CIO
Strategic Marketing Services

WHITE PAPER

MASERGY
Performance Beyond Expectations

FINDING AN MSP WITH THE RIGHT STUFF FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

For a successful relationship, look for a managed service provider with a strong customer experience focus

Nearly every organization aspires to become a "disruptive player," changing the rules and creating substantial competitive advantage, rolling out new services and products more quickly, and optimizing business operations.

Achieving this goal—and transforming the IT infrastructure to support it—is challenging, given the many years of shifting IT budgets and priorities. As a result, third parties are being used to deliver larger swaths of the IT infrastructure. Ensuring an organization finds the right partner is a critical task for the CIO.

Leading digital transformation to become a disruptive organization fits perfectly into the renewed focus CIOs have on strategy. In IDG's "State of the CIO" 2017 survey, for example, 65% of IT leaders say they want to spend more time on strategic activities in the next three to five years.

But with shrinking resources, and a notable skills shortage—according to 60% of CIOs, up from 49% a year ago[1]—organizations are turning to managed service providers (MSPs) to augment in-house resources and provide a faster "time to value" for some of the multitude of projects that are being simultaneously undertaken to transform the business.

Engaging an MSP is not just about adding resources, though. The new skill sets necessary to implement and operate the latest technologies are in short supply, and some positions, such as security analysts, may be impossible to hire in certain geographies. This need for specific skills and operational experience frequently drives the engagement of an MSP.

However, not all MSPs are the same, and organizations have encountered a wide range of customer experiences and satisfaction levels

with managed services. To understand what drives a positive, productive, and partner-oriented relationship, IDG, together with Masergy, surveyed MSP customers about essential attributes of an MSP. This research will help you identify a true business partner, not just a supplier.
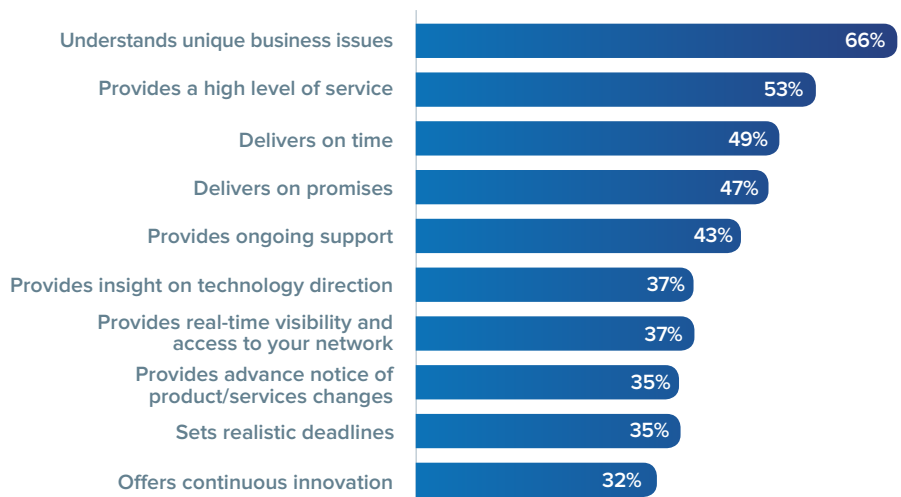
Choosing an Outstanding MSP

The majority of respondents — 60% — cite the customer experience as the most important aspect of an MSP relationship. This is a far larger percentage than those who focus on price, which only 10% of respondents cite as most important.

A seamless, positive experience is essential. To achieve that, it is critical that the MSP infus-

es the relationship with three pillars that show commitment to the customer experience:

- **Execution**—The MSP must deliver your services based on an understanding of your vision for business outcomes. But unfortunately, some MSPs don't take the time to understand what success means. Rather, they try to "force fit" customers into a predefined service found in a published "catalog" of services that have zero or limited flexibility.

