



What is the Proactive Managed IT Difference?

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Introduction

Doing more with less is an imperative for every business to be successful in order to keep costs down, to remain competitive, and because it is not always possible to find enough of the right people to fill positions.

Technology holds the promise of helping you get there but most businesses never obtain it for two reasons.

- 90% of technology approaches are reactive only focused on keeping the day to day running
- IT is thought of as G&A not a functional area so it is treated like an expense and put under finance to be cost controlled

In addition if your IT group isn't doing everything it should to make your company cybersecure, you are inadvertently putting the future of your business at risk.

Learn

What your IT should be doing to help create a secure, predictable platform for you to scale your business more easily and profitably.

- What good managed IT support looks like
- The difference between reactive and proactive IT
- How to implement IT strategy that drives business growth
- How to managed IT to metrics.

Whether your skeptical if your current technology plan can support your business plan, feeling like IT costs too much for what they get, or just wanting to make sure you are not missing something, I wrote this eBook to help you.

Sam Bloedow

Sam Bloedow (Founder and CEO of Thriveon)

About The Author



Trusting your business can run smoothly with technology seems impossible when your current IT provider is slow to respond and the guidance is reactive. An IT strategy needs to be effective, support growth, and help get your business where it needs to be.

At Thriveon, we believe current IT methods aren't good enough—period. Your managed IT provider should be doing more than just patching issues and managing the day-to-day. They should be proactively preventing issues altogether, before they disrupt your people, and guiding you on the changes to make your business more efficient.

Back in 2005, your struggles were our struggles. We knew we needed a different solution, and so we built one. For the last 15 years, we've deployed an IT approach that supports and guides your business's entire technology spend, including software, hardware, and services so your business can do more with less. We help align your company to best practice standards with a 500-point inspection, reducing security issues and vulnerabilities by 90%, and proactively eliminating risks before they become a problem. It's time for a solid IT strategy to support your business growth and enable you to scale your business the right way.

- CHAPTER 1 -

What is Managed IT Services?

What is Managed IT Services?

Managed IT services is the [outsourcing of the IT function of a business to an external firm who can provide better results for less annual cost](#) than the business could internally. While at first glance the definition looks pretty concise it leaves room for interpretation by the managed IT service provider and so there is a vast delta in the deliverables and results provided within managed IT services.

The IT function needs to consist of several different roles:

- Support to get users back working when there are issues.
- Management to monitor the network for issues and implement patches to help protect it.
- Proactive audit and alignment to best practices to prevent issues from arising.
- Guidance and direction on an IT plan and budget for what to do next to help your business do more with less.

Results from managed IT:

- Improved response time
- Fewer issues, clearer guidance
- Lower risk
- Greater operational efficiency
- Increased staff productivity.

While less annual costs doesn't always mean it costs less than what you are spending today, in fact it may cost more. [The real annual costs savings are realized in the benefits](#) of the results above. In fact managed IT services, when executed properly, should cover its entire cost within the first 12 months.

The importance of managed IT services

By outsourcing to a managed IT service provider, companies can focus 100% of their time on the things that matter most to their business: growing revenue and delivering their service/product.

[Managed IT service providers](#) focus 100% of their time on delivering the same result across all their clients in a repeatable way. In order to do so they create a disciplined process, best practices, and roles to fulfill all the duties required. In this way costs that would otherwise need to be burdened by each company can be spread across all companies.

Issues affecting one client can be developed into best practices which are implemented across all companies to prevent the issue from ever happening. Likewise workflow and reporting inefficiencies solved once can be replicated across all clients instead of each client needing to uniquely solve on their own through trial and error.

Types of managed IT services

When we boil it down there are really two types of managed IT services: reactive and proactive.

With reactive managed IT services, the provider focuses on keeping the day-to-day running whether that be on premise, in the cloud, or a combination.

In contrast, proactive managed IT services the provider focuses on helping the business run more efficiently, while it still keeps the day-to-day running, the service brings you into alignment to best practices and guides your entire technology spend which **eliminates issues before they start and allows your business to do more with less**. In this way the proactive provider helps you with all things technology including are we using the right business applications, paying too much for them or not getting the results we should.

- CHAPTER 6 -

What is the Proactive Managed IT difference?

What is the Proactive Managed IT Difference?

Not all IT is created equal. Most local Minnesota IT firms are reactive – meaning they respond to your support tickets and just keep your business' IT afloat. This causes frustratingly long wait times for support and continual IT issues to crop up. However, at Thriveon, we approach IT in a different way. We partner alongside your business strategy to ensure the technology you're investing in is working for you, eliminating the need for these astronomical amounts of support tickets in the first place. We think a zero-response time is the best response time because there are no more frustrating IT issues.

