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Engaging with In-Network Administration

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What is INA?

In-Network Administration¹ authorises a trusted external vendor to access your network as Administrator so they can act as part of your systems, to configure, monitor, maintain, manage and support your infrastructure on your behalf.

INA goes far beyond ordinary I.T. Support by placing responsibility for fault, configuration, accounting, performance & security management (FCAPS) squarely with the vendor, and as a result your infrastructure effectively becomes 'self-managing'.

The analogy is that the mechanic is now part of your car, not an external service. It means your car will always work and always do what you need it to do.

Why use INA?

SMEs face the same question: *How do I meet my actual I.T. needs?*

The traditional answer is to hire an in-house I.T. specialist, network engineer or technology officer and give them responsibility. They can be expensive and their skillset may be under-used depending on your company size, so this model is normally reserved for medium to large businesses.

¹ INA is coined from the Future Internet term *In-Network Management* and places administration intrinsically inside your network, not as an external service.

A second option is to contract an I.T. Support vendor, and although that seems attractive in terms of cost, it falls down in the area of problem ownership. You end up talking to someone different each time, no-one really knows your network or business, and you're required to know precisely what to ask for before you can get what you want. Typical issues include slow support times, wasted effort re-learning existing knowledge, fixes end up temporary because the support job is to 'make it work' not to 'make it right', and if you're not an I.T. expert, when you have to make all the decisions you feel trapped in never knowing if they're good. You can find yourself reactive to an endless stream of new faults, which takes you away from your core business.

In-Network Administration solves these issues by appointing an expert network administrator from a company like Basis Design to manage your network from the inside, part-time. You speak to that same engineer every time and the engineer is also empowered to manage ahead of the curve so your systems are prevented from failing in the first place. Critical needs such as security, performance and disaster recovery planning are automatically designed in, and even better, you gain a professional advocate for your I.T. needs, meaning someone who's across all technology options and has visibility on your needs, so brings you meaningful answers before you require them, or at least exactly when you do.

INA also gives you peace of mind that your investment in I.T. is protected, in the same way an insurance policy protects your business. It's delivers the ongoing, in-house I.T. expertise you want without the cost.

Benefits

In-Network Administration gives you:

- An experienced enterprise network admin & systems engineer assigned to your business, and the same engineer responds to all your support calls.
- You automatically receive expert advice on how to structure your network, based on your proven needs.
- Security is maintained from inside your network, not just at the boundary or after the fact, following ACSC Essential Eight best practice.
- Changes and upgrades get managed without disruption because the engineer already knows your core practices and procedures. You can throw them 'curve balls' with confidence that they will all be handled.

- As an advocate for your own needs, the engineer keeps you in touch with the Should Ask Questions that contribute to the usability, reliability and performance of your systems. They are the ones who sweat your security, how to keep your uptime, how to make systems useful and ultimately how to save you money in the long term.
- You can scale the INA engagement from 0% to 100% as you need, so you're in control of both rate of change and cost.
- Your network is properly documented to facilitate maintainability and successorship.

Why Basis Design

In-Network Administration is a highly trusted position that represents a partnership between your business and ours. When you engage us we become invested in your goals and work to provide solutions that further your requirements, not ours.

We then leverage our I.T. knowledge and infrastructure to implement those solutions for you, delivering the system designs, servers, workstations, networks and application configurations you need, and take on responsibility for securing, maintaining and documenting them all.

We have 25 years of experience in I.T. across the spectrum of software development, enterprise networking, managed hosting, systems configuration and end-user support and an exceptional track record of success.

Our true expertise though is in *how we think*, not what we know. We work to identify the patterns and high level concepts your business relies on, which means looking beyond the day-to-day operations. Once the patterns are found, we know that software tools can readily be deployed to support them.

For example, collaboration between offices may not be best done via Slack or Skype or Teams. What your staff need is to feel the presence of colleagues, not just a way to message them. In some cases collaboration is best done by phone but then does your business have its own Virtual PBX to create a one-touch connection, or could there be a lot of time-consuming address book lookups going on? Focusing on the need for *presence* is the right way to choose the best solution.

