DELIVER DIGITAL

FROM FRICTION TO ALIGNMENT

HOW MCKINLEY STUDIOS ASCENDED THE MSP FRUSTRATION CYCLE

INTRODUCTION

McKinley Studios had reached a breaking point.

With a growing team spread across two offices and plans for global expansion, they could no longer afford the IT dysfunction that had plagued them for years. Behind the scenes, frustration simmered. The team had cycled through multiple managed service providers (MSPs) in recent years—each one failing in its own unique way.

Larger vendors treated them like an afterthought, while smaller outfits lacked the scale to keep up.

The result was the same: unmet promises, mounting inefficiencies, and a creeping sense that technology was holding the company back.

Then came that would shift the trajectory of McKinley's IT story, connecting Deliver Digital and the team and McKinley.

UNCLEAR VALUE

Too much was being outsourced. Too little was being owned. For McKinley, IT had become a tangle of vendor promises and internal ambiguity—with no clear strategy guiding the ship.

PURPOSEFUL ALIGNMENT

Through deep discovery and guided strategy, McKinley took back control. They clarified ownership, cut noise, and built a tech foundation that supports—not stalls—their growth.

"We had lost all confidence in what IT could do, we now have optimized the partners we have in place and have seen an immediate turnaround. We no longer are having to settle for 'good enough'."

ADAM HART

CFO,
MCKINLEY STUDIOS

MISSED PROMISES & MOUNTING PRESSURE

The core problem wasn't about money or effort—McKinley was willing to invest. But despite engaging vendors who said all the right things during the sales cycle, execution always fell short. Specific needs like after-hours support or strategic IT guidance would get buried beneath generic service agreements. The executive leadership team had ambitious plans: to double down on new markets, scale globally, and invest in innovation. But without a dependable IT foundation, those goals remained out of reach.

FROM "ANY MSP WILL DO"

McKinley believed their MSP problem was about picking the wrong partner, until multiple failed attempts proved there was a deeper strategic gap.

TO CLARITY & CONTROL

McKinley reframed IT as a core business enabler, gaining internal clarity, rethinking roles, and making smarter decisions with long-term impact.

Underneath it all, there was an even deeper issue. No one inside the company owned the digital strategy for business-critical applications. Key processes—like getting a laptop to a new hire or ensuring that a key design application was always operational—were clunky, inconsistent, and costly in ways that no one had tracked. It wasn't just an MSP problem. It was a misalignment between McKinley's vision and their operating reality.

What compounded the issue was a lack of internal clarity. Team members operated on gut feelings about what was and wasn't working. There were no benchmarks, no comparative metrics, and no real framework for evaluating vendor performance. Without data, leadership struggled to make decisions with confidence. They knew something was broken—but they couldn't articulate where, why, or how to fix it.
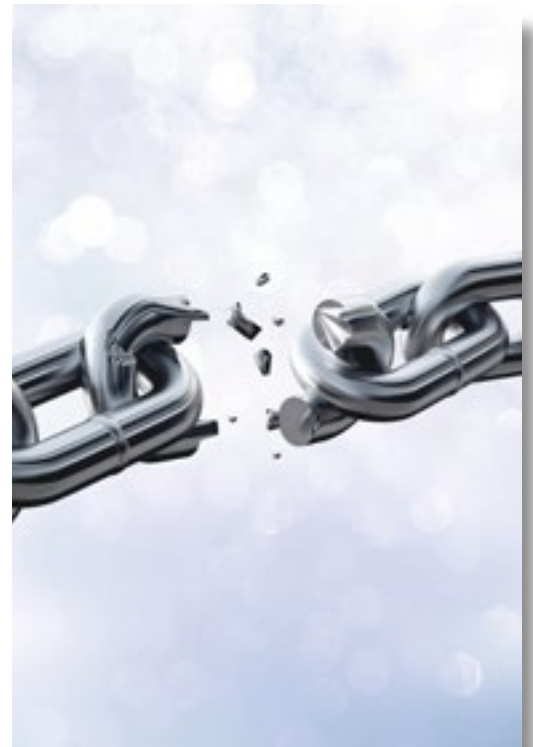
"It was refreshing to have my perspective included in a project like this from the start. As someone who relies so heavily on technology in my day to day role, its I feel like I see exactly what I needed reflected in who we chose."

