The NetWork

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

BUSINESS IT SUPPORT TRENDS 2026

SECURE BY DEFAULT

Letter from the President

As we wrapped up 2025 and stepped into 2026, I found myself pausing more intentionally than usual. This note may read a bit more celebratory, and that is on purpose. I recently received thoughtful feedback that I tend to move quickly from wins to "what's next." So consider this a moment to reflect, to recognize what our team accomplished in 2025, and to share why it matters to our clients.

One of our most impactful additions in 2025 was Jonathan, who joined us in a full time Automation role. His focus is helping us work more efficiently and intentionally, which means faster resolution, fewer repeat issues, and more time spent on the work that truly supports our clients. Investments like this may happen behind the scenes, but their impact is felt every day. We also achieved our profitability goals, which is significant not just financially, but operationally. It allows us to reinvest in our people, our tools, and the quality of service we deliver. It also directly supports our ten-year pledge to distribute five million dollars in total Profit Pool bonuses to our team over the next decade.

2025 also marked a major evolution in our sales and marketing efforts. Christa, our Director of Sales and Marketing, took full ownership of the department and built a structure that is focused, effective, and scalable. She began her journey with us years ago as an intern, and while she was technically our first and last unpaid intern, it has been incredible to watch her growth. She will now also oversee our vCIO department, helping ensure alignment between strategy, sales, and client outcomes.

We welcomed nine new team members and created three internship opportunities, while also strengthening partnerships with local schools. Investing in talent development is part of our long-term commitment to both our clients and our community. A strong, supported team leads to better service, stronger relationships, and greater continuity.

We were honored to receive several recognitions last year, including the Bell Seal Bronze Level, Nation's Best and Brightest in Wellness Award, Chicago's Best and Brightest Companies to Work For, and Inc 5000 recognition. While awards are never the goal, they reflect the environment we strive to create for the people who serve you every day.

Some meaningful life moments happened as well. We celebrated welcoming a new LeadingIT baby, which was a joyful reminder that work and life can grow together. Two of our team members relocated this past year. One moved closer to our Woodstock office. Another, Alex, moved farther away to Naperville. (Alex, your presence is terribly missed in the office, but we are surviving.) It has been awesome to see how well we can support both our staff and our clients from anywhere. Technology really is something.

Speaking of technology, yes, we must talk about AI. It is everywhere, and we are committed to helping our clients and our team cut through the noise. In 2026, you will see more education, practical guidance, and real world tips on using tools like Copilot and other AI solutions in a way that actually helps.

As we step into the new year, I feel incredibly grateful for our team, our clients, and the community that continues to support us. 2025 was a year of growth, learning, and alignment. 2026 is already shaping up to be one of momentum, impact, and opportunity.

So, cheers to this new year and everything ahead.

Warmly,
Laura Piekos

Why We "Secure By Default" (And Why You'll Be Glad We Do)

At LeadingIT, security isn't just something we offer, it's the heartbeat of everything we do. As your Managed Service Provider (MSP), our #1 priority is keeping your organization protected, day in and day out. That's why we follow the Secure By Default standard throughout onboarding and beyond.

During your onboarding and security tool implementation, our team works both behind the scenes and directly with you to put Industry Best Security Standards in place. We always try to loop you in to minimize any disruption to your workday, but as you know... cybersecurity doesn't wait for a meeting invite. Sometimes the safest move is to act fast, secure first, and verify right after.

So what does "Secure By Default" actually mean?
Here are a few real-world examples:

Manual Security Changes We Implement

- Unencrypted credentials? Updated immediately.
- Credentials inherited from a previous IT provider? Updated within 7 days.
- Administrative access? Reviewed and restricted during your first week.
- Privileged access? Only granted if absolutely necessary. Every request is evaluated for "least privilege."

Automated Defenses at Work

Our security tools are built to protect you automatically:
- Login attempts from unexpected countries? Denied by default.
- Suspicious email activity like unauthorized forwarding or impossible travel? Account temporarily locked down.
- Malicious endpoint behavior detected by AV/MDR tools? Device isolated until verified safe.

It may feel strict at times, but it's designed to keep you safe, even when you're asleep, at lunch, or halfway to Cancun.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we enforce this policy?
Because you've trusted us with your most vital systems. Acting quickly helps prevent a small issue from becoming a widespread problem. Delays cause damage — speed prevents it.

When are we monitored?
All day. Every day. LeadingIT's SOC is live-monitored 24/7/365.

What's the most common scenario?
Clients traveling internationally without telling us — cue the security alerts.
(Hot tip: submit a travel exclusion with us before you fly.)

When would a system be locked down?
When our AI-driven tools detect threat-level activity. A live analyst reviews it, and if it looks dangerous, the system is isolated to stop the spread.

What if I'm unsure about administrator accounts?
We'll help you identify, document, and secure them. No guessing required.

Our Promise to You
We take the "Secure By Default" approach because it works. It protects your data, your people, and your business, even if it occasionally means we secure first and apologize for the inconvenience later. You trust us because we do what's recommended, not what's convenient. And we take that trust seriously.

Together, we'll keep your organization safe, stable, and ready for whatever comes next.

Why We "Secure By Default" (And Why You'll Be Glad We Do)

Business IT Support Trends 2026: What Chicago Clients Should Know About the Changing Technology Landscape

We examine emerging Business IT Support trends in 2026 and what forward–thinking Chicago organizations can do to stay resilient.

