

IT10

IT Service Firms TO WATCH IN 2016

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Local IT Service Firms Provide Backbone to Economy

Written by Louie Hollmeyer, Advanced Technology Consulting, lhollmeyer@4atc.com

While small- to mid-sized businesses (SMBs) may not generate as much revenue as large enterprises nor get as much attention, clearly they are a critical constituent of the national economy. Taken further, they are the driving force in the strength of “local” economies. Greater Cincinnati is no different. Yet SMBs face unique challenges in a technology-driven business world.

SMBs need the same technologies leveraged by large corporations in order to compete. In fact, one could argue that they need to be more nimble and agile and therefore are much more technology dependent. Therein lies the issue. In order to succeed they must have enterprise-level, workforce-enabling technologies that facilitate collaboration and productivity. Of course, these technologies come with a price and an “upkeep” operational expense. Most SMBs are not prepared to deal with today’s complex and rapidly evolving IT landscape. In addition, SMBs cannot afford to be distracted from their core business and often don’t have the resources to buildout a diverse IT department.

This environment has led most SMBs to outsource segments or all of their IT operations, and these efforts usually center around the concept of adding IT capabilities while maximizing the use of IP and cloud-based technologies. The premise is to free up internal resources to take on more strategic, customer-centric roles.

The SMB Behind the SMB

As a result, agile IT service firms are backfilling a core need in Greater Cincinnati for versatile, responsive technical expertise. Firms that can handle both the day-to-day break-fix issues and the big strategic picture (think IT roadmaps) are the cornerstone behind today’s SMB, and thus the economy. Other, more niched, IT service firms are also delivering value supporting the SMB with core competencies in IT segments such as disaster recovery, business continuity and security.

Fortunately, Greater Cincinnati is home to a diverse and talented set of IT service firms. These companies add tremendous value to the tech ecosystem by supporting SMBs with their infrastructure needs, while helping clients adopt the appropriate technologies to drive business outcomes.

With this in mind, Advanced Technology Consulting (ATC) is the proud sponsor of this year’s “10 IT Service Firms to Watch.” ATC is not an IT service firm, rather a boutique telecom consulting firm providing VoIP, cloud and bandwidth services. Because we play in the same space as IT service firms, we see the great work that our local IT firms provide ... first hand!

The Mission

To identify leading “Queen City” technology firms offering outsourced IT services to the SMB while providing big-time impact through versatility, expertise and IP/cloud-based solutions. Undoubtedly, there are more than 10 IT service firms to watch in Greater Cincinnati, but here are snapshots of notable examples of the plethora of IT talent we have here in Greater Cincinnati. And, for that, we are thankful!



Brent Cooper

President
C-Forward
www.cforward.com

Brent Cooper started C-Forward in 1999 with a big idea – to bring “Big Business” IT solutions to small businesses in Greater Cincinnati. Although some processes have changed over the years, C-Forward has always specialized in assisting clients with developing and designing their computer networks by utilizing the best in new technologies.

Today, C-Forward offers a number of technology support services including cloud solutions, data security and disaster recovery back-up solutions, as well as project management and proactive monitoring to help their clients succeed. You may be familiar with the C-Forward-branded vehicles that roll around town, or recognize their company mantra – personal, proactive, reliable.

“We consider ourselves to be the IT department for companies that either don’t need, or can’t afford, a full-time IT staff,” says Brent Cooper. “Our certified technicians utilize state-of-the-art IT solutions, and a unique team approach, to ensure customer’s goals are always met. The advantage we bring to companies is depth and breadth of expertise. Anything that touches the network, we service and support.”

