



The 2027

IT SERVICES BUYER'S GUIDE



A plain English guide to choosing the right IT partner for your business. *What to look for, what to watch out for, and the questions worth asking.*



creavo.co.uk

Proper IT Support. Real People. No Jargon.

The 2027

IT SERVICES BUYER'S GUIDE

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CHAPTER 1

The five big shifts changing businesses like yours



***Hello, I'm Tom Mellish,
co-founder and director of
CREAVO.***

What a few years it's been for those of us running businesses. Whether you're having your best year yet or fighting for every new client, you'll have noticed how quickly the technology we all rely on keeps changing.

I've worked in IT for around 15 years and I've never seen change come this thick and fast. From where the CREAVO team sits, looking after businesses across London, the South, the Midlands and the North, **there are five big shifts affecting almost every client we work with.**



AI



Hybrid working



The cloud



Everything connected



Security risk



Shift 1. AI

Cast your mind back to late 2022. For most of us, AI was still something out of a film. Then ChatGPT arrived and suddenly everyone was talking about it.

Fast forward to today and AI is woven into the tools your team already uses. Copilot sits inside Microsoft 365. Meeting notes write themselves. Emails get drafted in seconds. Chances are some of your people are already using it, whether you've signed it off or not.

The next step is already arriving. AI that doesn't just answer questions but gets on and does jobs for you. Think of it as going from a very clever search engine to a junior assistant with its own to do list.

The opportunity is huge. So is the need for some sensible ground rules about what goes into these tools and who can see it. **So the question worth asking is simple. Where could AI save your team real time, and what guardrails do you need first?**

We've got a free guide on our website to help you get started too.
creavo.co.uk/aiguide



Shift 2. Hybrid working

2020 sped up something that was already happening. People want the choice of working at home, in the office, or from the coffee shop round the corner.

The technology makes that easy. The hard part is making sure your team can talk, share and get things done wherever they are, without leaving the back door open to criminals. The tools move on quickly, so it's always worth checking how well your business communicates and works together.



Shift 3. The cloud

Remember when you couldn't get to a file unless you were sat at your desk in the office? Feels like a lifetime ago. The cloud means your team can work anywhere, any time, on any device.

But here's the catch. Once your data is free to travel, you've got to look after it far more carefully. The cloud gives you freedom, and it also gives criminals more ways in. More on that later.



Shift 4. Everything is connected

The day the fridge went online, it was clear that eventually everything would. Printers, door entry, CCTV, heating, the big screen in the meeting room. Experts expect tens of billions of connected devices worldwide by the end of the decade.

Handy, but every one of those devices is another door into your network. If it's plugged in and online, it needs thinking about.



Shift 5. The biggest security risk we've ever seen

This one runs through all the others. Every change creates a gap, and criminals are brilliant at finding gaps.

The UK government's own research found that **43% of businesses suffered a cyber breach or attack in the last year, rising to 65% of medium sized businesses**. That isn't big corporates. That's businesses like yours and mine.

Criminals aren't sitting there picking targets one by one. They use automated tools that rattle every door of every business, all day long. It only takes one person clicking one bad link to let them in, and you might not know they're there until they strike. Sometimes that's hours later. Sometimes it's weeks.

The good news is that a handful of sensible habits and the right protection stop the vast majority of attacks. I'm always happy to talk them through.

43%

of UK businesses suffered a cyber breach or attack in the last year

65%

of medium sized businesses were hit

Source: UK Government Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2025/26, published May 2026.



With so much changing, it's easy to feel you're falling behind. Even our engineers work hard to keep up. So I'd boil your technology plan down to two words.



Defend

Protecting your business, your data and your reputation from criminals.



Invest

Making sure your technology moves the business forward rather than holding it back.

If you're reading this, I'd guess you're not completely happy with your current IT support and you're wondering whether it's time for a change.

Of course, I'd love you to choose CREAVO. But I've written this guide to be useful whoever you end up working with. It explains what a good IT partner looks like, how they behave, and the questions that sort the good from the not so good.

Along the way I'll explain why we work as a partner rather than a supplier, and why your IT plan and your security deserve a place at the heart of your business planning.

