

Choosing a Cloud Computing Services Provider

Data Privacy and Security Questions for IT Professionals

A new generation of Internet-based data storage and services technology—known as “cloud computing”—offers organizations greater choice, agility and flexibility while also driving efficiency gains and lowering overall IT costs. Protecting the privacy of your organizational and customer data is a key deciding factor when evaluating vendors of cloud computing services.

Here are some important questions to ask a prospective cloud services provider.

Big Picture Data Privacy Questions

What is the cloud services provider's information privacy policy?

- + How does it align with my organization's policy?
- + Does it show that the provider understands the challenges of data privacy in the cloud?

Does the provider have an Information Security Management System (ISMS)?

What can I learn from my organization's previous outsourcing practices that apply to "outsourcing" in the cloud?

What happens if my customer data is breached? What process does the provider use to notify me so that I can comply with breach notification laws?

Is the provider experienced in meeting data privacy requirements in my industry and geography?

Is this provider allowed to move my data to another provider if storage becomes a concern, and would I be informed?

- + How would I move my data to another cloud provider that provides specific services, such as additional computing power for handling large databases?

The Details

Organize your more detailed questions in categories that map to your organization's specific privacy-related processes, needs and concerns. Here are some examples.

SECURE INFRASTRUCTURE

Would my data reside on an infrastructure that is shared with other customers?

- + How will the provider isolate my data from other customers sharing the same servers, network or backup devices?

How does the provider protect against viruses and other malware? What happens if it finds a problem?

What is the provider's physical security plan?

How can I use information from an Intrusion Protection System (IPS) or Intrusion Detection System (IDS) that pertains to my organization, and that is supplied by the cloud provider?

IDENTITY AND ACCESS CONTROL

How does the provider handle provisioning—such as adding, changing and revoking employee accounts and data access rights?

- + Does this process offer me the appropriate level of control?

INFORMATION PROTECTION

Does the provider enable encryption of my sensitive data that is moved to the cloud?

- + In transit and in storage?
- + For structured and unstructured information?

How can we work together to prevent data leakage?

- + What tools can the provider supply, or what tools should I consider?

How can I perform forensics on data that I don't physically control?

AUDITING AND REPORTING

Are the provider's methods of reporting on data privacy compliance enough to satisfy my internal process and external regulatory requirements?

Microsoft has been examining and addressing privacy challenges in the evolving cloud computing realm for well over a decade, which has helped us create well-defined business practices, privacy policies and security measures that govern Microsoft's cloud computing services.

Learn more at www.microsoft.com/privacy/.