atema

IT Services **Buyer's Guide** 2027



An easy-to-follow guide showing you how to pick a new IT support partner. *Discover what to look for, what to beware of and the right questions to ask.*

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CHAPTER 1:

The 5 big technology revolutions affecting businesses like yours



Hello, my name's Jack Wetson-Catt and I'm the owner of Atema



Wow... what a crazy few years it's been for business owners and managers like you and me.

Whether you're doing well today or fighting for every bit of new business, you can't have missed the dramatic changes in the technology we all rely on.

I believe we're in the middle of a series of massive and interrelated technological revolutions.

There are 5 areas that I see are directly affecting the businesses my team and I look after:

Revolution 1) AI

Go back a few years to late 2022. And to most people, AI was still a science fiction concept... something that would happen "in the future". Then ChatGPT was released to the public, and the AI race started.

AI tools have been in development for years. But it's only been recently that many people have become aware of them, and have been able to access them through their browsers.

You're using Microsoft's Copilot, ChatGPT, or Google's Gemini, right? Most businesses are now using AI in some form, even if it's just built into the tools they have.

Perhaps you use them for research, to find answers more easily, generate images or create documents?

Or maybe you rely on AI to summarise calls or pull meeting notes together. Many people are benefitting from AI built into the tools they use every day.

It's been an exciting start to this revolution. And it's already moving to the next stage: AI that can figure out what needs to be done, and then get on and do it without being asked.

This is known as agentic AI. It's like giving a smart robot its own task list. It can decide what steps to take, then get jobs done without needing help.

How could that improve your business?



Revolution 2) Hybrid working

The big shift back in 2020 accelerated something that was already gaining huge traction: People want the option to work from home or the office. Or Starbucks.

Technology makes it so easy to work from anywhere. You just need to be very aware of the security implications, and make sure your people can communicate and be productive wherever they choose to work.

The tools for this are developing at an astonishing rate. So, it's always worth reviewing how your business communicates and collaborates.



Revolution 3) The cloud

The idea of being able to work anywhere, any time, on any device, is so easy because of the cloud. Can you remember the bad old days when you couldn't access data unless you were in the office? Unthinkable now.

But as the data has been freed, so we must take greater care of it. The cloud both liberates us and puts us at a hugely increased risk of crime. More on that later.



Revolution 4) Internet of Things

The day your fridge was allowed to go online was surely the day you realised eventually EVERYTHING will be online. Experts predict there'll be nearly 40 billion devices online by 2030.

Great for helping us check how many eggs we have left while we're at the shops. But there are huge security implications too, which affect any business that allows devices to be connected to its network.



Revolution 5) The greatest security risk ever known

This is the revolution that weaves through all the other revolutions... because any time there is change, it creates an opportunity for cyber criminals. And change is constant right now.

I've never seen as many threats to normal businesses as I see today. It's increasing year after year. If you saw everything I saw, you'd be forgiven for not sleeping well at night.

I'm not exaggerating. Cyber criminals are getting smarter. They're using automated tools to target all businesses, all the time.

It really does only take one person to click one bad link in a fake email, and you've unwittingly let them into your entire business. You won't even know they're there until they strike, often within hours, sometimes not for weeks.

There is very clear and solid security 'best practice' that you should make sure everyone in your team sticks to. And I'm constantly assessing new cyber security tools to keep my clients safe. I'd be happy to talk these through with you.

Things are changing at such a pace, it's too easy to feel you are falling behind. Even as technology experts, my team and I work hard to stay on top of everything that's happening.

Let me make it easy for you with a simple technology strategy I believe you should focus on: Defend and Invest.

- **Defend** is about protecting your business from cyber criminals
- **Invest** is about making sure technology is powering your business forward, not holding it back

If you're ready to talk before reading further, jump to chapter 5 to arrange a conversation. Let's see how we can partner to help your business.

I suspect you're reading this guide because you're not 100% happy with your current IT support company and are thinking of changing.

Of course, I'd like you to switch to us!

I've written this guide to help you understand how a trusted IT support partner behaves, and what great IT support looks like.

I'll explain why we genuinely partner with our clients and refuse to become just a supplier. I'll also explain why it's critical you put your IT strategy and data security at the core of your long-term business planning.



CHAPTER 2:

Why business owners & managers switch IT partners



I hear from a lot of businesses who are unhappy with their current IT support provider.

These are the top 10 reasons people want to make the switch to a new and improved IT support partner:

Reason to switch 1

You're not seeing business results

Return on investment is everything. Especially right now. You need to be able to see immediately exactly how hard your IT partner is working for you, and what benefit that work is bringing to your business.

An IT support partner should not only provide a detailed IT strategy for the long and short term, but they should also give you a set of metrics which you can measure results by.