If you'd rather talk now, skip to the last chapter and book a call. **We'd love to hear about your business.**



Tom

Tom Mellish

Co-founder and Director, CREAVO

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You've got a business plan. Do you have an IT plan?

When did you last sit down and look at your IT plan?

If the answer is “we don't really have one”, you're in good company. Most of the business owners we meet don't. But it's one of the most useful things you can do for your business.

Whether you run one office or five, a proper IT plan is the foundation you grow on. It can be the difference between muddling through a tough patch and coming out the other side stronger.

And here's the thing. **An IT plan isn't really about technology.** It sits alongside your business plan and answers one question. How will our technology help us hit our goals, in the simplest way possible?

A good place to start is to look at what you've got today

- What works well?
- What frustrates people?
- As you grow, will your systems grow with you, or will you need new software, connectivity or phones?

Then ask your team. They know exactly where the friction is. Which jobs take longer than they should? Where are people typing the same information into two different systems? What would they change tomorrow if they could?

A good IT partner will help you with all of this. They'll recommend the right equipment and software based on how you work today and how you want to work in future. They should spot problems you haven't noticed and suggest simpler ways of doing things.

A technology roadmap makes budgeting far easier too. You'll know what you need to spend and when, so there are no nasty surprise invoices landing on your desk.

Every pound needs to earn its keep. So agree a few simple measures that show whether your technology is paying its way. Your team might love a particular system, but if it isn't giving you a return, it isn't working as well as you think.

Your IT partner should also sit down with you regularly to review how things are going. **We'd suggest at least twice a year.** What's going well? What's taking longer than it should?

The cleaner and the facilities manager

This is why I keep saying IT partner, rather than IT company or IT provider.

Picture an office building. A cleaner comes in every evening and tidies up after everyone. That's how a lot of IT support companies work. They clear up the mess.

Now picture a facilities manager. They're always thinking ahead. They plan the maintenance, spot the loose tile before it falls and fix the drip before it becomes a flood. They still make sure the cleaning gets done, but most problems never happen in the first place.

That's how we work. We do as much as we can quietly in the background so things don't go wrong. Technology will still misbehave from time to time. But when the groundwork is done, there's an awful lot less to clean up.

What the CREAVO team builds for every client is an ongoing technology roadmap, so you and we both know

- What's happening over the next two to three years
- What you'll need to invest in, and roughly when

No surprises. It also shows what can wait if cash is tight, what can't, and what can be brought forward when you're ahead.

That kind of planning only works because of the relationship. We get to know your business as if it were our own. **We give the advice we'd follow if it were our business, our team, our livelihood.**

Ten reasons business owners switch IT partners

We speak to a lot of business owners who are fed up with their IT support.

The same frustrations come up again and again. Here are the ten we hear most often.

1

You can't see what you're getting for your money

You should be able to see clearly how hard your IT partner is working for you and what difference it's making. A good partner gives you a plan and a handful of measures that actually matter to your business. Not a pack of jargon filled reports that need a translator. If you can't understand the report, it isn't doing its job.

2

Poor communication

Slow to acknowledge problems. No warning before updates. Promised call backs that never come. With most suppliers these would be minor irritations. But when your team can't work without their technology, small frustrations quickly become big ones.

You need a partner who

- Acknowledges problems quickly
- Keeps you in the loop on everything you need to know
- Does what they say they'll do, when they say they'll do it

3

They don't take security seriously

It sounds unbelievable, but some IT companies don't practise what they preach. They're not keeping up with the latest scams, they're not keeping your systems fully updated, and their own house isn't in order.

That's why certifications matter. CREAVO is Cyber Essentials Plus certified and our service desk is ISO 27001 certified. **Ask any IT company you're considering what they hold, and when it was last checked.**

4

"Sorry, that's not covered"

If you've heard that, you'll know how frustrating it is. As long as it's to do with your technology, a good partner will help, or at least point you in the right direction and stay involved.

Every business is different. Two firms on the same street selling the same thing will still use different software, have different people and chase different goals. A rigid, one size fits all contract can't cope with that. A partner can.

5**Things take too long to fix**

Some problems take time to get to the bottom of. That's the nature of technology. But when that happens, you should be kept updated every step of the way so you know it's in hand.

