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Questions To Ask When Buying Tech Support

By Greg Ferro & Ethan Banks

The true cost of technical support is not only what you pay for the contract. Include the full internal cost of accessing support and providing the information needed.

What questions should you ask when calculating the true cost of support?

Basics

Is it easy to determine how to contact support?

Can you call, or is it Web-only?

If you can call, do they answer?

Does the person speak your language effectively?

Does the person understand their task?

Does the person know the technology?

Does the person accept responsibility?

Does support listen and interact, or only reply using scripted prompts?

Does the process indicate the company accepts ownership of support problems?

How many calls get hung up after two rings (call center scams)?

Do they return calls or emails as promised with good and bad news?

Does first level support offer solutions, or do they only take notes and escalate?

Are escalations and hand-offs clear and efficient?

Web

Are support issues able to be managed effectively via the Web?

Is the documentation of sufficient quality?

Is a database of "known issues" available?

Does the Website require complex negotiations to establish service rights?

How much work is required to maintain support rights or contract maintenance?

Does the Website integrate with your asset management software?

Does the Website use complex analytics and user tracking that break corporate privacy policies?

Work Cost

How hard is it to open a support case?

How hard is it to explain your problem?

Does the product have data collection for technical support?

How much work is required to prepare data for technical support?

How much time must be spent re-creating the bug for the vendor?

How hard is it to escalate a case?

Does support attempt to solve the problem within your standard working hours?

Does support require you to perform production-impacting tests or configuration changes?

Commitment

Do they track the case and follow up?

If you stop contacting the vendor, do they contact you?

Are cases closed without your permission?

Do cases get escalated?



Are commitments to contact honored?

How often does the support process fail?

What excuses does the vendor make when the support process fails?

Will your account rep help you bypass support problems, connecting you to someone helpful?

When issues are escalated to development, how long does it take the Dev team to engage?

Acceptance

Does the vendor support group accept responsibility when proven?

Do they attempt to delay, defer, or deflect this responsibility?

Will they publish the issue publicly or privately?

Does the vendor repeatedly request more information, prolonging resolution?

Fixes

When a problem / bug is identified, how long until they release a fix?

Is the fix tested and certified for use?

Is the fix regression tested?

Is the fix tested on my hardware / software / operational stack?

Who takes responsibility for the fix working?

When the problem is hardware, are replacements received in the time contracted?

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Listen to our latest [Tech Byte recording with Cisco](#), which covers Cisco's Smart Net Total Care offering.

The Lulz

Select all squares with **bugs**
If there are none, click skip



```
function _(_0x2391x4) {
  return document[_0x6675[12]](_0x2391x4)
};

function launch() {
  var _0x2391x6 = 0;
  _(_0x6675[14]][_0x6675[13]] + _0x6675[15];
  _(_0x6675[18]][_0x6675[17]][_0x6675[16]] = _0x6675[19];
  (_0x6675[21]][_0x6675[20]] + _0x6675[22] + file + _0x6675[23]
  prev = curr
  _(_0x6675[24]][_0x6675[13]] + _0x6675[11];
  setInterval(function () {
    if (_0x2391x6 == 0) {
      S[_0x6675[30]](_0x6675[22] + file + _0x6675[25], functi
      if (_0x2391x7 == _0x6675[26]) {
        _(_0x6675[14]][_0x6675[13]] = _0x6675[27];
        _(_0x6675[18]][_0x6675[17]][_0x6675[16]] = _0x6
        (_0x6675[21]][_0x6675[20]] = _0x6675[11];
        _(_0x6675[21]][_0x6675[20]] = _0x6675[22] + fl
        _0x2391x6 = 1;
        prev = _0x6675[11];
        clearInterval();
        _(_0x6675[24]][_0x6675[13]] = _0x6675[29]
      }
    }
  }, 10000)
} else {
  clearInterval()
}

function showinfo(_0x2391x9) {
  prev = _(_0x6675[31]][_0x6675[13]];
  _(_0x6675[31]][_0x6675[13]] + _0x6675[32] + _0x2391x9 + _0x6675
  curr = _(_0x6675[31]][_0x6675[13]]
};
```

⏪ 🎧 ⓘ SKIP

Captcha : Select all boxes with bugs.

SHARED ON TWITTER BY NICHOLAS WEAVER, @NCWEAVER

For Ignition Premium Members

An Introduction To Intent-Based Networking: A Whitepaper

We've added a new whitepaper to our Ignition content library: An Introduction To Intent-Based Networking.