1. Executive Insight: Why Business IT Support Is Evolving Faster Than Expected

The last 18 months have brought significant shifts in how organizations approach business IT management. Even mature systems face new risks, from software supply-chain issues to complex cloud dependencies.

2. The Growing Complexity of IT Environments

Business IT ecosystems now span:

- On-premise systems
- Hybrid cloud applications
- SaaS tools
- Remote and mobile workforces
- Vendor-managed platforms

Systems are increasingly interdependent, and interruptions in one area create downstream effects.

Key trend: Increased interdependency risk

According to Uptime Institute's 2025 Annual Outage Analysis, IT and networking issues accounted for 23% of impactful outages in 2024, while over the nine-year tracking period, two-thirds of publicly reported outages involved third-party IT and data center service providers including cloud, telecommunications, and colocation companies. This reflects a shift from "local IT issues" to "ecosystem-wide issues," requiring broader visibility and coordination.

3. Rising Cyber Hygiene Standards for Everyday Operations

The quieter story in 2026 is tightening operational cyber hygiene requirements that affect even routine Business IT Support activities.

Examples of hygiene requirements that are now standard:
- Zero-trust authentication for admin-level access prevents unauthorized privilege escalation
- Multi-network segmentation separates production, guest, and IoT devices to contain potential breaches
- Granular identity auditing tracks who is accessing what and when
- Automated patch orchestration tied to real-time vulnerability feeds ensures systems stay current

These practices aren't just "best practice", they're becoming baseline expectations for operational continuity, insurance requirements, and compliance frameworks.

4. The Shift from Reactive Support to Predictive Maintenance

Traditional IT support focused on reactive tasks: fixing issues, managing tickets, repairing outages. Now, predictive IT support uses system data to identify issues before users notice them. Modern business IT management relies on these predictive approaches. What predictive maintenance looks like:
- Login behavior analysis detects unusual patterns before accounts are compromised
- Storage monitoring identifies growth trends that will exceed capacity weeks ahead
- Performance tracking flags anomalies signaling early hardware degradation
- Error log analysis predicts imminent failures before users are affected

This shift reduces unplanned downtime by resolving issues early.

5. The "Human Layer" Becomes the Highest Priority in IT Support

Even with strong systems, human error remains one of the largest contributors to operational disruption. According to Verizon's 2024 Data Breach Investigations Report, 68% of breaches involve the human element; from employees falling victim to social engineering to configuration mistakes.

Not because staff are careless, but because modern workflows involve dozens of interconnected apps and constant system switching.

As a result, the focus of Business IT Support has expanded to include:
- Clear onboarding/offboarding processes that prevent access gaps
- Minimizing complexity in daily tools to reduce user friction
- Reducing steps required to complete tasks
- Simplifying authentication flows while maintaining security

Resilient IT environments reduce cognitive load for employees, not just secure infrastructure.

6. Backup, Continuity, and Recovery: Silent Strengths of a Healthy IT Environment

Critical aspects of Business IT Support include ongoing work that ensures:

- Backups run reliably
- Recovery points remain consistent
- Failover systems stay up to date
- Continuity plans reflect current infrastructure

Resilient IT environments aren't defined by tool sophistication, but by documentation and testing quality. According to the 2024 State of the Backup survey, among organizations that experienced data loss, only 42% successfully recovered all their data, leaving 58% with some amount of unrecovered data.; this underscores why regular testing remains essential.

Organizations investing in comprehensive Business IT Support see faster recovery when incidents occur.

7. What Businesses Should Expect to Change in 2026

- **More vendor-driven updates:** Cloud and SaaS platforms are increasing automated changes, requiring greater visibility.
- **More auditing requirements:** Cyber insurance, compliance frameworks, and vendor contracts increasingly require standardized reporting.
- **A larger focus on identity management:** Identity is becoming the new "perimeter," with business IT management strategies prioritizing secure access controls.
- **AI-powered automation in support workflows:** AI is improving triage, detection, and root cause analysis, reducing response times.
- **Expanded expectations for up-time:** As reliance on digital tools grows, the difference between "acceptable performance" and "business-impacting performance" becomes smaller.

These trends shape Business IT Support for Chicagoland organizations.

8. Summary

Business IT Support in 2026 is no longer about fixing computers or resolving isolated issues. It is about business IT management: managing interconnected systems, ensuring operational resilience, and supporting people, not just technology.

For Chicago clients, the IT landscape is evolving rapidly, but by staying informed and maintaining strong fundamentals, you can stay ahead of emerging challenges.

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You'll earn **$50** for every referral. If they sign up, you'll receive **$1000!**

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Congratulations Matthew!

We're excited to share that Matthew has been promoted to **Procurement Specialist** at LeadingIT. Coming from our Bench team, Matthew brings strong technical knowledge along with hands-on experience working directly in many of our clients' environments. That combination gives him a unique understanding of what our clients actually need when it comes to new hardware, and makes him a great point of connection for ensuring the right solutions are ordered, prepared, and delivered smoothly.

Leading IT

We help Chicagoland organizations run smoother by fully owning IT, providing a local dedicated crew, and delivering unlimited support without surprise costs.

Read more at GoLeadingIT.com/blog