



Axis Computer Networks
**THE IMPORTANCE OF
MANAGED SERVICES**

Axis Computer Networks offers a program of managed services that can help your business run efficiently, grow intelligently, and keep sensitive data secure.





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The Importance of Managed Services

INTRODUCTION

Today's business environment is a shifting landscape, and companies are continuously facing challenges to the status quo, raising new questions on how to operate an effective—and efficient—business.

There are expectations for business owners to leverage new technologies to enable their companies to grow and manage an increasingly remote workforce, all while staying compliant with ever-changing regulations. Oh, and they're also supposed to do all of this while lowering overall cost.

Managed services from Axis Computer Networks delivers strategic business operations with a team of highly skilled and trained IT professionals who, working with the latest advancements in technology and the most up-to-date compliance standards, provide effective and efficient outcomes to small- and mid-sized businesses. By utilizing Axis Computer Networks' managed services, small business owners can shift their focus away from day-to-day IT operations and focus on what matters most—the success of their business.

PART 1: Advantages of a Managed Services Provider

Technology can help your business thrive, but only if it's working the way it should. Your team should be able to access their data readily, and, if proper security measures are taken, remotely. Providing access to business information has game-changing advantages. If a management or sales team is truly valuable to the business, and you want them to come up with new ideas to encourage revenue growth, as well as

additional services or new product lines, then having more eyes on the information and metrics can inspire new thinking.

It works the same way with IT support. When small- to mid-size businesses look at how they manage their IT, they may figure that, with recent growth, there's enough work to hire an IT manager on staff to keep things up and running, help out when problems arise, and take care of software updates and patches. It's a great advantage to have an IT manager who knows the systems and is thinking about that network around the clock.

But just creating a new role and filling it may not be the best solution for every business, and in some cases, using a managed services provider has distinct advantages. Here's why.

With a managed services provider you have a business looking after you, around the clock. Sure, you can call the IT manager after hours when things get wonky (it always seems to happen then!), but what about when he or she wants to take a little overseas vacation with the family? Suddenly time zones are a factor. With a managed services provider, the on-call engineer can sort out your problem whenever you need.

Another advantage of a managed services provider is that the good ones hire people with a passion for the technology. At Axis Computer Networks, our engineers stay up to date on the systems and hardware that are out there, and they talk to their colleagues. The result is a wider knowledge base: Multiple brains mean different takes on a business system and when problems arise, it is this vast hive intellect that is brought to bear on finding a solution.

Still another advantage, managed services providers track their clients' systems and keep records of what hardware and software are on their respective networks. It's important to review that inventory, particularly when security weaknesses are identified in combinations of hardware, operating systems, and software. Making a suggested software update or hardware upgrade, or failing to, could expose a company's data to nefarious actors. With so many systems updating on an irregular basis, one person may not keep up with it all.

Best of all, managed services providers make sense even if a business has an IT manager. Many clients at Axis Computer Networks serve as a support team to the staff and work together to provide an added dimension of service, consulting on any issues that arise, and helping develop strategies to help head them off.



PART 2: What You Should Look for in a Managed Service Provider

Nearly all businesses can benefit from a good relationship with a managed services provider. In the not-too-distant past, managed services meant remote monitoring and management, or RMM, which was the key workload of managed services. The managed services provider would administer an IT function on a company's servers and network, making sure hardware was working properly and keeping an eye out for trouble spots and early indicators of problems.

Managed services has not changed at its heart, but as the IT-outsourcing business grew more and more competitive, providers began to offer additional services to try to differentiate themselves in the marketplace. Some would dial up their focus on a certain kind of client, such as medical or legal offices or financial services. Another twist: cloud computing began to alter the server landscape in a meaningful way, and added a twist to the needs of many companies who chose to manage their data this way.

Managed services providers protect the client from network outages and data loss, chiefly through hardware monitoring and regular backups. As contractors, they set up systems that they use to do this in an efficient manner, but sometimes a contract that's bid at a lower price may result in a lack of service when a problem does arise. One way to spot this is that after-hours calls are routed through a call center, which adds a layer of delay in service at a critical time. (Tip: The contractor will tell the client they are a 24-7 operation, and, if they really are, they won't need to be asked about that. They will readily volunteer this information as early as it makes sense. And sometimes before that.) The good providers will give you a guaranteed response time.

