RETHINK MICROSOFT. RECLAIM YOUR IT BUDGET.

Why Manufacturers Are Cutting IT Costs in 2026—Without Compromising Reliability

IT Budgets Are Getting Squeezed

Microsoft has mastered the art of locking enterprises into costly support contracts—agreements that grow more expensive every year, regardless of your actual support needs. Their Unified Support model ties service costs to product spend, not usage, creating an ongoing cycle of rising expenses that are increasingly hard to justify.

Manufacturers face a double hit. IT leaders are expected to support automation, ERP stability, cybersecurity, and plant-floor integrations—while operating under tighter margins and constant cost pressure.

Support costs keep rising, even as quality declines. Internal IT teams are dealing with slower response times, inconsistent escalation paths, and limited access to senior engineers—often when uptime and production continuity are on the line.

Unified Support contracts have become expensive fast. First-year costs often spike 30–400%, with renewals increasing another 15–30% annually. Meanwhile, offshored support and ongoing layoffs are degrading service, forcing IT teams to spend more time managing tickets and re-explaining issues—instead of focusing on reliability and modernization.

In 2026, more manufacturers are pushing back. Faced with technical debt and the need to modernize without disrupting operations, IT leaders are rethinking how support fits into their cost structure—and realizing they have more leverage, and more options, than Microsoft suggests.

This ebook shows how manufacturers are cutting Microsoft support costs by 30–50% — and up to 75% at enterprise scale. With faster response times and major savings, teams are reinvesting in hiring, cybersecurity, and system upgrades that strengthen production and growth.

What if you could get better Microsoft support without overpaying?

- Cut costs by 30–50% — up to 75% for large manufacturers

- Get 2-3x faster response times

- Work directly with U.S. or U.K. based engineers

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Locked in By Design

Microsoft is deeply embedded in manufacturing: Exchange, Teams, Azure, Active Directory, ERP integrations, and security tools all power critical operations.

That dependency brings efficiency—but also leverage.

Switching away isn't easy. Migrations are complex, costly, and carry real operational risks. Microsoft knows this—and Unified Support is built to exploit it.

Manufacturers often find themselves locked into one-size-fits-all plans that ignore plant-floor realities, legacy systems, and operational risk. Instead of support shaped around business needs, IT leaders are expected to reshape their roadmaps around Microsoft's bundle.

The negotiation process offers little relief. Renewals can drag on for months, draining internal resources. Some manufacturers run out the clock and accept Microsoft's terms simply to avoid a coverage gap.

The result: shrinking flexibility, rigid support models, and less control over how support fits into broader IT priorities.

And just as options narrow, support quality is slipping—setting up the next challenge manufacturers must confront.

What You Are Really Paying For

(Spoiler: It's not better support)

- **30-400%** spikes in first-year Unified costs
- **15-30%** annual renewal increases
- Pricing tied to total Microsoft spend, not support usage
- Support bundles with little to no negotiation

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Paying More, Getting Less

Microsoft Unified Support costs more every year. But for many manufacturers, the experience keeps getting worse. IT leaders report slower response times, unclear escalation paths, and limited access to experienced engineers, often during critical production windows. Offshoring, layoffs, and rigid support tiers leave internal teams waiting.

In manufacturing, where downtime can cost millions, that's not sustainable. These environments depend on tightly integrated systems—ERP, supply chain, plant-floor apps, and security tools working in sync. When support falters, delays ripple through production, inventory, fulfillment, and customer delivery.

What Changed?

Unified Support was pitched as a simpler, standardized model for enterprise support.

In practice, several shifts have weakened service quality:
- Roles moved offshore, creating language barriers, time-zone delays, and follow-through gaps
- Senior engineers were laid off, taking institutional knowledge with them

For manufacturers running complex, hybrid environments, that expertise matters. Engineers unfamiliar with legacy systems or plant-specific setups often default to scripted responses—slowing resolution when speed is critical.

How to Fix It

Better support isn't about adding layers. It's about restoring what was lost.

