**Progression**
whatever IT takes!

# How to Choose a Cloud Service Provider

# HOW TO CHOOSE A CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDER

Cloud computing is still an evolving technology. It marks the transition from you owning the hardware and software to you renting it for your business needs. It's the disruptive technology that's enabling businesses like no other. While the benefits of the cloud model for enterprises are many, moving to the cloud should be a carefully considered decision.

The most critical aspect in this is the Cloud Service Provider. While you can look at the hardware part of cloud as commodity, you have to switch to a view that you are now looking for a Service, and not merely renting boxes. And that can be tricky business. So what are the things to keep in mind when you choose a Cloud Service Provider?

## 1. CHOOSE AN ENTERPRISE - CLASS CLOUD

A cloud is a cloud. Right? Wrong. A cloud could be set up with a few boxes, with some freeware, in a dingy basement, with an engineer playing the all-round expert. It could also be set up in a fortified data center using state-of-the-art hardware, and tried, tested and benchmarked software, and run by specialized experts. A cloud could be set up in any configuration in between these as well.

So all clouds are not equal.

What would you choose for your business? If your business needs security and uptime, the last thing you need is your cloud service provider battling security breaches and patching freeware bugs or grappling with commodity hardware going bust.

### Current-Generation Infrastructure

*With Progression,* you can be assured that you get the top-of-the-end hardware and world-class cloud software and applications. This is because Progression has long-standing partnerships with HP, Oracle, VMware, Cisco, Check Point, Microsoft and Citrix.

## 2. OPT FOR MANAGED CLOUD

Do not sign up for a cloud service without asking if it's managed or not. Are you looking for self-service and self-management? Or do you want support, backups and monitoring? What works better for your business: your team trying to remotely manage things; or your service provider running it like clockwork for you?

Cost is one aspect in this equation. You might get a server or two for what looks like a steal. But then the business needs backups, monitoring and management.

### State-of-the-art NOC

*Progression's* Network Operations Center is equipped with monitoring and tracking tools that keep a continuous eye on each aspect of the infrastructure deployed for your business. These tools show the health of the systems through easy-to-read dashboards, and throw up alerts well before any issue can turn critical.

And the costs quickly spiral out of control. Sometimes you end up paying 4-5 times of the low-cost servers you signed up for! So don't presume that all clouds are managed. Read the fine print. Check before you sign up for things which are not there in the SLA, and ask for them.

## 3. LOOK FOR TRANSPARENCY

There are pricing calculators on most large cloud service providers' websites. They look cheap when you are dealing with just a few servers. And as your need for virtual machines increases, so does the complexity of backups, monitoring and management. And then the pricing will not be the forecast you have in mind. Be clear about what your needs are today, and how will they change over time. And estimate all the possible services you might need in a few months. And then take a call. Just going by the lowest price offer of today may not lead to the lowest TCO you are aiming for.

**Help with Pricing Models**

If you have a cloud pricing deal which sounds too good to be true, it likely is. You can get in touch with any of our Cloud Experts who can then help you figure out what all you need to have covered in the deal, given your business objectives.
Call us at *0124-6670100*.

## 4. GO LOCAL: LATENCY, COMPLIANCE, PRIVACY

How important are these to your business? As government regulations become more stringent, and as end user demand grows with respect to data confidentiality and privacy, companies are moving their applications hosted in a different country back to their own. Many companies do this to improve latency issues as well. Choose a cloud on these parameters as well. So clouds are increasingly going to be local.

**Location Options**

*Progression* gives a choice of locations of data centers. Our primary data center is in Gurgaon, which is Tier3+ and ISO 27001: 2013 certified. Our DR facility is based in Chennai, so we can offer high uptime, while delivering low latency and ease of compliance.

## 5. ASSESS SECURITY

A cloud is likely to be more secure than the security setups that most mid-size and even many large enterprises have on their premises. Internal threats are not given much thought to, in many enterprises.

But not all cloud service providers will deliver the kind of security you probably assume is being given to you. Make sure that you are aware of the firewalls, IDS/IPS and other systems that they have, and the processes they follow to ensure that there are no breaches. Does the service you signed up for give you the protection of an enterprise-class firewall and IDS/IPS, or do you have to pay extra?

Even if a data center does have the best-in-class security systems in place, it's still important to have a continuous monitoring system in place to ensure that any new threats are handled before they result in downtime for you. Ask for certifications like ISO 27001: 2013.