- **Visibility**—MSPs should provide their services transparently. As a customer, you should always have access to information about how the service is being used, how it may impact monthly fees, and usage vs. budget. Best-in-class MSPs provide graph-

Ten qualities that differentiate MSP "partner" from "vendor"

Quality	Percentage
Understands unique business issues	66%
Provides a high level of service	53%
Delivers on time	49%
Delivers on promises	47%
Provides ongoing support	43%
Provides insight on technology direction	37%
Provides real-time visibility and access to your network	37%
Provides advance notice of product/services changes	35%
Sets realistic deadlines	35%
Offers continuous innovation	32%

1. "State of the CIO," 2017, IDG Research Services

For more information, go to www.masergy.com.

ical real-time dashboards and reporting that make these data points clear. Further, these dashboards are customized for your organization. Visibility also maps to performance and the ability to quickly spot or remediate problems.

• **Control**—The inability to modify or "control" the services as they are being used can be frustrating. For example, if a business is using an MSP for WAN solutions and there is a spike in bandwidth requirements, it should be easy to enable more bandwidth, and then reduce usage once it passes. The fees charged should only reflect actual usage. Unfortunately, some MSPs push the customer into a higher-cost/higher-bandwidth usage tier for the entire month.

The customer experience is also heavily impacted by how the MSP interacts with its customers on an ongoing basis. The chart above shows actions that customers believe are essential to an MSP delivering a positive, ongoing customer experience. Note that there is no single attribute that is most critical. As a result, customers should look for MSPs that can meet a number of demands and are good at more than one thing.

The survey also asked what experiences would most likely cause a customer to change providers. One answer stands out: lack of responsiveness to customer requests or questions. In this case, 84% of respondents say this would make them very likely or likely to change MSPs.

As stated earlier, a strong MSP relationship is really a partnership, and the survey data makes it clear that understanding customer issues is the most important attribute for an MSP.

In addition to a common vision and understanding the organization's unique needs, customers seek an MSP that provides a

Factors contributing to continuation of an MSP partnership

Considered either likely or very likely to contribute to an ongoing partnership

Responsiveness to inquiries, requests, issues	87%
Proactive	84%
First line of contact is empowered to solve problems on the first call	84%
24/7 solution monitoring	84%
Fully manages solutions	82%
Collaborates to develop custom solutions	79%
Deploys solutions quickly	78%
Provides consistent service globally	75%
Regularly provides recommendations for improved price /performance	69%
In-house customer support	66%

high level of services and delivers on its promises—on time.

Finally, one of the most critical processes that will determine the success or failure of the relationship is how the MSP approaches the actual implementation for the client. Not only must this process allow the MSP to better understand the customer, but also the MSP must act on those insights in a very tangible way, proving that the vision has been internalized and is part of the service delivery process.

Summary

Engaging MSPs is now "business critical" for organizations that are trying to transform into digital businesses. This transformation impacts nearly every aspect of IT infrastructure and also calls for new initiatives

such as cloud-powered business analytics, the Internet of Things (IoT), and machine learning-powered business automation. The breadth of needs is substantial, and for many organizations there is just not enough internal IT "bandwidth" to take on all of the different projects.

As an addition to internal IT organizations, MSPs can deliver the new technology services and capabilities required to complete this transformation and stay competitive. Making the right MSP choice is critical to getting the desired outcome. Your organization should seek an MSP that is dedicated to the best possible customer experience, and can deliver on the three key tenets of execution, visibility, and control. The MSP's level of commitment will quickly determine if you've found a true business partner, or just another supplier.

About Masergy

Masergy is a provider of high-performance managed network, cybersecurity, and unified communications solutions for enterprises around the globe. The company is 17 years old, serves customers in 75 countries, and has the largest independent software-defined network in the world.

Masergy provides a legendary customer experience, with a 99% customer retention rate. This commitment to the customer is further demonstrated by an industry best Net Promoter score of 74. The company's MSP solutions include Hybrid Networking, Managed Security, and Cloud Communication Services.

For more information, go to www.masergy.com.