



# Incident Response Retainer vs. Managed SOC

## Which Model Actually Protects You

Organizations seeking 24/7 threat protection face a choice. IR retainers provide expert response when incidents occur. Managed SOC provides continuous monitoring and detection. This analysis compares both models—examining actual costs, response times, and which is appropriate for different organizations.

## Cost Reality

IR Retainer appears cheaper (\$50K-\$200K annually) but requires adding detection infrastructure (\$50K-\$200K annually). Plus incident fees when responses exceed retainer hours (\$2K-\$5K per hour). Total: \$100K-\$600K+ annually.

Managed SOC: Fixed fee (\$24K-\$120K annually) includes detection, monitoring, and initial response. Total: \$24K-\$120K annually.

## Response Speed Difference

IR Retainer: Detection by you (200+ days industry average) → Notification (5-30 minutes) → Initial response (1-2 hours) = 2-3+ hours from detection to response.

Managed SOC: Detection by SOC (minutes) → Notification (automatic) → Investigation (5-15 minutes) = < 30 minutes from threat to response.

Critical difference: Managed SOC detects threats actively. IR retainers wait for you to detect and report.

## Which Model When

IR Retainer: You have strong detection, experienced internal team, need expert escalation.

Managed SOC: You lack internal expertise, need 24/7 monitoring, require compliance

monitoring. Hybrid (Best): Managed SOC for detection + monitoring + initial response. IR firm for complex escalations.

### Key Statistics

MDR market: \$5.09B in 2026, 21.45% CAGR | Managed security market: \$38.31B in 2025, reaching \$69.16B by 2030 | Industry average MTTD: 200+ days

## The Best Approach

Most organizations benefit from hybrid: Managed SOC for continuous protection, IR retainer for expert escalation support. Unified Core enables managed SOC capabilities more effectively through advanced detection and automated investigation.