6 Due Diligence Questions To Ask Your Cloud Provider

Selecting the right cloud provider can be the difference between keeping your business in good health when it comes to protecting your data or losing everything and starting over.

By Jamie Brenzel, CEO, KineticD

When shopping for a cloud backup solution, creating a comparative spreadsheet will help you to keep track of your different options. After all, your company data is the lifeblood of your business. These key questions will help you in making an informed decision.

1. Does the cloud provider offer both on-site and off-site protection?

The ideal cloud backup solution should provide you with an unlimited option to back up to a local server for immediate access and to restore application files (Word/Outlook/QuickBooks) quickly and efficiently. It should also provide you with the option to back up your data (documents/spreadsheets/financials) to the cloud (an off-site server or data center.)

2. Does it offer unlimited backup?

Today, fewer vendors are offering unlimited backup, and if they do, they're attaching limitations such as bandwidth throttling or file size caps. When searching for a cloud backup solution, take a look at the options that take into account your growth potential. Be aware of providers that require a long-term contract with fixed bandwidth/data capacity. If the maximum capacity of your data is 50 GB, you shouldn't pay for 150 GB of data until you need it.

3. How long has the cloud vendor been in business? Whose technology are they using?

As with any trending technology, there are many fly-by-night companies that promise the moon and fail to deliver. How long has the cloud provider been in business? Do they have references or case studies for review? Do they license somebody else's software or is it their own? Research competing software reviews and compare and contrast the feedback.

4. Are there affordable solutions for my business in this economy?

Absolutely! In this economy, SMBs should be very careful when making large purchases for hardware or software. Monthly pay-as-you go options have less risk attached to them and are offered by reputable online backup providers and should be strongly considered. If in doubt, do a 3-year total cost of ownership analysis.

5. What security measures are in place to protect my data?

VARs and MSPs need to know what security measures and controls the cloud service provider has in place. Here are some basic questions you need answers to:

- Is its datacenter SSAE 16 certified?
- Is its web portal scanned daily by a security provider (e.g. McAfee)
- How is the data encrypted?
- Is there a master key? (If so, who has access to it?)

Chances are that serious cloud application providers will be substantially more secure than any SMB could afford to implement internally.

Jamie Brenzel

kineticD

Jamie Brenzel is the founder, CEO, and director of KineticD, a provider of online backup and recovery solutions. He brings more than 15 years of experience in investment banking and entrepreneurial start-ups to his role.

6. What are some of the most significant benefits cloud services bring to SMBs?

When evaluating a move to the cloud, SMBs should consider the advantages. Cloud backup and data recovery solutions do not require hardware purchases, alleviating capital cost expenditures. Also, the technology has advanced to such a level that small software tools can be downloaded to company machines that are user-friendly and easy to manage, keeping internal IT staff costs to a minimum.

Another benefit is the fact that your data can be backed up immediately. Once the data has been moved to the cloud, via online uploads, or seeding options (copying of all data onto an encrypted USB and shipping it to the cloud provider is one of these options) your business will enjoy immediate protection of company assets.

Finally, SMBs will see a lower cost of ownership. Cloud service providers benefit from economy of scale and have the ability to pass these savings onto the consumer, something that an SMB could not produce alone.

Conclusion

Making the decision to move to the cloud can be the difference between keeping your business in good health when it comes to protecting your data or losing everything and starting over. The ability to access files when computers or networks crash can make or break an SMB. Being well prepared, doing adequate software research, and finding answers to the questions above will prepare you to confidently transition your customers to the cloud. ●