

Exactly What to Ask Before You Sign an IT Contract



Choosing an IT provider is one of the most important technology decisions your business will make. Before you sign a contract, ask these 8 questions. The answers will help you compare providers more fairly, uncover hidden differences, and make a more informed decision.

1 Can you show me charges that are NOT included in my monthly fee?

Ask this:

"Please provide a complete list of anything that could result in an additional charge outside of my monthly agreement, including onsite visits, after-hours support, projects, new employee setup, employee off-boarding, Microsoft 365 administration, training, licensing, and anything else that could appear on an invoice."

Why it matters:

Many IT agreements look affordable until additional charges begin appearing each month. Understanding what's included, and what isn't, helps you compare providers fairly.

-  They provide a complete list quickly.
-  The answer is vague or they tell you "it depends."

2 Can you show me a real invoice?

Ask this:

"Can you show me a redacted invoice from one of your current clients so I can see what a typical month actually looks like?"

Why it matters:

A proposal shows what a provider promises. An invoice shows what clients actually pay.

-  They can produce one.
-  They avoid the request or say they can't.

3 Who will answer my phone when I call for help?

Ask this:

"Will all of my calls be answered by your local employees, an outsourced help desk, or a combination of both? If it's a combination, who answers first?"

Why it matters:

The first person you speak with often determines how quickly your issue is resolved.

-  Clear explanation.
-  They avoid giving a direct answer.

4 What cybersecurity protections are included in your standard service?

Ask this:

"Please provide a list of the cybersecurity tools and services included in your standard monthly agreement."

Why it matters:

Many IT providers advertise cybersecurity, but only include the basics. Necessary protections may be optional add-ons, leaving your business less protected than you expected.

-  They clearly explain what is included, what is optional, and why.
-  They use vague terms like "comprehensive security" without listing what's actually included.

5 How do you know my backups will work when I actually need them?

Ask this:

"How long do you retain our backups? How do you test them? When was the last successful restore test performed? If we had a ransomware attack today, how long would it take to recover our business?"

Why it matters:

Backing up data is only half the job. If backups aren't tested regularly, you may not discover a problem until it's too late.

- ✔ They can explain their testing process and recovery expectations with confidence.
- ✘ They only tell you backups are 'running successfully' but can't explain how they're verified.

6 Who will have administrator access to my systems?

Ask this:

"Who will have administrator access to our network, Microsoft 365, environment, servers, firewalls, and backups? What certifications or qualifications do those individuals hold?"

Why it matters:

You're trusting someone with the keys to your business. You should know who has that level of access and whether they're qualified to manage it securely.

- ✔ They are transparent about their team, certifications, and security practices.
- ✘ They only talk about company partnerships or avoid discussing the qualifications of the people actually supporting your business.

82%

of cyber detections in 2025
were free of malware.

That means, **antivirus software**
wouldn't have stopped it.

7 What happens if I want to leave?

Ask this:

"If we choose another provider in the future, how will you help transition our systems, passwords, documentation, and licenses?"

Why it matters:

No business enters a partnership expecting it to end, but circumstances change. A professional IT provider should make the transition process as smooth as possible. Your passwords, documentation, licenses, and data belong to your business - not your IT company.

- ✔ They are willing to work directly with your new provider to ensure a smooth transition and pass off passwords, documentation, licenses, and data.
- ✘ They are vague about the process, mention large fees to release information, say certain documentation is proprietary, or seem defensive when discussing the possibility of your leaving.

8 How will you prove you're delivering what you promised?

Ask this:

"What reports or business reviews will we receive? Will we regularly review ticket trends, cybersecurity risks, system health, strategic recommendations, and technology planning together? Can you give me an example of you being proactive?"

Why it matters:

A good IT provider doesn't disappear after the contract is signed. Regular reporting and business reviews help ensure your technology continues supporting your goals.

- ✔ They have a structured process for ongoing communication and strategic planning.
- ✘ Their only communication is when something breaks or a renewal is due.

