



Customer Education Series

Money Saving Secrets Your Computer Consultant Doesn't Want You To Know

The Most Comprehensive Business Owner Manual on
Hiring the right IT Support and Avoiding Expensive
Mistakes

Money-Saving Secrets Your Computer Consultant Doesn't Want You To Know

**This Free Business Advisory Report Will Show You
How To Avoid Hiring The Wrong Computer
Consultant, Spending Money That You Don't Have To,
and Start Making Smart Decisions About The
Technology That Runs Your Company**

Read this guide and you'll discover:

- ✓ 7 critical things you should know, research, or ask before signing any contract or inviting a consultant to work on your network.
- ✓ The one type of consulting contract you NEVER want to sign.
- ✓ The single best way to avoid misunderstandings that delay your project, frustrate you, and add to the overall costs.
- ✓ A little-known way to save thousands of dollars in ongoing support costs.
- ✓ Surefire ways to know if the consultant you are hiring is competent AND honest.

Provided as an educational service by:

Amir Sachs
BlueLight IT
8711 Glades Rd. Suite 212 Boca Raton, FL 33434
561-282-2225
www.Bluelightit.com

Introduction:

Finding an honest and capable computer consultant is a lot like finding an honest mechanic; they both operate in fields where the technician can easily rip-off a client because they play on their customer's lack of technical knowledge. The problem is that you won't know you've hired the wrong consultant until you are halfway into your project and have already invested a considerable amount of time and money.

Sometimes it's not even that obvious. A consultant may *look* like they are doing a good job, but unless you are technically savvy yourself, you simply have no way of knowing if they have over-billed you or recommended technology that you could have lived without just to pad the bill a little.

On the flip side, a good computer consultant will save your company a considerable amount of time, money, and frustration while increasing office productivity, lowering overall operation costs, improve customer service, and helping you avoid devastating data losses and viruses.

That is why I've decided to write this paper.

As a small business owner and consultant myself, I want to arm other business owners with a few good pointers to help them avoid getting the short end of the stick when outsourcing any IT project or support.

After all, your computer network is the nerve center of your business. It largely affects productivity, security, and even the competitive advantage of your organization. One bad decision can severely cripple an organization through lost productivity, data, or excessive costs.

Below are **7** critical things you should know, research, or ask before signing any contract or inviting a consultant to work on your network. By practicing or being aware of these 7 simple tips, you can:

- Begin saving your organization a considerable amount of money.
- Avoid making a bad decision by hiring the wrong consultant or firm.
- Save yourself hours of frustration and time that come with making a bad decision.

#1: Ask computer consultant to let you or your staff to get involved with the project so you can learn to be more self-sufficient and shave off billable hours.

One of the easiest ways to save money on technical support is by learning how to handle the many basic, routine computer support problems that arise in-house. That is why you want to be involved with any project being rolled out.

Many consultants or firms will want to keep you in the dark because the less you know, the more billable hours they can rack up on mundane tasks that could be handled in-house. We don't think this is correct, and that's why we always try and involve our clients.

Let me illustrate this point with a story:

One client of ours needed to implement a backup solution to their network of **550** workstations. Obviously they had to go through an installation on every PC. Instead of having us configure every machine, we assisted them in implementing a network auto installation.

By doing this, we saved this client over **\$17,532 in billable hours, guided their own IT team on the best practices and made their IT manager a hero.**

We have been able to save several of our clients a considerable amount of money by teaching them how to solve and fix problems while we do it. Unless you just don't want to get involved, we highly recommend this as a way to save a considerable amount of money on tech support.

#2: Always ask for fixed pricing.

This is one area where I see a lot of companies getting burned. When most consulting companies quote a project, they give you an estimated cost for completion with an hourly rate added in for "unexpected events" that may arise during the project. This is often called "time and materials". Be very careful about signing these contracts.

