



LEARN HOW IT WORKS

MANAGED SERVICE PROVIDERS

*Identifying the Right One
for You*

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Leader of Business Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S NOTE	2
INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER 1	4
CHAPTER 2	5
CHAPTER 3	8
CONCLUSION	9



AUTHOR'S NOTE

Bill Kimbler is a partner and Business Development Lead at CW Technology.

Being with the company for over 13 years now, his role is centered on discussing the dynamics of IT support on the managed services model. In such a way, Bill has impacted quite a few thousand businesses over the years...

Bill's belief that the "CW Technology" way of mixing the IT support with management and business process needs of an organization is where the answer lies. This provides the complete solution for any SMB organization that relies on technology to meet its mission and objectives.

Outside of work, Bill is an avid runner and has competed in various half and full marathons, including the *Grandmas Marathon* in Duluth.

He also enjoys spending time with his wife Teresa and his two teen sons - Noah and Jonah.

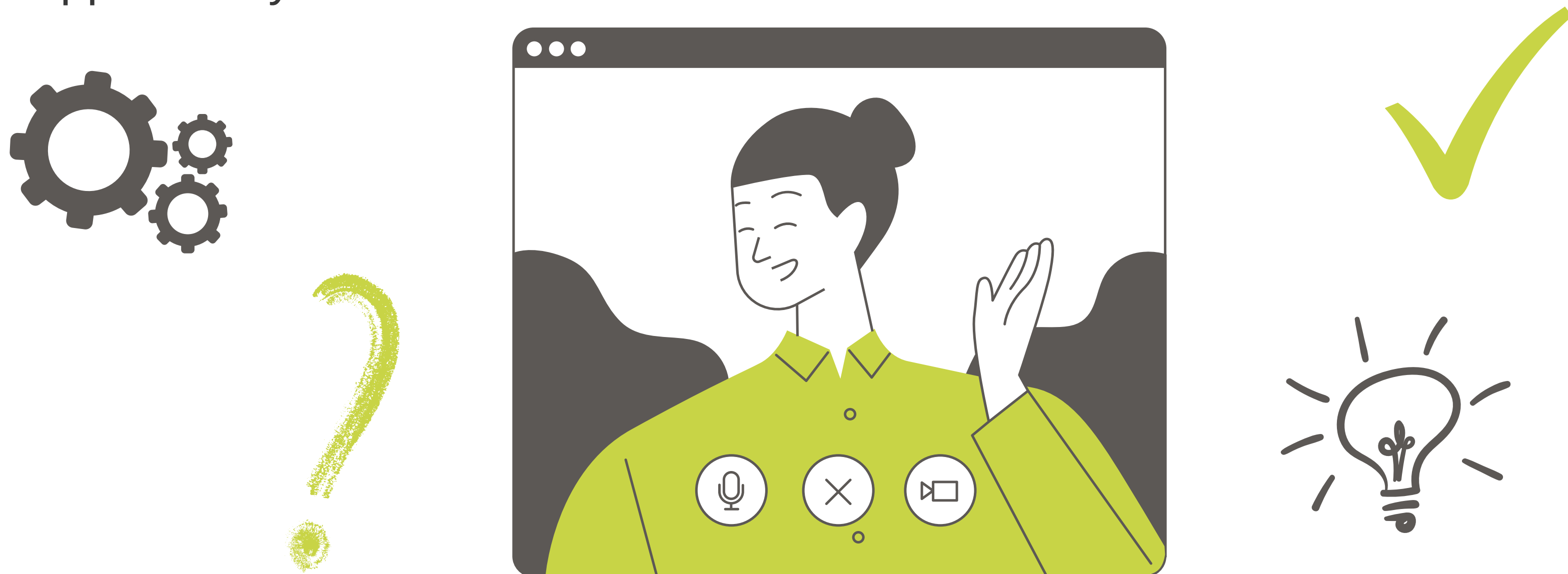
INTRODUCTION

Are you with the right one? Especially with the recent, big move to becoming more heavily dependent on technology, more and more SMB's (small-medium businesses) have made the change and begun outsourcing their IT to managed services providers, or MSP's.

If you are one of these businesses, or are considering such a change, it's especially important that you make the right, informed decision when picking your managed services provider.

WHY IT MATTERS

Choosing a managed services provider is not a step that should be taken lightly, for this becomes your new, collaborative partner that proactively supports all your business IT needs.



