



10 questions to ask your Cloud communications vendor

With the growing trend towards software based communication solutions, businesses can now choose between technology that situated on their own site or in a cloud environment.

There's a lot of hype surrounding Cloud, Hosted and Software as a Service (SaaS) and it's important to cut through the noise to decide what's really important to the successful adoption of a solution or a technology within your organisation.

Every organisation is unique with different needs based on their IT, communications and technological environment and their issues, pains and drivers. This means that your business objectives are the most important factor when choosing between different communication solutions and models.

This checklist is designed to provide a guide to the factors that really matter for cloud communications.



Can you demonstrate successful cloud deployments?

This is a great question to cut through the hype and to see if a vendor has a track record that they can demonstrate. There's nothing more comforting than knowing you're not the first organization to have implemented cloud communications from a vendor.



Do you have Service Level Agreements?

Although no provider is perfect, Service Level Agreements (SLAs) offer assurances about performance in areas such as availability and up-time.



Do you offer multi-tenancy?

Multi-tenancy provides the ability to run multiple customers across a shared infrastructure. In other words this is ideal for situations where there may be more than one organization on a site (for example business parks, hospitals and schools with leisure centers) and for situations such as public sector networks (for example with Doctors surgeries all sharing one network).

If it's relevant to your needs then multi-tenancy can be an efficient model.



What's the Disaster Recovery plan?

If the cloud environment experiences a disruption then what happens to ensure that your communications coverage continues. In simple terms does the disaster recovery plan do what it is supposed to do?



How secure is the cloud network?

Naturally the security of the cloud environment is an important question. A cloud vendor needs a robust approach to security in order to protect the network, data and applications. There may also be specific regulations relevant to your industry to consider.



Can we customise the solution to meet our needs?

Software applications can require configuration to meet the needs of particular businesses and this is often delivered through the project implementation process. Cloud solutions often provide customization capabilities through portal-based configuration rather than custom code or project management. In other words can a tech-savvy individual in your business make many of the changes you need rather than relying on an engineer?



Do you offer integration?

On-premises communications equipment (such as a phone system) will usually provide the same set of features as cloud based models. The differences lie in areas such as disaster recover, obsolescence, flexibility and approaches to cost models. One of the potential areas of difference for cloud is integration – can you integrate your communications with back-office systems or applications to achieve an improved experience for your customers.

Open standards-based technology can make a big difference here.



How many business applications does the cloud provider offer?

Operating your voice (phone) services in the cloud is great but does the vendor also offer the additional services that you might need such as video conferencing, messaging applications and mobility solutions. Sourcing everything you need from one vendor can have some clear benefits for technological integration and efficiency.

For more fun facts, check out our Cloud infographics at www.everycloud.eu



Can users get anytime, anywhere access from any device?

Clearly you need your users to enjoy the same uptime experience that they would from a phone system on-site. Users today want to be able to use their own devices too, especially smart phones and tablets.



Where is our data kept?

Cloud communications models change the way that records of phone calls and messaging are stored. Your company may need to keep data within country boundaries to comply with regulatory requirements – for example European Union companies contracting with providers outside of the E.U./E.E.A. have to adhere to E.U. regulations concerning the export of personal data.

