

## Pros & Cons of the 4 Types of Small-Business IT Support Services

URL: <https://smallbusiness.fedex.com/small-business-it-support>

Whether you fancy yourself a computer whiz or feel lucky to just power up your laptop, running your own business means you'll eventually have to find a small-business IT support provider. And just like the businesses they serve, tech support comes in a number of shapes and sizes.

### Which kind of small-business IT support provider do I need?

"As with any other business service, there's no one-size-fits-all small-business IT support approach that works in every situation," according to [Sergey Nosenko](#), President of [Allora Consulting](#), an IT services company in Raleigh, NC. Nosenko is a 16-year veteran of information technology, and studied physics and engineering in addition to computer science.

"It often comes down to simply answering the question, 'What's the problem?' in a given situation," Nosenko notes.

Sometimes you just need someone to remind you to plug in the printer. Other times, you need someone to diagnose a bisync issue with your NAS on a cross-platform network transmogrifier. That's a totally made-up problem (gotcha), but you get the picture: there's a range of solutions for the range of problems you encounter. So let's look at the four types of small-business IT support available.

### Phoning it In: Press 1 for Support

CAN BE IDEAL WHEN:

Issues are simple or when users are fairly tech-savvy.

POTENTIAL DOWNSIDE:

Communication barriers and tech-challenged users.

Small-business IT support via phone is relatively inexpensive and it's usually quickly accessible. But Nosenko is quick to point out that the list of phone support "cons" is hard to overlook.

"When there's a communication barrier," he says, "you have to figure out how to describe the issue so the technician understands. Then he has to explain the solution. That's difficult, even under the best conditions."

Yet, he says, "phone support can still be part of the equation. You just don't want it to be the only part."

### **Onsite Support: The Personal Touch**

#### CAN BE IDEAL WHEN:

You're dealing with hardware issues.

#### POTENTIAL DOWNSIDE:

Relatively expensive and even great response times will be slower than you'd like.

"There's just no substitute for having an expert on-site to diagnose and fix certain IT problems, like those related to audio or printing," Nosenko says. "It's often the only way to solve a small-business IT support issue when the problem is hardware-related."

"You want to get your money's worth, and having human-to-human support gives you the satisfaction of knowing a solution is on the way."

But onsite support isn't without a downside. "Unfortunately, your patience will be tested, even under the best response times. And onsite small-business IT support is pricey because it costs more to provide."

### **Friends from Afar: Remote Support**

#### CAN BE IDEAL WHEN:

You have a quality internet connection and you want a more human touch.

#### POTENTIAL DOWNSIDE:

Doesn't help hardware problems and not very effective when connectivity is dodgy.

When a small-business IT support tech can't be by your side, having him virtually there, via a remote desktop session, can work.

"Sometimes remote support happens simultaneously with a phone call," notes Nosenko, "but it's not necessarily required. It is important to have a good quality internet connection on both sides, however."

Remote support has the advantage of being pretty close to human-to-human support, so you're getting the benefit of your tech's undivided attention, much like you would in person.

"On the other hand," adds Nosenko, "it's not a cure for hardware problems. Remote support can't help much if your laptop won't even boot up."

## **@Your-Own-Pace-Dot-Com: Email or Forum Support**

### CAN BE IDEAL WHEN:

The issues in question aren't terribly urgent and you have time to resolve them.

### POTENTIAL DOWNSIDE:

Not very effective for urgent issues, problems with hardware, or when there's a miscommunication between technician and user.

With this support option, issues typically get reported to your small-business IT support provider via a special email address or a special online forum where "trouble tickets" are logged and updated as the issue gets resolved.

According to Nosenko this is "by far the most flexible small-business IT support platform. You, the customer, and I, the tech support guy, can both figure out how to fix the problem at our own pace."

"There's also the benefit of an automatic archive. Having access to a history of support issues informs how we deal with future issues from the same user — as well as how to solve the same issue on someone else's machines."

Yet he also notes: "Sometimes I'll suggest you take this or that troubleshooting step, which may in fact, trigger new problems when performed slightly inaccurately. At best, we'll have confusion or miscommunication, and at worst, we'll end up with an even more convoluted problem that takes days to unravel via email."

## **When the Bottom Line isn't Always the Bottom Line**

When shopping for small-business IT support providers, experts like Sergey Nosenko say you'll find that some specialize in one particular channel while others provide all four.

"Make sure you're not just buying based on price," urges Nosenko. "The best providers will build a package of support services that best meets your specific needs and is flexible enough to change as those needs change. Once you've chosen a small-business IT support provider, they've hopefully earned your trust and can best advise you on the course of action on a case-by-case basis."