



The DynaSis Educational Series for C-Level Executives

The Value of an IT Assessment

Ask yourself three questions:

- 1: Would you like your Information Technology investment to be an asset rather than just an expense?
- 2: Are you willing to risk your IT network “going down”, or risk suffering a total data-loss?
- 3: Do you believe you have to accept second-rate service because you are a small company?

Answering these questions should be extremely simple: of course you want your IT capabilities to be an asset to your company; of course you want to avoid risk; and “yes”, you are entitled to first rate service no matter the size of your company.

But where to begin? That’s another easy question: An [IT Assessment](#). Anyone who tells you how to get to where you need to go without a “road map” is probably going to recommend unnecessary changes, miss some important ones, and almost inevitably end up providing you with a system that doesn’t accomplish all that you want and need. In reality, you may never know what you are missing, because ***you simply don’t know what you don’t know.***

There are a number of goals for which any 21st century company needs to be striving:

Availability: Your employees cannot work if they cannot gain access to your network. 99% uptime may sound like a positive goal, but 99% uptime means 1% downtime which translates to 5,256 minutes a year when your team cannot function properly. If you believe in Murphy’s Law, then you know that this downtime won’t be happening at 4 AM on Sundays! Today we look at acceptable rates of uptime at between 99.99% and 99.999%. That’s between 5 minutes and one hour of total downtime per year. Yes, it is

achievable, but you have to be doing things right. The IT Assessment is critical.

Security: Cyber Security in 2016 is worthy of a whole separate white paper. In fact, you may want to read ours: [Cyber Security](#) 2016. But in a nutshell, the world of cyber crime has shifted to the small business. When you hear about data breaches to Sony, Target, Macys and others, you may assume that it's only the big guys who are being targeted. Not so. The big guys have now each spent millions of dollars protecting themselves, so today's cyber criminal has found an easier target: you. In 2014 71% of cyber crimes were committed against small to mid-sized businesses, up from just 14% in 2011. An IT Assessment will quickly show where your vulnerabilities lie.

The multi-national, and highly regarded, law firm [Dentons](#) recently advised its clients that in today's environment, risk management and crisis-management have become imperative for management and, where they exist in small to mid-sized businesses, Boards of Directors. "The consequences of risk arising from the rapid change in technological solutions that need to be addressed by a company in order to reduce exposure to potential adverse consequences may include, without limitation, those relating to business interruption, security/privacy, data integrity, intellectual property, licensing, records retention, electronic discovery, export control and other violations of law in both the US and foreign jurisdictions." They further go on to warn that failure to do so can risk action by both state and federal authorities, as well as civil litigation and unfavorable press.²

Mobility: Today's employees are on the move. In the office, on the road, at home, even on vacation. In the 9 to 5 world of "oh so long ago", when employees left for the day, or the weekend, they were gone. There was rarely contact between employer and employee outside of business hours. If Ward Cleaver's boss wanted to speak to him on a Saturday afternoon, he had to hope the big guy was standing next to the family phone in the hall by the steps, because that was the only phone the family owned. Not so today. If you need to speak with an employee at 11 PM on a Saturday night, you can probably find him via cell phone, text, or email. The positive trade off, of course, is that today's employee can also keep in constant touch with his/her family while on the job. But all this technology only provides a benefit if the technology is working! Your employee's ability to interact with your company's records at any time, and anywhere in the world, is a vital function, and an IT assessment can determine both the availability of your employees to the company and the availability of the company's records to your employees.

Productivity: Is your company still using Windows 7, Windows 8, or (arrgh!) Windows Vista? Huge improvements are made every time a new version of Windows or Office is released and although people tend to complain about the learning curve, the reality is that by keeping up with every new version, the learning curve is reduced and productivity increases. An IT Assessment will tell you where you are at in terms of productivity software and the benefits you can achieve by upgrading.

In a recent survey of 900 business executives on the need for "multi-speed IT", Accenture found that:

- Eighty-eight percent of executives believe that the IT organization needs to broaden its scope and keep pace with the evolving needs of the business.
- Seventy percent of executives believed they or their IT organization could operate and simultaneously support multiple business objectives, or "multi-speed IT."

- Eighty-one percent of executives stated that most IT organizations do not know how to operate effectively while supporting multiple objectives at the same time.

While the need for “multi-speed IT” is beyond the scope of this paper, it is telling that the vast majority of the execs polled believe that most companies do not know how to effectively support multiple objectives. In other words, they do not know how to maximize productivity.¹

Accounting: Do you really know where all your equipment is and who is using it? Not only is this an accounting issue, it goes back to Security, as well.

In a nutshell, an IT Assessment can address many of your concerns, such as:

- Looking at IT issues that effect productivity.
- Identifying areas within your network that may generate weakness or risk.
- Giving you an accounting of all discoverable IT assets and users.
- Whether using a third party service provider is a viable option.
- If you are currently receiving the level of outsourced IT support you need.
- Your own lack of real knowledge of your IT infrastructure.
- Determining what condition your IT infrastructure is in.

