

THE SHOW-ME BANKER



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(see article page 12)*

Sometimes I.T. Makes You Want to Drink ... *But It Shouldn't!*



BY TODD NIELSEN, JMARK

JMARK had a lot of fun at the MIBA Annual Convention. If you entered the convention area, you surely saw us with our bar theme and free Missouri beer. Our theme, “Sometimes I.T. Makes You Want to Drink,” was chosen to be fun — as well as a little tongue-in-cheek — but it is also so very true.

Banking is unlike any other industry, as far as technology is concerned. There are constant regulatory changes, an unwavering amount of security threats, and too many of what we call, “Johnny ponytails.” These are your I.T. guys or I.T. companies that claim to know banking and technology. Little do they know that in order to manage the complex security and compliance aspects of a bank, deep knowledge and experience across many disciplines are required.

So in keeping with our theme, and taking it a step further, how does a bank executive keep him or herself from needing to drown themselves in their favorite beverage when I.T. makes a goof? The answer is surprisingly simple and steeped in common sense: do your research beforehand and get the best talent you can.

Below I have listed some very hard questions you should be asking any potential I.T. provider. These questions are meant to help a bank understand the maturity of an I.T. services firm. Any I.T. company that doesn't have answers to these questions is not up to the challenge of supporting a banking environment. Some of the answers to these questions are not as obvious as you'd think, and the correct answer sometimes will depend on your institution's preferences or special requirements.

MANAGED SERVICES CAPABILITIES & OFFERINGS CATALOG

1. Do you have an official service catalog that describes your offerings and pricing scale?
2. Are there “gold, silver, bronze” tiers of support and services?
3. What metrics are used to assess speed, reliability and overall performance?

4. Do you offer on-site hours built into the regular contract fee?
5. Is there flexibility to add or subtract service offerings?
6. Are you able to diagnose problems remotely, as well as fix them without customer intervention?
7. How would you manage servers and users in multiple locations?
8. Do you use a commercial software platform to run your managed services operation, like professional services automation (PSA) software or remote monitoring and management (RMM) software?

MANAGED SERVICE PROVIDER EXPERTISE

9. How does your team stay current with new technology developments and trends?
10. What percentage of your business is dedicated to managed services versus other types of business models?
11. How many years have you been providing managed services offerings? Are they strategic to what you do?
12. If we are required to provide an audit trail to demonstrate compliance, how will this be handled?
13. Describe how the following items will be managed and monitored as part of the service: Server Support, Network Support, Desktop & Laptop Support, Email.

SERVICE LEVELS

14. Describe your Service Level Agreements (SLAs) in detail.
15. Provide your guaranteed response time for issues, dependent upon severity and time of day.
16. Provide your average response time for after-hours issues.
17. Describe the service levels you provide to clients.
18. How do you propose that the service level agreement be enforced?
19. Describe the availability of your support staff during normal business hours.
20. What options do you provide for emergency support?

SUPPORT

21. What are the methods by which clients can contact you with support issues (phone, email, etc.)?
22. What are the help desk hours? If they do not cover all of our hours of operations, please describe what coverage will be provided for those.
23. Describe your work order/trouble ticket system.
24. Are clients limited to a certain quota of calls or tickets?
25. Who can call the help desk?
26. What can we expect from your customer help desk?
27. Is help desk staff local? If not, where are they located?
28. What is your average response time and problem resolution time?
29. Are help desk staff employees of your company, or subcontracted?

30. What is the skill/certification level of first-level help desk staff?
31. What happens if the help desk cannot resolve the problem? How are complex questions escalated?
32. Is your support model all-inclusive? If not, what is not included?
33. What will our employees be expected to do?
34. Do you offer traditional break/fix support for hardware, software and other infrastructure?
35. How do you schedule and communicate downtimes for routine maintenance?
36. Describe your communication strategy for keeping clients informed of system conditions and changes.
37. Describe how major software upgrades would be applied, and what upgrades would require additional fees.
38. Explain your process for handling special requests or projects.

DELIVERABLES AND STRATEGY

39. What reports are used to summarize your services with us on an ongoing basis?
40. How will you help to make sure that our company is making the best decisions regarding technology strategy?
41. How do you measure and report on our employee satisfaction with your services?
42. What additional educational events or material will you provide to help improve our employee's technical know-how?
43. How will you help us manage the current relationships with existing vendors and partners?

DATA SECURITY

44. Describe your strategy for securing client data.
45. Describe your company's security certification and expertise.
46. Describe the different levels of security that you feel are required at a bank.
47. Describe how you will help us with audits and exams.
48. Describe your policy management practices.

DATA PROTECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

49. What methods are used to protect client data?
50. Are there any guarantees to protect my data against security breaches or data leaks?
51. Describe your plans for disaster recovery.

SYSTEM MONITORING

52. Describe your monitoring tools and strategies to monitor and ensure the stability of the environment.
53. Describe how these monitoring results would be communicated to clients in the event of an issue.
54. Describe the client's responsibility for system monitoring.

DOCUMENTATION

55. Describe how you would document maintenance, installation, performance, and changes to the system.
56. Describe the documentation that you would make available to us regarding system architecture.
57. Describe how you would implement change control processes.

Now, you may be thinking, "That is an awful lot of questions!" which is true, but this just goes to underline the importance of putting thought and research into choosing your I.T. provider. Information technology touches on every aspect of business operations, and because of that, a problem in one area can cascade into other parts of your business. Teaming up with the right technology partner for your bank is well worth the time you put into it. Extra effort now will result in fewer drinks down the road!

JMARK takes banking technology very seriously, and we want to help everyone have the knowledge to choose the I.T. partner that is best for them. If you'd like to know the answers to the above questions, shoot me an email at todd@jmark.com and let me know if my colleagues Brad Prost and Jeremy Hill can drop by to share a drink with you and talk about the ever-changing world of banking technology. ■



If you have questions or want to find out more about the steps you can take to keep your business safe and secure, give me a call at 417-863-1700 or email me any time at trnielsen@jmark.com. Grab your FREE copy of JMARK's Cybersecurity Checklist by going here: <http://www.jmark.com/ITSecurity2018> and start figuring out how your company's policies, procedures, and safeguards measure up.

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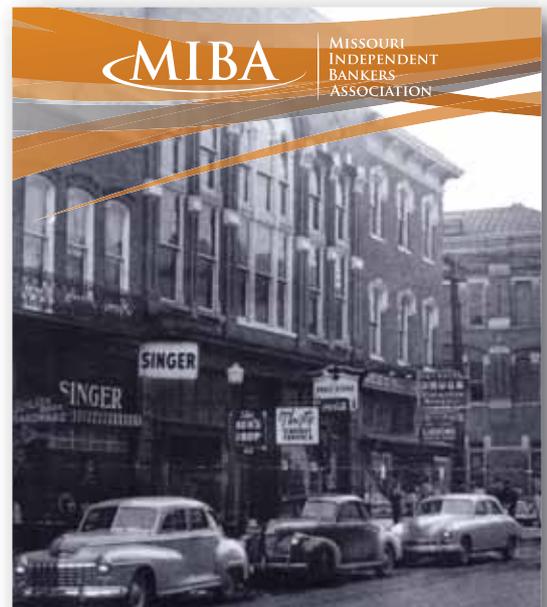
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