# 10 Questions to Ask Before Implementing Cloud ERP, Part 2

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*This is part two of a two-part piece.* Part one can be found here. *[1]*

**Top 10 Cloud Questions**

1. *Does the solution offer a true web interface?* If the cloud vendor requires you to install virtual private network (VPN) software or another client, then the solution isn't truly web-based, and you will miss out on benefits like access from any device, simplified user management and reduced maintenance costs. If the software vendor is offering you a hosted version of legacy software, then you may benefit from outsourcing, but are not gaining true cloud advantages.
2. *Is there a choice of deployment?* Not all cloud providers give you the option to deploy your solution on-premise, hosted or as a software as a service (SaaS). Having this choice enables you to maximize your outsourced information technology (IT) savings. If you have IT staff that can run servers, then you may want to deploy an internal cloud. If you do not have any IT expertise in-house, then a SaaS solution will be less expensive than hiring or outsourcing by the hour.
3. *Can I switch from SaaS to on-premise and back, as my needs change?* Your

business needs can change quickly. On-premise distributors may experience a fire or a flood, and want to move to a SaaS model. Distributors with a SaaS solution may hire a new IT person and want to move operations in-house. Selecting a vendor that offers deployment flexibility will support your long-term needs and minimize your long-term total cost of ownership.

4. *How easy is it to integrate with other needed software applications?* System integration is a key consideration if you have specialized applications, legacy systems or best-in-breed applications you want to continue using. There are two main ways to connect. If you need real-time data transfer (a big cloud benefit), then make sure your vendor offers a comprehensive application programming interface (API). For processes that do not require real-time data transfer, you can minimize costs by importing and exporting files. Many vendors offer tools to help you build customized import and export processes for Excel- or CSV-formatted data. Batch interfaces can run on a regular schedule and allow you to eliminate dual order entry without the development expense of a real-time interface.
5. *Can I customize my application?* Multi-tenant cloud systems (ones in which many companies share a single application) can reduce vendor maintenance costs, but may constrain your ability to customize your application and interface with on-premise systems. If customization is possible, verify that you can use common development tools (such as Microsoft Visual Studio) and common programming languages, so you are not locked into highly specialized developers that charge a premium rate.
6. *Can you involve all of your users, without additional costs and capacity constraints?* Plan for growth and involvement. The cloud allows you to involve all employees, business partners, customers and vendors in automation processes. If the vendor pricing model restricts your ability to add users, then you will not get the benefit of the network effect — where the value of a product increases as more people use it.
7. *What data controls and security is available?* A common cloud concern involves the security of data that is located off-site. The reality is that this data is more secure in a tier 1 data center than if it resides in your office, but you need to address all security concerns in the cloud, just as you would for an on-premise system. Verify physical security, transmissions security, storage security, access security, data security and application security.
8. *If I decide to do something different, how do I get my data?* Cloud systems offer fault-tolerant operation and failover. But what happens if you want to switch your software and retrieve your data that resides in the cloud? Are you held hostage or can you get your data in the format that you want without additional fees?
9. *What kind of processing performance can I expect with high-volume work?* Cloud systems allow you to scale rapidly, but sometimes the extra computing power comes with a cost. Verify that the system can handle workloads that correspond to your peak periods without costing more than you expect. If you need to interface with other systems, verify that there are not additional charges for sending data in and out of the cloud.
10. *Will I be able to control when updates/changes to my system are made, when backups take place and when new functionality is installed on my system?* SaaS applications set you free from the burden of applying system

patches and updates, and thereby reduce your maintenance costs. Some vendors allow you to pick when your system will be updated and others dictate when your updates occur. Select a vendor that gives you flexibility or make sure that you are not impacted if an update occurs in the middle of a physical inventory count or after you just trained new customer service personnel.

To read part one of this two-part series, please click here. *[1] What's your take? Please feel free to comment below! For more information, please visit* www.acumatica.com *[2].*

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