**World-Class Security Systems and Processes**

*Progression* uses Check Point systems, which are used by financial institutions worldwide for their security needs. We are ISO certified and among the few to be so, etc. We use secure VPNs, militarized zones, and strict processes to ensure the infrastructure, and secure.

# 6. UNDERSTAND AVAILABILITY

Availability is a much abused word. You will hear numbers being bandied about when it comes to availability. Tier 2,3, 4, and 99.95%, 99.999% and so on. What do they mean? And do you really get what is being promised? How is it being calculated? Is it annual, monthly, or on a rolling basis?

A Tier 3 data center is expected to deliver 99.9982% uptime, which translates to less than 1.6 hours of downtime in a year. Running a data center comes with huge challenges and a managed cloud service provider has to address them to be able to deliver the uptime businesses need. Yet if your business demands zero downtime, it's best to consider having multiple data centers across geographies.

### Uptime Needed by Your Business

*Progression's* data center has been designed for high availability.There really is no single point of failure. Right from the power supply and diesel generators to UPSs, air conditioning units to network connectivity, power lines, racks, switches, servers and storage-redundancy is built in at every stage. That's why we call it a Tier3+ data center. It's built to deliver lower than 1.6 hours of downtime. But if you want zero downtime, we design an infrastructure architecture spread across multiple data centers.

# 7. DO YOU GET SUPPORT?

Do not assume that you will get support for the service you have signed for. Do they have a helpdesk? Can you file tickets online and expect a call back? Is it only e-mail or chat support? Do you get an Account Manager? What is the process of support? Do they proactively track issues so you don't even come to know of them, or do you become the first customer who places the call when you face the issue? Who is responsible for your instances, virtual machines?

Does your service provider have capabilities across platforms and technologies to proactively solve issues that come up?

Who has the Single Point of Responsibility?

### Whatever IT Takes

At *Progression*, we pride ourselves on taking Single Point of Responsibility. Multiple vendors may be involved in the deployment of a project, which often leads to finger-pointing and loss of time and money for clients. But we take ownership and ensure that we work through all the challenges and meet the project specifications and deadlines more than satisfactorily. We believe that we must take care of the project, Whatever IT Takes.

# 8. CHANGING YOUR CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDER

You can change your cloud service provider, but it is not necessarily easy. Especially if your data volume is huge. In the SaaS model, you have to be extremely careful because you might not even have root access to your data. The reason for this challenge is that a common standard doesn't exist for cloud and SaaS models. When all cloud service providers agree upon a standard, things will become simpler. But be sure to have this conversation with the service provider, so you are well aware of what your exit options. And add them into the contract as well.

### You Have an Exit Option

*Progression's* clients always stay on to become lifelong customers. We have clients who have been with us for over 18 years. We see no reason for you to exit a Managed Cloud services contract with us. However, if for any reason, you do need to exit, we will work with you to help you take your data and application out.

# 9. CAREFUL ABOUT LICENSING

If you already have software licenses that you're using on your on-premise infrastructure, can those be ported to the cloud? Not necessarily. Not all cloud service providers allow licensing mobility. The way you count your licenses may not be how the software vendor might. So your budgets can go off track. Be sure to check with the cloud service provider about how the licenses will be sued, how many more will have to purchased, and what will happen in future with new versions.

**Figure out the Licenses**

If you don't know how licensing portability works, and how many OS, ERP and other application licenses you would need, speak to our Licensing Experts to figure out. Call us at *0124-6670100*.

### About Progression

Ever since its inception in 1995, Progression has been at the forefront of technology delivering outstanding IT infrastructure services to create significant business value for its customers. Today, Progression is a leading IT infrastructure service provider and Managed Cloud company. Progression delivers a comprehensive range of cloud offerings, remote management services, and managed hosting and DR services to its valued customers across the world.

With team strength of 125 and growing, Progression has engineers trained and certified in designing, architecting, selling, servicing and optimizing computing infrastructure based on products from market leaders such as VMware, HP, Oracle and Microsoft. Progression is widely recognized for its passion to stay abreast of the latest technology innovations and breakthroughs. It has been a leader in Server virtualization/consolidation solutions, and builds Private Clouds and offers Public Cloud computing services for business critical applications.

Progression is ISO 27001:2013 certified and adheres to ITIL v3 standards in service delivery. The company has been recognized for its commitment to deliver the right solutions to customers through awards instituted by CRN, SME Channels, ITPV, VMware, and Hewlett Packard.

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