Whether you're just beginning this process, or already involved, you should consider the following questions:

- **Does your current IT provider understand your business beyond your technology infrastructure?**
- **Do you have measurable benchmarks that align your business needs to your IT infrastructure?**
- **Does your current IT provider have a process-driven approach that delivers similar experiences for all your IT support needs?**

CHAPTER 1

PERILS OF CHOOSING AN MSP

When it comes to IT needs of the SMB market, there is no "one size fits all" solution... Why? Simply put: every company within any industry is **unique** in its own way, from its identity to its differentiated products and services

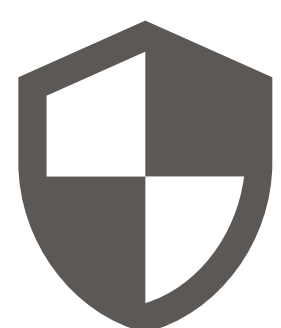
In addition to using workstations, laptops, and various other applications, recognizing and implementing security, backups, cost containment, and productivity measures is what establishes a reliable, secure, and efficient IT infrastructure that supports all business needs.

Now, how to **uniquely** align these two measures to positively impact the bottom line must be the primary focus for all companies. This is where managed service provider (MSP's) come in...

GETTING MORE WITH AN MSP



- Improved security.
- Proactive systems maintenance and monitoring.



- Decreased downtime.
- Access to new technologies.



- Reliable and efficient performance.
- Cost-saving, predictable expenses.

Using extensive, easily customizable tools, including security suites, backup systems, and help desks, MSP's support businesses' growth in providing the **unique** strategic and business alignment. The best way to explain this uniqueness scenario is through something we call the....

CHAPTER 2

THEORY OF THE CHOCOLATE CAKE

Picture the best chocolate cake you have ever had... Maybe it was homemade, maybe it was fresh from a bakery, or even store-bought. Wherever it was from, it has made quite the lasting impression on you, and you would probably travel a further distance or spend the extra money just for another bite of it...

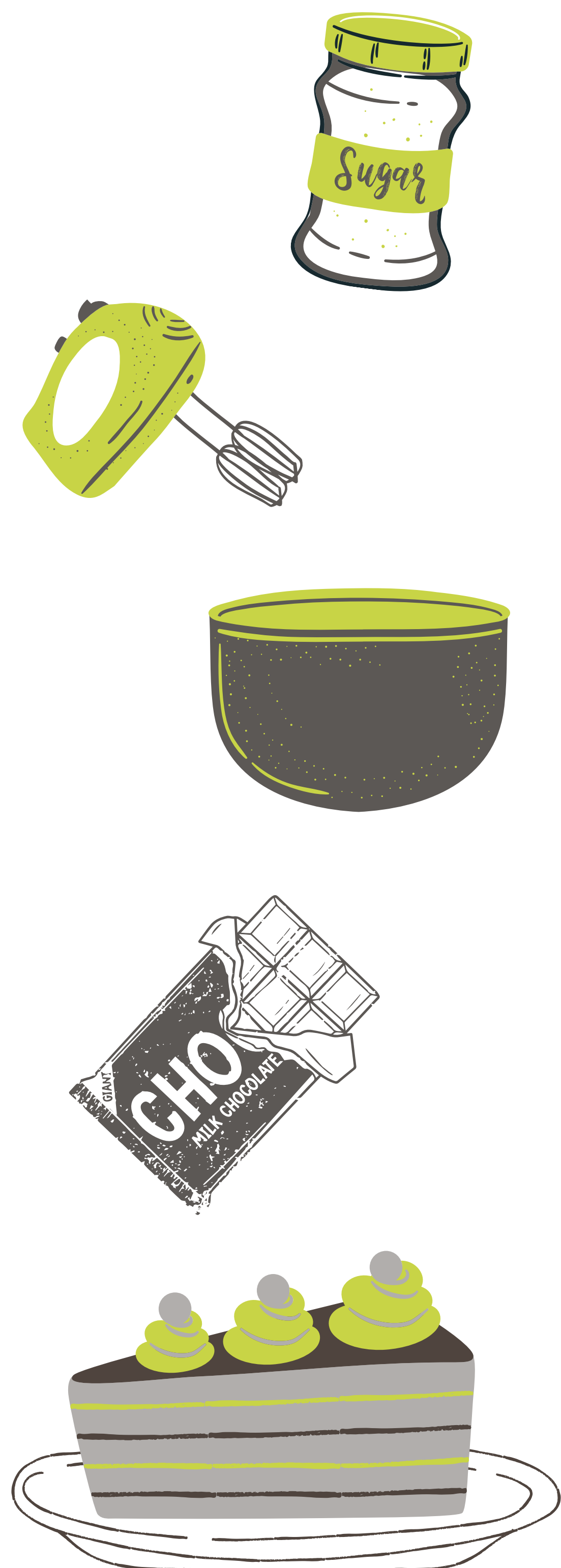
All chocolate cake is made from the same, general ingredients, such as eggs, butter, chocolate, sugar, and flour. Therefore, it can't be the ingredients alone that make the difference, but rather the way they are mixed and prepared that make that certain chocolate cake your favorite.

