The SME Cyber Security Buyer's Guide

What to Know Before You Speak to Any Vendor

Executive Summary

Most SMEs approach cyber security purchases backwards — they start with vendors instead of starting with their own needs. This guide helps SMEs understand what they actually require before entering the sales process.

1. What SMEs Really Need (Not What Vendors Sell)

- Business continuity
- Risk reduction
- Staff enablement
- Operational resilience
- Clear accountability

2. The 8 Questions Every SME Should Answer First

1. What are our critical assets?
2. What data do we hold?
3. What systems do we rely on?
4. What risks matter most to us?
5. What can we manage internally?
6. What must be outsourced?
7. What is our realistic budget?
8. What does success look like?

3. The 10 Questions to Ask Every Vendor

- What evidence supports your claims?
- How do you integrate with our systems?
- What does onboarding look like?
- What support do we receive?
- What are your SLAs?
- How do you handle incidents?

- What certifications do you hold?
- How transparent is your pricing?
- What is your roadmap?
- What are the exit terms?

4. Buyer Mistakes to Avoid

- Buying tools instead of outcomes
- Over-relying on certifications
- Ignoring onboarding
- Underestimating support
- Accepting vague pricing

5. Buyer Checklist (Printable)

A one-page checklist SMEs can use during vendor calls.