

Solutions & Success
The Inside Story

GiaSpace Delivers The Transparent IT Support MDS Builders Needs

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GIASPACE

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Originally founded in January 1989, since then the company has rapidly grown, with headquarters in Boca Raton and a network of offices in Austin, Texas, and Cleveland, Ohio.

Their office relies on a robust and complex IT environment, with three mirrored servers that are accessed regularly by their staff of 45 employees. In order to keep their IT systems optimized and secure, MDS Builders relies on GiaSpace.

MDS Builders Was Relying On Limited IT Support

"It was a one-man operation," says David, CFO, MDS Builders. *"There was no backup to call."*

Prior to working with GiaSpace, MDS Builders had relied on an independent IT professional to handle their support needs. It was a cost-effective arrangement that worked for the company for a time.

When he was available, they were generally satisfied with the service this IT professional provided. The problem is that he wasn't always available, which often meant having to wait for a resolution from time to time.

This is a key issue with independent IT support providers. No matter how good they may be at their job, they're just one person. Their lack of availability can lead to serious issues...

You Need An IT Team, Not An IT Guy

One of the most common ways that businesses control their expenses is with their IT support. While relying on unofficial IT support is undoubtedly cost-effective, it's unlikely to deliver the quality of service and level of responsiveness that a growing business needs.

The question is: have you grown to the point where your "IT guy" can no longer meet your needs? Maybe these four indicators ring a bell...

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You Can't Work

Whether it's a slow server that won't let you access shared company files or a buggy email client that leaves you unsure whether your messages are actually being sent, when your computers aren't working, you're not working.

It's Affecting Customer Satisfaction

If you can't work as quickly or as effectively as you should be, it's only a matter of time before that affects your customers' experience.

You're Paying For Short-Term Fixes

Poorly maintained computers will often need quick fixes. The problem is that while the hardware may work when you get it back from them, there's no guarantee it'll last for long.

You're Not Getting A Response

A key oversight in the ad-hoc IT support process is how you make a support request in the first place. Does your IT guy have a dedicated phone line for support requests? Probably not.

It's more like that you get their cell phone voicemail when you call. It's not likely that they have an online ticketing portal, Live support chat, or even a dedicated email either.

Further Delays

With this type of support, it could take days to fix your problem—in the meantime, your employees won't have access to the data they need to continue working. You're simply losing money by the minute.

All of these issues lead to a concept that those in the IT industry call "firefighting". That is, instead of proactively providing support and developing long-term strategy, the IT guy is always busy running from fire to fire.

They may be able to address emergencies for the most part, but that's all they're able to do. They don't have time for optimization, strategy or development.

"One person handling it all was not good," says David. "If something happened to him, we would have been offline for a while."

David and the MDS Builders team knew that if this IT professional took a vacation, got sick, or was unavailable for another reason, it could lead to a lot of downtime for the company. That's why they started looking into their options for more extensive IT services...

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MDS Builders Needed More Comprehensive IT Support

As accustomed as MDS Builders was to this independent IT support provider's service model, they knew they needed more from him. They urged him to hire a team and expand his capabilities, but he insisted that his approach was sufficient for their IT needs, and kept their costs as low as possible.

Eventually, this arrangement led to critical issues. Unbeknownst to MDS Builders, their systems were dangerously out of date, lacked standard security measures, and did not have a robust data backup system in place.

"There were a lot of 'band-aids' in place," says David.

When a malware attack infected their servers, MDS Builders lost critical business data. Despite being told that their IT needs were being covered, their IT professional was unable to secure their systems and protect their data.

Are You Sure Your IT Guy Is Doing Their Job?

No matter how great your current IT support may be, it's vital that you double-check and verify what you're being told from time to time. You have to be confident that you're protected in the event that something happens or if your IT support will be unavailable for a short period of time

You should always have verifiable answers to the following questions...

What's The State Of The Hardware?

An analysis of all of the technology at your business will help to ensure it's all properly installed, effectively maintained, and well within its lifespan. This may sound simple, but that's not always the case.

Is The Software Up To Date?