If a support request is still sitting there three days later with no reply, something's wrong. And all that waiting is time your team isn't working. Where's the value in that?

6**They never take responsibility**

We've heard from business owners who reported a problem and were told it was their own fault, despite doing exactly what their IT company had told them. Others were told to go and chase the software supplier themselves.

The whole point of an IT partner is that they deal with the technology so you can get on with running your business. If they pass the buck, you haven't got a partner.

7**They baffle you with tech talk**

Technology is full of strange words and it seems to change every five minutes. The mark of a good IT partner is that they make the complicated sound simple. If you leave every conversation more confused than when you started, the relationship isn't working.

8

You're not learning anything

You don't need to become an IT expert. That's what you're paying for. But you and your team do need to know the basics of spotting scams and protecting your data.

If you're told "don't worry, leave it to us", be wary. Your people are your first line of defence, and they can't defend against something they don't understand.

9

They're always selling you new kit

Sometimes an upgrade really is due. Old operating systems stop getting security updates and tired laptops slow everyone down.

But a good partner gets the foundations right first and plans equipment into your roadmap, so you can budget for it rather than being sold to every other month. Most businesses already have most of what they need.

10

You've outgrown them

This one isn't anyone's fault. Sometimes a business simply grows beyond what a small IT company can handle. Signs to look out for

- Your requests aren't being picked up as quickly as you need
- The ideas and recommendations have dried up
- You need a higher level of support than they can give

A good partner will often raise this with you first. No IT company wants to be out of its depth.



Recognise any of these? Then it might be time for a change.

No business gets everything right every time, and that includes us. We're human too.

But because we work in partnership with our clients, we can have grown up conversations, put things right quickly and move on, rather than spending weeks repairing the relationship.

When technology sits at the heart of how your business grows, it's easy to see why you need a partner you can trust.



CHAPTER 4

Protect the thing your business can't run without

Being able to work anywhere, any time, on any device has changed business for the better.

Lower costs, a wider pool of people to hire from and a happier team. Devices have become almost disposable too. Lose your phone and, as long as everything is backed up, it's a nuisance rather than a disaster. You get a new one, sign in, and everything comes back. Laptops and tablets work the same way.

The flip side is that every time a device leaves the office, your data goes with it. **And there are a lot of criminals working very hard to get their hands on it.**

Ransomware, explained simply

You'll have heard of malware. It's software designed to sneak onto a device or network and steal, damage or spy on your data. Ransomware is its nastiest cousin.

Ransomware locks up your files so you can't use them, then demands payment to unlock them. Think of it as someone changing the locks on your office overnight and leaving a note asking for money for the new key. Pay by the deadline, usually in cryptocurrency, or lose access for good. Even if you do pay, there's no guarantee you'll get your data back.

Small and medium sized businesses are a favourite target, because criminals know they often don't invest enough in protection.

How they get in

The most common way in is a single email. Before you think "nobody on my team would fall for that", it's worth knowing how good these emails have become. **AI now writes scam emails that are almost impossible to tell from the real thing**, and criminals are even using fake voice and video to impersonate people you know.

They look like they come from HMRC, your bank, a supplier or even your own finance team. They ask you to do something simple, like click to update your details. Even when you're looking for it, it can be very hard to spot.

Once inside, attackers don't always strike straight away. Sometimes it's within hours. Other times they sit quietly for weeks, exploring your network and getting into as many systems as they can. By the time they act, they can be very hard to remove. That's why prevention is always better than cure.

Signs someone may be in your network. You and your IT partner should look out for

- New administrator accounts appearing out of nowhere
- Security software being switched off
- Unfamiliar software being installed
- Remote access sessions running for days

There are plenty of more technical signs too, but these are a good start.

People and technology, working together

A good IT partner will always recommend regular security awareness training for your whole team. Software alone isn't enough. You need the right tools and people who know what to look for.

It's worth being clear on one thing. **Nobody can make you 100% safe.** Criminals keep inventing new tricks and the security world is always catching up. You can get very close, but we don't always recommend locking everything down to the absolute maximum.

