

“What Every Business Owner Needs To Know About Hiring An Honest, Competent, Responsive And Fairly-Priced Computer Consultant”

Choosing the correct computer support company to support your office computers & infrastructure is one of the most important decisions you will make as a business owner and reading this guide will give you a heads up on what questions you should be asking to get the right company for the job.

Read this guide and you'll discover:

- ✓ 12 revealing questions that will help you instantly assess the credentials of your computer support company and will help you disregard computer companies in minutes before they waste your time and money.
- ✓ 3 costly considerations you should have as a business owner about computer maintenance and repair companies.
- ✓ Viruses, worms, spyware, and hackers: what you need to know to protect yourself and have a state of the art Internet Security setup in your company.
- ✓ Why the lowest price computer consultants aren't always the bargain they initially appear to be.

Provided as an educational service by:

Mark Kelly

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Brought to you by: Mark Kelly
Managing Director, iPing LTD

Dear Colleague,

Choosing a computer support company isn't easy. There is no shortage of stories about computer repair jobs going wrong and causing more problems as a result. I'm sure if you talk to your own friends or colleagues you will hear of the plenty of these experiences they have encountered in this area and I am sure you have some of your own.

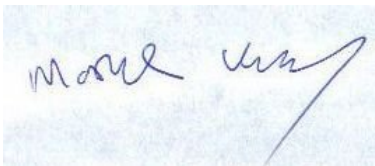
Why is this? It's because the computer repair and consulting industry, along with a lot of other industries, has its own share of people who will try to take advantage of trusting business owners who simply do not have the time or skill to determine whether or not they know what they are doing.

It is worth pointing out that **the IT support industry is not regulated** like many other professional service industries, which means anyone can setup as an IT support company.

Mechanics, electricians, plumbers, lawyers, dentists, doctors & accountants are all regulated to help make sure the consumer receives a good company.

Due to this lack of regulation in Ireland we have decided to produce this report to help the SMB's in Ireland select a good IT & computer support provider. The information in this Guide is provided to help raise standards within the computer repair and support industry in Ireland, and to give you useful information to make an informed decision.

Dedicated to supporting you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Kelly", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.



About The Author

Name : Mark Kelly

Age: 33

Home County: Donegal though living in Dublin for eleven years.

Mark studied computers for four years in the University of Ulster (UU) where he got a degree in computer science with a diploma in industrial studies. The diploma in industrial studies was made up mainly of one year's work placement. Mark took the opportunity to work for the worldwide accounting firm BDO where he obtained an excellent grounding in computer support.

Mark moved to Dublin in 1999 after getting his degree from UU and started to work for internet provider Cablenet, He provided server & client support for their customer base. In 2001 Cablenet were acquired by Internet Ireland and Mark moved across to join Internet Ireland as lead Windows Server Engineer.

In 2003 Mark joined Dell computers as a Gold Premium Support Engineer for Dell's enterprise server and backup range of products. Key in this role was supporting Dell's enterprise customers. Working for Dell gave him a great opportunity to learn how things work in a big company.

Mark has also worked for the global telephone provider Avaya. In testament to Mark's level of service while working for Avaya, after setting up his own company in 2005, Avaya are now a client of his.

Mark set up his own company, iPing Limited, after hearing feedback from a number of companies in his local chamber of commerce who were dissatisfied with their current IT provider. From his research he found that of primary importance to companies looking for an IT support provider, is a firm that is proactive, who will contact the company before a problem happens instead of them having to hunt for the company after a major crash. Mark understood that reliability is of crucial importance to companies when it comes to trusting someone to look after their computer network.

In his spare time Mark enjoys being a member of Junior Chamber International (JCI) and he is the 2010 JCI Ireland national president. This is a role that Mark takes great satisfaction from and he is relishing the opportunity to make a difference in his local community.

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12 Questions You Should Ask Your IT Company Before Hiring Them To Support Your Computers.

Customer Service:

Q1: Do they take the time to explain what they are doing and answer your questions in plain old English?

Our Answer: Our technicians are trained to have the ‘heart of a teacher’ and will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms. Just look at what Niall ó h-Éalaithe from Open Office Architects www.openofficearchitects.ie had to say:

“i-Ping helped us to set up our printing, network, security and backup systems. We were very pleased with their prompt response and their friendly and professional service. We are happy to recommend them to other companies.”

