Growing Your MSP Business in the 2020's

In a highly competitive market and with growing customer demands MSPs must focus on core strengths. MSPs benefit by handing network system configuration and maintenance over to a specialist.

Introduction: The Shoemaker's Children

MSPs convince their customers of the benefits of offloading maintenance tasks to third party specialists. Ironically, many ignore the potential benefits that they themselves can gain by making such a change. Terms, like digital disruption and gig economy, illustrate that nowadays, technology evolves at a brisk pace. Consequently, the burden of taking care of all of their customers' technical needs strains many MSPs' resources and decreases their margins.

What can be done? MSPs must heed their own advice. They need to determine where they add value and focus their energies there. For many, network maintenance has become an onerous burden. Hiring a specialist to oversee customer network deployments and maintenance enables MSPs to expand their reach, improve their service, and reduce their costs.

The Network Maintenance Challenge

Monitoring customers' IT systems is a complex undertaking, one that becomes more complicated every day. New solutions, such as the Internet of Things; artificial intelligence and machine learn; and Augmented Reality/Virtual reality, emerge.

The traditional office is expanding. The Internet frees employees from desktop systems in central office cubicles. Today, they use a variety of devices, desktops, smartphones, and tablets to access information and work from home, branch locations, customers' offices, and the local coffee shop.

Configuring and managing all of these devices, applications, and connections has become time consuming. MSPs need to maximize staff productivity. Increasingly, they find themselves extending their reach into new areas and having to train, develop, and keep techies who have expertise in many different areas.

For a growing number of MSPs, network installation has become very challenging. Wired options continue to increase in speed, variety, and complexity. The number of wireless options is constantly expanding. 5G technology has more overlap with Wi-Fi than in the past.

As noted, customer networks support more dispersed worksites. Traditionally, MSPs focused on remote support but that approach has proven inefficient at times. Regularly, a new system needs to be installed or a legacy system must be upgraded. Often, the MSP asks non-technical site managers to make such changes. They were able to do that in yesteryear where only a few items needed to be plugged in. Today's solutions are much more complicated. When problems arise, troubleshooting and fixing them becomes cumbersome because the site managers lack required expertise.

Also, MSPs struggle to deploy and manage cabling, which in some cases was run years ago. On occasion, the staff improperly configures a system, which results in delays and in worst cases failed projects. These issues drive up MSPs' costs, diminish their image, and negatively impact the business, so, why are they spending their time, money, and manpower on it? Frankly, they think they have no other option.

Meeting the Challenge

Yet a potential simple solution stares them in the face: like their customers, they need to find a third-party expert. MSPs should look for an experienced partner that can cover their service area and take on network maintenance work. For MSPs looking to grow and expand, a nationwide partner can be invaluable. Aligning with an organization that can provide many types of services allows the MSP to offer much more support to their client, including site surveys, rack and stack of network devices, configuring complex cable systems, installing new hardware, decommission end of life systems, and troubleshooting network problems. All under the MSPs name and brand.

An ideal partner can supplement the MSPs support team. The partner provides an MSPs helpdesk or their customer's IT department with boots on the ground that function as an extension of the MSPs in-house support team, the group taking on the more complex networking tasks. In partnering with a company that is focused solely on networking, MSPs can increase efficiency and cost effectiveness by focusing on their own proficiencies and outsourcing tasks outside of their wheelhouse to an experienced resource.

What to Look for When Hiring a Network Expert?

When evaluating potential partners, what traits should an MSP look for? They need a firm with deep networking expertise. The partner must do more than simple network maintenance. They need to be able to manage projects for complex environments. It's imperative to find a trustworthy partner with thoroughly vetted technical resources who will complete on-site tasks with the same skill and care that the MSP themselves would exhibit.

They want a company that has a strong geographic reach. If the MSP is no longer bound to the local area, they can expand their marketing reach across the country. As an MSP extends its service area, its potential client base --- and revenue -- increases well beyond its current domain.

They require someone with strong and agile customer support. The partner's trouble ticketing system needs to be flexible and customizable, allowing the MSP to swiftly create service requests without a waiting in a support queue. Even if the MSP provides many special services to their clients, the partner takes care of all of their networking needs. Consequently, the change is smooth and does not disrupt the business The MSP continues to service its clients in its tried-and-true approach.

Conclusion

MSPs are in a highly competitive market. Many have been hamstrung by a growing list of customer requirements, a lack of up-to-date networking skills, and geographic limitations. By using a third-party specialist, they eliminate network installation headaches, lower their operating costs, improve customer service, expand their service reach, increase revenue, and become more profitable.

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