user's guide

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AutoCont

We all make headway in different ways.

We know how.

It is not important to win but to take part.

Really?

This may be valid on the sports field. Life, however, is not merely a sports field. And this applies doubly to the world of business and enterprise. It also has its rules, and fair play should be observed within it. But it does not mean that it is possible to abide by the Olympic ideal. On the contrary:

It is not important to take part but to win.

Victory in business may take many forms. Rivals are not only other people but oneself. Winning need not mean being the best in the world. Winning simply means being good enough. Good enough to make customers, colleagues, business partners satisfied. Winning in business may take many forms – from a bakery where people go to get crusty rolls, through a travel agency or a law firm whose good reputation and perfect knowledge of issues are appreciated by all who have ever come into contact with them, to a business empire like Virgin built up by the maverick British entrepreneur and aeronaut Richard Branson from scratch.

None of these victories is better or worse than another. All of them are equivalent in the important sense of that word. Victory can be attained in many ways, and it is a chance for everyone. That is the good news.

And now for the bad news. This is a race that never ends.

Success today is no guarantee of success tomorrow. It may help a bit, but sometimes, paradoxically, may also become an encumbrance. The running never ceases.

No one can do it all on his own. You need allies, assistants and tools. Everyone knows that today a prominent position among the latter is occupied by computing technology. However, not everyone knows how to assess its benefits.

Computers and information technologies are by no means a panacea, and those who present them as such are being economical with the truth — whether out of ignorance or deliberately. If your business plan is bad, no computer will make it a good one.

On the other hand, it is no longer true that a computer is merely an aid for accountants and does not have any other sense in business. It can significantly reduce costs — for communication, purchase of stock, materials and services. It can easily pinpoint economic weaknesses that you would never have detected yourself. It can arrange it so that you can approach every customer individually and offer exactly what they really want and at the time when they want it.

It can, and this is probably the most important aspect today, smooth the path to new customers, find them, address and win them. It can give you the chance to become suppliers of large companies.

If it is used properly. If it saves, not steals, your time. If it saves you money, not empties your pockets.

We will tell you how you can tackle it. And, moreover — if you want, if you choose us — we will help you.

Since **WE KNOW HOW.**

About us

AutoCont CZ, a.s. is a private company with Czech capital founded in 1990. **It is one of the leading suppliers on the Czech information technologies market.** It has a market share of approximately 10%. AutoCont CZ's customers include Czech Telecom, General Health Insurance Company (VZP), Ahold Czech Republic, GE Money Bank, the Parliament of the Czech Republic, as well as a large number of medium–sized and small companies. The latter customers are as important to us as the biggest ones.

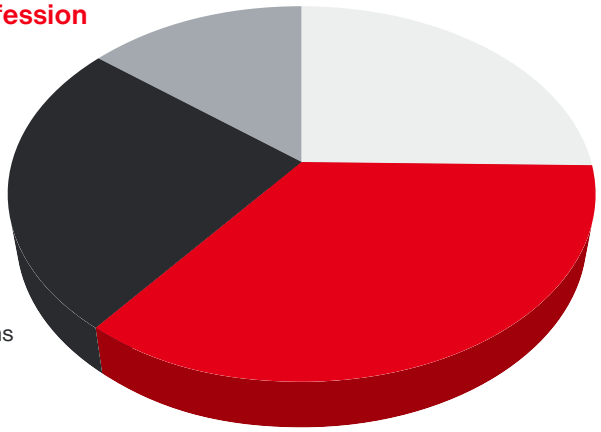
What does AutoCont CZ supply? Simply said, **everything to do with computers and information technologies**. As regards computers, the bigger the order and the bigger the customer, the less frequently the purchase is carried out according to the menu. Large supplies in this area — called, as a rule, "systems" or "solutions" — are tailor–made. Every company is different, every combination of problems you need to tackle by means of computers is unique. One size does not fit all. That is precisely why a large supplier such as AutoCont CZ must — within reason — offer everything and understand everything.

Of course, no one can be good at everything. Thus, we come to the important role played by business partners. AutoCont CZ closely **cooperates with leading global companies**, among them Microsoft, Hewlett–Packard and Cisco, and also with a host of other companies, in many a case, with its competitors. Such cooperation combined with competition, so–called *coopetition*, is typical of the present–day computer business. Suppliers competing with each other in one business case can constructively cooperate in another. When it comes to larger orders, you almost always encounter such a composition of suppliers.

What "systems" and "solutions" are we talking about here? Supplies of information technologies can be viewed in two manners. One of them is what you will find on an invoice. Virtually every supply consists of a certain amount of hardware (for example, personal computers, printers, connecting cables), software (operating systems, office programs, accounting, etc.) and services (installation, activation, user education and training etc.) All these items can be listed in a column, added up and underlined. All in all, they represent a functional entity — a *system*.

There exists, however, yet another view. It rests in the fact that we look at a supply as an integrated means for tackling some clearly defined problem a customer faces. Such a problem can be, for example, overly high costs for printing documents from computers. The majority of companies and organisations pay for printing — in the form of purchase and wear and tear of printing machines, toners and inks consumed, loss of time when staff have to wait for materials

Employee structure according to profession



25,3% business activity
35,5% services
25,2% implementation of information systems
14,0% other

to be printed, consumption of paper and costs for its recycling — a truly unnecessary amount; more than would have to be paid in the case of rational organisation of prints and means for their procurement. This is what we have in mind when we talk about *solutions*. Informatics is an "enabling" technology, meaning a technology *enhancing possibilities*. Those who can make proper use of information technologies are more efficient and possess greater competitive strength.

Accordingly, information technologies may be described not only in terms of purchase prices and operating costs, but also in terms of benefits and return on investment. Although these views complement each other, bear in mind that they significantly differ. **Today, company managements mostly perceive informatics as costs.** Expenditure on them is more or less obligatory, but a great benefit is not expected from them. **However, it is far more correct to view informatics as an investment.** Accordingly, to ask: how quickly will the outlaid finance be paid back? When will this specific information technology start to earn its keep? You are fully entitled to request the answer to this question from your supplier. If it is not able to provide the answer…spare a thought for it.

Let's go back to our company. We have 720 employees, of which 86% directly working for customers. Our customers do not pay for any redundant administration and countless tiers of internal management. We are a streamline company oriented to performance, productivity. We do not like bureaucracy and are definitely not going to hassle you with any unnecessary formalities.

Unique characteristic of AutoCont CZ is that our people do not only work in the headquarters in the capital, or in a handful of other offices. **We have a regional coverage of the entire territory of the Czech Republic and Slovakia: we have 56 branches**, established in most district towns.

