



## WHAT KINDS OF MSPs OUTSOURCE NOC AND SERVICE DESK?

The short answer is that all kinds of MSPs are outsourcing NOC and Service Desk – but that wouldn't make for much of an article! So given that MSPs making this decision do not conform neatly to a single profile, we should perhaps be looking at *when* MSPs outsource; *why* they outsource; and *what* outsourcing can help them to achieve.

### Does size matter?

It seems not. There is as likely to be interest now from small MSPs needing to access additional resource and modern tools to help them optimise service for their clients, as from big, established players seeking to move up the value-chain and deliver bigger projects to larger companies.

And all shades in between.

### Or where you are in the business life-cycle?

Not really. Outsourcing NOC and Service Desk can be an effective strategy at any stage of your company's life cycle to help you to achieve your business objectives. It's just the drivers and desired outcomes that change.

As a **start-up** MSP your focus is on gaining and retaining your first customers. You are likely to be wearing a number of 'hats' in addition to your day job – sales, marketing, customer relations. Liquidity is likely to be an issue. Outsourcing NOC gives you access to the skills you need but can't afford in-house. You benefit from minimal capital outlay, reduced maintenance/training cost and predictable, controlled OPEX. Plus, you have more time to focus on growing your business.

As you **grow** revenues and customers, you may be finding it difficult to resource new opportunities; looking to differentiate your service from competitors; trying to run the business in a more formal way. Outsourcing at this stage helps you to improve your customers' experience without having to invest in new technology and new skills. You benefit from a scalable solution offering resources on-demand; a pay-as-you-grow approach for a cost-effective business model.

As an **established** MSP, you are expanding rapidly. You worry about retaining customer loyalty and market share; about meeting new customer expectations – and doing it profitably; about how to retain staff and keep them motivated. Outsourcing at this stage offers access to an expert team and the opportunity to automate and benefit from industry best practice. It enables you to move in-house resources away from essential but resource-consuming services such as NOC and Service Desk on to higher value opportunities such as cloud and mobile.

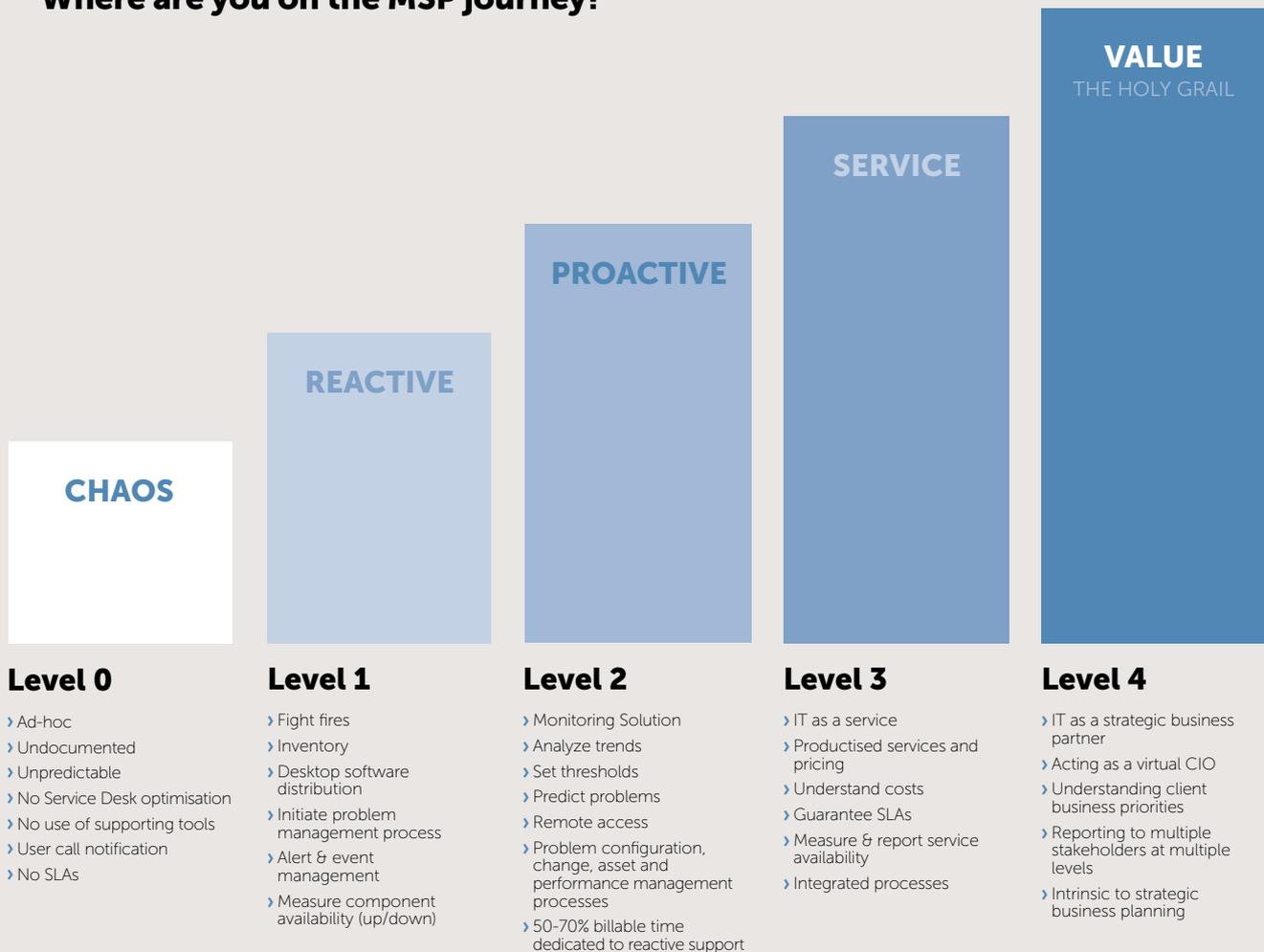
Having reached the **mature** phase of the business life cycle, you are still winning business but competition is fierce. Your main market is becoming commoditised, so you need to differentiate away from price. You are looking to new markets and distribution channels to gain market share and revenue opportunities. How can your existing skills and resources be most profitably deployed? Is international expansion feasible with your existing resources - particularly if this means offering 24/7 support? Outsourcing can help you to **reinvent your company**; to compete more effectively in a crowded market; to move up to servicing larger clients without having to increase head count; to provide full 24/7 support. Crucially, it allows you to focus on building client relationships in value-add areas rather than being distracted by day-to-day 'noise'.

