



18 Critical Questions Every Engineering, Environmental, and Construction Company Should Ask Their IT Company Before Signing A Support Contract.

**Don't Trust Your Critical Files and Operations To Just Anyone!
This Advisory Guide Will Arm You With 18 Revealing Questions You Should Ask Any IT Company Before Letting Them Set Up and Support Your Computer Network**

Choose the wrong IT services company and you could end up with more than shoddy service. Their mistakes and oversights can cost you in lost productivity, slow systems, crashes, excessive downtime, CAD files being lost, corrupted, deleted, or overwritten (costing you HOURS of lost work). Don't hire just anyone!

Read this guide and you'll discover:

- ✓ Buyer beware! The "dirty little secret" of the IT services industry that most people don't know and will never be told by their IT company.
- ✓ 18 revealing questions that will help you instantly spot an unethical or grossly incompetent IT company in minutes so you don't risk your time and money hiring the WRONG one.
- ✓ Ransomware, viruses, spyware, and hackers: what you need to know to protect your organization from a devastating, expensive attack.
- ✓ Why "cheap" or "lowest price" IT companies aren't the bargain they initially appear to be (and how to know if someone is pulling a bait-and-switch deal).

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An Open Letter From William Williams CEO, New Avalon Technology, LLC

Dear Colleague,

Choosing an IT services company isn't easy. There is no shortage of horror stories about incompetent computer and IT "gurus" bungling jobs and causing MORE problems as a result of their loose morals or gross incompetence. I'm sure if you talk to your own friends and colleagues you will get an earful about the unfortunate experiences they have encountered in this area.

Why is this? Because the IT services industry, along with a lot of other industries, has its own share of incompetent or unethical businesses that will try to take advantage of trusting business owners who simply do not have the expertise to determine whether or not the technician knows what they are doing.

Sometimes this is out of greed for your money, but more often it's simply because they don't have the skills and competency to do the job right but won't tell you that upfront. From misleading information, unqualified technicians, poor management, and terrible customer service, we've seen it all...and we know they exist in abundance because we have had several customers come to us to clean up the disasters they have caused.

Buyer Beware: The IT Services and Consulting Industry Is NOT Regulated

Electricians, plumbers, lawyers, realtors, dentists, doctors, accountants, and even engineering and construction firms are heavily regulated to protect the consumer from receiving substandard work or getting ripped off.

However, the IT services industry is still unregulated. There aren't any laws in existence to protect the consumer – **which is why it's so important for you to arm yourself with the information contained in this report**. Anyone who can hang out a shingle can promote themselves as an IT expert.

Even if they are honestly *trying* to do a good job for you, their inexperience can cost you dearly in your network's speed and performance, ransomware attacks, or with lost or corrupt data files. That is why we decided to offer this report. The information in this guide is provided to help raise standards within the IT services industry, and to give YOU useful information to help you guard against the lack of ethics or incompetence of some companies and technicians.

Dedicated to serving you,

William Williams, CEO



About The Author & New Avalon

William Williams is CEO of New Avalon Technology, LLC, and is a veteran IT specialist and network engineer with more than 25 years of experience in the IT services industry. William has worked with local and federal government agencies and with more than 2,000 businesses in more than 100 industries, ranging from small start-ups to 500 employees.

New Avalon's Security Operations Center was the recipient of the **HTG Connectwise Best Newcomer** and received the **ASCII Best in Show**.

Originally a break/fix company founded in 2004, New Avalon Technology quickly turned to managed IT services and support in early 2009 at their customers' request. Since then, New Avalon Technology has grown into a full-service managed IT services company serving small businesses and local and federal government, but with a specialty in engineering, environmental, and construction firms.





18 Critical Questions Every Engineering, Architectural Or Construction Company Should Ask Their IT Company Before Signing A Contract For Support

Customer Service

Q1: Do they answer their phones live or do you always have to leave a voice mail and wait for someone to call you back?

Our Answer: We answer our phones live 24/7/365. Why? Because many of the C-level executives we support work outside normal hours and find it the most productive time they have. If they cannot access their computer network AND can't get hold of anyone to help them, it's incredibly frustrating.