It means that **we are close to customers**, wherever they are based. Moreover: it means that we understand local issues, that our people are local and trustworthy, that they know the problems of this or that company. If, however, the knowledge of one of our branches does not suffice, there always is the combined experience of that which the entire AutoCont CZ is capable of: skills of our specialists closely focused on specific products, technologies and customers' business branches.

We are concurrently a local and nationwide company, large and small. Such a combination cannot be offered by anyone else within the computer sector in the Czech Republic.

We are able to do more for you than others. **WE KNOW HOW.**

How we operate

AutoCont CZ, a.s. **is part of a bigger entity — the AutoCont CZ, a.s. holding**. Just like AutoCont CZ, it is also a private company with Czech capital, built up from scratch owing to the hard work and skills of its founders. The holding's history dates back to 1990. Alongside the company AutoCont CZ, the holding AutoCont CZ comprises several other important firms operating in the information technologies domain.

- AT Computers (www.atcomp.cz) — one of the largest Czech wholesalers of computing technology.
- AT Compus — a manufacturing company assembling and supplying personal computers, primarily with the trademark AutoCont Triline and Comfor, as well as industrial PC systems.
- Autocont Slovakia (www.autocont.sk) — roofs the holding's activities in Slovakia.
- Comfor Stores (www.comfor.cz) — a retail chain selling personal computers, peripheral equipment, such as printing machines and various accessories.

We are a strong company with a leading position on the domestic market.

- AutoCont Control Systems (www.autocontcontrol.cz) — deals with supplying systems for control of technological processes. In addition, AutoCont has a significant stake in the company Dagis, specialized in supplying technologies for engineering project works — CAD (Computer Aided Design).

Applied throughout the holding's companies is cooperation, synergic effects. They rest, on the one hand, in sharing knowledge and experience, on the other, in cost-saving, meaning lower final prices. As an entity, we are an extremely strong company occupying a leading position on the domestic market. In 2004 the entire holding attained consolidated revenues of CZK 7,671,110,000 and has been profit-making over the long-term.

The structure of the company AutoCont itself can be described in two ways: functionally and regionally. From the viewpoint of customers, **regional division** is more visible and useful. The network of 56 branches is divided into six regions. Each of them is managed by the respective regional centre. These centres are in Prague, Brno (south and central Moravia), Ostrava (north Moravia and Silesia), Jihlava (Vysočina and eastern Bohemia), Karlovy Vary (southern, western and northern Bohemia) and Bratislava (Slovakia). Each branch can fully utilise all

We deal with three large groups of supplies: applications, infrastructure and operation.

the capacities of the regional centre, which makes it an equal and effective partner even for larger customers. At the same time, it does not lose any of its local accessibility and flexibility.

Functionally, AutoCont is focused on three large groups of supplies: applications, infrastructure and operation. In addition to this, it possesses several central specialised divisions providing services mainly when it comes to the largest orders. This deserves a more detailed explanation.

The following list serves to provide you with a basic idea of the scope of AutoCont activities:

- Supplies of infrastructure (computers, networks, active network elements, operating systems, including tools for their management, control and ensuring security).
- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP).
- Knowledge management.
- Computer networks, remote access.
- Systems for integrated document management and customer relationship management.
- Electronic trading, web portals.
- Development of tailor-made programs for specialised purposes not covered by the standard offer.

Computing **infrastructure** – all technical equipment necessary for effective work with computers. It includes both hardware and software. AutoCont supplies infrastructure to both large and small customers. In the case of smaller companies and individual users, it places emphasis on the simplicity, intelligibility and integrity of everything it delivers. These customers mainly require items that function immediately and can be used without lengthy installation and tailoring.

As regards larger customers, infrastructure is usually more complex and mostly links up to services of various types. A more complex technology must be professionally connected into a single functioning aggregate, it is necessary to install software, set up everything necessary, accommodate to specific customers' requirements. Here the area of infrastructure blends with operation and services.

Our partners are the largest global IT companies.

The main part of the AutoCont offer comprises products made by our suppliers, i.e. the biggest global companies. We are an authorised business and service partner of the firms Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft, Cisco Systems, Canon, Acer, and many other global brands. Of course, we also deliver state-of-the-art AutoCont personal computers produced by our affiliated company Compus. We have a comprehensive programme of services precisely focused on the needs of smaller customers, AC Asistent.

When it comes to **applications**, we have in mind enterprise resource planning supplies. Mainly used in this connection is the term "comprehensive solution". It again means that the sense of what we do is not an intermediate product but a fully functional turnkey delivery. We are aware of the fact that our customers want to use their information systems as a basis and main tool of their own business; they do not want to waste time with their fine-tuning and adjustment, after all, it is not their specialisation. We fully respect their point of view.

The activity resulting in a solution of such comprehensiveness is in computer business terminology called **systems integration**. The role of a systems integrator is to a certain extent similar to that of a general contractor of a building or another project. He takes care of partial deliveries from various sources, decides in cooperation with customers about the general plan and intention, sees to it that the time schedule is kept and, above all, attends to fractional parts of the delivered technology smoothly functioning as one entity. In similar situations, proper project management is of the essence and determines success or failure – to the detriment of all parties involved, this aspect is often overlooked.

AutoCont CZ acts in these supplies either as a systems integrator or a subcontractor of another systems integrator. This is a classic example of the combination of competition and cooperation between computer companies (coopetition) mentioned above.

As regards particular information systems, we have the greatest experience with the Microsoft Navision solution and SAP systems.

Smoothly linking up to the applications area is **operation of information systems and other services**. This all is primarily intended for larger customers (the large enterprise sector), public administration, as well as smaller and medium-sized enterprises if they have higher demands for operated technologies. The prevailing activities are so-called managed services and outsourcing of information systems.

In the case of managed services, it does not only concern the basic interconnection of computers – either in one locality or, for example, between headquarters and branches in other towns – but above all a wide scale of superstructure services. Only these make it possible to use infrastructure as effectively as possible. The main idea

of managed services rests in the fact that a supplier provides them to a customer **on the basis of a Service Level Agreement (SLA)**. Such an agreement determines, for example, how many (and for how long) failures are still "within the standard", and when the customer is entitled to a discount or another form of compensation; how quickly the servicing staff must arrive; and many other aspects. It is possible to agree upon various price models. The most common among them is the so-called point system: customers receive within the service's price a certain number of points, i.e. a credit, which they draw by means of their requirements. Owing to this, the customer can precisely plan the costs related to information technologies, which is otherwise an almighty pain in the backside.

