SUNDOG

YOUR STRATEGIC IT PARTNER

Managed IT: Your Ally Against Downtime

HOW MSPS MITIGATE THE RISK AND EFFECTS OF DOWNTIME ON YOUR BUSINESS

MANAGED IT: YOUR ALLY AGAINST DOWNTIME

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is the cost of downtime to your business?

If your IT systems go down unexpectedly, your operations can momentarily halt or entirely come to a halt. But experiencing unplanned IT downtime is more than just a simple inconvenience. In fact, it can have a number of severely damaging effects on your business, including:

Productivity and revenue losses

“Time is gold” may be a cliched adage, but it remains very true in business. When your operations cease for even just a few minutes, your company loses precious time that employees could have used to complete their tasks.

Additionally, any amount of unplanned downtime will almost certainly prevent you from making sales, manufacturing products, or rendering service to your customers. According to Information Technology Intelligence Consulting's 2022 Global Server Hardware Security survey, just one hour of downtime cost 91% of enterprises over $300,000 in losses due to lost business, productivity disruptions, and remediation efforts.

Reputational damage

Your customers rely on you for quality products and services. Unplanned downtime prevents you from using key IT systems, which may cause a decrease in the quality of your outputs or prevent you from providing customers with the level of service they have come to expect of you.

Now, it’s understandable for any business to encounter the occasional outage or two, but if these were to happen repeatedly, even your loyal customers may feel frustrated. Disgruntled clients will likely share their negative experiences with others, damaging your reputation and making it difficult to attract potential customers.

Data loss and security risks

Without a dependable backup and recovery plan, you could lose essential data, like customer information or financial records, if you experience unplanned downtime. And even if you have a plan, it may not be enough to protect your business from the financial and legal repercussions of data breaches caused by outages. If you don't have the proper security measures set up, attackers can use downtime to exploit the vulnerabilities in your system and access confidential information.

Service level agreement (SLA) payouts

SLAs are a guarantee that clients have consistent access to a vendor's products and services. In some cases, SLAs contain provisions that assure clients of financial compensation should the vendor be unable to deliver the expected output or service because of downtime. If you have such provisions in your SLA with your clients, then repeated downtime can result in heavy losses for your company.

Fines and penalties

Businesses in regulated industries like healthcare and finance are obligated by law to ensure the security and integrity of their clients' data. If an outage were to result in a data breach, industry regulators will look into the possibility of noncompliance. Your company will likely be subject to various lawsuits, as well as hefty fines and other penalties.

What are the common causes of downtime?

Downtime can occur for many reasons, but these are five of the most common:

Human error

Human error is one of the leading causes of IT downtime. In many cases, these errors result from a lack of understanding of IT processes and procedures. However, they can also be caused by disregarding best practices or failing to follow correct procedures. You can address these mistakes through regular training and consistent updates, as well as strict documentation of key processes.

Some incidents, such as people tripping on wires or unknowingly changing or moving files, are accidental and are not completely preventable. Precautionary measures, like tidying up wiring and limiting access to crucial data and applications to select personnel, can help minimize the risk and impact of these unforeseen mishaps.

Cybersecurity threats

Various cyberthreats can paralyze your operations in different ways. Ransomware, one of the most notorious types of malware, blocks your access to vital data or IT systems until you pay the ransom specified by the attack's perpetrators. In some cases, the attackers also erase your data or expose it to the public whether or not you pay the ransom. According to Coveware, ransomware attacks caused an average of 25 days of downtime in the third quarter of 2022.

A distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack, on the other hand, floods your web servers with large volumes of traffic. This cyberthreat can slow down your servers, shut down your website, and prevent you from responding to your customers' requests. Some perpetrators of DDoS incidents even demand a ransom before they cease the attack.

Cyberthreats can also be an indirect cause of downtime. Data breaches and phishing attacks, for instance, can occur without stopping your operations. But if you belong to a regulated sector and end up falling victim to these cyberattacks, your company will most likely be the subject of investigation by industry regulators. Depending on the severity of the incident, you may have to scale down or cease your operations for the duration of the investigation.

