

## All-Inclusive, Flat-Rate Computer Services Provider



**John Balch**  
President & CEO  
Senior Technical  
Consultant  
CarefreeIT Ltd.

**CEOCFO:** *Mr. Balch, your site indicates networks that work-guaranteed. How so?*

**Mr. Balch:** Quite simply, we focus on business results and the key business result our clients seek is system reliability. They want systems they can depend on day in and day out. How do we do that? There are several key components. First and foremost, we apply our best practices to their network, desktops and servers. These best practices, honed over the years, are designed to ensure system reliability. Secondly, we work with our clients at budget time to ensure their IT dollars are utilized to pre-emptively replace system devices and components before they fail. Finally, we monitor every aspect of our clients' IT on a 24x7 basis. It is these three factors that give us the confidence to guarantee – with money back – our clients' networks.

**CEOCFO:** *Do many of your clients come to you because they understand the depth of your offering?*

**Mr. Balch:** No, it is very rare that a prospect understands our offering or even truly understands what he/she needs. Occasionally, they come to us because they have persistent system problems they can't get fixed properly but, more often, they come to us because they feel their current system provider isn't responsive to their needs.

**CEOCFO:** *Would you provide an example?*

**Mr. Balch:** We rarely hear from clients that their current provider is weak from a technical standpoint. We usually hear things like "they never do what they say they'll do", or "they never call me back", or "I can never get them to answer the phone". We focus on basic customer service and communication. We do what we promise and are responsive. It's as simple as that.

**CEOCFO:** *What do you look for in your people? How do you know who are the right people to represent Carefree?*

**Mr. Balch:** We look for people who have strong interpersonal skills combined with good technical skills. As I said earlier, we focus on providing exceptional customer service and, to do that, we need people with excellent communication and interpersonal skills. The technical skills can be taught but the soft skills are more difficult to find – especially in technical people.

**CEOCFO:** *What types of companies typically use Carefree?*

**Mr. Balch:** Our service plans are designed for companies who truly understand the value of their IT. They want their IT to provide them a competitive advantage. We work with them to ensure their IT is aligned with their business goals and thus provide that competitive advantage.

**CEOCFO:** *What is your geographic reach today?*

**Mr. Balch:** Most of our clients are based in southwestern Ontario but we have clients across the country.

**CEOCFO:** *Do you see that expanding?*

**Mr. Balch:** It depends on demand. There is still plenty of room for growth in our home area but we believe our service model and focus on business results has universal appeal.

**CEOCFO:** *Carefree IT was recently been ranked Number One Small Business Managed Service Provider in Canada.*

**Mr. Balch:** It is very nice to have the recognition but we realize that attaining that ranking is because of the trust our clients have placed in us. They know we have their best interests at heart and that is something we never take for granted and continue to work on every single day.

**CEOCFO: When you are first working with a company, what might you look at about their system or practices that others would not necessarily think are important to have in the mix?**

**Mr. Balch:** At first glance we'll focus on ensuring that their systems are secure. We get our backup solution in place quickly and then ensure all the virtual "doors" are locked – firewall, antivirus, passwords, etc. After that, we begin to learn the business priorities and then work to align their systems to those priorities.

**CEOCFO: When people sign with you, do they pay attention to your suggestions and take advantage of your expertise to clean up their server?**

**Mr. Balch:** Yes, in nearly all cases they do. Changing IT providers is a difficult and nervous experience for most companies. Doing so means they are feeling some pain and they want relief quickly. So, they are very keen to listen to our advice and do whatever we ask them to do.

**CEOCFO: Why is giving back to the community important for the company and where do you focus your efforts?**

**Mr. Balch:** We live in this community and we all feel a responsibility to give back to it. I raised two daughters who were very active in minor sports. I saw first hand the impact sports had on their lives and that would not have been possible without corporate sponsorships. Kids who participate in organized sports have a better chance to grow up to be well-rounded adults.

**"First and foremost, we apply our best practices to [clients' networks], desktops and servers. These best practices, honed over the years, are designed to ensure system reliability." - John Balch**

**CEOCFO: How do you stay on top of changing technology?**

**Mr. Balch:** Our clients rely on us to provide them with sound technical advice so we take that very seriously. We attend conferences, continually train, and monitor industry publications. There's also plenty of trial and error. We test new technologies on ourselves and our own internal business.

**CEOCFO: What surprised you as the company has grown and developed?**

**Mr. Balch:** I think what has surprised me the most over the years is that as an IT person, I always assumed the best IT company would be the ones with the best technical people. That has not been the case. The best IT service providers are the companies with the best communicators. They have people who can take technology and make it understandable for the average user. They are able to empathize with people and understand their priorities.

**CEOCFO: When you founded CarefreeIT, managed services was new. How did you know it was the way to go?**

**Mr. Balch:** At the time, I always felt uncomfortable charging someone hourly. Simply put, I never felt that using time as a measure of IT effectiveness made sense. It puts the IT provider in a position where he profits if his clients have IT problems. That simply did not make sense. So, I sought out a win-win approach where both we, as the IT provider, and my clients would benefit from reliable systems

**CEOCFO: What may be different a year from now for CarefreeIT?**

**Mr. Balch:** We feel that our customer service is a key differentiator for us. We think we do it better than our competitors but we aren't resting on our laurels. We've recently embarked on a customer improvement program designed to put a "wow" in our customer service. That will be fully implemented in a year from now.

**CEOCFO: Why choose CarefreeIT?**

**Mr. Balch:** Our name says it all. We believe that IT should be carefree. If a business owner truly values his/her IT and wants to get the most out of it – without having to spend every waking moment worrying about it – then we're the provider for them.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

**For more information visit: [www.carefreeit.ca](http://www.carefreeit.ca)**

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