

Savings and security

What to look for in an IT off-site solution

Businesses across every industry face an ongoing need for more power, space and performance from their IT infrastructure. And yet the prospect of spending several months and significant capital investment building out a facility to meet this demand is one many firms find unfeasible.

Smart Business spoke to Evans Mullan, chief operating officer at Latisys, to better understand what a company should look for when considering an IT off-site solution. There are several important considerations when it comes to selecting the right off-site colocation partner that can offer the complete set of capabilities.

What are the primary benefits of an IT off-site solution?

Companies that choose to outsource their IT infrastructure to a data center provider achieve four significant benefits:

More reliability from fully redundant systems for power and cooling, with backup batteries and generators for continuous uptime.

More connectivity from multiple business-grade bandwidth carriers delivered as a blended network for maximum performance and speed.

More security with several layers of physical security, including 24-7 staff on site, extensive camera surveillance throughout the facility and multi-factor authentication at entryways, such as man-traps, biometric scanners and key-card access.

More capacity and growth potential as data center providers have an inventory of available space for new customers and for existing customers to be able to expand their footprint as their business grows.

What current economic and business factors are driving the business case for colocation?

Capital expenditures to build a world-class facility often exceed the budgets of all but the largest organizations. Outsourcing the physical location of the IT infrastructure allows companies to benefit from the economies of scale that data center companies can provide with regard to Internet bandwidth, cooling and power, as well as security staff and round-the-clock remote hands support. Gaining the increased flexibility and tighter control of costs that come with the operational expenses of colocation make it an attractive solution compared to an investment of capital to build out new data center space.



Evans Mullan
Chief operating officer
Latisys

What size of company benefits most from an IT off-site solution?

Most data center providers have a variety of inventory options available, making them a fit for any size company. Typical colocation packages include partial or full cabinets on the small side, and customizable caged space that can range anywhere from 150 square feet to 10,000 square feet or larger for companies with the need for more space. Some data center companies also provide private suites, which feature fully enclosed data center areas for clients who want additional layers of security, climate control and privacy.

How does this solution help enterprises enhance their security posture?

In addition to the multiple layers of physical security previously mentioned, there are third-party audits that data center providers can achieve that result in the highest levels of reliability and data integrity for their customers.

One of the most significant third-party validations of a data center's security is the SAS70 Type II audit. This audit is an independent review of the control objectives and activities in place to ensure all controls are valid and enforced. Controls include building access and security, data center access and

security, data storage, customer information security and change procedures for equipment and systems. Data center providers that have completed the SAS70 audit can provide a copy of the audit report to their customers to verify that the controls in place are adequate for the customers' requirements. And the fact that the audit is performed by a third party will alleviate the need for colocation customers to perform their own audits for their IT infrastructure.

How can an IT off-site solution specifically improve a company's bottom line?

Replacing capital outlays with operational expenses that can be scaled as needed has immediate impact on a company's bottom line as it faces the need to optimize its IT infrastructure spend. Additionally, the 100 percent uptime service level agreements achieved through a colocation solution will safeguard a company from the financial ramifications of any potential instance of downtime.

Another bottom-line benefit to an IT off-site solution is the economies of scale offered by data center providers. The blended network of premium carriers and shared systems for cooling and security are much more affordable when outsourced and shared amongst multiple clients.

What else should a company look for in a colocation provider?

While an off-site solution comes with many improvements and benefits for a company, it is really just the foundational layer when it comes to the full benefits provided by outsourcing its IT infrastructure. Beyond SAS70 Type II compliant characteristics offered, companies should look for data center providers that also offer growth in terms of additional services and solutions. Common growth requirements include the outsourcing of managed services to improve monitoring and performance optimization systems as well as managed security services. The ability to offer elastic hosting options including managed virtualization and multi-site replication are important factors to look for as well, to ensure that the data center provider can accommodate the maximum scalability for a company's IT infrastructure now and years from now. <<

EVANS MULLAN is the chief operating officer of Latisys. Reach him at Evans-Mullan@latisys.com.

Insights **IT Outsourcing** is brought to you by Latisys