And these metrics should be relevant and important to your business. Not a standard set issued by the IT support partner, made difficult with jargon. I've heard too many stories of IT companies providing vague metrics that are impossible to decipher. Avoid!

Reason to switch 2

Poor communication

This can cover a whole range of issues... from taking too long for them to acknowledge problems... to them not telling you when updates are taking place... or not getting back to you when they say they will...

If we were talking about any other kind of supplier, these gripes might seem petty. But as we know, without working technology, your business can't run as it's supposed to, and these little gripes become huge issues.

Again, this is another way for you to distinguish an IT support provider from an IT support partner.

You need a responsive IT support partner who:

- **Acknowledges issues in good time**
- **Keeps you in the loop of everything you need to know, and**
- **Does what they say they'll do, when they say they'll do it**

Just as your success is their success, your failure is their failure. So, the faster an issue can be resolved, the better it is for both parties.

Reason to switch **3**

They don't take data security seriously

Yes, you read that correctly.

There are some IT support providers, whose job is to keep your data safe and secure, that don't do the same thing within their own business.

They don't make it a priority to keep themselves educated on the latest scams and threats. They can't keep you fully protected.

And they won't go out of their way to ensure every part of your data is as safe as it can be. Or that your software is 100% up to date all the time.

I know... this scares me too...

Is this really a company you'd want to be responsible for keeping your business safe from the growing number of attacks and data breaches?

Reason to switch **4**

They won't go outside of their contract

"Sorry, we don't cover that."

Ever heard that from your IT support provider? Lots of businesses have. But so long as the request relates to your technology, it should be a red flag.

"We don't cover that" suggests a real lack of concern for your business, and that's not how a partner behaves.

A partner actively spends time looking at new ways to improve your network, your data security and your infrastructure. They won't be working rigidly to a one-size fits all contract.

And that's the point. One size doesn't fit all, because every business is unique. Even two businesses in the same street, selling the same product or service will have a different way of working. They'll use different software and devices, have different people working with them and, importantly, have different goals.

You need an IT support partner who will take your goals as their own and do as much as they can to help you reach them.

Reason to switch **5**

Things take too long to fix

Some problems can't always be fixed immediately. Now and then issues take a while to get to the bottom of. Other problems are rare and may demand more diagnostic work.

But in these situations, good communication is key.

It might take a while to see a resolution. But if your IT support partner is keeping you updated at each step, you're confident it's in hand.

Whereas if your support request is still waiting for a response three days later... you've got a problem.

And what if some issues never get fixed at all? Or one thing gets fixed only to break something else?

This is technology we're talking about. It goes wrong. It doesn't always work the way we want it to.

But you absolutely should not be facing issue after issue, waiting days to have problems resolved. You should not face silence when you need help.

All that waiting means downtime for your business. Where's the value for money in that?

Reason to switch 6

They never accept responsibility

When you take on an IT support partner, it's vital that both businesses take responsibility for their side of the agreement.

Failing to do so causes a huge lack of trust. And means the relationship is going nowhere.

I've heard from business owners who have reported an issue to their IT support provider, only to be told that it's their fault that the issue arose!

(despite them following advice and instruction from that company)

I've also heard from business owners who reported issues to their IT support provider, only to be told that they need to contact someone else (such as a software supplier) about the problem.

The idea of an IT support partner is that you trust them to deal with their area of expertise, while you get on with yours. If they're passing the buck when you face a problem, you're not getting the benefit of a support partner at all.

Reason to switch 7

They confuse you with tech talk

If technology wasn't complicated, everyone would be able to take care of their own business infrastructure without a problem.

However, the truth is quite the opposite. It's full of strange words and concepts, and everything changes every 7 minutes! (it seems that way anyway).

It's a minefield if you don't know what you're doing.

The hallmark of a good IT support partner is that they take this complication and make it look easy. Better still, they make it sound easy. They explain things to you without sounding like they're speaking a foreign language.

Again, it all comes down to your connection as partners. If you can't communicate properly with each other, how fruitful is this relationship really going to be? The likelihood is that it'll leave both sides frustrated, and your business won't be able to make the most of the technology it has.

Reason to switch 8

You're not learning

We're not expecting your IT support partner to teach you their job. You don't need to be an expert in IT; that's what you're paying someone else for. However, there should be an element of learning when you partner with an IT company.

For example, you need to learn about cyber security, how to avoid scams, and how to protect your data.

If you're told "let us worry about that", it should ring alarm bells. You can't expect to keep your organisation safe from a data breach or data theft if you don't know what you're trying to protect yourself from.

It's also important that your IT support partner explains what they're doing. You want to have a basic understanding of how your infrastructure works or is set up for you. This will help you to help yourself when a minor issue occurs.

Reason to switch 9

They're always pushing new hardware

Some of our clients complain that their previous IT support providers spent more time pushing new equipment than they did on the fundamentals.

