



# “What Every Business Owner Must Know About Hiring an Honest, Competent, Responsive, And Fairly-Priced Computer Consultant”

**Don't Trust Your Company's Critical Data And Operations To Just Anyone!  
This Business Advisory Guide Will Arm You With 19 Revealing Questions  
You Should Ask Any Computer Consultant Before Giving Them Access To  
Your Company's Network**

Choosing the wrong computer consultant to support your network can be not only incredibly frustrating and expensive, but could also cost you in downtime, data loss, and expensive repair bills, not to mention the headaches and frustration!

**Read this guide and you'll discover:**

- ✓ 19 revealing questions that will help you instantly spot an unethical or grossly incompetent computer repair/support technician.
- ✓ 4 costly misconceptions business owners have about computer maintenance and repair.
- ✓ Viruses, worms, spyware, and hackers: what you need to know to protect yourself.
- ✓ 5 mistakes to avoid when choosing a computer consultant.
- ✓ Why you need to avoid “cheap” or “bargain” computer repair shops.
- ✓ The one surefire sign that you should run – not walk – out of a computer repair shop.

**Provided as an educational service by:**

Greg Sweers, CEO

ACTS360

P.O. Box 1193 Brandon, FL 33509

813-602-0606, [www.acts360.com](http://www.acts360.com)



From The Desk of:  
Greg Sweers  
CEO  
Acts360 Technology

Dear Colleague,

**Choosing a computer support company isn't easy.** There is no shortage of horror stories about so-called computer repair "gurus" bungling jobs and causing MORE problems as a result of their lack of integrity and out of date technical training. I'm sure if you talk to your own friends and colleagues you will get an ear-full of the unfortunate experiences they have encountered in this area.

Why is this? It's because the computer repair and consulting industry, along with a lot of other industries, has its own share of incompetent or unethical businesses who will try to take advantage of trusting business owners who simply do not have the ability to determine whether or not they know what they are doing. Sometimes this is out of greed for your money; but more often it's simply because they don't have the skills and competency to do the job right but won't tell you that up front. From misleading information, unqualified technicians, and poor management, to terrible customer service, we've seen it all...and we know they exist in abundance because we have had a number of customers come to us to clean up the disasters they have caused.

### **Buyer Beware: The Computer Repair and Consulting Industry Is NOT Regulated**

Here's an embarrassing fact about my industry: it is not regulated like many other professional service industries, which means ANYONE can claim they are a "computer repair expert." **In fact, many of the businesses in this industry started because the owner was fired or laid off from their job and couldn't find work anywhere else. This led them to start their own company and begin offering services that they do not have the technical training to offer or that they are not experts in their field.**

Automotive repair shops, electricians, plumbers, lawyers, realtors, dentists, doctors, accountants, etc. are heavily regulated to protect the consumer from receiving substandard work or getting ripped off. However, the computer industry is still highly unregulated and there aren't any laws in existence to protect the consumer – **which is why it's so important for you to arm yourself with the information contained in this report.**

Anyone who can print a business card can promote themselves as a computer expert. Even if they are honestly *trying* to do a good job for you, their inexperience can cost you dearly in your network's speed and performance or in lost or corrupt data files. That is why we decided to offer this report. The information in this Guide is provided to help raise standards within the computer repair and support industry, and to give YOU useful information to help you guard against unethical or incompetent companies and technicians.

Dedicated to serving you,

Greg Sweers, CEO

## About The Company

- ACTS360 was originally founded by Greg Sweers as ACTS Consulting, in 2001 when a number of long time personal contacts in the non profit community needed to replace IT staff. Non-profit organizations began calling on us to provide that IT service. Our vision and primary focus was to serve churches and non- profits with highly experienced technical services without the typical high price. Over time we saw this vision develop into reality as more opportunity was provided to us. We began growing and adding more clients, employees and as such Acts 360 has grown to what it is today serving both non-profit and for profit businesses with expertise, integrity and great service at a reasonable cost.
- In our name ACTS 360, the “ACTS” stands for **Acting Out Christ’s Teachings through Service**. The “360” represents the fact that we offer 360 degrees of service that enables businesses to Control their Business Technology in all aspects. We take a very strong approach on a high code of ethics, integrity and honesty which is the bedrock of why so many companies choose to partner with us.
- ACTS360 has worked with technology in virtually every field and every business size. We are one of the first IT organizations to provide a complete platform using our Cloud technology to deliver a highly redundant, scalable, and cost effective means to meeting business goals and objectives. We see technology as an enabler and not technology for the sake of technology. This level of business discussion enables us to truly help organizations utilize technology not just be used by it. ACTS360 employees hold together over 50 years of IT experience, and hold certifications in a wide variety of applications, hardware and software.
- Although technically Greg Sweers is the CEO of Acts Consulting; dba Acts 360, he feels that a better description of his roll is Steward of the company that God actually owns.