Here's why. Picture your office door with seven locks and a fingerprint scanner. Within a week someone will have propped it open with the fire extinguisher. Make security too painful and people find ways around it, which leaves you less safe, not more.

So we take a blended approach. We combine a few carefully chosen tools that work together, so your team has fewer passwords and hoops to jump through and your data gets better protection. Every blend is different, built around how your business actually works.

CHAPTER 5

Why it pays to be sceptical of every IT company

You probably don't know what you don't know about IT. And why would you?

You're busy being brilliant at what you do. You keep up with your own industry, go to the events and read the trade press. You don't have time to do the same for IT. Would you expect your clients to know your job as well as you do? Of course not. That's why they come to you.

The catch is this. **IT support is an unregulated industry.** There's no governing body, no licence to practise and no minimum standard. Anyone at all can set up tomorrow and call themselves an IT support company. That's why I'd be sceptical of every IT company you speak to, including us.

Without asking the right questions, you can't be sure whether you're trusting your business to an established, accountable team or to one person working from their spare room.

There's nothing wrong with starting small. We all started somewhere, and for a sole trader with simple needs it might be the right fit. But once you've got a team, several systems and data that matters, you need more than one person can give.

So how do you choose well? First, look for substance. Check their certifications, track record and the size of the team behind them. Then ask some tough questions. You're not trying to make anyone squirm. You just want to know they can deliver. **Here are the five I'd ask.**



ASK THEM

"How quickly will problems be fixed?"

It depends on the problem, of course, but you should get clear timescales based on how serious the issue is. How long to acknowledge it? How long until someone is actually working on it?

Run through a few scenarios. If someone can't log in, how long until they're working again? If you were hit by ransomware, how long to get the business back on its feet?

Ask how they handle problems too. Do they have proper processes, or do they make it up as they go? Ask about the worst problem they've ever dealt with. You're not judging the problem, you're judging how they handled it.

**ASK THEM*****“What do you do to stop problems happening in the first place?”***

Downtime is a business killer. The internet drops, systems stop, the kettle goes on and the office grinds to a halt. Then once everything's back, it takes everyone a while to get going again. **A 15 minute blip can easily cost you an hour and a half of work.**

So what will they do behind the scenes to stop those blips? Will updates and maintenance happen outside working hours? What else will they do to keep your team productive while essential work is going on?

**ASK THEM*****“Who exactly will be looking after us?”***

It's easy to overlook, but it matters. Will you speak to the same people each time? What happens when they're on holiday? Who builds your roadmap and runs your reviews? Who do you go to if you're unhappy?

At CREAVO we organise our 40 engineers into small service desk pods, so you deal with familiar faces who know your business, not a different stranger every time you call.

**ASK THEM*****“Can you explain something technical in a way I’ll understand?”***

You’re not trying to learn their job. You’re checking whether they can talk in plain English. Do they get frustrated with questions? Do they brush you off with “you don’t need to worry about that”?

If you can’t understand each other, the partnership won’t work. It also shows whether they can teach your team the things that matter.

**ASK THEM*****“How will you keep up with the changes in my business?”***

Successful businesses change all the time. New starters, new services, new ways of working. Your business probably looks quite different to how it did a year ago.

A good partner keeps track of all that, because it should shape their advice on software, connectivity and security. If they don’t know how many people you employ or how you deliver your service, how can they help you grow and stay secure? Look for one that takes a real interest, with regular catch ups built in.

Your five question checklist. Take it into every conversation with a potential IT partner

- How quickly will problems be fixed?
- What do you do to stop problems happening in the first place?
- Who exactly will be looking after us?
- Can you explain something technical in a way I’ll understand?
- How will you keep up with the changes in my business?

There are plenty of other questions you could ask. But these five will tell you the most.

Five things we wish every business owner knew about IT

Don't worry, I'm not about to bury you in jargon.

These are simply the things that, if every business owner knew them, would make life better for everyone.

