

IT PROVIDER BUYER'S GUIDE

How to Choose an IT Provider in Birmingham

The questions that separate a genuine local partner from a call centre with a Birmingham phone number.

01	The contract terms that quietly lock you in
02	How to verify response times before you sign
03	What onsite support should actually mean locally

Use this guide to assess where you are, identify the evidence you need, and turn the biggest gaps into a practical action plan.

Prepared by Brotherly Technology

Owner-led IT, security, and compliance support.

15-MINUTE ASSESSMENT

Start with the current state

Mark each item Yes, Partial, or No. A written policy only counts as Yes when the process is operating and you can show evidence.

☐ The agreement defines response targets by severity, channel, and business hours.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ Onsite support includes a realistic coverage area and target arrival window.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ You know which team members will actually support your organization.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ The provider can coordinate internet, phones, line-of-business apps, and hardware vendors.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ Remote-control tools require MFA, named technician accounts, and session logging.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ Backups, security monitoring, patching, and vendor coordination have named owners.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ The provider identifies who owns licenses, domains, documentation, and admin credentials.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ Pricing separates recurring service, projects, hardware, licenses, travel, and after-hours work.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ Termination language includes exports, transition help, and a complete credential handoff.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ References include organizations near Birmingham with similar size and industry needs.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ The provider carries appropriate insurance and explains its incident-notification process.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
☐ You can see a sample service report and escalation path before signing.	☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

Quick score: Yes = 2, Partial = 1, No = 0. Start with any No that could stop work, expose sensitive data, or create an avoidable contract cost.

Translate the agreement before it becomes a problem

Circle anything vague. If a term affects cost, access, security, or your ability to leave, put the operational meaning in writing.

Clause	Healthy version	Question to ask
Term and renewal	Short initial term or clear value exchange; visible renewal date	When and how can we decline renewal?
Termination	Defined notice, export, credential, and transition process	What exactly do we receive, in what format, and when?
Ownership	Client owns domains, tenant, data, and core admin identities	Whose name appears on every account?
Price changes	Notice period and a defined basis for increases	Can licenses or labor change mid-term?
Scope	Included systems, users, sites, hours, and exclusions are listed	What common request becomes a project?
Security	MFA, least privilege, logging, notification, and insurance are addressed	How do you protect access to all clients?
SLA remedy	Reporting, escalation, and corrective action are defined	What happens after repeated misses?

OPERATIONAL PROOF

Verify response time instead of trusting a promise

A fast sales reply does not prove a fast support response. Test the operating system behind the promise.

1	Ask for the severity matrix and read the definitions. Make sure your real outages qualify as urgent.
2	Submit a test request through the normal channel and record acknowledgement, human contact, and useful work.
3	Ask what pauses the SLA clock, including waiting on you, a vendor, parts, or an onsite appointment.
4	Walk through an outage at your Birmingham location and identify exactly who would arrive, from where, and with what access.
5	Call two references and ask for timestamps from a real urgent incident.

What to watch for

WATCH: One response time is quoted for every severity.

WATCH: The provider will not show a sample report, escalation path, or offboarding checklist.

WATCH: The SLA measures an automated acknowledgement, not human engagement.

WATCH: Core accounts or licenses would be opened in the provider's name.

WATCH: Onsite support is described as available but has no coverage or arrival target.

WATCH: The contract auto-renews long before you receive a performance review.

MAKE IT ACTIONABLE

Turn the worksheet into a 30-day plan

Do not try to solve everything at once. Assign one owner, one next action, and one date for each priority.

NOW	Name the owner and confirm the current state.	_____
NEXT 7 DAYS	Fix the highest-risk gap or gather the missing evidence.	_____
NEXT 30 DAYS	Complete the remaining quick wins and set review dates.	_____
NEXT QUARTER	Test the process, document results, and assign improvements.	_____

Notes / decisions / questions for your provider

Want a second set of eyes? Book a free consultation at brotherlytechnology.com/contact/ or call 404-907-1005.

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