AC Asistent — our work for you does not finish with sales, it only just starts!

Don't bother your head about not actually understanding computers. You don't need to. You will only use them for your work or entertainment. If problems emerge, we are here to resolve them for you. All you need to do is to buy, together with a computer or another piece of equipment, our services program AC Asistent and all your worries are gone! AC Asistent will help you with putting a new computer into operation, with connection to the internet, with repairs of faulty equipment. It will prolong your guarantee period and arrange servicing at the best level attainable. It consists of the following services, which can be bought in an arbitrary combination:

set–up — Putting a new computer into operation. We bring it over to your place, connect it, activate it, set up everything necessary, connect to the internet.

on–site — Guaranteed service at your place, not ours — throughout the guarantee period. You don't have to bring the equipment to the service centre, a service technician will come over to your place.

in–time — Shortened time of repair and removal of defects within a deadline determined in advance. If it is still not possible to debug a defect in time, we will lend you a substitute device.

support — An extensive spectrum of services that can tackle all your problems relating to operation of computers and other equipment. If you are not able to sort something out, just call. We will turn up, give you advice, repair, resolve.

garant — Prolongation of a guarantee period up to five years. It can only be purchased for the computer series AutoCont OfficePro.

More information: at www.autocont.cz or in every regular catalogue of products and services.

Generally, outsourcing is the transfer of a non–key activity of a company to an external contractor who then finances it from its own sources and collects reimbursement for it by means of regular instalments. AutoCont CZ offers outsourcing of the customer firm's entire information system or only some parts of it. Outsourcing can be of various scope, up to the comprehensive form, including transfer of the customer's property and existing staff into the ownership of the provider (reverse purchase and subsequent lease of means).

Our offers complement each other. We have the correct solution for everyone, big and small. **WE KNOW HOW.**

What we are able

As can be seen from the description of individual AutoCont CZ sections, our main activity rests in the fact that we **build and sometimes also subsequently operate information systems to order** for our customers — small, medium–sized and large companies — from various branches. The aim is to strengthen the customer, facilitate him in attaining better economic results so that his business can develop more effectively.

We possess the experience that entitles us to say this and prove that this is exactly what we are able to do. Working with a large number of customers from various branches means ascertaining that the problems they face are surprisingly similar. They can be generalised. Branch specificity and individual company histories play a role far smaller than would seem at first glance.

Hence, the first step in our work when we receive an assignment for an IT solution is to **decipher where exactly the problem actually rests**. It need not always be an opinion identical with how the problem is viewed by the customer! Initial discussions in which the two parties voice their viewpoints and opinions of possible solutions are therefore extremely important. In this phase, mutual confidence is built up too, a necessary precondition of further cooperation. As a rule, we try to formulate the problem in general terms so as not to rule out any useful solution in advance. Instead of, for example, saying "deliver fifty new PCs to us", it is better to go to the heart of the matter: "arrange it so that all employees can effectively work on such and such a task". The solution can then lie in something totally different than delivering new computers — for example, improvement of the communication infrastructure.

Once it is clear what is in question and what is to be resolved, the next phase encompasses determination of **priorities and limitations**. It goes without saying that it is up to the customer, i.e. the management and owners. However, we are ready to submit our own proposals and recommendations.

Then it is necessary to begin working on the **actual project implementation**. In addition to informatics skills, also required is deep knowledge concerning the customer's sphere of business, both general and fully specific for the actual company in question. "Do you really understand those things better than the customer himself?" you will probably be asking yourselves.

No — and yes. Of course, we do not have and cannot have in-depth knowledge of a specific branch, even less of a specific company. On the other hand, we have dealt with a host of customers and **therefore are able to discern general regularities in specific details** which cannot be mastered by someone who is inside, who has been dealing with a given activity for a long time, thus suffering from the inevitable operating blindness. Hence, the usual practice again rests in dialogue. Customers tell us (for example, in the form of a controlled questionnaire interview) about their sphere of business, about their firm, about business processes. ("Describe how your business works!") We translate the information gained in this manner into our terms, for instance, project management, integration of business procedures, etc. Thus, a model sufficiently

to do

precise — and concurrently sufficiently abstract — originates to make it possible to link up to it by means of the building up and adaptation of a specific information system.

An abstract model of this type has yet another significant advantage. It relatively easily allows you to **transfer experience**, to be inspired by how the best companies in the branch function, to gradually draw up a list or a collection of such experience (best practices). In the majority of cases, we can build it directly in the supplied information systems, for example, as procedures set up in advance. Then one only needs to use them.

Reputable suppliers can prove their abilities in two manners: either by means of a list of **reference customers** or through a summary of **formal qualifications**. Both of these possess equal importance in the computing technology sector. Certificates document the fact that our people are well grounded in theoretical terms, whereas references prove that they are able to make proper use of their knowledge in practice. As regards certificates, their list is currently very extensive (see the inserted text).

In addition to formal certificates, our staff are responsible for much greater success owing to which we have joined the ranks of global leaders in our branch. **Two times in a row, Microsoft has rated us as one of its best partners worldwide.**

AutoCont's quality control system is certified according to the **ISO 9001:2001** standard in the domain of service provision and servicing. All our procedures related to service provision and servicing abide by the ISO 9001:2001 standard and the internationally acknowledged ITIL standard.

We are able to put all our theoretical knowledge into practice in a proper way. The list of our reference customers is long, and is always extending. Those interested can find its updated version on our websites (www.autocont.cz and www.autocont.sk). Here are a few examples:

- Tonak
- Kooperativa pojišťovna (Kooperativa Insurance Company)
- Soddexho Pass
- Czech Telecom
- Všeobecná zdravotní pojišťovna (General Health Insurance Company)
- CEE WOOD
- Schwan Cosmetics CR
- Česká pojišťovna (Czech Insurance Company)
- Vysočina Regional Authority
- Neografia Martin
- University of Technology in Brno

AutoCont CZ is the holder of the highest possible certificates from the majority of its suppliers. The updated list can be checked on http://www-autocont.cz/profil-partnerstvi.cml.
At present, it concerns the following certificates:

- Microsoft Gold Certified Partner:
  - Networking Infrastructure Solutions
  - Advanced Infrastructure Solutions
  - Information Worker Solutions
  - Microsoft Business Solutions
  - Learning Solutions
  - Integrated E-Business Solutions
  - Security Solutions
  - Business Intelligence Solutions
- Microsoft Partner Advisory Council
- Microsoft LAR Account Reseller
- Microsoft Certified Technical Education Centre
- FileNet ValueNet Partner
- NetIQ Premier Authorized Resseler
- NetIQ Customer Advisor Board
- Fenestrae VAR Partner
- Computer Associates Gold Enterprise Solution Provider
- Citrix Solution Advisor — System Integrator
- Symantec Enterprise Solutions Partner
- VMware Enterprise VIP Network Reseller
- VMware Authorized Consulting Partner
- CheckPoint Authorized Value-Added Solutions Provider
- SAP NetWeaver Partner
- 3COM Gold partner
- Cisco Premier Certified Partner
- HP Bussines Partner
- HP Autorized Support Provider
- HP Autorized Service Partner
- IBM Business Partner
- IBM Service Partner
- Dell Professional Services Partner

"Do you really understand customers better then they do themselves?"

