

# I.T. Buyers Guide



*The Small to Mid-sized Business Guide  
To I.T. Support And Services*

# What You Should Expect To Pay For I.T. Support

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

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

- ✓ The three most common ways I.T. 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 I.T. services; you'll learn what it is and why you need to avoid agreeing to it.
- ✓ Exclusions, hidden fees, and other "gotcha" clauses I.T. 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 that you didn't anticipate.

# Why Did We Write This Report?

If you have a small or mid-sized business that is currently looking to outsource some or all the I.T. support, this report contains important information that will be extremely valuable to you as you search for a competent firm you can trust.

CIO Landing has been providing I.T. services to businesses nationwide for over 10 years. We focus on providing technology and security solutions that help our clients improve productivity, reduce costs, and protect their data. Our concentration is on helping businesses secure their networks, meet compliance requirements, and use technology to their advantage. The value of our services goes beyond just I.T. support as we become a trusted advisor to our clients and provide CIO oversight within their company helping them reach their ultimate goals for growth and success.

**One of the most common questions we get from 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 – we decided to write this report for three reasons:

1.

We wanted an easy way to answer this question and educate all prospective clients who come to us on the most common ways I.T. services companies' package and price their services, and the pros and cons of each approach.

2.

We wanted to bring to light a few “industry secrets” about I.T. services contracts and SLAs (service level agreements) that almost no business owner thinks about, understands or knows to ask about when evaluating I.T. 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.

We wanted to educate business owners on how to pick the **right** I.T. 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, our goal 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.

## About CIO Landing

CIO Landing was founded in 2012 with the goal of providing clients with the I.T. capabilities previously only available to large Fortune 500 companies. Our dedicated team makes technology headaches a thing of the past, for an affordable, predictable monthly fee that is easy to plan and budget for. Our objective is to give our clients Peace of Mind that comes from knowing they have the security and technology they need to run their business so they can focus on delivering their business goals.

CIO Landing is led by Business-I.T. Professionals who leverage I.T. solutions to drive superior business results. We don't have a one-size-fits-all solution, instead, our team of experts will work with you to create and implement a solution that is designed for the needs of your business.

We have built our reputation on providing the best technology solutions that are cost-effective while making certain our client's needs are met in a professional, timely, and friendly manner. We design solutions to meet the unique needs of our clients while ensuring the technology in place is in line with their business goals. Our objective is to turn your technology investments into a powerful business advantage.



## Comparing Apples To Apples: The Predominant I.T. Service Models Explained

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

- **Time and Materials.** In the industry, we call this “break-fix” service. 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 fixing a problem with your e-mail, or it may encompass a large project, like a 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 I.T. Services.** This is a model where the I.T. services company takes the role of your fully outsourced “I.T. 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, cyber security, backup and a host of other services to monitor and maintain the health, speed, performance, and security of your computer network.
- **Co-Managed I.T. Services.** This model of I.T. service delivery is where a company’s internal I.T. department works in partnership with an external I.T. service provider. In this model, the external I.T. service company provides expertise, resources, and tools to complement the internal I.T. team’s efforts. This collaboration enables the organization to have greater control over its I.T. operations while also benefiting from the external provider’s specialized skills and support. Co-managed I.T. services can provide a flexible and cost-effective way for organizations to manage their I.T. infrastructure while maximizing their resources and achieving their business goals.



When looking to outsource your I.T. support, the two service models you are most likely to end up having to choose between are the “managed I.T. 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.

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## Managed I.T. 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." We couldn't agree more – and that's why it's our sincere belief that some form of managed I.T. is essential for every small to mid-sized business.



In our company, we offer different plans to fit the needs of our clients. In some cases, where the business is small, we might offer a very basic managed services plan to ensure the most essential maintenance is done, then bill the client hourly for any support used. Our smallest clients often find this the most economical. But for some of our mid-sized organizations, we offer a fully managed approach where more comprehensive I.T. services are covered in a managed plan. By doing this, we can properly staff our team and ensure they get the fast, responsive support and expertise they need.

