How Cloud and Managed Technology Services Can Improve Your Business…and Bottom Line

As a technologist and an owner of a small/medium-sized business (SMB), I can truly appreciate the frustration business owners and managers face when confronted with technology decisions. I'm frequently asked by peers who own and operate firms ranging in size from just a few employees to hundreds:

What can cloud technology do for my business?

How can I improve the level of service we're being provided?

What are my risks and how can these risks be mitigated?

Typically, SMBs are supported by an in-house or "single-shingle" IT professional with mid-level skills that are often unable to advise business leadership at a strategic level, keep up with technology advancements, evaluate options, and present a business case to substantiate investments. In other cases, SMBs are supported by resellers or integrators that have a vested interest in the products and services they sell and recommend. These contributing factors can often times lead to confusion, mediocre service and support, IT/business misalignment, and missed value opportunities for IT to assist with business growth (such as implementing advanced technology for customer handling, lead generation, etc.).

The Paradigm Shift

In today's landscape, a paradigm shift is occurring whereby utilizing cloud-based, remotely managed and monitored services, **SMBs can attain enterprise-class service** that were once reserved only for very large organizations.

This is achieved by engaging an independent technology advisory and support provider who can provide services ranging from CIO-level advice and cross-domain technical resources to professionally managed support services.

Better Results and Cost Savings

Done correctly, this results in alignment of technology with business objectives; professional user support; remote monitoring and management to mitigate issues before they become problems; and rapid response to remedy problems either remotely or on-site. The business benefits by getting a comprehensive view of solution alternatives, efficiency and higher productivity of operations, and cost control which often translates into short- and long-term savings.

How to Proceed?

The steps to developing an IT strategy include the following.

- **Engage key business stakeholders** to understand business, application and user requirements.

- **Assess application portfolios and infrastructure platforms** including network, server, storage, voice systems, mobile devices, etc.

- **Base-line IT costs and depreciated assets** including equipment, service and maintenance agreements and software licensing.

- **Document future-state requirements and analyze alternatives**, costs and benefits to meet business goals.

- **Prioritize solutions** and develop an appropriate implementation schedule.

- **Determine ongoing support** requirements and planning accordingly.

PlanNet Consulting has worked with many companies to develop strategies, navigate through the transition, and provide on-going support services. It often leaves business owners asking "why didn't we do this sooner?" While I can't answer that question, we can certainly help you determine what technology is right for your business.

Please contact us if you're interested in knowing more.

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