We are able to tackle your problems.
WE KNOW HOW.

What we offer sm and medium–size

The problem of every small company lies in the fact that it is compelled to do a number of things less effectively than a large company — or at least it thinks that it has to do them this way. When it comes to enterprise resource planning, small and medium-sized firms in the Czech Republic usually try to save on it as much as possible, and there is nothing inherently wrong with this. The trouble rests in the fact that they often do so in an inappropriate manner. As is generally known, savings can be made in the right and the wrong place.

Czech companies very frequently operate on their computers old software applications and have a very slow replacement cycle: ten years and even longer. Such saving becomes a false economy. Technical progress in information technologies is such that in some cases the payback on newer equipment can be in terms of labour costs alone — the same work can be done by fewer people — within several months. The **return on investment into computing technology and information systems is high** — under the presumption that it concerns a professional delivery preceded by a proper calculation. Large enterprises deliberate in this manner without exception and understand the payback mathematics very well. Paradoxically, smaller enterprises, for which financial economy and cash flow play a much greater role, only rarely think in this way and more often than not purchase technologies at random. However, an error can damage them much more than it can a large company.

Our offer concerning information technologies intended for smaller firms is primarily focused on fast return on investment and elimination of risk. AutoCont supplies and implements for customers mainly Microsoft Navision systems. In this activity, we are the biggest and most successful Czech certified seller (Microsoft Certified Business Solutions Partner) and implementation provider of Navision products.

We offer fast return on investment and elimination of risk.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), or **enterprise information system**, is a comprehensive software tool for management of a company's entire activities, from receipt of orders and invoicing, through management of stock and inventories, to wages, human resources, production control, research and development, etc. It concerns a key item of enterprise software. Linking up to it are other products and functionalities: data warehouses, managerial information systems, web stores and portals and so on. AutoCont supplies all this too.

Before it is possible to move on to installation and operation of an information system, it is necessary to build up, complement and update technological infrastructure. This includes computers, networks, active network components, operating systems, as well as tools for their management, control and security. Of crucial importance is the fact that we are able to review an infrastructure supply and the linking up information system as one entirety. Thus, there is neither the threat of undersizing, which results in operating problems, nor oversizing of the infrastructure, which becomes unnecessarily expensive. Technologies are governed by customers' business needs, not vice versa.

We have extensive experience with development of web portals and electronic trading tools. We also deliver and implement the currently highly sought–after **information and knowledge management systems**.

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Their purpose is to work with non–structured data, i.e. data that are not stored in databases but have the form of, for example, text and table files (business correspondence, etc.). Closely linking up to this are systems for integrated document management (IDM) directed to the so–called paperless office.

We also offer another important group of systems in high demand: **customer relationship management (CRM)**. A CRM system represents a set of tools for work with customers, from generation of demand and individually targeted marketing to effective storage of the relationships' history, buying patterns, work with discounts, special offers, etc. Also within this area is individual processing of all specific transactions, from orders, through delivery of goods, to invoicing, payment terms, servicing and support.

Owing to great demand in this area, we also have a group focused on a specific domain: retail and distribution networks information systems (ISM). It specialises in computer solutions in the retail sector. The main activity of ISM at the present time is customer solutions for retail policy management for non–homogeneous retail chains operating heterogeneous information systems.

Small companies need solutions with rapid payback and at a reasonable price.
WE KNOW HOW.

What we offer large companies

Typical of large customers is good knowledge of their own needs as regards information technologies. This simplifies the situation for both parties — the supplier and the customer. But, at the same time, it is necessary to take into consideration that requirements of large companies are considerable and frequently atypical, highly individualised. This places extraordinary demands on the supplier. AutoCont CZ ranks among the few top companies in its branch that have successfully and repeatedly managed to meet these requirements.

Large firms are specific due to the very fact that they are large. The comic formulation is to emphasise that it does not concern a quantitative but qualitative characteristic. Computer people often call this scalability: what is simple on a small scale requires a totally different approach on a large scale. You can write ten invoices a month in an ordinary text editor and then transfer them manually into a table. No problem. However, for one hundred invoices a day you need not only invoicing clerks but, primarily, a specialised item of software that makes their work more effective and rids it of errors. In the case of one thousand invoices, it is necessary that their making out and sending take place more or less automatically, without the intervention of a human hand.

Accordingly, **processes** in large companies are more complex in comparison with those in small firms; more costly; and that is exactly why they possess the possibility of much larger **savings** and, concurrently, larger **benefits**, of course, if they are properly managed.

We consider our decisive competitive advantage in the area of supplies for large companies to be consistent **knowledge of process management**. The most important aspect of what we offer is high–quality interconnection of the two sides of the problem, i.e. technical and managerial–organisational. We understand both the customer's specific problems and their formal description in the language of process and project management and the technologies these problems can be tackled with.

The basis of our supplies for large customers is the implementation of **infrastructure**. We conceive it as being interconnection of hardware and software products and solutions in such a manner that the customer's staff attain and always have available at their end station a perfect working environment — efficient, secure, easy to control, designed precisely for what they want to use it for. In this conception, infrastructure comprises servers, client stations, mobile devices, their operating systems, their network interconnection, all security solutions and, finally, systems for central management and supervision of information technologies.

We distinguish between customers' expectations and explicitly told requirements.

Linking up to these supplies are our other services, often including operation of infrastructure created in this manner in the form of outsourcing. We operate service management strictly in line with the ITIL methodology, which ensures provision of top services, including the **guaranteed operation of critically important technologies throughout the Czech Republic and in the 7x24 regime**. Service centres are located in 25 towns of the Czech Republic, with the network's backbone being formed by 13 regional branches. Provision of services is centrally controlled by the Customer Centre in Prague.

