



5

Questions to Ask Before Your Unified Renewal

If you can't answer these questions with confidence, you're not ready to renew your Microsoft Unified Support Contract.

Most Unified renewals don't feel like a decision. They feel like a deadline. The quote you receive is usually a big number tied to your overall Microsoft spend. There's pressure to "just get it done," pressure from Microsoft to sign before quarter-end and very little time to actually ask whether the cost still matches the value.

This checklist is built for Procurement, Finance, and IT leaders who want to change that dynamic. It's the kind of one-pager a Procurement Director forwards to the rest of the team with:

“

**We should review this
before we sign anything.**

”

1.

What exactly drove last year's support cost increase?

Unified Support is priced as a percentage of your Microsoft spend, not a reflection of how much support you actually consumed. Microsoft's current Unified pricing tables show graduated percentages applied to Azure and Modern Work/BizApps spend (e.g., 10% on the first \$1.8M of Azure, then 7% on the next band and so on).

That means your Unified bill can jump simply because:

- Your Azure usage grew
- More users were added to Microsoft 365 or Dynamics
- A discount expired

...even if your ticket volume was flat or down.

Additional Items to Consider:

- Can we clearly explain, in writing, why our Unified Support cost changed year over year?
- Did our support usage grow at the same rate as our Microsoft spend?
- How much of the increase is "consumption growth" versus pricing mechanics and lost discounts?



Red flag

If the only explanation anyone can give is "we're spending more with Microsoft, so support goes up as well," you don't have cost transparency, you have a tax on growth.

2.

Do we have a clear breakdown of our support usage?

That means your Unified bill can jump simply because:

- No easy view of tickets by product, severity, business unit
- No breakdown of engineering effort per issue
- No simple link from “this incident” → “this cost”

At the same time, the SaaS and software world tells a very consistent story:

Zylo’s SaaS Management Index finds that organizations use only **56% of their SaaS licenses**. The other **44%** are wasted or under-utilized, with about **\$17–18M** in annual waste per company on average.



Ask yourself

- Do we have a simple report showing ticket volume by severity and product, for the last 12–24 months?
- Can IT tell a story about how Unified contributed to uptime, risk reduction, or project acceleration?
- Can Finance and Procurement tie the Unified line item to any measurable business outcome?



Red flag

If your Unified invoice and your internal reporting don’t line up, you’re signing off on a number you can’t defend.

Research Snapshot: Usage & Waste

Topic	Data point	Why it matters for Unified
SaaS license utilization	Average org only uses 56% of SaaS licenses ; 44% are wasted .	Bundled entitlements are almost never fully used.
Annual SaaS waste	Companies leave \$17–18M per year on the table in unused licenses.	Under-used spend is the norm unless you have hard usage data.
Renewal behavior	Most contracts still auto-renew without deep usage analysis (multiple SaaS governance studies).	Without usage visibility, renewals become “rubber stamps.”
Entitlement Tracking	Many teams cannot show a clear report of training and advisory hours used versus what was included.	If usage is unclear, Unified value is assumed, and unused entitlements get renewed again.
Business impact linkage	Procurement and Finance often cannot connect tickets to downtime avoided, risk reduced or project acceleration.	Without outcome proof, the renewal becomes a cost approval, not a value decision.
Ticket concentration linkage	Support demand typically clusters in a small set of products and recurring issue types over the year.	A spend-percentage model charges broadly, even when most support need is concentrated in a few areas.

3.

How long did it actually take to resolve our critical incidents - not just acknowledge them?

Unified Support advertises fast response SLAs for critical incidents (for example, 15-minute or 1-hour initial response depending on product and plan). But response is not a resolution.

Industry outage data from Uptime Institute shows that around 60% of organizations experienced at least one significant outage in the prior three years, and that actual performance often falls short of SLA language on paper. More than half of respondents in recent surveys reported their last major outage cost over \$100,000, and 16% said it cost more than \$1M. That's the real cost of

“We responded quickly but took days to really fix it.”



Ask yourself

- For our last 5-10 Sev A / critical incidents, how long did it take to restore service, end-to-end?
- Did we get senior, engineering-level expertise from the start....or after multiple escalations?
- Do we have any trend data showing that Unified is actually reducing downtime, not just meeting response metrics?