Q2: Are they familiar with (and can they support) your unique line-of-business applications?

Our Answer: We support the problems with ALL line-of-business applications for our clients. That doesn't mean we can fix faulty software – but we WILL be the liaison between you and your vendor to resolve problems you are having and make sure these applications work smoothly for you.

Q3: Do they have a written, guaranteed response time to your calls?

Our Answer: We guarantee to have a technician working on a problem within 3 minutes or less of your call or reporting of a problem. This is written into every service agreement we give to our clients because it's standard procedure.

Q4: Do they guarantee in writing to complete projects on time and on a budget?

Our Answer: All projects are fixed-priced and guaranteed to be completed on time, in writing. This is important because many unethical or incompetent computer guys will only quote "time and materials," which gives them free rein to nickel-and-dime you as well as take as much time as they want on completing a project, racking up fees and leaving you with the option to fire them and start over or pony up the money.

Q5: Do they have adequate errors and omissions insurance as well as workers' compensation insurance to protect YOU?

Our Answer: Here's something to consider: if THEY cause a problem with your network that causes you to be down for hours or days, to become the victim of ransomware or to lose data, *who's responsible?* Here's another question to consider: if one of their technicians gets hurt at your office, who's paying? In this litigious society we live in, you better make darn sure whomever you hire is adequately insured with both errors and omissions insurance AND workers' compensation



for your protection– and don't be shy about asking to see their latest insurance policies!

Maintenance Of Your Network

Q6: Do they consistently (and proactively) offer new ways to improve your network's performance, or do they wait until you have a problem to make recommendations?

Our Answer: We conduct Quarterly Technology Review meetings with our clients to review your current IT plan, discuss new projects, and make recommendations. We BECOME your virtual CTO (Chief Technology Officer). Our goal with these meetings is to help you be more profitable, efficient, and competitive and to listen to any concerns you might have or suggestions for us to improve.

Q7: Do they insist on remotely monitoring your network 24/7/365 (managed services) to keep critical security settings, virus definitions, and security patches up-to-date to AVOID downtime, ransomware, and other problems?

Our Answer: Our remote network monitoring system watches over your network to constantly look for developing problems, security issues, and other issues so we can address them BEFORE they turn into bigger problems. With IT being so central to running a business, you want someone monitoring and maintaining the network, not just jumping in with a quick fix when things go wrong.

Q8: Do they provide you with a weekly report that shows all the updates, security patches, and the status of every machine on your network so you know for SURE your systems have been secured and updated?

Our Answer: Every week our clients get a detailed report that shows an overall health score of their network and the updates and maintenance we've done to ensure you stay up, running, and protected from cybercrime and other issues.

Q9: Is it standard procedure for them to provide you with written network documentation detailing what software licenses you own, critical passwords, user information, hardware inventory, etc., or are they the only person with the "keys to the kingdom"?

Our Answer: All clients receive documentation on their network in written and electronic form at no additional cost. We also perform a quarterly update on this material and make sure certain key people from your organization have this information and know-how to use it, giving you complete control over your network.

Side note: You should NEVER allow an IT person to have that much control over you and your company. If you get the sneaking suspicion that your current IT person is keeping this under their control as a means of job security, get rid of them (and we can help to make sure you don't suffer



ANY ill effects). This is downright unethical and dangerous to your organization, so don't tolerate it!

Q10: Do they have other technicians on staff who are familiar with your network in case your regular technician goes on vacation or gets sick?

Our Answer: Yes, and since we keep detailed network documentation (basically a blueprint of your computer network) and updates on every client's account, any of our technicians can pick up where another one has left off.

Q11: Do they take the time to explain what they are doing and answer your questions in terms that you can understand (not geek-speak), or do they come across as arrogant and make you feel stupid for asking simple questions?

Our Answer: Our technicians are trained to have the "heart of a teacher" and will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms.

Backups And Disaster Recovery

Q12: Do they INSIST on monitoring an offsite as well as an on-site backup, or are they letting you rely on outdated tape backups?

