

# 9 CRITICAL TECH QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR IT COMPANY

## WHAT SHOULD YOU ASK ABOUT YOUR IT SYSTEMS...THAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW?

You're a business person, not a brain surgeon or an architect or a lawyer. You know your business inside and out. But when it comes to other critical areas of specialty, you seek out the advice of a professional – whether it's the brain surgeon, or the architect or the lawyer.

When you seek out the specialists, it's important to ask the right questions. The right questions will help guarantee that you get the results you're after. You know your business, the specialists know their areas of expertise. Between the two of you, you'll get great answers, solve problems and have the confidence that you are well protected.

It's no different with your IT partner. You know your business intimately, but they are the experts in technology, know what's coming down the road, and have experience working with your colleagues and competitors. It's no wonder you trust them.

But like other specialists, your results could very well depend on your ability to ask the right questions and drill down to the heart of the matter.

That's why we created this list of 9 critical questions to ask your IT Company.

If your IT company is not partnering with you – slow to respond to your needs, seems like they are learning on your dime, or is not providing you outstanding service, give Genesis Global Technologies a call. You will be refreshingly surprised by the expert professionals who treat your network like their own.

Go ahead and get started.

## 9 THINGS YOU NEED TO ASK YOUR IT COMPANY ABOUT.

### **1. How do I know that my network is secure? How can I be assure that my network is safe from outside intrusion and internal threats from potentially disgruntled employees?**

Sadly – more than once – we've assisted the FBI in investigations where organizations' networks had been hacked. Once it was by a disgruntled former employee. And sadder still, this employee maliciously wiped out the data on their network and the backup drives so that the organization could not recover.

In another incident, ISIS actually hacked into a non-profit organization's website, and overrode the site with ISIS recruiting videos. You just can't make this stuff up, Folks! Protect yourself before you become a casualty.

## **2. Is my data being safely backed up? How many days of data do I stand to lose in the event of an emergency or breach? What data and files are being backed up every day?**

On the surface, this question is self-explanatory. But the real question is, what is your threshold for data loss? If you lost a day's worth of data, would that be a nuisance, expense or fatal? What about a week or a month or a year.

It's a well-documented statistic that 90% of businesses who lose their data, never recover and go out of business. Know your threshold for loss and then put measures in place to mitigate the data loss threat.

There are so many new ways to back up your data that weren't available 10 years ago. Cloud backup (while not recommended as the only backup solution) has become an affordable and easy solution.

Keep in mind also that backing up your data is not sufficient. You must regularly schedule restore/verify sessions to back up and restore your data. Make sure that your system is restoring/backing up correctly and consistently so the data can be accessed and used after a restore. Don't do your backups half way. Close the loop and make sure that your data is restorable.

## **3. When was the last time that the latest software patches have been applied to my network? Are there software patches that should not be applied to my network?**

Software patches are a double edged sword. While it makes sense that you want to keep your operating system and software updated with the newest patches and upgrades, there are caveats.

It's never a good idea to be the guinea pig for the latest "bleeding edge" software upgrades. And it's not always guaranteed that your existing software is going to be compatible with the newest upgrades. And just because an upgrade is "free" doesn't mean you should necessarily have it, or that it will not cost you expensive downtime!

In case you've been told otherwise, there is no "easy" button. A remote technician across town isn't doing you any service by automatically updating all your software and applying patches.

That's where your relationship with a real engineer who comes on site and talks to you about your business becomes invaluable. They can help you navigate through the "should I or shouldn't I" questions to make sure that you do what's right for your organization – not necessarily what you've read about on the Internet.

#### **4. How can I know that my network is setup optimally for our needs and running at peak performance so that it's not costing my staff time?**

Like any good structure, the foundation must be sound, or nothing you put on top of it will be reliable. The same is true of your IT network. If the foundational setup (operating system, configuration and settings) are not correct, you'll always have quirky issues with your software, connected devices and user profiles, and never really know what's causing the root issues.

Be sure that your network is set up optimally for your organization. Your competitors may not need the same remote access, or file sharing or active directory settings that you need.

Questions like this can't be determined remotely by a "virtual engineer". You need an engineer to talk business with you before configuring your network. We actually recommend quarterly face to face reviews of your network and business needs. Make sure your network is custom configured for your company, your users and your access.

#### **5. What protection do I have against disgruntled employee breaches or assurance of HIPAA or pillar three compliance?**

In today's reality, if you have, store or have access to your clients' or patients' financial or medical information, you are responsible for complying with financial (Pillar 3) and/or medical (HIPAA) security measures. You only need to google "HIPAA" or "pillar 3" breaches to see the sobering financial repercussions for non-compliance. It's a scary but real wake up call for everyone.

