Every growing Kenyan business hits the same inflection point. Your IT needs outgrow the "that guy in accounting who is good with computers" phase, and you need to decide: do we hire an IT person, or do we outsource?

CloudSpinx is a managed IT services provider based in Nairobi. We have had this conversation with over 60 Kenyan businesses in the past three years. Some hired us. Some hired in-house. A few tried in-house first, ran into problems, and switched to managed services later. We have seen both models work and both models fail.

This post gives you the real numbers. Not marketing projections - actual costs in KES based on 2026 Kenyan salary surveys, our pricing, and the hidden costs that nobody talks about until the bills arrive.

What You Actually Need From IT

Before comparing costs, let's define the work. A typical Kenyan SME with 10-50 employees needs someone to handle:

- **Day-to-day support:** Password resets, printer problems, email issues, "my laptop is slow"

- **Infrastructure management:** Servers, network, Wi-Fi, internet connectivity, cloud services

- **Security:** Firewall configuration, antivirus, backups, access control, patching

- **Software management:** Installing, updating, and troubleshooting business applications

- **Strategic planning:** Recommending technology investments, budgeting, vendor management

- **Compliance:** Kenya Data Protection Act, KRA eTIMS requirements, industry-specific regulations

One person can do all of this for a small business. But here is the catch: they cannot do all of it well, and they certainly cannot do it 24/7.

The True Cost of an In-House IT Team in Kenya

Let's build the real cost, including everything that gets left off the job posting.

Salary: What IT Staff Actually Cost in Nairobi

Based on 2026 Kenyan hiring data from BrighterMonday, Glassdoor Kenya, and our own observations:

ROLE	MONTHLY SALARY (KES)	EXPERIENCE LEVEL
IT Support Technician	40,000 - 80,000	1-3 years
Systems Administrator	80,000 - 150,000	3-5 years
Network Administrator	90,000 - 160,000	3-5 years
DevOps Engineer	150,000 - 300,000	3-7 years
IT Manager	200,000 - 400,000	5-10 years
Cybersecurity Analyst	150,000 - 350,000	3-7 years

Most Kenyan SMEs start by hiring one Systems Administrator at KES 100,000 - 150,000/month. Let's use KES 120,000 as our baseline.

Hidden Costs Nobody Mentions

The salary is just the starting point. Here is what the full cost looks like:

COST ITEM	MONTHLY (KES)	NOTES
Base salary	120,000	Mid-level sysadmin
NSSF employer contribution	2,160	Statutory

COST ITEM	MONTHLY (KES)	NOTES
NHIF employer contribution	1,700	Statutory (Sha contribution)
Housing levy (1.5%)	1,800	Statutory
PAYE administration	Included	Payroll processing
Annual leave provision	10,000	21 days/year, amortized monthly
Medical insurance (employer)	5,000 - 15,000	Group cover, depends on plan
Training and certifications	8,000 - 15,000	AWS/Azure certs, security training
Laptop and tools	5,000 - 8,000	Amortized over 3 years
Software licenses (tools)	3,000 - 8,000	Monitoring, ticketing, VPN
Recruitment cost (amortized)	5,000 - 10,000	Agency fees spread over tenure
Total monthly cost	**KES 162,000 - 210,000**	

That single KES 120,000 hire actually costs your business KES 162,000 - 210,000/month. Most business owners do not realize this until the end of the first year.

The Gaps One Person Cannot Fill

Even at KES 200,000/month, one IT person has fundamental limitations:

No 24/7 coverage. Your sysadmin works 8am - 5pm. If your e-commerce site goes down at 11pm on Friday, who responds? Nobody, until Monday morning. Or your sysadmin, annoyed and responding from bed on WhatsApp, making mistakes.

Single point of failure. When they go on leave, get sick, or resign, your IT operations have zero coverage. We have seen businesses go 3-4 weeks with no IT support during a hiring gap.

Limited expertise. No single person is an expert in networking, cybersecurity, cloud infrastructure, databases, and desktop support. They will be strong in 2-3 areas and weak in the rest. If your sysadmin is great with Windows Server but your business is moving to AWS, you have a skills gap.