Axis Computer Networks also takes into consideration that on-site service visits will occasionally be required and has the infrastructure to manage it. Not all managed services providers plan for this, and often, if they do, it's considered a premium add-on to the service.

Some managed service providers focus on data security and it's easy to understand why. Network security will always be a hot topic for IT managers. A managed services provider should act as a partner to your in-house team, and their programs should dovetail with yours and provide an effective backstop for them. Checks of critical systems and disk health, monitoring firewalls, helping to train staff and network users, and other factors all contribute to network security, and a frank discussion with prospective contractors will give you an idea of what to expect. If a managed services provider listens to your needs and responds to your concerns with details about your network and ideas for solutions, that may show someone who won't shoehorn your network into a one-size-fits-all program. At Axis Computer Networks, we build a program that will protect critical data, while allowing your team to gain access whenever they need it, keeping hackers at bay, and backing up regularly to ensure any kind of fault causes a minimal disruption of your business.

Managed services may seem like an additional expense since it's a new line on a budget spreadsheet, but when a managed services provider does its job properly, it frees up in-house IT personnel and resources to attend to other projects. Your staff can work creatively and use the parts of their skill set that made them desirable hires in the first place. And when people work at challenging, fulfilling projects, they tend to have better job satisfaction and are less likely to leave, reducing recruitment costs.

Managed services can give your business the edge it needs—and give you peace of mind.



Axis Computer Networks uses managed services to help improve network security and access to data on an international scale.

PART 3:
Managed Services and the Remote-Work Revolution

There's no escaping the fact that how we do business has changed dramatically over the last three years. With work-from-home and remote work services, companies are able to take advantage of a decentralized workforce, offer their employees levels of autonomy and work-life balance that can make them more productive, and lower overhead by decreasing the costs associated with large offices. However, remote workers mean more potential entry points for cyber predators.

So, how do you best position your company for success in this new digitally connected world? The answer is twofold: Optimize, and secure, your network.

There's no better way to keep your team connected, share data and assets, and communicate objectives than your company's network. And with remote workers, there is nothing more important. This seamless flow of information is essential for keeping your teams up to date and operating efficiently.

And while all of this was typically done in-house with an on-site server system, much of this computing power has moved to the cloud. With seemingly endless possibilities for information and workflow management, managed services are a power tool for company success. With scalable and configurable cloud services, there is a viable solution for virtually any company's business needs. If you think moving some of your network functionality to the cloud may help your business, Axis cloud services can help you get there.

Every day, countless businesses, organizations, and municipalities are the target of cyber attacks. Protect-

ing your network against these potential threats is key, not just for your company's long-term success, but also to avoid interruptions to your day-to-day operations. With workforces going remote, this opens your network to many more entry points.

One key element of protecting your data is server monitoring—the review and analysis of a network server and its operating-related processes. This includes monitoring server availability, performance, operations, and security through manual or automated software systems, or both, with the primary objective of securing your server against potential failure.

Depending on your company goals, Axis Computer Networks can set up a specific monitoring protocol. For instance, with an application server, administrators may want to review responsiveness and availability; with a data server the administrator may be more concerned with data capacity, loss, and delay; and for a web server, security, speed and user load take top priority.

Knowing how servers are managing under the load of data and information, and watching the operations and performance of the hardware, requires tracking metrics closely for optimization and responsiveness. With server monitoring, part of the managed services from Axis Computer Networks, our team of experts will work to not only prevent server failures, but also ensure peak performance and enhanced hardware life through proper server maintenance and management.

The bottom line, in today's business environment, having the ability to seamlessly manage operations and workflow remotely is key to success. And with managed services from Axis Computer Networks, you can make the transition to remote management with ease and security.

PART 4: Secure Your Network and Keep It Safe

Natural disasters seem to be more common these days, from wildfires to flooding to earthquakes. These may not be the first items on your list of “What Keeps Me Up at Night,” and we certainly would not want you to lie awake worrying just because we mentioned it. But there’s a lesson in each one: No one anticipates these incidents will happen to them, and it’s always a shock when they do. But it’s a lot easier to recover when you have a plan in place to keep moving forward.