We would recommend a Co-Managed approach when you already have a competent I.T. person or team proactively managing your computer network and have a specific I.T. project to complete that your current in-house I.T. team doesn't have the time nor expertise to implement (such as migrating to a cloud-based solution, implementing a cyber security plan, etc.) and manage it on a continuous basis.

The only time we would recommend a Time and Materials approach is for a very specific project that does not require ongoing maintenance once implemented. We do not think the break-fix approach is a good idea for general I.T. 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 I.T. 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 that work around the clock to do one thing: hack into your network to steal data or money or to hold you ransom.

As you may know, ransomware is at an all-time high because hackers make millions of tax-free dollars robbing one small business owner at a time. But that's not their only incentive.



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Some will attempt to hack your network to gain access to bank accounts, credit cards, or passwords to rob you (and your clients). Some use your computer network to send spam using YOUR domain and servers, host pirated software and, of course, spread viruses. Some even do it just for the “fun” of it.

And don’t think for a minute these cybercriminals are solo crooks working alone in a hoodie out of their basement. They are highly organized and well-run operations employing *teams* of hackers who work together to scam as many people as they can. They use advanced software that scans millions of networks for vulnerabilities and use readily available data on the dark web of YOUR usernames, passwords, e-mail addresses, and other data to gain access.

Of course, this isn’t the only I.T. danger you face. Other common “disasters” include rogue employees, lost devices, hardware failures (still a BIG reason for data loss), fire and natural disasters, and a host of other issues that can interrupt or outright destroy your I.T. 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 I.T. services are 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 I.T. services to restore your systems to working order (break-fix).

## Should You Just Hire A Full-Time I.T. Manager?

In most cases, it is not cost-effective for companies with under 50 employees to hire a full-time I.T. person for a couple of reasons.

First, no one I.T. person can know everything there is to know about I.T. support and cyber security. If your company is big enough and growing fast enough to support a full-time I.T. lead, you probably need more than one guy. You need someone with help-desk expertise as well as a network engineer, a network administrator, a CIO (Chief Information Officer), and a CISO (Chief Information Security Officer).



Therefore, even if you hire a full-time I.T. person, you may still need to supplement their position with co-managed I.T. support using an I.T. firm that can fill in the gaps and provide services and expertise they don’t have. This is not a bad plan; what IS a bad plan is hiring one person and expecting them to know it all and do it all.

Second, finding and hiring good people is difficult due to the skill shortage of I.T. technicians. And if you’re not technical, it’s going to be very difficult for you to interview candidates and sift and sort through all the duds out there to find someone with good skills and experience. Because you’re not technical, you might not know the right questions to ask during the interview process or the skills needed to do the job properly.

Often, the hard and soft costs of building an internal I.T. department for general I.T. support just don’t provide the best return on investment for the average small to midsize business. An internal I.T. department typically doesn’t make sense until you have closer to 50 employees OR you have unique circumstances and need specialized skills, a developer, etc., but not for day-to-day I.T. support and maintenance.

## 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 I.T. firm. The I.T. services company has no incentive to prevent problems, stabilize your network, or resolve problems quickly because they are getting paid by the hour when things stop working; 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 I.T. consultant can take the liberty of assigning a junior (lower-paid) technician to work on your problem – one who may take two to three times as long to resolve an issue that a more senior (and more expensive) technician might resolve 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 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 must 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 I.T. projects and expenses a nightmare since they may be zero one month and thousands the next.

## What Should You Expect To Pay?

**Important!** Please note that the following price quotes are industry averages based on a recent I.T. industry survey conducted of over 750 different I.T. services firms. We are providing this information to give you a general idea of what most I.T. 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.



