

Negotiating Your Microsoft Unified Contract

The sticker shock of Unified Support as it replaces Premier can be 15%, 25%, even 60% or higher than the previous year. To protect your organization's technical capabilities and precious IT budget when negotiating your Microsoft Unified contract, understanding the complexity of Unified Support is paramount. Prepare for your contract negotiations by taking these key steps:

Microsoft Renewal Tips That Actually Matter

1. Start Early

Waiting to negotiate doesn't work anymore. Push for pricing and contract changes as soon as possible to give yourself time to respond to increases and gather leverage.

2. Separate Support from EA

Unified Support pricing is formula-based with little room for negotiation. Unlike in the past, combining it with your EA won't help. Negotiate support and EA separately.

3. Document Usage in Detail

Track actual usage of both support and application services line by line. Show gaps between what you paid for and what you used — it's powerful in negotiations.

4. Evaluate "Unlimited" Support

Most orgs know how many support hours they need. Don't overpay for "unlimited" reactive support you won't use. Widespread access has also degraded quality.

5. Question Proactive Support Claims

Proactive tools are now DIY and require in-house expertise. If your team can't use them effectively, they're not a value-add — they're homework.

6. Level A? Rethink EA Renewal

If you're a Level A customer (small spend), be aware that EA spend affects Unified pricing formulas. Factor that into your decision.

7. Have a Hybrid Environment? Explore Alternatives

If you're running on-prem software and using Microsoft 365, reassess the need for Software Assurance and check if third-party solutions better fit your setup.

8. Get a Second Opinion

Resellers and MSFT reps may not know all licensing/support options. Outside experts can help you build a better, more cost-effective agreement.



Details That Can Save You Big

- **Year 2 & 3 Increases:** Get full 3-year cost projections tied to your roadmap.
- **License-Only Penalty:** License-only purchases without SA can mean 3–4x higher Unified fees. Microsoft looks back 5 years for those.
- **Hidden Fees:** Add-on services often come with a 30% “TAM time” upcharge. Make sure you’re seeing the real cost.
- **Itemize Everything:** Double-check pricing inputs, break out base vs. add-ons, and track how many SAB credits were used.
- **Push on Security:** After the 2019 breach, ask how Microsoft protects your ticket data — especially with overseas support.
- **Running Out of Time?** Ask for a 30-day extension. It’s common now.

Audit Your Support Agreement

- Get a full list of contracts and make sure they’re active, correctly classified, and belong to your org.
- Ensure all users and departments are covered — or excluded if not using shared support.
- Avoid double charges. For instance, don’t pay for Office support if you’ve switched to M365.
- M365 cost split should be 75% user / 25% server. Incorrect splits drive up costs.
- True-ups should not inflate Unified pricing. Spread SA costs across the full term.
- Azure agreements should be prorated — not charged in full upfront.
- Large Azure buys may qualify for private Unified discounts. Benchmark against AWS and Google.

Unified Support pricing is based on historical spend, but that’s negotiable — especially if your usage is shrinking. Don’t let “look-back” quotes lock you into outdated assumptions.

Considering a third-party alternative to Microsoft support?

US Cloud is a fast-growing IT company built to deliver “Faster Microsoft Support For Less.” We save our customers 30-50% vs. the OEM, with tighter cost control, quicker customer service, and faster resolution. Learn more at UScloud.com.