A typical task we operate for customers is **end station management**. It encompasses all tasks connected with the operation of customers' PCs, notebooks, hand-held computers and peripheral equipment. In such an arrangement, we assume full responsibility

What is ITIL

ITIL (IT Infrastructure Library) is a library containing a description of IT infrastructure and service management methods provided by means of it. It concerns a set of best practices, which is one of the reasons why ITIL is intelligible for many organisations. Organisations that decide to implement ITIL often find out that some areas defined and described in ITIL do not represent anything new and unknown for them. They are areas they have already dealt with, are dealing with and intend to deal with in the future. What ITIL brings into the bargain is the consolidation of gained experience into a uniform and consistent entirety from which ITIL creates a framework of rules and recommendations.

IT management is too complex a matter. Therefore, many organisations resolve and implement solutions for individual areas step–by–step. Thus, it can often happen that something is overlooked and not worked out properly, and this subsequently complicates the implementation of a solution in another area that it is necessary to focus on. ITIL puts experience from individual areas in connections, thus facilitating their solution while maintaining the necessary bonds and preserving an overview of the overall image of all relationships so as to make the subsequent solutions in other areas simpler. It can be said that ITIL introduces a standard for IT management.

for the operation of end stations. Customers merely use their computers. They are detached from all issues relating to their procurement, operation, technical maintenance, replacement by more up–to–date models, etc. Thus, their employees remain efficient — we resolve their problems with personal computers to the full extent.

An increasingly frequent requirement on the part of large companies and organisations is the possibility of more effectively managing their business processes so as to have a higher degree of control of them than hitherto. Serving for this is software support for **Business Process Management (BPM)**. At present, process management is one of the key methods of enterprise management and cannot do without software support. This support consists of tools and services allowing one to plan and manage in terms of business processes, i.e. to analyse them, define, allocate sources and keep track of their capacity utilisation, monitor real execution of processes, etc. BPM support is a higher degree of software technologies known, for example, under the terms workflow (document flow management) and collaboration tools.

We also supply tools for **Enterprise Content Management (ECM)**. Every organisation today works with a vast quantity of data in digital form: text files of all shapes and sizes, emails, database contents, images, audio records, etc. Order needs to be maintained in all of them — and, moreover, it is necessary to search for relevant information in these data. It is necessary to ensure that the right, not the wrong, people have the right data at the right time, it is necessary not to mutually confuse various versions of the same document. This, and much more, can be arranged by means of ECM solutions.

It is important that we ourselves abide by the rules we always strive to implement with customers. We consistently manage our projects in terms of life cycle and, accordingly, we do not pursue the start/stop method whereby in the end an unhappy customer realises that although he has received what he asked for in the beginning it was not what he actually wished — because he did not ask for it precisely. This is a big and fairly typical problem of the entire information technologies business. In all likelihood, it concerns the most frequent reason for customers' dissatisfaction with supplies of IT services.

We are fully aware of this risk and actively preclude it. We distinguish between **customers' expectations**, i.e. what they really want, and **explicitly told requirements**. We always endeavour to meet real expectations — accordingly, to help the customer formulate them, detect them and convert them into explicit formulations, for example, in contractual documents. Such a procedure is often cyclical, with a gradual specification of tasks. Consequently, during the course of solutions we adapt project objectives so as to meet customers' real expectations, real intentions.

Our work complies with the most stringent international standards. We are as good as top foreign suppliers. **WE KNOW HOW.**

How to plan purcl and operation of

Do you employ your own physician? Certainly not. But you have surely carefully noted down the telephone number of "your" doctor, who you trust, who you feel safe with, who you visit for regular examinations, who knows your and your family's health largely by heart, while the rest he can find in the card register. You know you can call the doctor any time. As regards minor problems, he can give you advice over the phone; you can even occasionally see him for a chat and informally talk about prevention. When you have an urgent health problem, he finds time for you. And when things go bad, he arrives immediately. The doctor is able to tackle a lot on his own, and if his powers and equipment do not suffice, he sends you to the respective specialist.

Do you employ you own lawyer? Certainly not. However, just like in the case of the physician, you also have "your" lawyer to whom you turn once you need his services. He too is able to resolve problems over the phone, and when it comes to more important issues, he immediately begins systematically

1. Turn to the nearest branch of a selected supplier. If the local branch is not able to handle something, it will arrange qualified assistance. Local staff, however, will be at your side all the time. If a supplier does not have a branch in your proximity, ask for detailed information and later on contractual guarantees concerning its employees' availability.

hase IT solutions

2. Describe your problems and requirements as simply as possible, in everyday language, without using computer terminology. Do not seek pseudo-specialists as “interpreters”. Think of your problem always in business, not technical, terms. Do not say “we need a new scanner”, but rather “we need to work with some documents in electronic instead of paper form”, or even better “we need to work in a faster and less costly manner with documents”. The situation is similar to that with your doctor. You do not come to see him with a complete diagnosis and proposed therapy, but with a description of your symptoms. You say “I have pain in my knee”, not “I would like to order an operation on the knee joint with total anaesthesia”.

working for you — either on his own or with the backup of an entire team.

Is it clear and logical? Commonplace? Does everyone do it this way?

And now — how about your specialist in information technologies?

3. Do not ask at the very beginning “how much does it cost?”, since you cannot receive a reasonable answer. There will be time enough for price negotiations when the job has been specified in more detail. The price of an IT solution can only rarely be described simply, it is rather a framework comprising the purchase price, operating costs and, frequently, also items of the type “if a certain condition is met within a certain deadline (for example, shortening the time of production, reduction of inventories), the supplier will receive such and such a bonus”. If in the case of a more complex solution a supplier offers you a price as one figure, weigh up thoroughly if it makes any sense.

Would it not come in handy for you to have a specialist who is **available for you in a similar manner and under the same conditions as the physician and lawyer?** You see, by no means do we want to denigrate your employees working in the position that, as a rule, is called “system administrator” and the like. However, usually connected with their jobs in small and medium-sized companies are notorious troubles that can be easily defined.

Above all: they are seldom sufficiently used and are therefore too expensive. A small company rarely has so much work with regular IT administration and maintenance to justify it having even one full–time IT worker — let alone more of them. All the same, it employs its own specialist since his knowledge is irreplaceable. It is simply impossible to do without such a person, even at the price of his **productivity** being small. By the way, do you have any idea what exactly he is doing all day long? Are you able to objectively evaluate him and measure his performance in the same way you can your sales representatives?