No peer review. When one person makes all the decisions, mistakes go unchecked. We have inherited systems from solo IT hires where backups were configured but never actually worked, firewalls had "temporary" rules that stayed open for years, and root passwords were stored in a text file on the desktop.

The True Cost of Managed IT Services in Kenya

Now let's look at what managed IT actually costs. These are CloudSpinx rates for 2026, which are representative of mid-tier managed providers in Nairobi.

Managed IT Pricing for Kenyan SMEs

TIER	EMPLOYEES	WHAT YOU GET	MONTHLY (KES)
Starter	1-10	Helpdesk, monitoring, patching, basic security, email support	25,000 - 45,000
Growth	10-30	Everything in Starter + server management, backups, network support, monthly reports	50,000 - 100,000
Scale	30-50	Everything in Growth + 24/7 on-call, cloud management, security audits, strategic planning	100,000 - 180,000

What is included in managed IT that you would pay extra for with an in-house hire:

- 24/7 monitoring and alerting (not just business hours)
- A team of specialists, not one generalist
- Backup verification and disaster recovery testing
- Security patching on a schedule
- Vendor management (dealing with Safaricom, your hosting provider, software vendors)
- Knowledge base and documentation (your systems are documented, not just in someone's head)
- No recruitment costs, no leave coverage gaps, no NSSF/NHIF/housing levy

The Direct Comparison

Let's compare the total cost for a 20-person Kenyan business:

COST CATEGORY	IN-HOUSE (1 SYSADMIN)	MANAGED IT (GROWTH TIER)
Monthly base cost	120,000 (salary)	75,000 (managed fee)
Statutory contributions	5,660	0
Insurance and benefits	10,000	0

COST CATEGORY	IN-HOUSE (1 SYSADMIN)	MANAGED IT (GROWTH TIER)
Training and certs	12,000	0 (included)
Tools and licenses	8,000	0 (included)
Equipment (amortized)	6,000	0
Leave/sick cover	10,000 (amortized)	0 (team coverage)
Recruitment (amortized)	8,000	0
After-hours coverage	0 (not available)	Included
Total monthly	**KES 179,660**	**KES 75,000**
Coverage hours	**9hrs/day, 5 days**	**24/7**
Expertise areas	**2-3**	**8-12 (full team)**

The managed option costs 58% less and provides broader coverage. That is not a sales pitch - it is arithmetic.

When In-House IT Makes More Sense

Managed IT is not always the right answer. We tell businesses to hire in-house when:

You have 50+ employees. At this scale, the volume of daily support requests justifies a dedicated person (or team). The cost gap narrows, and having someone physically in the office improves response time for hardware issues.

Your business IS technology. If you are a software company, fintech, or SaaS startup, your IT is your product. You need engineers embedded in your team, not external support.

You have industry-specific compliance requirements. Some regulated industries (banking, healthcare) require IT staff with security clearances or specific certifications that must be employed directly.

You need physical hardware support daily. If your business runs point-of-sale terminals, industrial equipment, or specialized hardware that needs hands-on attention every day, on-site staff makes sense.

You want to build internal capability. Some businesses intentionally invest in internal IT as a strategic advantage. This is a valid choice if you have the budget and the patience for the learning curve. We offer [IT consulting](#) to help internal teams build skills.

When Managed IT Makes More Sense

Go managed when:

You have 5-50 employees. The sweet spot. Big enough to need real IT support, not big enough to justify the full cost of hiring.

Your core business is not technology. You run a logistics company, a retail chain, a law firm, or a manufacturing business. IT supports your business but is not your business. You need it to work, not to be your competitive advantage.

You cannot afford 24/7 coverage in-house. A single hire gives you 45 hours of coverage per week. Managed services give you 168. If your business depends on uptime (e-commerce, SaaS, customer-facing apps), managed wins.

You are growing and cannot predict IT needs. Managed services scale with you. Hiring means committing to a salary whether you need more or less capacity.

You have been burned by a bad IT hire. We hear this frequently. A business hires an IT person, they leave after 8 months, and nobody knows how anything is configured. Managed providers document everything and maintain continuity regardless of staff changes.