High-performing models focus on:
- Retaining expertise – keeping seasoned engineers and deep technical knowledge
- Smarter tools – using AI to assist, not replace, human judgment
- Real transparency – clear SLAs, honest escalation, and predictable response times

When vendors fall short, manufacturers don't have to settle. If Microsoft's model no longer fits, third-party providers can—and do—deliver better outcomes for less.

> " Microsoft's new model meant a massive year-over-year price increase for us. At the same time, their service quality dropped. That's when we moved away from Unified Support. "

TODD D.
VP ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS, AMEDISYS

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Reinvesting Support Savings

Faced with rising costs and declining support quality, manufacturers aren't just cutting spend in 2026—they're redirecting it to high-impact priorities.

Cutting Microsoft support costs by 30–50% — and up to 75% at enterprise scale — isn't just a line-item win. It's budget freed up for overdue modernization. According to Forrester, redirecting even a portion of that spend can fund meaningful upgrades, innovation, and strategic projects — without raising overall IT budgets.

Manufacturers are reinvesting in five key areas:

Strengthening IT Teams	Reducing Technical Debt	Accelerating Automation	Improving Cybersecurity	Advancing Sustainability
Hiring cloud, security, and systems experts who get both enterprise platforms and plant-floor needs	Modernizing legacy systems, stabilizing ERP, and closing long-standing security gaps	Improving production visibility, reducing downtime, and streamlining supply chains	Securing on-prem, cloud, and OT-connected systems as environments grow more connected	Piloting energy-saving and smarter resource monitoring to cut costs and meet evolving sustainability goals

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A Different Path Forward

More manufacturers are rethinking Microsoft Unified Support—and many are choosing a better option.

Third-party Microsoft support offers a model built around cost control, faster response times, and access to senior engineers—without leaving the Microsoft stack. For manufacturers facing rising costs and declining service, this path is increasingly compelling.

Independent providers decouple support pricing from Microsoft product spend. That means you can invest in Azure, security, or productivity tools without triggering support cost hikes.

Why Manufacturers Are Switching
This shift isn't just about cost—it's about operational risk.

Unified Support costs more. Service keeps slipping. And manufacturers have limited leverage.

IT leaders are asking:
Why pay more for slower support when better options exist?

A Smarter Way Forward
Organizations like US Cloud represent a new support model focused on outcomes, not contracts.

Manufacturers routinely cut support costs by 30–50% or more, while improving service and access to expertise.

Why Benchmarking Matters

Even if you plan to stay with Microsoft, a third-party benchmark gives you:

- Real pricing data to challenge inflated renewals
- Budget insight to guide internal planning
- Negotiation leverage when it counts

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Why US Cloud is Different

Staying with Microsoft Unified is risky. Unified costs are rising fast. Service quality is slipping. And negotiating power is minimal.

Third-Party Microsoft Support is a superior, fully vetted alternative to Unified. US Cloud routinely save clients 30% to 50% or more—and matches your Unified quote to prove it.
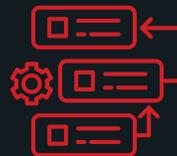
Guaranteed
15-min response SLA

No offshoring.
(UK/EU engineers available)

24/7/365 support
for all severities

Full on-premises and
cloud coverage

Unrestricted
Microsoft escalations

Faster ticket resolution
than Microsoft

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It's Time to Rethink Support

Staying with Microsoft by default is costing more than money. It drains time, stretches IT teams thin, and limits the flexibility needed to support uptime and modernization.

In manufacturing, IT support isn't back-office—it's operational. When response times lag and escalation breaks down, the impact hits the plant floor, delivery schedules, and revenue.

The good news: you're not stuck.

Third-party Microsoft support with US Cloud can cut costs by 30–50% — and up to 75% at enterprise scale — speed up response times, and connect your team directly with senior engineers who understand hybrid environments and the entire Microsoft Tech Stack.

More importantly, IT leaders regain control—freeing budget for talent, security, and systems that keep production and the IT roadmap moving. In manufacturing, every hour counts—and your support model should, too.

Next Steps

Book a Call

Learn how you can save 30-50% over Microsoft Unified Support.

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