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## Hourly Break-Fix Fees:

Most I.T. services companies selling break-fix services charge between \$150 - \$250 per hour with a one-hour minimum. In some 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 I.T. consulting firm for a project, we suggest you demand the following:

- **A very detailed scope of work that specifies what “success” is.** Make sure you detail what your expectations are in performance, workflow, costs, security, access, etc. The more detailed you can be, the better. Detailing your expectations upfront will go a long way toward avoiding miscommunications and additional fees later to give you what you REALLY wanted.
- **A fixed budget and time frame for completion.** Agreeing to this upfront aligns both your agenda and the consultants. 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 I.T. 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.

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

## Managed I.T. Services:

Most managed I.T. services firms will quote you a MONTHLY fee based on the number of devices they need to maintain, back up and support. Nationally, that fee is somewhere in the range of \$300 - \$500 per server, \$50 - \$150 per desktop or laptop, and \$50 - \$150 per user.

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

- Security patches applied weekly, if not daily, for urgent and emerging threats
- Antivirus updates and monitoring
- Firewall updates and monitoring
- Backup monitoring and test restores
- Spam-filter installation and updates
- Monitoring workstations and servers for signs of failure and resource usage
- Optimizing systems for maximum speed
- Documentation of your network, software licenses, credentials, etc.

The following services may **NOT be included** and will often be billed separately. This is not necessarily a “scam” or unethical UNLESS the managed I.T. 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 (ex. new servers), PCs, laptops, etc.
- Software licenses (ex. M365 licenses)
- Special projects (ex. Cloud migrations)
- Advanced security solutions (ex. Device encryption)
- Compliance solutions

## Other Things To Notice And Look Out For:

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### **Are they good at answering your questions in terms you can understand and not in arrogant, confusing “geek-speak”?**

Good I.T. companies won't confuse you with techno-mumbo-jumbo, and they certainly shouldn't make you feel stupid for asking questions. All great consultants have the “heart of a teacher” and will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms. As you interact with them in the evaluation process, watch for this.

Our technicians are trained to take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms. Just look at what Tom Hudson of Peregrine Enterprises LLC had to say:



I recently had the pleasure of working with CIO Landing and I can confidently say they exceeded my expectations in every way. Their new equipment evaluation and preloading software is top-notch and has greatly improved the efficiency of my business operations. Additionally, their ticket system is incredibly helpful in keeping track of all maintenance requests and responses, ensuring that nothing falls through the cracks.

– Tom Hudson, Owner, Peregrine Enterprises LLC



### **Do they and their technicians present themselves as true professionals when they are in your office? Do they dress professionally and show up on time?**

If you'd be embarrassed if YOUR clients saw your I.T. consultant behind your desk, that should be a big red flag. How you do anything is how you do everything, so if they cannot show up on time for appointments, are sloppy with paperwork, show up unprepared, forget your requests and seem disorganized in the meeting, how can you expect them to be 100% on point with your I.T.? You can't. Look for someone else.

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

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## See What Other Business Are Saying:

### Responsive, Timely Support, Painless Compliance



We hired CIO Landing because we needed an I.T. company that is responsive. Some of the other companies we tried to work with took a very long time to respond to us, but the biggest differentiator with CIO Landing was their responsiveness. They also made our SOC2 process painless and did most of the heavy lifting with user computer compliance as well as managing browsers, and password managers, and ensuring people used them. CIO Landing is great, I am very happy with their service. Their team provides timely support and can handle pretty much any request we throw at them. Definitely glad we chose them as our I.T. provider.

– ABJ, OneStepGPS

### Responsive, Knowledgeable, Solution – Not Sales - Focused



CIO Landing has been our IT provider/partner for five years. CIO Landing team members took the time to learn who we are, what we do, and what our goals were before proposing I.T. solutions and upgrades. None of the other I.T. firms that we interviewed took the time to do that. CIO Landing support team members are well-trained on our customized software, and they are always responsive and professional. We no longer worry about I.T.-related tasks and projects, because they anticipate and are responsive to our I.T. needs 24/7.

– KM, JAN Management Services

### Responsive, Efficient, Professional



Professional, Efficient, and Responsive, that's what you want from any kind of customer service and especially from your I.T. provider. CIO Landing delivers.

