

# Managed services

How an IT service provider can help unify communications, increase collaboration

INTERVIEWED BY ROGER VOZAR

Companies are getting away from the old IT model of purchasing an on-site solution and having an internal staff working to solve problems. Instead, many companies are utilizing a professional service provider to handle tasks that are not directly related to core company business.

“That allows staff IT to focus exclusively on their lines of business — specific applications and training programs rather than a phone not working, a locked password, or more extreme, the data center/network being down,” says Karl Seiler, president of DataServ.

*Smart Business* spoke with Seiler about why companies are taking this approach and how professional IT service providers work as partners with businesses.

## What IT services should be contracted to service providers outside of a company?

Things that are common to every organization: support, infrastructure, network, wireless, smart devices, collaboration architecture, security, help desk and inventory.

These needs are common across almost any organization and can be done from a professional service provider perspective rather than at an internal level. It allows for higher efficiencies and lets your team focus on its core business rather than solving remedial issues.

## How does partnering for IT differ from building IT?

Building IT is the old approach. It's slow to move and internal people may not have the skills to do a proper evaluation of return on investment or assess the real business fit within the environment. IT is often based on a person with a single mindset who provides the only view. And because CEOs

**KARL SEILER**  
President  
DataServ, a Skoda Minotti  
Technology Firm  
(440) 449-6800  
kseiler@dataserv.tv



**WEBSITE:** To learn more about DataServ or how to unify your organization's communications, visit us at [www.skodaminotti.com](http://www.skodaminotti.com) or call (440) 449-6800.

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and CFOs are often not the technology experts, that leaves critical decisions to one person who might not always have the knowledge or passionate team around them to proceed down the best path.

With IT as a service, a team of experts complete a comprehensive assessment for the organization. There are engineers who specifically understand infrastructure, applications, networks or collaboration. All that information is reviewed and analyzed to determine the best solution.

A professional IT provider knows how to partner with an organization and learns and develops an understanding of the company's objectives, allowing them to build appropriate solutions. They become a trusted partner — not a vendor.

## How can you tell if an IT service provider would make a good partner?

That's part of the due diligence process. Vet companies and get a sense of how they work. Talk to references. Visit their workplace, talk with the leadership and see how they utilize the collaboration tools and other technology in their environment to grow their business.

Studies show huge challenges for businesses in terms of collaboration tools in the workplace. Millennials coming into the workforce are naturally collaborative and organizations are not structured

effectively for that. Webconferencing, video technology and other services allow you to conduct business in real time. We provide a dashboard interface that shows who is available in our organization so we can connect with that person, see them on video, and effectively share information and data.

The workplace is everywhere now and technology needs to allow for collaboration whether someone's at home, school, work or Starbucks. You have to build the architecture for your organization so that team members can collaborate from anywhere. Most businesses don't understand how to architect a network — it's just not their area of expertise. They have obsolete phone systems that do not work efficiently and are not connected to other company communication tools.

Another area of importance is your data. How do you organize the data (analytics) and build business intelligence tools in real time so you can make informed decisions and implement them faster? Applications have to allow for that level of integration.

Everything starts with finding a trusted partner and beginning the journey of unifying your technology. Effectively building a collaboration architecture begins with equal parts of culture, process and technology. That's the most important area to address when growing your organization and business. ●