



HOSTING DECISION TREE

Workflow Automation Delivery Framework

ENTERPRISE EDITION

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Hosting Decision Tree

Choose the Right Hosting Model for Every Client

Primary Decision Flowchart

Detailed Decision Matrix

n8n Cloud vs Self-Hosted Decision

License Compliance Checker

Client Readiness Assessment

Hosting Setup Workflows

For n8n Cloud Setup

For Self-Hosted Setup

Quick Reference Table

Red Flags to Watch For

Hosting Decision Tree

Choose the Right Hosting Model for Every Client

Primary Decision Flowchart

flowchart TB

START([" START: New Client Project"]) --> Q1

Q1{"Will client need to
access n8n directly?"}

Q1 -->|"Yes, they need to
see/edit workflows"| CLIENT_HOST

Q1 -->|"No, they just want
the end result"| Q2

Q2{"Are you delivering a
recurring service or
one-time deliverable?"}

Q2 -->|"One-time deliverable
(JSON + docs)"| EXPORT_MODEL

Q2 -->|"Recurring service
(ongoing delivery)"| Q3

Q3{"Does client need to
connect their own
credentials/data?"}

Q3 -->|"Yes"| CLIENT_HOST

Q3 -->|"No, you control
all data sources"| INTERNAL_HOST

subgraph CLIENT_HOST[" CLIENT HOSTS N8N"]

direction TB

CH1["Client owns n8n instance"]

CH2["You're invited as team member"]

CH3["Client pays for all APIs"]

CH4["Clean handover possible"]

CH1 --> CH2 --> CH3 --> CH4

CH_OPTIONS{"Which n8n option?"}

CH_CLOUD["n8n Cloud
Easiest setup"]

CH_VPS["Self-hosted VPS
More control"]

CH_LOCAL["Local/On-prem
Maximum privacy"]

CH4 --> CH_OPTIONS

CH_OPTIONS --> CH_CLOUD

CH_OPTIONS --> CH_VPS

CH_OPTIONS --> CH_LOCAL

end

subgraph INTERNAL_HOST[" INTERNAL HOSTING"]

direction TB

IH1["You host for internal ops"]

IH2["Client never sees n8n"]

IH3["You deliver end results"]

IH4["Careful: Not for SaaS"]

IH1 --> IH2 --> IH3 --> IH4

end

subgraph EXPORT_MODEL[" EXPORT MODEL"]

direction TB

EM1["Build in your environment"]

EM2["Export as JSON"]

EM3["Deliver with Loom guide"]

EM4["Client imports themselves"]

```
EM1 --> EM2 --> EM3 --> EM4
end
```

```
style CLIENT_HOST fill:#c8e6c9,stroke:#2e7d32
style INTERNAL_HOST fill:#fff9c4,stroke:#f9a825
style EXPORT_MODEL fill:#e3f2fd,stroke:#1565c0
```

Detailed Decision Matrix

```
flowchart LR
    subgraph CRITERIA[" Decision Criteria"]
        C1["Client Technical Level"]
        C2["Data Sensitivity"]
        C3["Ongoing Relationship"]
        C4["Budget"]
        C5["Compliance Requirements"]
    end

    subgraph OPTIONS["Hosting Options"]
        subgraph CLOUD["n8n Cloud"]
            CLOUD_PROS[" Easy setup<br/> Managed updates<br/> Quick start"]
            CLOUD_CONS[" Monthly cost<br/> Less control<br/> Data in cloud"]
        end

        subgraph VPS["Self-Hosted VPS"]
            VPS_PROS[" Full control<br/> Custom config<br/> One-time setup"]
            VPS_CONS[" Tech required<br/> Maintenance<br/> Security burden"]
        end

        subgraph LOCAL["Local/On-Prem"]
            LOCAL_PROS[" Max privacy<br/> No cloud deps<br/> Full control"]
            LOCAL_CONS[" Complex setup<br/> No remote access<br/> Hardware costs"]
        end
    end

    style CLOUD fill:#e3f2fd
    style VPS fill:#fff3e0
    style LOCAL fill:#f3e5f5
```

n8n Cloud vs Self-Hosted Decision

flowchart TB

START(["Choose n8n Deployment"]) --> Q1

Q1{"Client's technical
capability?"}

Q1 -->|"Non-technical"| CLOUD_PATH

Q1 -->|"Has IT team"| Q2

Q1 -->|"Developer/Technical"| Q3

Q2{"Data sensitivity
requirements?"}

Q2 -->|"Standard business data"| CLOUD_PATH

Q2 -->|"Highly sensitive/regulated"| SELF_HOST_PATH

Q3{"Budget for
infrastructure?"}

Q3 -->|"Prefers OpEx (monthly)"| CLOUD_PATH

Q3 -->|"Prefers CapEx (one-time)"| SELF_HOST_PATH

subgraph CLOUD_PATH["n8n CLOUD"]

CLOUD1["Sign up at cloud.n8n.io"]

CLOUD2["Choose plan based on executions"]

CLOUD3["Invite consultant as team member"]

CLOUD4["Configure credentials"]

CLOUD1 --> CLOUD2 --> CLOUD3 --> CLOUD4

end

subgraph SELF_HOST_PATH["SELF-HOSTED"]

SH1{"Which platform?"}

subgraph DOCKER["Docker Option"]

D1["Provision VPS
(DigitalOcean, AWS, etc.)"]