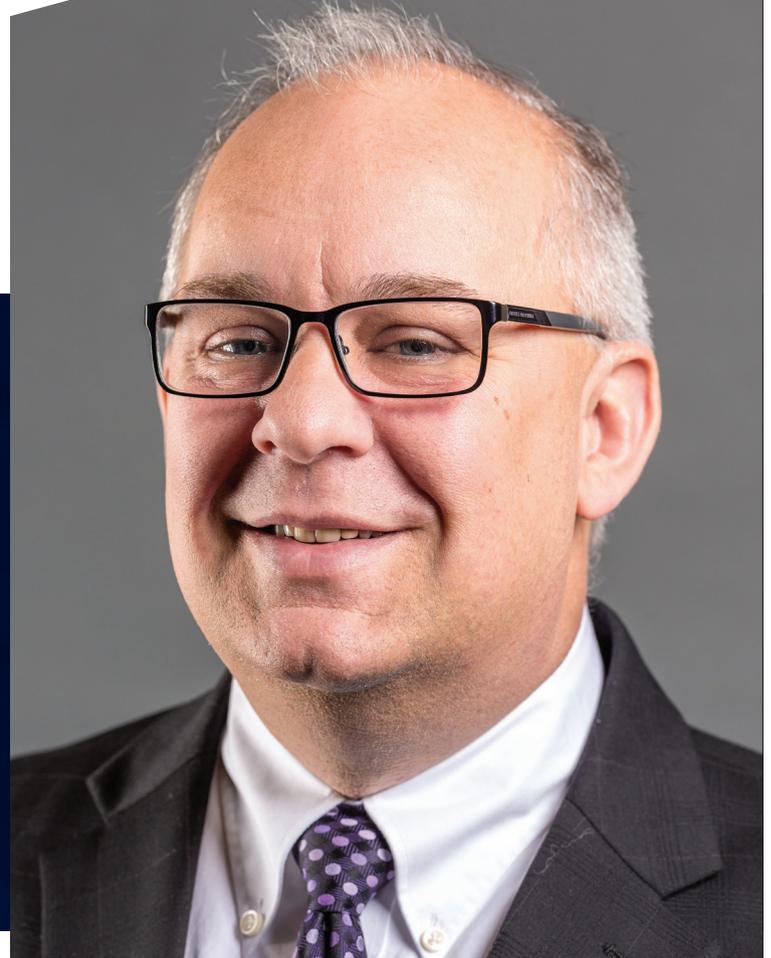
Chris Philpott

Vice president, sales and marketing
CenterGrid
www.centergrid.com

Founded in 2011, CenterGrid offers a full suite of hosting and managed services targeted to mid-sized companies. CenterGrid’s set of products and solutions range from “build-it-yourself” services for the larger enterprise to fully integrated and immediately available, pay-as-you-go, solutions for the smaller enterprise.

“CenterGrid has the cloud computing knowledge and infrastructure that organizations need so they can focus on their business, not on the infrastructure on which their business runs,” says Chris Philpott. “We realize the most difficult part of hosting is moving infrastructure somewhere else. We have a proven process and the knowledge base to lead these projects for our customers.”

CenterGrid’s solution set includes Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS - private, public and hybrid), remote management and monitoring, colocation, managed IT security solutions, backup and disaster recovery. CenterGrid’s RecoveryCenter product is a hybrid backup/recovery solution and BIMCenter is a specialized virtual desktop infrastructure for use with large graphic files.





Rick Maxwell

President and chief executive officer
Full Service Networking
www.fullservice.net

Full Service Networking (FSN) founded in 1987, is a leading technology company specializing in managed and co-managed IT services for small- and middle-market Cincinnati organizations. FSN offers outsourced services that ensure clients' uptime network performance, data security, business continuity and overall office productivity. Core services include NetCare, 24/7/365 monitoring and management of IT network infrastructure components; remote and scheduled onsite help desk support; and hosting.

NetCare service includes monthly validation of data backups, along with acting as a liaison with third party software application vendors to ensure overall network functionality. Further, FSN delivers on-going support by installing patch and firmware software updates to ensure a reliable IT network infrastructure.

"No two client requirements are exactly the same when it comes to achieving their business objectives. In some cases, we are their outsourced IT partner, including us physically having people onsite, as well as monitoring and managing all of their network infrastructure and desktop environments," says Rick Maxwell. "In other cases, we are in a co-managed relationship with their internal IT staff."

Gaby Batshoun

President
Global Business Solutions
www.gbs-inc.com

Since 1994, Global Business Solutions (GBS) has helped businesses, government organizations and educational organizations in Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky solve business problems. GBS has four categories of products and services including IT solutions (SMB and enterprise), telephony, audio visual solutions and cabling. Each solution provided by GBS is personalized to the business.

"We don't do cookie cutter and we put business before IT. We understand what it takes to truly excel in the professional world and how IT contributes to that success," says Gaby Batshoun. "We take the time to understand how to help our clients use technology to run their businesses better. We become a branch of their business."

GBS prides itself on being the only partner clients need. "Instead of juggling multiple, disparate technology providers, our clients have learned that they just need one: GBS," says Batshoun.





Tim Rettig

*President and chief executive officer
Intrust IT*

www.intrust-it.com

Founded in 1992, Intrust IT provides IT support services to companies, schools and local governments in the Greater Cincinnati area. Intrust acts as an organization's IT department. "Instead of having a single IT person, Intrust provides a whole team of IT professionals with a wealth of knowledge and experience to allow companies to better leverage the best technology available," says Tim Rettig.

Intrust provides consulting, implementation and managed services to SMBs wrapped around cloud, data backup and recovery, virtualization, network protection and universal communications.