Q2: Do they consistently offer new ways to improve your network’s performance, or do they wait until you have a problem to make recommendations?

Our Answer: We conduct quarterly review meetings with our clients to look for new ways to help improve their operations, lower costs, increase efficiencies, and resolve any problems that may be arising. Our goal with these meetings is to help our clients be more profitable, efficient, and competitive.

Q3: Do they provide detailed invoices that clearly explain what you are paying for?

Our Answer: We provide detailed invoices that show what work was done, why, and when, so you never have to guess what you are paying for. We also double-check our invoices for accuracy before they are sent to you.

Q4: Do they have Professional Indemnity (PI) insurance to protect you if something goes wrong?

Our Answer: iPing is fully insured so on the off chance that something goes wrong with a job that we are working on for you, you can be sure that we are covered for the work that we are doing on your network.

Maintenance Of Your Network:

Q5: Do they insist on remotely monitoring your network 24-7-356 to keep critical security settings, virus definitions, and security patches up-to-date and PREVENT problems from turning into downtime, viruses, lost data, and other issues?

Our Answer: Yes; our remote network monitoring system watches over your network and constantly looks for developing problems, security issues, and other problems so that we can address them before they turn into problems.

Q6: Do they provide you with a report that shows all the updates, security patches, and status of every machine on your network so you know for SURE your systems have been secured and updated?

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Our Answer: On our TOTAL COMPUTER CARE package we provide our clients with a detailed report that shows an overall health of their network and the updates to their antivirus, security settings, patches, and other important network checks.

Q7: Is it standard procedure for them to provide you with written network documentation detailing, your critical passwords?"

Our Answer: On our TOTAL COMPUTER CARE package all clients receive this in written and electronic form at no additional cost. We also perform a quarterly update on this material and make sure certain key people from your organization have this information and know how to use it, giving you complete control over your network.

Backups And Disaster Recovery:

Q8: Do they INSIST on monitoring an offsite as well as an onsite backup, or are they letting you rely on tape backups?

Our Answer: We do not advise our clients to use just tape backups because they are unreliable. We make sure all of our clients have an online backup that will work at all times and not a tape backup system that relies on someone changing tapes.

Q9: Do they INSIST on doing periodical test restores of your backups to make sure the data is not corrupt and could be restored in the event of a disaster?

Our Answer: We perform regular tests on backups for our clients to make sure their data can be recovered in the event of an emergency. After all, the WORST time to "test" a backup is when you desperately need it.

Q10: Do they insist on backing up your network BEFORE performing any type of project or upgrade?

Our Answer: We do; and that's simply as a precaution in case a hardware failure or software glitch causes a major problem.

Technical Expertise And Support:

Q11: Do their technicians maintain current vendor certifications and participate in on-going training?

Our Answer: Our technicians are required to keep the most up-to-date vendor certifications. Our engineers have Microsoft, Dell or Cisco qualifications.

Q12: Do their technicians arrive on time and dress professionally?

Our Answer: Our technicians are true professionals that you would be proud to have in your office. They dress professionally, show up on time and if they cannot for some unforeseen reason we always notify the client immediately. We believe these are minimum requirements for delivering a professional service.



Three things to consider about computer maintenance and repair

Consideration 1: My computer network doesn't need regular monitoring and maintenance.

This is probably one of most costly misconceptions that business owners have. Usually this is because they've been fortunate enough to never have encountered a major disaster; but that's similar to someone thinking they don't need to wear a seat belt when driving a car because they've never had an accident.

Computer networks are complex and dynamic systems that need regular updates and maintenance to stay up, running fast and problem free. Here are just a few of the critical updates that need to be done on a weekly – if not daily – basis:

- Security patches applied – with new viruses cropping up daily, this is a critical part of maintaining your network
- Antivirus updates and monitoring
- Backup monitoring and test restores
- Spam filter installation and updates
- Spyware detection and removal
- Monitoring disk space on workstations and servers
- Monitoring hardware for signs of failure
- Optimizing systems for maximum speed

Just like car ownership, if you don't change the oil, replace the filter, flush the radiator, and perform other regular maintenance, your car will eventually break down and cost you far more to repair than the cost of the basic maintenance.