The IT specialist in a small company does on the whole routine work: maintenance, sorting out failures, software updating. But does anyone in your firm have a **general overview** of the information technologies used? A vision for the future? Do you ponder where your IT should develop, what it should deal with, what conditions you put on such a solution? Do you comprehend it on the necessary level? Does your system administrator understand it?

Forgive us for continuing to raise unpleasant questions for a little longer. What is your company’s standing when it comes to security of information systems? Are you

4. Require calculation of the return on investment. Factor it into the agreement and ensure that its fulfilment is contractually enforceable.

5. If you compare the prices of various IT solutions, do not forget to include in the comparison every conceivable cost. Typical is the situation when the price of the proposed outsourcing is compared with the labour costs for one's own employees. But have you taken into consideration the costs for rooms, the building, heating, lighting, security service, amortisation...?

sufficiently protected against viruses, against ingress of unauthorised persons, against data loss? How often, and according to what scheme, are things backed up in your company? And what precisely?

Who has decided about it, who has approved such a plan of security measures?

And what if your hard disk crashes? It is the most banal and most frequently occurring hardware failure. What if the disk breaks down in your server where you have bookkeeping, invoicing, customer data? What if the disk of your manager notebook with the personnel agenda, wages, all your correspondence, draft contracts disappears? Do you know what to do in such a situation?

6. Extremely sensitive is the role of your own IT specialists – employees. To a certain extent, their opinions must be respected because they know the ins and outs of the given issue. On the other hand, they seldom know the overall picture: they undoubtedly care more about the capacity of server disks than the business results of your company. Furthermore, they can feel threatened by the arrival of an external supplier, either unjustifiably (if they are good and honest) or justifiably (if they do not work well or surreptitiously carry out their own activities on your technology). Make sure that your IT specialists understand business. If you are a travel agency, your programmers and system administrators must comprehend sales of trips. If you are a hypermarket, your system administrator must understand the principles of goods distribution and replenishment. Otherwise they will not do their work properly.

Where to take the disk in order to have your data safely retrieved and not abused?

Can you judge if your entire IT infrastructure – hardware, software, internet connection,

Are computers good for anything at all?

In 2004, in America and subsequently around the whole world a big stir was caused by Mr. Nicholas Carr, a journalist and editor of Harvard Business Review, with his article "IT Doesn't Matter" This, in a nutshell, is what he wrote: computers and related technologies have ceased to provide a competitive advantage to companies since they have become commonplace. Hence, he recommended reducing investments in computer technologies; stopping seeking a strategic advantage in them because there is none; refraining from using the state–of–the–art technologies on the market and placing your bets rather on tried-and-tested and stable solutions; seeking in IT use higher security of transactions and cost saving, not new business opportunities. Actually, the thrust of Carr's article is not that "informatics doesn't matter" but that it is no longer possible to differentiate oneself by means of them, which certainly is not the same thing. Nevertheless, he did succeed in providing plenty of food for thought among IT suppliers and their customers.

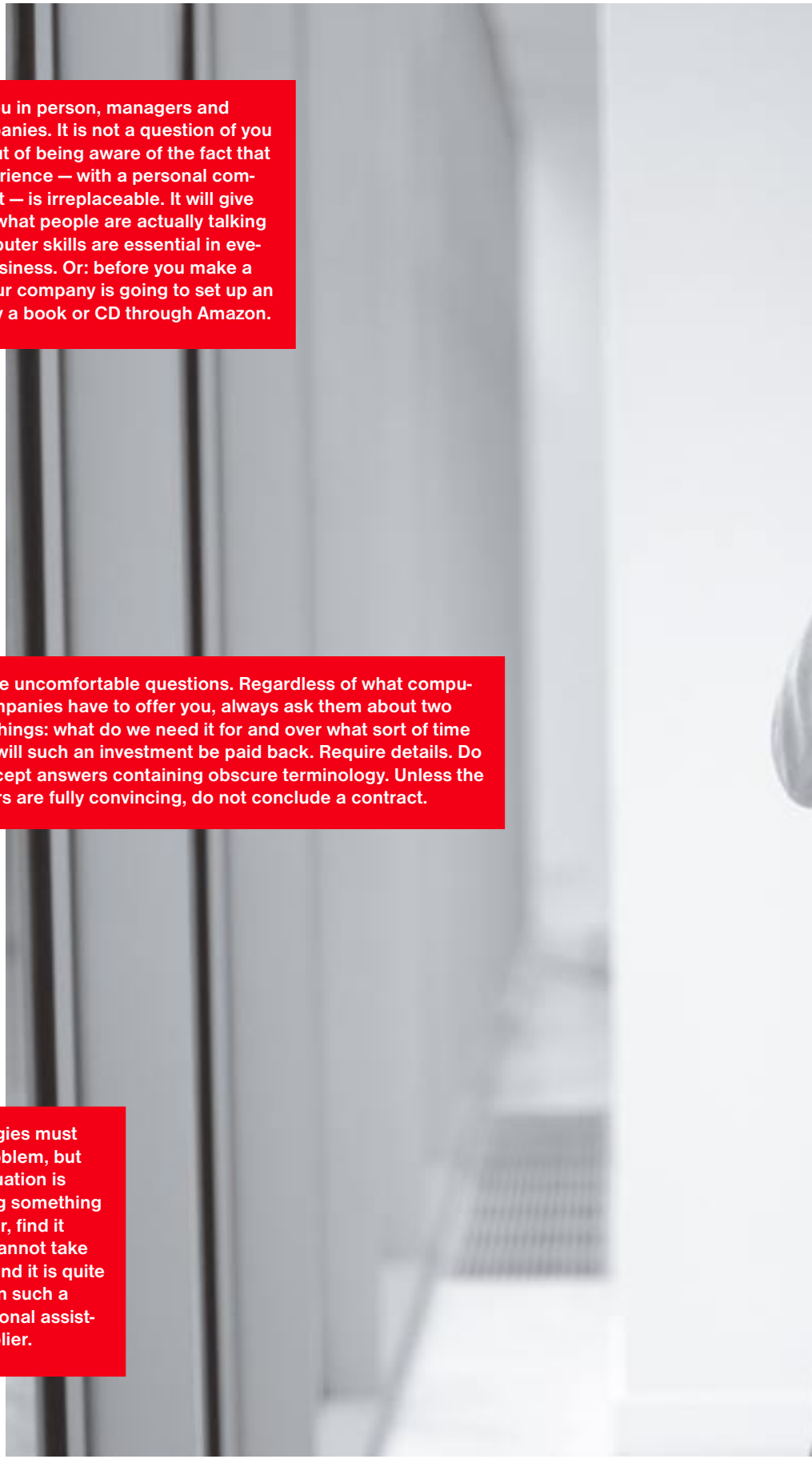
Carr's opinion is extremely controversial. He does not take into consideration how drastically — or amazingly, depending on personal attitude — the world has changed and expanded over the past fifty years or so. The number of us inhabiting the planet is growing and growing, we live together in a much more interconnected manner, we affect each other to a greater extent, our standard of living is improving, and alongside it our demands are rising while, at the same time, the risks are increasing. Analysing and evaluating, at least somehow, all the data such a development of the world and humankind daily generates is simply not possible without computers and digital technologies. Yes, admittedly, our coexistence with computers is often complicated, but just try to imagine what the world would look like without them! Without these faulty, demanding and spoilt machines, modern civilisation would not be able to function.

