10 Ways to Make the Most of Your Data Center Investment

While outsourcing your data center services can be less expensive than maintaining your own in-house data center, it's still a considerable monetary commitment. That's why most companies want to maximize their ROI by finding the right data center partner.

"Knowing what to ask and what to look for in a data center partner can help companies save valuable time and resources," explains Josh Moody, Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing at FORTRUST. "Businesses entrust a large component of their livelihood to their data center, so it's important to work with someone with integrity and who will follow through."

Here are 10 questions to help ensure you find a data center that fits your needs and can help you make the most of your data center investment.

1. Have you considered consolidating data centers?

If your company's main focus is to prevent downtime and data loss, you may be considering colocation at multiple, lower quality sites. Instead, consider colocating in one or two facilities that have an impeccable uptime record. This solution will remove redundant IT assets, software, maintenance and support, and disaster recovery contracts while maintaining the reliability you require.

2. Is your hardware rationalized?

Rationalizing your hardware will provide a clear look at your inventory, giving insight into which machines are used effectively and which are not. By paring down your equipment, you can lower maintenance and support charges as well as lower energy costs, freeing up capital to allocate more wisely elsewhere.

3. How secure is your data center?

Security is one of the biggest concerns for businesses looking to outsource their data center services. Your data center partner should deploy a combination of multi-layered and progressive security measures to control personnel access with multiple points and types of 2-factor authentication, including card readers and biometric scanners, dual mantraps, security identification points, CCTV, and 24-hour onsite security guards combined with offsite security monitoring. Your data center should be doing all they can to protect your company's assets from attack.

4. Does your data center provide constant customer support?

In addition to security teams and a skilled operations team, your data center should provide a professional, highly available customer support team. A problem, question, or a need to alter your services or environment could come up at any moment. A live support staff should be available to you 24/7/365 to handle any questions, concerns, or requests for assistance quickly and with competence.

5. Can your data center accommodate you now and in the future?

It's important to select a data center that can accommodate your legacy hardware, extend its lifetime, and yet allow for future growth when customer computing demands or technology increase. A typical data center traditionally over-provisions, but a data center that provides a fit-for-purpose solution to match your requirements now and in the future optimizes your data center investment.

6. Have you considered data modules?

In terms of energy consumption, security, and design, data modules offer some of the most efficient methods of colocation. Modules segregate hot and cold aisle containment and adjust cooling parameters based on the customer's real time IT load. Their effective method of cooling allows for higher density computing, which maximizes space and efficient energy utilization, thus reducing operation costs by as much as 18.5 percent. By providing the infrastructure to perform high density computing, as well as savings from the energy efficient design and an extra layer of security due to its containerized architecture, modules are an effective colocation solution.

7. How efficient is your data center?

Consider storing your infrastructure at a facility that maximizes operational efficiency. A highly efficient data center will have lower operations costs, which results in lower rates for the customer. Efficiency also speaks to how well a data center is run and maintained. Look for features that keep the data center's IT equipment running longer and at peak operating efficiency like seismic enhancements, custom air filtration systems, closed loop cooling systems, and comprehensive Data Center Infrastructure Management (DCIM).

8. Can you be sure your IT environment is optimized and your SLA is being met?

Most data centers today use a DCIM system that allows them to monitor the data center's critical infrastructure, but a few progressive facilities are now offering their customers a real-time view into their data center environment as well. This virtual window offers insight into how and where your resources are being expended without speculation. This visibility ensures your SLA is being met, and informs you of any adjustments that need to be made.

9. Does your data center provide ample connectivity?

Internet and WAN connectivity is vital to maintaining normal business operations in a connected world. Be sure your data center has a robust network infrastructure and employs several carriers with intelligent route optimization capabilities and regional peering points. Diversified connectivity, high redundancy, and intelligent load balancing ensure you experience low latency and a lower risk of uninterrupted service, which can be costly to your company.

10. What is your data center's uptime record?

Recent reports show that the average length of an outage was 86 minutes. When you factor in the average cost per minute of downtime – $7,900 – that means the average total cost of an outage was a whopping $690,200. With that in mind, smart IT organizations need a data center that does everything it can to prevent a costly unplanned outage. To minimize the chance of an interruption of services, choose a data center with risk mitigation features, a resilient critical systems design, a thorough DCIM, a well-trained operations team, and frequently tested redundant components and critical systems infrastructure. Be sure to ask for the data center's uptime record, as well as the frequency of critical systems infrastructure (electrical and mechanical distribution) maintenance windows, which are the true measuring stick for any data center provider.

Every data center is different and will offer varying levels of service. Invest in a facility that offers all of the above to ensure that your organization receives the benefits and protection it needs. At the end of the day, your data center should be more than just another expense; it should serve as a valuable business partner to make your job easier.

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FORTRUST is one of the most progressive high-availability data center services providers in North America, serving clients across the globe who depend on colocation services for a critical lifeline of their business. FORTRUST Denver is the largest data center in the region with over 300,000 square feet and 34 megawatts of data center capacity. FORTRUST offers agile, reliable, sustainable and secure raised floor and modular data center capacity for any-size enterprise supported by optimal power infrastructure and connectivity to safeguard mission-critical business services. In addition to the national headquarters in Denver, FORTRUST has data center locations in Phoenix, Arizona and Edison, New Jersey. www.ftdc.com