The Hybrid Model: Best of Both

The businesses that get the best results often use both. Here is what the hybrid looks like:

In-house: One IT coordinator or support technician (KES 50,000 - 80,000/month) who handles day-to-day user support, printer jams, laptop setups, and acts as the liaison with the managed provider.

Managed: CloudSpinx or similar handling infrastructure, security, cloud, backups, and 24/7 monitoring (KES 50,000 - 100,000/month).

Total: KES 100,000 - 180,000/month with 24/7 infrastructure coverage AND an on-site presence for physical support.

This gives you the responsiveness of having someone in the building with the expertise depth and 24/7 coverage of a managed team. It is the model we see working best for Kenyan businesses with 20-50 employees.

What Happens When the In-House Hire Leaves

This is the scenario that sends businesses to managed services. It happens more often than you think.

The average tenure of an IT professional in Kenya is 18-24 months. Junior staff leave for better pay. Senior staff leave for international remote roles that pay in USD. When they go, they take institutional knowledge with them.

What you lose:

- Passwords and access credentials (if they were not documented)

- Knowledge of why systems are configured a specific way

- Relationships with vendors and service providers

- Momentum on in-progress projects

What it costs to replace:

- Recruitment: KES 50,000 - 150,000 (agency fees)

- Ramp-up time: 1-3 months before the new hire is fully productive

- Knowledge gap: Weeks of figuring out how things work

- Risk: The new hire may change things they do not understand, breaking what worked

Managed providers do not have this problem. If an engineer on your account leaves CloudSpinx, another engineer picks up seamlessly because everything is documented in our systems. You never notice the change.
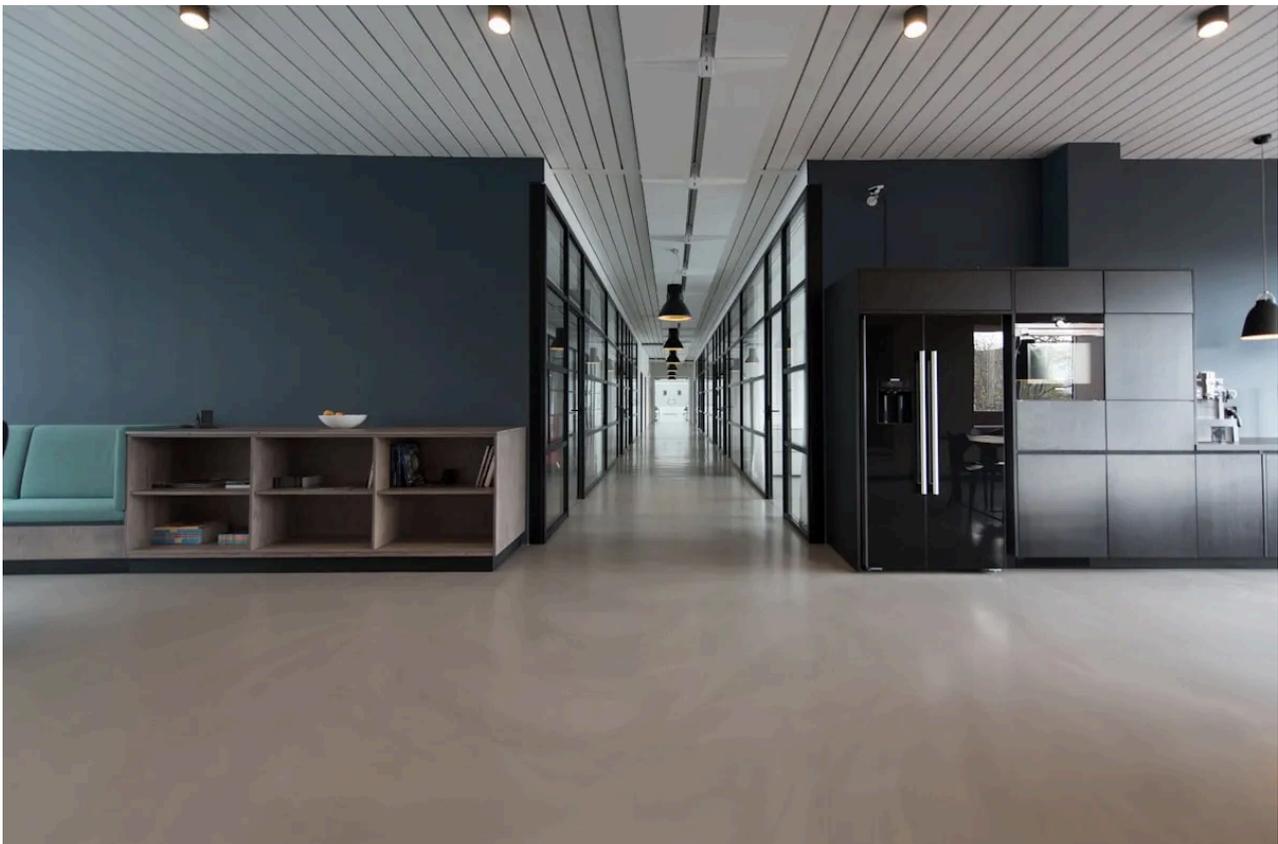
How to Choose a Managed IT Provider in Kenya

