



AgileIT

Family-owned managed IT since 2007 | Melbourne & Mornington Peninsula

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR AUSTRALIAN SMBs

10 Questions to Ask Your IT Provider Before Your Next Renewal

Ten questions, with what to listen for in the answers. Use it as a renewal review with your current provider, or as a structured comparison sheet when you are talking to a new one.

How to use this guide

Each question has three parts: **why it matters**, **what a good answer sounds like**, and **what a poor answer sounds like**. The point is not to catch your provider out. The point is to have an informed conversation about whether the arrangement is delivering what your business needs, and where the gaps are.

Prepared by Agile IT Solutions. Family-owned managed IT, cyber security and AI enablement for Australian SMBs since 2007. Founding member of SMBiIT Professionals. Microsoft AI Cloud Partner.



Before you renew

A managed IT renewal is a moment of leverage. Whether you are renewing with your current provider, considering a switch, or starting fresh with a new one, the questions you ask before signing shape the relationship for the next 12 to 36 months. Most businesses sign without asking enough of them, and end up living with the consequences.

These ten questions are the ones we would put to a managed IT provider, in the order we would put them. They are designed to cut through the marketing surface and get at how the relationship actually operates. None of them is a trick; all of them are reasonable questions for any business to ask.



01 Who, specifically, will my business work with?

Why it matters. A managed IT relationship that runs through a rotating ticket queue is different from one with a named account or technical lead. The latter knows your environment; the former is always reading the documentation.

✓ What a good answer sounds like

A named primary contact and a small back-up team. They can name your environment without looking it up.

✗ What a poor answer sounds like

"Whoever picks up the phone" or "our team rotates through your account on a roster".

02 What is your response model and SLA, in writing?

Why it matters. The marketing brochure promises fast response. The contract states what is actually owed and what you can do if it is not delivered. Those are different documents.

✓ What a good answer sounds like

A clear written SLA with response targets by priority level, after-hours treatment defined, and a credit or remedy if missed.

✗ What a poor answer sounds like

Verbal commitments only, with no defined priority levels or remedies. "We try to respond within an hour" with no obligation behind it.



03 How often do we meet to talk about the business, not just open tickets?

Why it matters. Strategic conversations only happen if they are scheduled. Without them, the relationship reduces to ticket-handling and the IT spend slowly stops aligning with the direction of the business.

✓ What a good answer sounds like

Quarterly business reviews as part of the standard service, with a documented agenda covering risk, planning, and roadmap.

✗ What a poor answer sounds like

"We catch up when needed" or "annual review on the anniversary". Strategic conversations have to be ritualised, not opportunistic.

04 What security framework do you align to?

Why it matters. Cyber security without a framework is opinion. A framework gives your business a measurable position and a clear next step. In 2026, "we have security covered" without naming a framework is a flag.

✓ What a good answer sounds like

A named framework: SMB1001, the ASD Essential Eight, NIST, ISO 27001. Stated maturity level, and what is included in the managed service vs. what is an add-on.

✗ What a poor answer sounds like

"We follow industry best practice" or "we have multi-factor authentication". Neither is a framework; both are individual controls.



05 What is included in the monthly fee, and what is billed separately?

Why it matters. A per-user fee is comparable to another per-user fee only when you know what is included. The difference between two quotes is often "what counts as a project" and "what counts as out-of-scope".

✓ What a good answer sounds like

A written inclusions list. A clear definition of what is included in the monthly fee, what is billed as a project, and what is out-of-scope, with examples of each.

✗ What a poor answer sounds like

"Most things are included" or "we will let you know if something is out of scope before billing". You should know before signing.

06 How do you handle backups, and how recently was a restore tested?

Why it matters. Most businesses with backups discover at the worst possible moment that a backup that ran successfully is not the same as a restore that works. Restore testing separates real backup protection from theatre.

✓ What a good answer sounds like

Backups for Microsoft 365 (not assumed, this is not Microsoft's responsibility), offsite or immutable copies, restore tests documented within the last 6 months.

✗ What a poor answer sounds like

"Backups run nightly" without restore testing. Or worse, an assumption that Microsoft backs up Microsoft 365 data, which they do not.



07 How long do your average clients stay with you?

Why it matters. Long-tenured clients are the strongest signal that a managed IT relationship delivers value over time. Short tenure is rarely the client's fault.