Our Answer: We do not allow our clients to use tape backups because they are incredibly unreliable. We also ensure every client has 100% of their files backed up in a manner that would protect against ransomware. NOT ALL BACKUP SYSTEMS PROTECT AGAINST RANSOMWARE, and it's important that YOUR backup system is set up in a way that cyber-attacks cannot corrupt or lock backups.

Q13: Have they set your backups for hourly and daily revisions so you don't lose a full day's (or week's) work on a drawing or other project?

Our Answer: We set backups so they take hourly and daily versions of your files so if someone accidentally overwrites a file, or a file becomes corrupt, you can quickly and easily restore it without having to do HOURS of rework.

Q14: Do they INSIST on doing periodic test restores of your backups to make sure the data is not corrupt and could be restored in the event of a disaster?

Our Answer: We perform a monthly "fire drill" and perform a test restore from backup for our clients to make sure their data CAN be recovered in the event of an emergency. After all, the WORST time to "test" a backup is when you desperately need it.

Q15: Do they insist on backing up your network BEFORE performing any type of project or upgrade?



Our Answer: We do, and that's simply as a precaution in case a hardware failure or software glitch causes a major problem.

Q16: If you were to experience a major disaster, do they have a written plan for how your data could be restored FAST and/or one that enables you to work from a remote location?

Our Answer: All clients receive a simple disaster recovery plan for their data and network. We encourage them to do a full disaster recovery plan for their office, but at a minimum, their network will be covered should something happen.

Technical Expertise And Support

Q17: Do their technicians maintain current vendor certifications and participate in ongoing training – or are they learning on your dime?

Our Answer: Our technicians are required to keep the most up-to-date vendor certifications in all the software we support. Plus, our hiring process is so stringent, 99% of the technicians who apply don't make it through (guess who's hiring them?).

Q18: When something goes wrong with your Internet service, phone systems, printers, CAD systems, or other IT services, do they own the problem or do they say, "That's not our problem to fix"?

Our Answer: We feel WE should own the problem for our clients so they don't have to try and resolve any of these issues on their own – that's just plain old good service and something many IT guys won't do.



4 Costly Misconceptions About IT Support And Choosing An Honest, Competent IT Services Company

Misconception #1: My computer network doesn't need monthly monitoring and maintenance; I only want to pay for repairs or support on an "as-needed" basis.

This is probably one of the biggest and most costly misconceptions many construction and engineering companies have (usually the smaller ones).

Computer networks, data, and software applications are complex and dynamic systems that need regular updates and maintenance to protect against cybercrime (ransomware, hackers, viruses) and to ensure backups are happening. Here are just a FEW of the critical updates that need to be done on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis, many of which most IT firms miss or simply don't do:

- 3rd Party Software updates for critical updates, conflicts, functionality, and potential issues
- Sage CRE, Viewpoint, Deltek, and other accounting applications for updates
- Backups checked DAILY to ensure HOURLY backups are happening
- Security patches and updates installed (with new cyber-attacks cropping up *daily*, this is a CRITICAL part of maintaining your network)
- E-mail size maintenance and monitoring to avoid problems with large file transmissions
- Antivirus updates and monitoring
- Firewall updates and monitoring
- Spam-filter installation and updates
- Spyware detection and removal
- Monitoring disk space on workstations and servers
- Monitoring hardware for signs of failure
- Optimizing systems for maximum speed

All computer networks and the devices connected to the network need to be managed and monitored if you want to protect against cybercrime, lost data, slowness, and data loss.

If your IT support company does not insist on some type of regular, automated monitoring or maintenance of your network, then DO NOT HIRE THEM. Lack of system maintenance is the NUMBER ONE reason most people end up losing valuable files and incurring heavy support costs to restore files. If your IT company isn't offering you these services, you need to find someone else to support your computer or network for 2 reasons:

1. Either they don't know enough to make this recommendation, which is a sure sign they are horribly inexperienced, *OR*



2. They recognize that they are *profiting* from your IT problems and don't want to recommend steps toward preventing you from needing their help on an ongoing basis. After all, they'll get paid MORE to restore a network that's been locked by ransomware than to make sure your system is patched, updated, and secured (which can be done quickly and inexpensively with good monitoring).

