



Cloud decisions simplified with comprehensive checklist



Rand Morimoto knew that the cloud would deliver greater business agility and lower costs to his customer, a major Silicon Valley-based semiconductor manufacturer. But the customer was challenged in evaluating cloud service providers (CSPs) because it did not have a clear idea of what it was looking for. Different departments had different criteria, which were further complicated by the fact that each CSP presented its services differently.

Ask the right questions on the journey to the cloud

Morimoto is president of Convergent Computing (CCO), a San Francisco-based IT consulting firm that has helped many companies move to the cloud. CCO helps organizations design, implement, adopt, and support cutting-edge technology solutions. Its customers range from enterprises to small and midsize companies.

“When our customers come to us with an interest in moving to the cloud, most bring their own selection criteria checklists, and all these checklists are different,” says Morimoto. “Large enterprises are often thinking about a wide range of issues, beginning with data privacy. But even sophisticated customers are not sure what they’ve missed. And without a uniform set of compliance criteria, they cannot make an apples-to-apples comparison.”

A recent [Forrester report](#) on cloud service agreements found that 94 percent of respondents would have changed something about their cloud agreement, adding more stipulations about security, privacy, performance, and accessibility, or other factors.

Create one standard checklist

Recognizing this challenge, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) established a standard for cloud compliance agreements and service-level agreement frameworks and technology. This

standard, the [ISO/IEC 19086-1 Standard](#), provides much-needed structure and guidance to cloud contracts that helps both cloud shoppers and CSPs.

ISO/IEC 19086-1 provides a standard set of questions around performance, service levels, data management, and data governance. It prompts cloud buyers to ask questions such as, what is a CSP’s policy on law enforcement requests for my data? What happens to my data if the CSP goes out of business? How quickly will the CSP respond to service requests? Can the CSP access my data without my express permission?

Microsoft was an active participant in the ISO subgroup that developed ISO/IEC 19086-1. Building on its deep familiarity with the standard, Microsoft developed the [Cloud Services Due Diligence Checklist](#) to distill the standard’s 37 pages into a simple, two-page document that organizations can use to negotiate a cloud service agreement. Because it is grounded in the standard, the checklist is service- and provider-neutral. Microsoft encourages consistent use of the checklist by enterprise cloud customers regardless of whether they are considering Microsoft cloud solutions.

Standardize and simplify cloud selection

CCO uses the standard and checklist in all its cloud engagements. “The ISO/IEC 19086-1 standard and the Due Diligence Checklist provide a comprehensive snapshot of what organizations need to examine,” says Morimoto. “The checklist

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Customer Name: Convergent Computing
Industry: Professional services—IT services
Country or Region: United States
Customer Website: www.cco.com
Employee Size: 65 employees

Customer Profile:
Convergent Computing (CCO) is an IT consulting firm headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area that helps enterprise customers design, implement, and support flexible, secure hybrid datacenters.

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Chris Amaris, Chief Technology Officer,
Convergent Computing

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Rich Dorfman, Vice President of Professional Services, Convergent Computing

helps small companies think more broadly and helps large enterprises create a better structure around how things are addressed and helps to ensure that all the right people are part of the discussion. It's especially helpful for procurement departments, which are often the least familiar with the cloud and how to compare service providers. The Due Diligence Checklist eliminates dueling checklists and makes the question for CSPs, 'What is your 19086-1 response to this issue?'"

One CCO biotech customer was focused primarily on data security in its examination of cloud providers, but it was not aware of the need to also consider law enforcement access, service termination, or service outage questions. "The Due Diligence Checklist brought these issues to their and our attention and gave them more comfort and assurance in moving their workloads to the cloud," says Chris Amaris, Chief Technology Officer at Convergent Computing. "The standard brings consensus to what can be a pretty chaotic situation. Customers are assured that they don't need 1,000 questions; they just need these 25. It also gives them a standard for comparing the practices of various CSPs."

Accelerate move to the cloud

Knowing the right questions speeds the go/no-go decision or the "which cloud" decision considerably. An organization may discover that no cloud provider is able to meet its security requirements at present. "The worst-case scenario is when a customer goes through the whole process over a period of months and then backs out," says Morimoto. "The sooner a customer can get to yes or no, the better for its business."

In fact, CCO has found that use of the ISO/IEC 19086-1 standard and Due Diligence Checklist speed up cloud decisions dramatically, primarily by ensuring that the right people are at the table. Sometimes compliance and security staff get involved late in the process and slow progress toward a decision. By using the checklist, CCO is able to bring these people into the discussion early on.

"By using the Cloud Due Diligence Checklist, we have seen a six-month cloud decision process shrink to six weeks," says Rich Dorfman, Vice President of Professional Services at Convergent Computing. "I've never seen customers finalize cloud decisions this fast. Most importantly, the checklist gives customers confidence that they are looking at the right issues, which increases their confidence in running mission-critical workloads in the cloud."