Why your data provider's support matters

By Chris de Bruyn   8 Mar 2019

Data has become critical to business and organisations need to be able to access it at all times. Not all businesses have the capacity to retain the in-house skills required to manage their data storage and backups, so they become dependent on their data backup provider to assist them when issues arise.

Chris de Bruyn, Operations Director at Gabsten Technologies

Many providers offer 24/7 support services to assist customers with their data concerns. However, when organisations need assistance and support, many find it frustrating.

The support conundrum

Support is meant to make a business's life easier. Unfortunately, many businesses find their support can result in the opposite. Here are a number of reasons why support can be ineffective:

- **Lack of understanding of business requirements** – Support staff need to have full visibility into the customers' business in order to understand the importance of specific data sets and the consequences when a business is unable to access or restore them. Insufficient or incorrect information can cause a Service Desk to incorrectly prioritise incidents, creating delays that can frustrate a customer.

- **Misunderstanding** – In order to provide 24/7 support, many data storage and backup providers leverage international call centres. Although this is convenient and offers 'round the clock' support, different accents compounded by an understanding of the English language can cause misunderstandings to occur.

- **Cultural differences** – Not all providers grasp the nuances specific to South African businesses, which can cause confusion and even, at times, offence. This applies to data compliance, too, where international call centre agents may lack awareness of regulations specific to a local business or industry.

- **Lack of on-site support** – Occasionally support requires a hands-on approach. Providers who don't have a local presence may be unable to provide on-site support, and businesses are forced to source a local resource to assist them.

What about "follow the sun"?

Some providers adopt a 'follow the sun' approach when it comes to support in order to maintain 24/7 service, essentially handing over a call or issue from call centre location to call centre location based on daylight hours. This ensures customers receive continuous support, however, it can create additional complexity too.

Information can be lost as language barriers, miscommunications and misunderstandings can occur, between agents and customers as well as between different call centres during handover. Handovers can also create unnecessary delays, depending on the complexity of the issue.

Moreover, environments become difficult to monitor and manage remotely, and remote assistance becomes dependent on different variables such as connectivity and reception.

What should businesses do?

Different organisations have different data and support requirements, so a 'cookie cutter' approach is not always possible. Businesses should carefully consider their provider's service offering, factoring in support to ensure it will suit their specific and unique needs.

The more complex the data environment, the more 'hands-on' support is required. Organisations should identify the type of support they need, taking into account their potential need for on-site support, as well as whether there is potential for communication barriers. South Africa has eleven official languages and most South African's don't use English as their first language. Where businesses practice in a language other than English, it makes sense to select a provider that can offer them support in their preferred language, wherever possible. This eliminates much confusion when an issue needs resolving.

Businesses should ideally choose a data provider that can tailor their services and support to their needs, providing trust, optimal and hands-on support, and transparency across all their services.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris de Bruyn is Operations Director at Gabsten Technologies