



BCS eBook

# KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

when evaluating communication providers



# ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS CAN HELP YOU FIND THE RIGHT COMMUNICATIONS PROVIDER WITHOUT SKIPPING A BEAT

Hospitals, clinics, and GP surgeries today are increasingly turning to unified communications (UC) to meet their communication and collaboration needs. But how do you know which offering is right for you? This listicle outlines 12 categories - each with a set of questions - to help you evaluate UC providers and ensure you **make an informed decision that will benefit your facility for years to come.**

## 12 Categories to Consider

- Infrastructure
- Reliability
- Support
- Compliance
- Features
- Remote Working
- Ease of Use
- Adaptability
- Scalability
- Integration
- Administration
- Implementation



# 1 | INFRASTRUCTURE

## WHAT IS YOUR CLOUD INFRASTRUCTURE LIKE?

Your chosen communications provider should have several best practices in place to ensure maximum security, regardless of whether you are looking at a public, hybrid or private cloud solution. The provider should also employ industry standard encryption, firewall configurations and protection systems to prevent outside network intrusion and ensure security of your sensitive patient data.

### Be sure to ask:

- Where is your data stored?
- Is everything backed up?
- What disaster recovery solutions do you have in place?
- How do you ensure sensitive data is secure?
- Are your data centers geo-redundant?



## 2 | RELIABILITY

### HOW DO YOU MONITOR UPTIME?

A communication provider's very existence relies on its ability to provide consistent service. Look for a provider with redundant data centers, that also has direct relationships with multiple Tier 1 internet and telephony carriers to ensure near-constant uptime, as every second counts when you're delivering life-saving care.

### Be sure to ask:

- Do you provide 24/7/365 monitoring and support?
- How will I be notified if there is downtime?
- Can I review your Service Level Agreement (SLA)?
- Do you offer local survivability?
- Will you provide guarantees and financial penalties if you fail to meet uptime commitments?



## 3 | SUPPORT

### WHAT CUSTOMER SUPPORT DO YOU PROVIDE?

Your communications provider may manage your overall telecom infrastructure, freeing up your staff to spend more time enhancing your patient and healthcare worker experience.

### Be sure to ask:

- What are your support hours?
- Is your support managed internally and in a geographic location that is relevant to us?
- Are there any associated costs?
- Are you a single source provider and will you serve as the interface on our behalf to resolve issues when other parties are involved?



## 4 | COMPLIANCE

### WILL BE COMPLIANT USING YOUR SOLUTION?

The right UC provider will take care of your compliance responsibilities, alleviating this burden from your staff. Cloud-based applications can often provide a rapid rollout of new features to address changing regulatory standards, while ensuring conformity across multiple locations. This can protect you from fines that have the potential to harm your bottom line.

### Be sure to ask:

- What compliance requirements do you meet?
- Do you complete routine audits to ensure compliance?
- Are your data centers compliant with regulations for the healthcare sector?



## 5 | FEATURES

### HOW WILL YOUR FEATURES ADDRESS OUR NEEDS?

A UC provider can provide basic calling features (e.g., caller ID, voicemail, conferencing) as well as advanced features such as call routing, call recording and interactive voice response. You can expect new features to be added regularly to enhance your capabilities and help you stay ahead in the ever-changing healthcare industry.

### Be sure to ask:

- What features do you have in place that address our organization's unique challenges and goals?
- How intuitive is your user experience?
- Can you support the contact center with:
  - Staff self-services (e.g., vacation, sick leave, out of office)
  - Appointment reminders
  - AI or chatbots to simplify the agent's workload?
- How often do you provide new releases?



## 6 | REMOTE WORKING

### CAN YOU SUPPORT COMMUNICATIONS ACROSS ANY DEVICE AND LOCATION?

As remote working becomes increasingly possible in the healthcare sector, staff need more than a phone system that simply connects a call. They need to move seamlessly between phone calls, chats, video conferences and desktop sharing. Look for a communications solution that supports collaboration across all devices, no matter the type to help more healthcare staff take advantage of mobile working opportunities.

### Be sure to ask:

- Can employee devices be integrated with your network?
- Can you provide video, instant messaging and desktop sharing to facilitate greater collaboration from anywhere?
- Do you provide an automatic Wi-Fi/cellular/mobile call handover to stay connected everywhere?
- Are you able to keep voice and signaling safe?



## 7 | EASE OF USE

### ARE YOUR FEATURES USER-FRIENDLY?

Users will be quicker to adopt communications tools that are easy to use, and that look and work as effortlessly as the consumer apps they use every day. Make sure you select a UC system that is simple and intuitive so that healthcare workers can quickly pick up the new system and stay focused on their work.

### Be sure to ask:

- Can I gain access to your communications solution from various browsers and mobile devices?
- Can functions be completed with single commands vs. multiple steps?
- What training is available for your solution, both during implementation and on an ongoing basis?



## 8 | ADAPTABILITY

### CAN YOUR SOLUTION EVOLVE WITH OUR CLOUD MIGRATION JOURNEY

You want to migrate to the cloud at the right pace for your organization, so choose a UC provider that can support you with both public, private and hybrid cloud solutions. Working with a provider that enables a hybrid approach - a mixed deployment with some elements remaining on-site and others hosted in the cloud - means you'll get expert guidance on migration and the flexibility to customize your migration path.

### Be sure to ask:

- Do you have a solution that will enable us to make a gradual move to the cloud?
- Can you seamlessly link on-site and cloud deployments?
- Does your phone system support future and emerging technologies?



## 9 | SCALABILITY

### CAN YOUR SOLUTION GROW AS WE CHANGE?

To succeed in today's healthcare landscape, hospitals must be agile. You need a phone system that can scale quickly, no matter if the need is prompted by facility growth or changing demands and regulations.

### Be sure to ask:

- How scalable is your solution?
- Can you support fluctuating capacity as we undergo workforce shortages and growth through recruitment?
- Can you add licenses easily, or do we have to purchase them upfront?



## 10 | INTEGRATION

### CAN YOUR SOLUTION INTEGRATE WITH OUR EXISTING APPLICATIONS?

A communications system should easily integrate with other cloud-based applications you may be using (e.g., healthcare records, EMR, CRM). Look for communication providers that offer open APIs (Application Programming Interfaces), which enable your IT team or a third-party developer to customize the solution to your organization. Do your healthcare staff use Microsoft Teams? Do you need it to provide seamless integration with your communication system to:

- Deliver presence federation, so staff and contact center agents understand user activity as it's reflected across either application in both systems
- Ensure 99.999% uptime and survivability options
- Meet privacy regulations

### Be sure to ask:

- Can your solution be configured to meet specific needs?
- Do you offer APIs?
- What applications does your solution integrate with?
- What level of integration with Microsoft Teams do you offer?



## 11 | ADMINISTRATION

### HOW EASY IS IT TO MANAGE?

To ease the administrative pressure on your staff so they can concentrate on new solutions that improve patient care and staff wellbeing, select a provider that delivers single-source service, as this will minimize the number of pressing questions and concerns they need to answer.

### Be sure to ask:

- How much technical understanding does our staff need to run your solution?
- How easy is it to administer and use?
- Can any changes be made remotely?



## 12 | IMPLEMENTATION

### HOW DO YOU HANDLE IMPLEMENTATION?

Make sure you can implement a communications system at a pace that's right for your organization. Departments, teams, or locations can be migrated over to the new UC system in a phased approach that meets the needs of your hospital.

### Be sure to ask:

- How will you help us to start up?
- How long will the implementation process take?
- Can we use a phased approach?





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