So, what is the Proactive Managed IT Difference?

An IT strategy exists

For starters, IT is considered in the strategic plan of the business. The difference between a tactical and strategic IT approach is that IT is included your business plan. With a strategic approach to IT, it is viewed as an asset with a known Return on Investment. IT is able to focus on aligning to security and productivity best practices. What exactly is an IT strategy?

IT strategy is a way to guide decision making about technology that unleashes benefits that ultimately help the company succeed. IT strategy is a way to guide decision making about technology that unleashes benefits that ultimately help your company succeed.

[Get the FREE IT Strategy Quick Start Guide](#)

Technology is aligned uniquely to your company

The significant investments you make in IT are strategically aligned to serve each of your departments and your organization as a whole. Technology changes are planned, budgeted for and aligned with the company's long-term planning. Gone are the days where your systems don't talk to each other. We can recommend the best and brightest technologies for your industry, and work to integrate them seamlessly into your unique business needs. We also support any system and take the extra steps to call the 3rd party on your behalf when something isn't going quite right. Strategically aligning your systems save you time and money. On average, with the Microsoft Modern Workplace, 5 hours a week per computer user is saved in staff time. This level of productivity adds up for efficiencies and employee satisfaction.

Dedicated IT Expert

Strategically aligning best practices and continual audits of your technology require a dedicated professional to lead the charge. With Thriveon's Managed IT services, a dedicated Fractional CIO leads the team to success in the IT strategy and aligning to over 500 IT best practices.

Bring your organization into a modern workplace and discover the proactive managed IT difference. Give us a call or [schedule a meeting](#) to learn more.





- CHAPTER 2 -

Every Business Leader's Dream: Safe, Stable, Secure Technology

Dream of the day when...

Imagine a day with zero tech issues. Imagine a week, a month, a year!

That would be unheard of, right? It doesn't have to be. You no longer have to dream of a world with low to no technology issues with a [Proactive Managed Services IT approach](#). Get your technology to work for you once and for all.

Proactive IT Services means we actively work to get your technology investments in the best shape of their lives and consistently monitor your team's entire tech stack, from Microsoft to Hubspot, never tiring to ensure your solutions are stable, safe and secure.



What does Stable Technology look like?

The ability to go to sleep at night blissfully dreaming happy thoughts and no more technology nightmares, knowing that your IT provider has it covered. The dream of having stable technology is when your work is done seamlessly without interruption and when you do not even notice your technology in the first place; it just works. It is meant to support and enhance your work, and not cause constant frustrations and roadblocks to get your work done.

What does Safe Technology feel like?

The peace of mind that comes with keeping your technology safe comes with educating and training your team on the current vulnerabilities that exist and mitigating any unsafe practices. These can include clicking on links and attachments from unknown email addresses and otherwise engaging with suspicious albeit sophisticated phishing attempts. You need experts at the helm to keep your investments locked up airtight.

How will you know your Technology is Secure?

Chances are, you may not know it. But you will know it when your technology is unsecure and a cyberattack rears its ugly head. Unfortunately, the less protected you are, the higher the likelihood a security event will occur at some point. Securing your technology through a [technology audit](#) will provide your organization with the knowledge you need to make informed decisions on any susceptibility to a threat. A technology audit is a review of the current state of technology against a known set of best practices.

A Few Best Practices to Get You Started:

Enabling Two-Factor Authentication

By enforcing multifactor authentication, bad actors would need more than your password to access your information. When employees remote into applications a text code should be sent to their mobile device to confirm it is really them logging in. The same thing goes for Office 365 and any other company-protected accounts.

Secure Password Management

The length of time it takes to crack a password grows exponentially with each character added. 9 characters can be cracked in 2 minutes, 10 characters in 2 hours, 11 characters in 6 days and so on. Current security standards recommend 19 characters, and then only having to change once per year.

Limiting Device Permissions

Remove local admin rights on user computers. By removing local admin rights, the risks from clicking on bad links in websites or emails is reduced because the corresponding action of downloading and executing a malicious payload is less likely to be successful.

Backing Data Up Properly & Regularly

Isolate your backups and backup appliance from your network. When a cyber-attack happens, it is designed to run across the entire network in your business. By preventing your network from accessing your backups and backup appliance, you protect yourself because you still have secured data to restore.

The Thrive On IT Process

See our unique business process that goes beyond standard Managed IT Services. With our tried and true [Thrive On IT Process](#), you will not only receive 24/7 IT and 24/7 Management Services, but a dedicated CIO for ongoing strategy and guidance along with proactive auditing and alignment thus reducing your IT issues and security vulnerabilities by 90%.



