



# **21 Questions to Ask Computer Consultants Prior to Hiring Them**

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**WHITE PAPER**

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# SAALEX INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, LLC.

## THE IT EXPERTS—WHY TRUST ANYONE ELSE?

### Introduction

Our purpose in providing this information is to help you make an informed decision and avoid getting burned by the many incompetent firms offering IT services. Below you will find 21 questions to ask computer consultants prior to hiring them.



### CUSTOMER SERVICE QUESTIONS:

Question 1. 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 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and give all clients an emergency after-hours number they may call if a problem arises, including on weekends. Why? Because many of the CEOs and 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.

Question 2. Do they have a written, guaranteed response time to your calls?

Our Answer: We guarantee to have a technician respond to your problem within an hour of your call. This is written into every service agreement we give to our clients because it's standard procedure.

Question 3. Do they take the time to explain what they are doing and answer your questions in terms that you can understand (not geek-speak),



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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.

**Question 4.** 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 review meetings with our clients to look for new ways to help improve their operations, lower costs, increase efficiencies and resolve any problems that may be arising. Our goal with these meetings is to help our clients be more profitable, efficient and competitive.

**Question 5.** Do they provide detailed invoices that clearly explain what you are paying for?

**Our Answer:** We provide detailed invoices that show what work was done, why and when, so you never have to guess what you are paying for. We also double-check our invoices for accuracy before they are sent to you.

**Question 6.** 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 or to lose data, who is responsible? Here’s another question to consider: if one of their technicians gets hurt at your office, who is paying? In this litigious society we live in, you have to be certain whomever you hire is adequately insured with both errors and omissions insurance AND workers’ compensation – and don’t be shy about asking to see their latest insurance policies!

*Here’s a true story to consider: A few years ago, Geek Squad was*



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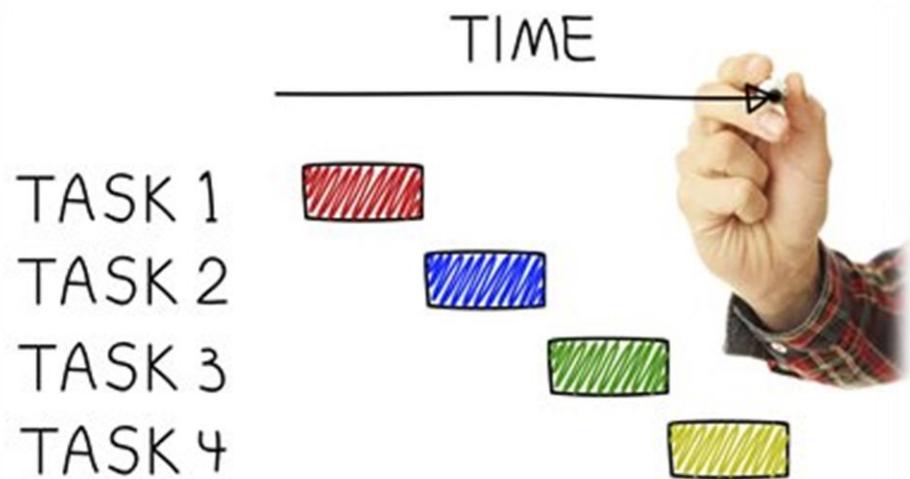
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slapped with multimillion-dollar lawsuits from customers for bad behavior by their technicians. In some cases, their techs were accessing, copying and distributing personal information they gained access to on customers' PCs and laptops brought in for repairs. In other cases, they lost a client's laptop (and subsequently all the data on it) and tried to cover it up.

Bottom line: make sure the company you are hiring has proper insurance to protect YOU.

Question 7. Do they guarantee to complete projects on time and on 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.



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### **NETWORK MAINTENANCE QUESTIONS:**

Question 8. Do they insist on remotely monitoring your network 24-7-365 to keep critical security settings, virus definitions and security patches up-to-date and *prevent* problems from turning into downtime, viruses, lost data and other issues?

Our Answer: Yes, our remote network monitoring system watches over your network to constantly look for developing problems, security issues and other problems so we can address them *before* they turn into bigger problems.