In actual fact, Carr does not say anything else but that the development of information technologies is in a certain sense completed, that it has attained everything it is possible to attain. The risk borne by similar allegations is generally known. Their authors usually become victims of the irony of history when further development — often within a short time — reveals their gigantic fallacy. Just recall the notorious example of the director of the US patent office who in the second half of the 19th century wanted to abdicate and put up the shutters because "everything has already been invented". Even Thomas Watson, the founder of IBM, circa 1950 believed that the global market's capacity was only for several computers. Today's computing technologies are by no means a closed chapter; every opinion declaring "the end of history" is in its essence vainglorious.

A simple example: many providers of services pertaining to information technologies work hard to achieve it that computers function more or less just like they have to date, but better – to really fulfill the promises which have been somewhat frivolously made by their producers. Just take the problems with data and program formats. At present, the world of computing systems is fragmented, atomised into tiny pieces. Everybody, from users in households to large companies, has some problems with incompatibility, everybody all the time tackles what to start up where, what will communicate with what, how to transfer data from one agenda into another as easily as possible. Differing network architectures; various operating systems; all kinds of databases; an extensive selection of programming languages and models; an infinite miscellany of application programs and data representations in them. "Integration of applications began representing a problem at the moment when the first computing technology user in the world placed his second system into operation," says Robert Hailstone, an analyst from the company IDC.

The task of IT people is, as a rule, to interconnect all this into a functional entity. Quite often, they deal with it in such a manner that they bow down in face of its complexity and propose upgrading, actually meaning: throw out what we have and buy something new, something that would be at least a little more general and flexible. For years, this approach has kept many computer companies happy, many users feckless and many financial managers livid with rage. However, in recent years users have simply not had enough money for such an approach. But — it has been revealed that if there is a will, there is a way. A new informatics branch has originated, so–called applications integration, which strives to arrange the respective interconnections and to see to it that everything in computers collaborates with absolutely everything, not only on the paper of an information leaflet but in reality too.

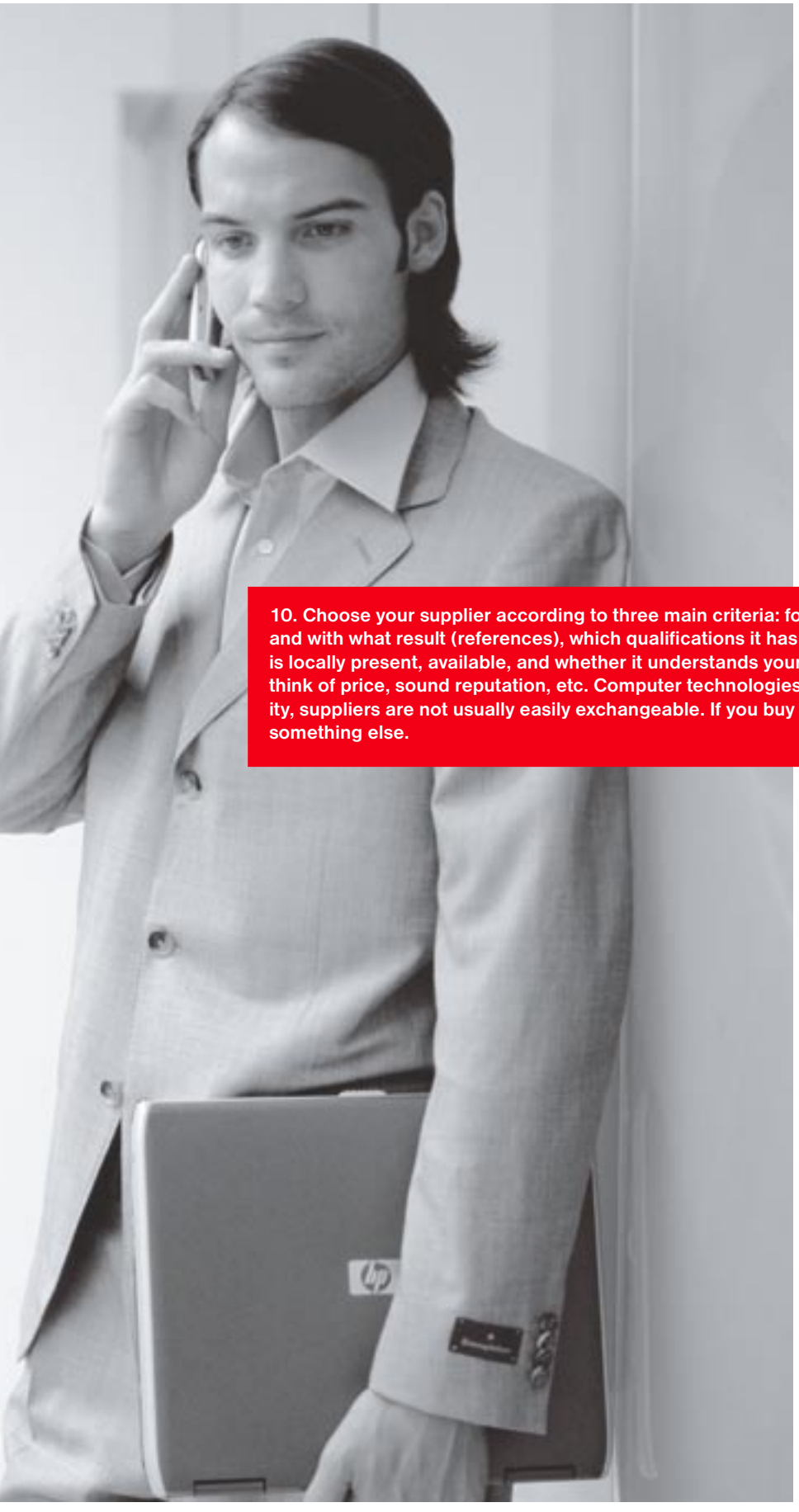
Thus, it seems that although Nicholas Carr may have hit the nail on the head, the target of his criticism still has an ace in the hole…



7. Learn the basics — you in person, managers and owners of smaller companies. It is not a question of you becoming IT experts, but of being aware of the fact that your own practical experience — with a personal computer, email, the internet — is irreplaceable. It will give you a far better idea of what people are actually talking about. In addition, computer skills are essential in everyday life, not only in business. Or: before you make a decision on whether your company is going to set up an electronic business, buy a book or CD through Amazon.

