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Is Managed IT Right for Your Business?

An assessment framework for business owners who want
to make the right call — not just the easy one

April 2026



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Lattis · Atascadero, CA · lattisnetworks.com



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Introduction

Most managed IT conversations start with a vendor telling you why managed IT is right for every business. This one is different. Managed services is the right fit for some businesses and the wrong fit for others. Knowing which one you are before you sign anything is worth more than any sales pitch.

I've been doing this on the Central Coast since 2000. I've seen managed services relationships that transformed how a business operates — and engagements that never should have started. The difference usually comes down to a few factors that are visible before the contract is signed, if you know what to look for.

This guide walks through what managed IT actually is, when it makes sense, when it doesn't, and what a good engagement looks like from both sides of the table. Read it before you make a decision either way.

What Managed IT Actually Is — And What Most People Get Wrong

Break/fix IT is simple: something breaks, you call someone, they fix it, you pay the bill. It's reactive by design. The provider has no financial incentive to prevent problems — in fact, more problems mean more revenue. That's not a criticism of break/fix providers. It's just the math of the model.

Managed services inverts that model. You pay a predictable monthly fee. The provider is responsible for monitoring, maintaining, and supporting your systems. Their financial incentive is to keep things running — because every outage, every emergency call, every fire drill costs them time they're not getting paid extra to spend. A good managed services provider makes more money when your systems are stable. That alignment is the foundation of the relationship.



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The Hidden Truth About Break/Fix IT

In a break/fix model, your IT provider benefits when you have big problems. You benefit when you don't. That means your provider has no financial incentive to help you avoid outages — outages are how they make more money. This isn't a character flaw. It's the structure of the model. A managed services engagement changes that structure entirely. Your provider's interest and your interest are aligned: stable systems, predictable costs, no surprises. That alignment is worth understanding before you decide which model is right for you.

What most business owners don't fully appreciate is what it actually takes to build a team capable of managing a modern business network. The experience, the tooling, the research and development, the certifications, the bench depth to cover when someone is out — assembling that internally costs more than most businesses realize. A managed services provider amortizes that investment across their entire client base. You get the benefit of a full team without the cost of building one.

The ultimate goal of a managed services relationship is a win-win. The provider brings expertise and executes a series of recommended improvements that stabilize the environment. Support call volume drops. System performance improves. Chaos decreases. The provider is rewarded with a retained client and a stable, manageable environment. The business gets reliable systems without having to hire, train, and retain the staff to build them internally.

When Managed IT Is Clearly the Right Fit

These are the businesses where managed services almost always makes sense. If you recognize your situation in this list, it's worth a conversation.

Established business, 10 to 50 employees, a lot at stake

You've been operating long enough that your systems are woven into how your business runs. Downtime isn't an inconvenience — it's a cost. You've grown past the point where IT problems can be handled informally, but you haven't grown to the point where a full-time IT hire makes financial sense.



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Systems grew organically and nobody's sure what's there

The network was built piece by piece over years. Equipment was added as needed. Nobody documented anything. It works — mostly — but nobody could tell you why, and nobody knows what would happen if a key piece failed. That's not a stable foundation. It's an accident waiting to happen.

Your IT person just left

An employee who knew the systems is gone. Their replacement is capable but walking into an undocumented environment. Or you had a vendor whose key technician moved on and the new person doesn't know your setup. Either way, you're exposed. A managed services engagement starts with a thorough assessment and documentation — so the knowledge lives in the relationship, not in one person's head.

Multiple locations that need to operate as one

Separate systems at each site create management complexity, support gaps, and resilience problems. A managed services provider unifies the oversight and brings consistency across locations.

You want a stable, well-run system and a consistent standard of quality

Not the cheapest option. Not a vendor you call when things break. A relationship with a team that knows your environment, monitors it proactively, and shows up with the right answers. That's what a well-structured managed services engagement delivers.

Larger business with in-house IT looking for specialized depth

Smart IT departments recognize what they're good at and what they're not. Application management and operating systems are one skill set. Network architecture, physical security, structured cabling, fiber optics, voice systems — those are different disciplines. Co-managed relationships work well when the in-house team handles day-to-day user support and the managed services partner handles the network layer and specialized projects. Lattis is also a strong backstop during in-house IT transitions — if your IT person leaves, the institutional knowledge doesn't walk out the door with them.



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When Managed IT Is Not the Right Fit

Not every business is a good candidate. Being clear about this upfront saves everyone time.

Price is the only consideration

If the conversation starts and ends with the monthly fee, managed services probably isn't the right model right now. A race to the bottom on price produces a race to the bottom on service. The businesses that get the most out of managed services are the ones that understand they're investing in stability, not buying the cheapest available option.

Leadership views IT as nothing but a cost center

Technology investment decisions made purely on cost, with no consideration of risk, reliability, or competitive position, produce systems that reflect those values. A managed services provider can't deliver results in an environment where every recommendation is blocked by a philosophy that views IT as an expense to minimize rather than a function to optimize.

The business wants break/fix with a monthly invoice

Some businesses genuinely need break/fix support and a managed services agreement would be oversized for their situation. There's nothing wrong with that. The wrong outcome is signing a managed services contract when what you actually need — and will actually use — is occasional on-call support.