## 19 Questions You Should Ask Your Computer Consultant Before Hiring Them To Support Your Network

### Customer Service:

**Q1: Do they answer their phones live or do you always have to leave a voice mail and wait for someone to call you back?**

**Our Answer:** We answer our phones live from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and give all clients an emergency after-hours number they may call if a problem arises, including weekends. Why? Because many of the CEOs and executives we support work outside normal hours and find it to be the most productive time they have. If they cannot access their computer network AND can't get hold of anyone to help them, it's incredibly frustrating.

**Q2: Do they take the time to explain what they are doing and answer your questions in terms that you can understand (not geek-speak), or do they come across arrogant and make you feel stupid for asking simple questions?**

**Our Answer:** Our technicians are trained to have the 'heart of a teacher' and will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms.

**Q3: Do they consistently (and proactively) offer new ways to improve your network's performance, or do they wait until you have a problem to make recommendations?**

**Our Answer:** We offer quarterly review meetings with our clients to look for new ways to help improve their operations, lower costs, increase efficiencies, and resolve any problems that may be arising. Our goal with these meetings is to help our clients be more profitable, efficient, and competitive.

**Q4: Do they provide detailed invoices that clearly explain what you are paying for?**

**Our Answer:** We provide detailed invoices that show what work was done, why, and when, so you never have to guess what you are paying for. We also double-check our invoices for accuracy before they are sent to you.

**Q5: Do they have adequate errors and omissions insurance as well as workers' compensation insurance to protect YOU?**

**Our Answer:** Here's something to consider: if THEY cause a problem with your network that causes you to be down for hours or days or to lose data, who's responsible? Here's another question to consider: if one of their technicians gets hurt at your office, who's paying? In this litigious society we live in, you should be sure that whomever you hire is adequately insured with both errors and omissions insurance AND workers' compensation – and don't be shy about asking to see their latest insurance policies!

True Story: A few years ago Geek Squad was slapped with multi-million dollar lawsuits from customers for the bad behavior of their technicians. In some cases, their techs were accessing, copying, and distributing personal information they gained access to on customers' PCs and laptops brought in for repairs. In other cases, they lost a client's laptop (and subsequently all the data on it) and tried to cover it up. Bottom line, make sure the company you are hiring has proper insurance to protect YOU.

**Q6: Do they guarantee to complete projects on time and on budget?**

**Our Answer:** All projects are fixed priced and guaranteed to be completed on time, in writing. This is important because many unethical or incompetent computer guys will only quote "time and materials," which gives them free reign to nickel and dime you as well as take as much time as needed on completing a project.

**Maintenance Of Your Network:**

**Q7: Do they insist on remotely monitoring your network 24-7-356 to keep critical security settings, virus definitions, and security patches up-to-date and PREVENT problems from turning into downtime, viruses, lost data, and other issues?**

**Our Answer:** Yes; our remote network monitoring system watches over your network and constantly looks for developing problems, security issues, and other problems so that we can address them BEFORE they turn into bigger problems.

**Q8: Is it standard procedure for them to provide you with network documentation detailing what software licenses you own, your critical passwords, user information, hardware inventory, etc., or are they the only person with the "keys to the kingdom?"**

**Our Answer:** We digitally encrypt and store your valuable data at no additional cost and make sure certain key people from your organization have this information and know how to use it, giving you complete control over your network. Be leery of any company that actually wants to leave this information in written form near your server. This leaves you vulnerable!

**Q9: Do they have other technicians on staff who are familiar with your network in case your regular technician goes on vacation or gets sick?**

**Our Answer:** Yes; and since we keep detailed network documentation (basically a blueprint of your computer network) and updates on every client's account, any of our technicians can pick up where another left off.

