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# Choosing a Managed Network Services Provider



## Is Managed Network Services Right for You?

**Every organization reaches a point where they must decide how to manage their network effectively.**

For small to midsize businesses: Should we handle network management ourselves?

For larger enterprises: What parts of network management should we outsource?

If your network meets any of these criteria, it's time to consider managed network services:

- Connects multiple offices, stores, or sites
- Exceeds current access line capacity
- Requires secure connections for mobile and remote employees
- Could benefit from integrating voice and data traffic for cost savings
- Needs to support high-bandwidth applications like video
- Becoming harder to manage with limited staff and budget

Managed network services involve outsourcing the daily operation and management of your network to a service provider. This solution covers various communication services:

- Network Connections: Broadband access (T1, Ethernet, DSL, etc.)
- Remote Access: Secure VPNs (SSL, MPLS) for remote site connectivity
- Network Security: Comprehensive management to secure against intrusions and threats

## Choosing the Right Provider

A managed services provider can consolidate, integrate, and manage all of these network services—giving organizations cost-effective ways to connect their business locations to each other, the Internet, and business partners.

When exploring managed services, finding the right provider is crucial. While large carriers cater to extensive enterprise networks, boutique providers may lack comprehensive network support. Opting for a Managed Service Provider (MSP) ensures scalability and tailored service options.



## Finding the Ideal Managed Network Services Provider

Once you've decided to explore managed services, the next crucial step is identifying the optimal managed network services provider for your organization.

**The landscape of service providers is diverse, offering a wide array of services and management models that can be overwhelming to navigate. Understanding the various types of providers is key to making an informed decision that aligns with your organization's needs.**

When considering managed network services, it's natural to initially consider large telecom carriers. However, it's important to note that while these carriers offer hosted network services to small and mid-sized businesses, their primary focus tends to be on large enterprise networks. Even for large enterprises with dispersed locations and complex network requirements, the solutions offered by these carriers may not always be the most suitable or cost-effective.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are small "boutique" providers that operate under a Bring Your Own Bandwidth (BYOB) model. Here, customers are responsible for arranging their own network links and equipment. While this model may appeal to some, it lacks the advantages of a provider's dedicated MPLS network and comprehensive support for network-based QoS and managed security services.

For most organizations, the ideal MSP typically falls in the middle of this spectrum – a provider that maintains its own robust network infrastructure and offers a broad range of managed services. With such an MSP, you have the flexibility to opt for fully managed network access, security solutions, or a tailored combination that precisely meets your business requirements and internal network management capabilities. Moreover, this type of MSP can scale its services as your organization evolves, ensuring continued alignment with your evolving needs.

By carefully evaluating these factors, you can confidently select a managed network services provider that not only meets your current needs but also supports your future growth and operational goals.

## Best Practices for Selecting an MSP

When embarking on the search for an MSP, you'll encounter numerous companies vying for your consideration.

**How can you effectively assess these providers and their service offerings to make the most informed decision? The following best practices offer invaluable criteria for your decision-making process.**

### Comprehensive Service Offerings

An ideal MSP should prioritize understanding your unique service requirements and deliver tailored solutions that surpass generic offerings. They should provide flexible network connectivity options, ensuring you can select the optimal speed for each user or remote location. Their broadband access services should deliver high-speed, "always on" connectivity as part of a seamless nationwide solution that's easy to deploy, manage, and support.

### Network Operations Excellence

Your chosen service provider should demonstrate unwavering support through proactive monitoring of their data, operating around the clock from a Network Operations Center (NOCs). This dedicated infrastructure ensures optimal performance and provides responsive technical support whenever you need it.

Moreover, they should empower you with comprehensive visibility into network status and performance via an intuitive web-based customer information portal, enhancing service delivery through self-service capabilities.

### Certified Professionals and Strategic Partnerships

Delivering top-tier managed network services necessitates a team of highly skilled and certified network professionals, supported by strategic partnerships with leading equipment and network capacity vendors. When evaluating an MSP, inquire about the certifications held by their staff and their collaborative ventures with key industry players.

### Emphasis on Service Level Agreements

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) serve as critical benchmarks for assessing an MSP's commitment to maintaining superior network performance and availability. These agreements guarantee overall network uptime and stipulate response and resolution times for network issues.

**By adhering to these best practices, you can confidently navigate the selection process and secure an MSP partner that not only meets but exceeds your organization's managed service expectations.**

## Streamlined, Cost-Effective Setup and Management

**Businesses today are achieving heightened operational efficiencies and cost reductions in network expenditures through managed services.**

### Key Benefits of Partnering with a Managed Services Provider Include:

#### Cost Efficiency:

- Enjoy a predictable monthly fee for network and management services, paying only for the utilized networking resources.
- Access cutting-edge network technologies and management expertise without substantial capital investments or ongoing expenses for upgrades, IT staffing, and maintenance.
- Simplify vendor management and reduce network costs with a single point of contact for IT staff.
- Outsourcing expertise eliminates the need to develop costly management and reporting capabilities.

#### Simplified Operations:

- Benefit from proactive management of network services, including 24/7/365 monitoring of connectivity and equipment, automatic fault detection, and responsive trouble resolution.
- Free up your IT staff to focus on strategic initiatives rather than routine network support.
- Well-defined Service Level Agreements (SLAs) ensure prompt response and resolution times for network issues, minimizing disruptions for users.

By leveraging these advantages, businesses can streamline operations, enhance productivity, and achieve substantial cost savings without compromising on network reliability or performance.



## Why Plow Networks?

Plow Networks handles everything from designing networks and deploying them seamlessly to keeping a close eye on performance, managing proactively, providing detailed reports, and offering responsive support.

Plow Networks' managed network services make it easy to securely connect remote locations and users to your network. We simplify operations by giving you a single contact point for efficient management, cutting down on the costs and complications that come with network connections.

Visit [www.plow.net](http://www.plow.net) to learn more.

Or, contact a Plow Networks Account Executive today by emailing [hello@plow.net](mailto:hello@plow.net).