While nothing is ever guaranteed, you can most definitely mitigate your risks by having a HIPAA or Pillar 3 Assessment and ultimately remediation completed on your computer and IT network. You'll be surprised at the findings, but glad you did it. Some lenders are requiring Pillar 3 compliance in order to keep doing business with title companies.

If you're even thinking about Pillar 3 or HIPAA assessments, contact Genesis Global Technologies and request "What Title Companies Need to Know About Pillar 3" paper or the "Ready or not, here comes HIPAA" webinar recording.

This is one area of your business that would definitely benefit from living by the saying that an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure.

#### **6. Are there firmware upgrades that should be applied to my network? Are any of my computers running operating systems that are no longer supported and vulnerable to security hacks?**

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So we discussed software upgrades earlier, but there are also “firmware” upgrades that update your computer hardware with patches and upgrades needed to work with newer operating systems or better drivers. Once again, you’ll want to consult with your IT professionals to determine if it’s a good idea to do those firmware upgrades. In fact, you probably won’t even be aware when there are new firmware upgrades available for your hardware.

Also, if you get our Business Tech Trends, you’re probably aware that Microsoft and others often “retire” older versions of their software (like Windows XP for example) and discontinue support and security patches for that version.

When they make that announcement, the “bad guys” go to work writing malicious software just waiting to exploit security holes that are vulnerable right after Microsoft quits releasing security patches.

That’s why it’s business critical that you have a plan ahead of time to upgrade your software, operating systems and hardware before they are retired. Your IT Company should be prepared to assess your usage and needs and determine the most cost effective upgrade path for you. Again, no two organizations are alike, and you’ll want a recommendation that’s right for you – not your neighbors.

## **7. Should my company have a disaster recovery plan? If I already have one, when was the last time it was reviewed and updated?**

Most people think “apocalyptic” when they hear or read about IT Disaster Recovery Plans (often referred to as DRPs). But you’d be surprised. Disaster Recovery Plans are for hurricanes, floods, and even sabotage or hacking incidents.

Like a living will, a DRP is a living document that needs to be updated every year based on changes in the business (size, locations, software, personnel changes, where people live in proximity to your offices, etc.) and needs to be as all-inclusive as possible.

The main factor or question that drives your DRP is, how long can you afford to be down in the event of a disaster?

That will determine what measures you put in place, how accessible your data needs to be, who’s in charge of doing what in the event of an emergency, etc.

Again, if you need help with assessing your DRP risk, developing a plan, and executing it, contact Genesis Global Technologies. We’re happy to share our expertise and put our knowledge to work for your organization’s benefit.

**8. Are there any pending issues with my network that could suddenly blindside me and create a work stoppage? If not, when was the last time I had a network health checkup? (Which begs the question, “do you have a relationship with an engineer who knows your business inside and out?)**

Another great question is, “What should I know that I don’t know?” I’ve often said, “it’s what you don’t know that will really hurt you.”

Is there something out there that if you knew it, would change how you do business or handle your data more efficiently?

Is my competition (or others in my field) doing something with technology that I should be aware of or consider? Is there a competitive edge I could have?

Are there “gotchas” in my computer network or technology that have the potential for disrupting your business if you don’t catch them and handle them ahead of time?

Just like you go for an annual checkup or a dental cleaning, your IT computer system should get reviewed, checked and tweaked on a regular (6 month or 1 year) basis. Not only do you want to know about little symptoms before they become big problems, but your business changes, people change, and you want your network to be relevant for your business today – not 10 years ago.

**9. Based on my unique company needs, is my IT system the best for us? Or should I be considering other options such as cloud computing or remote access or remote backups?**

Everybody wants to know what’s new (if you don’t believe me, check out FaceBook!).

They say that technology changes every 6 months, and if you don’t keep up, you could be a dinosaur before you know it.

That’s true. New, evolving technology can change the game of business. Your people can be more efficient, and make your business more profitable. If there’s something out there that makes you more competitive, don’t you want to leverage it before your competition does?

Likewise, just because something is new, doesn’t mean you need to have it or should have it. In the wrong environment, something new could actually be detrimental to your business.

That’s why you need the direction of an IT partner who’s knowledgeable, knows your business and has your organization’s best interests at heart.

In conclusion, treat your IT like the business critical specialty that it is. Make sure and ask the right questions and then drill down into your business. After all it is your business!

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And just like you'd get a second opinion on any specialist's recommendation, consider doing the same thing with your computer IT – even if you already have a company or "guy" who handles your IT. There's too much at stake for you. Protect yourself so you have the confidence you are doing the right thing for your organization.

If you'd like some advice, a second opinion or need IT assistance of any kind, contact us. We are truly committed to your success. And I guarantee you'll love the service you get from us!