– HK, Innovative Assembly Design Inc.

### Hassle-Free, Dependable, Transparent



We have peace of mind knowing that CIO Landing handles our I.T. problems and is on point at any hour of the day or night. They have done so – hassle-free – for more than five years. Before we used CIO Landing, I would spend hours of my valuable time trying to resolve I.T. problems – because I never knew how much an I.T. technician was going to charge. Not anymore. I can just call CIO Landing. They're responsive, prompt, and very knowledgeable. It's great that I can focus on running my business and reach out to them to resolve my technology issues. That's total peace of mind.

– DH, Law Office of Robert L Herst, LLC

## A Final Word And Free Offer To Engage With Us

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

**The next step is simple:** call our office at **888-308-8879** and reference this letter to schedule a brief 30-minute initial consultation.

On this call we can discuss your unique situation and any concerns you have and, of course, answer any questions you have about us. If you feel comfortable moving ahead, we'll schedule a convenient time to conduct our proprietary network assessment.

This Assessment can be conducted 100% remotely with or without your current I.T. company or department knowing (we can give you the full details on our initial consultation call).

**At the end of the Assessment, you'll know:**

- ✓ Where you are overpaying (or getting underserved) for the services and support you are currently getting from your current I.T. company or team.
- ✓ Whether or not your systems and data are *truly* secured from hackers and ransomware, and where you are partially or totally exposed.
- ✓ If your data is *actually* being backed up in a manner that would allow you to recover it quickly in the event of an emergency or ransomware attack.
- ✓ Where you are unknowingly violating compliance requirements.
- ✓ How you could lower the overall costs of I.T. while improving communication, security, and performance, as well as the productivity of your employees.

**Fresh eyes see things that others cannot** – so, at a minimum, our assessment is a completely cost- and risk-free way to get a credible third-party validation of the security, stability, and efficiency of your I.T. systems.

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# A Final Word And Free Offer To Engage With Us

1

**We Respond Within 1 Hour Or Less.** The average amount of time it takes for one of our clients to get on the phone with a technician who can start working on resolving their problem is 60 minutes. We know you're busy and we have made a sincere commitment to making sure your computer problems get fixed FAST. And since most repairs can be done remotely using our secure management tools, you don't have to wait around for a technician to show up.

2

**No Geek-Speak.** You deserve to get answers to your questions in PLAIN ENGLISH, not in confusing technical terms. Our technicians will also not talk down to you or make you feel stupid because you don't understand how all this "technology" works. That's our job!

3

**100% No-Small-Print Satisfaction Guarantee.** Quite simply, if you are not happy with our work, we'll do whatever it takes to make it right to YOUR standards.

4

**All Projects Are Completed On Time And On Budget.** When you hire us to complete a project for you, we won't nickel-and-dime you with unforeseen or unexpected charges or delays. We guarantee to deliver precisely what we promised to deliver, on time and on budget, with no excuses.

5

**Lower Costs, Waste, And Complexity With Cloud Solutions.** By utilizing cloud computing and other advanced technologies, we can eliminate the cost, complexity, and problems of managing your own in-house server while giving you more freedom, lowered costs, tighter security, and instant disaster recovery.

6

**We Won't Hold You, Hostage.** Many I.T. companies do NOT provide their clients with simple and easy-to-understand documentation that outlines key network resources, passwords, licenses, etc. By keeping that to themselves, I.T. companies hold their clients "hostage" to scare them away from hiring someone else. This is both unethical and unprofessional. As a client of ours, we'll provide you with full, written documentation of your network and all the resources, software licenses, passwords, hardware, etc., in simple terms so YOU can understand it. We keep our clients by delivering exceptional service – not by keeping them in the dark.

7

**Peace Of Mind.** Because we monitor all our clients' networks 24/7/365, you never have to worry that a virus has spread, a hacker has broken in or a backup has failed to perform. We watch over your entire network, taking the management and hassle of maintaining it off your hands. This frees you to focus on your customers and running your business, not on your I.T. systems, security, and backups.

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