KEY ISSUES FOR ORGANISATIONS WITHOUT IN-HOUSE IT EXPERTISE

THE CHALLENGE

All SMEs and smaller charities rely to an increasing extent on maintaining digital records and systems, typically email and data storage. The computers we use every day to create these files and the devices needed to store them have become everyday tools that we all now take for granted. For somebody working in a SOHO (Small Office Home Office) environment it is relatively easy to maintain systems and records, without undue difficulty. However, as an organisation grows and additional staff are taken on, the different team members will need to be able to share and exchange information. Whether this is with somebody in the same physical location or with remote co-workers, in a safe, managed, and secure manner.

For this sharing to run smoothly the different machines and devices have to be able to communicate securely and robustly. This means that constant care has to be taken to ensure that networks are set up and configured correctly. In addition, where a program such as Microsoft Office 365 is the default for all team members, it is important that all users are upgraded to the same, latest version to reduce incompatibility issues. All too often when a new person joins the team this basic housekeeping is overlooked, whether through poor communication with current IT providers or sheer expediency and/or ignorance. Whilst this may not create issues in the near term, almost without exception problems will arise at a later date when the next person joins or a new device is added to the network.

A House of Commons briefing paper on business statistics published in December 2017 reported that there were 5.7 million businesses in the UK. Of these over 99% were classified as SMEs. Within the SME sector 5.5 million are described as micro businesses, employing fewer than 9 people. On the assumption that few if any businesses of this size have a budget for in house IT, this suggests that over 95% of UK businesses do not have ready access to in-house IT support.

THE PROBLEM

When an organisation first looks for external IT support and advice the person given the task of solving the problem will almost certainly not fully understand the underlying issues. This is scarcely surprising since we cannot 'see' what is going wrong and in any event the connectivity requirements behind an apparently simple configuration of computers, routers and servers can be extremely complex. A request to a potential IT support company might typically be along the lines of "…our emails won't synchronise properly…" or "…the network keeps crashing whenever we try to print a document from this particular laptop…". All too often the response, instead of being a few sentences in plain English, comes back in the form of a very long and complex series of 'explanations and suggested next steps' that will almost inevitably be expensive and require the agreement of an obligatory 12 month contract prior to any remedial work being done. If you are lucky the immediate problem will be solved and your organisation will receive clear, sensible and reliable support over the course of that contract. On the other hand, it is equally likely that something else goes wrong a few months later that will require further investigation by the IT support team and, who knows, yet more investment in equipment and/or additional software.

THE VISION

As more and more organisations worldwide migrate towards a relatively small number of core software applications, such as Microsoft Office 365, and hardware become increasingly generic, we believe that IT should be seen as a simple utility like water and electricity - Inherently reliable and always ON.

We also believe that all IT systems and solutions should be inherently flexible, so they can grow and be adapted as the organisation changes over time.

Not only this, but we believe in active intervention and rationalisation. Too many times we see clients with different versions of the same software, or running programs with known bugs. This needs to be stopped ASAP, and a path forward discussed during the onboarding process. Everyone needs to be brought up to the same level of IT. This standardisation procedure means we will eradicate some of the bugs in the process, and that future bugs are more readily fixable.

THE SOLUTION

We believe the vast majority of problems relating to IT issues are a clear result of poor/incorrect setup from the beginning, and a break-fix attitude towards inherent issues. As additional staff and software systems are added to an organisation the applications become increasingly unreliable as conflicts between them multiply - typically because different people are using different versions of an application such as Office 365 that become incompatible with other aspects of the overall operations.

The first step is to carry out an audit of current requirements and issues, to establish where the

most important pain points lie. This needs to be followed closely by a clear setting out of the likely future requirements over the next 12-18 months. We achieve both of these aims through our comprehensive IT Strategy Review.

We then take the time to configure all machines and related devices so as to create a robust, scaleable framework within which the organisation can operate and grow with confidence. For customers wishing to have the comfort of continuing protection and support we offer our 24/7/365 monitoring service.

MAKING IT SIMPLE

OUR APPROACH

At Bongo IT, we believe that the creation of any long term solution lies in offering a set of core services; principally broadband, email, telephony, hardware supply, website maintenance and general IT Support - all through a simple menu based approach.

This has the major advantage of being immediately **understandable** to all customers. It has the added advantage of allowing us to be **flexible** in providing the services only as and when they are required.