



CHECKLIST - Cloud Service Provider

The questions you need to ask to find **the right partner**

What to look for in a cloud services provider (CSP)

Deciding which CSP to partner with is a decision that must not be taken lightly. Your hard-earned reputation, relationships, and revenue depend on it. The CSP checklist is based on feedback from our partners who were once where you are.

Some of them said they had originally let the big CSP's seemingly low prices make the decision for them. But, they soon regretted their decisions.

They discovered that the big CSP's partner programs and technical support subscriptions were cost prohibitive. The "affordable" tiers provided inadequate support. This left them in no-win scenarios which resulted in damaged reputations and relationships.

CSP Checklist			
Topic	Questions to ask:	PASS	FAIL
Track Record / Experience	How long has the CSP been working with cloud server technologies? Does the CSP have 5 years or more experience or will they be learning the ropes at your expense?		
Hosting Facilities	Ask the CSP for a list of standards their facilities comply with. Are their North America datacenter(s) compliant with standards such as: ISO 27001, ISO 9001, SSAE16, SOC1-Type II, and SOC2-Type II? Do their non-USA facilities meet SOC1-Type II standards? When was the most recent audit? Is the CSP willing to provide you all certification documents and audit reports? Do the facilities meet your standards?		
Agency Certifications / Compliancy	If you or your customers operate in a regulated industry (e.g. Pharmaceutical, Life Sciences, Financial Services etc.) ask the CSP if their infrastructure and hosting facilities are compliant or validated for the applicable agency certifications such as (but not limited to) HIPAA, GxP, 21 CFR Part 11, Annex 11, GAMP 5, GDPR etc. Does the CSP have strong relationships with experienced validation consultants who can help alleviate your regulatory concerns by developing repeatable actions that streamline and centralize audit-ready validation processes?		
Infrastructure	Ask the CSP for storage, networking and compute component level details. Ask the CSP which technologies and processes are used to ensure high levels of performance, reliability, security and availability. Does the CSP use enterprise class, state-of-art cloud hardware and software and do they keep it current? Does the CSP provide hardware component-level manufacturing location details?		
Service Level & Customer Agreements	SLAs and customer agreements are not always what they appear to be. Is it easy to understand what is and what is not covered? Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined? What is the CSP's penalty if they fail to meet their responsibilities? What language (tone) was used to create the agreements? Were they written to support you, or were they written to protect the CSP?		
Configuration Flexibility	Does the CSP let you build custom configurations to match your client's needs? Does the CSP force you into costly over-provisioned configurations where you end up paying for resources your clients don't require? Even worse, are you forced into provisioning under-sized configurations that can fall short of your client's performance expectations? Are there additional costs imposed for the ability to scale up or down? How easy is it to bi-directionally scale a configuration to satisfy your client's requirements?		
Sales Model / Margins	Does the CSP sell its services wholesale so you can maximize your margin potential and grow your business? Does the CSP publicize its price list making it difficult for you to own your pricing/margin strategy?		
Friend or Foe	Does the CSP sell to direct end users? Will the CSP end up competing with you? Does the CSP have a SaaS business unit (Trojan horse) that could be leveraged to infiltrate your accounts? Is there a risk that the CSP could compete with any facet of your business?		
Contracts / Commitments	Does the CSP work hard to earn your business and even harder to keep it? Is the CSP committed to your success? Does the CSP realize they can't be successful unless you are? Does the CSP ask you to commit to long term contracts or sales volumes? Why?		

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Partner Program Requirements	Are there membership fees to join the CSP's partner program? Are there costs associated with partner program "tiers"? Are you required to have employees take expensive and sometimes lengthy training/certification classes?		
Technical Support	Is the CSP's support staff available when you need them and at no additional cost? Does the CSP's engineers answer your calls (24x7x365) or are there times when you're forced to deal with outsourced (sometimes not as competent) support?		
Cost Transparency	Does the CSP provide transparency to the "small details" behind all costs? Does the CSP have hidden costs such as outbound data costs, on-shore / off-shore support costs, costs for support requests after "regular" business hours, transaction costs etc.? Does the CSP advertise low costs that don't align with the real cost of doing business?		
Cloud Platform Ownership / Control	Is the CSP just a "Me Too" cloud provider using a commodity cloud "package" from a software vendor? Does the CSP own the cloud management platform and roadmap, thereby enabling them to address requests you may have for feature enhancements?		
Tools or Solutions	Does the CSP provide you with complete end-to-end solutions or do they point you to 3rd party "tool" vendors and leave the implementation up to you?		
Focus / Distractions	Will the CSP focus on being the best cloud services partner they can be for you or are they distracted with other business units? Does the CSP treat all its customers equal or do they give preferential treatment to their direct, mega-customers/partners?		
White Label Marketing & Sales Support	Will the CSP provide white label marketing and sales support if you want to leverage your brand? Will the CSP accommodate your desire to use their brand if you prefer not to self-brand?		
Partner Portal	Does the CSP provide a self-service, intuitive portal that can be branded (if desired)? Does the CSP's portal provide all the tools you need to effectively and efficiently support your clients?		
Account Team	Does the CSP assign a full-time account team to you? Does the sales rep/account manager act as your evangelist (trusted advisor) or do they just want to sell you more product? Does the CSP charge you for tiered account level support? Do you have to pay to be a partner? Why?		
Portfolio Breadth	Does the CSP's portfolio include the services you need to satisfy all of your client's requirements? Does the CSP offer bare metal servers, physical and virtual servers, disaster recovery as a service, backup as a service, server migration, private and public clouds etc.?		

To learn more about Egenera's Xterity Cloud Services please contact us at:

USA - Headquarters

Egenera, Inc.
80 Central Street
Boxborough, MA 01719 USA
phone: 978-206-6300
www.egenera.com
email: info@egenera.com

Asia/Pacific

Egenera, K.K.
Kojimachi Crystal City
West Bldg. 4-8-1 Kojimachi
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0083
Japan
phone: +81-3-6261-6301
japan.egenera.com
email: info-jp@egenera.com

EMEA - Dublin

Egenera, Ltd.
4033 Citywest Avenue
Citywest Business Park
Dublin 24
Ireland
phone: +353 (0) 1 485 3473
www.egenera.com
email: sales@xteritycloud.ie

EMEA - London

Egenera, Ltd.
21 St. Thomas Street
Bristol, BS1 6JS
United Kingdom
phone: +44 (0) 203 808 5563
email: emea@Egenera.com

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