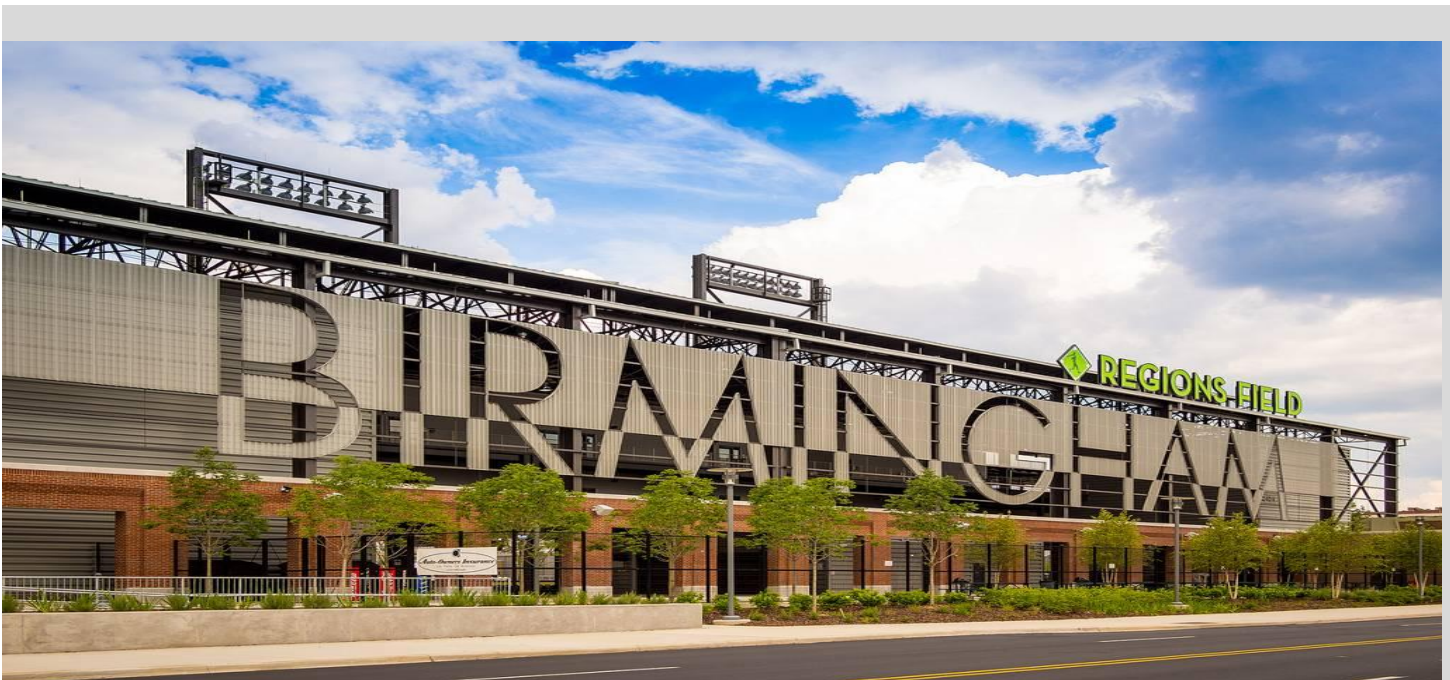# We've Got IT Covered

SERVING BIRMINGHAM SINCE 1989

Meet Bobby Welch, our co-owner and President who manages the overall operations and health of the organization. Bobby is responsible for the vision, culture, and strategy that drives us toward our long-term objectives. Bobby is involved in the financial, budget, legal, HR, software development, and client acquisition areas of ACCi. He has been with ACCi since 1989…

Meet Keith Keller, our co-owner and Chief Operating Officer. He is responsible for all sales and marketing functions and oversees ACCi's sales personnel. His main focus is on business consulting, sales of hardware, software services and hosted technology solutions. Keith is in his 20th year with ACCi…

A Seat at Your Board Table
By: Bobby Welch

Technology. Some days you love it, and some days it is the bane of your existence. On most good days, you typically do not even think about technology. It sits quietly in the background and performs amazing tasks for you with speed, precision, and connectivity. However, it is always a bad day when technology challenges rear their ugly head. The computer locks up before you saved that 10-page Word document, the internet is down so you cannot lock in that mortgage rate or plane ticket fare, or your office server got infected with ransomware and you are left with the decision of starting over or paying the ransom because your backup has not run successfully for the past 3 months.

Regardless of your experience with technology, in business we all fall somewhere on the following spectrum – Technology is a necessary evil that we have to have to run our business. We buy low cost equipment and run it until it dies, and we hate spending money on service just to keep these darn computers running. Versus, we value technology as a critical component to our business, and we understand that technology must be invested in and maintained in order to receive the maximum benefit. This can provide a competitive advantage and help to differentiate us from our competitors.

Where do you land on this spectrum? We would hope it would be more towards the value end. Ask yourself a few questions:
- Do you have an established IT budget?
- Do you practice life-cycle management that tracks useful life, warranty dates, and replacement schedules for your equipment?
- Are your systems proactively maintained and kept up to date with the latest patches, updates, definitions?
- Can you confirm that you are getting consistent image-based backups that are stored both locally and offsite?
- Do you have a multi-layered security strategy with awareness training provided for all your staff?
- Do you have a trusted internal/external resource who understands your business, understands the technology landscape, meets with you regularly, and implements best practices?