- CHAPTER 3 -

Technology's Impact on your Strategic Plan

Technology's Impact on Your Strategic Plan

Strategy and planning are vital to running a successful organization, and you're already spending a exorbitant amounts of time and energy on your strategic plan each year. In a recent survey, executives ranked technology as their #1 investment, yet it was listed as #8 priority ranking it below hiring, productivity and execution, financial management, capital/cash management, performance management/HR and employee engagement. (2021 Vistage Quarterly Business Review) It appears that across business executives' focuses, priorities are not entirely aligned with spending.



With IT being ranked as such a low priority, it begs the question “are business owners simply doing IT change projects or are they doing business change projects that leverage technology to create the change desired?”

There should be no such thing as just an IT project. Technology does get old and should be upgraded, but too often money is spent on simply making the old new, when instead intentional business changes that unlock new productivity will allow you to support more revenue per employee.

In a nutshell, focusing IT on creating intentional business change in alignment with the strategic plan should be the goal, not just continually upgrading the old to the new.

Business Approaches to IT

How is IT connected to the strategy of your business? Has IT been enabled to be strategic for you? There are two main approaches to IT, tactical and strategic. They have similar characteristics, but the key differences are determined by the outcome of each. Do we have a tactical or strategic approach to IT today? Here are some characteristics to help you determine which approach you have:

Characteristics of the Tactical approach

- IT is viewed as an expense to cost-control
- IT is overseen by Finance
- IT is consumed fixing and installing things
- Technology changes are ad-hoc or not aligned with the company's long-term plans

Characteristics of the Strategic approach

- IT is viewed as an asset with a known ROI
- The IT leader is a peer on the Executive Team
- IT is focused aligning to security and productivity best practices
- Technology changes are planned, budgeted and align with the company's long-term plans

Which of these two approaches characterizes your current IT strategy? Is IT viewed as an expense to cost control OR IT is viewed as an asset with a known ROI? Is IT overseen by Finance OR is the IT leader a peer on the Executive Team? Is IT consumed with fixing and installing things OR is IT focused aligning to security and productivity best practices? Are Technology changes ad-hoc or not aligned with the company's long-term plans OR are Technology changes planned, budgeted and aligned with the company's long-term plans?

Knowing these fundamental characteristics to the different IT approaches can chart the course down your strategic path, and an IT expert in a Fractional CIO can get you there. If you are not currently implementing IT in your strategy, the Thriveon team supplies a dedicated CIO to you to join your strategic team to guide the process.

[Schedule your free technology audit and IT strategy review](#)

- CHAPTER 4 -

The Hidden Costs of Reactive IT

The Hidden Cost of Reactive IT

You might not realize it, but there are hidden costs in your current IT methods. Whether you have an internal IT person or outsource to a Managed Services provider, if they are not using a proactive approach, you're likely suffering the hidden costs of reactive IT.

For many companies, IT issues cost too much time, energy, and money. This leaves you frustrated that you aren't getting enough value out of your technology. Reactive IT costs your business more than what shows up on the P&L. What if your IT support could make your business more profitable?

Hidden costs to consider when using the traditional IT approach affect the following areas of your business:

Support

Creating work disruptions for your employees causes them to lose valuable time and productivity in their work. Repeat issues and workarounds that go unsolved create frustrated, unproductive employees which costs your business.

Cost of Doing It Yourself

When a company attempts to handle IT on their own, it can mean not getting it right the first time around, which costs you time and money. Decisions made for one department may not be right for other departments or the business as a whole. When department heads are project managing technology projects, it takes away from their day-to-day responsibilities or the project lasts much longer than it needs to because there is too much to handle for someone who is not in IT.

Data Sprawl

The cost of finding, organizing, losing, and keeping unnecessary data can be a headache. It leads to not being able to use the data you have in a productive way.

Unrealized Functionality

If you're not sure of all the functionality in your systems, it can create manual and duplicate entry across departments including having to import and export data and working in spreadsheets to cover the gaps. These archaic methodologies do not have to overtake your people's time and energy in a day. There are better ways to collaborate and automate using technology, and a holistic view of technology can get you there.

Misalignment with the Business

When your technology is not aligned across all departments, business processes take more time from your people and knowledge of the work is lost when people leave. With the proper tech in place, audited and aligned from Thriveon's IT best practices, you'll never pay for technology you don't need, and the technology you do invest in will serve your unique business needs across all departments.

Cyber Attacks

Revenue lost to breaches cleaned up, loss of customer trust and future orders, loss of employee trust and future employment hang in the balance if you do not ensure cybersecurity. Fines, higher insurance premiums, and unplanned technology expenditures can all stack up when you're not sure if you're cybersecure. Mitigate the attacks with an IT expert at the helm proactively ensuring cybersecurity across all platforms.