If your computer support company does not insist on some type of regular, automated monitoring or maintenance of your network then they are not being proactive. Lack of system maintenance is the number one reason most people end up losing valuable files and incurring heavy computer repair bills.

Consideration 2: All computer technicians are created equal. Your best option will be the one who offers the lowest price.

The plain fact is you get what you pay for. Really good technicians do not work at a discount because they are in high demand just like any other professional. The only technicians that will work for highly discounted rates are those just getting started in the business.

We take the view that most people want value for money and simply want the job done right. You may find that we may not be not the cheapest, but we don't apologize for that. As the owner, I decided a long time ago that I would rather explain our higher rates one time than to apologize for poor service forever. That said we're not the most expensive either. We simply feel that we should offer a good service at a fair price. That's why we have been able to stay in business for over 5 years.

Consideration 3: An honest computer support company should be able to give you a quote over the phone.

I wish this were true, but it isn't. Just like a good doctor, a professional technician will need to diagnose your network before they can quote any price over the phone. Consider the example where all that was needed was a simple cable being plugged in. If someone brought that to us, we would just plug it back in and not charge them; but without seeing the machine, we could never have diagnosed that over the phone.

3 More Mistakes To Avoid When Choosing A Computer Consultant

1. **Choosing a computer consultant based on a single phone call.** We recommend you invite them into your office and ask them for a written proposal. Be clear on what your expectations are and what type of problems you want them to resolve. A competent professional should offer to do an audit of your network to diagnose your system before quoting you anything.
2. **Choosing a computer consultant without speaking to several of the current clients.** Check their references! Don't just take the sales guy's word that they are good – ask to speak to at least 2 or 3 clients.

Another good sign is that they should have testimonials posted on their website.

3. **Choosing a computer consultant who cannot remotely monitor, update and support your network.** You want someone to do this because it will dramatically increase your network's stability and will enable them to do faster repairs. That's not to say they shouldn't come onsite; but remote monitoring and repairs make fixing problems faster for you and help prevent problems from cropping up in the first place.

A Final Word

I hope you have found this guide helpful in shedding some light on what to look for when outsourcing the support of your company's network. As I stated in the opening of this report, my purpose in providing this information was to help you make an informed decision.



If you have any additional comments or questions, we welcome them! If you have an idea to make this guide even more helpful please let us know! And of course, if you are looking for someone you can trust to take over the care and maintenance of “all things digital” in your office, we’d love the opportunity to earn your business.

Below you will find information on how to request a FREE Network Health Check and Diagnosis. This is, of course, provided for free with no obligations and no expectations on our part. So why are we offering something like this for free?

Two reasons:

1. We are simply offering this service as a risk-free “get to know us” offer to people we haven’t had the pleasure of doing business with. Again, our goal is to allow you to make an informed and confident decision; and offering this is one way we can help you better evaluate us.
2. This will allow us to determine if we even can help you. Obviously we can’t help everyone, and our services might not be a good fit for you. Conducting this Health Check enables us to do a small project for you to help you evaluate whether or not we’re the right company for you without risking your money.

Looking forward to your call!

The Team at iPing LTD
Phone: 01 5241350
Web: www.iping.org

How To Request Your FREE Network Health Check:

Contact Mark on 01 5241350 or e-mail him on mark.kelly@iping.org and ask him for your free 27 point network audit.

What Our Clients Have To Say:

iPing installed our network and did excellent job. They have been providing all the firm's computer support & back-up service for the last three years and are fast, friendly and reliable on support matters and commercial on any suggested changes to the system."

Finola O' Hanlon, O'Hanlon Tax Ltd www.ohanlontax.ie

"i-Ping helped us to set up our printing, network, security and backup systems. We were very pleased with their prompt response and their friendly and professional service.

We are happy to recommend them to other companies."
Niall ó h-Éalaithe from Open Office Architects www.openofficearchitects.ie

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I can highly recommend the IT services that iPing provides. As a small company who rely on technology to complete day to day business iPing are able to swiftly resolve technical problems and are available at short notice."

Audrey Hughes, Managing Director, Principle HR. www.principlehr.ie