# In-house or outsourced, right IT partner vital to data security

Whether they like it or not, many human resource professionals have been indirectly thrust into the responsibility of data protection. The growing concern of internal security threats - including disgruntled employees and rogue IT professionals - has put a tremendous strain on HR to hire the "right" IT personnel.

**I.T. OUTSOURCING**

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In fact, according to the 2006 CSI/FBI Computer Crime and Security Survey, 39% attribute a substantial portion (20% or greater) of their organization's losses to insider threats. However, security isn't the only issue with regard to hiring IT personnel. Other risks of in-house IT personnel include:

**High turnover rates.** IT spending is on the rise as organizations scramble to gain a technological edge in the marketplace. Historically speaking, when the demand for IT professionals increases, employee retention rates dwindle. Managing IT in the 21st century demands a higher degree of trust and a better understanding of a organization's needs, and high turnover rates within your IT department can be detrimental.

**Evolving technological advancements**. Technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace and new virus and hackers threats continually threaten the security of an organization's IT system. Meanwhile in-house IT personnel are expected to keep track of business needs, work with tight budgets, limited resources and time constraints – leaving little or no time to keep up with technology trends and/or security updates.

**Multi-level IT expertise:** Like any industry, IT has specified areas of expertise. While most IT experts are knowledgeable in a few areas of IT expertise, it is unlikely that he/she has the time or resources that outsourcing can provide.

**Is Outsourcing the Answer?**
The growing number of data integrity issues has led many business leaders and HR professionals to outsource a portion or all of the IT function. Outsourcing in general, has a twofold benefit: Employees are freed to focus on strategic initiatives that grow the business; and non-core tasks are run more efficiently.

However, outsourcing hasn't been successful for all organizations. In fact, more than 30% of customers have been dissatisfied with their outsourcing results. Many experts attribute this to the reactive business model of many IT outsourcing providers – i.e. when problems arise, they react accordingly. Trusting an internal IT system to an outsourcer that makes a living off your "constant" IT problems can lead organizations that outsource down a slippery and costly slope.

In other words, an ideal IT outsourcer should **thrive off an organization's** successes**, not its failures**.

Many business owners are finding an attractive alternative in an IT outsourcing concept called 'utility computing'. Much like a utility company provides electricity or water, utility computing delivers all the necessary computing resources to businesses. With utility computing, large capital outlays in IT infrastructure are replaced with a monthly fee. All support costs are eliminated by the help desk of the utility computing provider.

Since the utility-computing provider delivers all the necessary business computing resources, organizations don't actually invest in the equipment and, more importantly are no longer responsible for the upkeep of its IT systems – the provider is. Any costs involved in troubleshooting or maintenance are incurred by the provider.

The formula is simple: The utility computing provider delivers technology resources and charges the client company per user. As technology becomes less of a burden, the client company expands and subsequently adds new users, giving them peace of mind knowing that to succeed the provider must help them thrive first.

Utility computing has also become a key component in an organization's crisis planning. In the event of a natural disaster or terrorist act, the inherent remote capabilities of utility computing allows HR professionals to send its employees to a secure location to keep the flow of business communication during a crisis.

Given the daunting task and rising costs of recruiting, selecting, and training/development of IT professionals, HR professionals might be wise to advocate the outsourcing route. But beware of those outsourcers that 'run the meter' whenever problems arise. A true IT partner should take a more proactive approach and share the risk of the organization it serves.

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