

The Top Seven Considerations for Choosing a Data Center Services Partner

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An increasing number of companies are relying on Independent Service Organizations (ISOs) to provide all or part of their data center hardware maintenance, “Rack & Stack,” product/network monitoring and associated IT Infrastructure Services. The decision to contract for these services with an ISO is generally the result of internal cost-management initiatives, an interest in unifying service providers or, in the case of self-maintainers, internal staffing limitations. Some companies may find Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) pricing too expensive and service offerings too limited for their needs. Self-maintainers may not have the know-how to fully perform these functions on their own. Regardless of the business drivers, the decision to choose an ISO to support mission-critical systems and infrastructure is often complex, can require gaining buy-in from multiple operating departments, but very often delivers a custom, comprehensive IT Infrastructure Services solution at a lower cost. If your organization is thinking about outsourcing your data center services, the following considerations should factor into your decision.

1. Cost: Flexibility, Convenience, Bundling

With economic pressures affecting data center operations of all sizes across all industries, the cost to retain IT Infrastructure Service is generally a foremost consideration. Some service providers offer a portfolio of packaged, off-the-shelf services that are not customizable. Others offer flexible terms and conditions which let their clients select only those services and level of service they require, and also allow cancellation for convenience during the contract term. Flexibility and convenience are important attributes in an ever changing world of technology. Another important attribute to consider is bundling discounts across locations and product lines to gain maximum leverage in your services contract.



“Look to partner with a company that offers a flexible service delivery model and pricing structure and that provides maximum discounts via bundling of locations and products.”



“An ounce of around-the-clock prevention is worth a pound of cure. Look for a provider capable of monitoring your data center and one who proactively addresses problems before they arise.”

2. Single-Source Provider vs. the Use of Multiple Specialists

Some ISOS can handle a complete range of operational and management services and can support one or more of their clients’ data centers, irrespective of geographic location. Others provide more regional or local service. Some are vendor-specific, servicing and maintaining specific manufacturers’ hardware while others are vendor-neutral and can support multiple service platforms, network devices and storage products. Consolidating all your operations under a single roof with a single point of contact can be beneficial in terms of streamlining the administration of services. This poses fewer headaches in contract negotiation, financial planning, performance

reporting and many other key management issues. Know your needs, research all your options and pick the best option.



3. Global vs. Regional/Local Footprint

For multi-national organizations, partnering with a company that is itself a multi-national provider enables the consolidation of services across all your Data Center facilities. Some service providers claim to be global through their affiliates and the strategic alliances they forge with other companies. This can result in having



to sign multiple SLAs with different service providers at the regional or local level. These affiliates may have their own set of businesses practices, service models, and cost structures. Consolidating your SLAs under a single company with global operations enables you to sidestep these complexities while benefiting from the unified support of a single global business partner.

4. Deployment Efficacy and Scalability

Deployment efficiency is another major consideration in your choice of a data center services partner. A third-party provider's ability to meet your deployment timeline is crucial to the selection process. The more detailed communication that takes place and the more planning that is done upfront, the more likely you are to have the transfer of responsibilities go off without a hitch. This partner should also have the ability to flexibly accommodate your company's expansion needs both near-term and in the foreseeable future. While some providers offer off-the-shelf, packaged solutions that may require you to purchase service and levels of service you don't need, others offer flexible service and pricing models that can be customized to your precise needs.

It's important to choose a partner that can scale with you down the road.



5. Security

One of the most essential requirements for selecting a data center partner is selecting a partner with the knowledge of industry-specific reporting requirements (e.g., HIPPA, PCI/ DSS, SOX and other requirements), technology partner certifications, (ISO 9001, Microsoft, Cisco, HP, etc.) and personnel clearances (e.g., DOD) to ensure your operations and your data are kept confidential

and safe. You want to be able to sleep at night with the certainty that those managing your operations and your critical infrastructure are knowledgeable, competent, compliant and trustworthy.



6. Infrastructure Management Tools

Your users will have a better experience when you are able to head issues off at the pass. Check to make sure your partner offers “always-on” monitoring. This will help you make better decisions about hardware upgrades that might be needed down the road. Make sure also that the partner you select can handle all contingency planning issues, including backup and recovery. And be sure to ask about the depth of the company’s toolset. What is the

nature of the call management and escalation system, Help Desk service and off-site Network Operation Center (NOC)? Does the partner utilize the best tools on the market? Does the partner have the ability to spot risks before they become problems such as hardware end-of-life management and firmware upgrades that may be needed?

7. Experience and Referenceability

In the final analysis, nothing can replace the value of experience and reputation. Look at both the type and depth of experience the ISO has, the background and credentials of its top executives and the longevity of its service technicians. Has the company experienced a good deal of turnover of technical staff and top management? Has the company been continuously profitable? How long has the company been in business? Does it continually invest in improving its services and utilize best industry practices? Does it service other clients in your industry? Is it willing to make available a list of references? Is it willing to share its success stories with you? These are all important considerations in selecting a partner that will keep you and your data center operations in good health.





Interested in finding out how more about how to improve your Data Center operations? We'd love the opportunity to help you be more efficient. Contact Maintech Today.

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