A PRACTICAL CHECKLIST · IT SUPPORT RENEWAL

IT Support *Renewal Check.*

Seven Signs Self-Assessment

A six-section self-assessment for Managing Directors, Finance Directors and IT Managers at professional services firms deciding whether to renew, renegotiate or move.

FOR BUSINESS LEADERS AND IT MANAGERS

Seven signs.
Thirty-five checks.
One confident decision.



CONTRACT · SEVEN SIGNS · ACCESS · SLA · OPTIONS · HANDOVER

Gather the evidence, then *make the decision.*

This is a six-section renewal check covering what to know before an IT support contract renews. Built to be used as both a working plan and a record of what was checked, for the person who owns the decision whether or not they hold an IT job title.

01 WHAT THIS IS

Six sections: the contract facts, the seven signs of support that is not delivering, who holds your access, what the service agreement should cover, your options at renewal, and how to review or change provider without disruption. Thirty-five checks in total.

02 WHO IT IS FOR

Managing Directors, Finance Directors and IT Managers at professional services firms with 20 to 100 staff, and any business owner approaching a support renewal who wants evidence rather than gut feel before signing.

03 HOW TO MARK IT UP

For every check, mark whether the position is **In place**, **Partial**, or a **Gap**. Use the notes column to record the owner, the action required and the target date. Count the Gaps in Section 02: that number feeds into the decision in Section 05, where the checks are actions marked **Done** or **Not yet**.

04 HOW TO KEEP IT USEFUL

Run it two to three months before every renewal date. A completed, dated copy is the evidence for a service review with your current provider, or the brief for any provider you ask to quote. Update it when the contract, scope or team changes.

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This checklist reflects common UK IT support contract terms at the time of publication. Always check your own agreement and take advice on notice periods before acting.

SECTION 01 · OF SIX

Contract and Evidence

6 CHECKS

Nothing else in this checklist matters if the renewal window has already closed. Start here.

Many support contracts carry a notice period and some renew automatically. Find the dates first, then gather the evidence you will need for every decision that follows.

#	CHECK	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	**Renewal date found and recorded** *Check the contract, not memory. Work back from it to find your decision deadline.*	☐	☐	☐	
2	**Notice period known and diarised** *Often 60 or 90 days' written notice. Put the last safe date to give notice in the diary now.*	☐	☐	☐	
3	**Auto-renewal clause identified** *If the contract renews automatically, confirm the term and price it renews on.*	☐	☐	☐	
4	**Contracted scope document to hand** *What is included, what is chargeable and what is excluded. If it cannot be found, ask the provider for it.*	☐	☐	☐	
5	**Three months of tickets exported** *Response times, resolution times and repeat faults. Most providers can export this on request.*	☐	☐	☐	
6	**Last three invoices compared with scope** *Mark any recurring line item that has not been explained.*	☐	☐	☐	

☐ In place: operates as documented ☐ Partial: exists in part, or not yet confirmed ☐ Gap: absent

WHERE THIS TRIPS FIRMS UP

The notice window closes earlier than most people expect. A 90-day notice period on a January renewal means the decision is needed by the start of October. Firms that start the review in December usually find they have already renewed.

SECTION 02 · OF SIX

The Seven Signs

7 CHECKS

Think about the last three months rather than a single bad week. One incident is not a pattern.

Each check describes what good support looks like. Mark it a Gap where the opposite is true for your firm. If a check describes a service your contract doesn't include, mark it Partial and ask your provider what adding it would involve. The number of Gaps here feeds into the decision in Section 05.

