

Outsourcing IT

Why today's savvy healthcare providers are looking to outsourced IT support providers to transform their practices.

A common question often asked by healthcare providers is *"should I hire an "IT Guy" or should I outsource my IT support to a third party?"* Often that question is asked in relation to practice size. *"We have 25 computers. Are we large enough to hire someone internally to support our computer network?"* or *"We have 200 computers and an internal IT staff of 5 people. Why would we outsource any of our IT support to an external provider?"*

Regardless of the size of your practice, there are benefits to hiring internal IT support staff and to hiring outsourced IT support providers. Some practices benefit from a blend of both. This report explains.

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Hiring Internal IT Support

Practices lacking internal IT support often rely on a tech savvy staff person whose actual role within the organization has little or nothing to do with managing technology. You know one or more of these individuals. They are the ones with a passion or personal interest in technology. They are power users who enjoy troubleshooting technical problems and helping other users solve their computer woes.

Having a tech savvy employee in your practice is a great thing, but it's not enough. Managing an IT infrastructure is a complex matter. First, there's the day-to-day maintenance of your hardware and software assets to prevent problems from occurring. That, alone, can require a lot of time and expertise. Then you have antivirus, security and data backup needs to consider. If you are relying on your power user to get all this done it will not be long before that individual is overwhelmed or your network is neglected, which brings us to our original question: ***"should I hire internal IT support staff?"***

Some practices choose to hire an individual (or team) to serve as their dedicated IT support. There are certainly benefits to having dedicated IT professionals on your payroll:

When you hire your own internal staff, these individuals are dedicated solely to your practice. Because their focus is only on your practice and its needs, they will develop a clear understanding of your needs and goals. As a result, they will help you develop a strategy for the best use of IT in your practice. If something breaks, you don't have to wait in line for a fix as you might if you outsourced your IT service to a third party provider. In addition, you free any additional "power users" you may have had managing your IT to concentrate solely on the job you hired them for, thus improving workplace productivity.

Drawbacks to Hiring Internal IT Support

Simply allocating an internal individual to your network will not solve all your problems, however. ***Here's why:***

1. Time is limited.

An interesting thing happens when you hire an internal IT support staff member: problems seem to multiply. You'll find that when your staff learns they have IT support available to them, the number of problems they have suddenly increase. It is not unusual for individuals to ignore the nagging issues they face in their day when they do not have a specialist on hand to fix those issues. Suddenly you hire "an IT guy" and your staff start reporting their problems. Before long, that individual is overwhelmed putting out fires and fixing issues.

2. Individuals get sick and take vacations.

Over time your staff will become more reliant on your internal IT support staff. What do you do when that individual gets sick or takes a vacation? The power user you had helping you before you hired your internal IT support staff may be able to step in and help out but big problems will go unresolved.

3. Routine maintenance may be neglected.

The more tools and users you have, the more things are going to break. A proactive approach to maintaining your computers and network is much more beneficial than a reactive, break-fix approach. Again, if your internal IT support staff is forced to spend the majority of his or her time putting out fires and fixing problems, he or she is unable to dedicate the time necessary to complete the preventative maintenance tasks that help keep problems from occurring in the first place.

4. You may miss out on the opportunity to learn new ways to use technology to improve your business.

Ask any IT professional how they like to spend their time, and very few will say “patching systems and fixing what is broken.” Talented IT professionals have passion for their trade. They enjoy applying technology to solve business problems. They enjoy learning about new technologies and exploring how to implement them in ways to improve profits and processes. If you hire a talented IT professional who is really good at problem solving, chances are they’d be great at helping you better align your technology to your business strategy. Unfortunately they’ll be too covered up with problems to do so.

Using IT Strategically

When you think about your practice’s IT, you must think beyond, “How do I fix these things when they break?” You should be thinking, “How can I get the most return from my investment into these resources.”

Benefits of Outsourcing IT Support:

1. Access to a broad skill set.

When you hire an outsourced IT support provider, you have access to a team of individuals with a broad skill set and experience you are unlikely to get from hiring a

single individual or even small team. In addition, help desk support is always available. As mentioned, internal staff members get sick and take vacations. Outsourced IT support providers employ multiple individuals on their help desk so there is always someone available to take your call. Because they serve multiple clients, however, your help desk tickets are likely to be triaged in order of priority. You may have to wait for the repair of a low priority item as your provider tends to the priority needs of another client.

2. Automation.

Many of today's outsourced IT Support providers have transitioned away from a break-fix approach to network support and more towards a managed services approach where routine maintenance activities are automated. Proactively maintaining your network results in a more stable environment thus reducing downtime for your staff.

3. Expert recommendations.

Partnering with an outsourced IT support provider has additional benefits as well. Outsourced IT Support Providers have in-depth, hands on knowledge on a wide range of technology solutions. Some even specialize solely in supporting a specific vertical market. This is of significant benefit to healthcare providers whose use of technology is so highly regulated. Providers who specialize in niche vertical markets are experts in recommending and implementing solutions that directly align with their customers' business strategy. They can advise you on best practice while also helping you to avoid mistakes when selecting and implementing new solutions. Access to this level of expertise can shorten implementation time saving your practice in terms of both time and money. Such expertise is also helpful in ensuring you are getting the most from your existing IT resources.

The Hybrid Approach = The Best Of Both Worlds

The best of both worlds may be a hybrid approach to IT management where you employ internal resources and engage the services of a third party provider. Many of Kalleo's clients are structured in this manner and the outcome is the best of both strategies.

We have met a number of very talented IT professionals who are yearning for the opportunity to go beyond day to day firefighting and spend their time, instead, to find ways to help their management team reach their business goals through strategic use of their technological tools. When those clients partner with Kalleo, they are able to outsource the preventative maintenance of their IT assets and/or help desk support for problems that cannot be prevented. The company still has the benefit of having an

onsite IT pro to handle any emergencies requiring immediate, hands-on assistance. The remainder of their time is spent streamlining the use of existing technologies and seeking new tools to help their employers reach their business goals and gain (or maintain) their competitive edge.

Conclusion

Your technology assets have the power to enhance the efficiency of your staff, provide timely data to improve decision-making, enhance service to your customers and make your business more profitable, but you cannot achieve any of those benefits without an IT strategy and tools that are properly maintained and working for you. IT should never be relegated as merely a task on someone's to-do list. Take control of your environment by finding a partner to help you transform your IT from a cost center to the profit center it is meant to be.

About Kalleo Technologies



Founded in 2004, Kalleo Technologies is a managed IT service provider specializing in highly efficient, remote managed systems.

Kalleo's professionals have extensive knowledge of the challenges facing the marine transportation, government and healthcare industries. Kalleo uses this knowledge to help its clients leverage technology in a way to further their advancement towards their strategic business goals. Learn more at www.kalleo.net.