Similarly, this how you can determine which MSP is the best fit for your organization and your business IT needs.

At the core, IT support and managed services is similar from company to company: they have the tools, the people, the ability to respond to needs, and assist their clients. But what makes an MSP different? The answer lies in the process they use to achieve the optimal results that both they and their clients expect.

Your favorite chocolate cake is an MSP that effectively combines its tools and process to successfully deliver the results their client's needs, including improved cost management, productivity, and security for their IT infrastructure.

So, what steps should you take to identify a managed services provider that is right for you?



A FOCUS ON PARTNERSHIP



The best MSP will view your relationship as a partnership. A partner that understands your business goals is better equipped to help you improve your business strategically.

What's more, an MSP who is willing to conduct an in-depth discovery phase to understand the entire landscape of your company can develop solutions that are tailored to your business, infrastructure, and services.

Seek a provider who works in your industry and genuinely understands your niche. This will create a stronger partnership and an increased level of efficiency down the road.

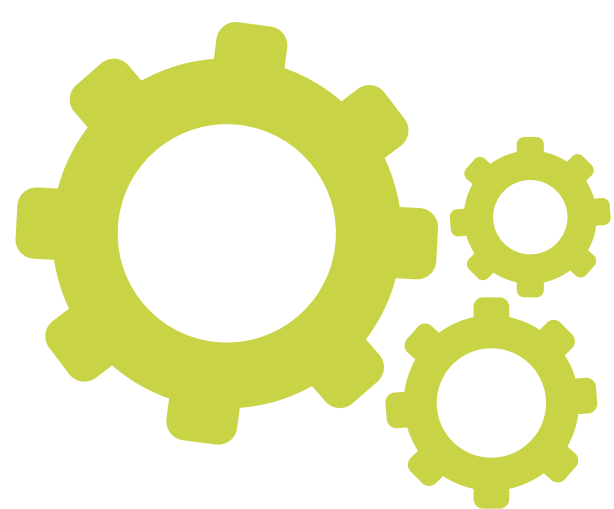
Additionally, while seeking the right provider, it's crucial to not base your decision solely on the salesperson, brochure or the company website as these are elements that could be misleading. Take the time to physically tour their office and witness first hand their bench strengths and quality of actual resources on hand.

DETAILED DOCUMENTATION STRATEGY



Make sure the MSP you hire or look at has strong documentation strategies in place. Your company is going to encounter unique situations that don't always have a textbook "fix," and it's essential that your MSP can document them as they crop up.

Documentation makes a problem easier to solve and gives your company the context needed to avoid the same issue in the future. What's more, an MSP that has a good documentation strategy in place can look back at the logs to observe problems your business has encountered before, and develop a plan to cope with it in the future.



PROACTIVITY

A good managed service partner should always be proactively monitoring and anticipating any and all upcoming problems.

If a provider is only offering static monthly reports on what's running smoothly and not what is potentially at risk, they aren't proactively managing your network.

While your network management team should fix problems as they occur, it's more beneficial to anticipate a problem and proactively take steps to avoid it, or in a worst case, have a solution ready before it happens.

Your company also needs a partner that's planning for your organization's growth instead of waiting for the change to happen and then playing catch up. While many MSPs favor the latter approach, the former is more effective and can help reduce the rate of incidences in your managed services.



CHAPTER 3

WHY MANAGED SERVICES?

The managed services model has become increasingly popular for SMB's over the past 10-15 years. The main reasons for working with a provider in a managed services model include:

STRATEGIC ADVISOR ROLE



The right MSP is not just another vendor that you write a check to... The right MSP understands that you have many IT needs, such as backup and disaster recovery (BDR) and mobile device management (MDM), and can manage them all for you.

Turning to one MSP practice to take care of all of your technological demands not only means you'll only have to pay an invoice, it also means you'll have an outside expert that's knowledgeable of your entire IT environment. Now, that's immensely valuable!

SECURITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



Are you aware of all the various contributing factors responsible for data loss and data breaches? Better yet, have you built and enforced security policies and procedures to protect against these threats?