Red flag

If you can quote response times, but nobody can quote restoration times, you are measuring the wrong thing.

4.

Are we paying for entitlements we no longer need or would never use?

Unified bundles a lot: training, advisory hours, architectural guidance, “all-you-can-open” support access. In theory, that’s great. In practice, **bundled entitlements are exactly where enterprises lose money**:

- Zylo reports that **44% of SaaS licenses** are wasted or under-utilized, with average companies wasting **\$17–18M** annually on unused software.
- License-waste studies repeatedly show that under-used contracts still get renewed, simply because nobody has time, data, or ownership to challenge them.

It would be an anomaly if Unified training and advisory entitlements were magically different.



Ask yourself

- How many Unified training/advisory hours did we actually use vs. what we paid for?
- Which entitlements are mission-critical, and which no longer match how we operate today?
- Who owns a concrete plan to maximize those entitlements before they expire?



Red flag

If no one can show utilization reports for training, advisory, and “value add” services, assume you’re paying 100% and using a fraction.

Quick Check: What Procurement Usually Sees vs. What They Need

What often shows up on the renewal	What your organization actually needs
One large Unified Support number	Ticket volumes by severity and product
% of total Microsoft spend	Trends: cost vs. usage vs. business impact
Broad list of generic entitlements	Actual utilization of training, advisory & credits
Response-time SLA bullets	Time-to-restoration data and escalation paths
Spend-based renewal urgency	12–24 month cost forecast with spend scenarios
Generic “covered services” language	Time-to-restoration data and escalation paths
No clear escalation ownership	Escalation owners, triggers, and engineering path

5.

Have we compared this model against a usage-based or engineering-aligned alternative?

Microsoft positions Unified as a strategic, high-ROI service. Forrester's Microsoft-commissioned Total Economic Impact™ study claims a **225% ROI over three years**, with benefits like reduced downtime and faster solution adoption...for a composite organization in ideal conditions. But when independent firms model real customer environments, they often see something different:

- Third-party Microsoft support providers consistently cite **30–50% immediate cost savings versus Microsoft Unified**, plus ongoing cost-avoidance benefits as cloud consumption grows.

The point isn't that one model is always better. The point is: **you shouldn't be renewing any support contract you've never benchmarked.**



Ask yourself

- Have we run a side-by-side comparison between Unified and at least one usage-based or third-party support model, using our own data (tickets, severities, incidents, and entitlements used)?
- If we assume realistic entitlement utilization-say 80%, 60%, or even 40%, does Unified still come out on top?
- Are we comfortable with support costs that scale as a percentage of Microsoft revenue, instead of scaling with what we actually consume?



Red flag

If no one can show utilization reports for training, advisory, and "value add" services, assume you're paying 100% and using a fraction.

If you don't ask these questions...

When Unified Support costs rise automatically and visibility stays low, you expose the organization to:



Runaway Cost Curves

Support spend that follows your Microsoft spend, not your incident profile.



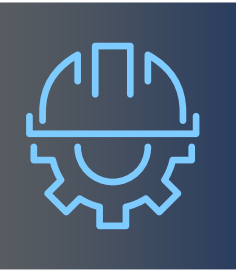
Weak Financial Governance

Procurement and Finance signing off on seven-figure renewals they can't fully explain.



Under-Utilized Entitlements

Training and advisory hours that quietly expire while other budgets stay frozen.



Engineering Gaps

Fast acknowledgements paired with slow resolution on critical incidents.

A renewal should never be a rubber stamp. These five questions reveal whether you're paying for value, or paying because the model doesn't show you the difference.

Use your checklist for answers to quickly reveal where you're overpaying **vs.** what you actually used (tickets, entitlements, incidents) and what outcomes you received.

Find Out if You're Paying For What You Don't Use



ROI Battle: 12-Month Showdown.

Ask your team, or a neutral advisor to model three simple views:

01

Today

What you spend on Unified, what you used (tickets, entitlements, incidents), and key outcomes.

02

Unified at different utilization levels

100%, 80%, 60%, 40% entitlement usage.

03

Usage-based or engineer-led support that prices against what you actually consume, not your entire Microsoft bill.



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