Most IT providers spend your budget fixing what's broken, installing updates and telling you what to replace. Our approach is different. We will make your IT work for you, rather than against you. In fact, since 2002 we've been using technology to propel businesses forward.



- CHAPTER 5 -

Proactive IT vs. Reactive IT

Proactive IT vs Reactive IT

First, let's start with [defining an IT strategy](#). On the surface it may only seem like a roadmap of IT initiatives and budgets for the next 1-3 years. More importantly an **IT strategy is a comprehensive plan that outlines how technology should be used to meet the goals of the business**. In the section above, we introduced the two categories IT strategies fall into: reactive or proactive.

Now, let's take a closer look at how each differs in approach.

Differences between a proactive IT and reactive IT strategy

In a reactive strategy, IT is viewed as an expense that has minimal returns, so it must be cost controlled and overseen by finance. The business value, keep it running. Software and hardware is replaced on a refresh schedule or after it fails. The internal or outsourced IT group is charged with, you got it—keeping the technology running.



Since IT doesn't have the time or skill to help the business, the burden is on each department head to seek out new technology to help their business unit. While their selections work for them, they often aren't the right change for the whole company or solutions selected aren't enterprise class. Which then takes more time and cost than it should to keep the technology running. There is always too much work to do and so internal groups ask for more people, and external groups become overwhelmed and responsiveness suffers.

In a proactive strategy, [IT is viewed as an asset that has a substantial return](#). It's invested in and often overseen by the Executive Team so it aligns with the company's mission and vision. [The business value helps the business run more efficiently](#), doing more with less.

Software and hardware changes are made based on the hours of time they can save the company each month and are the right long term change for the entire business. The internal or outsourced IT group is charged with not just fixing but preventing issues happening and providing guidance on the technology changes that should be made to make the business more efficient.

The adoption of new technology to help the business is done collaboratively with all department heads: CEO, Sales, Operations, Finance, and IT. Changes happen only after they have been evaluated by all department heads as the right long term change for the whole business and the return on investment has been quantified. Fewer but larger changes are implemented with success, allowing staff to do the same work in less time.

Why a proactive IT approach is needed

Doing more with less is imperative for every business to be successful, to keep costs down, and to remain competitive because it is not always possible to find the right people to fill positions. Technology holds the promise of helping companies get there but most businesses never obtain it for two reasons.

- 90% of technology approaches are reactive only focused on keeping the day to day running.
- IT is thought of as G&A not a functional area so it is treated like an expense and put under finance to be cost controlled.

IT is now a fully functional area that contributes to all other functional areas and requires a proactive approach. There is tactical, operational, and strategic work to be done.

Yet when operating an SMB often there isn't enough room in the budget to bring on all the different people needed to cover 24/7 support, proactive tool management, network administration, system administration, security administration, strategic planning, budgeting, and implementing new innovation. SMB leaders expect those duties and responsibilities to be stretched across a couple team members or a managed service provider—whose programs were never designed to deliver everything needed. This is the main contributing factor to why the IT retention rate of internal people and outsourced providers is just 2.5 years. The net result—as the SMB grows, it does so less profitably.

What a proactive IT approach looks like — from start to implementation

Now let's break down what a proactive IT looks like by diving into support, monitoring, audits, and IT planning.

24/7 support to get users back working when there are issues.

- Help portal (request support, view status, and request a change)
- Self-help center for instant instruction to common questions to keep users working
- Move or Add Changes to management
- Manage technology vendor relationships

24/7 management to monitor the network for issues and implement patches to help protect it.

- Network and performance monitoring and management
- Predictive hardware failure monitoring and management
- Microsoft and 3rd party remote patch/ service pack management and remediation
- Realtime virus, spam, malicious content identification, and protection
- After hours workstation and server optimization

Proactive audit and alignment to best practices to prevent issues from arising.

- Dedicated role and process for developing technology standards
- Continual audit and alignment to standard best practices
- Areas outside of alignment are reviewed for business risk and costs to remediate as part of CIO steering meetings
- Manage firmware and minor application releases
- Documentation: WAN, LAN, Applications, Passwords, Procedures, Remote Access, Virtualization

Guidance and direction on an IT plan and budget to help your business do more with less.

- Named Chief Information Officer
- Monthly steering meetings with your executive team
- Known multi year IT roadmap, productivity initiatives, risk, and budget
- Guidance on all technology: hardware, software, services warranties, versions, and other important parts of proactive IT lifecycle planning and management



Schedule a Consultation

Learn more about the benefits our proactive approach would have in your business.

[Schedule a Consultation](#)