

What to Look for in a Digital Transformation Partner

There are far too many businesses attempting to take on digital transformation (DX) alone and 84% of companies fail in the transition process. The good news is that you're reading this, which means that you've made the wise decision to consider a partner for this important company growth initiative. However, finding a partner can feel just as daunting as choosing the right software for your business needs, if not more so. In order to help with your decision, we have provided a checklist of "must haves" when qualifying candidate IT support providers.

5 Things to Look for When Choosing a Partner for Your Company's Digital Transformation

1. Prior Success in Digital Transformation for SMBs and SMEs

When qualifying any business to serve any need, B2B and B2C consumers alike want to know if there are prior successes to reference. This is as true of IT services providers as much as it is Realtors. Simply put, you want to know if a candidate firm has a track record in helping other SMBs or SMEs increase the adoption of business technology to great success. Your prospective partner should be upfront about their past and current results. If they can't be verified, you may have cause for concern.

2. Provision of Custom Solutions

There are a lot of IT firms out there that can offer DX for businesses of all sizes, but for the sake of scalability, many of them serve a pre-packaged solution. The problem is that no IT need or goal is identical. For instance, you may not need a fully managed solution, as you may already have IT staff that is well versed in one area but lags in another, and therefore to complete your digital transformation you need a partner that can fill the gaps, so to speak. In such a case, a partner firm must be willing to work alongside your in-house IT to help manage the day-to-day or to focus on specific projects.

Alternatively, you may have nothing in place, and to date, you've just had contracted individuals or firms set up a piecemeal solution that no longer serves your needs. In such a case an IT provider would need to handle everything from infrastructure and server maintenance to set-ups and day-to-day support requests.

You need to make sure your partner can account for your unique needs. A fully managed services provider that doesn't offer you a dedicated IT solution, be it for one area or all, is not a fully managed services provider. And if the latter is the case, they cannot truly manage your digital transformation.

3. Expertise in Cybersecurity and Compliance

Yes, digital transformation opens up your business to increased cybersecurity risk. However, the increased productivity and revenue potential that comes with DX is too great to ignore. Therefore, there is only one conclusion to be had - any partner in DX must have expertise in cybersecurity. We're not talking about traditional antivirus and firewalls folks, but advanced threat protection, enterprise-level tools that leverage AI and machine learning for endpoint security. It's not just malware/ransomware your partner needs to protect you from, you need to mitigate the threat of spear phishing, exploitation of holes in prior cloud migration, hijacking of business IoT, attacks on vulnerabilities in operational technologies, crypto-mining, and other ever-evolving methods.

However, when SMBs hear the word "enterprise" they tend to fear the cost of the protection as much as they do the cost of a cyberattack. After all, if you're spending more on IT security than you would in the event of a hack (excluding compliance fines, that is), then what's the point? This is where finding the right DX partner is everything. If your candidate provider doesn't offer enterprise-level cybersecurity solutions made affordable through vendor partnerships then walk away, and find someone who does.

In addition, you need a firm that will help ensure that your business remains in compliance with recent updates to Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) and the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Be sure to pose that question to prospective partners.

4. Expertise in Disaster Recovery

The biggest worry for a business preparing to increase the digital transformation of operations is "downtime". You're not just worried about your website going offline, but other valuable tools and functions including email, security applications, inventory management processes, manufacturing capabilities, payment systems, and even IoT-based office/shop utilities. Years ago, when so many things depended upon on-premises systems and servers, this concern was certainly justified. Any disaster from a hack to a hurricane could shut down a business' operations and render them incapable of serving customers/clients for a day or even weeks. There are many SMBs that would have to shut down in such an event.

However, when your business connects to an enterprise-level cloud-based productivity solution, everything is backed up in real time, and ready to recover just as fast. An IT disaster recovery expert offering robust cloud solutions delivers not just data back up but will inspect systems and repair/replace/update/upgrade as needed. They will help you institute a system of reporting to meet privacy compliance mandates, and provide ongoing monitoring and testing so that your risk mitigation process evolves with the marketplace.

You no longer need to fear the ramifications of a digital shutdown, not when you partner with the right IT support firm. Learn more about how to better prepare your business for disaster recovery in the digital age.

5. Offers SMBs Affordable Access to Enterprise DX Tools

Some key qualifiers above reference the fact that enterprise business tools remain to be the most effective means to successful digital transformation. Any DX partner that can provide this access, at a fraction of the cost of sole purchase, is a partner you need.

For example, one business tool that delivers robust cloud productivity while offering enterprise-level data security and compliance is Microsoft 365. What you'll be happy to know is that MS 365 partners with key leaders in IT support services in Canada. In establishing carefully curated partnerships with a select few IT support firms and Cloud Solution Providers (CSP) in the country, Microsoft opens up access to their enterprise tools for SMBs and SMEs alike. So when you find a Microsoft Gold Partner and Certified CSP, you too can leverage the power of Microsoft 365 Enterprise products and services as they apply to all of your needs. This is one key qualifier that is easy to validate.

Admittedly, we may have been leading the witness with the qualifications provided above, as Fully Managed checks all the right boxes. Nevertheless, digital transformation is our business, and we're here to make it a part of your business' success in 2019 and beyond.

Contact us today for a conversation about what we will do for you as your Managed Services Provider and partner.

For more information visit us at www.FullyManaged.com