#	CHECK	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	**Tickets answered within agreed times** *Urgent issues triaged by business impact, not queued behind a printer query.*	☐	☐	☐	
2	**Faults fixed at the root cause** *Repeat problems investigated and closed with a note on what was done, not reset every Monday.*	☐	☐	☐	
3	**Proactive contact between incidents** *Patches applied, early warnings, regular reviews. You hear from them when nothing is broken.*	☐	☐	☐	
4	**Invoices match what was agreed** *Project work scoped and quoted before it starts. Licence counts reviewed, not drifting upward.*	☐	☐	☐	
5	**Clear picture of performance available** *Response and resolution against targets, recurring issues, security posture and licence spend, in language the board can use.*	☐	☐	☐	
6	**Forward planning in place** *A twelve-month roadmap covering hardware, licensing and security certification. Someone has asked where the business is heading.*	☐	☐	☐	
7	**Staff still log tickets** *Ticket volumes healthy. No USB-stick workarounds, no files going to personal accounts to get work done.*	☐	☐	☐	

☐ In place: operates as documented ☐ Partial: exists in part, or not yet confirmed ☐ Gap: absent

HOW TO READ YOUR SCORE

Gaps in this section: _____ **None:** renewing is sensible. **One or more:** ask for a service review and written commitments before renewal. **Plan a move** if your provider can't or won't commit, commitments have already been made and missed, or Section 03 has Gaps that can't be resolved. Section 05 sets out each option.

SECTION 03 · OF SIX

Access and Ownership

5 CHECKS

Your provider may need admin rights to do their job.
Your business should still hold the keys.

These are the problems a contract change cannot fix. If any are a Gap, resolve them before you give notice or sign anything.

#	CHECK	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	**Business holds its own administrator account** *Separate from the provider's, with credentials stored securely inside the business.*	☐	☐	☐	
2	**Domain registrar login held by the business** *Whoever controls the domain controls email and the website.*	☐	☐	☐	
3	**Email and cloud tenancy owned by the business** *Such as Microsoft 365. Global admin rights sit with a named person in the firm, not only with the provider.*	☐	☐	☐	
4	**Software licences in the business's name** *Microsoft, line-of-business and security licences held and renewable by you.*	☐	☐	☐	
5	**System documentation held and current** *Network diagram, device list and backup configuration, up to date and available to you on request.*	☐	☐	☐	

☐ In place: operates as documented ☐ Partial: exists in part, or not yet confirmed ☐ Gap: absent

WHERE THIS TRIPS FIRMS UP

Credentials taking time to hand over is the most common cause of delay when changing provider. Confirming ownership early, while the relationship is still working, avoids a difficult conversation later.

SECTION 04 · OF SIX

The Service Agreement

5 CHECKS

SLA numbers look similar across most providers. What matters is whether they are measured and acted on.

A service level agreement is most useful when it covers both response and resolution, when you can see how performance measures up, and when it is clear what happens if targets are repeatedly missed.

#	CHECK	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	**Response targets set by severity** *Phone response within 30 to 60 minutes for critical issues and four hours for routine requests is a reasonable benchmark at this size.*	☐	☐	☐	
2	**Resolution targets included, not only response** *An answered ticket is not a fixed one. Both should be in the agreement.*	☐	☐	☐	
3	**Performance against targets visible on request** *You can see the figures, whether as a regular report or a review when you ask.*	☐	☐	☐	
4	**Consequences for repeated misses defined** *An escalation route or a right to review the contract. If it is not written down, it will not happen.*	☐	☐	☐	
5	**Included versus chargeable work written down** *Support, monitoring, project work and out-of-hours clearly separated so invoices can be checked against them.*	☐	☐	☐	

☐ In place: operates as documented ☐ Partial: exists in part, or not yet confirmed ☐ Gap: absent

WHAT TO ASK

Ask what actually happens when you call: who answers, how quickly, and whether they can fix it there and then. The answer tells you more about the day-to-day experience than any SLA table.

SECTION 05 · OF SIX

Your Options at Renewal

5 CHECKS

Which option is right depends on how many signs apply and whether your provider is willing to change.

Four realistic options: renew as is, renegotiate the scope, add an internal IT lead, or change provider. Work through the checks, then use the guide below.

