



# New Office IT Checklist for China

## 9 Steps to a Successful IT Setup

From lease signing to go-live day — everything international businesses need for a smooth, compliant, and productive China office launch.

**Prepared by NETK5**

Helping International Businesses Succeed in China Since 2002

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## 1 Before You Sign the Lease

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### Verify ISP availability at the address

China Telecom, China Unicom, and China Mobile each have different coverage. Some buildings are single-carrier only. Check before committing.

### Confirm building wiring standards

Ask the landlord about existing cabling (Cat5e, Cat6, or Cat6a) and riser/closet space for network equipment.

### Check power resilience & UPS readiness

Does the building have backup generators? What is the power reliability history? Plan for UPS for critical equipment.

### Assess cellular reception on the floor

Poor 4G/5G reception inside buildings is common in China. If needed, plan for a signal booster or DAS.

### Plan headcount growth for 12–24 months

WiFi capacity, switch port count, and desk layouts should account for future expansion, not just today's headcount.

**Pro tip:** Visit the building during business hours and run a quick WiFi scan (Ekahau or even a phone app). You will see how many neighbouring networks already crowd the air — critical data for channel planning.

## 2 ISP Ordering & Connectivity

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### Order primary internet line (4–6 weeks lead time)

Enterprise broadband in China requires lead time. Start the process as soon as the lease is signed. Typically China Telecom or China Unicom.

### Order secondary line for redundancy

A second line from a different carrier prevents single-ISP outages from taking your office offline. This is essential, not optional.

### Plan SD-WAN or dedicated link to HQ

Standard VPN over consumer broadband is unreliable. SD-WAN or MPLS provides stable, prioritised connectivity between China and global offices.

### Order static public IP addresses

Required for site-to-site VPN, remote access, and some cloud services. Order at least 2–4 IPs.

### Register ICP license for the corporate website

If your company website will be hosted in China or needs fast local access, an ICP license is mandatory. Start this process early — it can take 2–4 weeks.

**Pro tip:** Do not trust the ISP's installation date. Build a 2-week buffer into your timeline. If you are relying on the internet for a go-live date, have a 4G/5G backup router ready for day one.

### 3 Network Infrastructure

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#### Design structured cabling layout

Plan cable runs from the server room/MDF to each desk zone, meeting room, and common area. Minimum Cat6, preferably Cat6a for future-proofing.

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#### Commission WiFi design (predictive survey)

Do not guess AP placement. Use Ekahau or similar for a predictive design based on floor plans and wall materials before installation.

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#### Install network rack / server cabinet

Choose a lockable, ventilated cabinet. Plan for cable management, power distribution (PDU), and airflow from day one.

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#### Deploy core switch & PoE switches

PoE switches power APs and VoIP phones. Ensure enough PoE budget for current and future devices. Use managed switches with VLAN support.

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#### Install firewall / next-gen security appliance

Essential for site-to-site VPN, traffic filtering, and threat protection. Choose a model suited for China's unique browsing environment.

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#### Install & configure WiFi access points

Follow the predictive design. Conduct a passive survey post-install to verify coverage before users arrive.

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#### Set up guest WiFi network (isolated VLAN)

Separate SSID for visitors on a different VLAN/subnet, with bandwidth limits and captive portal if required.

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**Pro tip:** Chinese building materials (concrete, steel) are harsh on WiFi. Even a 30 cm AP placement shift can make a measurable difference. Always do a post-install site survey.

## 4 Hardware & Procurement

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### Source workstations (laptops / desktops)

International brands (Dell, HP, Lenovo) are available in China but models and pricing differ. Factor in Chinese Windows license requirements.

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### Procure monitors, docking stations & peripherals

Check voltage compatibility (220 V). Budget for Chinese keyboards where needed.

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### Order UPS for server room and critical equipment

Calculate runtime needed for an orderly shutdown. At minimum, protect the core switch, firewall, and server/NAS.

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### Procure printers / MFDs

China has region-specific models. Ensure drivers are available for your OS and that local service/support is in place.

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### Get networking spares on hand

Keep a spare switch, a couple of APs, patch cables, and SFP modules in stock. Lead times for replacements can be weeks.

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**Pro tip:** Do not import IT hardware from overseas if you can avoid it. Customs clearance, import duties, and Chinese 3C certification can delay equipment for weeks. Buy locally.

## 5 Software & Cloud Services

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### Choose M365 licensing path (global vs 21Vianet)

Microsoft 365 operated by 21Vianet is the locally compliant version but has feature gaps. Mixed-tenant setups are common for China offices.

