5 tips for choosing your cybersecurity provider

The wining and dining ends … final pitches close with a wink … suitors line up in the hopes of hearing: "I choose you."

It sounds like the finale of a matchmaker reality TV show, but MSPs also experience this moment of truth when it's time to select a new cybersecurity provider. When your time arrives, will you be able to make the right choice?

Follow this game plan to make an informed decision you won't regret.

1. Prioritize performance

Regardless of your choice of provider, it's *your* reputation that's on the line when a customer suffers a malware outbreak or targeted attack. So how can you predict the real-world results that determine the success of your MSP business? Don't fall in love with the marketing, turn to independent testing for an objective assessment of the year's most effective cybersecurity organizations.

But here's the thing: a single test doesn't say much, it's really just a snapshot of performance in a specific test on a single day. For real insight, you need to look at the overall number of tests entered *and* the number of top finishes to see which company consistently rises to the top. It's a bad sign if a company avoids independent tests to hide their weaknesses. The best providers are eager to be tested.

2. Beware the one-trick pony

Start-ups might call it "specialization", but it can be downright dangerous to limit the ways you can stop threats. Find a provider that offers more than anti-malware. Much more. From ransomware to phishing and advanced persistent threats (APTs), cybercriminals attack businesses from every angle; customers want (and need) versatile protection for their physical, mobile and virtual environments.

The right cybersecurity provider can actually save you time and effort in the long run. It's easier to manage a multi-faceted solution from a single provider than a patchwork of solutions. What's more, in-house technologies work together seamlessly. That means no integration headaches down the road.

3. Get top technical support

Technical issues are inevitable. And when something happens that requires urgent assistance, you need a security provider that will have your back. If they're slow to respond and lack technical or interpersonal skills, you could face cyberattacks, financial loses and damage to your reputation.

Start by looking for local support that's available 24/7. And do some background work to learn more about their offerings and reputation. Have they received industry recognition?

4. Check for channel focus

Competition can be fierce for cybersecurity MSPs – and the field is only getting more crowded. The global managed security services market is projected to reach $29.9 billion by 2020 (according to Allied Marketing Services: Global Managed Security Services Market – 2013-2020). The good news is, if you choose a cybersecurity organization that's committed to channel-driven sales, you won't have to worry about competing with your provider.

When a provider focuses on the channel, they're motivated to provide you with the knowledge, tools and resources you need to sell. Your success is their success. You're also more likely to benefit from financial incentives and other offerings designed to make selling easier and more profitable for you.

5. Remember your marketing

No matter which company you chose as your cybersecurity provider, you'll need to continue to build leads and communicate with customers. If you can find an organization that's committed to helping you, you'll get a jump on the competition.

Find out if your potential provider offers a broad selection of marketing resources or just a few items. You're going to want high-quality materials like logos, templates and presentations. It's also important to ask what kind of access you'll have: is it automated or do you have to place a phone call and wait for an answer?

Now that you've got your game plan, it's time to do your research. Remember, you're the star of this reality show, so focus on the facts and think long term when you choose your cybersecurity match.

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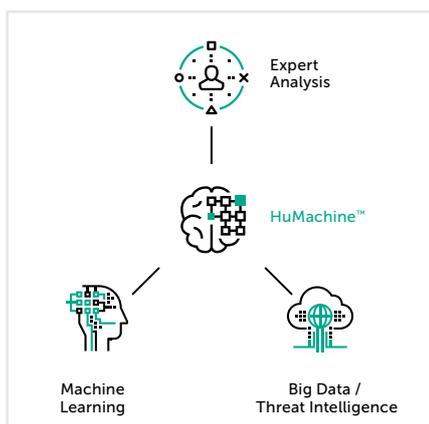
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