

3 Factors to Consider when Choosing a Cloud Partner

Most channel partners know that delivering solutions in the cloud isn't simple. The inner workings of preparing a solution for deployment in the cloud can be a very complex task, requiring significant time and expertise.

A cloud deployment and the service behind it is a major factor in your customer's satisfaction with your solution. That's why one of the most important decisions a channel leader can make is choosing the right cloud service, and partner, for the solution.

A true cloud partner should be a strategic asset, fully engaged with the organization, its goals and solutions, with the expertise to deliver the services required to meet a variety of business and IT objectives.

With that in mind, there are three characteristics that an organization should evaluate when choosing a cloud partner:

1. Technical Excellence
2. A Strong (yet customizable) Security Posture
3. Support for Market and Operational Readiness

1. TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

Cloud-enabling applications is a specialized area of technical expertise, and it's a key factor in helping solution providers get to market quickly with high-quality solutions.

Look for a partner that invests heavily in the onboarding process and ensures technical excellence with careful strategy and planning. An ideal cloud partner will have a very thorough process documented with specific details about the technical requirements of a solution, security and deployment, including steps such as definition of workloads, classification of data and security protocols, provision of cloud resources, workload deployment, two-way accessibility, testing and validation.

In support of a strong technical strategy, an ideal cloud partner should be completely transparent and provide technical advice, implementation and education on how to leverage and position the advantages of the platform to your end customers. For example, quality and protocols for Concerto Cloud Services include the maintenance of a minimum of five plus layers of security monitored 24x7x365 by a committee that follows ITIL, a strict industry methodology of best practice for IT Service Management.

Concerto has developed these protocols and methodologies over years of experience delivering complex environments in the cloud, such as Microsoft ERP solutions. They also spend a lot of time helping their own channel partners and end customers understand the reasons behind a technical recommendation.

"We chose to partner with Concerto Cloud Services because of the quality of their infrastructure and their service, from presales to delivery and support," says David Kelly, national strategic alliance manager, Wolters Kluwer Tax and Accounting North America. "We now offer our sales and use tax calculation engine on Concerto's private

cloud platform as an option to our clients given the sensitive nature of the data. It's a win-win solution that is already giving us a competitive advantage in the sales cycle and is helping our clients streamline their processes and realize financial benefits."

2. A STRONG, YET CUSTOMIZABLE, SECURITY POSTURE

Ideally, a cloud provider should have a strong baseline approach to security, which begins with a classification of data and assets and a determination of which workloads are better served in private clouds or public cloud solutions such as Microsoft Azure.

A strong, yet customizable, security approach complements the hybrid cloud trend. This trending philosophy—to utilize and connect private, public and on-premises deployments based on the application needs and classification—delivers simplicity of the cloud without the sacrifice of performance, function, security or cost-savings of public platforms.

3. SUPPORT FOR MARKET AND OPERATIONAL READINESS

"The move to a cloud model changes business requirements," says Greg Pierce, vice president, Concerto Cloud Services. "The good news is that not every solution provider will have to go through a massive business model transformation. But to what extent will depend on the type of cloud solution being adopted and whether the cloud-based system introduces a new capability or replaces an existing one in the customer's organization."

This is where the consultative aspect of the cloud partner relationship comes in. As more than just a hosting provider, a cloud partner can offer advisory services to help expedite the process of marketing and selling cloud services to end-customers. From helping the solution provider understand the technical road-map to assisting them with pricing, sales positioning and much more, an experienced cloud partner that has pioneered their own path in the marketplace can provide guidance based on real-life success.

THE CONCERTO DIFFERENCE

Concerto Cloud Services offers private and hybrid cloud environments that are unmatched for their uptime, flexibility and security. And the Concerto Cloud Services Channel Partner Program is unique for its heavy focus on strategy and support. The program features comprehensive operational, technical and organizational

support, marketing and sales enablement tools, and a customized advisory process designed for rapid transition to a profitable cloud model. The program is ideal for channel partners that could—until now—only deliver applications through an on-premises platform.

"We view cloud enablement as a total business transformation that requires a shift in how you approach all facets of the organization," Pierce says. "We invested millions of dollars in building the highest-quality cloud infrastructure so that software companies don't have to. Whether a partner has yet to move to the cloud or their experience thus far has been challenging, we've bundled best practices, lessons learned and business requirements gleaned for more than four years to help other organizations rapidly accelerate to the cloud."

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Concerto's partnership approach to cloud delivery is being embraced by customers, ISVs and VARs alike, with a growing number of channel partners adding Concerto to their roster. Due to a relentless focus on quality and service as well as experience with some of Microsoft's most complex applications, Concerto offers deep familiarity with a variety of industries and a willingness to take on a consultative role within organizations.

Jim Wenniger, CEO of Wennsoft says about Concerto: "WennSoft uses Concerto for cloud services because they are knowledgeable and provide great service. The Concerto team can talk to the most sophisticated, IT-savvy customer and prove they know what they're doing, and yet they can talk to a smaller organization with limited IT staff and explain the options of hosting and what is important to them. They help us win business and service the customer well."

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