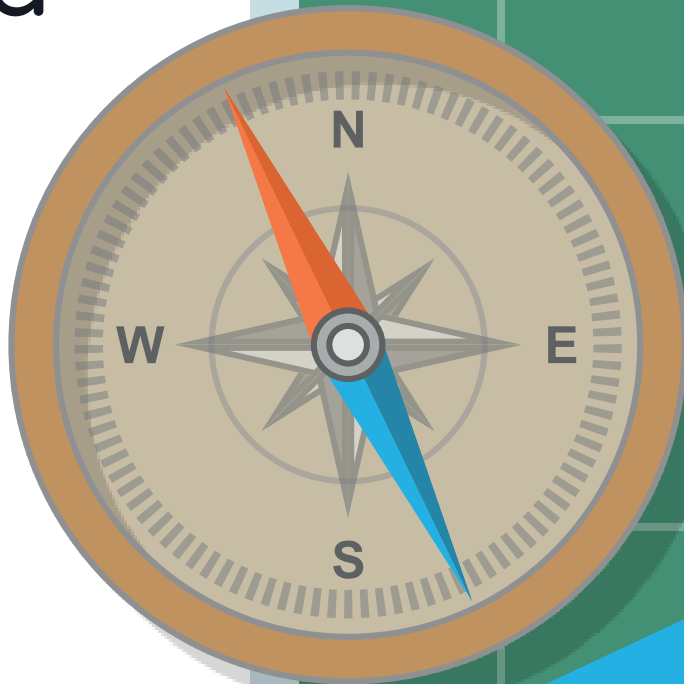## Geeks Guide

What to look for in an IT support and service partner

A handy checklist for ambitious SMEs

COMPUTER GEEKS®

Who will you entrust with your IT?

A well-matched IT service provider will dramatically transform the productivity and creativity of your team. With the latest technology on your side and a team of experts on hand to help you make the most of it, your business will be in an ideal position to achieve its most ambitious goals. So who will you trust to bring your IT up to date, empowering you with all the benefits of the connected modern workplace?

A good partner will equip you with the infrastructure you need to stay safe from data loss and cyber security threats. They'll also help you achieve your business goals, empowering your workforce with fast, reliable hardware and collaboration software.

Trustworthy IT partners genuinely care about the success of your business, helping you meet the challenges and opportunities of the next decade and beyond without worrying about the technology that makes it possible.

To help you on your search, we've compiled this handy checklist. Covering what we believe to be the most important considerations for SMEs – technology, people, prices, contracts and service – this comprehensive list provides useful questions to ask any potential service partner, so that you can move forward with the knowledge that your IT needs are covered.

Technology

The ability to provide powerful and reliable technology will likely be the first thing you look for in an IT support and service provider.

Here are some questions to consider when shortlisting potential partners.

☑ **Do they have an in-depth understanding of cloud-based solutions?**
The cloud is an essential component of modern IT. Any IT partner you choose should have a deep understanding of the cloud – how it can benefit you now, and what it will be able to offer in the future.

☑ **Do they offer all the technology services you need?**
SMEs are likely to require a range of IT services, from broadband and telephone systems to cyber security and consultancy. Check that your partner can provide everything you need before choosing them.
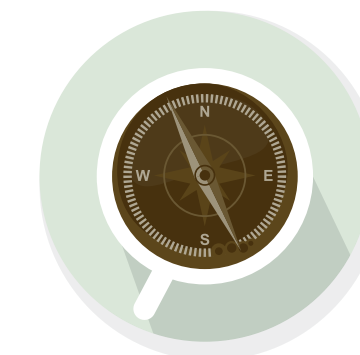
☑ **Do they use their own products?**
If an IT service provider offers branded products, they should believe in them enough to use them within their own organisation. For example, at Computer Geeks we rely on Geeks Cloud and Geeks Voice to keep our operations efficient, flexible and secure.

☑ **Do they have a reliable monitoring programme to keep your IT secure?**
A good IT service provider will consistently monitor your technology and provide regular updates to keep your technology secure.

☑ **Are they fully qualified?**
Look for qualifications like Microsoft Partner status on your potential service provider's website – this shows the company has repeatedly proven its skills on client projects, and has been recognised for its ongoing technical capabilities.

People

Behind every great IT support and service partner is a team of experienced people: helpful humans who genuinely care about providing solutions that make sense for your business. These questions will help you narrow down your search.

☑ **Do they care about solving your problems?**
Great IT partners will ask lots of questions to figure out exactly how they can help, and actively listen to your concerns. If they're only focused on selling, you might want to look elsewhere.

