



6 Questions for a Prospective Cloud Service Provider

Introduction

In order to remain competitive in today's global marketplace, organizations must constantly improve customer service, reduce IT overhead, and increase efficiency—frequently with fewer resources than before. This may seem like an impossible feat, but the advent of UCaaS (Unified Communications as a Service) has enabled IT departments to be viewed as business drivers rather than cost centers.

Companies looking to take advantage of a cloud UC strategy need to consider the move from a myriad of business perspectives. “How will Provider X's solution serve specific departmental needs as well as the requirements of the organization as a whole?” “Will Provider Y be able to better equip us with the required tools to streamline processes and increase collaboration?”

Here are six additional questions to ask any potential UCaaS provider before making a decision.

01. How robust are your analytics?

Earlier this year, Nucleus Research reported that enterprises with tactical analytics deployments earn an average ROI of 389%. Data that provides real-time dashboard views into the internal workings of a business can have strategic benefits toward aligning technology investments with business objectives. Fuze deeply integrated analytics capabilities provide just such information, in ways that allow customers to baseline activities and develop strategies that improve workforce processes. By leveraging data aggregated across the Fuze suite of services and third-party applications (e.g. Presence, Voice, and Contact Center), it's possible for users to draw previously unattainable conclusions and to act on this data.



02. What is your mobile solution?

Reliability and mobility must go hand in hand, as customers are no longer willing to sacrifice one for the other. UCaaS can dramatically simplify mobile application deployment and management, and many organizations are now opting for a mobile-first strategy, replacing traditional desktop phones with smartphones and tablets to connect their increasingly distributed workforces.

Our own Fuze mobile solution features iOS and Android smartphone and tablet support, mobile integration of IP PBX and other core cloud UC applications, improved management visibility into mobile workforce activities, and seamless connectivity between fixed Wi-Fi/wireless communications networks.

03. How well do you play with others?

UCaaS providers must be comfortable accessing third-party APIs and supplying customers with homegrown APIs to facilitate deeply-integrated functions. Our customers find significant value in our ability to marry our adaptive platform with business applications that run the gamut from hosted software like Salesforce.com to industry or even company-specific technologies.

Part of the value of cloud communications lies in its ability to integrate a range of business applications, thereby removing the historical islands of technology that have made workplace communications and collaboration less than optimal.



04. What kind of disasters recovery do you have?

Fuze has a high-availability, fully redundant, multi-data center architecture that allows us to guarantee service availability in the event of a data center failure. In short, regardless of the reason for failure (e.g. storm or man-made disaster), we are able to continue to provide services even if an entire data center goes offline. To facilitate this capability, each UC service end point is programmed to a primary data center while having secondary and even tertiary data centers available for immediate device (DID and configuration) failover.

05. How flexible are you?

Networks are required for every UC implementation. However, mandating the deployment of a new MPLS network just to support cloud UC services is not practical, nor cost effective. Your provider should give you the option to bring your own network or provide one for you. As an example, many companies already have an MPLS network in place for their data needs that is working well for them and would be sufficient. Unlike other cloud UC providers, we allow customers to securely extend existing MPLS networks into our data centers, offering a cost-effective way to migrate to the cloud with enterprise quality (CoS), without the need to dislodge existing network investments.

06. How are you when it comes to customer success?



This last, and possibly most important, topic spans everything from on-site delivery, deployment, and support to service-level agreements. Look for a UCaaS provider that offers an end-to-end solution that addresses everything from planning to security.

Ensure that the company you choose is willing to commit to high availability and quality of service on a 24x7 basis. And don't discount experience. It's critical that you partner with someone who has been around long enough to understand what it takes to define your UC vision, align it with strategic business objectives, and deploy it intelligently.

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