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12 Essential Considerations For Small Businesses Thinking Of Hiring An ITaaS Vendor

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Small businesses often have limited resources for their staffing needs. For this reason, owners may choose to leverage an IT-as-a-service vendor instead of hiring a dedicated IT professional or team. This allows owners to only pay for the services, configuration and technologies that are relevant to their company.

While hiring a service provider for IT functions gives smaller organizations more flexibility, doing so can also have its limitations. That's why 12 members of Forbes Technology Council have shared the most important factors small-business owners should consider before hiring an ITaaS vendor.

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1. Hiring Criteria

Establish unique criteria for selecting the vendor based on their priority to your business. Does the vendor need to have specific expertise (e.g., public cloud, cybersecurity, virtualization and so on) that is critical to your business' success? Create a scoring card or matrix that allows you to compare vendor proposals accurately and make an informed decision. - Thomas Aronica, Biller Genie

2. Your Daily Tools And Systems

The No. 1 thing all business owners must do before considering an ITaaS vendor is to create a list of tools and systems they rely on every day, as well as any tool they are evaluating for future use. I see so many companies that do not pause and create an inventory of the IT items they rely on when they get up and running. - Kevin Hasley, RootMetrics

3. How Closely IT Is Tied To Your Core Business

Consider how closely tied IT is to your core competitive advantage and your business strategy. If it is very closely tied, then outsourcing IT to a third party is probably not a good idea, as it will slow you down and limit your options. If it is far away from your core, ITaaS is probably a great idea and will allow you to focus on your core business. - Jessica Nordlander, ThoughtExchange

4. The Importance Of Having Expert Help

ITaaS is the very best solution for small businesses. Owners rarely know IT as well as their own business. They must consider how important it is to have expert help in defining the services they need and selecting the right provider. All ITaaS providers are not created equal, and neither are all contracts. Paying a small fee to a consultant will pay dividends in the short and long run. - Phil Alberta, IPM

5. Automation Options

ITaaS providers can be critical to a small company's future because they can provide a stable, secure and robust infrastructure. A company's growth can be impacted

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severely by a cyberattack, an outage or the inability to scale. Automation in provisioning, cybersecurity defense and redundancy enablement is critical in a good ITaaS partner. - John Walsh, Red Summit Global

6. Your Ability To Maintain Agility

How dependent are you on technology, externally? If your small business lives and dies by its technology infrastructure or systems, ITaaS is a recipe for disaster. In a small business, everything rides on revenue and an ability to pivot quickly. If you're reliant on a third party, you must consider what would happen if you had extended SLAs or an onsite presence. You have to be agile today! - Tom Roberto, Core Technology Solutions

7. Their Response Times And Processes

Almost all applications now are services for firms of all kinds. IT departments become order takers. So you need to pick a vendor that has a prompt response time and an easy way to ask for service. If it's convoluted, you have to jump through hoops or they take hours to reply, you want to learn that before signing up. - Seth Wasserman, Menin Hospitality

8. Their Commitment To Cybersecurity

Security, security, security—we cannot overemphasize the importance of cybersecurity considerations. So many small businesses are exploited by cybercriminals and fall by the wayside due to lax security controls. Digital risks are not letting up in our post-pandemic world, and small businesses are easy targets for phishing attacks and data breaches. - Kumar Ritesh, CYFIRMA

9. If They're Both Foundationally Sound And Innovative

Looking for the right ITaaS vendor can be as complex as looking for a spouse and potentially as consequential. To find the right one, you need to look at their foundations and technical understanding, integration with innovative and legacy security systems, and speed in response to customer issues. - Oren Eytan, odix

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10. The Total Cost Of Ownership

Consider the total cost of ownership and whether you can get the right advice. Mostly, small businesses take on ITaaS with little in-house expertise or skills. The risk of poor execution, inadequate commercial protection and adjacent costs must be managed carefully. Investing in some professional or advisory services to shape solutions at the start could pay dividends later. - Jacqueline Teo, HGC Global Communications

11. Alignment Of Values And Expectations

When hiring any company it is important to make sure your values and expectations of each other align. At the end of the day, unless you are subscribing to software you are dealing with people, and even if the service they are offering is not right, the people who understand you and see the world the way you see it will make sure to deliver the right result, and it will work out at the end. - Bobir Akilkhanov, Missed.com

12. Whether Adding Warranty And Maintenance Services To Your Equipment Purchase Will Suffice

ITaaS is another continuation of the "aS" trend, but essentially it's the same as good old "computer maintenance." I would advise small-business owners to simply buy warranty and maintenance services, together with their equipment, from the same vendor. If a "small" business is not that small and you need more—such as a help desk for your employees—then vendor selection should follow your standard vendor-selection process. - Boris Kontsevoi, Intetics Inc.

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Boris Kontsevoi

President & CEO

Intetics Inc.

Naples, Florida Area

Member Since 2018

Boris Kontsevoi is a founder and President of Intetics Inc., a leading global software engineering and digital transformation company. Under his leadership, a group of software engineers developed into a truly global technology company with multiple professional certifications and industry awards, including the Global Outsourcing 100, Software 500, and Global Sourcing Association best of class company.

COMPANY INFO

Intetics Inc.

INTETICS
MEANS YOUR SUCCESS

Toll Free:	+1 (877) SOFTDEV
US:	+1 (239) 217-4907
DE:	+49 (211) 3878-9350
UK:	+44 (20) 3514-1416
Email:	contact@intetics.com