How does your hosted provider match up?

8 ways to tell if you're not getting the service you deserve.

1. Customer experience

The most important part of any hosted voice deployment is the customer experience.

What about Columbus? Horizon is provided in conjunction with our wholesale network partner Gamma. By controlling all parts of the hosted service, we offer a true end-to-end solution that other providers are simply unable to replicate. Furthermore, we own and manage all the hardware deployed, as well as the software used throughout the Horizon service.

Advisor question: Who owns, manages, operates, supports and maintains each element of the hosted solution, including datacentre, network, access, hardware and software?

2. Quality of access

A persistent problem with hosted deployments is inadequate bandwidth on access lines designed for data.

What about Columbus? To meet this challenge, we've access to our own ISP infrastructure, which lets us offer a full range of managed data services, from voice-only Assured DSL-based services through to a full Ethernet portfolio designed for large offices including converged technologies over the likes of EFM and FTTC. As the voice-prioritised data network is supported by the same people as the hosted voice services, there is one single point of resolution if a problem occurs.

Advisor question: Is voice prioritised across their network and whose network they use? How do they do this and what do they use to do this? Do they have converged voice and data products available?

3. Financial stability

Trusting your voice services to a third-party is a big decision for any business. Ensuring that you select a partner with the right level of financial stability is vital, as a failure of a partner can lead to catastrophic consequences for your business.

What about Columbus? Columbus is a debt-free, cash-rich, profitable business. Our partner Gamma is trusted by some of the largest telephony providers in the UK. Gamma employs over 500 people spread across sites in the UK and Hungary. Gamma's latest published financial report showed gross profit up 18.2% to £44.9m and EBITDA growing by 30% to £14.2m. As well as being debt-free, Gamma has a significant asset base which includes their wholly-owned Tier 1 3000 km fibre network.

Advisor question: Ask to see evidence of your provider's financial performance and run a credit check on them.

4. Resilience and security

Ensuring business continuity and high levels of security are critical factors when choosing a hosted provider.

What about Columbus? The network holds ISO22301 Business Continuity Management and ISO27001 Information Security Management standards, which are mandatory to service the enterprise market. We're the only UK hosted provider with both of these standards - other large carriers may, but they subcontract services to suppliers who do not.

Advisor question: Ask to see evidence of the hosted supplier's business continuity and security ISO accreditations.

5. Easy to use web-based interface

The ability to make real-time moves, adds and changes, quickly, efficiently and from any internet-facing device is vital to the day to day management of any telephony system.

What about Columbus? Our hosted voice service is built using a bespoke GUI powered by a number of application platforms. Broadsoft provides most of the core features on the hosted service, however where we have our own application platforms in the network the GUI is built to talk to these. This gives us a commercial, technical, and flexibility lead compared to other Broadsoft-only platforms and crucially we provide and own an interface that uses straightforward language and navigation.

Advisor question: Ask to see a demo of the solution to ensure it is easy to set up and manage.

6. Seamless deployment

Installing the hosted solution and managing the number-porting element of an installation is key to its smooth deployment.

What about Columbus? As Columbus has enjoyed growth in its next generation voice products, we've invested in operational improvements to ensure that we can best service our customers. Columbus uses an online portal which enables us to port and provide numbers in a scalable and automated fashion and last year 250,000 numbers from other providers were ported over the platform.

Advisor question: What porting agreements does your hosted supplier have? How many numbers on average are they porting each month?

7. Competitive pricing

Ensuring clear pricing with a bundled solution provides commercial flexibility.

What about Columbus? Columbus recognises the need to be commercially aggressive. We offer inclusive call bundles to UK 01, 02, 03 and mobile destinations, free Cisco or Polycom handsets (subject to T&Cs) and free fraud management.

Advisor question: Confirm what is included in the basic hosted subscription. Will you get free calls to local, national and UK mobile? Are handsets included in the subscription FOC? How do they handle fraud?

8. Top tier player

Hosted voice is fundamentally about trust and the quality of the customer experience.

What about Columbus? Our partner Gamma has been recognised as one of the top three hosted telephony providers, (Gartner) and achieved this position by innovating faster than our competitors, providing a single self-service portal but most importantly of all, changing our entire business to ensure that the customer experience on hosted voice is better than that of traditional voice services.

Advisor question: Ask to see evidence of industry recognition.

Interested?

To find out more please speak to one of our friendly and experienced advisors:

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