of threats. Our ITWorks Managed Security Program can control streaming media, limit music and video and prevent users from downloading illegal media using peer to peer sharing sites.

10. **100% guarantee on all work done.** We're confident in our ability to deliver high quality work that meets or exceeds your expectations.