You're in crisis and looking for a rescue

A business that's completely down, understandably frustrated, and reaching out in an emergency is not in a position to start a managed services relationship. We'll help where we can. But a managed services engagement requires a stable starting point, a documented onboarding process, and a mutual commitment to doing things right. That conversation happens after the fire is out — not during it.

What Lattis Brings to a Managed Services Engagement

Most managed services providers handle desktops, servers, and cloud platforms. That's the standard scope. Lattis is different because of where we came from.



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We started in telecommunications in the 1990s — AT&T, Lucent systems, structured voice networks. That foundation gives us a depth of understanding about what happens on the wire that most IT providers simply don't have. A lot of IT people are excellent with applications and operating systems. But there's often a drop-off in what's actually happening at the network level — once data leaves the network interface on a computer or server. That's the layer where most performance problems, security vulnerabilities, and reliability issues live. It's also where Lattis has spent 26 years.

Beyond the network, we design and install fiber optic systems, structured cabling, and physical security systems. We support unified communications platforms and have deep experience with the service provider landscape — ISPs, legacy voice carriers, the full telecommunications stack. When a client has a problem that involves the connection between their building and the outside world, we know that territory. Most IT providers hand that off. We own it.

We also do strategic planning with clients — three-year budget forecasts, technology roadmaps, investment prioritization. The goal isn't just to keep the lights on. It's to help the business stay current, maintain competitive advantage, and avoid the expensive cycle of emergency spending that comes from deferring technology decisions too long.

What Onboarding Actually Looks Like

We take our time at the front end. A thorough understanding of your environment is the foundation of everything that comes after. That means documenting what's there, understanding how it's being used, and identifying what needs to change.

During onboarding we get our monitoring and management tools in place, gain access to the systems we'll be responsible for, and conduct a full assessment of the environment. What we find goes into a prioritized remediation list — items that need to be addressed immediately for stability or security, and a longer roadmap of recommended improvements. Some of those improvements are investments. We're direct about what they are, why they matter, and what the risk is if they're deferred. Some legacy systems get placed on an exclusions list by mutual agreement — systems that must remain in place for business reasons but are out of manufacturer support. We document our best-effort commitment to those systems and we're clear about the limits of what we can guarantee.



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The onboarding process also establishes the working relationship — who the point of contact is on the client side, how we communicate, how we handle after-hours requests, and what the expectations are on both sides. Getting that clarity upfront is what makes the ongoing relationship work.

What We Need From You

A managed services relationship works best when it's a genuine partnership. That means something from both sides.

On your end: a single point of contact who owns the day-to-day relationship with Lattis. Leadership that invests time in annual reviews and stays engaged with technology decisions. HR giving us lead time on new hires so equipment and access are ready on day one — and following an offboarding process when employees leave so access is removed promptly. Paying your invoice on time. Being direct with us when something isn't working. Letting us know when something is working well.

The businesses that get the most out of a managed services relationship are the ones that treat it like a relationship — not a vendor transaction. We know your environment. We know your business. When you're thinking through a decision that has technology implications, bring us in early. We'd rather help you think through a decision before it's made than fix the consequences after.

How Pricing Works

There's no single pricing model that fits every business. Some businesses have more devices than people. Some have more people than devices. Some need full managed services coverage. Some need a co-managed arrangement that complements an in-house IT team. We have flexible models that are designed to be fair — you pay for what you need, not for a package built around someone else's environment.

What we don't do is quote a number before we understand your environment. The assessment comes first. Then we put together a proposal that reflects what we actually found and what it actually takes to manage it well. That's a longer process than getting a number over the phone — and it's the only way to build an engagement that delivers what it promises.



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What a Well-Run Managed IT Engagement Looks Like

If this list describes your current IT relationship, you're in good hands. If it doesn't, there's room to improve.

- ✓ **Proactive monitoring** — we know about problems before your staff reports them
- ✓ **Documented environment** — every system, every configuration, every vendor contact, on record
- ✓ **Prioritized remediation roadmap** — a clear plan for improving the environment over time
- ✓ **Predictable costs** — monthly fee, no surprise invoices for routine support
- ✓ **Strategic planning** — annual reviews, three-year budget forecasting, technology roadmap
- ✓ **After-hours and emergency coverage** — available when you need it, defined in the contract
- ✓ **Security coverage** — endpoint protection, patch management, vulnerability monitoring
- ✓ **Backup and recovery oversight** — verified, tested, retention policy in place
- ✓ **Vendor management** — we deal with your ISP, your carriers, your hardware vendors
- ✓ **New user onboarding and offboarding** — handled correctly, every time
- ✓ **Physical systems support** — cabling, fiber, network hardware, not just software
- ✓ **Physical security integration** — cameras, access control, intercoms, on the same team as your IT
- ✓ **Voice systems support** — phone system management from a team that actually knows voice
- ✓ **A relationship** — one team that knows your business, your history, and your systems



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Not sure if it's the right fit? That's exactly what the first conversation is for.

We don't sign clients we can't serve well. If managed services is right for your business, we'll tell you what it would look like and what it would cost. If it's not the right fit, we'll tell you that too. Either way, you'll leave the conversation with a clearer picture of where you stand.

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