

How Managed Services Can Benefit Government Agencies

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Today's demanding economic environment continues to force state and local governments (SLGs) to cut costs, programs, and jobs. Government agencies have the same technology needs as private companies, but usually have less budget and fewer IT resources. Public sector IT departments and CIOs must develop innovative technology solutions that help agencies increase employee productivity and reduce operational costs.

In their ongoing efforts to tackle these challenges, IT staffs are turning to managed services, offloading certain non-core but still important IT tasks to managed service providers that help monitor, manage, and maintain the IT environment. Use of the managed services IT model, also known as outsourcing or out-tasking, is growing in both the public and private sectors — wherever there is a need to cut costs, improve service delivery, and deploy new technologies with limited IT resources.

In this brief, we discuss how state and local government agencies can deploy managed services — specifically PC management and maintenance — to reduce IT costs, provide better employee service, and focus on mission-critical business functions rather than routine IT issues.

Cost Savings

Transferring all or some of the management and support of PC devices to a managed service provider can help reduce maintenance costs — without relinquishing control or visibility into overall PC management. Most organizations deploy managed PC services to speed and simplify day-to-day tasks that are important, but do not contribute to the agency's strategic mission.

Instead, the service provider's technical experts manage and support computing resources, including tasks such as:

- Migration planning — developing and implementing plans for migrating operating systems or rolling out new laptop and desktop computers and mobile devices;
- System deployment — asset tagging, customization of system settings, installation of options, drive partitioning, desktop standardization, and image creation and management;
- Software and application management — installation, managing settings, software license compliance, and deployment and upgrading of applications and patches
- On-site installation — system set-up, transfer of data and personality, and connection to networks and peripheral equipment;
- Recycle and asset recovery — securely purging data, recycling equipment in accordance with local standards, and reselling assets;
- Device security — managing computing security policies, users, groups, and permissions;
- Asset management — auditing hardware and software assets;
- IT help desk — remote assistance, on-site or emergency assistance or repairs, ongoing maintenance, scheduled repairs, and remote resource monitoring

These duties are critical to the success of the organization — they are like clocks that keep the trains running on time.

Yet these routine tasks use a tremendous amount of IT staffing and budgeting resources. By transferring the administration of such tasks to a managed services provider, SLGs reduce operating costs, preserve IT resources for more strategic uses, and improve service quality.



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Reduce Operating Costs

Agency leadership may believe that it's too expensive to outsource IT services. However, actual costs are affordable when weighing in productivity gains and operating costs such as salaries and downtime. Costs are predictable and it's easier to develop and maintain budgets because the service provider charges a flat monthly or annual fee.

Preserve IT Resources

While it's true that some organizations turn to the managed services model to reduce IT headcount, it isn't the primary driver of managed service adoption in SLG agencies, where most IT workers are stretched thin and simply need to be able to focus on core business projects. The managed services model frees IT staff from mundane activities such as maintaining PC fleets and managing software rollouts, allowing them to focus on strategic business interests such as deploying new applications to help meet agency goals.

Improve Service Quality

IT service quality takes a hit when an agency lacks technical expertise or simply doesn't have enough staff to provide appropriate service levels. But government agencies don't have to be hamstrung by hiring freezes, because a managed service provider can provide the experience and attention required to manage an agency's complete computing infrastructure. Most organizations that switch to managed services realize significant reductions in downtime, which ultimately decreases the lost revenue experienced when a system outage renders an agency unable to perform critical tasks.

Steps to Getting Started

So how can your agency experience these time, cost, and productivity benefits? Before considering the managed services model, make sure to assess the following areas:

- Infrastructure — Get an accurate count of the components that make up and use the computing infrastructure, including the number of servers, laptop and desktop PCs, mobile devices, and applications; and the number of end users served and how much time they use the infrastructure daily. What is the age of the assets? Are there PC lifecycle and refresh strategies? How often does the infrastructure experience failure or outages?
- Staffing — How many internal and external staffing resources support the computing infrastructure, and how much time do they spend on a daily basis? Also, learn how often systems are backed up, and how much time is spent on the backup process. How much time and resources does it take to deploy or replace new systems? How easy is it for staff to manage updates, patches and other necessary functions?
- Help desk and support — Find out how many problems the help desk responds to on a daily basis. What's the average length of time before a problem is solved? Which problems take the longest to solve? Is support proactive or reactive? Also, evaluate end user satisfaction with IT and help desk support.
- Costs — Understand the business impacts associated with the IT infrastructure, such as the costs and staff hours. Are you satisfied with support quality, relative to its cost? How much downtime do you experience and what does it cost your agency in terms of lost productivity and revenue?



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