

Title:

It Consulting - Buyer Fraud Prevention

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841

Summary:

Hiring the wrong computer consultant is not only frustrating, but it can also leave you cheated of your money. There is no dearth of 'IT consulting guys' who cause inconvenience with their unethical behavior. For this very simple reason business owners are left feeling over-charged. The reason being - they do not choose their consultant with care. Here are a few points that will help you guard yourself from scams and getting ripped off.

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Keywords:

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Article Body:

Hiring the wrong computer consultant is not only frustrating, but it can also leave you cheated of your money. There is no dearth of 'IT consulting guys' who cause inconvenience with their unethical behavior. For this very simple reason business owners are left feeling over-charged. The reason being - they do not choose their consultant with care. Here are a few points that will help you guard yourself from scams and getting ripped off.

1) Run a background check: Today, with a few hundred dollars and a click of a mouse, even you can be a computer consultant. The point I am trying to get across is that the computer industry is not regulated like the medical, law or accounting fields. Due to lack of laws and code of conduct, consumers are not protected from malpractice and substandard work. Therefore, it is absolutely important that you conduct a thorough background check by checking business references so that you can distinguish the professionals from the wannabes. You should always ask for references and if you don't get any, then stay away from those consulting companies.

2) Interview the prospective consultant: Remember the last time you shopped for shoes? You tried on a pair, walk around in-front of a mirror, trying to assure yourself of making the right choice. It would be wise if you interviewed your

consultant just as meticulously. Try questioning him about his knowledge regarding the software you use, his previous network assignments, specific responsibilities, duration of experience and how many technicians he has on staff. A good IT consultant will always do his homework and answer your questions with relevant proof. By having a short discussion with open ended questions you will realize whether they are interested in solving your business problems or sending you hefty invoices.

3) Sign a contractual agreement: Make sure to enter into a written agreement which specifies nature, duration of work, rate of compensation etc. This will ensure that the consultant is aware of his task and meets all your specifications. An agreement will protect you from having to pay for undelivered service and/or substandard work. It's always a good idea to run it by an attorney and insist a change if any clause is not in your interest.

4) Check the compensation scale: A major mistake many business owners make in hiring an IT consultant is without checking the going rate in the industry. You need to do some research to find out the pay range for the services you require before overpaying. While large IT consulting firms charge anywhere from \$350 to \$400 per hour, individual consultants are likely to charge about \$100 to \$300 per hour. Charges also vary depending on nature of job, your geographical location and the consultant's reputation and duration of experience.

5) Warranty: As a standard rule you must be offered a one year guarantee on the service of material used. Also enquire what the consultant's policy is regarding exchange, emergency support system and technical assistance. However, some problems are so common that consultants cannot guarantee that they will not recur i.e. the problem of pop-ups and internet viruses.

6) Do your own research: More than often, IT consultants buy additional software or equipment either to upgrade or repair your system, and most of the time you are charged for it. If you do basic research, you can compare the market price to the price you are being charged. Very few IT consulting companies will actually pass on the savings to you, ask the consultant, if they say they do not make money on the purchase make sure they mention that in the contractual agreement.

7) Demand an explanation: There are many people out there who are looking for any excuse to get their hands into your pockets. By talking in technical lingo your consultant may try convincing you into buying the latest and the greatest whether or not you need it so that he can make money from the purchased software. So go ahead and request explanation in simple English and consent such a purchase only when convinced. Be aware of any technical consultant who tries

to sell you a product just because it's new and run away (real fast) from those who recommend that the solution to all your problems is to upgrade to the latest network equipment.

As technology advances, the average computer user's level of knowledge decreases. Due to this they trust people with the slightest computer training to be experts and hire them as IT consultants. Many people have been duped in the bargain. If you feel you are not being treated right or are being ripped off, go ahead and get a second opinion. Ultimately, a lot in this world runs on trust. You should be able to have a relationship with your IT consulting company. Why should you settle for anything you're not comfortable with? You might know a thing about technology, but if your prospective IT consultant makes you feel any smarter by educating you a little more, then you have winner.