Of course, there's nearly always a genuine upgrade on the cards… an operating system that's had its day, or tired old hardware that can't keep up. So for some, a hardware refresh really is overdue.

And it's nice to have the very latest technology in your business. But it's certainly not vital. There are lots of other things to consider before upgrading equipment and devices. Especially today when you expect value for money and a return on investment.

Yes, your business will need a certain level of equipment for you to operate the way you need to, but you probably already have most of the technology you need.

I find that for most businesses, it's far more important to get the infrastructure right before we consider your hardware. Additional devices, for example, are sometimes nice to have rather than crucial.

A good IT support partner will help you create an IT roadmap, which should detail when in the years ahead you need to budget for upgrades or additional devices.

Reason to switch
10

You've outgrown them

Now, this last one isn't necessarily a bad reason to switch IT support partners. Sometimes, your business just grows too big for a smaller IT company to deal with.

That's great news for you. The difficult part can be knowing when to make the switch. Especially when you're working with a company that you like.

It's worth keeping in mind that:

- **If your support requests aren't being responded to as quickly as you need them to be**
- **Or the recommendations on how best to use technology to grow your business have stopped**
- **Or you need a higher level of support**

... it's in your best interest to find a new IT support partner.

If you've noticed you need more support, your IT support partner has probably noticed too. In fact, if they're good partners, they may even discuss this with you first. Trust me when I say there'll be no hard feelings. No company wants to be out of its depth with clients.

If you've ever felt any of these issues, maybe now is the right time for you to make the switch too?

When you place your technology at the heart of your business growth strategy, you see why it's important to have a partner you can trust.

No business is perfect. Inevitably we get some things wrong for our clients some of the time, because we're human too.

But because my team and I have partnerships with our clients, we're able to have adult conversations and change course quickly. We don't have to spend unnecessary time repairing relationships. Instead, we can set the correct expectations and resolve issues quickly.

CHAPTER 3:

Why you should be highly sceptical of all IT support companies



You probably don't know what you don't know about IT.

Does that make sense? I think that's a fair assumption for me to make.

And why should you concern yourself with the latest tech news, software, and support updates? You're too busy doing what you do best.

You probably read your industry magazines, blogs, visit trade shows, go to conferences, and attend training... you're an expert in your field. That's what experts do. You certainly don't have the time to do all of that for your IT as well.

Would you expect your clients to know as much about your area of expertise as you do? Of course not. That's why they hire you, right?

The same goes for us.

We totally absorb ourselves in the highly technical, high speed, rapidly changing world of technology. We genuinely love it and pride ourselves on having a level of expertise that most people don't.

You'd be shocked how many people consider themselves IT experts, simply because they know their way around computers. However, great IT support partners operate on a completely different level, with better knowledge, tools, and systems.

The biggest problem with IT support is that it's an unregulated industry. There's no governing body that people must pass through to be allowed to call themselves an IT support company. No industry standard that must be met. No guidelines on how the business must operate.

Just about anybody *...literally anybody...* can set themselves up and say they're an IT support company.

This is why I say you should be highly sceptical of all IT support companies.

Without asking the right questions, you don't know if you're putting your trust, and the security of your business data, in the hands of a reputable, honest company... or someone working alone out of a bedroom in their parents' house. A bedroom warrior as I like to call those guys.

Now don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with bedroom warriors. Everyone must start somewhere, and if you're a one-man band with minimal IT requirements, that could be the most cost-effective solution for you.

However, if you own or manage an established, growing business, with staff and more than one computer, you'll need more than one person working from their bedroom can provide.

So how do you avoid choosing the wrong IT support company?

Firstly, look for solidity. You need to check they have the right qualifications, accreditation, and experience. Remember,

it's an unregulated industry, so you really need to do the research if you want to end up with the best IT partner.

Next, ask them some difficult questions.

You don't want to see your potential new IT partner squirm. But you do want to make sure they're going to deliver what you need.

And asking difficult questions is the only way to be sure that you're making the right choice.



"How quickly will problems be fixed?"

Obviously, this will depend on the scale of the problem, but you need to know time frames based on severity. How long will it take your proposed IT support partner to acknowledge your issue in the first place? How long do they expect it'll take to get someone working on the problem?

Look at different scenarios. If you can't access your software, how long should it take to get you logged in? How long could it take to get your business up and running if you suffer a ransomware attack?

You also need to understand the approach your potential new partner will take.

Do they have processes and procedures they stick to when issues arise, or are they winging it? Can they tell you about the worst problem they've encountered and how they dealt with it?

Remember, it's not the problem that you're judging them on, but how they responded to it. This can tell you a lot about their professionalism, knowledge, and ability to remain calm in a crisis.



“What do you do proactively, to make sure my team has fewer interruptions?”

Downtime is a business killer.