**Q10: When they offer an "all-inclusive" support plan, is it TRULY all-inclusive, or are there "gotchas" hidden in the fine print?**

**Our Answer:** Our "all-inclusive" support plan is just that – all-inclusive. One of the more popular service plans offered by consulting firms today is an "all-inclusive" or "all-you-can-eat" managed services plan. These are actually a good thing because they'll save you a lot of money in the long run – HOWEVER, make sure you REALLY understand what is and isn't included. Some things to consider are:

- Is phone/e-mail help desk included, or extra?
- What about network upgrades, moves, or adding/removing users?
- Is hardware and/or software included?
- What about 3<sup>rd</sup> party software support? (We recommend that this IS included, there are exemptions to this, but we clearly identify this in the agreement beforehand).
- What are the costs/consequences of early cancellation?
- What if you aren't happy with their services? Do they offer a money-back guarantee?
- If the hardware and software is included, what happens if you cancel the contract?
- Are offsite backups included? To what degree?
- If you have a major disaster, is restoring your network included or extra?
- What about onsite support calls? Or support to remote offices?
- Do they have the means to proactively discuss and move your network to available cloud solutions, and show you through business metrics the advantages/disadvantages of them.

### **Backups And Disaster Recovery:**

**Q11: Do they INSIST on monitoring an offsite as well as an onsite backup, or are they letting you rely on outdated tape backups?**

**Our Answer:** We do not allow our clients to use tape backups because they are incredibly unreliable. We make sure all of our clients have either offsite file and system backups, image based recovery backups or are utilizing our Cloud solutions.

**Q12: Do they INSIST on doing periodical test restores of your backups to make sure the data is not corrupt and could be restored in the event of a disaster?**

**Our Answer:** We perform a quarterly and daily "fire drills" by solution and perform a test restore from backup for our clients to make sure their data CAN be recovered in the event of an emergency. After all, the WORST time to "test" a backup is when you desperately need it.

**Q13: Do they insist on backing up your network BEFORE performing any type of project or upgrade?**

**Our Answer:** We do; and that's simply as a precaution in case a hardware failure or software glitch causes a major problem.

**Q14: If you were to experience a major disaster, do they have a written plan for how your data could be restored FAST and/or enable you to work from a remote location?**

**Our Answer:** All clients receive a simple disaster recovery plan for their data and network. We encourage them to do a full disaster recovery plan for their office, but at a minimum, their network will be covered should something happen.

### **Technical Expertise And Support:**

**Q15: Is their help-desk US based or outsourced to an overseas company or third party?**

**Our Answer:** We provide our own in-house help desk and make sure the folks helping you are friendly and helpful. We consider this one of the most important aspects of customer service, plus we feel it's an important step in keeping your data secure.

**Q16: Do their technicians maintain current vendor certifications and participate in on-going training – or are they learning on your dime?**

**Our Answer:** Our technicians are required to keep the most up-to-date vendor certifications in all the software we support where applicable. Plus, our hiring process is so stringent that 99% of the technicians who apply don't make it through (guess who's hiring them?).

**Q17: Do their technicians arrive on time and dress professionally?**

**Our Answer:** Our technicians are true professionals that you would be proud to have in your office. They dress professionally, show up on time and if they cannot (for some odd, unforeseen reason) we always notify the client immediately. We believe these are minimum requirements for delivering a professional service.

**Q18: Are they familiar with (and can they support) your unique line of business applications?**

**Our Answer:** We own the problems with all line of business applications for our clients. That doesn't mean we can fix faulty software – but we WILL be the liaison between you and your vendor to resolve problems you are having and make sure these applications work smoothly for you.

**Q19: When something goes wrong with your Internet service, phone systems, printers or other IT services, do they own the problem or do they say “that's not our problem to fix”?**

**Our Answer:** We feel WE should own the problem for our clients so they don't have to try and resolve any of these issues on their own – that's just plain old good service and something many computer guys won't do.

## The 4 Most Costly Misconceptions About Computer Maintenance and Repair

### **Misconception #1: My computer network doesn't need regular monitoring and maintenance.**

This is probably one of the biggest and most costly misconceptions that business owners have. Usually this is because they've been fortunate enough to never have encountered a major disaster; but that's similar to someone thinking they don't need to wear a seat belt when driving a car because they've never had an accident.

Computer networks are complex and dynamic systems that need regular updates and maintenance to stay up, running fast and problem free. In fact, it's surprising how fast a brand-new PC will slow down after a few weeks of use without proper updates and maintenance. Here are just a FEW of the critical updates that need to be done on a weekly – if not daily – basis:

- Security patches applied – with NEW viruses and hacker attacks cropping up DAILY, this is a CRITICAL part of maintaining your network
- Antivirus updates and monitoring
- Firewall updates and monitoring
- Backup monitoring and test restores
- Spam filter installation and updates
- Spyware detection and removal
- Monitoring disk space on workstations and servers
- Monitoring hardware for signs of failure
- Optimizing systems for maximum speed
- Consult on Best Case Practices for optimizing and controlling your technology.

