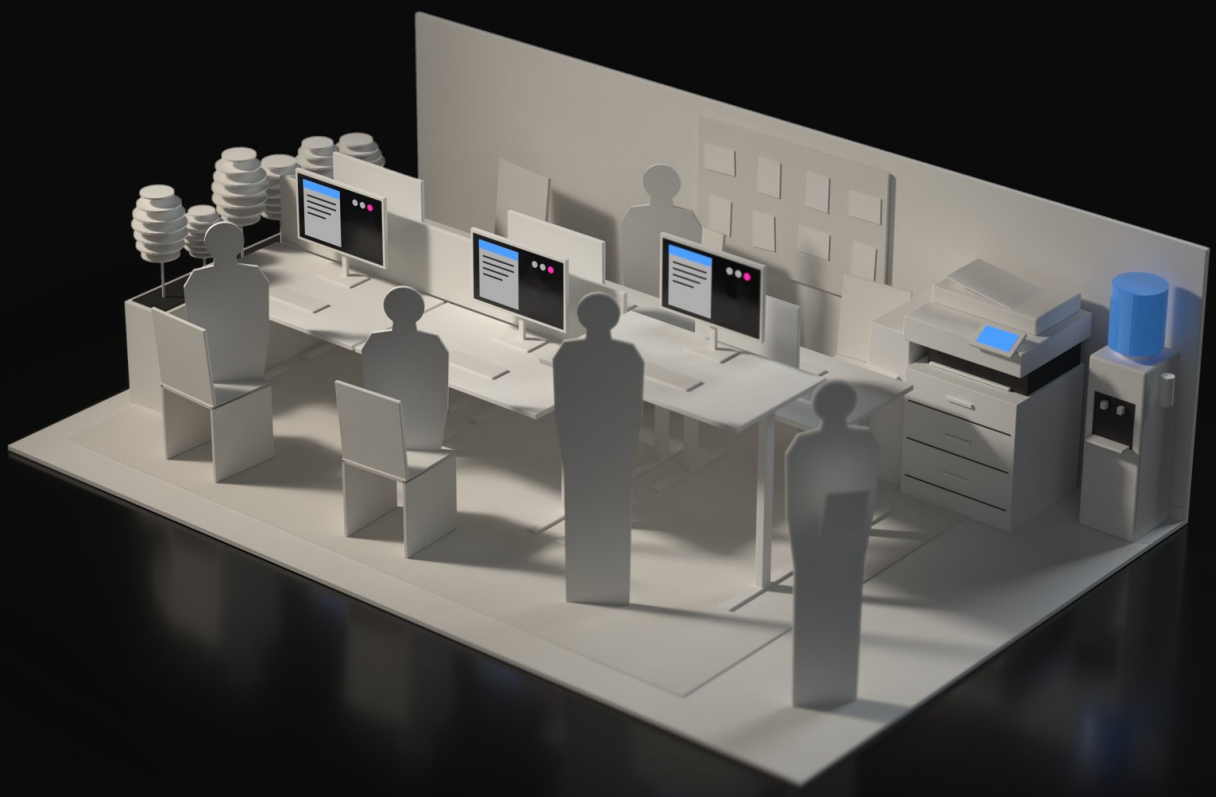


FOR CEOS AND BOARDS · AS OF NOVEMBER 2026

Choosing an IT provider. Simplified.

The questions to ask, what good answers sound like, and the contract red flags that cost clubs money for years.

John Morgan · Initial Technology · November 2026

THE ONE THING TO KNOW

You're not buying a help desk. You're handing over the keys.

Your IT provider can see everything: email, finance, members, gaming. Choose on how they protect you and how easily you could leave, not just on price.

SIMPLIFIED

Own your accounts. Get it in writing. Check their security, not just yours. Make leaving easy.

WHAT TO CHECK

01

Who holds the keys

Your tenant, domain and admin accounts.

02

Their own security

Essential Eight, MFA, staff checks.

03

Hours that match yours

Clubs trade nights and weekends.

04

The contract

Term, notice, exit, price rises.

05

Documentation

Written down and handed over.

06

References

From clubs your size.

STEP 01

Questions to ask

And what a good answer sounds like.

- [ ] **"Who owns our Microsoft tenant and domain?"**
  Good: you do, in the club's name, with our admin access listed.
- [ ] **"Do you follow the Essential Eight yourselves?"**
  Good: yes, at a stated level, with evidence.
- [ ] **"Who does the work?"**
  Good: named people. Ask if any of it is offshore or subcontracted.
- [ ] **"How do your staff sign in to our systems?"**
  Good: named accounts, multi-factor, logged and reviewed.
- [ ] **"What happens on a Saturday night?"**
  Good: a real person, a stated response time, a phone number.
- [ ] **"What insurance do you carry?"**
  Good: professional indemnity and cyber, with certificates.

HANDY TIP

ASD publishes a short list of security questions to ask managed service providers. Send it to every provider you're considering.

STEP 02

Contract red flags

Read these before you sign, not when you try to leave.

- [ ] **Long auto-renewal with a short window.**
  Three years, renewing unless you object 90 days out.
- [ ] **They keep the admin accounts.**
  Or charge you to hand them over.
- [ ] **Price rises at their discretion.**
  With no cap or notice.
- [ ] **Big exit fees.**
  Or no clear exit process at all.
- [ ] **Vague service levels.**
  "Best endeavours" instead of times.
- [ ] **Hardware tied to the service.**
  Leases that lock you in.

HANDY TIP

Most clubs are too big for the small business unfair-contract protections (100+ staff or $10M+ turnover), so the contract matters even more.

WRITE IT DOWN

PROVIDER	TERM	NOTICE	EXIT COST	AFTER-HOURS

STEP 03

Make leaving easy from day one

The best providers don't mind, because they don't expect you to go.

- ☐ **A documented handover clause.**
  Accounts, passwords, network diagrams, licences.
- ☐ **A current system register.**
  Updated every quarter.
- ☐ **Licences in the club's name.**
  Microsoft, firewalls, backup.
- ☐ **Security incident notice.**
  They tell you quickly if they're breached.

Choosing or reviewing a provider?

I'm independent and I don't resell anything. I can write the brief, run the questions, read the contracts and give the board a clear recommendation.

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THE SIMPLIFIED GUIDES

Free at initialtech.com.au/resources

01 Microsoft 365 security
02 Cyber basics and phishing
03 Ransomware readiness
04 Backup and recovery plan
05 Incident response
06 Working from home securely
07 Copilot readiness
08 Choosing an IT provider
09 Buying a major system
10 The board technology report
11 Copilot vs ChatGPT vs Claude

Sources, checked November 2026. ASD's ACSC: Questions to ask managed service providers; How to manage your security when engaging a managed service provider. Australian Consumer Law: unfair contract terms in small business contracts (penalties from 9 November 2023; under 100 employees or under $10 million turnover). General information only, not legal, insurance or financial advice. Check current details with your IT provider before acting.