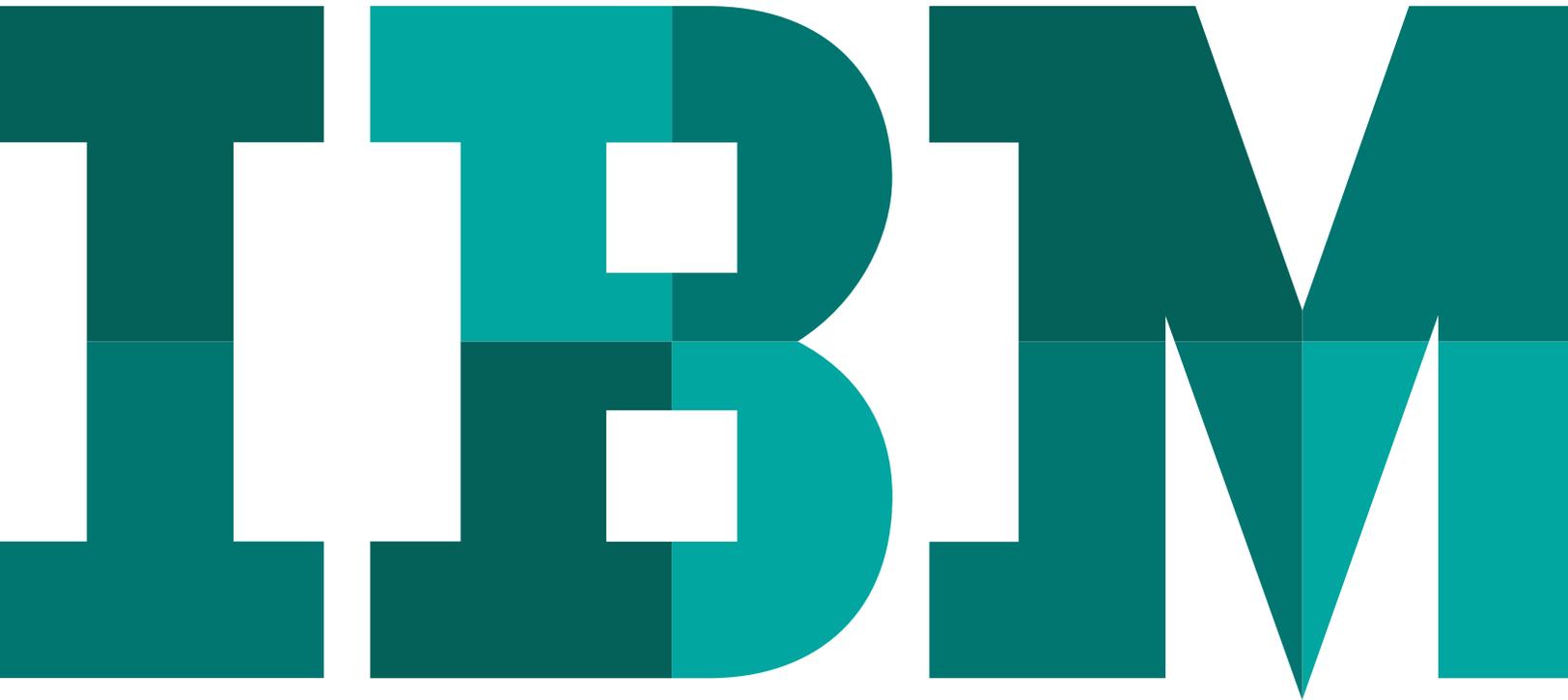# Cloud-based data backup:
a buyer's guide

How to choose a third-party provider to develop, implement and manage your data backup solution

IBM

Savvy organizations understand that cloud-based data backup solutions are no longer just a way to protect business—they are a way to help grow business. These data backup solutions can help an enterprise obtain competitive advantage. They help protect business-critical data, giving organizations near-ubiquitous access to the information they need for smarter decision making. Cloud-based data backup solutions can help a company to continue to generate revenue even under unexpected or disastrous circumstances: network failures, power failures, fires, pandemics, terrorist acts, civil unrest, and a host of other unforeseen events. In doing so, these solutions can help the company meet its service level agreements. They can also help strengthen relationships with customers, business partners, employees, creditors and other stakeholders.

All this may be why, according to IDG market research,[1] many IT decision makers now view cloud computing as an attractive platform for data backup. But while having a cloud-based solution is valuable, developing one in-house can be tricky. The first challenge is in finding sufficient in-house expertise. Staff IT personnel may often lack the cloud experience necessary to develop, implement and manage a cloud-based data backup system. The cost of training these professionals is just one part of the significant up-front and capital expenses an organization may incur in building its own cloud-based backup solution. In addition to hardware and software, there may be costs for offsite facilities to house the cloud infrastructure.

Finally, there is the intangible cost of devoting in-house IT expertise to data backup when that expertise could be better deployed for strategic initiatives. Because of these issues, many organizations will want to contract with a third-party cloud provider for one or all components of cloud-based data backup: solution design, implementation or ongoing operations and management. Let's look at ways to help choose the right third-party provider to meet your business needs.