1

IT needs constant care, not a one off fix

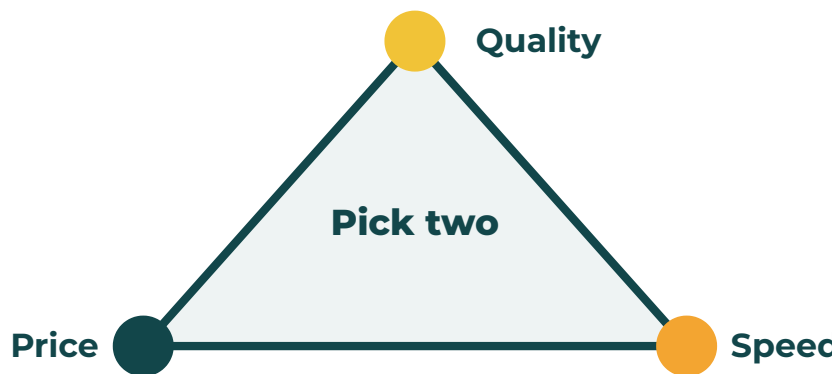
Your phone and laptop ask you to update them all the time for a reason. Software changes, security holes are found and patched, and equipment wears out. Your whole setup is the same.

If an IT company isn't offering round the clock monitoring and maintenance as part of what you pay for, walk away. A good partner spends a lot of its time quietly spotting and fixing issues before you know there's a problem. Like a good car service, you should barely notice it happening.

2

Good, fast, cheap. Pick two.

You'll know this one from buying almost anything. Quality, speed and price are linked. Push one and the others move. IT support works exactly the same way. Cheap support tends to be slower and lower quality.



The best approach is to decide what you can comfortably invest and choose the best support you can for that budget. Get your IT right and hitting your business goals becomes a lot easier.

3

Beware the spare room IT guy

One person working from home doesn't have the overheads of a proper team, so of course he's cheaper. If you're his only client, it might even work.

But what happens when he takes on another client? And another? Because he's cheap, he needs lots of clients to make a living. Something has to give, and it's usually the speed of response and the proactive work you're paying for.

A larger team costs a bit more, but it's built to keep service levels high however many clients it looks after. **And there's still someone to call when he's on holiday.**

4

A long term partnership protects you more than it protects us

We don't do one off jobs or emergency call outs. We work with businesses as long term partners. Yes, that's good for us, and I won't pretend otherwise. But the real benefit is yours. Over time we get to know your business inside out, which means we can

- Work more closely with you and your team
- Understand your priorities and help you get there
- Shape your IT around where you're heading, not just where you are
- Build a setup that grows with you
- Keep you better protected, because trust lets us give you honest advice

None of that is possible in a short term arrangement. When you do well, so do we.

5

Outsourcing usually gets you more for your money

You may have wondered about hiring someone in house. The challenge is that you're asking one person to be a help desk, a security expert, a network engineer and a strategist, all at once, for your whole team. That person is very hard to find and very hard to keep. And when they're off sick or on holiday, you've got nobody.

An IT partner gives you a whole team with a broad range of specialist skills, for a cost that often compares well with a single salary once you add up recruitment, training and cover. It's the difference between hiring one handyman and having a whole firm of trades on call.

CHAPTER 7

Don't just take our word for it

I've spent a lot of this guide telling you what a good IT partner looks like.

But it's one thing for me to say it. It means far more coming from the business owners we work with every day. Here's what a few of them have to say about working with the CREAVO team.



Absolute IT peace of mind

For a company of our size that doesn't have a dedicated IT department it is essential that you find the right IT partner that learns, understands and actively meets the IT demands of your business. Creavo ticks all the boxes. Tom, Chris and the wider team have supported us enormously since we engaged them on many IT issues.

Always a pleasure to deal with. We do not see them as our outsourced IT, we see them as our IT partners. 100% highly recommended.

P Marquez IS&G Steel Stockholders



We were nervous about moving provider and the impact it could have on operations, but CREAVO managed the process from start to finish with our previous provider. They introduced themselves to our team early on, ensuring everyone knew who they were and how to contact them from day one.

M Bowen LG Davis



I have found Creavo to be highly competent and responsive. Providing day to day support but also looking to future proof our business by implementing necessary changes and upgrades in advance avoiding unhelpful urgency and assisting individual users when any adaptation is needed to work with changes or upgrades.

I've also found Creavo to be extremely helpful in understanding and implementing information security principles required to achieve certifications such as ISO27001 and Cyber Essentials.