Just like car ownership, if you don't change the oil, replace the filter, rotate the tires, flush the transmission, and perform other regular maintenance, your car will eventually break down and cost you FAR MORE to repair than the cost of the basic maintenance – and cars are far simpler than a computer network!

**If your computer support tech does not insist on some type of regular, automated monitoring or maintenance of your network, then DO NOT HIRE THEM.** Lack of system maintenance is the NUMBER ONE reason most people end up losing valuable files and incurring heavy computer repair bills. If your technician isn't offering you these services, you need to find someone else to support your computer or network for two reasons:

1. Either they don't know enough to make this recommendation, which is a sure sign they are extremely inexperienced, *OR*
2. They recognize that they are profiting from your computer problems and don't want to recommend steps towards preventing you from needing their help on an ongoing basis.

Either one is a good reason to get as far away from that person as possible!

### **Misconception #2: My nephew/neighbor's kid/brother-in-law/office manager knows this computer stuff and can take care of our computers.**

Most people look for a part time "guru" for one reason: to save a few bucks; but this often comes back to haunt them. We frequently get calls from business owners who desperately need our help to get them back up and running or to clean up a mess that was caused by an inexperienced neighbor, friend, or relative who was just trying to help.

If the person you have working on your machine does not do computer repair and support for a living, there is a good chance they won't have the knowledge or experience to truly help you – they are a hobbyist at best. Do you really want a part-time, inexperienced person responsible for handling something as important as your data and computer network? As with everything in life, you get what you pay for. That's not to say you need to go broke to find a great technician, but you shouldn't be choosing someone on price alone.

### **Misconception #3: All computer technicians are created equal. Your best option will be the one who offers the lowest price.**

As we stated a moment ago, you get what you pay for. A cheap price usually means a cheap job. Really good technicians do NOT work cheap because they are in high demand. The only technicians that will work cheap are those that are just starting and they are grossly inexperienced. And some shops will hire college kids or newbie technicians because they will work cheap – but what you don't realize is that an inexperienced technician like this can end up costing more because:

1. They improperly diagnose problems, which mean you're paying them to fix the WRONG thing and they STILL won't resolve your problem. Case in point: A few years ago a TV reporter went undercover to 8 computer repair shops in LA with a perfectly working PC, but simply disconnect a cable in the back (a fix that the AVERAGE computer tech would have caught in minutes with a visual inspection). Several shops improperly diagnosed the problem and wanted to charge them anywhere from \$59 to over \$275 to fix it!

2. They could take 3 to 5 times as long to do the same repair an experienced technician could fix quickly. Again, you're paying for those extra hours.
3. They could do MORE damage, costing you more money and downtime.

With your client data, accounting records, e-mail, and other critical data at stake, do you REALLY want the cheapest technician working on your machine?

We take the view that most people want value for money and simply want the job done right. You will find that we are not the cheapest, but we don't apologize for that. As the owner, I decided a long time ago that I would rather explain our higher rates ONE TIME than to apologize for POOR SERVICE forever. That said, we're not the most expensive either. We simply feel that we should offer a good service at a fair price. That's why we have been able to stay in business for over 10 years and now have over 100 customers with us.

#### **Misconception #4: An honest computer support company should be able to give you a quote over the phone.**

I wish this were true, but it isn't. Just like a good doctor, an honest and professional technician will need to diagnose your network before they can quote any price over the phone; consider the example above where all that was needed was a simple cable being plugged in. If someone brought that to us, we would just plug it back in and not charge them; but without SEEING the machine, we could never have diagnosed that over the phone.

Also, some consultants will quote you a cheap rate over the phone to get in the door, but then jack up the prices once they get in your office by taking 3 times as long, selling you add-ons and up-sells, etc. And finally, reputable firms don't charge by the hour anyway -- they give you a fixed fee, flat-rate. Here's why...

One of the easiest ways to take advantage of a customer is to get them to agree to a time and materials repair. Unless you know what's wrong and how long it should take, they can soak you on the fees. And what are you going to do when they get 5-6 hours into a repair or project and then spring on you the news that it will take even longer than they anticipated to fix, costing you MORE money?

Always, always, always make sure you get a flat-rate, fixed fee quote in advance so you don't end up getting burned – and NEVER take a phone quote!

