



Cloud Service Provider

Checklist For Choosing the Right Partner

Clearly, the best way to keep a cloud service provider from letting you down is to choose a reliable provider in the first place. We've created this checklist to help you do your due diligence and make a wise choice.

Choosing the Right Partner

Security and Support Come First

If you're ready to start adopting one or more cloud services, you need to feel confident that the vendor you've entrusted with your business-critical applications and data will keep them safe and provide proper support. That isn't necessarily easy, though. According to a recent report by the SANS Institute,³ the biggest problem IT professionals have with cloud vendors is a lack of visibility into operations and security controls. More disturbingly, a recent survey by IDG² found that one in three IT leaders who subscribed to mission-critical software as a service (SaaS) found that the provider ultimately failed to meet expectations for support.

The Checklist

1. Make a site visit.

- Does the provider seem to have adequate staff to handle the volume of support calls?
- How many infrastructure monitoring alarms exist?
- How many infrastructure monitoring alarms are old, and how old are they?
- Can the provider produce information backup audit tickets?
- Can the provider produce tickets requiring authorization for a security change?
- How many open tickets does each support person have?

2. Ask about customer service processes and performance.


- What metrics are used to manage service timeliness and quality?
- Request copies of customer satisfaction data.
- Request copies of checklists used in customer onboarding.
- What are the cloud service provider's support hours?
- How did the provider help another company with issues similar to yours?
- How many employees work in service delivery as opposed to sales and marketing?
- What level of formal education and certifications do support staff hold?
- What IT and compliance reports and infrastructure performance reviews does the provider offer?

3. Ask about the scope of cloud service offerings.

- Does the provider include unlimited business hours and after hours support?
- What CIO planning and budgeting services are included?
- What infrastructure design and implementation services are included?
- What security, compliance, and business continuity services are included?

4. Ask about business continuity, security, and privacy practices.

- Request copies of security and privacy policies.
- Request copies of third-party security audits and certifications.
- If your organization is subject to HIPAA, request a copy of the provider's Business Associate Agreement.
- Request an overview of the firm's disaster recovery and business continuity plans.



The partner you choose will manage one of your greatest assets—your data. Take the time to vet prospective cloud service providers thoroughly.

- [] What percentage of the service staff are contractors?
- [] If any of the following are outsourced, request a detailed description of the outsourcing arrangement.
 - Help desk services
 - Infrastructure monitoring
 - Server hosting
- [] Request a description of the provider's hiring and termination processes.
- [] Has the provider ever been responsible for a breach of client privacy/personal information? If so, request details of the breach as well as the steps taken to prevent a future breach.

5. Ask about company longevity and stability.

- [] How long has the cloud service provider been in business and how long has it been profitable?
- [] Request a summary of any lawsuits the provider has been involved in within the past five years.
- [] What was their employee turnover in the past year?
- [] What does a typical client look like (size, industry, type of engagement)? How many ongoing clients does the provider have? How long have those clients been with the provider on average?

6. Evaluate references.

- [] Request 5–10 references.
- [] Choose three of the references at random to contact.

References

¹ <https://www.cloudpassage.com/resources/gate/sans-survey-orchestrating-security-in-the-cloud>

² <http://www.idgenterprise.com/report/2015-role-influence-of-the-technology-decision-maker>

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Your employees will depend on your cloud service provider partner for support. Assess prospective partners' hiring practices, staff retention record, and client base.