☑ **Can you rely on them in a crisis?**
One of the most important roles of an IT service partner is to provide a route to recovery if an emergency occurs. If you're unlucky enough to experience a fire, a security breach or another business-threatening disaster, it's good to know they'll have your back.

☑ **Does the whole team understand IT?**
Alongside support engineers, you may need to talk with people from departments like accounts and sales. These interactions run more smoothly when everyone is technically literate, allowing you to discuss specific issues without any loss of meaning.

☑ **Are they privately owned?**
It may not seem like an obvious priority when you're just looking for someone to help with IT, but privately owned companies are often more motivated to build lasting business relationships with their clients, resulting in a higher level of service.

☑ **Are they proud of the service they offer?**
It's hard to fake real passion. When someone's genuinely enthusiastic about their work, proactively sharing the latest themes and trends of the IT industry, it's a promising sign that they'll go the extra mile when you need it.

Prices and contracts

Your agreement with your IT partner should be fair, thorough and professional, setting you on track to receive reliable support and valuable service when you need it. Before handing over money or signing contracts, take a moment to answer these important questions.

☑ **Do they offer great value, as opposed to the cheapest price?**
Low costs might be tempting, but can that budget IT service provider really provide everything you need? If a more expensive option can save you money or increase productivity in the long run, it might be the better choice.

☑ **Are they selling you what you really need, or just what's most profitable for them?**
Be wary of pushy sales tactics and unnecessary package deals – an honest IT partner will take time to learn the solutions that matter to you.

☑ **How transparent are they being?**
Look for an IT partner that doesn't hide its prices, so that you can check you're paying a fee that's in line with industry standards. At Computer Geeks our fees are consistent, meaning you'll always pay a fair price for the service you receive.

☑ **Is the contract flexible?**
Don't lock into a contract that's unreasonably long or inflexible. You may need to scale up or down your level of service to suit the needs of your company at a particular point in time. Check with any potential IT partner that this can be accommodated.

☑ **Do they follow industry best practices?**
It's important to know that your service provider operates ethically and uses the right protocols to manage your IT. Signs of industry recognition to look out for include Microsoft Partner status and Cyber Essentials certification.

Service

When your business relies on technology, having access to quick, reliable and knowledgeable service from your IT partner is vital. From initial set-up to ongoing support, the partner you choose should make your life easier, taking away any stress and worry surrounding IT.

☑ **Do they have a tried-and-tested onboarding process?**
A well-managed onboarding process sets the foundation for your organisation's new approach to IT. An experienced expert should be assigned to your project, setting you up with all the right documentation, software and processes.

☑ **Do they use a documentation platform to record the processes your IT relies on?**
It's important that your IT partner has a system in place to track and document how IT in your company runs. At Computer Geeks, we use a professional documentation platform for this.

☑ **Do they measure response times?**
How quickly an IT support team can respond to queries is a key indicator of their ability to provide help when you need it. Professional companies will be able to provide this information.

☑ **Are they dedicated IT support specialists?**
IT support is a specialist skillset and service. Make sure you hire a dedicated partner who specialises in support, rather than simply offering it as an add-on service to a primary specialism such as software development.

☑ **Are they specialists in supporting SMEs?**
The ideal IT partner will be small enough to provide a personal level of service, yet big enough to provide the enterprise-level technology, continuity, reduced risk and expertise you need to achieve your goals.

Geeks you can trust

Now that you know what to look for, you're ready to start your search for an IT service and support provider: a reliable long-term partner that feels like the right fit for your business.

At Computer Geeks, our approach involves getting to know you and your business, then providing the technology you need to reach your goals. Our experts will be your guides on your journey to a more connected and resilient modern workplace, helping you to avoid tech-related pitfalls and protecting you against digital dangers of all kinds.

Fancy chatting through your options?
Give us a call and let's see if we're the right match for your business.

Computer Geeks offer everything we need, from security and backup to answering development questions and setting up new people with computers and laptops. We feel that Nick and Rob have a handle on what we need and the support we want. We are very happy with them."

David Nicholls, General Manager at The Mind at Work

It's a real position of trust, letting your IT loose. The world is a risky place, and IT is so key to business. You want to know there's a degree of security. With Computer Geeks, we made the right decision. Having expert back-up makes me feel safe."

Hilary Wilson, Finance Director at Provelio

Ready when you are
If you've found the information in this guide useful and want to find out more about the services we offer at Computer Geeks, we'd love to hear from you.

Drop our friendly team a line on **0117 325 0370**, email us via **hello@geeks.co.uk** or visit our website at **geeks.co.uk**