



The negative impact on your business of DIY IT



The negative impact of DIY IT on your business and it's growth



My name is Chris Palmer and I am the Managing Director of AnyTech Solutions.

We have two sides to the business: on one side we specialise in business IT Support and under that banner offer solutions-based support, hardware support and software solutions. On the other side we offer specialist repairs of electronic hardware, predominantly tablet computing and mobile devices. Our business clients range from owner managed SMEs right through to the public sector where we specialise in patient computer services for the NHS. Within the public sector we specialise in computing for psychotherapy wards which includes Wi-Fi hotspots, secure bespoke computer cabinets, vandal-proof workstations and internet security.

My original training was in the graphic design and production field, which early in my career lead to production management, studio management, logistics and finally directorships at operational level. During my varied past I have been exposed to many types of businesses with their own very individual problems. The effect of this experience has given me the ability to look at a business objectively and quite quickly see the most efficient way for the staff in that business to work. Once we have an idea of your work path we can suggest either small changes to your IT footprint or ways to dramatically simplify it. In both instances we are focused on the end user experience and business efficiency which in turn will lead to your business being more profitable.

For as long as I can remember I have had a keen interest in computing, from programming my own systems to specialising in computer graphics at art school. I have always enjoyed working with computers and making them do what I wanted them to and I still get the same amount of thrill when we do the same for others – it's just on a grander scale now.

The last post I held before starting my own business was working for a national media-space owner where I was responsible to the board, my remit being production processes, outdoor team logistics, sales support and IT provision.

Due to my varied experience I am able to dovetail my commercial marketing and design background with my thorough understanding of IT. This enables me to vision solutions that will directly impact your staff and business with immediate positive effect.



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You have built your business from inception and you have always managed your own IT, so far it has worked for you and for that I congratulate you - but that's where it ends.

When there were two of you things were easy, little issues were Googled away and you continued to work effectively.

Now things are different.

There are no longer just a few of you – your business has grown and there are now many of you placing an increased strain on your IT infrastructure. Not only are you struggling to be reactive and stay on top of your increasing IT issues as they arise you are not able to be proactive in order for your business to benefit from up to date solutions and services.

Due to DIY IT these are the issues affecting your business:

- The person who used to keep the IT running cannot now handle the increased requests
- This same person is now unable to do their own main job function and this has a negative impact on them
- The IT infrastructure is struggling due to increased load and it is now affecting business growth and profitability
- You're concerned about charges for external help
- The cost to the business by failing IT standards is likely to be much more than the external help
- Your PAYG external help doesn't always show up – no service level guarantee

You need a solution and quickly in order to halt the lost progress of your business.

IT is now intertwined in every aspect of the business and no more so than small businesses of 250 staff or less. Information Technology has been a huge boost for small businesses in that it has allowed them to compete in a much bigger global market. To do so the IT system must work seamlessly. Unless it all works together the system can fall apart.

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Why not have someone part time?

Part-time IT staff can be a useful stop gap between your main staff being off for various reasons but can it really be a solution for daily IT support?

How can you guarantee to your staff that when they need help it will be available to them, when it isn't how does this affect moral?

Without a service level agreement binding the supplier to be available by a certain time there is no guarantee that you will get the help that you need – when you need it.

If this support cannot be relied upon what are the likely costs when your staff cannot work due to failing IT hardware or software?

How many hours of IT downtime did your business experience last year?

The average business suffers about 14 hours of IT downtime per year. Regardless of whether you experienced more or less, I'm very sure that there was a negative financial impact associated with each downtime event.

According to surveys, small enterprises lost, on average, more than £30,000.00 in revenue due to IT failures each year, while midsize companies lost more than £55000.00 and large companies lost more than £500,000.00.

Those numbers may shock or seem unrealistic but let's think this through. How much are you paying idle employees? Did you pay overtime to make up for the lost productivity? How much revenue did you lose that could have been generated? Did you incur late delivery charges? Did a loss of customer goodwill erode your ongoing revenue stream? Did you need to plan and execute campaigns to explain and apologise for the outage?

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Here's a simple calculation that you can do yourself to get some idea of what you lose when you have an outage that stops your business functioning.

LABOUR COST = P x E x R x H

P = number of people affected

E = average percentage they are affected

R = average employee cost per hour

H = number of hours of outage

LOST REVENUE = (GR/TH) x I x H

GR = gross yearly revenues

TH = total yearly business hour

I = percentage impact (A high percentage would mean you can't complete any transactions, will lose clients, and have a PR nightmare)

H = number of hours of outage

Finally, to calculate the expected annual cost, multiply this number by the number of expected annual hours of outage.