✓ What a good answer sounds like

Multiple clients of 5+ years. The provider can name them. They will introduce you to two or three for a reference call.

✗ What a poor answer sounds like

High turnover with vague reasons, or only short-tenured clients. "Our clients usually stay until they outgrow us" without specific case studies of growth supported.

08 What does onboarding look like, including cost?

Why it matters. Onboarding is when the new provider does the work that puts your environment in a supportable state. A cheap onboarding figure often means a short onboarding, which means the new managed service starts on top of unresolved issues from the old environment.

✓ What a good answer sounds like

A documented, multi-week onboarding plan with discovery, documentation, remediation, and parallel-running phases. Cost stated up-front, scoped to your environment's complexity.

✗ What a poor answer sounds like

"Onboarding is included" with no defined scope or duration. Or no onboarding at all, with the new MSP taking over the existing setup as-is.



09 What is your offboarding process if we decide it is not working?

Why it matters. A provider that has not thought about offboarding is one that depends on lock-in. A provider that has a documented offboarding process is one that treats the relationship as a partnership.

✓ What a good answer sounds like

A clean documented process: credentials returned, documentation handed over, administrative access removed, no per-day exit charges. Reasonable notice period (30 to 90 days).

✗ What a poor answer sounds like

No documented process. Long notice periods (12+ months). Hostility or evasiveness when the question is asked. Hidden exit fees in the small print.

10 Can I speak to two or three current clients of a similar size and industry?

Why it matters. A reference call is the closest thing you will get to a real test before signing. A provider that cannot or will not provide references is either inexperienced in your space or low on satisfied clients.

✓ What a good answer sounds like

Three or more contactable references, of similar size and industry, with clients who have been with the provider for two or more years.

✗ What a poor answer sounds like

"Our clients are very busy" or generic references that turn out to be acquaintances rather than active managed-IT clients. Reluctance to provide any reference at all.

After the conversation

You will not get ten perfect answers from any provider. Use the questions as a framework, not a pass/fail. The shape of the answers tells you a lot:

Strong signals

- ✓ Specific people named for roles and responsibilities
- ✓ Written SLAs, written inclusions list, written offboarding process



- ✓ A framework named for security, with maturity level stated
- ✓ Restore testing documented, with a date inside the last 6 months
- ✓ Three contactable references at similar size and industry
- ✓ Clear, scoped onboarding with a written plan and cost

Warning signs

- ✗ Generic answers, hedged commitments, or "trust us" language
- ✗ Reluctance to put anything in writing that was committed verbally
- ✗ No named primary contact, or a different contact for every interaction
- ✗ "Best practice" or "industry standard" instead of a named framework
- ✗ No documented offboarding process, or a long notice period (12+ months)
- ✗ Pressure to sign before all questions are answered

Want a second pair of eyes on the answers?

Agile IT runs a free 45 to 60 minute discovery conversation, on-site or via Microsoft Teams. We walk through what you are looking for, where the gaps are, and whether we would be a sensible next step for your business. No quote pushed, no obligation.

Book a discovery conversation at agileit.com.au/contact.html
or call 1300 859 910 and ask for the team.



About Agile IT Solutions

Agile IT is a family-owned managed IT, cyber security and AI enablement business, founded in 2007. We work with small and medium businesses across Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula. Our service is delivered through the AgileMANAGED platform: one accountable partner across IT support, cyber security, AI, business voice and connectivity.

We are a founding member of SMBiIT Professionals, the Australian peak body for managed IT services serving the SMB market. We are a Microsoft AI Cloud Partner. Our security work is aligned to the SMB1001 framework and the ASD Essential Eight.

How we work

Every engagement starts with a discovery conversation, either on-site or via Microsoft Teams. It is 45 to 60 minutes, free of charge, structured around five themes, and ends with you in control of the next step. There is no quote pushed at the end.

Get in touch

Phone: 1300 859 910

Web: agileit.com.au

Email: admin@agileit.com.au

Mornington: Building C 6/41 Watt Rd, Mornington VIC 3931

Melbourne: Level 2/88 Jolimont St, East Melbourne VIC 3002

This guide is offered as general orientation for Australian SMBs evaluating a managed IT relationship. It is not legal or compliance advice. For advice tailored to your specific environment and obligations, talk to a qualified provider or your trusted advisors.