



# Right-size your support SLAs

Get priority support on critical business systems, but don't over support where you don't need to

## **IT decision makers are taking a long, hard look at how much they spend on technology support, and it comes down to a balance between cost and risk.**

If a critical piece of infrastructure goes offline, it can cost the organization more lost business than it would have cost for a higher service level support agreement. On the other hand, spending more than you need to supporting non-critical infrastructure can be the slow drip that bleeds the budget dry.

The scale and complexity of a large company's IT support requirements can complicate this delicate balancing act. Large organizations have a huge asset register that's often out of date, and a wide range of software licenses, all with different expiry dates.

They're trying to manage a big in-house support team, as well as numerous vendor support contracts, with no single point of contact.

In this sort of environment, it can be difficult to tell if every part of the business is correctly supported. The natural tendency is to err on the side of caution, over-specify support SLAs, and spend more than you need to.

Taking a more analytical approach to service levels can go a long way to solving these problems. It can help you set a high level of support where you need it, but avoid over-paying where you don't.

The key to making sure you're not over or under supporting your assets is to work out how critical each system is to the business and set service levels accordingly.

Let's take a look at how to do this.

Large organizations have a huge asset register that's often out of date, and **a wide range of software licenses, all with different expiry dates.**

Remember that having a conversation with your support provider about the business outcomes you want to achieve can go a long way to **getting the optimum set of support SLAs that meet both your business requirements and your budget.**

### Step one: Work out how critical each system is to the business

To make informed decisions about what levels of support you need, and how much to spend on support, you need to work out how critical each part of your IT is to the business. This means assessing the business impact of the failure of each system.

You should do this in collaboration with your business unit stakeholders and spend time with different groups of users to understand what services they think are critical to them. In most cases you'll find you don't need to guarantee maximum availability for every single system in the business.

Additionally, you agree a recovery time objective for each system – that's the maximum length of time the company can afford the system to be out-of-service. Then, you use this to set the required levels of availability and reliability for each individual area.

It's likely that you'll need different levels of support at different locations, across different business units, and between different systems.

For example, services like e-mail, internet access, voice over IP, and common business applications like Microsoft® Office are used by everyone, everywhere, all the time, and have to be available. By contrast, one small department might be the only user of a specialist application which, if it went down, wouldn't affect many people or have much of an impact on the business.

### Step two: Sort systems into tiers based on how much support they need

You can do this at the level of systems, locations, or individual pieces of infrastructure.

Tier one would include mission critical applications or infrastructure, where any loss of service would have a severe financial impact. These would require the highest level of availability and support.

Tier one systems would probably be designed to be highly resilient, with capacity and storage on demand, and a full disaster recovery plan in place. Their importance would warrant spending more on faster onsite response and recovery times, including rapid onsite engineering support when needed.

At the other end of the scale, tier five services would include non-critical applications or infrastructure, where a loss of service would have little business impact. Here, a lower level of reactive support with a longer recovery time objective would be sufficient, and the business could save money on support.

### Step three: Talk to your support provider

Now that you have a clear understanding of your organization's service requirements across your entire IT estate, you can make informed decisions about how much to spend on support services in the different parts of your business.

You want to work with a service provider who's flexible and doesn't force you into a 'one-size-fits-all' contract approach.

What you want is a partner that has a granular set of support offerings, so you can choose service levels according to your specific business requirements and budget.

So, have an open conversation with them and see if they can offer variable SLAs.

Ask if you can have a 9-to-5 next business day SLA on non-critical systems, but a 24/7, 2-hour SLA on a mission critical part of your infrastructure. Understand if they offer availability monitoring as part

of their higher availability service plans so that issues can be spotted and corrected before an incident occurs.

A good support provider will offer this flexibility, so that you can find the perfect fit for your requirements, and they should also be able help with the analysis and tiering exercise.

Taking a consultative approach with your service provider can go a long way to developing a support contract across your IT estate that strike the right balance between cost and risk.

### Talk to NTT about right-sizing your support

By following these three steps, you will find that in most cases it's possible to reduce IT support costs without compromising service levels.

It's not about downsizing to save costs, nor upsizing to reduce risk across the board – it's about rightsizing support for each system, location, or individual asset, based on how critical it is to the business.

Remember that having a conversation with your support provider about the business outcomes you want to achieve can go a long way to getting the optimum set of support SLAs that meet both your business requirements and your budget.

If you'd like us to look at whether your current support arrangements are right for your business, ask your account manager about the IT Support Assessment, or fill in the contact form on our website.