Either reason is a good one to get as far away from that person as possible!

Misconception #2: My nephew's/neighbor's kid/brother-in-law/office manager knows this IT stuff and can take care of our computers.

Most people look for a part-time "guru" for one reason: to save a few bucks. But this often comes back to haunt them. We frequently get calls from (new) clients who desperately need our help to get them back up and running or to clean up a mess caused by an inexperienced neighbor, friend, or relative who was just trying to help.

As a professional construction or engineering firm, you know the importance of getting a PROFESSIONAL to do the work.

If the person you have working on your network does not do IT support for a living, there is a good chance they won't have the knowledge or experience to truly help you – they are a hobbyist at best. Do you want a part-time, inexperienced person responsible for handling something as important as your data and IT network? As with everything in life, you get what you pay for. That's not to say you need to go broke to find a great technician, but you shouldn't be choosing someone based on price alone.

Misconception #3: All IT support companies are created equal. Your best option will be the one who offers the lowest price.

As we stated a moment ago, you get what you pay for. A cheap price usually means a cheap job. Really good technicians do NOT work cheap because they are in high demand, just like every other professional service category. The only technicians who will work cheap are those who are just starting, and they are grossly inexperienced.

Some shops outsource the support to overseas companies who will do the job for a fraction of the price; but we feel you should know who's accessing your personal files, e-mail, and data. Others will hire college kids or newbie technicians because they will work for next to nothing to gain experience, OR they allow interns to support their network because they don't have to pay them at all – but what you don't realize is that an inexperienced technician like this can end up costing more because:

1. They improperly diagnose problems, which means you're paying them to fix the WRONG thing and they STILL won't resolve your problem. Case in point: A few years ago a TV reporter went undercover to 8 computer repair shops with a



perfectly working PC, but simply disconnected a cable in the back (a fix that the AVERAGE IT tech would have caught in minutes with a visual inspection). Several shops improperly diagnosed the problem and wanted to charge them anywhere from \$59 to over \$275 to fix it!

2. They could take 3 to 5 times as long to do the same repair an experienced technician could do quickly. Again, you're paying for those extra hours.
3. They could do MORE damage, costing you more money and downtime.

With your client data, accounting records, personal e-mail, personal browsing history, bank accounts, and other critical data at stake, do you REALLY want the lowest-priced shop working on your machine?

We take the view that most people want value for their money and simply want the job done right. You will find that we are not the cheapest, but we don't apologize for that. As the owner, I decided a long time ago that I would rather explain our higher rates ONE TIME than make excuses for POOR SERVICE forever. That said, we're not the most expensive either. We simply feel that we should offer a good service at a fair price. That's why we have been able to stay in business for over 25 years.

Misconception #4: An honest IT support company should be able to give you a quote over the phone.

I wish this were true, but it isn't. Just like a good doctor, an honest and professional technician will need to diagnose your network before they can quote any price over the phone; consider the example above where all that was needed was to plug in a simple cable. If someone brought that to us, we would just plug it back in and not charge them, but without SEEING the machine, we could have never diagnosed that over the phone.

Also, some consultants will quote you a cheap rate over the phone to get you in the door but then jack up the prices once they get in your office by taking 3 times as long, selling you add-ons and up-sells, etc. And finally, reputable firms don't charge by the hour anyway – they give you a fixed fee, flat rate. Here's why...

One of the easiest ways to take advantage of a customer is to get them to agree to a time and materials repair. Unless you know what's wrong and how long it should take, they can soak you on the fees. And what are you going to do when they get 5 to 6 hours into a repair or project and then spring on you the news that it will take even longer than they anticipated to fix, costing you MORE money?

Always, always, always make sure you get a flat-rate, fixed-fee quote in advance so you don't end up getting burned – and NEVER take a phone quote!



A Personal Invitation

We'd love the opportunity to earn your business. To that end, we'd like to offer you a FREE IT Assessment to review your network's stability and security. We want to look for ways to eliminate file problems, e-mail problems, licensing problems, slowness, crashes and a host of other nagging, frustrating IT-related issues (\$995 value, yours free).

