

# 21

# Critical I.T. Security Questions



Better Technology.  
Better Support. Better Business.

# 21 Critical Questions Every Business Owner Should Ask Their IT Company Before Giving Them Access To Your Company's Network

**Don't Trust Your IT To Just Anyone!**

**How To Know If An IT Company Has The Right  
Policies, Procedures And Protocols In Place To  
Deliver Quality IT Services And Support**

**Read this guide and you'll discover:**

- ✓ 21 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.
- ✓ The "dirty little secret" of the IT services industry that most business owners don't realize that puts their organization at HIGH risk for ransomware, data loss and expensive downtime.
- ✓ Why "cheap" or "lowest price" IT companies aren't the bargain they initially appear to be (and how "cheap" IT companies hide their real fees to get you to sign a contract).

**Provided as an educational service by:**

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## **An Open Letter From Robert Faulkner President, Lexii Business Technology Services**

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 ability 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 up front. From misleading information and unqualified technicians to 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, and 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, in ransomware attacks or in 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,



Robert Faulkner, President

## About The Author



**Robert Faulkner** is President of Lexii Business Technology Services and a veteran IT specialist with more than 30 years of experience in the IT services industry. Robert has worked with many companies, from multinational corporations to start-ups, in various industries, ranging from engineering, finance and architectural companies to airlines and wealth management firms. He is an expert in IT infrastructure, development, business continuity and disaster recovery, including application availability, data security and network performance.

Since 1986, Lexii has been providing dependable, affordable, flexible IT managed support services to small-and-medium-sized businesses in Westchester, Southern Connecticut and the surrounding NYC tri-state area. This model provides Lexii's clients an efficient way of outsourcing proactive management responsibilities and functions to improve operations and cut expenses.

## **21 Critical Questions You Should Ask Your Computer Consultant Before Hiring Them to Support Your Network**

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

**Our Answer:** We guarantee to have a technician working on a problem within 60 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.

**Q3: 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. We understand our customers do not have IT training and cannot be expected to understand complex IT jargon so we explain in easy terms so they understand completely.

**Q4: Do they guarantee in writing 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 to complete a project, racking up fees and leaving you with the option to fire them and start over or pony up the money.

**Q5: 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, particularly Bloomberg, Autocad, Bluebeam, Newforma, Raiser's Edge and Office applications. 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.

**Q6: 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.

## **Maintenance Of Your Network**

**Q7: 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.

**Q8: 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.

**Q9: Do they provide you with a weekly report that shows the status of windows updates, antivirus and proactive maintenance running on 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.

**Q10: 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.

**Sidenote:** 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!

**Q11: 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.

**Q12: 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 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 moves or adding/removing users?
- Is hardware and/or software included?
- Are contacting vendors on your behalf (ISP, line of business applications) included?
- What about 3rd-party software support? (We recommend that this IS included.)
- Are off-site backups included? To what degree?
- Do they offer a business continuity/disaster recovery solution
- 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?

## **Backups And Disaster Recovery**

**Q13: 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 these backups 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.

**Q14: 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.

**Q15: 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.

**Q16: 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.

**Q17: 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: 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.

**Q18: 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?).



**Q19: Do their technicians arrive on time and dress professionally?**

**Our Answer:** Our technicians are true professionals who you would be proud to have in your office. They dress professionally, show up on time, and if they cannot (for some odd, unforeseen reason), we always notify the client immediately. We believe these are minimum requirements for delivering a professional service.

**Q20: How quickly to their technicians repair problems?**

**Our Answer:** All of our technicians have fully rounded experience in all of the technology we support and they have immediate access to our senior engineers should they get stuck on an issue. We understand the importance of quickly repairing problems so our customers can get back to production.

**Q21: 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 to 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 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:

- Security patches and updates installed (with new cyber-attacks cropping up *daily*, this is a CRITICAL part of maintaining your network)
- Backup monitoring and test restores
- 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
- Schedule with client Line of business applications, Quickbooks, Sage or other accounting software for updates and version upgrades

All computer networks and the devices connected to them 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 **#1 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 company 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.

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. And do you really 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 that 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 your 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 36 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 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 upsells, 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. During this assessment we will perform a comprehensive audit of your entire network to look for potential problems, security loopholes, spyware and other hidden problems that will cause the computers on your network to run slow, act funny, crash and lose data. (\$497 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 your 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 business 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.lexii.com](http://www.lexii.com)

*Or* call me at 914-923-0161

*Or* e-mail me direct at [rob.faulkner@lexii.com](mailto:rob.faulkner@lexii.com)

Looking forward to meeting you,



Robert Faulkner, President, Lexii Business Technology Services

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 third party reviewing your systems is worth the little bit of time it takes, and this is truly an easy, noninvasive process.



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

## Cost Effective Solution for a Small Firm

What I like best about Lexii is the **response time**. Lexii is **always available** to resolve a problem with any hardware or software **within an hour**. It was a concern of Still Lake Capital not having an in-house IT manager but it has worked out better than we could have expected and is a **cost effective solution for a small firm**. In this industry, prompt response is a large portion of our success and Lexii has aided in making this possible.



**Bruce Martin**  
President & CEO  
Still Lake Capital

## Productivity has effectively increased

"Our experience with Lexii has been exceptional. Since implementing their proactive approach to IT management, our service requests have dropped by 75% and **productivity has effectively increased** because we are no longer spending hours each month troubleshooting and trying to resolve IT issues. Having Lexii as our trusted Technology Management Firm, I have the peace of mind that our needs are being well looked after."



**Dr. Jonathan  
Gorman**  
DDS

## No discernable downtime

"Lexii is an important member of our team. Their proactive approach to support keeps our systems running with **no discernable downtime** and they respond quickly to our questions or if an issue does arise. One would be hard pressed to surpass the quality of service we have received from them. We would highly recommend Lexii to any business looking for IT support."



**Andrew Mintzer**  
President & CEO  
GFI  
Communications

## You can be confident in Lexii

"We are completely computer dependent in this office and cannot function day to day with system problems and deficiencies. If you are too; looking to outsource your Information Technology support, **you can be confident in Lexii's talent**, ability and expertise. We are extremely pleased with the way Lexii looks after us."



**Edward Klotz**  
President & CEO  
23-25 Spring Street

## Their unit cost approach is also refreshing

Our experience with Lexii has been positive in every way. They bring knowledge and experience to the table coupled with helpfulness, responsiveness and commitment.

**Their unit cost approach is also refreshing** in that it is completely predictable and consistent. **The fact that the owner of this company has over 25 years of experience in the corporate world and in the private community in this specific field was the deciding factor in me choosing this specific company.** There are no hidden charges. Our hearty recommendation of Lexii is unqualified and resounding.



**Larry Haggerty**  
President  
Best Humidors

## It all just works

"Technology is a part of today's business world. Lexii understands this and makes having an "IT Department" within reach for any size company. They are very easy to deal with, deliver on their promises and have taken the thinking out of IT for us. Now **it all just works** and if there is a problem we have the peace of mind knowing they will get it taken care of quickly and efficiently. They have made IT a tool for us, not a drain of resources and time."



**Billy Zolna**  
Owner  
4Sixty6 Caterers