SMB IT CHALLENGE

IMPROVING IT EFFICIENCY, OPTIMIZING IT TIME

Lenovo Premier Support answering the call

technaisle

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SMB IT challenge:

**Improving IT Efficiency, Optimizing IT Time**

Today’s IT dialog is dominated by discussions about optimizing time and improving IT efficiency. The cost of down time, the importance of uptime, and the time-related metrics in service level agreements (SLAs), including response time and mean time to resolve a technical problem are all issues that contribute to business growth, reducing costs and improving employee productivity.

Specifically, IT staff within SMB organizations need to ensure that scarce internal resources are able to deliver IT efficiently: supporting innovation and transformation while responding immediately and effectively to crises.

A recent study by global SMB IT research firm Techaisle found that maintenance and support consume 77% of SMB IT staff time, leaving only 23% of time on transformation initiatives. Nearly half of maintenance and support cycles are dedicated to PCs, making it difficult for staff to respond to issues relating to servers and networks, and software and security systems.

### SMB IT Efficiency is challenged

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<th>IT Expectations</th>
<th>Expected to deliver more with less</th>
<th>Seen as source of innovation, actual is only 26%</th>
<th>Expected to deliver business outcomes faster, actual is 33%</th>
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<td>86% of SMB’s</td>
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<th>Support detracting IT’s efficiencies</th>
<th>Pre-occupied with support &amp; maintenance</th>
<th>Left with little time for innovation</th>
<th>Time is spent on maintenance &amp; support &amp; only 23% on transformative activities</th>
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Challenges in internal PC support

In four out of every five SMBs, IT is consumed with support and maintenance requirements – and in 86% of these firms, this situation is exacerbated by an executive mandate to ‘do more with less’ – more demands on IT, less budget/staff to respond to pressing user needs. The result is a mismatch between expectation and experience: IT is seen as a potential source of innovation in 85% of SMBs, but is an actual source of new capabilities in just 26% of these businesses. IT is expected to improve the pace of business in nearly 80% of SMBs, but only delivers more rapid outcomes in 33% of small and midmarket organizations.

PC-related issues account for nearly half of SMB IT support requirements, and are all or part of the workloads of 74% of small business and 49% of midmarket IT staff members. More importantly, though, PC maintenance issues have a significant impact on SMB business success: 60% of SMBs report that PC downtime increases operational costs, and 59% state that PC downtime decreases employee productivity.

Taken together, these statistics indicate that more than one in every four SMB IT staff hours is consumed by basic PC-related maintenance tasks – reducing the opportunity for IT to contribute to other business and IT priorities.

Challenges in internal PC support

Virtually all SMBs experience issues in the process of supporting PCs. Two-thirds of midsized and 59% of small businesses state that lack of time and an overloaded IT agenda makes PC support difficult. Compounding the lack of time is the fact that more than half of SMBs state that they do not always have the right skills to correctly identify problems and deliver a satisfactory solution. Approximately 40% of SMBs are unable to provide adequate proactive maintenance, and more than one-third of small businesses and over 20% of midmarket firms state that their response/resolution time for PC problems is unacceptable.

Approximately three quarters of SMB IT professionals believe that external PC support improves employee productivity, and more than half see third party PC support as a key to freeing up IT staff to focus on initiatives that will expand business capabilities.

Key aspects of external PC support

The Techaisle research finds that there are some key expectations that SMBs have from their PC OEMs or other third-party PC support services. Nine different services are rated as at least a 4.0 (on a scale of 1-5) in terms of importance to an SMB organization, and in each case, more than 70% of SMB IT professionals believe that the service is “very important” or “important” to their organizations.
The benefits obtained from external PC support services start with the initial trouble ticket: 80% of respondents state that obtaining in-depth technical support from knowledgeable agents is an important/very important aspect of the service relationship. More than three-quarters of research respondents also cite improved rate of first-time fix, proactive monitoring and onsite support are essential to driving improved business and IT productivity within their organizations.

**SMB: Very Important + Important PC support services**

- **80%** In-depth technical support with knowledgeable support agents
- **78%** Improved rate of first time-fix
- **77%** Proactive monitoring alerts system, health checks, automated diagnostic
- **76%** Onsite labor support, it required & parts dispatch prioritization
- **75%** Unscripted trouble shooting
- **74%** A single point of contact for end-to-end case management
- **74%** Support for 3rd party software (adobe, microsoft, intuit)
- **73%** Enhanced reporting including incident tracking, dispatch reporting
- **72%** Every support case handled by the same tech agent, from start to finish
- **68%** Dedicated phone line with no phone free menus to navigate

One of the most interesting reported advantages of third-party PC support is that it “reduces the cost of IT,” which is highlighted as a benefit of external PC management by 47% of midmarket firms and 41% of small businesses. The same Techaisle survey found that cost can be a major obstacle for SMBs, with more than 65% stating that PC support services are “expensive.” These findings aren’t really at
odds with each other – the data suggests instead that no approach to PC support is without cost. The expense associated with external service providers is visible, but (according to the research) it is offset by the benefits gained from access to dedicated PC specialists. The internal costs, while opaque, are substantial: PC-related maintenance consumes about 25% of the typical SMB’s IT resources, and SMBs can face additional lost time downside due to reduced employee productivity and constraints on technology-dependent new business initiatives that are delayed by a lack of available IT cycles.

Lenovo Premier support addresses the key asks of SMBs for outsourced PC support.

**IT Expectations**

1. In-depth technical support with knowledgeable support agents
2. Online labor support, if required & parts dispatch prioritization
3. Unscripted troubleshooting
4. A single point of contact for end-to-end case management
5. Support for 3rd party software (Adobe, Microsoft, Intuit)
6. Enhanced reporting including incident tracking, dispatch reporting
7. Every support case handled by the same tech agent from start to finish
8. Dedicated phone line with no phone tree menus to navigate
The key to IT operational efficiency: Effective internal management of external PC support services

An important first step in achieving optimal outcomes from a PC support contract is building an understanding of how a supplier can best support SMB business and technical objectives. Techaisle’s research highlights a list of priority outcomes that SMB IT leaders can use to plot the best path to deploying PC support services within their organizations.

• Minimize downtime and workforce productivity interruptions: working with an external supplier, SMB IT managers can align SLAs and internal resources to keep users productive by making sure that their devices are available.

• Focus on highest-value initiatives: Beyond making sure that each business user is productive, the key advantage of outsourcing some portion of PC support lies in increasing the IT staff resources available for high-value transformative initiatives. SMBs are relying on IT to support innovation and to accelerate business cycles. It’s essential that the IT function has the capacity needed to work with business peers to deliver on these requirements.

These objectives illustrate the ways that SMB IT managers can use an external PC support service to drive better productivity within the IT department and across the entire organization. Remedial PC maintenance and system failure are major sources of ‘lost time’ incidents that can impede SMB business success. By working with a PC OEM SMBs can reduce time lost to PC outages, and focus on key objectives – increased productivity and better collaboration on transformative projects – that deliver accelerated business success.