#	CHECK	DONE	NOT YET	OWNER / NOTES
1	**Gap count from Section 02 totalled** *Write it in the notes column. It is the single most useful number in this document.*	☐	☐	
2	**Service review requested from current provider** *Share the evidence from Sections 01 to 04 and ask for a formal review before renewal.*	☐	☐	
3	**Written commitments requested** *Specific, measurable improvements with dates. Verbal assurances do not count.*	☐	☐	
4	**Review date agreed** *A fixed point, typically 90 days out, to check whether commitments have been met.*	☐	☐	
5	**Outside view sought before signing** *Ask another provider to look over the arrangement. A discount on the same service will not fix a service problem.*	☐	☐	

☐ Done: completed and recorded ☐ Not yet: still to do before renewal

THE DECISION GUIDE

Renew as is: no signs apply, costs match scope and performance has been stable. Check the notice period and any price rise before it renews automatically.

Renegotiate the scope: one or more signs apply and your provider is open to adding monitoring, clearer visibility or a roadmap. Only works if commitments are written down and reviewed.

Add an internal IT lead: the business has grown to the point where someone needs to own IT decisions day to day. Adds salary cost and still relies on a provider for depth and cover.

Change provider: your provider can't or won't commit to improvements, commitments have been made and missed, or you cannot get your own admin access and documentation.

SECTION 06 · OF SIX

Changing Without Disruption

7 CHECKS

A planned move is usually far less disruptive than firms expect. An unplanned one is not.

If you decide to move, these checks keep the handover orderly. Most transitions for a firm of this size complete within four to eight weeks with no interruption to daily work.

#	CHECK	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	**At least three providers compared** *Ask how they prevent problems and how they will keep you informed about performance.*	☐	☐	☐	
2	**Accreditations asked for** *ISO 27001, Cyber Essentials and Microsoft partner status are all worth asking about.*	☐	☐	☐	
3	**References from similar firms taken** *Same size, same sector, ideally a firm that moved from a reactive arrangement.*	☐	☐	☐	
4	**Measurable SLA commitments in every proposal** *Response, resolution and how performance will be shared, in writing, before you choose.*	☐	☐	☐	
5	**Parallel handover planned** *The incoming provider audits and shadows your systems before anything is switched off.*	☐	☐	☐	
6	**Notice given inside the window** *In writing, in the form the contract requires, with confirmation of receipt kept.*	☐	☐	☐	
7	**90-day success measures agreed** *What improvement looks like, in writing, reviewed from day one.*	☐	☐	☐	

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RENEWAL READINESS GUIDE

Must be true before you decide: renewal date and notice period diarised, three months of evidence gathered, Gap count from Section 02 recorded.

Must be true before you give notice: every Gap in Section 03 closed, written commitments requested and answered, at least three proposals with measurable SLAs.

Can follow the decision: 90-day review diarised, documentation and credentials confirmed in the business's hands, next renewal date recorded.

Turning the score into *a decision.*

The firms that renew well are not the ones with the biggest IT budgets. They are the ones that gathered the evidence before the notice window closed.

DMS · IT FOR SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES

i START WITH THE DATES

Find the renewal date and notice period before anything else. Every other step depends on how much time you have.

ii ASSIGN OWNERS

Every Gap needs a named owner and a date. The Finance Director usually owns Sections 01 and 04; the IT Manager or Managing Director owns 02, 03 and 06; the Managing Director owns 05, the decision itself.

iii EVIDENCE, NOT INSTINCT

"It feels like it has got worse" is not something a provider can act on. Three months of tickets and three invoices are.

iv NOT EVERYTHING NEEDS CHANGING

If none of the signs apply, renew. Keep the completed check on file and run it again before the next renewal.

ABOUT DMS

Here if a second opinion helps.

DMS supports Managing Directors, Finance Directors and IT Managers in UK professional services firms, schools and multi-academy trusts with IT support, network infrastructure and compliance. This checklist is a self-assessment tool you are welcome to use on its own. If your renewal is coming up and you would like a plain-English view on whether we would renew, renegotiate or move, the details below are here to use. If it looks right, we will say so.

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