10 Questions You Should Ask Every SharePoint Hosting Provider

❑ How much of your company is focused on SharePoint?

It's important to identify early how much of the hosting provider's business is centered on SharePoint. Whenever you're outsourcing work, you want qualified experts on the case, and while some providers may be 'Cloud' experts - you need a 'SharePoint Cloud' expert.

❑ How long have you been hosting SharePoint?

This follows the same logic as the previous question. How do we identify a provider's expertise? *By practice.* The longer the provider has been in business, the more SharePoint environments they've planned, built and deployed. Expertise is a result of knowing a service inside and out, so make sure your SharePoint hosting provider has the credentials to back it up.

❑ What is your support availability?

You can't settle for anything less than 24/7. SharePoint is an unpredictable platform that can spring a leak at an unfortunate time. Your IT team may be asleep, but if you're outsourcing this role, the SharePoint hosting provider must be committed to fixing problems around the clock.

❑   How much control do I have over my servers?

Another pivotal differentiator is administrative control for your servers. You don't have to relinquish this control despite what some providers may tell you. A dedicated SharePoint environment provider will be able to give you full parity with an on-premises solution, including the ability to log into your servers and customize your private cloud. You should always have full access to your managed cloud.

❑   Am I limited in what I can add to the environment?

Here, you cannot settle for anything less than unlimited customization capabilities. This will only be available, for the most part, with a Private Cloud SharePoint Hosting provider. Shared environments may limit your functionality but if you have true control over your server, you can add 3rd party apps that enhance SharePoint's built-in capabilities.

❑   Are your SLA guarantees financially-backed?

If you experience an outage or latency as a result of your hosting provider, you need a Service Level Agreement that offers a 100% uptime guarantee or as close to it as you feel comfortable. This guarantee should be financially-backed because if it affects your business, it costs money. Make sure to always carefully review the SLA with your SharePoint hosting provider so you completely understand what they are responsible for.

❑   Can I use our current SharePoint licenses?

An advantage that many SharePoint hosting providers can offer is the ability to work with your current SharePoint licensing or help set up new ones for your business. It's an important question to ask because it can save your company a lot of money in licensing costs.

❑   Do you meet compliancy standards for my industry?

Before even considering hosting, know what securities you need behind your data. Once you have the compliancy standards for your industry, make sure that your hosting provider's data center has these competencies. Make them show you.

❑   How secure is your data center(s)?

Security is paramount to your company's data and your hosting provider's data center can give you enterprise capabilities that were previously unavailable due to cost or size. Carefully review the different security features that your provider's data center possesses and even ask to visit it if possible. Ask about compliances. Ask about network protection. Take security seriously.

❑   What is your Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity strategy?

Your business needs to have a backup plan. How can your SharePoint hosting provider assist in this area? What options do they have to keep your business running in the event of a major incident? Make sure they provide custom solutions for the various needs of different industries. The provider should be capable of meeting whatever needs you require.

Five Business Benefits of Hosted SharePoint