Topped off with willingness and competence to assist with bespoke network installations and business services such as VoIP telephony mean that I am routinely impressed with Creavo and would not hesitate to recommend them.

C Sampson Hamton Environmental



Working with Creavo has been a genuinely positive experience. They have become a trusted partner for our organisation, always providing friendly, knowledgeable, and reliable support whenever we need it. No issue is ever too much trouble, and their team consistently goes above and beyond to help us find solutions quickly and efficiently.

What stands out most is their approachable and responsive service. It's reassuring to know that expert help is only a phone call or email away. Their support has played an important part in keeping our systems running smoothly, allowing us to focus on our work with confidence. We highly value our relationship with Creavo and would not hesitate to recommend them to other organisations looking for a dependable and professional IT provider.

M Horne Lennox Children's Cancer Fund

You can read more of our reviews on Trustpilot.

Read our Trustpilot reviews →

About CREAVO

Let me properly introduce the team.

I've worked in IT for around 15 years, and the biggest lesson I've learned is that the technology is rarely the hard part. The relationship is. Business owners don't want to become IT experts. They want someone they trust to look after it properly, tell them the truth and help them plan ahead.

Over the years I've also seen the other side of our industry. Businesses tied into contracts with providers who didn't pick up the phone, talked in riddles and only got in touch when they had something to sell. Owners who felt their IT was something done *to* them rather than *for* them.

In January 2021, my co-founder Chris Thrussell and I started CREAVO to do things differently. The idea was simple. **Proper IT support. Real people. No jargon.** Look after every client's business as if it were our own, and give the advice we'd follow if it were our business, our team, our livelihood.

Since then we've grown into a team of 40 engineers, with offices in Hertfordshire, Warwickshire and Cheshire, looking after owner led businesses across London, the South, the Midlands and the North. Most of our clients have somewhere between 10 and 150 staff and no IT department of their own. That's exactly who we built CREAVO for.

40

Engineers in small
service desk pods

3

Offices covering the
South, Midlands and
North

CE+

Cyber Essentials Plus
certified

ISO

27001 certified service
desk

We're also proud to support Lennox Children's Cancer Fund, guiding their technology and security and raising money for them through events during the year.

Everyone in the team cares about the businesses we look after and celebrates their wins as if they were our own. Because in a small way, they are.



CHAPTER 9

Your first 90 days with us

If you're thinking about working with us, here's what to expect.

The first 90 days matter most. In that time the CREAVO team focuses on three things.

1

Getting to know your business inside out

2

Fixing anything left outstanding by your old IT provider

3

Building your technology plan

We hope to work with you for many years, so the aim of these first 90 days is to set you up properly. By the end you'll know

- What we can and can't do, so expectations are realistic from day one
- What we need from you
- How we'll work together

We start by looking at every part of your current setup, from devices and software to connectivity, phones and accounts. Everything is documented securely.

We'll even ask about things we might not look after directly, like your website hosting or specialist industry software. At some point you'll ask us about them, so we want to know how they work and who to call.

It means a little work for you and your team up front. I promise it's worth it, and you'll only have to do it once.

Then we talk to your team. Ideally every one of them. What frustrates them? What slows them down? What has your old IT company said can't be done? We can't promise to fix everything, but we'll always try.



Those first 90 days reset everything and bring your IT up to the standard it should be. Then it stays there.

Only then does the really valuable work start, planning ahead together and making technology a real help to your growth. It looks different for every client, and I'm happy to talk you through it when we speak.



What to do next



I hope you've found this guide useful.

Hopefully it's answered a few of the questions on your mind, and perhaps made you look at your IT support a little differently.

If you're serious about finding an IT partner who'll help your business grow, the next step is easy. **Book a short, no obligation call with the CREAVO team.**

We'll find out about your business, where you want to take it and what's getting in the way. If we're a good fit, we'll arrange a longer chat or a visit, whichever suits you. If we're not, we'll tell you, and point you in the right direction.

There's no obligation to buy anything, ever. I'm looking forward to hearing about your business.

Book your call with the CREAVO team →



Proper IT Support. Real People. No Jargon.

The advice we'd follow if it were our business, our team, our livelihood.



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