### **Or more specifically, where you are on the MSP journey?**

Why would an MSP outsource NOC or Service Desk? The typical answer according to MSPmentor<sup>1</sup> involves "maintenance vs. innovation": the MSP focuses on higher-margin services and new innovations, rather than mundane (and potentially lower-margin) phone and tech support.

But you can't group every MSP under a 'one size fits all' umbrella. Depending on where you are on the MSP journey, you will be experiencing different concerns, have different motivations – and your own specific goals.

## Where are you on the MSP journey?



## Do you recognise any of the following scenarios?

Are you **'paddling in proactive'** - suffering from 'reactive support fatigue', with 50-70% of your billing time still based on reactive support? Do you have 24/7 phone addiction - just in case a server goes down, an alert is missed, a customer emails at midnight, a router dies... ? Are you really busy – but not necessarily busy making money?

Are you **'circling in service'**? You've stopped worrying about billing time and your clients understand your value much more. But they want even more value, even better availability, greater capacity, improved compliance and higher performance. They want to be able to access all of their devices at any time, from anywhere in the world.

Or are you sitting comfortably? You've reached **the holy grail of MSPs**: you have become a true strategic business partner to your clients. You fully understand and act on your clients' business objectives. You're managing IT as a business level service and acting as a virtual CIO for clients that understand your value.

Whether you are a proactive paddler, a circling servicer or a holy grailer, outsourcing NOC and Service Desk can help you to address the challenges you are experiencing and achieve your goals.

## Proactive Paddlers



How do I move from a time-based billing model?

How can I free up my in-house resources to support this?

I want better clients without increasing headcount to service them

Clients want out of hours support. We can't work 24/7!

## Circling Servers



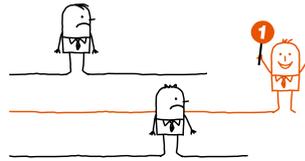
My clients want more for less

How do I scale my team to cope with client demands?

Engineer overload and staff attrition as pressure mounts

Clients want 24/7 support, for everything, everywhere.

## Holy Grailers



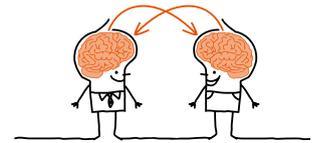
How do I keep competitive, predict my costs and increase my profit margins?

Is my NOC fully automated? How do I get it there?

Am I using my resources cost effectively and how do I retain them?