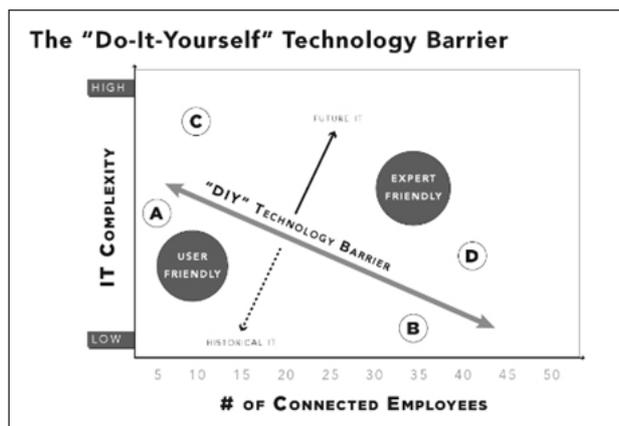
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With so many options where do you start?

So with the never ending IT options, systems, hardware and software in the market and your lack of internal expertise – how do you create an IT strategy for the next stage of your business growth?

You need to find an IT expert and this expert must understand your business and its goals. Only by understanding your business can the expert tune solutions that will dovetail easily and seamlessly into your business with little change management required.

Imagine performing your own plumbing, electrics and building maintenance – you most likely will end up with more of a mess than you started out with, IT is no different. Sure, there are many DIY point and click solutions out there and many of them are good but for a business that is no longer a start up the risks involved in choosing the wrong service or piece of hardware increase with the size of the business.



Putting my point in graphical terms above you will see that as the business grows exponentially in number of personnel – the DIY IT effect has a negative impact on the business. As seats increase the user friendly experience is less satisfying.

In the user friendly zone, (A) represents medium complexity and a lower number of users which lends itself to DIY support. Similarly, (B) represents more users but low system complexity and is therefore also in the DIY User Friendly Zone. In the Expert Friendly Zone, (C) indicates a small number of users but high system complexity and likewise (D) represents medium complexity and a large number of users. Both (C) and (D) represent sufficient challenges to the lay person or someone not sufficiently skilled in technology.

Ultimately those businesses in (A) and (B) may not be exploiting the full potential of the business nor the skillsets of the staff. Stagnating.

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Making Sense of it all

When you find yourself with too many choices and not enough deep understanding of the toolsets, you somehow have to find your way to a solution. Which tools do you choose? How do you support all of this, and how do you make sure it all works, day in day out? If you think you can do it yourself, consider that computing speed doubles every 18 months. With increases in computer processor power also comes a plethora of advances in related software and hardware systems. You can try to learn it yourself or use a part time person that you use ad hoc but doesn't your business deserve better care? The wrong implementation can cost your business much more than you will ever have saved by using the DIY approach.

Every technology that is installed in a business ultimately needs to be managed and supported. If you neglect your health you'll pay a price down the road.

Likewise, those that neglect their investment in technology will ultimately pay a high price in repairs, downtime, security breaches, and other failures – not to mention the impact it will have on staff morale.

The single most important part of any business is staff and the effectiveness of those staff members. If they feel that they are constantly being let down by the businesses failing IT they will not tolerate it and some may even leave because of the miserable time they are having. The issue becomes even more critical when the staff is incentivised to sell and rely even more on their IT in order to earn their wage.

Despite obvious obstacles, some small business owners feel they can handle the complexity if they just hire 'my own guy' to stay on-site and deal with the technology on a full-time basis. Often people say they feel more comfortable knowing their 'IT guy is just down the walkway'. If one of those describes you, and you are not convinced that outsourcing is the right solution for your growing business, there are a couple of things you need to consider.



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Finding qualified, affordable staff

Probably the biggest difficulty in creating an IT department – for any size business – is finding the right people. This is very challenging even for IT companies, and at AnyTech Solutions we are constantly searching for great talent. For most businesses, recruiting people with serious technical skill sets is too difficult. First, how do you know what to look for? Can you read an IT CV and understand all the little technical differences? Do you need a network architect, a systems engineer, an operating systems guru, a cloud consultant, or perhaps a security expert?

Don't take it personally, but to a successful IT person, your business is probably, well, boring. An in-house IT professional's primary job is to keep things running well and fix things when they are not functioning correctly. After that happens, and your technology is running smoothly and there are no apparent issues, where is the next challenge?

Let's say however that everything I've mentioned doesn't apply to you and you have managed to find that special guy that does a fantastic job and isn't bored with routine.

What happens when they are ill? On holiday? What happens when they get into trouble and need help? Where can they go?

These are some of the reasons that most small businesses will not be able to attract, afford and keep really good IT staff. That really is the nail in the coffin for the fool's errand of building, staffing, and managing an internal IT department at a small business.

In summary, most people who run their own business will be far better off concentrating on running and growing their business, not trying to run their IT networks.

So where do you go from here?

Quite simple, if some of what I have said makes sense to you and your business you can benefit by taking advantage of a free network assessment that we are able to offer you. We will take a look at your hardware and give you an idea of what it would cost to take away the pain of trying to do it yourself.

**Call 01202 460279
and ask for me Chris Palmer**