ANONYMOUS

TEAM MEMBER, MCKINLEY STUDIOS

DISCOVERY THAT CHANGED THE COURSE

Deliver Digital didn't begin by prescribing solutions. They began by asking questions—and really listening to the answers.

Through a discovery process that included confidential one-on-one interviews, team-wide surveys, and deep-dive executive visioning sessions, Deliver Digital painted a full picture of McKinley's operational reality. They benchmarked existing MSP agreements, evaluated service level expectations, and dissected the day-to-day impact of IT on billable work.

The results were revelatory. The leadership's suspicions were confirmed: the company was hemorrhaging hours to inefficient workflows and overpaying for support that wasn't fit for purpose. More importantly, staff surfaced frustrations and workarounds that had never made it to the boardroom. Proposals delayed by application crashes. Hours lost navigating ticketing systems. A culture of workaround instead of resolution.

One moment, in particular, reshaped the company's thinking. During a candid workshop, McKinley's CEO, initially skeptical of another IT "intervention," shifted his view entirely. Deliver Digital helped reframe IT as an enabler of core business functions—especially through the lens of mission-critical tools like Revit and Bluebeam. By the end of the meeting, the CEO had outlined three new ideas to use technology to drive efficiency and scale. A meeting he had dreaded became a turning point.

"What could have been a lengthy and uncertain effort was streamlined into a clear, structured decision. We appreciated Deliver Digital's practical approach and deep understanding of the IT landscape."

LAUREN ALLAN

OPERATIONS MANAGER,
MCKINLEY STUDIOS

RETHINKING IT AS A STRATEGIC LEVER

Deliver Digital's recommendations weren't about patching over pain points. They focused on structural transformation. One of the most critical realizations was that McKinley had been outsourcing too much. MSPs were being tasked with overseeing strategic applications they barely understood—tools that were deeply embedded in McKinley's workflows and client delivery.

Deliver Digital proposed a bold shift: reduce the MSP's scope to what they could realistically deliver, and build internal capacity where it mattered most. This meant creating a new role within McKinley—someone responsible for owning business-critical software, aligning application strategy with organizational goals, and serving as a bridge between operations and IT.

This reframing of roles and responsibilities brought clarity. The MSP wasn't the enemy—it was simply the wrong tool for a job it hadn't been designed to do. With a new internal strategy lead in place, Deliver Digital helped McKinley find and onboard a better-fit MSP. Not the biggest. Not the cheapest. But the one who could deliver the right value at the right level, and partner with McKinley in a truly collaborative way.

FROM VIBES TO VISIBILITY

In the months that followed, McKinley's IT landscape changed dramatically. Cost savings were immediate, as unnecessary services were cut and new efficiencies gained. But more importantly, the team's day-to-day experience improved.

IT tickets stopped feeling like black holes. Internal communication about issues and needs became clearer and faster. The head of operations, who had previously been a de facto vendor babysitter, could focus on strategic priorities again. Leadership gained confidence—not just in their vendors, but in their own ability to make informed, strategic decisions about technology.

Behind the scenes, Deliver Digital remained involved. Not as a middleman, but as a strategic advisor. They coached team members, facilitated tough conversations, and provided the frameworks McKinley needed to govern their evolving tech ecosystem. Technology was no longer an afterthought. It had become an integral part of boardroom conversations.

Perhaps the most telling outcome: a company that had once viewed IT as a source of frustration was now exploring how it could become a competitive advantage. They weren't just asking, "How do we make this work?" They were asking, "What's possible next?"

LOOKING FORWARD

McKinley Studios is still on their transformation journey, but the groundwork has been laid. They've moved from reactive firefighting to proactive strategy. They've shifted from dependency on outsized vendors to empowered internal leadership. And they've built a new relationship with IT—one rooted in alignment, accountability, and opportunity.

With Deliver Digital continuing to guide and advise, McKinley is now positioned not just to grow, but to scale wisely. Their leadership is aligned. Their foundation is strong. And their vision for the future is no longer constrained by legacy systems or vendor limitations.

This is what happens when you stop treating IT as a necessary evil—and start treating it as a strategic asset.

Deliver Digital is a Calgary-based consulting organization that helps businesses make better technology decisions.

Our work is transforming the technology solution and software provider landscape by helping organizations reduce costs and duplication, enhance vendor alignment, and establish sustainable operating models that empower digital progress.

We are ready to guide you.

If you believe you deserve more from your technology partnerships, you're right.

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