

Selecting the Best Cloud

As the popularity of cloud computing grows and the number of vendors offering it multiplies, the issue is not whether cloud computing is valuable, but what criteria users should apply when selecting a cloud services provider.

Single Vendor Integration

In today's telecommunications environment, a company might purchase VOIP phone service from one company, Internet service from another, and cloud services from another. Using different vendors for each technology can easily lead to gaps in service, incompatibility problems, and extensive IT headaches. A single vendor solution improves efficiency and lowers costs.

Dedicated High Speed Symmetrical Connections

Cloud services are only as strong as the Internet connection between the user and the cloud provider. To function properly, both upload

and download speeds must be fast and reliable. Most Internet vendors provide asymmetrical connections in which the upload speed is significantly lower than the download speed. This design is unacceptable in a cloud environment where data is being uploaded to cloud servers as often as downloaded. In addition, most Internet providers transmit data over the public open Internet, forcing neighboring businesses to share bandwidth. Consequently, a cloud provider that offers high-speed symmetrical Internet connections and employs a dedicated private network, instead of the public open Internet, is preferable to one without these capabilities.

Exclusive Access to the Data Center

An important security differentiator among cloud providers is whether "civilians" are allowed to enter the data center. In a practice called "co-location," some cloud providers allow customers to personally maintain their own servers and other hardware inside the provider's data center. The fact that a non-employee is in close proximity to servers holding confidential data of other organizations raises serious security concerns. Cloud providers that limit data center access to their own authorized employees and their own hardware do not face this risk.

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