You may see where we’re going with this, but it’s the same with your company’s network. No one starts their day in the office by saying, “Today’s the day! A pipe will burst, and flood the server room,” or “I bet a bag of microwave popcorn will catch fire and burn this place to the ground.” Instead, we walk into the office and take whatever each day brings.

Anything can happen, and the amount of preparation you do is key. Here are four considerations to help you avoid the long-term effects of any disaster.

1. First, back up your network, regularly and completely. As we have already said, no one can predict the future. Your network is the trusted resource, and it may be hard for your business to cope if some or all data or functionality is lost or damaged. That can happen due to a hardware failure, either because of damage by outside factors or if the unit itself fails (hey, it can happen—more on that below). Another way your network server can let you down is because of hackers, who can infect your server with ransomware, or breach your security and steal important, valuable data. “Whenever something bad happens and they call us, we know our clients are in good shape,” says Scott Wonka, COO of Axis Computer Networks. “But sometimes a call comes from a company that’s not a client, and we must ask, ‘Are they backed up?’ If the

answer is yes, we have a good starting point. When the answer is ‘no,’ or ‘we don’t know,’ then we have to figure out where we stand.” The time frame of the last backup will help you determine the data you have lost, and the degree of a setback the event has caused. And if the backup is from last night, well it may just be that, with some system checks, you can continue business as usual.

2. Plan for the disaster. Think about what could happen to your business and put plans in place to mitigate the effects. Having a backup program in place is a great first step, but the more planned out you are for the days and weeks following an unplanned event, the faster your business will begin to emerge from its effects. Any recovery plan should include staff assignments to triage damaged or suspect data, and a review to see if security was breached simultaneously. You cannot solve your problems without knowing their full extent.

3. Prepare your team. Depending on the scope of the disaster, be sure to communicate with your team to make sure they and their loved ones are all right. Rather than training your staff to use physical devices to back up their own machines, a network backup eliminates the headache of figuring out who was backed up properly and who wasn’t. Another advantage of a system-wide backup, it frees up staff to be ready to roll up their sleeves and get their parts of your business back to functioning normally. Understanding their roles in this window in advance of the crisis, will help them work effectively to shorten recovery time.

4. Communicate priorities to your team, and reach out to clients and vendors, when appropriate. When you know when your goods or services will resume normal delivery or have a time frame and relevant details for recovery, it may be a good idea to share your plans.

Managed services from Axis Computer Networks provides companies of all sizes with the IT support they need to grow and operate successfully in today’s digital world.

CONCLUSION

So, all this information begs the question, do you need a Managed Service provider? For many small- and mid-size businesses, the answer is yes.

We call our approach ProactiveIT, and our managed services are offered by a team of IT professionals with the experience and training to keep your network running smoothly from server to desktop. ProactiveIT considers the entire network, top to bottom, and heads off issues before they become problems.

Our ProactiveIT Managed Services include: PC Support, which includes both Remote Response or On-Site Service options depending on your business needs; Patch Management, Audit, and Discovery, which manages what software updates and patches are needed to keep your operations running seamlessly and reduce the chance of a data breach; Remote Desktop Management, which provides centralized remote connections and machine

data, as well as control of passwords and site access; and LAN and Windows Monitoring, which tracks performance and heads off any issues before they slow down your business.

Additionally, we offer Help Desk and Trouble Ticketing to assist you and your team should an IT issue arise; Software Deployment and Systems Management, which ensures that all team members have the software and tools they need to perform their tasks successfully and efficiently; Network Policy Management, providing you with centralized access to rules, profiles and objects; and Backup and Disaster Recovery, which protects your data in the event of a disaster or system crash.

Sometimes new hardware is required when software upgrades or system defragmentation no longer cut it. Fortunately for our clients, we watch the trends and track new technology, so we know what's available. We make it our business to know your needs, so we can match you with the technology that makes the most sense for you. ■

Scan the code below and find out if managed services from Axis Computer Networks is right for your business.