## 5 More Mistakes To Avoid When Choosing A Computer Consultant

1. **Choosing a computer consultant based on a single phone call.** We recommend you invite them into your office and ask them for a written proposal. Be clear on what your expectations are and what type of problems you want them to resolve. A competent professional should offer to do an audit of your network to diagnose your system BEFORE quoting you anything. After all, would you take a doctor's word that you need surgery if they hadn't done x-rays or other diagnostics? Of course not! Prescription without diagnosis is malpractice.
2. **Choosing a computer consultant that doesn't have a written money-back guarantee.** In our view, a good consulting firm should be accountable for their services and fixing things RIGHT. If you aren't pleased with a job that was done, they should (at a minimum) make it right for free; and if they simply cannot resolve an issue to YOUR satisfaction, you shouldn't get stuck with the bill.
3. **Choosing a computer consultant without speaking to several of the current clients.** Check their references! Don't just take the sales guy's word that they are good – ask to speak to at least 3 or 4 clients that are similar to you. If they hesitate or cannot provide you with references, don't trust them!
4. **Choosing a computer consultant who cannot remotely monitor, update and support your network.** In this day and age, a computer consultant who doesn't do this is living in the stone ages. You want someone to do this because it will dramatically increase your network's security and will enable them to do faster repairs. That's not to say they shouldn't come onsite; but remote monitoring and repairs make fixing problems FASTER for YOU and help PREVENT problems from cropping up in the first place.
5. **Choosing a computer consultant who isn't experienced in your field can cost you thousands.**

### A Final Word...

I hope you have found this guide helpful in shedding some light on what to look for when outsourcing the support of your company's network. As I stated in the opening of this report, my purpose in providing this information was to help you make an informed decision and avoid getting burned by the many incompetent firms offering these services.

If you have any additional comments or questions, we welcome them! Have an idea to make this guide even more helpful? Let us know! And of course, if you are looking for someone you can trust to take over the care and maintenance of "all things digital" in your office, we'd love the opportunity to EARN your business.

**Below you will find information on how to request a FREE Network Health Check and Diagnosis. This is, of course, provided for free with no obligations and no expectations on our part.** I want to be clear that this is NOT a bait and switch offer or a trick to get you to buy something. My reputation for running an honest and trustworthy business is something I hold very dear. I would never jeopardize that in any way. So why are we offering something like this for free?

***Two reasons:***

1. We are simply offering this service as a risk-free “get to know us” offer to people we haven’t had the pleasure of doing business with. Again, our goal is to allow you to make an informed and confident decision; and offering this is one way we can help you better evaluate us.
2. This will allow us to determine if we even CAN help you. Obviously we can’t help everyone, and our services might not be a good fit for you. Conducting this Health Check enables us to do a small project for you to help you evaluate whether or not we’re the right company for you without risking your money.

Looking forward to your call!

The Team at ACTS 360  
Phone: 813-657-0859  
Web: [www.acts360.com](http://www.acts360.com)

## **FREE Network Health Check For All Prospective Clients Who Want To Put Us To The Test!**

As a prospective customer, we would like to offer you a FREE Network Health Check and Diagnosis (\$297 value). During this health check we will perform a comprehensive 50 point checklist of your entire network to look for potential problems, security loopholes, spyware, and other hidden problems that will cause the computers on your network to run slow, act funny, crash, and lose data.

We will:

- ✓ Review your system backups to make sure they are working properly and CAN be restored quickly in the event of a disaster
- ✓ Scan for hidden spyware, malware, and viruses that MOST anti-virus tools and software can’t detect or won’t remove
- ✓ Check for security updates and patches to validate that your network really IS secure.
- ✓ Review your firewall and security settings

- ✓ Check the integrity of your server and workstations hardware (Side Note: Did you know that hardware failure is one of the leading causes of data loss that CAN be detected early and avoided with proper monitoring?)
- ✓ Audit your virus definitions and protection
- ✓ Conduct a visual scan of your server room and cabling to make sure your network is PHYSICALLY safe and set up properly
- ✓ Check your overall system performance, space, and settings to see if your network is running as fast as it could be

## Why Should You Care About This?

Because there are literally dozens of ways hackers and viruses can access your network—undetected—to remotely control your network, corrupt your data, and use your network as a conduit for spreading spam, viruses, and even illegal software.

There are numerous system checks and updates that should be done on a regular basis to ensure maximum speed, performance, and security. Ignore them and your system will get progressively slower, more unstable, and increasingly susceptible to viruses, spyware, and hackers.

Tape backups have a failure rate of 100% – that means all tape drives will fail at some point, often without warning. You don't want to find out that your backup was not working the day after your hard drive fried.

## How to Request Your FREE Network Health Check:

**You can call us at 813-602-0603 and ask for our Sales Consultant, David Lovic to schedule an appointment, email us at [getacts@360.com](mailto:getacts@360.com)**