10 questions you should be asking your cloud provider

How much do you really know about your cloud environment? Download our free guide to find out all you need to know — from support and data sovereignty, to outages and accreditations.

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Welcome to Teledata

We're a Tier 3 data centre facility in Manchester, located right at the heart of one of the Manchester Airport City Enterprise Zones.

We're ISO27001 accredited and we provide premium colocation, cloud hosting and data centre services to businesses across the country. We're proud to be one of the most secure, resilient and well-connected data centres in the UK. In fact, our Security and Operations Control Centre (SOC) means that we're the only data centre globally, with an NSI Gold Approved BS5979 security centre on-site.

Bringing people and technology together...

Delivering the highest levels of service and support, we put people at the heart of our technology with solutions that are designed to optimise your business performance, empower your teams and help you to grow. Providing our network of clients with best-in-class hosting solutions, we can truly help to drive your business forward.

Our building, our builds, our people

We're proud to be Manchester's only premium independent data centre. We own the buildings that the servers are housed in, we built the data centres to top specification, and our dedicated support team is based right here too, looking after a network of clients across the globe.

Our people, your team

We bring people and technology together, and you can bank on our team of passionate technical experts to support you every step of the way.

All of our engineers are VMware® certified, SC cleared and background checked, and our customer support team is based right here on-site at Delta House in Manchester. In fact, the people you'll be chatting to about your everyday questions and queries are the people that built our data centre from the ground up, because we think there's nobody better to advise you, than them.

We'd love to see you...

Why not pop in for a tour of our facility? Visit our website at **www.teledata.co.uk** or call **0161 498 1200** for details.

Introduction

When a business invests in a physical IT infrastructure, it's common to spend large amounts of time assessing vendors, researching technologies, sourcing and buying hardware or choosing the right hosting or data centre partner. And rightly so. Your business critical data, and that of your customers, needs to be in the safest possible hands.

What **isn't** common practice however, is for businesses to use the same approach when it comes to cloud based infrastructures, where — for some reason — decisions are often based purely on price and features.

It's still the same, critical data. It still needs to be in the safest possible hands, but when it comes to cloud, businesses tend to be more relaxed. The same expectations are there, but the selection criteria seems to be lower.

In reality, businesses should be asking more questions about cloud infrastructures, than they do about physical ones.

In a cloud based environment, there is often less control in terms of choice of hardware and levels of redundancy, and your provider may not have had the same selection criteria as you would have liked — especially if they come in at a low price point. The truth is, most cloud providers don't have control over the whole stack, and cloud platforms vary enormously.

So, what should you ask your provider?

How much do you really know about your cloud environment? Are you handing over valuable business data without fully understanding where it's going, how it's being supported and who's looking after it?

Checklist

1   Who owns the data centre?

Does the cloud provider own their own data centres? If not, can they guarantee that the data is secure? Can they access the facility immediately, as required? What happens in the event of disaster? If your cloud provider is acting as a third party, there should still be the same transparency as there would be if you were dealing directly with the data centre provider. All the same questions apply, and your cloud provider should have a comprehensive understanding of the data centre's offering, in terms of security, latency and resilience.

2   How resilient is the cloud platform?

You should be prepared to ask a cloud provider questions about their uptime track record, the resilience and level of redundancy in their data centre, and the steps they take to avoid human error (which is the number one cause of unplanned IT outages). Data centre tier ratings don't always tell the whole story, so it's worth asking your provider about the specific characteristics that have earned their facility its classification. Be sure to ask about UPS redundancy, environmental monitoring, power and cooling, and how power is fed within the data centre, as well as their contracts and SLAs with any maintenance service providers.

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3 Where is my data?

Think about data sovereignty. Some cloud providers may host content outside of the UK, which poses regulatory questions. Cross-border data transfers can cause major compliance challenges, especially when it comes to GDPR and the NIS Directive. Data hosted outside the UK may also have an impact on latency, depending on where the ultimate end-users are accessing data from. Even if your cloud data centre is in the UK, what happens during a failover? Will you data always reside in the UK? Can your data centre provider guarantee data sovereignty?

