DWC

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C O M P A N Y

EVALUATING CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDERS

In this briefing paper, we consider the critical factors to be considered when selecting and evaluating cloud service providers, and to list the basic points to consider when appointing a cloud service provider that best match your organisations, technical, and operational needs.

Critical Considerations are:

1. Cloud Security
2. Services
3. Monitoring & Management
4. Support
5. Service Level Agreements
6. Cost

The list is offered to assist senior manager build an effective strategy and the building blocks to use when determining a move to cloud-based systems and appointing a managed service provider you will trust with your data and applications.

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"There are several key factors to consider in evaluating cloud service providers…"

To begin, look at how support is offered from the Cloud provider. Is it 24/7 and 365-day year support? Is the Cloud service hosted locally or overseas? What is the availability guarantee, is it truly 99.999% uptime? Do they have multiple Tier 1 NOCs for their equipment? What are Internet Connections? A little homework goes a long way to ensuring the Cloud service has the standards to meet the requirements.

Do the support technicians have capabilities to provide the required service and have knowledge of your industry, and, fluent about your operations? What is the Cloud service provider's culture? If they have a poor culture with high turnover, then the support staff you are talking to maybe new and not as experienced with the platform or products. This is a big issue when an emergency hits.

Next, investigate the company history and growth plan. Moving systems to the Cloud is a long-term strategy, If the service provider is a new start-up or does not have the financial backing and resources to meet your organisation's future needs, or have multiple data centre to provide secure redundancy, then you maybe selecting the wrong service provider.

Security and systems monitoring are key criteria to question. What security and monitoring systems does the cloud service provider use? How is data protected and secured? Who is responsible for Cloud service security, is it end-to-end or just within the data centre? If they are compliant with standards like the ISO 27000 series or have recognised certifications, check that they are valid and get assurances of resource allocation, and compliance with these frameworks.

Avoid the risk of vendor lock-in by ensuring the service provider has minimal use of proprietary technology that limits the ability to migrate or transition to another provider. Similarly, ensure there is a clear exit strategy in place at the start of your relationship. Moving away from a Cloud service provider is not always a smooth process, so it is worth establishing the exit criteria before signing a contract.

Finally, review their customers by undertaking client visits and reference checks. The best is to undertake the reference checks independently and understand if the provider can meet your requirements.