How to Choose an IT Consultant

In business today the choice of a technology advisor can be a critical success factor. In this article, you’ll learn how to make the right choice.

Maintaining your small company network in good shape is not an easy task, and you are probably perfectly aware that doing it on your own is not the best way to invest your time. When you want to hire somebody to maintain your company network for you, basically you have two choices – to employ somebody onsite (as a full-time or part-time employee) or to outsource the task to an external IT Consultant.

After you have decided that your small company does not need onsite IT staff, and you will need an IT Consultant, the next step is to choose one. Choosing an IT Consultant is not so different from choosing an onsite employee, but still there are specifics you need to be aware of. Sometimes this task is a very easy one when you can ask your business associates to recommend somebody. But if you want to choose the IT consultant on your own, here are some points to consider:

5 Key Steps in Choosing an IT Consultant

- **Technical competencies.** Needless to say, this is the most important factor because if you hire somebody whose technical competency is not satisfactory, this will certainly lead to a lot of trouble. If you are a non-technical person, you are hardly in a position to judge the technical skills of the candidates, but if you ask them about the certificates, degrees, diplomas, and other similar documents they possess, this will give you a clue if they are technically competent or not. For instance, IT Consultants with Microsoft Small Business Specialist certification have passed rigorous exams on small business technology.

- **Ability to work with people.** Sometimes technical people are not the best communicators. But IT Consultants are supposed to be half techies, half business consultants, so for them being technical is not an excuse for lacking basic business and communication skills. That is why it is key to choose someone who can communicate with you, explain things in a way you understand, answer all your questions, and not just talk in jargon — someone who can help you understand how technology matters to your business and can help it grow.

- **Availability.** Availability is a key factor for your decision because if you hire somebody who is not available when you need him or her most, what’s the point of having an IT Consultant if you can’t rely on him or her? Usually it’s best to hire locally, because when their office is near, they are more likely to be able to arrive quickly on your premises in an emergency. Also, very often problems can quickly be solved remotely, so it is equally important that the IT Consultant you choose provides remote support as well.

- **Recommendations from clients.** It’s always good to know how the candidate has handled
previous clients, so feel free to ask for recommendations from their clients.

- **Can they handle all your IT needs?** When you choose an IT Consultant, you would like him or her to be the single point of contact for all your IT needs. While it’s not always possible for your IT Consultant to necessarily complete all of your technical needs him or herself, he or she should be able to manage the process on your behalf. (For example, if you want a software application to be developed especially for you, you’d better contact a dedicated software development company, but your IT consultant could be the one to handle the process for you.) Therefore, it’s best if the consultant you choose can meet all (or at least most) of your IT needs – from purchasing new hardware, to maintaining the network, to providing support for the applications you use on a daily basis.

**Wrapping Up**
These are some of the points you need to have in mind when choosing an IT consultant. It is important to choose carefully. If you want to establish a long term “trusted advisor” relationship with your IT Consultant, just like with your attorney or accountant, you must choose the best — not necessarily the cheapest — IT Consultant. Remember, your IT Consultant is a key partner in the viability of your business and your success!

**What Next?**
- Sit down with your team and become clear on your IT needs and goals.
- Ask associates or key advisors such as your accountant for recommendations
- Interview and select carefully. The best IT Consultant should be a trusted advisor just like your accountant or attorney. Take your time and find someone you can trust and work with for the long term

Advanced Managed Solutions specializes in network management, network design, and network infrastructure. Along with sales, support and management we offer IS support services, technical outsourcing, and 24 X 7 monitoring. AMS offers quick reliable services with our number one goal is to protect our client assets and ensure that their network is performing optimally. In today’s world, the cost of a network being down in a company is greater than the cost of the equipment itself. And now with the convergence of voice and data networks, companies today need to emphasize network reliability in the work place. Whether it’s at the office or on the road.

AMS has a number of qualified support specialists and engineers available to insure that your needs can be meet rapidly in this ever changing network environment. Whether it’s a network move or upgrade, cabling project, or data center design and implementation, we can provide the necessary people to ensure quality service and a commitment to excellence.

Our Company works regularly on the latest networking technologies. This enables AMS to bring new and innovative solutions for improving reliability and performance. Our Managed Services solution allows us to monitor your network environment to protect against surprises that can lead to costly repairs. It also allows us to view the network performance and see where improvement is needed as your company evolves and make technology a pleasant experience.

As a leading technology company, AMS can provide solutions for servers, systems, software, upgrades, service and support. We can also provide project management and design capabilities as needed for your office. Our customer specialists are very knowledgeable and are willing to assist in any way to keep each company’s network performing optimally.