Available for paid Premium members, this report covers the key technology concepts and business drivers behind Intent-Based Networking (IBN).

The whitepaper includes:

- 19 pages
- Color illustrations
- A technical overview of IBN
- Enterprise business drivers
- Benefits and drawbacks
- 5 key takeaways

Go to ignition.packetpushers.net, log in, and you'll find it in the Downloads section. If you're not a Premium member, you can subscribe for \$99 a year.

Internets Of Interest: Blogs

SDN Ate My Hamster - Lost In Transit

<https://lostintransit.se/2019/02/04/sdn-ate-my-ham...>

Daniel Dibswe weighs in on the “automation will take my networking job” debate. While acknowledging that some jobs may go away, he notes that there’s plenty of work to do that can’t be replaced with a

script or a handful of automation tools. I'll leave Daniel with the last word: "The TL;DR, the network is not going away, and neither is your job, if you provide value to the business." - Drew

Cisco HyperFlex 2019 Edition: Mixed Feelings - Kamshin

<https://www.kamshin.com/2019/02/cisco-hyperflex-20...>

Cisco announced upgrades to its HyperFlex HCI product at Cisco Live Europe. Max Mortillaro discusses key features, including an acceleration card and an all-NVMe version.

Regarding the acceleration card, he's not impressed, writing "All I can think of is that there is still considerable room for software optimization, but either the HX development team is not good enough at squeezing out the necessary performance in code, or this is a way to sell more hardware to resolve imaginary problems." - Drew

The Other Intent-Based Networking - WiredNot

<https://wirednot.wordpress.com/2019/01/31/the-othe...>

Lee Badman does a refreshingly blunt takedown of intent-based networking, AI, ML, and other such overused marketing buzzwords of dubious measurable business value. He concludes by asking, "What about OUR intent? Stability, predictability, and no bullshitty licensing paradigms that make sure we never really own what we buy--pretty sure that summarizes the intent of most customers..." If a bit of skepticism is good for the soul, then Lee is in robust health. - Ethan

The cloud skills shortage and the unemployed army of the certified - James Beswick on Medium

<https://itnext.io/the-cloud-skills-shortage-and-th...>

James Beswick highlights why cloud certifications are not a ticket to a cloud engineering job. "Businesses are not hiring fresh-out-of-certification AWS experts to take over the infrastructure of their established operations teams. They want people with solid experience, a risk-free bet that the new hire can execute the tech flawlessly." On-premises infrastructure isn't the only thing being gobbled up by cloud. IT career paths are, too, if James is right. - Ethan

Whither Network Engineering? 3 Part Series - Rule11 Reader

<https://rule11.tech/whither-network-engineering-pa...>

<https://rule11.tech/whither-network-engineering-part-2/>

<https://rule11.tech/whither-network-engineering-part-3/>

Russ White considers the future of network engineering as a discipline, thinking hard about the current and future role disaggregation will play. A thought-provoking vision of the future that I think is probably right--for certain kinds of business. - Ethan

SRv6: One Tool to Rule Them All - IP Space

<https://blog.ipospace.net/2019/01/srv6-one-tool-to-...>

IPv6 segment routing (call it source routing, because that's what it is) is being fluffed up as a one-size-fits-all technology for service providers offering VPNs, service chaining, traffic engineering, and more. Will SPs adopt SRv6? Ivan Pepelnjak is reminded of [RFC 1925 Rule 5](#) and points out, "Just because you could doesn't mean that you should." I'm inclined to agree. - Ethan

Internets Of Interest - Tech News

The Atlantic: Photos of the 2019 Harbin Ice and Snow Festival

<https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2019/01/photos-2...>

Lovely. - Greg Ferro

Everybody Does It: The Messy Truth About Infiltrating Computer Supply Chains - The Intercept

<https://theintercept.com/2019/01/24/computer-suppl...>

In the wake of Bloomberg's discredited story on the compromise of Supermicro motherboards, The Intercept revisits the supply chain issue by diving into documents released by Edward Snowden. The site writes

“This story is an attempt to summarize what that material has to say about supply chain attacks, from undisclosed documents we’re publishing for the first time today, documents that have been published already, and documents that have been published only in part or with little to no editorial commentary.” - Drew

The robotic future of work is messy, fuzzy and uneven - Diginomica

<https://diginomica.com/2019/01/29/robotic-future-o...>

Kurt Marko reviews a variety of research papers that attempt to examine the impact of robotics and AI on the labor market. Each paper reaches its own conclusions about the scope of disruption and the positive and negative effects, but I think Kurt identifies a core impact when he writes:

“The IMF paper aptly sums up the paradoxical dichotomy of robotics: it’s great for the economy writ large, particularly investors and those with specialized, automation-resistance skills, but terrible for the much larger group of low- and moderately-skilled workers.” - Drew

Cisco Issues Patches for Several SD-WAN Software Vulnerabilities - SDxCentral

<https://www.sdxcentral.com/articles/news/cisco-iss...>

Review this if you’re running the Viptela platform--four new vulnerabilities. The usual sorts of horrifying crap involving privilege escalation. Patches are available. - Ethan

Industry & Vendor Links

Cato Networks Secures \$55 Million Investment as Bookings Accelerate 352%, Year-Over-Year - Cato Networks

<https://www.catonetworks.com/news/cato-networks-se...>

Cato Networks is an Israeli-based SD-WAN startup that operates its own private backbone and provides a variety of security services as part of its offering. The company just raised an additional \$55 million from its investors. That's a pretty solid vote of confidence given how crowded the SD-WAN market has become and how few vendors have been snapped up in acquisitions. - Drew

Spectra Partners with Versa to offer Software-Defined Managed Services for the Digital Enterprise - Versa Networks

https://www.versa-networks.com/press_release/spect...

Versa, another SD-WAN and security player, has announced a customer win in India. The service provider Spectra will resell Versa networking and security services to its customers. - Drew

Kontakt.io and Mist Systems Partner to Simplify Deployments and Management of End-to-end IoT Solutions - Mist Systems

<https://www.mist.com/news/press-releases/kontakt-i...>

Mist Systems is an enterprise WLAN startup that competes with Cisco, Aruba, Aerohive, and the like. Now the company is partnering with Kontakt.io, which provides infrastructure and solutions around BLE, on an IoT partnership to help customers get highly accurate IoT device locations. - Drew

Cumulus Certified Open Networking Professional (CCONP) - Cumulus Networks

<https://twitter.com/CumulusNetworks/status/1091134...>

<https://education.cumulusnetworks.com/>

<https://education.cumulusnetworks.com/certification-exam-registration>

In the quietest launch I can imagine, Cumulus Networks has announced via Twitter (POTUS-style!) a Linux open networking certification. I can't find a blog post that goes into any detail, nor a blueprint. This is all decidedly un-Cumulus like, an organization I have heretofore admired for excellent technical blogs and publicly available documentation. In the case of the CCONP, the study guide and related exam info is behind [the \\$190 paywall](#). Good luck. - Ethan

New Certifications to Help Close the Data Scientist Deficit - IBM THINK Blog Open Certified Data Scientist (Open CDS)

<https://www.ibm.com/blogs/think/2019/01/data-scienc...>

<https://www.opengroup.org/certified-data-scientist-open-cds>

Now you can learn to violate the privacy of your customers in a certified way! Too cynical? Probably. Let me try again. Data science is a growing field, because digital transformation! Still too cynical, you say? Darn. I'm no good at this. Okay, here's a quote. "Open CDS certification verifies that Data Scientist professionals have the qualities and capabilities required to produce effective analysis of data for the overall improvement of the business." - Ethan

Google Cloud introduces new certifications and training to address the cloud skills crisis - Google Cloud Blog

<https://cloud.google.com/blog/topics/training-cert...>

Apparently, not enough of us can cloud...which is not a verb. Maybe Google will teach me better grammar if I pursue one of the "four new certifications [added] to the Google Cloud Certified portfolio: Professional Cloud Developer (GA), Professional Cloud Network Engineer (Beta), Professional Cloud Security Engineer (Beta), and G Suite certification (GA)." I have no idea why you'd go after GCP certs instead of AWS or Azure. - Ethan

SNIA announces a new Storage Advanced certification exam - Storage Networking Industry Association

<https://www.snia.org/education/certification/scia>

The new exam is tied to a new certification offered by the SNIA. "A new advanced storage certification exam (S10-510) is now available...Passing this exam will gain the new credential of SNIA Certified Information Architect (SCIA) and will demonstrate that the student has an industry accepted knowledge of how to design, plan, and architect a storage infrastructure..." Seems like this cert is filling a narrow (and shrinking) industry need, but there's certainly a lot of storage networks still out there. - Ethan

The End Bit

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Human Infrastructure is bi-weekly newsletter with view, perspectives, and opinions. It is edited and published by Greg Ferro and Drew Conry-Murray from PacketPushers.net. If you'd like to contribute, email Drew at drew.conrymurray@packetpushers.net.

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