The companies that answer "Yes" to, or are at least addressing, the questions above are the ones that value their technology and rate higher on the operational maturity level (OML) scale that we use to grade our clients. If you're interested, we would be happy to review the OML model with you to see how your business rates.

ACCi wants a seat at your board table. We want to be there when you do your strategic planning for your business. We want you to tell us your vision, goals, and objectives for the current year, the next 3-5 years, and the long term, so that we can implement the right technologies that allow you to achieve your vision. We want to be more than your IT advisor. We want to be viewed as your business partner, sitting at the board room table with you, and walking with you on your business journey.

Our CoverIT solutions are designed to help you move further along the value technology side of the spectrum. This year, make the commitment to move in the right direction.

When you are ready, let's have a business conversation …

Meet Tyler Harris

Business Development Coordinator at ACCi

Tyler is a recent graduate of Auburn University. He and his wife, Jordan, live in the Birmingham area. Tyler works closely with our sales department and helps potential clients in their search for the perfect IT solutions. He enjoys reading, watching AU football, and spending time with his new wife!

Managed Services vs. "Break-Fix":
Which Model of IT Support is Right for Your Business?

When choosing an IT provider for your business, the first thing to consider is which model of IT support your business needs. The older, more traditional offering is the "break-fix" model. The newer, rapidly emerging offering is the managed services model. Both have advantages and drawbacks, so how can you know which one is right for your business? Below is a description of the way that each model works so that you can make the right choice for your business.

How the "Break-Fix" Model Works

- You have an IT problem, i.e. no internet, email isn't working, or server crashes
- You contact your IT provider
- They dispatch a technician to come to your office or work to solve the problem remotely
- The technician arrives on-site and diagnoses the problem
- The technician resolves the problem and you are billed for the work performed

How the Managed Services Model Works

- An IT problem occurs
- Your IT service provider is notified by monitoring software *before* or *the moment an issue arises*
- A technician promptly reviews the alert and begins to diagnose the issue – without you having to contact them
- The problem will be solved remotely (if possible) or you will be notified of an on-site visit

Will the Break/Fix Model Work in Your Business?

The break/fix IT service model is acceptable if:

- Your organization rarely faces IT / technology issues.
- Your budget can handle unpredictable IT costs typically associated with unexpected IT problems.
- You have a dedicated IT department in-house or you have a tech-savvy person on staff that can handle majority of the IT problems you do have.

Should you Go with Managed Services?

Managed Services are ideal for companies that want:

- Predictable, fixed monthly fees for IT service & support.
- Easy access to IT professionals that can provide help or answer tech questions (via HelpDesk Support).
- To maintain a low risk for down-time that could negatively impact their business.
- To outsource their IT department so they can focus on their business.

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Meet Keith Kester

New Business Development Manager for ACCi. Keith and his wife, Amy, live in Birmingham and enjoy spending time with their 2 daughters and their many activities including basketball, gymnastics, and soccer. They love good friends, good food, and good fellowship!

If you think it's expensive to hire a professional, wait until you hire an amateur.

Let's be frank

Candid Email to a potential client:

Thanks so much for reaching out. You are correct – our hourly rate is a little bit higher than some of our competitors. Being in business for 29 years, we have learned a few things along the way that have helped us improve our process for our clients. The main one is maintaining a well-trained, continually educated staff. You can see from the attention to detail in our quote that we took the time to learn your business and your needs. The solutions we have offered are vetted and time-tested. We have long-standing relationships with our best-in-class vendors that have proven to make our clients very happy. Our technicians and engineers have to accumulate CEU's (continuing education units/credits) every year. This is from each of our vendors such as SonicWall, Microsoft, HP and many others. They are also required to take classes on cyber security, PCI compliance, HIPAA/Sarbanes Oxley compliance, network administration, phone solutions and much more. This ongoing training and education ensures that we deliver the excellence that our clients have come to expect. Because we are delivering a superior level of expertise, we charge a little more. Also, one of our service dispatchers always answers the phone when you call. They will open your ticket (or you can open one online). They will gather information on your issue to assign it to the correct personnel, determining whether to dispatch a technician or a senior engineer. All of this is done in an effort to prevent these costly mistakes that we have seen others in our industry making:

1. They dispatch someone underqualified and have to send a more skilled technician out.
2. They put a band-aid on the issue and don't resolve the underlying cause.
3. They simply can't resolve the issue at all because they do not have the training.

Our process is designed to elicit a rapid and effective response to our clients' needs so that they can focus on their business.

Sorry I gave so much detail, but we've seen that until a customer has a really bad experience and calls us in to fix the issue and/or become their managed IT firm, it can be hard to understand what goes on behind the scenes of our hourly rate. So, to answer your question – YES, you can get a discounted rate. We offer all of our clients these discounts on our hourly rates: Over $5k will get you a 5% discount and over $10k will get you a 10% discount off the hourly rates on the schedule. Will this help?

Thanks so much and we look forward to earning your business.

Keith