

20 Questions You Should Ask of Your Backup & Disaster Recovery Provider



20 Must Ask Questions About Cloud Service Providers

1. What Do I Want From The Cloud?

Not every cloud provider offers the same services. It's important to clarify if they can fulfill your businesses requirements before taking discussions any further. You also need to be clear about your own objectives for switching to cloud based solutions and networks. Are you looking for services that will support your current network? Do you want to switch all of the software you use across to cloud hosting, take advantage of colocation services, or are you simply looking for a cloud backup solution to ensure the security of your data? Being clear about what you need will make it easier to find the right provider.

2. What Cloud Services Do You Recommended For My Business?

Once you have explained your overall objectives to a prospective cloud provider, it's always advisable to ask what services they recommend for your business. This will give you an idea of how well they understand your requirements, something that is key when selecting the provider you want to work with.

3. What Pricing Structure/ Options Do You Offer?

Cloud providers offer a whole host of pricing options and structures, it's important to understand what your options are before selecting a provider to work with.

You need to identify the provider offering the most value for money, while still feeling confident that you will receive the services and support that you require.

4. What Security Measures Do You Have In Place?

You will be trusting this provider to manage and protect business critical data and you need to know just what security measures they have in place.

How do they keep your data safe on a day to day basis, what firewalls, anti-virus, and other security precautions do they have in place, and how do they respond to threats? Do they have a documented disaster recovery plan in place and what is it?

5. Do You Own Your Own Data Centers And What Physical Security Methods Do You Have In Place?

Your cloud provider should take the security of the actual data center building as seriously as they do any online threats to your data. Do they operate their own data centers or just rent space? What measures do they have in place to secure your data should there be a hardware or electrical failure? Do they have measures in place to manage the unexpected such as fire or flooding?

6. What Backup Options Do You Offer?

Sometimes things go wrong and you need to be sure that your cloud provider can recover your data. What happens if the worst happens and your data is lost, how will they respond? Loss and corruption of data can have an immediate and devastating impact on your daily business operations. Knowing that your cloud backup provider can look after everything is essential.

7. What Uptime Can I Expect?

Any cloud provider worth their salt should be able to let you know the levels of uptime and downtime that they provide for their existing clients.

8. Can We Easily Change The Services Required To Meet Our Business' Needs?

Businesses grow and change, one of the key benefits of accessing business critical data and systems from the cloud is that it is a flexible option. Having said that, it's always advisable to speak to any potential cloud providers about their processes when it comes to altering the services you receive from them in any way.



9. How Do We Access Your Cloud And How Easy Is It To Get Set Up?

Many providers will simply provide you with access via a username and password that will allow you to manage your services from an interactive dashboard. It's always worth speaking to any potential cloud providers about access and the levels of control you will have as a client.

10. What Ongoing Support Do You Offer?

There will be times when you have questions or need assistance with something regarding your cloud services. Once your chosen cloud provider has signed you up, what level of ongoing support can you expect? Do they have any testimonials and/or clients you can talk to in order to back up the promises they are making regarding the support they offer?

11. What Is The Data Transfer Rate?

If you anticipate needing to back up large amounts of data, make sure you and the provider are up to the task, that is have high-speed Internet connections.

12. Does The Service Provide 256-Bit Ssl Connections And Data Encryption?

Most online or cloud backup services provide 256-bit SSL connections, but in some cases secure connections are optional – and may require paying an additional fee.

So before you sign up, find out what level of security you are entitled to for the advertised price or if you need to pay an additional amount for a 256-bit SSL connection. Similarly, make sure the backup service will encrypt your data.

13. How Safe Is My Data In The Case Of Disaster?

Many cloud backup services have redundant data sites, in case a data center experiences problems, but not all do. (That is, some only store data at a single site/data center.)

If you want to make sure your data has the highest level of protection, choose a backup service with a redundant data site.



14. What Are The Backup Service's Data Retention Policies?

Before choosing a backup provider, it is essential you find out what its retention policies are – and if they are flexible. For example, if you have a billing issue or dispute, and have not paid within 30 or 60 days, will the provider automatically delete all your data?

15. How Quickly Can I Recover My Data, Especially In The Case Of Emergency?

Will it take a few hours, a few days, or a few weeks? This question is critical as the whole reason you are backing up your data is in order to be able to retrieve it.

16. Does The Service Also Offer Or Help With Local Backup?

Some online backup providers offer local backup services (or help), either as part of their service or for an additional fee. If this is something you are interested in, ask upfront if it is an option – or how the service works with your existing onsite backup system(s).

17. Does Using This Backup Provider Make Sense From A Cost Vs. Benefits Perspective?

Price per gigabyte of data stored or transferred is not the only measurement of online service costs and benefits. You need to weigh the total cost of using a particular cloud backup provider, including the service and support it provides, the level of security and data protection and peace of mind.

18. Can Your Metadata, Not Just Files, Be Automatically Backed Up Daily?

This is critical to get data back to its original state with minimal headaches. You don't want a solution that simply gives you reams and reams of unorganized data, forcing you to have to look for that one piece of



lost data – the ‘needle in a haystack’ problem. You need a solution that rewinds time and puts everything back as it was before the data loss causing event occurred.

19. Can You Pick And Choose What To Restore, No Matter How Granular The Piece Of Data?

The key is a service that gives you the flexibility to select what and when you want to restore, as opposed to one that limits you to a ‘one-size-fits-all’ option. In

Salesforce for example, you may not need to restore all of your data for all of your accounts, but rather just a few select fields for a set of key accounts that were affected by a user's upload or merging activities.

20. Is The Vendor Fully Transparent About Your Backup Successes (And Failures) And Your Data Quality Issues?

Be sure your backup provider gives you daily status reports to show where data quality may be an issue. Sometimes you may be completely unaware of corrupt files and there is no way of detecting these without your provider alerting you to the situation.

Don't wait until you need to recover lost data to find out you've actually lost data. The cloud is fantastic and will continue to enhance how we all do business, but those who are serious about data protection and availability must do their homework when it comes to identifying the most suitable service offering to meet their needs. Only then will they avoid data loss roadblocks that can derail an upward growth trajectory.

Brian Weaver

Vice President of Cloud
Services

Bweaver@nsacom.com
(716) 710-2940