If you decide managed is the right model, here is what to evaluate:

Response time SLAs. How fast do they respond to critical issues? We guarantee under 15 minutes for critical incidents and under 2 hours for standard requests. Get this in writing.

Local presence. Can they send someone to your office in Nairobi, Mombasa, or wherever you are? Remote support handles 90% of issues, but the other 10% needs hands-on help.

Scope clarity. What is included and what costs extra? Some providers quote a low monthly fee then charge extra for everything beyond basic helpdesk. Get a clear list of included services.

Client references. Ask for 2-3 references from businesses similar to yours. Call them. Ask what went wrong, not just what went right.

Exit terms. What happens if you want to leave? Can you take your data, documentation, and configurations with you? We provide full documentation handover because locking clients in with proprietary knowledge is not how we want to win business.

Security practices. Does the provider follow security best practices themselves? Ask about their own internal security, staff vetting, and data handling. Your managed IT provider has keys to your entire business - they should be trustworthy. Our [cybersecurity services](#) extend to our own operations.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much does a managed IT service cost in Kenya? Managed IT services in Kenya range from KES 25,000/month for small businesses (1-10 employees) to KES 180,000/month for larger SMEs (30-50 employees). CloudSpinx offers three tiers: Starter, Growth, and Scale, with pricing based on the number of employees and services required.

Is it cheaper to outsource IT or hire in Kenya? For businesses with 5-50 employees, outsourcing is typically 40-60% cheaper than hiring. A single in-house systems administrator costs KES 160,000 - 210,000/month when you include

statutory contributions, benefits, tools, and training. Managed IT for the same sized business costs KES 50,000 - 100,000/month with broader expertise and 24/7 coverage.

What does a managed IT provider do? A managed IT provider handles helpdesk support, server and network management, cybersecurity, cloud infrastructure, backups, software updates, vendor management, and strategic IT planning. They act as your complete IT department without the overhead of hiring staff.

Can I use both in-house IT and managed services? Yes. The hybrid model works well for businesses with 20-50 employees. An in-house IT coordinator handles daily user support (KES 50,000 - 80,000/month) while the managed provider handles infrastructure, security, and 24/7 monitoring (KES 50,000 - 100,000/month).

What happens to my data if I switch managed IT providers? Reputable managed IT providers like CloudSpinx provide full documentation and data handover when you leave. Your data, configurations, passwords, and documentation belong to you. We do not use vendor lock-in tactics.

How do I know if my business is ready for managed IT? If you have 5+ employees, business-critical data, and your current IT setup causes regular problems or depends on a single person, you are ready. The trigger is usually a painful incident: data loss, extended downtime, or a key IT person leaving.

Getting Started

The decision between in-house and managed IT comes down to this: do you want to be in the IT management business, or do you want IT to just work so you can focus on your actual business?

For most Kenyan SMEs with 5-50 employees, managed IT services deliver better coverage at lower cost. The numbers are clear.

We offer a free IT assessment where we evaluate your current setup, identify risks, and give you a detailed cost comparison for both models based on your specific situation.

Book a free IT assessment or reach out on WhatsApp at +254 713 403 044. We will give you the honest numbers for your business, even if the answer is "hire in-house." Our full managed IT services page has more details on what is included at each tier.

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