You’ll have seen it for yourself at some point, either in your own business or one you were working for. The internet goes down, for example, and people can’t access the software they need to do their jobs. The office descends into chaos.

Even those who aren’t reliant on the internet stop doing what they’re doing. The coffee machine goes into overdrive. Everyone forgets about their job for a while and makes the most of an unofficial break.

But then when things are up and running again, people don’t immediately get back to business. Conversations are finished, systems are rebooted, everyone needs to regain their focus. And that often takes more time. What should have been a 15 minute interruption loses you 90 minutes of work.

And that’s if it’s a minor problem.

So, what can your IT support partner do to minimise this downtime?

Will they be working away in the background, making the necessary checks to ensure that most of these little blips don’t arise? Can they assure you that most updates and maintenance will be done outside of working hours?

Do they have any other solutions that will mean your business maintains productivity while essential work is taking place?

“Tell me about the specific people who’ll be looking after us.”

Though it’s an important question, many businesses overlook this side of things when it comes to working with a partner.

It’s good to know about the people you’ll be working with.

How does your proposed IT support partner assign your account manager, for example? Do account managers have an area of sector expertise? Do they match you on how your personalities may work together? Or do you simply get assigned to the person with the smallest current workload?

Will you always be speaking to the same person? What happens if that person is on holiday or ill? Who will be doing your strategic IT reviews and building your technology roadmap? Who do you talk to if you’re not happy?



This question is a great way for you to get to know more about the company you’re hoping to work with. But it’s also a great way for you to figure out if their people are the right match for yours.

“Can you explain something deeply technical to me in a way I’ll understand?”

With this question, I’m not suggesting that you try to learn the ins and outs of building an IT infrastructure from the ground up. Instead, it demonstrates your potential IT support partner’s ability to explain things to you in English, not tech-speak.

Can they explain a really complicated, technical process to you in a way that you can understand? Do they get frustrated if you ask too many questions? Do they brush you off with ‘you don’t need to know the technicalities of that’?

If you are partnering with someone, it’s vital that you can communicate with each other clearly, without any confusion or breakdown.

It also demonstrates their ability to educate you about the things that matter.

“How will you keep on top of the constant changes in my business?”

It’s no secret that successful businesses deal with a lot of change. From adding new staff members, to tweaking the product or service you offer, it’s likely that your business is forever changing things.

It’s the way we grow.

In fact, your business probably looks very different now to how it looked 12 months ago.

So how will your proposed IT support partner cope with that? How much do they need to know about these changes? Will it affect what they’re doing for you?

It should. Remember, you’re looking for a partner here, not just another supplier. It’s part of their role to be able to make recommendations based on how you’re working. To suggest better software to use, a smoother network, more appropriate security.

If they can’t keep track of how many people are working for you, or the ways you deliver your service, how can they suggest ways to grow, improve and, especially, stay secure?

Look for a new partner who takes an active interest in the changes happening within your business. Perhaps even arrange regular catch-up sessions to ensure they’re on top of everything that’s going on.



There are lots of other questions that you should be asking. But I feel these are the 5 that tell you the most about your potential partner.

CHAPTER 4:

Don’t take our word for it: Here’s what our clients say



I've spent a long time in this guide educating you how to buy an IT support service. I've covered all the bases. And by now you should know what you want and need in your IT support partner.

But it's all very well me, the owner of the business, telling you how a great IT support partner will change your business.

It's time you heard from some of my clients about the reality of working with us.

"After a few weeks of working with Atema I realised it was time to take my hands off the wheel and let them take over. We've seen our systems go from what I thought was already good to absolutely brilliant. Increased network speeds, no downtime, and complete confidence that my data is being safely stored and backed up exactly as it should be."

Justin Jeffrey - Managing Director, Mindvision Ltd

"I'm a lawyer, and IT was never going to be where my time went. Atema take all the worry out of it and just get the job done. Just speaking to them, you can tell they genuinely care. No pressure, no rush, the right thing at the right time. Professional, knowledgeable, but most of all personable."

Richard Bate - Managing Director, Richard T Bate & Co

CHAPTER 5:

What to do next



I hope you've found this guide useful, and it's covered many of the questions you've had about choosing a new IT support partner.

Perhaps it's made you look at your IT support in a different way?

Good news; we're currently taking on new clients again.
That's why I wrote this guide.

I'd really love to talk to you about your business.

If you're serious about working with a new IT support partner to improve your business and contribute to long-term growth, this is your next step:



Book a 15 minute, no obligation video call with me at
www.atema.co.uk/call

You'll see my live calendar on that page.

You and I can check that our businesses are a good fit and arrange a longer video call, or physical meeting (whichever is most appropriate).

Of course there's no obligation to buy anything, ever.

I'm looking forward to speaking with you and learning about your business.

atema

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