Another example is that live knowledge tools such as Zendesk and Confluence can be far superior over using traditional Word and Excel documents where information

changes frequently and is consumed by many. Your team's need is confidence in the information's *currency*, not just to access it. Word files are best reserved for static documents with established MOC procedures, and a live web-based knowledge management system is far better at capturing the living heartbeat of your team.

We also know security must also designed in from the start. It is never an afterthought or add-on. Security that's designed into the network structure up-front doesn't create any extra cost burden, and avoids a plague of retrofit problems that can come later.

Add Managed Hosting Services

Beyond In-Network Administration, Basis Design is nearly unique in simultaneously offering **Managed Hosting Services** through our well-established datacenter in Surry Hills, NSW 2010.

Hosting some or all of your systems with us as well represents a cost-effective way to access ultra-fast hardware and high bandwidth resources that can scale. It's markedly different to cloud hosting where you have to know your requirements up front and every decision you make becomes your risk.

We take on that risk instead and offer fixed-price managed hosting tiers that fit your infrastructure. When then manage your networks, software and hosting *as one*, and as a result, bring a turnkey solution to all your I.T. problems.

Add In-Network Consulting

Our long experience with **In-Network Consulting** as both business analysts and process architects means we know how to spot and reduce friction points for staff, automate manual tasks and integrate components from many vendors to create the most functional environment possible.

We've worked with Tier 1, 2 and 3 enterprises in both Australia and the U.S. so we genuinely understand how I.T. serves needs, and it's not about choosing which hardware to buy or which software to run. It's about distilling your processes to discover how they underpin your business model, then finding technology that supports it all.

Our real focus now is *Small to Medium Enterprise* because that's where we know we add the best value. When we're engaged for INA you'll find that In-Network Consulting

naturally emerges as part of the role, however we can also take on separate large scale consulting projects to help evolve your business to the next level and more.

Software or Solution?

If all you do is adopt software, you end up defining *how your staff must work*.

When you implement solutions, you begin to *enable staff to do their actual work*.

The entry point is to know your use cases and user stories, i.e. your processes. Then carefully adopt parts from different vendors and integrate them to make everything work. User management through Microsoft domains and Azure tenancies with SSO and federated LDAP. Network control through a combination of FreeBSD, Cisco and Netgear firewalls, switches and routers. Container deployments with Kubernetes or via Docker on Linux hosts. VDI through Microsoft RDS on Hyper-V. Inter-office VPN through Wireguard and OpenVPN. Even right down to whether you'll use Microsoft Office or the F/OSS Open Office day-to-day.

These are just some of the solutions that could meet your needs but any I.T. spend that doesn't support your staff constitutes a waste of time. Because we understand how the technology itself works we can implement solutions for you, not just features.

How to engage with us

It's our job to help you adopt our services, not yours. So, here's a step-by-step plan:

We visit

We meet with you up front, in person or online:

- Tell us what systems you currently have
- Tell us all the problems you're facing
- Let us ask questions so we can get to know your business

We design

We create a proposal for you:

- We show you a vision for any system changes or updates
- We share why we made each recommendation
- We outline the time and cost that's involved
- We help set up meaningful contracts and agreements

- We start small** In collaborations, trust is built over time.
- We can take on helpdesk only at first
 - We roll out minimal tools initially such as Remote Support
 - We involve you in all the small updates we make
 - We continue to learn about your business

Then in due course, if you find our initial results positive:

- We migrate** If you then need systems hosted, we do the migration.
- We handle the virtualisation of physical systems
 - We ensure smooth transfer of existing virtual machines

- We implement** If it's required, and with your approval and visibility, we then start creating or transforming the parts of your systems that need it from where they are today to where they have to be.
- We believe our reputation is your reputation so we take great care in how we present to your staff and your clients, and are confident in our approach to questions, concerns and planning, as changes are rolled out.

- We tidy up** We take some time to document all the parts of your systems, as the very best way to ensure maintainability and reliability of the investment you're making in technology.

- We support** We now take on the management of all the parts of your network. Importantly, the work is minimal month-to-month if the network has been set up well but it's still important it gets done.
- We continue to offer staff and clients full Helpdesk throughout, without disruption.
- And lastly, for any services you do decide to host with us, we manage those seamlessly as well.

Call us today to begin a journey towards a new and better mode of I.T. management.