With a quarter century of providing Outsourced Managed IT Services behind us, we at [DynaSis](#) have developed a highly successful IT Assessment process we follow during an on-site visit. Another Managed Service Provider may choose a different route, but this is the process our experience tell us works best:

- We assign a highly trained and experienced Solutions Architect (SA) to the project.
- Upon arrival at the subject company’s office, the SA will conduct a thorough physical inspection of the server room.
- The SA will ask to be logged into the server.
- The SA will run our proprietary Assessment Tool.
 - The Assessment Tool runs in memory and nothing is installed on any system. It only collects system / inventory information and does not collect any company or end user data.
- The SA will discuss the company’s needs, pain points, and what they hope to achieve from the Assessment.
- With company approval, he will take photos of the company’s environment.

Within a week of the on-site visit, our Solutions Architect returns to the Company to hold a review session at which we ask that all stakeholders be present. Stakeholders: ownership, IT team leader (if there is one), appropriate management, finance officer.

The Executive Summary will be reviewed covering:

- Discovered risks
- Potential operational benefits
- Network security
- Detailed reporting is also available
- Long and short term economic considerations
- Proposals and next steps

Again, this is the way we do it at DynaSis and other IT Service Providers may do it differently.

In addition to all the above, Canadian firm Litcom tells us that, depending on your specific business and industry, a well-done IT Assessment can also help deliver successful projects on time and on budget, decrease cost exposure from overrun, enhance competitive position, improve internal control over financial reporting, help in complying with current regulations, and improve IT governance.³

If you are not the business owner or CEO, but the senior executive in charge of IT, there are a few more incentives that you can use to convince your boss that an IT Assessment is money well spent. Charles Cresson Wood, CISA, CISSP, in a paper published more than a decade ago, told IT executives that with a proper IT Assessment, they could review and justify purchases. The Assessment can also keep you from spending \$20,000 to fix a \$1,000 problem. You can proactively identify and address security problems before they are exploited; you can increase employee motivation; you can preempt surprises, and you can document that due diligence has been performed.⁴ This was written more than a decade ago, but every word is still absolutely true. Now that's forward thinking!

A note to you IT Executives: The goal of an IT Assessment is NOT to eliminate your job or your team, if you have one. A properly executed IT assessment will give you the roadmap you need to provide your employer with top-notch IT services, making you ever more valuable. So unless it's your goal to spend the rest of your life fixing old worn-out IT equipment, a good IT Assessment can be your best friend.

What an IT Assessment can show you:

Several recent IT Assessments performed by DynaSis uncovered a variety of issues that might have led to serious problems if left unattended. It was discovered that one company's user accounts had passwords set to never expire, presenting a risk of use by unauthorized users. These are more easily compromised than passwords that are routinely changed. **Recommendation:** reconfigure all passwords to expire regularly.

If you have considered moving your IT infrastructure to the "Cloud", an IT Assessment will detail the benefits you can realize from this move, and whether it is cost justified. IT assessments performed for various companies have shown some that the Cloud was their best move, while others were shown that hybrid systems, where using the Cloud for certain functions, made the most sense.

An assessment for another company revealed that they had a number of computers whose support was about to expire. This means that updates and patches would no longer be available. **Recommendation:** operating systems should be upgraded, which not only prevents them from being out of support, but also provides many operating advantages over the older systems.

A frequently discovered problem was lack of adequate backup and/or disaster recovery plans. It was discovered at one company that newly installed computers were not being backed up with the rest of the network.

Another common problem was the lack of a Crypto Containment System (CCS), designed to prevent Crypto viruses from running rampant through an entire network. An effective CCS will detect a

Crypto virus upon intrusion into your system and contain it instantly by automatically detaching the infected unit from the rest of the network.

Conclusion: An IT Assessment, properly performed by a qualified IT Managed Services provider, allows you to deal with “issues” before they become “problems”. Whether there is a fee involved or complimentary, this service can alert you to situations that might otherwise take down your network, cause data to vanish in a flash, allow viruses to steal your customers’ personal data, permit disgruntled former employees to wreak havoc, or shut your system down completely.

You need an IT Assessment. Do it. Do it now!

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DynaSis is an Atlanta-based managed IT services provider. Their proprietary IT Assessment tools have been developed over their quarter-century of service to small to mid-sized business (typically 10 to 200 employees) and are continually upgraded as new technologies, and new cyber threats, are developed. If you are reading this White Paper, you are invited contact DynaSis to discuss a [Complimentary IT Assessment](#) for your business.

1 - https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insight-calibrating-multi-speed-it.aspx?c=str_ustechstratfy16psgs&n=Multi-Speed_IT_-_US

2 - <http://www.dentons.com/en/insights/alerts/2012/september/6/the-role-of-information-technology-risk-assessment-in-enterprise-risk-management>

3 - <http://www.litcom.ca/organization-benefit-assessment/>

4 - <http://searchsecurity.techtarget.com/How-to-sell-risk-assessment-benefits-to-IT-execs>