Why would we give this away for free? Two reasons:

1. We are simply offering this as a risk-free "get to know us" offer to people we haven't had the pleasure of doing business with. Again, our goal is to allow you to make an informed and confident decision – and offering this is one way we can help you better evaluate us.
2. This will allow us to determine if we even CAN help you. Obviously, we can't help everyone, and our services might not be a good fit for you. Conducting this assessment enables us to do a small project for you to help you evaluate whether or not we're the right company for you without risking your money.

This service is completely free, with ZERO obligations or expectations on our part. Would we like the opportunity to earn your business? Of course! But I personally guarantee you won't be strong-armed or pestered to do anything.

You'll Get Answers To The Following Questions:

- Is your current outsourced IT company *really, truly* doing the maintenance and monitoring they *should* be doing, that you might even be paying them to do?
- Are your IT systems **truly secured** from hackers, cybercriminals, viruses, worms, and even sabotage by rogue employees? *If you're not getting weekly security patch updates from your current IT person, your IT systems are probably not truly secured.*
- Are your **backups configured properly** to allow you to recover FILE VERSIONS that were saved an hour ago? A day ago? A week ago? Also, if you lost it ALL to ransomware or some other disaster, how fast could you be back up and running again at full speed? *In 99% of the computer networks we've reviewed over the years, the owners were shocked to learn they would NOT be able to restore everything as fast as they thought.*
- Could you utilize **cheaper and more efficient cloud-computing technologies** to lower IT costs and make it easier to work remotely with large files?
- Are your systems, e-mail, and software systems **optimized for maximum speed** and performance? Are you having licensing issues? File-sharing issues when attempting to e-



mail large files? Slowness and other “glitches”? We’ll diagnose ALL of these issues and provide answers on how to resolve them (they ARE easily fixed).

Once we have a clear picture of the state, health, and performance of your current IT systems, we’ll deliver a **customized report and action plan** that will show you how to eliminate every single nagging problem, enable you to work more efficiently and possibly even lower your IT costs.

We hope you become a client, but if not, you’ll still see value from this service. As I stated a moment ago, you have my personal guarantee that high-pressure sales tactics will not be used at any point during our engagement. We simply want this to be a delightful, informative, and positive experience for you.

3 Easy Ways To Request Your Free IT Assessment

Go online to: www.newavalonech.com/assessment

Or call me at (855) 358-7100

Or e-mail me directly at bill@newavalontech.com

Looking forward to meeting you,

William Williams

William Williams, CEO, New Avalon Technology, LLC

P.S. Even if you don’t have an immediate need or problem right now, having this IT Assessment done is an easy, no-cost way to have “fresh eyes” looking at your network.

In the 20+ years, we’ve done this, we’ve never been able to find a “perfect” setup with zero problems or ways to improve the speed, performance, and security of a network. At the very least, the peace of mind you’ll gain from having a credible 3rd party reviewing your systems is worth the little bit of time it takes, and this is truly an easy, non-invasive process.



Here's What Our Clients Say About Our Services And Support:

"Their technology stack is unmatched", Go the Extra Mile!

After partnering with New Avalon Technology, LogicNet Alaska has co-managed multiple businesses providing real control over their IT expenses, experiencing a reduction in overall IT costs. New Avalon has excellent communication and customer service only highlighted by how they go every extra mile to maintain the relationship. Their technology stack is unmatched. I would definitely recommend New Avalon to any firm looking to partner with an IT Company that puts their customers first!



Steve Smith
President
LogicNet Alaska, Inc.

"Happy with the responsiveness", proactive approach to IT!

In today's marketplace and business world, it takes responsive, and consistent IT providers to ensure the success of organizations such as ours. We are very happy with the responsiveness New Avalon Technologies provides to our program and staff. I know if we call them, the problem will be fixed. I also appreciate their proactive approach to IT solutions, investigating and informing us of new ways to protect our network and improve network performance. Thank you for making sure we can do our jobs effectively.

David J. Sisneros
Emergency Housing Director
Heading Home