Let's first examine the role human error plays in weakened security. Poor passwords and password security are just the tip of the iceberg.

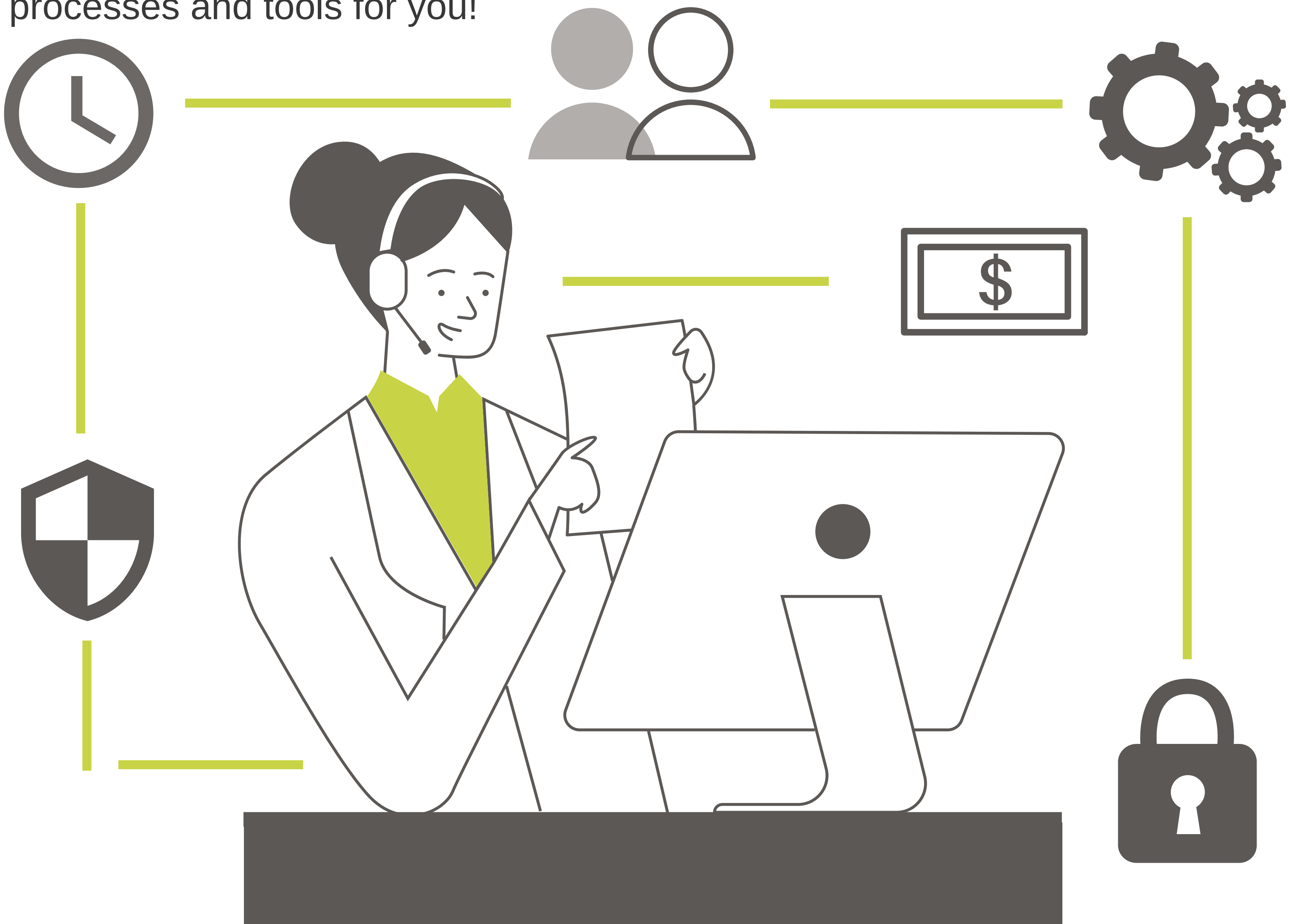
Combine this with staff accidentally deleting files, leaving devices unattended without locking screens, misplacing devices, sharing files unsecurely and falling for malware, malvertising or phishing schemes, and you've got a business-crippling situation on your hands

CONCLUSION

Managed services, along with managed services providers, are not going anywhere. As the market expands, more and more SMB organizations make the change and transform their technology strategy to one that involves MSP's.

At **CW Technology**, we provide the necessary and extensive managed services, customized for your business IT needs.

If you're looking to gain greater value from your technology, then contact us today to discuss how we can implement the optimal managed services processes and tools for you!



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