Updates are important because they correct existing errors and mistakes in software, and patch potential flaws that could leave it vulnerable to security threats.

What Is The Status Of Licenses And Warranties?

Depending on the type of business, there may be specific software needed for daily operations. It could be Quickbooks for accounting and bookkeeping or Oracle Micros for restaurant Point of Sales, but the bottom line is that if you need it to get work done, you should know whether you can actually use it.

See, while the program may be installed on the hardware you have, that doesn't mean that the licenses originally purchased for it won't have expired.

Are There Any Security Measures In Place?

The key here will be to determine whether there's just standard, baked-in security in place, or actual additional software, such as:

- Firewalls
- Anti-virus
- Anti-malware
- Password managers
- Multi-factor Authentication

Are There Backups And Contingencies In Place?

What the backup plan will really look like could vary. It could be a simple external hard drive that gets updated on a daily or weekly basis. You need to be sure you have a plan in place so that you can restore lost data at a moment's notice.



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For All These Reasons, MDS Builders Called GiaSpace

Fortunately for MDS Builders, they didn't have to go far to find a more capable IT support provider. David and GiaSpace shared a mutual client who had been satisfied with our service for years.

"He was very happy with them," says David. "He had nothing but good things to say."

David got in touch with us to inquire about how we could help MDS Builders. Our team assessed the company's IT environment at the time and got to know how they relied on their IT. We explained what needed to be done to improve performance and secure their data.

"I really like the business model GiaSpace has," says David.

A key factor in why David decided to hire us was the fact that we were upfront about the costs involved in upgrading their IT systems. David was used to IT companies "nickel-and-diming" him; quoting one initial cost, and then adding additional charges down the line...

MDS Builders Hired GiaSpace For Our Transparent IT Services

As in any business relationship, a key downside to look out for is the possibility of hidden fees. The wrong IT company will nickel and dime you for onsite visits and other specific services if you're not careful.

The fact is that any IT company worth working with will provide transparent pricing. They will not send unauthorized invoices or statements. In your contract, it will state your monthly charges. It will also list what is and is not covered. That billing enables you to plan your expenditures to ensure they account for essential services.

An IT company's fees can be an issue if:

- They send unexpected bills, such as charges for services beyond your arrangement.
- You received an invoice for services not performed or authorized.

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That's why David was so careful in selecting an IT company. He wanted to know the full cost of proper IT management upfront.

Fortunately for MDS Builders, this is precisely how we conduct ourselves with clients. We take pride in communicating openly about the financial realities of major IT upgrades which, while necessary, aren't always cheap.

For example, one of the first projects we undertook for MDS Builders was the overhaul of their extremely out-of-date IT systems...

MDS Builders' IT Environment Was Past “End of Life”

Do you have old technology that needs to be replaced?

Sticking with outdated hardware and software may save you some money in your IT budget, but its lack of functionality and security can slow down your business and put you at risk. This was the case for MDS Builders.

Their previous IT support provider insisted their hardware was functional enough, and that their most cost-effective course of action would be to keep using it.

However, this becomes very dangerous once hardware and software reaches “end of life”. This is the point at which the developers of the technology no longer provide support updates.

This means no more bug fixes or security updates for the hardware or software—it's the end of support delivered by the manufacturer. Over time, there will be a loss of usability and increased vulnerability. While it may work fine right now, it won't be long before it becomes a problem.

That said, it's not uncommon to procrastinate on technology upgrades. The process can be expensive and complicated, but the fact is that there comes a point in the technology life cycle when failing to upgrade can present a number of serious concerns.

As important as cost control is, it is equally important for owners and managers to ensure they're maintaining their competitive edge, using secure technology, and working as efficiently and effectively as possible.

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Without support, security updates, and bug patches, users open themselves up to a number of risks:

- Malware infection
- Expired online banking protections
- Out of date anti-virus
- Exposed private data

For all these reasons, we had to completely overhaul BD's environment...

GiaSpace Seamlessly Upgraded MDS Builders' Systems

Our first project with MDS Builders was to replace their out-of-date hardware and software. We took a careful inventory of everything that would need to be replaced and developed a detailed plan and budget for David's review.

