


# SUPPORT THE SYSTEMS YOU DEPEND ON...

A photograph of three office workers in a busy office. A man in a purple shirt and glasses is in the foreground, looking at a large document. Two women, one in a light green cardigan and one in a red jacket, are standing behind him, also looking at the document. The office is filled with desks, papers, and office equipment like a printer and a scanner. The lighting is bright and warm.

Don't risk financial, productive or reputational losses by not supporting the technology your business relies on. **Heather Hardy**, Business Manager of Skipton-based IT support reseller, Support Warehouse, offers her advice

**O**rganisations have come to depend on IT, and the systems and technology you are running may be critical to the success of your business. Whether you are running your retail activities through an EPOS system or you store your customer data on your IT networks, it is likely that your revenue, reputation and/or productivity are dependent on technology.

When you buy a piece of hardware it will come with a manufacturer's warranty. This is effectively a promise to repair or replace the product should something go wrong within a specified time period after purchase, normally between 1 and 3 years.

But what do you do once the standard warranty has ended? Or what if the standard support is not enough? You will probably still rely on the piece of equipment; it may still be critical to the operations of your business and any problems with it would cause financial, reputational or productive losses.

## “Leaving the hardware unsupported leaves your organisation open to risks.”

To mitigate against these threats you can probably purchase a post-warranty support package to cover your hardware once the original support has ended. Read our top tips to consider when purchasing IT support.

It's easy to think about IT support in the same way you would your car breakdown insurance. On the one hand, you may happily drive around for a whole year without ever needing to call out the breakdown company. Alternatively, you might experience several breakdowns throughout the policy period which, without cover, could have cost you significant amounts of money, time and inconvenience. Likewise, you may never need to take advantage of your IT support, or your laptop might die the day before you have to deliver a big presentation and is only fixed on time because you took out IT support in advance.

### IT support considerations

No matter who manufactured your IT hardware, it is probable that you will be notified when your initial standard warranty is about to expire. You then have the choice to renew the support or take the risk and leave your hardware unsupported. But how do you decide which choice to make?

- Firstly, you need to assess the importance of the

piece of kit to the smooth running of your business. Companies in different sectors and of varying sizes use IT technology in varying ways. A sole trader or small business might rely on a laptop, with valuable business information stored on the device; support would be essential should something go wrong with it. Enterprise businesses however may not rely on a single laptop, but should something go wrong with their servers, for example, this would be critical for them.

- Next, you need to think: if it broke down or became unavailable, how long could you do without the IT kit? Would productivity slow down or stop? Would your reputation be damaged in your customers', investors' or suppliers' mind? Would you lose money with every passing hour that went by with the problem unresolved?

- If you did not have support on the IT equipment, how easy would it be to replace should something go wrong with it? Could you simply pop to the nearest IT dealer and buy a new version? Would you be at risk from losing data or important business information? Would your workforce be forced to stop or would it take you or your IT staff away from more business-critical activities?

- A standard warranty will cover your equipment at a basic level but this may not be enough to cover your critical IT assets such as a server. Before the standard warranty has finished or soon after you may choose to upgrade the support service level you were initially covered by. You may even need to consider mission-critical support services if you decide that you cannot afford any unplanned downtime whatsoever.

Once you have asked yourself these questions and decided that IT support is necessary, you should look into renewing the support on your IT equipment.

### Ask the experts

Talk to your IT reseller or the manufacturer of your IT hardware if you want information on the support options available. Your reseller should be able to offer you advice on the most appropriate support to ensure that the hardware you rely on is always covered. It can also be confusing for customers to select the most appropriate support product for each item of hardware. Your reseller will try to establish how critical the equipment is in keeping your business running smoothly.

## CONSIDERATIONS AND BENEFITS

### Considerations

- How crucial is each piece of IT equipment to the smooth running of your business?
- How long could you cope without the use of the IT equipment?
- How easy would it be to replace the IT equipment in terms of money, time and inconvenience?
- Is the standard warranty support adequate?
- Is it cheaper and convenient to replace the product if something goes wrong?

- Will you want to renew support when the standard warranty period comes to an end?

### Benefits

- Minimises downtime and maintains high levels of customer service
- Provides peace of mind
- Proven to be cost effective, especially if you do not have an IT department
- Allows your IT staff to focus on more business critical and productive activities