8. Raise uncomfortable questions. Regardless of what computer companies have to offer you, always ask them about two basic things: what do we need it for and over what sort of time frame will such an investment be paid back. Require details. Do not accept answers containing obscure terminology. Unless the answers are fully convincing, do not conclude a contract.

9. Information technologies must not be a part of your problem, but a solution to it. If the situation is vice versa, you are doing something wrong. Look for the error, find it and eliminate it. If you cannot take care of it on your own (and it is quite probable once you are in such a situation), seek professional assistance — an external supplier.



the number and qualifications of IT specialists, the degree of training of all employees — is **optimal**? Is it not undersized, or oversized? Would it be possible to achieve a higher performance (perhaps a much higher performance) for less money (maybe for much less money)?

A suitably selected external supplier will allow you to get all the aforementioned issues under control. You will be able to rely on it in the same manner you can your physician and lawyer. But how do you find this supplier?

10. Choose your supplier according to three main criteria: for whom it has already worked and with what result (references), which qualifications it has (certificates) and whether it is locally present, available, and whether it understands your specific business. Only then think of price, sound reputation, etc. Computer technologies are not usually a commodity, suppliers are not usually easily exchangeable. If you buy from someone else, you buy something else.

We are convinced that we — AutoCont CZ — are the right supplier for you. However, we would prefer it if you, after your personal deliberation, were to arrive at this conclusion yourself. We are aware of the fact that customers from medium–sized and small companies often do not know how to proceed when purchasing information technologies and IT solutions. These areas are still relatively new and for a number of people shrouded in mystery.

Naturally, the weight of mutual communication to a much greater extent lies on the supplier than the customer. Nevertheless, it is useful if the customer knows the basic rules of such a bargain. As a result, negotiations will become easier and faster for both parties. One of the methods of how to find a starting position for negotiations with an IT supplier, how to find the right partner for your business.

Let yourself be given advice from those who talk to you openly and clearly.
WE KNOW HOW.

Who are AutoCont
partners and wha

Microsoft®

Microsoft is the largest independent software company in the world, a supplier of operating systems, office tools, business applications and other software.

hp invent

Hewlett–Packard is a leading global supplier of personal computers, printing machines, servers, network infra-structure and many other IT products and services.

SAP®

SAP is the largest global supplier of enterprise resource planning systems and related software for large, medium–sized and small companies.

IBM®

IBM is a leading global supplier of servers, system and application software and a wide range of other IT products and services.

t CZ's main business
t do they supply?

Other important AutoCont partners:

3COM

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Computer Associates

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FileNet

CheckPoint

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Symantec

VMware

How are benefits from IT solutions

How can customers come to know that they have outlaid their money effectively? Taken in general, according to the results of the next year or next few years. It must again be emphasised that, as a rule, information technologies are not a cost item, but a strategic investment. The correct approach does not rest in how to minimise it but how to ensure its precisely controlled and rapid return. In other words, and something of a generalisation: **the question is not how much it will cost but how much it will earn.**

Preliminary payback calculations, however convincing they may appear, are often wide of the mark even with the best will of both parties – they cannot take into consideration various complications that will emerge in the future. Therefore, suitable is the situation when a supplier receives contractual obligations for fulfillment of the agreed criteria. It means sharing the risk, which is distributed between the supplier and the customer. Today, there are an increasing number of this type of contracts in the IT sector. They are not always suitable — they are not used in the case of simple orders in particular because they would encumber the contract with unnecessarily high overhead costs. In certain cases, however, they can significantly enhance the solution's success.

What to measure, according to what criteria should success be evaluated? Entire books have been written on metrics in informatics, it is a fiendishly complicated area. A few points suffice on initial overview.

The most advantageous are so-called hard metrics — objectively measurable indicators.

As regards IT solutions, they can include, for example, acceleration of stock rotation, shortening of production time, shortening of delivery terms. If following the implementation of an IT solution a company records progress in these indicators, it is sufficient evidence that the solution works and its benefit can be precisely figured out.

measured?

The next group of metrics appertains to the operation of the actual IT system. How often does failure occur and how long does it last? Computer people commonly use the term accessibility, the period during which the system is in full and smooth operation expressed as the percentage of the time over which it should be in operation. As a rule, accessibility is supposed to be 99% and more — in the case of exigent methods of use, it is carefully calculated how many nines there are after the decimal point.

With many solutions and many types of customers it is only possible to work with such indicators to a limited extent, or not at all. For example, when it comes to advertising agencies, lawyer's offices or graphics studios, it would be very difficult to seek any hard metric applicable for evaluation of IT benefits. In such a case, all that can be done is to resort to soft metrics, i.e. subjective evaluation of benefits. Evaluation can include, for example, ease of service, ergonomics, estimated time saving, usually in the form of a questionnaire filled in by the customer's employees.

We will share with you the risks of the supplied solution.

Outsourcing of services differs from external goods supplies in, among other things, the fact that it concerns a continual process. As regards physical production, it is relatively easy to verify the delivery's quality: the delivered goods are reviewed and according to this the agreed price is paid. In the case of services, such an inspection is more complicated in both technical and legal terms. Developed for this purpose has been a special legal structure, the Service Level Agreement (SLA). The supplier and customer agree within it upon the metrics used to mirror the quality of the service, the method of their measurement and evaluation, and this serves as the basis for determination of the price, contractual fines, bonuses, etc.

The problem again lies in the fact that not everything that is important in similar cases is objectively measurable. Hence, metrics are often reduced to purely formal aspects (the time from reporting of a defect to commencement of the repair, etc.), which need not precisely express the real benefit for the client. Thus, the issues of metrics, SLA and the like represent extensive scope for creative ideas of both the supplier and the customer.

We will share with you the risks of the supplied solution. **WE KNOW HOW.**

AutoCont in a nutshell

AutoCont CZ. WE KNOW HOW.

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