Characteristics to look for in a cloud solution

From our more than ten years' experience in backup and recovery work, and our more than one million backups managed monthly, IBM has developed a list of capabilities an intelligent cloud-based data backup solution should offer. These capabilities are highly recommended if the solution is to meet business needs for data protection, improved competitive capabilities, brand and reputation protection, and overall business resilience. They include:

Leading-edge technology, providing:
- High levels of information availability
- A choice of public, private or hybrid clouds
- The ability to back up geographically dispersed information
- Data security standards that help meet business requirements
- A portal that offers a "single pane of glass" into information stored on the cloud
- The ability to help prevent backup jobs from running into production periods

A proven track record, including:
- Data backup success rate of at least 99 percent
- Recognized leadership in cloud-based data backup

Cost benefits, such as:
- Usage-based, pay-as-you-go pricing
- Solutions that help reduce total cost of data center ownership
- The ability to replace capital investments for backup systems with an operating expense

SmartCloud Managed Backup: an intelligent choice

The IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup service offers public, private and hybrid cloud-based data protection solutions to help clients who want to achieve cross-enterprise information resiliency and data recovery. It is designed to help you simplify backup with automated and standardized tools and processes that can consolidate dispersed information onto a single infrastructure. IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup solutions are security rich and highly scalable. With SmartCloud Managed Backup, IBM can help you choose and implement a plan tailored to your backup priorities, retention and retrieval goals, and needs for infrastructure flexibility and scalability.

The SmartCloud Managed Backup infrastructure offers virtually anywhere, anytime access to data via a web-based portal installed in your environment. This portal gives your authorized users a "single pane of glass" view of the information stored within the cloud. It also gives you a single management point for your data backup services. Our pay-as-you-go pricing structure requires no long-term commitments or architectural investments, which can help reduce the total cost of data center ownership. Best of all, these services are designed to deliver consistently high backup success rates, as high as 99.8 percent.

Wide-ranging management and reporting capabilities can provide further peace of mind. IBM proactively monitors backup performance 24x7 via a virtual private network set up in your environment. This monitoring helps curtail the prospect of chronic backup failure. Should something go wrong, the service response process is to analyze the problem and, if necessary, alert you of any actions that need to be taken. The overwhelming majority of backup failures are identified and corrected by IBM, without involving your IT staff. In addition, regular reports summarize monthly usage information; offer detailed service availability, capacity, allocation and configuration information; and identify assets that are being underutilized. Finally, if you ever need help, English-language support is available 24 hour a day. Additional support for French, Italian, German, Spanish, Japanese and Chinese speakers is also available.

While IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup is designed to have the characteristics of an ideal vendor listed in the previous section, three aspects of our solution further differentiate us in the marketplace. The first is our data protection analysis. This analysis can help identify gaps in your data resiliency plan by offering a baseline view of your data backup environment and pinpointing the areas that could compromise data security and availability. This analysis can help you better understand your organization's vulnerability to risk, and help determine how to achieve potential improvement in backup and recovery performance with IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup services.

Second, we offer three delivery models to suit client needs. You can choose from a mix of public, private and hybrid clouds, depending on the backup design that meets your business goals and provides the levels of isolation required for your data. A "public cloud" is a cloud hosted in an IBM or IBM Business Partner data center, on a platform dedicated just to your business. A "private cloud" is a cloud hosted in your organization's own data center. A "hybrid cloud" is a situation in which the organization may choose to back up data to its own data center and replicate it in an IBM or IBM Business Partner data center. This flexibility in cloud models is not found in many other solutions.

Finally, our services are backed by a team of business resiliency experts delivering solutions to clients on six continents, on call 24x7 and ready to engage with clients directly as required. We oversee more than 1 million successful backups monthly—with less than 1 percent of total alerts requiring manual intervention.[2]

Choosing a cloud provider

IBM understands that you have a choice in vendors when it comes to cloud backup. Here are the questions we suggest you ask when evaluating a service provider:

- Does the provider's solution require capital expenditures? In addition to direct costs such as those incurred for software and hardware, does the provider address indirect costs such as facilities and maintenance? Does the provider offer an operating expense model?
- Does the provider's solution offer in-depth reporting to meet your needs?
- What backup percentage rate has the provider delivered for its clients? In today's environment, business leaders need to know that a service has delivered successful backups at least 99 percent of the time.
- Can the vendor provide backups at a site of your choice, or just at its own data centers?
- Is the provider's solution automated to reduce the risk of human error and meet your backup requirements?
- Can the provider offer global coverage, or just local and regional coverage?
- Can the provider perform backups on all of the platforms that you use? Can its solution handle complex customer interfaces?
- For backup of distributed data or data at remote offices, does the provider offer options for managing bandwidth concerns?
- Can the service provider handle large backups if necessary? Does it offer options for quick backups and restores?
- How does the provider address security concerns? What type of encryption is available?
- Is the provider dependent on channel partners to deliver services?

Why IBM?

IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup is a leader in the data backup and recovery market. Teaming with IBM, you can feel confident in the quality, technology, flexibility, scalability and value of your cloud-based data backup solution.

Moreover, IBM offers additional cloud-based services that can help you address other resiliency and compliance challenges. IBM SmartCloud Content Management services are designed to provide cloud protection for and organization of infrequently accessed information that nonetheless needs to be retained for regulatory, legal or compliance purposes. IBM SmartCloud Virtualized Server Recovery offers application continuity for both physical and virtual server protection, while IBM SmartCloud Email Management Express offers email continuity, recovery and archiving. Combined with IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup, these services can help organizations deploy a wide-ranging business resilience solution that can help them continue operating even under the most challenging conditions—which in turn can help improve competitive capabilities and bolster reputations in an aggressive marketplace.

For more information

Want to learn more about cloud-based data backup in general or IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup in particular? Read our case for cloud, and an interview with an IBM cloud backup expert. For more information, call 1-800 IBM-7080 or visit the following website:

ibm.com/cloud/data-backup

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[1] IDG Enterprise Cloud Computing Study, IDG, 2012

[2] IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup Global Support Center statistics,
IBM, 2012

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