Who are these big boys on the horizon? How do I compete?

## How outsourcing can help



- › Pay-as-you-grow model designed to help you build predictable recurring revenue
- › No capital outlay required to scale up
- › Predictable controlled OPEX helps you plan

- › Shift the day-to-day grind and free up your team to support the growth you want
- › Scale up (and down) on demand
- › Fast track NOC automation. Use your partner's expertise.

- › Use your partner's team as an additional resource
- › Offload out-of-hours maintenance and other tasks to ease the load
- › Complete projects on time and on budget by using your partner's skilled team as a dual resource

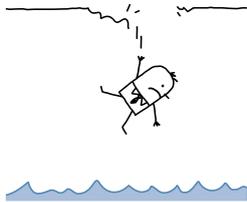
- › Deliver true 24/7 services in any zone
- › Provide 'always on' service to any location
- › Extend and improve your clients' experience
- › Service larger clients with more complex needs
- › Compete on a level playing field with bigger competitors.

## Ensuring a successful outcome from outsourcing

The ability to benefit from outsourcing NOC and Service Desk is not restricted to a specific MSP profile - or to a single set of drivers. Perhaps the very appeal of outsourcing is that it offers 'horses for courses'. Successful outcomes depend not on company size or stage reached on the business or MSP journey; in our experience, the most important determinant of success is that the MSP has 'totally bought in' to the decision to outsource - not just in financial terms, but in adopting the mind-set that this is the right way forward for the business.

This means dispelling up-front any potential concerns – we've included some of the usual culprits here.

### Will I lose control?



No - you'll gain more. More control of your time and more control of your resources.

### Can I trust my outsourcing partner?



Of course. Just check their credentials first. Your outsourcing partner should also be a Certified Partner of the leading automation tools suppliers – for example N-able for RMM and Autotask for service management. They make their partners jump through lots of hoops. Of course, you must check your partner has stringent policies and security in place to ensure your customers' data and credentials are safe – and ask about other industry accreditations too.

### What about my existing team?



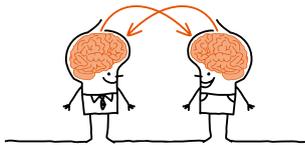
Your team is the bedrock of your business. Your partner's people must play nicely with and complement them - freeing them up for the exciting stuff, and making it easier for you to take on larger, higher-value clients. Your partner should act as an extension of your business, heading in the same direction... yours!

## I already have an in-house RMM guru



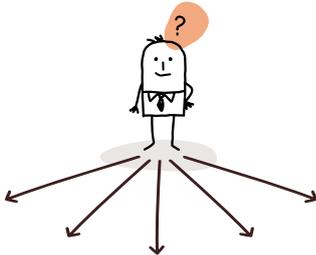
That's great. You can double up your capacity or use your partner's experts for out-of-hours and project support. And even gurus go on holiday, get sick, and sometimes leave for pastures new and usually when you least expect it!

## I already have NOC and Service Desk teams



Not a problem. Use your partner's resources to extend your service to 24/7 or to take on out-of-hours maintenance. They can work as your overflow, cover different time zones, carry out project work, act as a Level 1 barrier, escalate specialist tasks – whatever you need them to do.

## Should we build our own 24/7 NOC?



Some MSPs do - but why re-invent the wheel? It typically involves a lot of hard work, significant capital outlay, a big investment in management time and ongoing operational expense. Not to mention a big chunk of HR worry to find and retain the right staff to work a 24/7 shift pattern.

## WHAT KINDS OF MSPs OUTSOURCE NOC AND SERVICE DESK?

Almost any MSP – with a few provisos.

There should be a clear alignment between your motivation for outsourcing NOC and Service Desk and your higher level business strategy: if you don't know where your company is going, outsourcing is unlikely to be as effective as it could be.

You must have made the mental adjustment to outsourcing NOC and/or Service Desk as being the right way forward for your business. This means understanding exactly what is involved and dispelling upfront any doubts or concerns you or your team may have about the impact on your business.

You should bear in mind that this need not be an 'all or nothing' decision; you can follow your own path, moving forward gradually with flexible service levels that reflect your individual 'DNA'. It just means finding the outsourcing partner that is right for you.

And finally, as in all business decisions, take every opportunity to reduce the risk – whether real or perceived - of moving to outsourced NOC and Service Desk: check out your prospective partner's stability, credibility, client testimonials and, where possible, ask to trial the service on a no-cost, no-obligation basis.

**For more information, please visit:**



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