

Operational excellence

Building a technology infrastructure



For family offices embarking on the journey of building a tech infrastructure, literally hundreds of questions and considerations can arise. We are often asked, “How do we go about building our tech stack from the ground up? Do we want cloud services? What about cybersecurity?” Our discussion of best practices can serve as a road map for your family office to follow on the path to success.

Define your requirements

A Identifying what you need is probably the most difficult part of getting started. A few questions to get you started can help define your goals.

- **Project scope:** Understand the nature of your project (e.g., how extensive is the project; are you looking for hardware, software, outsourcing, etc.?).
- **Budget constraints:** Consider financial limitations and the cost of different technologies.
- **Team skills:** Evaluate the expertise of your team members and choose technologies they are comfortable with or willing to learn.


Starting from square one

The first step is deciding on an operating system (OS). For general purposes, the choices are Windows, Linux or macOS.

If you do not have an internal IT team, we suggest beginning with a Managed Service Provider (MSP) search. Selecting an MSP is a crucial decision for any organization seeking to outsource its IT services. The right MSP can enhance your IT operations, improve security and provide strategic guidance. Here is a structured approach to help you choose the right MSP:

Define your needs and objectives

- **Scope of services:** Determine which IT functions you want to outsource, such as network management, cloud services, cybersecurity, data backup or helpdesk support.
- **Business goals:** Align your IT needs with your business objectives. For instance, if scalability is a priority, you might need an MSP with strong cloud capabilities.
- **Budget:** Establish your budget for managed services and understand the pricing models (e.g., flat-rate, per-user, per-device).



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Research potential MSPs

- **Reputation and experience:** Look for MSPs with a solid track record and industry experience. Check reviews, testimonials and case studies.
- **Certifications and partnerships:** Verify if the MSP holds relevant certifications (e.g., CompTIA, Microsoft Gold Partner, Cisco Partner) and has partnerships with major technology vendors.
- **Specialization:** Ensure the MSP specializes in the areas you need, such as cybersecurity, cloud solutions or compliance.

Evaluate key criteria

1. Service offerings

- **Comprehensive services:** Ensure the MSP provides a full range of services that meet your requirements.
- **Customization:** Check if they can tailor their services to fit your specific needs.

2. Technical expertise

- **Skill set:** Assess the MSP's technical skills and expertise in the technologies and platforms you use or plan to use.
- **Certifications:** Look for certifications that demonstrate expertise in relevant technologies.

3. Support and Responsiveness

- **Service Level Agreements (SLAs):** Review SLAs to understand the level of service and response times you can expect.
- **Support channels:** Ensure they offer 24/7 support and multiple communication channels (e.g., phone, e-mail, chat).

4. Security and compliance

- **Security measures:** Evaluate their security protocols, including data protection, threat management and incident response.
- **Compliance:** Check if they comply with industry standards and regulations relevant to your business (e.g., GDPR, HIPAA).

5. Scalability and flexibility

- **Growth support:** Ensure the MSP can scale their services as your business grows.
- **Adaptability:** Verify their ability to adapt to changes in technology or your business needs.

6. Integration and compatibility

- **Technology stack:** Ensure their technology stack integrates well with your existing systems and platforms.
- **Compatibility:** Check for any potential compatibility issues with your current IT environment.

7. Assess financial stability

- **Financial health:** Review the MSP's financial stability to ensure they can sustain their operations long term.
- **Pricing structure:** Understand their pricing model and any potential additional costs.

Request MSP proposals and conduct interviews

- **Request proposals:** Ask for detailed proposals from shortlisted MSPs outlining their services, pricing and terms.
- **Conduct interviews:** Schedule meetings or interviews with potential MSPs to discuss your needs, their approach and to gauge their understanding of your business.

Evaluate and compare

- **Comparison matrix:** Create a comparison matrix to evaluate MSPs based on key criteria like service offerings, expertise, support and pricing.
- **References:** Check references from current or past clients to get insights into their experience with the MSP.

Selecting software applications

After your operating system and MSP are in place, the next step is to decide what core software platforms you will need for your business. Selecting software applications to complement your operating system involves choosing tools and applications that integrate well with your OS and enhance its functionality based on your needs. Here is a step-by-step guide to help you make informed decisions:

Identify your needs

- **Use case:** Determine what you need the software to accomplish (e.g., productivity, development, security).
- **Integration requirements:** Consider how the software needs to interact with the OS and other applications.
- **User experience:** Ensure that the software aligns with the workflow and preferences of the users.

Consider compatibility

- **OS compatibility:** Verify that the software is compatible with your OS version and architecture.
- **Updates and support:** Check if the software is regularly updated and supported on your OS.

Determine software categories

1. Productivity tools

- **Office suites:** Microsoft Office, Google Workspace, LibreOffice
- **Note-taking:** Evernote, Microsoft OneNote, Notion
- **Task management:** Todoist, Trello, Asana

2. Security software (often provided by your MSP)

- **Antivirus/anti-malware:** Norton, Bitdefender, Malwarebytes
- **Firewalls:** ZoneAlarm, Comodo Firewall
- **Encryption tools:** VeraCrypt, BitLocker (for Windows), FileVault (for macOS)

3. Communication and collaboration

- **E-mail clients:** Microsoft Outlook, Mozilla Thunderbird
- **Messaging:** Slack, Microsoft Teams, Zoom
- **Project management:** Jira, Basecamp, Monday.com

4. Financial tools

- **General ledger:** QuickBooks, Sage, NetSuite or Specialty System
- **Reporting:** Power BI, Google Analytics or Specialty System
- **Budgeting:** Workday, Monarch, NerdWallet

5. Utilities (often provided by your MSP)

- **Backup solutions:** Acronis, Backblaze, Time Machine (for macOS)
- **File management:** WinRAR, 7-Zip, Finder (for macOS)
- **System monitoring:** System Monitor (Linux), Activity Monitor (macOS), Task Manager (Windows)

Evaluate features and performance

- **Feature set:** Ensure the software has the features you need.
- **Performance:** Check if the software performs well on your OS without causing significant resource drain.

Consider licensing and costs

- **Licensing model:** Determine if the software uses a subscription model, one-time purchase or open-source licensing.
- **Budget:** Evaluate if the cost fits within your budget.

Check reviews and reputation

- **User reviews:** Read reviews and ratings from other users to gauge reliability and performance.
- **Professional reviews:** Look for expert reviews and comparisons.

Test and trial

- **Free trials:** Utilize free trials or demo versions to test the software in your environment.
- **Beta testing:** Participate in beta testing if available to get a preview of upcoming features.

Look for integration capabilities

- **APIs and plugins:** Check if the software offers APIs or plugins to integrate with other tools and services you use.
- **Compatibility with other tools:** Ensure it works well with other software applications you plan to use.

Ensure security and privacy

- **Data security:** Verify that the software has strong security measures in place.
- **Privacy policies:** Review the privacy policy to understand how your data will be handled.

Support and documentation

- **Customer support:** Check if the software offers reliable customer support and resources.
- **Documentation:** Ensure there is comprehensive documentation and user guides available.

Building a robust tech stack is not a small feat. It is a journey that takes years if you take the time to participate in the proper due diligence and project planning. No one path is the same, but hopefully we have shared some best practices with you that will help you along the way.

Erin Hulse

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