What sets Intrust IT apart is its unique, transparent culture as it relates to customer service. Every time a customer interacts with Intrust, the customer is given the opportunity to rate the interaction and provide feedback. "In any given month more than 60 percent of those interactions are rated, and for more than two years our customer satisfaction rating has exceeded 99 percent. In some months we've hit 100 percent," states Rettig.

R. Nathan Golden

*Owner
Managecast*

www.managecast.com

Founded in 2000, Managecast initially provided a wide array of general IT products and solutions, as well as IT consulting and support services. Today, the company has specialized in cloud backup and disaster recovery, while also providing business continuity and disaster recovery as a service. The majority of the Managecast client base still resides within Ohio. However, their niche in cloud backup services has allowed them to expand with customers all over the U.S. and Canada.

Managecast couples management, disaster recovery planning services, with the ability to provide a complete offsite disaster recovery solution for just about any platform and application. Cloud backup data is stored in Cincinnati, OH, and replicated to Louisville, KY, with redundancy built in.

"After being in business for many years we realized a lot of customers don't monitor and manage their backups as they should," says Nathan Golden. "Let's face it, doing backups is like going to the dentist – something you need to do, but it's easy to put off, and easy to neglect – especially when other projects get your attention."





Jon Salisbury

Chief technology officer

Nexigen

www.nexigen.com

Nexigen was founded in 2003 as a leader in cloud services, managed infrastructure services and cyber security solutions. In addition, Nexigen launched a security operations center that monitors security alerts using a cutting edge platform. Located in Newport, KY, Nexigen's home office features a state-of-the-art 24/7 network operations center, which is the core of the organization.

"Nexigen was the first cloud provider in Cincinnati with a utility computing solution offering in 2013," says Jon Salisbury. "Today we are managing clouds across the globe. We manage, migrate and optimize solutions ranging from virtualization upgrades to in-depth coding and programming needs for shipment in the cloud."

Unlike other companies, Nexigen creates its own products through a partnership with Nimblesoft. Through this partnership, Nexigen has market changing products in the cyber security and cloud service space.



Jeffrey Loeb

Vice president of operations

ProSource Technologies

www.totalprosource.com

Jeff Loeb and Dan Winterhalter founded ProSource Technologies as Infitech in 1999. Originally, the company's goal was to be the IT department for small businesses that couldn't justify an internal fulltime IT department. Infitech was acquired by ProSource to form ProSource Technologies in 2013.

ProSource Technologies' primary focus today is on managed IT services for the SMB. In addition, ProSource has solutions and expertise in backup and disaster recovery, IT security, as well as networking and server projects and deployment.

"We analyze, stabilize and optimize our customer's IT environment to help them use technology to achieve their business goals and provide a strategic advantage," says Jeff Loeb. "Each managed IT customer has a dedicated vCIO (virtual CIO) who's responsibility is to make sure our customers IT is in alignment with the businesses goals and plans." In addition to the day-to-day management and support of the customer's network operations, the vCIO has a formal "Technology Roadmap" meeting with each customer quarterly.



Erin Arnold

Owner
NextStep Networking
www.nextstepnetworking.com

NextStep Networking is a full service IT company specializing in small to medium business, not-for-profit organizations, local governments and K12 education. Founded in 1986, NextStep Networking offers outsourced IT services, backup and disaster recovery services, technology planning, Google Apps for education and work, Microsoft Office 365 and more.

"NSmanageIT is our core outsourced IT product," says Erin Arnold. "It centers around the 3P's: people, process and protection. People – we believe in a reverse triangle support model. Process – from onboarding, to ticket resolution, to technology planning, to technology adoption for an entire school district, having a process that is repeatable as well as customized to each client's individual needs is critical to our success. Finally, Protection – we develop not only the network policies, but we provide verbiage to HR to consider adding to the company manual, we make recommendations based on what is best for the clients, even if it makes our job a bit more difficult."



Jonathan Bristow

Partner
Orchestrate Technologies
www.orchestratetech.com

Founded in 2013, Orchestrate Technologies helps businesses simplify and streamline their functionality and maximize their return on investment – in both employees and technology. Orchestrate Technologies specializes in working with the SMB. Orchestrate recently moved into new office space in downtown Cincinnati.

Services offered by Orchestrate Technologies include Office 365 migration, endpoint security, mobile control, Wi-Fi management, VPN management, phone solutions and cloud solutions. Orchestrate's Sophos Cloud solution provides managed endpoint security and monitoring that protects corporate IT infrastructure and all employee devices. It integrates endpoint security, mobile device management (MDM), server protection, and secure web gateway into a single seamless solution.

"We are the sole contact for all IT needs. Everything from 'my email is not working' all the way to network issues, server problems or firewall reconfiguration," says Jonathan Bristow. "We climb in and get to know our client's business, so we can find solutions."