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### Set up tenant / domain for email & Teams

Configure MX records, SPF, DKIM, and DMARC. Test Teams call quality over the China office connection before go-live.

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### Choose cloud storage & backup solution

Alibaba Cloud OSS, Tencent Cloud COS, or Azure China for local storage. Pair with a global provider for offsite backup.

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### Set up antivirus & endpoint protection

Ensure coverage for all company devices. Centralised management console preferred for remote IT teams.

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### Deploy VPN client for remote workers

Staff working from home or on the road need secure access. SSL VPN or IPsec client with MFA.

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### Configure MDM for company mobile devices

Intune, Jamf, or similar for managing phones and tablets. China has specific restrictions on certain MDM features.

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**Pro tip:** M365 operated by 21Vianet does not support all features available globally. Plan for a hybrid setup — global tenant for HQ, 21Vianet tenant for local compliance — and manage carefully.

## 6 Security & Compliance

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### Implement company-wide MFA

Multi-factor authentication for all accounts. Non-negotiable for any business operating in China.

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### Set up network monitoring & alerting

PRTG, Zabbix, or similar to monitor bandwidth, device health, and unusual traffic patterns. Critical for proactive issue detection.

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### Configure firewall rules & access policies

Define who can access what. Block unnecessary outbound traffic. Set up geo-IP filtering where appropriate.

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### Establish data backup & recovery schedule

Daily automated backups with monthly restores tested. Follow the 3-2-1 rule: three copies, two media types, one off-site.

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### Create incident response plan

Who to call, what to do, and how to communicate during a security incident. Include local emergency contacts.

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### Review data localisation requirements

China's data laws require certain types of data to remain in-country. Review what data your China office collects and where it is stored.

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**Pro tip:** Do not treat security as a last step. Integrate it into every procurement and configuration decision from week one. Retrofitting security is always more expensive.

## 7 IT Support & Staffing

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### Decide on IT support model

In-house IT hire vs managed service provider (MSP) vs hybrid co-managed model. Each has different cost and coverage implications.

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### Set up helpdesk ticketing system

Freshservice, Zendesk, or Jira Service Management. Configure with Chinese-language support and local business hours.

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### Establish on-call escalation procedures

Define response SLAs, escalation paths, and after-hours support coverage. Critical if you have production or factory operations.

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### Document all systems, passwords & vendors

Centralised IT documentation (IT Glue, Confluence, or similar). Essential for staff turnover and disaster recovery.

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### Order IT onboarding kit for new hires

Pre-configured laptop, dock, monitor, headset, cables. Have a standardised setup ready before day one.

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**Pro tip:** The most common mistake international companies make is hiring a single local IT person with no backup plan. When that person is on leave or leaves the company, you are stranded. MSP coverage fills that gap.

## 8 Moving In & Go-Live Day

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### Verify ISP installation & bandwidth test

Run speed tests to international and domestic destinations. Verify SLA commitments. Test both primary and backup lines.

### Conduct WiFi site survey (post-install)

Walk the entire floor with Ekahau or similar. Verify coverage meets design specs. Adjust AP channels and power as needed.

### Test all network ports & cable certification

Use a cable certifier (Fluke or similar) to verify all copper and fibre runs meet Cat6/Cat6a standards.

### Configure & test site-to-site VPN

Verify connectivity to HQ, cloud services, and remote resources. Document MTU/MSS settings if needed for China links.

### Set up user accounts & email distribution lists

Pre-create accounts with correct licensing. Test mail flow, Teams, and shared calendars.

### Test VoIP / desk phones (if applicable)

Verify call quality to HQ and international numbers. Test under peak load conditions.

### Run a full office dry-run day

Have a small group of users work from the office for one day before opening to everyone. Real usage reveals hidden issues.

**Pro tip:** Always schedule a buffer day between "ISP says it is ready" and "staff move in." Last-mile delays in China are the norm, not the exception.

## 9 Post-Setup (Next 30 Days)

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### Monitor network performance & user feedback

Gather real-world feedback. WiFi that looks perfect on a heatmap can feel different under 30 simultaneous Teams calls.

### Review & update documentation

As-built diagrams, password inventory, vendor contacts. Update anything that changed during setup.

### Schedule monthly health check cadence

Regular reviews of system logs, backup status, security patches, and performance metrics.

### Conduct first quarterly backup restore test

Actually restore from backups, do not just check that backup logs say "successful." A restore test is the only test that counts.

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