Hardware failure

The failure of critical hardware, such as the servers that house your business's data, will prevent your staff from accessing important files and completing their tasks, causing your operations to grind to a halt. Such incidents usually occur because your hardware needs to be repaired or replaced.

Unfortunately, this problem may not be resolved as quickly as you need it to be. If you don't have in-house technicians, you may have to wait up to several hours for third-party service personnel to arrive and repair the broken machine. Replacement often takes much longer, as purchasing new machines and setting them up can take up to several days.

Taking note of your hardware's average life span is one way to remedy this issue. Servers, for instance, need to be replaced every three to five years. Furthermore, you may need to secure redundant machines that will serve as a backup in case your primary hardware malfunctions or fails.

Legacy systems

The if-it-ain't-broke mentality doesn't always work to your advantage in IT. Instead of holding on to legacy systems because "they still work just fine," consider upgrading to newer and more powerful hardware and software. This is because newer business tools and applications often require computing power that old hardware simply cannot support or provide. What's more, these solutions tend to be incompatible with older programs and operating systems (OSes). Incompatibilities result in errors, which may lead to downtime.

Using old OSes, such as Windows XP, Vista, and 7, can also make your company more vulnerable to security risks. This is because these legacy OSes no longer receive support and security updates from Microsoft, which means they are not equipped to defend against the latest cyberthreats.

Natural or human-made disasters

Different disasters can affect your operations in various ways, depending on their severity and the area they affect. Hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods, for instance, can damage infrastructure and result in power and internet outages. A fire or a terrorist attack can damage your building and the equipment inside, including your servers. Pandemics, on the other hand, make it unsafe to leave the house and congregate in closed spaces like offices.

Most disasters are unpredictable, so you need to have precautions in place to keep resulting downtime to a minimum. These should include redundancies, such as power generators and alternative internet connections, as well as measures that will help you quickly regain access to your data following a disaster. You must also ensure that your staff can access data and complete their tasks outside the office should the need arise.

How can MSPs help address downtime?

Mitigating the risk and effects of IT downtime, all while growing your business, can be a considerable and costly challenge. Partnering with a managed IT services provider (MSP) like Sundog is the best way to overcome this hurdle.

An MSP is a team of IT specialists to whom you can outsource key IT functions. These experts assume responsibility over your IT system, helping you maximize the benefits you gain from your technology investments. Different MSPs tend to offer different services, especially if they specialize in specific industries, but most of them provide cybersecurity, data backup, and network monitoring solutions.

It's impossible to completely eliminate the risk of downtime. The expertise that MSPs bring to the table, however, can help you manage the risk of downtime, shorten its duration, and keep its negative effects to a minimum. There are several ways in which MSPs accomplish these.

They monitor your network

One of an MSP's primary goals is to ensure that your network is functioning optimally at all times. They don't wait for components in your IT system to break before they act.

Instead, MSPs proactively monitor your network 24/7/365 for any issues and irregularities that can bog down its performance. Should they find an issue, the MSP resolves it as quickly as possible. For most issues, they do this remotely, so you no longer have to wait for them to go on site to address the problem, although they can travel to your office for more complex issues.

If you don't have an internal IT team, working with an MSP ensures that the critical task of overseeing your network is handled by experts who are well versed in IT procedures and best practices. This reduces the risk of mistakes that trigger outages and cause downtime for your company.

They strengthen your cyber defenses

Gartner estimates that organizations will spend $188.3 billion on information security and risk management products and services in 2023. Here's how MSPs can help improve your cyber defenses and lower the risk of downtime caused by cyberattacks:

- Proactive monitoring can detect potential threats to your IT system, such as irregular traffic and hacking attempts.
- MSPs can conduct vulnerability assessments to identify weaknesses in your IT infrastructure that cybercriminals can exploit to harm your business.
- An MSP can recommend tools, applications, and measures to keep cyberthreats out of your network.
- Part of an MSP's responsibilities is ensuring that your firewalls, anti-malware software, data backups, and OSes are updated to the latest versions.
- MSPs stay abreast of cyberthreats, key processes, and cybersecurity best practices.

