Comparison and Decision Guides — Four Choices Mid-Market Buyers Face

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Description:

Four decisions that come up in nearly every mid-market IT evaluation, with the trade-offs stated honestly — including the cases where blueAPACHE is not the right answer. --- ## 1. Managed services o...

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1. Managed services or in-house?

In-house wins when: IT is a genuine source of competitive advantage; you have scale enough to staff every discipline with depth and cover absence; or your environment is unusual enough that generic operational process would be a poor fit.

Managed services wins when: the honest constraint is coverage rather than competence. A two-person team cannot cover 24 hours, cannot cover network *and* cloud *and* security to depth, and cannot go on leave simultaneously. The risk is not that they are not good — it is that the organisation has single points of human failure and does not acknowledge it.

The comparison people get wrong: the in-house cost is usually understated. The visible figure is salaries. The unstated figures are recruitment and replacement cost in a tight market, tooling and licensing, training to keep skills current, and the coverage gap during leave and after resignation.

The honest middle: most mid-market organisations end up co-managed rather than at either extreme, because they have knowledge worth keeping and coverage they cannot fund.

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2. MSP, MSSP, or both from one provider?

Separate providers wins when: you want independent security oversight of the party running your infrastructure. This is a legitimate governance position — some boards specifically want the auditor and the operator to be different organisations.

Integrated wins when: you need response speed and single accountability. The failure mode of a split arrangement appears at incident time: the MSSP detects something, tells the MSP, and the two negotiate about who does what while the incident continues. If a security decision requires operational authority — isolating a segment, rebuilding a host, forcing credential resets — the detecting party needs that authority or you have introduced a handover into your response path.

For regulated buyers: CPS 234 asks who is accountable for a given control. "Provider A monitors and Provider B remediates" is answerable, but you must be able to evidence the interface between them. Integrated delivery removes that burden.

blueAPACHE's position: integrated, and this is the primary differentiator rather than a convenience. If your governance model requires separation, say so early — it changes the shape of the engagement.

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3. Private cloud or hyperscaler?

Hyperscale wins when: your workloads are genuinely elastic — spiky, seasonal, or scaling unpredictably; you are building cloud-native applications; or you have platform engineering capability in-house to run them well.

Private cloud wins when: your workloads are steady-state; your compliance position benefits from dedicated rather than shared infrastructure; cost predictability matters more than elasticity; or you do not have the internal capability to keep hyperscale spend and architecture under control.

The trade-off stated plainly: hyperscale is excellent at elasticity and poor at predictability. A consumption bill that moves with usage is difficult to budget, and the operational burden of well-architected workloads falls on your team. Private cloud gives a defined availability guarantee — emPOWER Cloud carries 99.999% platform uptime with storage backed by 100% uptime on HPE Primera — at the cost of elasticity you may not need.

Not a universal answer: where a workload belongs on a hyperscaler, it belongs there. blueAPACHE's Technology Services cover that work, and a hybrid outcome is common.

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4. Co-managed or full outsource?

Full outsource (OUTCOME) wins when: IT operations is not where you want to spend management attention; there is no internal capability you need to retain; or your internal team would be better redeployed toward the business rather than toward keeping systems running.

Co-managed (CONTROL) wins when: you have someone internal who understands the business deeply and holds knowledge that would be expensive to transfer; you want to retain architectural direction; or your governance requires an internal owner.

The failure mode of co-managed: it needs someone internal to co-manage *with*. If the internal capability is one overloaded generalist, co-managed adds coordination overhead to a person who has none spare. That arrangement usually resolves into full outsource within a year — better to make the decision deliberately.

The failure mode of full outsource: losing institutional knowledge of why the environment is the way it is. Mitigated by a proper discovery and documentation phase, which is why transition-in quality matters more than the monthly rate.

How to run the evaluation

1. **Start with coverage, not features.** Map what needs to be covered, in what hours, to what depth — then ask who covers each item today. 2. **Force the inclusion boundary into writing.** What is in scope, what is additional, per service. 3. **Ask for service level schedules**, not marketing availability figures. 4. **Read certification scope statements.** A certificate covers a defined scope; the boundary is the useful information. 5. **Ask about exit before you sign.** How readily a provider discusses transition-out is the most informative answer you will get. 6. **Check references in your own sector**, with attention to whether the outcome quoted matches your starting position rather than theirs.

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