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Integrated Business Technology
One Company, One Call

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN EVALUATING CLOUD BUSINESS PHONE PROVIDERS



A guide from Mitel



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Businesses today are increasingly turning to cloud business phone systems to meet their communications needs. But how do you know which offering is right for you? This eGuide outlines 12 categories – and questions within each – to help you evaluate cloud business phone providers and ensure you make an informed decision that will benefit your business.

Cloud business phones: 12 categories to consider

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|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Infrastructure | 4. Compliance | 7. Ease of use | 10. Integration |
| 2. Reliability | 5. Features | 8. Adaptability | 11. Administration |
| 3. Support | 6. BYOD support | 9. Scalability | 12. Implementation |



1 | Infrastructure

What is your cloud infrastructure like?

A cloud provider with the expertise in place to host a carrier-class network should have several best practices in place to ensure maximum security. The provider should also employ industry standard encryption, firewall configurations and protection systems to prevent outside network intrusion and ensure security.

Be sure to ask:

- *Where is your data stored?*
- *Is everything backed up?*
- *What types of disaster recovery solutions do you have in place?*
- *How do you ensure data is safe?*
- *Are your data centers redundant?*



2 | Reliability

How do you monitor uptime?

A cloud provider's very existence relies on its ability to provide consistent service. Look for a provider with redundant data centers, that also has direct relationships with multiple Tier 1 Internet and telephony carriers.

Be sure to ask:

- *Do you provide 24 / 7 / 365 monitoring and support?*
- *How will I be notified in the event of downtime?*
- *Will I be able to review your Service Level Agreement (SLA)?*
- *Will you provide guarantees and financial penalties if you fail to meet these requirements?*





3 | Support

How does your customer support work?

Since the cloud provider manages the overall telecom infrastructure, your team is able to focus on more pressing issues that are key to advancing your business. However, in the event of a problem, a reputable cloud business phone provider should have strong support mechanisms in place to quickly respond to your needs.

Be sure to ask:

- *What are your support hours?*
- *Is your support managed internally and in a geographic location that is relevant to us?*
- *Are there any associated costs?*
- *Are you a single source provider and will you serve as the interface on our behalf to resolve issues when other parties are involved?*



4 | Compliance

Will I be compliant using your solution?

With the right cloud business phone provider, compliance is easily covered without putting the burden of maintaining it on your staff. Cloud-based applications can often provide a more rapid rollout of new features that address regulatory standards, while ensuring conformity across multiple locations.

Be sure to ask:

- *What compliance requirements do you meet (e.g., HIPAA, SOC2)?*
- *Do you have routine audits done to ensure compliance?*
- *Are your data centers SSAE 16 compliant?*



5 | Features

How will your features address our needs?

A cloud provider can provide basic calling features (e.g., caller ID, voicemail, conferencing) as well as advanced features such as video, team collaboration and mobile apps. New features are added regularly and are available immediately, without the need to upgrade the entire system.

Be sure to ask:

- *What features do you have in place that address the goals unique to our organization?*
- *How intuitive is the experience for your users?*
- *How often do you provide new releases?*



6 | BYOD support

Can you support our needs, no matter the location or device?

To make dispersed teams productive, your staff needs more than a phone system that simply connects a call. They also need to move seamlessly between phone calls, chats, video conferences and desktop sharing. Look for a cloud business phone that supports collaboration across all devices, no matter the type.

Be sure to ask:

- Can employee devices be integrated with your network?
- Can you provide video, instant messaging and desktop sharing to facilitate greater collaboration from anywhere?
- Do you provide an automatic Wi-Fi/cellular call handover to stay connected everywhere?
- Are you able to keep voice and signaling safe, even in public hot spots?



7 | Ease of use

Are your features user friendly?

Users will be quicker to adopt communications tools that are simple to use, and that look and work as easily as the consumer apps they've come to love. Make sure you select a cloud business phone system that is simple to use and intuitive in nature.

Be sure to ask:

- Can you gain access from various browsers or mobile devices?
- Are functions easily completed with single commands vs. multiple steps?
- What training is available, both during implementation and on an ongoing basis?



8 | Adaptability

Can your solution evolve with our business?

Choosing a business phone system is no simple task. To ensure you select a solution that will last, make sure you have the flexibility to evolve in the future. Some providers give you more choices than others, so you'll want to get a good understanding of any limitations up front so you're not stuck researching providers again in a couple of years.

Be sure to ask:

- *Do you have a solution that will enable us to make a gradual move to the cloud?*
- *Can I mix and max service plans and change on-demand?*
- *Does your phone system support future and emerging technologies?*



9 | Scalability

Can your solution grow as our business grows?

To succeed in today's competitive landscape, businesses must be agile. A cloud phone system can scale quickly, no matter if the need is prompted by rapid growth mergers or industry changes.

Be sure to ask:

- *Do you have a solution that can scale as business demands change?*
- *Can you support the capacity of newly acquired business units?*
- *Can you add user profiles easily, or do we have to purchase them upfront?*



10 | Integration

Can you integrate with our existing systems?

Integrations between cloud-based solutions are often pre-built or easier to facilitate, so a cloud phone system can offer integration options with other cloud-based systems you may be using (e.g., EMR, CRM).

Be sure to ask:

- *Does your solution have the ability to be configured to meet specific needs?*
- *Will it integrate with our existing systems?*



11 | Administration

How easy is it to manage?

Cloud apps often provide greater opportunities for oversight and hands-on management since accounts, users and functionality can be securely accessed from anywhere. Many businesses often experience a greater sense of control when they move to a cloud vendor that provides single-source service, minimizing the number of calls needed to answer pressing questions and concerns.

Be sure to ask:

- *How much technical understanding does our staff need to run your solution?*
- *How easy is it to administer and use?*



12 | Implementation

How do you handle implementation?

With little to no hardware to install, you can move implementation of a cloud-based phone system along at a pace that's right for your organization. Departments, teams or locations can be migrated over to the new phone system in a phased approach that meets the needs of your business.

Be sure to ask:

- *How will you help us to start up?*
- *How long will the implementation process take?*
- *Do you offer phasing?*



Next steps

You've got the questions, now it's time to get all the answers. Talk to the cloud experts at Mitel today. Call **1.844.YES.MITEL** or visit **mitel.com**.

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