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1 Do you offer a Service Level Agreement (SLA)?

2 Is there financial compensation for breaking your SLA?

3 Do you have a Public site listing issues and outages?

4 How do you schedule maintenance and handle upgrades?

5 How can I be assured my data will be protected?

6 How do I get my data if I decide to leave?

7 What is your product roadmap?

8 Do you offer support?

8 Questions You Should Always Ask Your Cloud Vendor

A Simple Conversation to Bring the Cloud Down to Earth

When we talk to organizations about technology, there are several themes that we hear about. There is one growing technology trend that we hear across all industries.

"What is 'The Cloud' and what can it do for us?"

When it comes to 'The Cloud', defining specifics can be challenging. 'The Cloud' covers a whole suite of different ways of delivering technology services, from standalone software applications (hosted email, sales force automation) to very new and exciting ones (virtual dynamic datacenters, platform as a service). The bottom line is 'The Cloud' can be a very advantageous option for many organizations and is certainly worth examining.

So let's move past the first part of the question, 'What is the cloud?' and move on to the much more important second part of the question, 'What can it do for us?' For most organizations, there is more than one answer.

Reduce Cost

Most cloud solutions require very little up-front investment. No more up front hardware and software investment. The whole model of cloud services is subscription based; you rent the software and/or hardware you need on a monthly basis. Software licensing and all upgrades are included. Hardware life cycle and back office support are also covered. You simply get a monthly bill typically based on the number of subscription users.

We believe there are eight important questions you should ask to ensure you have all the details to help make the best decision for your organization.

Reduced Focus on IT issues = More Focus on Your Business

In a nutshell – companies who provide cloud services focus solely on building, maintaining and monitoring their datacenters, which means you don't have to. Their team is focused on keeping your organization's technology up and running so you can focus on your business, your mission, your goals. Cloud providers invest a great deal of time and money into keeping their datacenters maintained, that type of focus would be very expensive and time consuming if done to the same level internally.

Flexibility

Typically, most applications are designed to be delivered and accessed within a single building or campus. Offsite access is typically expensive and requires maintenance. Public Cloud solutions only require a browser and internet connection to access the application remotely. This allows any employee to access their applications regardless of their location.

Valid Concerns

Of course, there are concerns. The obvious elephant in the room is security. This is a model based on access regardless of location, utilizing a shared resource component. It's critical to evaluate your provider's security and privacy plans. What systems are used to provide security? How is access limited? What systems are in place to audit security effectiveness? A sound understanding of the service offerings, and their limitations and advantages is the only way to intelligently deal with these issues. There are key questions you should ask any vendor you are considering partnering with to make the move to the Cloud. We believe there are eight important questions you should ask to ensure you have all the details to help make the best decision for your organization.

Important Questions to Ask Your Cloud Vendor

1. Do you offer a Service Level Agreement (SLA)?

Your vendor should offer a SLA. Most providers offer 99.9% up time.



2. Is there financial compensation for not meeting the contracted SLA?

Savvy buyers are looking for financial compensation when their SLA is not met on a monthly basis.

3. Do you have a Public site listing issues and outages?

It's important, as a consumer, that the vendor provides some transparency and insight into the status of their systems.

4. How do you schedule maintenance and handle upgrades?

Check into the lead time vendors will give you for scheduled maintenance. Your vendor should provide you with a detailed plan for both the schedule and the amount of downtime required for upgrades. They should address how they protect your data during the upgrade and provide details for testing the system after the upgrade is completed.

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- 5. How can I be assured my data will be protected?**
It's important to review the vendor's policies for backups, security and privacy. Find out what systems are used to ensure security and how access is limited. Make sure your vendor has systems in place to verify and audit security effectiveness.

6. How do I get my data if I decide to leave?
Lead time and method are important aspects in the data retrieval process.

7. What is your product roadmap?
Cloud vendors should be able to provide annual or quarterly upgrade roadmaps.

8. Do you offer support?
Clarify the methods you have to access their support – telephone, email?

If you can't get answers to these questions, or they aren't willing to explain their recommendations so it makes sense – you might want to seek out another partnership.

If you are like many businesses, you are trying to figure out how 'the Cloud' fits into your world. It's important to find an expert in the technology field with whom you can partner with to give you guidance and trusted advice to match the appropriate technologies to your business goals.

www.BCGSystems.com/cloudservices

Interested in having a Cloud conversation?
Contact BCG Systems at (800) 968-6661 or email us at info@bcgsystems.com

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