

Cloud Buyer's Guide

Know the Questions You Need to Ask





Buying Cloud may seem complex if you have never done it before, especially if you are also buying new software to host. But, as with an “on premise” solution, knowing the requirements of your software and how you plan to use it is key to knowing the kind of infrastructure you will need in the Cloud.

How do you Plan to Use the Cloud?

Moving to the Cloud is a planned and managed process that you can jump into head first or just dip your big toe. Some clients move everything to the Cloud while others start with file sharing or email in the Cloud. It is important to create a realistic plan that correlates to the needs you have identified for your business. If your biggest need is to provide access to your accounting software and/or CRM, from remote locations, jumping in may be the right plan for you!

Knowing the software you plan to use in the Cloud has a defining role in the decisions you make. Some things to know about your software before you call Cloud providers:

- What type of server resources and licensing does your software require? Are you interested in private or multi-tenant cloud?
- What is your budget?
- Are there other applications or software that you will require? (Microsoft Office, industry specific add-ons)
- Can your software run effectively in a generic Cloud environment or do you want/need a Cloud provider experienced in your software?

What is the Cloud?

Calling it the “Cloud” has really put an aura of mystery around something that you have been using for years. Simply put, the “Cloud” is a network of servers which enables you to access your software from remote locations through a browser.

Additionally, you will need to decide between multi-tenant or private cloud. A multi-tenant cloud is a server that has been partitioned for multiple companies. Each tenant has their own partitioned section that is secure from all other tenants and likewise, you do not have access to their partitioned section. A multi-tenant cloud is a more economical solution since you are sharing the cost of the hardware with other tenants, however, you cannot control the performance of the environment on a per tenant basis.

A private cloud is a server that is dedicated to a single tenant, thus your environment is customizable to your specification since you are the only tenant.

You will find that the infrastructure and services will vary from provider to provider so it is important, when shopping, to compare “apples to apples”. Some of the differentiators include:

- Server Resources (CPU, Memory, Storage, etc.)
- Server Licensing (Operating System, Data Base Requirements, etc.)
- IT management
- Hardware upgrades
- Scalability
- Migration support
- Software specific support desk
- Fully tested environments for your specific software
- Data Backups
- Security



What do You Expect of Your Cloud Provider?

In your quest to find the right Cloud provider you will likely research two types of provider – generic and software specific. A generic Cloud provider specializes in infrastructure only. This means that they will know little or nothing about your software, the industry in which you work, and the way that you will use your software. They are generally using a large data center that hosts a multitude of clients and software types. Their support is often limited to their infrastructure.

A software specific cloud provider will not only specialize in infrastructure, they will also specialize in hosting your specific software. They will be intimately acquainted with your software and add-on requirements and provide environments that are fully tested to ensure full functionality of your software and add-ons.

There are several things that you can ask potential Cloud providers in order to clarify what you are getting now and in the future.

- How do you web enable my software? Do you utilize an encryption solution?
- Do you provide infrastructure support and troubleshooting and is it included in the service?
- Do you have experience hosting my software?
- Do you have migration experience with my software?
- Is your environment tested for my software? Have you ever run my software on your system?

Choosing Your Cloud Provider

Once you have narrowed down your list of Cloud providers, the proposal process begins. This is the most tedious part of your search, but will end up saving you a lot of heartache in the end. Please see the following checklist of items to help you along your journey. I-BN will be happy to give you an initial proposal to use in your comparisons with other providers, please contact use at 678-627-0646 or email IBN@I-BN.net.

Provider Company Name _____

Contact _____ Phone _____

References

Request to speak to references that run your software in their Cloud.

Name _____ Name _____

Phone _____ Phone _____

Email _____ Email _____

Experience

How many years in business? _____

How many years hosting my software? _____

Can you work with my VAR during migration? yes no

Are you knowledgeable in my software and add-ons? yes no

Do you continue to innovate solutions? yes no

Is the Cloud provider: Software Specific Environment or Generic Hosting Environment?

Support

Software support assistance? yes no

Infrastructure support? yes no

Is there an additional cost for infrastructure support? yes no Rate _____

How is the support structured? Email, phone, available hours?

Backup

How often do you backup?

Do you replicate my data?

Security

Where is the Cloud located?

What type of environment access security do you have?

Describe the data center physical security utilized.

Proposal

What is included in the proposal? For a true comparison, be sure to request a comprehensive proposal that includes the following items:

- Storage GB
- RAM (Memory)
- CPU
- Server and database licenses provided
- Microsoft (do you need it? Is it included?)
- Full description of migration support
- Ongoing support plan



About I-Business Network

Established in 1999, I-BN's executive management profile includes years of corporate and Big 6 experience. We are expert consultants in hosting accounting software also known as ERP system. Our consultants have expertise in a wide range of industries and our IT staff keeps current on the latest technologies. Our greatest strength is our ability to deliver a national network of partners to provide local services and specialized knowledge.

I-BN is customer focused with the goal of matching the right business management tools with company requirements, deployed on-premise or in our private cloud, and financed via subscription, purchase, capital or operating lease. I-BN strives to transfer knowledge to its customers and partners to improve their productivity and business effectiveness.