Once approved, we carefully removed the unsupported hardware and software, and then installed, configured and deployed their modern counterparts. Every step of the way we kept David and the MDS Builders team up to date and were careful to work within the budget we had established.

"GiaSpace has done exactly what they said they would do," says David. "I got no surprises on implementation."

It's this sort of transparent and accurate service that David was looking for. We told him how much the project would cost and how long it would take to complete, and we stayed true to our word.

Before GiaSpace, MDS Builders Couldn't Qualify For Cyber Insurance

In addition to updating MDS Builders' systems, we also worked quickly to remediate their cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

Their previous IT support provider had been unable to properly secure their systems, which led to malware infections, data loss, and problems with cybersecurity insurance. This is another common problem with limited IT support arrangements.

Cybersecurity expertise is in high demand these days. As cybercrime continues to grow, and as businesses become more and more digital in their operations, cybersecurity becomes a much more critical priority. However, there's only so much cybersecurity talent available to hire.

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It's nearly impossible for a lone IT support provider to properly address a company's many cybersecurity needs. When David attempted to get a cyber insurance policy for MDS Builders, it quickly became clear that they didn't have the necessary cybersecurity standards in place to qualify.

"I went to my IT guy and we couldn't get any answers," says David. "We couldn't even qualify."

Qualifying For Cyber Insurance Is Easier Said Than Done

The fact is that cybersecurity insurance won't protect you if your cybersecurity standards aren't up to par.

The somewhat inevitable nature of modern cybercrime has led businesses to consider cybersecurity insurance as a final layer of reassuring protection.

In fact, it's becoming more and more necessary, as many insurance providers have begun drawing a clear line between normally covered losses, and those incurred by cybercrime-related events. That means that if your cybersecurity doesn't meet the standards of your insurance provider, you may not be as well covered as you think.

Cyber insurance carriers are requiring more sophisticated written cyber policies, tools, training, and disaster recovery systems before processing the renewal, and in many cases are also significantly increasing premiums for individual cybersecurity risk items that are not being addressed.

This has nothing to do with whether there has been a claim or not in the past, and everything to do with what steps the applicant must now take to address cyber security risk. All the carriers now have additional forms filled with cybersecurity questions that must be answered accurately before the carrier will renew the policy.

Furthermore, you can be sure that if a claim against the policy is ever submitted, the carrier will check the answers provided to determine if there is any way for them to deny coverage.

Questions can include...

1. Does your business have a policy against opening unverified email attachments?
2. Does your business keep malicious and spam emails out of staff inboxes?
3. Does your business use an Endpoint Detection & Response (EDR) solution?
4. Does your business use multi-factor authentication (MFA) on all user accounts?
5. Does your business test cybersecurity standards with regular vulnerability scans?

And that's just a few of the dozens that usually show up on the questionnaire. It's these types of questions that MDS Builders' previous IT support provider couldn't answer.

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GiaSpace Got MDS Builders The Cyber Insurance Policy They Wanted

Fortunately for MDS Builders, we were able to both remediate their cybersecurity issues and manage their cyber insurance audit process.

We managed the questionnaire on their behalf, identifying any areas that require changes in order to help them qualify for a policy. We also made modifications and changes in order to keep the cost as little as possible.

Our team provides ongoing cybersecurity and IT management services for MDS Builders in order to keep them secure and properly manage contingencies like cyber insurance.

"They did everything they said they were going to do and I got no surprises," says David.

With GiaSpace, MDS Builders Has Everything They Need

"Now we're up to date on everything, we have backups, and we've got everything we need," says David.

Working with GiaSpace, the MDS Builders staff is confident they made the right choice this time. They now have an IT partner that directly manages everything IT-related in their business, from dental software to third-party tech vendors to ongoing projects.

It's this quality of support that allows the MDS Builders staff to focus on delivering the best possible experience for their patients. They don't have to worry about their IT—they can trust that GiaSpace is taking care of it.

"I really do like their business model," says David. *"They're different from most IT companies."*

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