A good consultant should be experienced enough to have thoroughly investigated your situation and thought through problems and issues that may arise before issuing a proposal. Adding on a clause where they can charge you for extra hours is a safety net for them. If their consultant screws up, takes longer than they should, or if they overlooked something when quoting the job, YOU end up paying the price. Next thing you know you're well into the project and the bill ends up being twice as much as you expected.

#3: Make sure whoever you hire is certified or endorsed by the software vendor you are using.

If you are upgrading or installing new software, it's always a good idea to work with a consultant or company that is certified or authorized by that vendor to support their software. This is a good idea for two main reasons:

1. Certified consultants and companies are required to uphold higher standards in service and support than their non-certified counterparts because they are regulated by the vendors. You may be able to find a good, non-certified consultant, but you are gambling.
2. Certified vendors usually have more in-depth knowledge about the products they support because they are required to (by the vendor), and because they work with it frequently.

However, a vendor's seal of approval doesn't excuse you from doing any of the necessary background checks on their consultants.

Check the level of expertise and experience with the consultants that will be working on your project. Don't assume that your tech support company will be providing you with top-notch consultants.

Find out exactly which individual consultants will be put on your project, and check their backgrounds, experience, and certification. If at all possible, get assurance in writing that at least one senior level consultant will be a key player in your project. This up-front homework will help you avoid making a bad (and expensive decision) when hiring a computer consultant or firm.

#4: Ask to speak to a few of their recent clients who have had similar problems or projects.

This seems obvious, but a lot of companies skip over this step. Ideally, you want to speak to other clients who had a similar project or problem, but this isn't always possible since every company's network and computing needs are different. You do want to speak to a few recent clients to find out:

- Did they deliver on what they promised?
- Were they responsive and easy to get hold of in times of emergency?
- Did they bill accurately?
- Did they stay within the projected budget?
- Would you use them again? Why or why not?

You might also ask if there were any problems that arose and how the consultant handled them. Not every project goes perfectly; that is why it's important to find out how the consultant handles problems before you hire them. If your consultant seems hesitant to provide you with references, take that as a red flag.

#5: Make sure you're completely clear on your end before signing any contract or spending a dime.

A lot of businesses are reluctant to outline a complete high-tech project because they lack confidence in the area of technology, but we can't stress the importance of this enough.

Don't be afraid to ask your consultant to explain the project in simple terms that are clear to you. Ask questions like, "Tell me why this is absolutely necessary?" or, "What does that mean exactly?", or "Explain to me exactly how this will work, once it is done, on a user level."

A good consultant will welcome these questions and be more than happy to answer them because it will eliminate a lot of disappointment and frustration for both of you. Doing this will help you avoid expensive misunderstandings that can pop up in the middle of a project and put you well over budget.

#6: Get everything in writing.

Once you are clear on the end result you want and how it is going to happen, get everything in writing to avoid confusion and disappointment further down the road. If your consultant feels that some goals are unachievable, then it is their responsibility to tell you so up-front. By getting them to put everything in writing you can hold them accountable for the promises they make and responsible for outcomes not achieved.

Here are the main details you want to agree to in writing:

- **Confirm payment terms.** This includes up-front deposits, fee structure, and payments on completion of project. Most consultants work with an up-front down payment, then percentages of the total cost to be paid as phases of the project are completed.
- **Deliverables.** What do you expect to be able to do when the project is done? How should the work flow? What does it look like? Don't assume anything; if you expect it to happen, get it in writing as specifically as possible.
- **Work schedule and pace.** Make sure you outline a date for completion as well as the phases of delivery.

Again, any professional, experienced computer consultant will be more than happy to outline these items in writing prior to a project. If they hesitate or make excuses, it is a sign they are not confident in their ability to deliver on their promises.

#7: Do business with “one-man-bands” carefully.

One big mistake we see a lot of business owners make is hiring a very small one-man-band consulting firm, or relying on someone who is supporting your network on the side (moonlighting). By doing this they think they are saving a lot of money because these individuals typically charge less than established computer networking firms.