D2["Install Docker"]

D3["Deploy n8n container"]

D4["Configure SSL/domain"]

end

subgraph RAILWAY["Railway/Render"]

R1["One-click deploy"]

R2["Auto-scaling"]

R3["Managed container"]

end

subgraph K8S["Kubernetes"]

K1["Enterprise scale"]

K2["Helm charts"]

K3["High availability"]

end

SH1 -->|"Simple"| DOCKER

SH1 -->|"Medium"| RAILWAY

SH1 -->|"Enterprise"| K8S

end


```
style CLOUD_PATH fill:#e3f2fd,stroke:#1565c0
style SELF_HOST_PATH fill:#fff3e0,stroke:#ff6f00
```

License Compliance Checker

```
flowchart TB
    START([" Check License Compliance"]) --> Q1
    Q1["Who is using the<br/>n8n instance?"]
    Q1 -->|"Single business"| SINGLE
    Q1 -->|"Multiple clients"| MULTI
    SINGLE --> Q2["Who owns/pays for<br/>the instance?"]
    Q2 -->|"The business using it"| COMPLIANT1
    Q2 -->|"Third party (consultant)"| Q3
    Q3["Does the business<br/>log in to n8n?"]
    Q3 -->|"No, never"| INTERNAL_OK
    Q3 -->|"Yes"| NEEDS_LICENSE
    MULTI --> NEEDS_LICENSE
    COMPLIANT1([" COMPLIANT<br/>Standard client hosting"])
    INTERNAL_OK([" COMPLIANT<br/>Internal agency use"])
    NEEDS_LICENSE([" NEEDS LICENSE<br/>Commercial/Enterprise required"])
    style COMPLIANT1 fill:#c8e6c9,stroke:#2e7d32
    style INTERNAL_OK fill:#c8e6c9,stroke:#2e7d32
    style NEEDS_LICENSE fill:#ffcdd2,stroke:#c62828
```

Client Readiness Assessment

```

flowchart TB
    subgraph ASSESSMENT[" Client Readiness Matrix"]
        direction LR

        subgraph TECH["Technical Readiness"]
            T1["Has IT support?"]
            T2["Manages own servers?"]
            T3["Uses cloud services?"]
            T4["Has developer access?"]
        end

        subgraph DATA["Data Considerations"]
            D1["Data sensitivity level"]
            D2["Compliance requirements"]
            D3["Existing integrations"]
            D4["Data volume"]
        end

        subgraph BIZ["Business Factors"]
            B1["Budget type (OpEx/CapEx)"]
            B2["Long-term commitment"]
            B3["Growth expectations"]
            B4["Internal resources"]
        end
    end

    subgraph SCORING["Scoring"]
        HIGH["High Readiness<br/> Self-hosted VPS"]
        MEDIUM["Medium Readiness<br/> n8n Cloud"]
        LOW["Low Readiness<br/> n8n Cloud + Support"]
    end

    ASSESSMENT --> SCORING
  
```

Hosting Setup Workflows

For n8n Cloud Setup

sequenceDiagram

participant Consultant as Consultant

participant Client as Client

participant N8N as n8n Cloud

Note over Consultant,N8N: n8n Cloud Setup Flow

Consultant->>Client: Send setup instructions
(Loom video recommended)

Client->>N8N: Create account at cloud.n8n.io

Client->>N8N: Choose subscription plan

Client->>N8N: Enter billing information

N8N->>Client: Account active

Client->>N8N: Go to Settings > Users

Client->>N8N: Invite consultant email

N8N->>Consultant: Invitation email

Consultant->>N8N: Accept invitation

Consultant->>N8N: Verify access to workspace

Note over Consultant: Ready to build!

For Self-Hosted Setup

```
sequenceDiagram
    participant Consultant as Consultant
    participant Client as Client
    participant VPS as VPS Provider
    participant N8N as n8n Instance

    Note over Consultant,N8N: Self-Hosted Setup Flow

    Consultant->>Client: Recommend VPS provider
    Client->>VPS: Create account & provision server
    Client->>VPS: Configure SSH access

    alt Consultant Assists
        Client->>Consultant: Share temporary access
        Consultant->>VPS: Install Docker & n8n
        Consultant->>VPS: Configure SSL & domain
        Consultant->>Client: Transfer credentials back
    else Client Self-Service
        Consultant->>Client: Send detailed guide
        Client->>VPS: Follow installation steps
        Client->>N8N: Verify installation
    end

    end

    Client->>N8N: Create admin account
    Client->>N8N: Invite consultant as user

    N8N->>Consultant: Access granted

    Note over Consultant: Ready to build!
```

Quick Reference Table

SCENARIO	RECOMMENDED HOSTING	LICENSING	NOTES
Client wants to see/ manage workflows	Client hosts (Cloud or VPS)	Standard	Most common
Client just wants results delivered	Your internal n8n	Standard	Don't expose n8n
Selling workflow as JSON export	Either	Standard	One-time delivery
Building SaaS/platform	Your hosting	Commercial	Contact n8n sales
Enterprise with compliance needs	Client self-hosted	Standard	On-prem option
Quick prototype/POC	Your internal	Standard	For testing only

Red Flags to Watch For

```
flowchart TB
    subgraph REDFLAGS["RED FLAGS - Needs Commercial License"]
        RF1["Multiple clients accessing same n8n"]
        RF2["Charging for n8n access/seats"]
        RF3["Reselling n8n as a product"]
        RF4["Marking up n8n hosting costs"]
        RF5["White-labeling n8n interface"]
    end

    subgraph OKAY["OKAY - Standard License"]
        OK1["One client per n8n instance"]
        OK2["Billing for consulting/development"]
        OK3["Internal agency automations"]
        OK4["Client pays own hosting"]
        OK5["Exporting workflows as deliverables"]
    end

    style REDFLAGS fill:#ffcdd2
    style OKAY fill:#c8e6c9
```

Next: See [03-project-lifecycle.md](#) for the complete project delivery flow.

Workflow Automation Delivery Framework | next8n | <https://next8n.com>

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