



wireless watchdogs

What to Look for in an IoT Managed Services Provider

Introduction

Datapoints related to the Internet of Things (IoT) are staggering. Depending on the source, the number of connected devices is predicted to be somewhere around 30 billion to 50 billion in 2020.

[IDC forecasts worldwide spending on the Internet of Things \(IoT\)](#) will grow from just over \$800 billion in 2017 to nearly \$1.4 trillion in 2021 as organizations continue to invest in the hardware, software, services, and connectivity that enable the IoT. Fueling this growth is the sheer number of connected devices predicted to compose the IoT by 2020, around 30 billion to 50 billion by 2020, depending on the source.

Meanwhile, most companies looking to benefit from IoT lack the expertise and necessary software, security, and IT infrastructure to do so. Data analytics, security and virtualization capabilities are the skills most in demand, according to a study conducted by [451 Research](#).

Instead of absorbing the costs and time associated with filling these skills and technical gaps in-house, companies are turning to IoT managed service providers (MSPs) to help implement, manage, secure, and analyze their IoT environments.

Not surprisingly the IoT managed services market is also expanding at a healthy clip. According to data from [Infoholic Research](#), the worldwide IoT managed services market is projected to grow at a compound annual rate of 15.3% between 2016 and 2022, reaching a total value of \$120 billion.

Fueling this growth are continued business investment in digitization, government IT initiatives, increased spending on security services, and significant growth in the business and consumer mobile subscriber base, along with the swelling adoption of connected devices among consumers and businesses.

As IoT ecosystems become more complex and companies look toward improving their flexibility and agility, they'll increasingly partner with MSPs for their expertise in IoT technologies and infrastructure, and to help offload routine, day-to-day management and support tasks.

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The Top MSP Criteria

When looking for an IoT MSP, you want cost-efficient pricing and granular billing platforms. That goes without saying. Other key MSP criteria that group near the top of the list are:

- ☑ Customization
- ☑ Security
- ☑ Scalability
- ☑ Connectivity

Let's take a look at each of these criterion in more detail.

Does the MSP Offer Customizable Plans and Services?

No two IoT projects are the same. The best MSPs will take the time to understand your needs and offer a wide variety of customizable services that support your business objectives.

The IoT demands staffing with expertise in big data and analytics, hybrid clouds, and vertical markets.

The MSP must understand the vertical markets they serve. They must also understand the needs and opportunities of the individual companies they serve within vertical markets such as healthcare, construction, and manufacturing—three of the heaviest users of IoT services. Look for MSPs with demonstrated expertise in their vertical market and a team dedicated to tailoring service offerings to the unique needs of the client company.

As IoT systems go online, they trigger a deluge of data collection that needs to be organized and

analyzed before businesses can use the data meaningfully. As with network infrastructures and IoT, most companies lack the staff and resources to handle this data influx. Many will turn to MSPs to manage the systems and help figure out how to interpret the data and use it to effect process changes and launch new services.

If the MSP is going to provide data and analytics services, ensure that you discuss your business goals and analytics objectives thoroughly with the MSP beforehand.

Is the MSP's Infrastructure Secure with Security Services Offered?

Gartner predicts that by 2020, addressing compromises in IoT security will have increased security costs from less than 1 percent of annual security budgets in 2015 to 20 percent in 2020. Indeed, security is a top challenge when it comes to IoT technology adoption.

How IoT devices are deployed and the types of data they generate create new security and privacy implications companies need to address. What's more, the IoT creates new access paths for cyber attackers to compromise your infrastructure.

Today, MSPs are capable of deploying IoT security across a network, including endpoints. Intrusion is prevented through analytical monitoring of operations and identifying unique behaviors across the system.

Some MSPs provide infrastructure vulnerability

assessments and remediation, freeing up your IT and security staff to spend more time on strategic projects and less time on reporting and patch mitigation.

All IoT devices, security, connectivity, and applications need to be managed, monitored, and kept up to date. That's a monumental undertaking when there are tens of thousands of devices and related data and infrastructure.

Ask prospective MSPs how they'll handle the massive amount of data transmitted by all the devices, while keeping the devices protected. If your IoT devices use custom protocols, find out how the MSP will support them. Is there expert staff who can rewrite or modify code, if needed?

Your MSP should be able to support the toughest challenges that could arise while managing and helping to secure your IoT environment.

Is the MSP's Infrastructure, Resources, and Processes Scalable?

An MSP can't survive without the ability to scale, not only to change the size of its infrastructure (scale up or scale down) to accommodate clients' changing business and IT requirements, but also to modify the scope and size of its management processes and teams.

Their scalability allows companies to better align IT with operating requirements and accelerate resource provisioning.

Expect your MSP to be able to scale up and grow with your business quickly and efficiently, as well

as contract and subtract resources if your business slows. Ask prospective MSPs about their plan for increasing and decreasing capacity. Request real-life examples that demonstrate the MSP's ability to scale.

Ask about the scalability and availability of MSP staff with specialized skills, how specialists share knowledge, and how best practices are communicated.

Do You Have Plenty of Connectivity Options?

Without connectivity, the IoT doesn't work. The IoT is made up of devices that communicate over the Internet. How they connect to the Internet depends on the end device and its application.

Based on bandwidth, range, cost, reliability, and network management capabilities, you could have 20 or more different connectivity options in your IoT environment. If you're enabling machine-to-machine (M2M) devices, continuous connectivity will be an MSP requirement.

The more connectivity options an MSP brings to the table, the better. Ask the prospective MSPs about their global coverage capabilities. What resiliency safeguards are built into their network?

In addition, inquire about the MSP's billing and reporting functionality. Does it allow you to efficiently manage the connectivity and other costs related to your IoT devices?

Summary

When evaluating MSPs, ask them for details about their customization, security, scalability, and connectivity offerings. Partnering with an IoT MSP is a win for companies that lack the expertise and network infrastructure to deploy IoT. MSPs help them exploit the enormous IoT opportunities while enabling them to focus their in-house expertise on core day-to-day operations and strategic IT objectives.

Because of the sheer number of connected devices and other elements that comprise the IoT, the scope and scale of IoT deployments can get out of control quickly if not properly managed. Leave the management and monitoring to an MSP with staff who can isolate, analyze, and remediate many issues in complex IoT ecosystems.

About Wireless Watchdogs

Since 2001, Wireless Watchdogs has been providing customized solutions that turn businesses with mobile device challenges into loyal customers. We work with companies in a range of sizes and industries, because we know optimized mobile systems are critical whether you are building houses, taking care of patients, or trading stocks.

Ready to learn more about the benefits of a managed mobile solution?

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(310) 622.0688



info@wirelesswatchdogs.com



wirelesswatchdogs.com



317 Isis Ave. #102
Inglewood, CA 90301