4 Accreditations at the data centre

Accreditations aren't the be-all and end-all, but checking for compliance with standards should still be one of your first ports of call. Is the data entre compliant with ISO27001 (information security management) and can your provider show you any documentation? If you're going to be processing card payments and data, will the data centre help you achieve PCI DSS compliance? If they cite accreditations, ask for them to be backed up with certifications and ask to see the scope, to ensure certain services aren't excluded.

5 How secure is the building?

If a cloud hosting provider can't answer your questions about the security of their facility, or attempts to gloss over key points, this may be a sign they're not the right choice for your business. You should look for a wide range of security controls in your cloud data centre, including — but not limited to — on-site manned security, 24-hour CCTV monitoring, biometric scanners and swipe card access, and perimeter defences such as fencing, infra-red tripwires and mantraps. But remember, great security isn't just about great infrastructure. It's also about the people running it, and this will be reflected in their level of expertise and understanding of the risks.

6 How secure is the infrastructure?

Looking at accreditations is an excellent starting point when it comes to assessing security — compliance with ISO27001 for example. However, other accreditations outside of ISO will tell you how much time and effort the provider dedicates to security and compliance. You may want to look for certifications like the NSI Gold scheme for example, or the presence of SIA-approved personnel. It's easy to look at a cloud provider's website, see that a particular accreditation is listed, and take it at face value rather than undertaking an in-depth review of the relevant documentation. A cloud provider worth working with, should have no problem with you auditing their data centre premises.

7 What levels of support are available?

If you don't have an in-house cloud expert, it makes sense to choose a cloud partner that can offer a high level of quality support without significant extra cost. Having access to support — and lines of communication with engineers in the data centre environment itself — can be critical in order to solve performance and availability problems within the shortest possible time frames. Some hosting providers may be unable to offer direct access to on-site staff, so it's important to find this out before you make a decision. Ask about support hours, which support channels are available (phone, email, support tickets), whether or not their helpdesk is UK based and if you're moving from another provider, what kind of migration support is available.

8 What happens in an outage?

What is the hosting provider's uptime SLA and what technical controls are in place to ensure this is met? At the hosting platform level, what kinds of redundancy measures and resilience features will protect your business from the effects of downtime? In case of power outages, what level of UPS redundancy is available from the data centre? In case of network outages, how diverse are the network connections to and from the data centre? Does your cloud live in an area with a high environmental risk profile? Would it be possible for you to retrieve your data in the event of an outage?

9 What do their customers say?

It's worth doing your homework and finding out what any potential cloud provider's customers are saying about them. Can they provide customer references that you can contact? Can any case studies or testimonials that feature on the provider's website be followed up? What does the media, and their social media profiles say about them? A good provider should be transparent in all of these areas, showing a robust service offering and solid customer service across the board.

10 What levels of support are available?

Some cloud providers — normally those that offer cloud as part of a range of data centre services, such as colocation and disaster recovery — will allow you to visit their facilities and even offer a tour of the data centre itself (in person or virtually). If this option is available to you, we recommend you take advantage of the opportunity and get a feel for how the data centre is run. Use the chance to learn as much as possible about the facility, ask the right questions and have conversations with the on-site leadership team to really understand how the facility is run. If you're not entirely comfortable, it's probably time to look elsewhere.

If the option of a data centre tour is available to you, we recommend you take advantage of the opportunity and get a feel for how the data centre is run.

How can Teledata help?

Dual-site cloud with built-in DR — as standard. Teledata offers a cloud hosting service that you can rely on.

CloudActiv™ is our VMware® powered, Active-Active cloud platform which is delivered from one of the UK's most secure, resilient and well-connected data centres: our very own Delta House. Providing out-of-the-box, multi-site resilience and failover with built-in disaster recovery — as standard — CloudActiv gives you ultimate peace of mind.

With expert technical support, including comprehensive one-to-one orientation sessions and a library of pre-recorded webinar guides, you can manage everything from a single administration panel, wherever you are, defining your distribution of processing power, memory and storage allocations.

Find out more and get a free trial

To find out more about Teledata, or for a free trial or demo of any of our services, get in touch with our experts on **0161 498 1200** or email **enquiries@teledata.co.uk**.

Cloud Activ™

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people and technology together