The challenge comes when they can't respond to your emergencies or complete your projects on time because they have too many clients. Or, they simply go out of business because they can't make enough money leaving you high and dry.

Basically, as with all things in life, you get what you pay for. If you have mission-critical applications and data that must be protected and working 24/7, then it makes sense to hire a well-established firm with a good track record and enough technicians on staff to quickly respond to any technical emergencies that arise.

5 Guarantees We Make To Our Clients That No Other Technology Firm or Consultant Would Dare To Make:

1. We GUARANTEE 1-hour response time to network emergencies.

When your computer network goes down in the middle of a busy work day, you need it fixed **immediately** so your employees aren't sitting around taking a \$10,000 coffee break waiting for their computers to come back online. As a client of ours, we guarantee to respond to any crisis within 1 hour of your call if not sooner.

2. We GUARANTEE to provide you with the most cost-effective solution to your problem or we'll refund the difference. As a business owner myself, I understand the importance of keeping overhead and costs to a minimum. That's why I require that all of our technicians be trained to find the least expensive solution to your problem without sacrificing quality.

If you find a better, more cost effective solution than the one we provided you, simply show it to us and we will happily refund you the difference. We can boldly make this guarantee because I am certain that we never over-charge clients for expensive upgrades, hardware, and solutions that aren't 100% necessary.

3. We GUARANTEE to solve your computer problem right the first time to your satisfaction or it's FREE. A money-back guarantee is unheard of for computer support companies, and you will be hard-pressed to find anyone else who dares to offer one.

We can offer this with total confidence because we take extra steps up-front to make sure we thoroughly understand your problem and create a well thought out approach in advance for solving it. This enables us to avoid mistakes and overlooked issues that would delay the completion of your project and cost extra in billable hours. We maintain a **99% fix it right the first time** track record. If you are not satisfied with our technicians or the work completed, simply give us a call and we'll refund that entire day's work.

4. Guaranteed Completion Date of Your Project. When you hire us, you can rest assured that your project won't be dragged out over days and weeks. I guarantee your project will be completed to your satisfaction on time or we will give you a \$500 rebate off your bill.

5. Guaranteed Certified Technicians And No Bait & Switch With Juniors. You can rest assured that your project will be handled by our own seasoned, qualified, and courteous technical professionals. In addition to years of hands-on experience, our technicians maintain vendor certifications in Microsoft, Cisco, and Citrix, as well as being Certified Document Imaging Architects.

We require ALL of our staff to complete ongoing training to ensure we are up-to-date on the latest technologies and solutions. You won't find a better qualified team of professionals anywhere else.

Services We Offer

- **Network Monitoring**
- **Business Data Backup and Recovery Services**
- **Offsite Backup and Colocation**
- **Server Maintenance**
- **Desktop Maintenance**
- **Software Patch Management**
- **Complete Network Design and Deployment**
- **IT Network Upgrades**
- **Business Continuity**

For a complete list of our additional services please visit www.bluelightit.com

! FREE !
Problem Prevention Network Audit
For All New Business Clients

As a prospective customer, we would like to offer you a \$297 Problem Prevention Audit of your computer network for FREE.

During this audit we will do a comprehensive 27-point check of your entire network to look for security loopholes, spyware, viruses, and other problems that can cause your network to run slowly, act funny, crash, and lose data.

At no charge or obligation, we will send a technician onsite to:

- ✓ Scan for hidden spyware, malware, and viruses that MOST anti-virus tools and software can't detect or won't remove.
- ✓ Check for critical security updates and patches
- ✓ Review your firewall and security settings
- ✓ Check the integrity of your hard drive
- ✓ Audit your virus definitions and protection
- ✓ Review your backup system

We can also answer any questions you have, diagnose any specific problems you have been experiencing, and even give you a free second opinion on a project you are considering.

How To Request Your FREE Problem Prevention Audit:

BlueLight IT
8711 Glades Rd. Suite 212 Boca Raton, FL 33434
561-282-2225
www.Bluelightit.com
Email: shaul@bluelightit.com