Question 9. Do they provide you with a weekly report that shows all the updates, security patches and the status of every machine on your



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network so you know for SURE your systems have been secured and updated?

**Our Answer:** Our clients get a detailed report that shows an overall health score of their network and the updates to their antivirus, security settings, patches and other important network checks (like hard-drive space, backups, speed and performance, etc.).

**Question 10.** 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 this in written and electronic form at no additional cost. We also perform regular updates 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!

**Question 11.** 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.

**Question 12.** When they offer an “all-inclusive” support plan, is it *truly* all-inclusive, or are their “gotchas” hidden in the fine print?

**Our Answer:** Our “all-inclusive” support plan is just that – **all-inclusive**. One of



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the more popular service plans offered by consulting firms today is an “all-inclusive” or “all-you-can-eat” managed services plan. These are actually a good thing because they’ll save you a lot of money in the long run – however, make sure you REALLY understand what is and isn’t included. Some things to consider are:

- Is phone/e-mail help desk included or extra?
- What about network upgrades, moves or adding/removing users?
- Is hardware and/or software included?
- What about 3rd-party software support? (We recommend that this IS included.)
- What are the costs/consequences of early cancellation?
- What if you aren’t happy with their services? Do they offer a money-back guarantee?
- If the hardware and software is included, what happens if you cancel the contract?
- Are off-site backups included? To what degree?
- If you have a major disaster, is restoring your network included or extra?
- What about on-site support calls? Or support to remote offices?
- Are home PCs used to access the company’s network after hours included or extra?



*Ask SaalexIT  
about our all-inclusive  
Managed Services Product*



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### BACKUPS AND DISASTER RECOVERY QUESTIONS:

Question 13. Do they insist on monitoring an off-site 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 make sure all of our clients have their data duplicated to a cloud-based storage solution and that the data is incrementally backed-up at a schedule that our clients desire.

Question 14. 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?

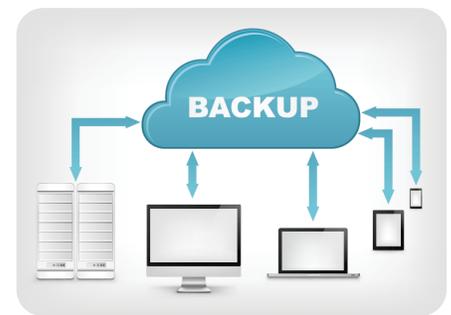
Our Answer: We perform a “fire drill” and perform a test restore from backup for our clients to make sure their data *can* be recovered in the event of an emergency. After all, the WORST time to “test” a backup is when you desperately need it.

Question 15. 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.

Question 16. 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.



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### **TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND SUPPORT QUESTIONS:**

Question 17. Is their help desk US-based or outsourced to an overseas company or third party?

Our Answer: We provide our own in-house help desk and make sure the folks helping you are friendly and helpful. We consider this one of the most important aspects of customer service, plus we feel it's important for keeping your data secure.

Question 18. 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?).

Question 19. Do their technicians arrive on time and dress professionally?

Our Answer: Our technicians are true professionals that you would be proud to have in your office. They dress professionally in their SaalexIT polo shirts, show up on time, and if they cannot (for some odd, unforeseen reason), we always notify the client immediately. We



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believe these are minimum requirements for delivering a professional service.

Question 20. Are they familiar with (and can they support) your unique line-of-business applications?

Our Answer: We own 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.

Question 21. When something goes wrong with your Internet service, phone systems, printers 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 computer guys won't do.

We hope you have found this guide to be helpful in shedding some light on what to look for when outsourcing the support of your company's network. If you have any additional comments or questions, we welcome them! Have an idea to make this guide even more helpful? Let us know! And, of course, if you are looking for someone you can trust to take over the care and maintenance of "all things digital" in your office, we'd love the opportunity to EARN your business.

### ***Call SaalexIT today for a free IT Network Assessment!***

*Saalex Information Technology, LLC (SaalexIT) is a trusted partner in IT support and services, providing technology solutions that are designed to take your business to the next level. No matter what your IT requirements are, the SaalexIT experts can create, implement and support a technology strategy that will fit your business and budget.*

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### ***SaalexIT – The IT Experts. Why Trust Anyone Else?***