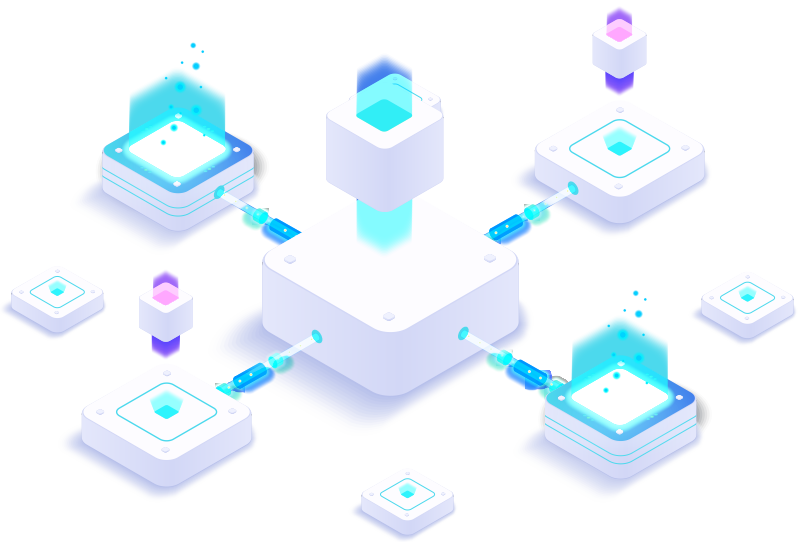
MSPs that cater to specific industries also specialize in compliance with industry regulations. For example, if your business is part of the healthcare sector, an MSP that specializes in your industry can help you comply with the data security requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

They keep your systems up to date

MSPs reduce the risk of hardware failure through professional maintenance and repair services. As maintenance and fixes can be disruptive to your operations, you can arrange with your MSP for these processes to be performed when they would have the least impact on your company's day-to-day activities.

If the cost of upgrading your system prevents you from letting go of legacy systems, then your MSP might be able to help. Some MSPs can secure top-notch business solutions at lower prices, while others offer convenient services like Hardware-as-a-Service (HaaS).

HaaS lets you rent IT equipment at an affordable cost, allowing you to acquire new and powerful machines for your business. In this arrangement, the MSP usually takes care of maintenance and future hardware upgrades so you don't have to budget for those. You can also increase or decrease the number of machines you rent according to your business's needs.



They help with data backup and disaster recovery

On the off chance that you lose access to crucial business data following a cyberattack or natural disaster, you can avoid prolonged downtime as long as you have backups of your files. Your MSP can implement on-site backups or cloud backups — or both — depending on factors like data regulation requirements, how critical your data is to your operations, and how quickly you need to resume your operations. Additionally, they will consider data recency requirements, storage needs, and cost implications when devising the best backup strategy for your company.

They can train your employees

When your employees are trained in IT, they are less likely to make mistakes that can result in downtime. What's more, they will know how to prevent and respond to incidents that can potentially disrupt your operations.

MSPs are usually composed of experts with years of experience in various fields of IT. If you're looking for people who can train your staff on IT-related matters, look no further than your MSP. For instance, they can help your employees identify telltale signs of cyberattacks and behaviors that compound the risk of a security breach. You can even arrange for your MSP to conduct regular training sessions designed to update your staff on evolving cyberthreats and new IT best practices.

How can Sundog help?

IT downtime can hurt your business in many ways. It can lower your revenue, compromise your data, damage your reputation, and subject you to costly penalties. And while you can't completely eliminate the possibility of downtime, you can minimize its risk and impact by partnering with an MSP.

Sundog will proactively monitor your IT systems, keeping track of possible vulnerabilities and identifying opportunities to further bolster your defenses against factors that can disrupt your operations. We are dedicated to ensuring that your IT network is in the best condition to help your company grow. After all, your business's success is our success as well.

Let us help you address downtime in your organization.

CONTACT US TODAY!

Phone: (815) 991-2400 Email: yourteam@sundogit.com

SUNDOG
YOUR STRATEGIC IT PARTNER

www.sundogit.com