

# Guide to Buying COLOCATION



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VP of Product Management, Mike Frank, outlines the key considerations and questions to ask when choosing a data center provider. As a veteran product leader specializing in data center colocation, Mike has participated in the design of a myriad of unique colocation solutions deployed in hundreds of different data centers by enterprise and government organizations. He has bought and sold colocation solutions ranging from 1kW quarter cabinets to multi-megawatt buildings. One of the benefits of this experience (and hindsight) is the ever-increasing knowledge base available for every new solution request.

# HERE ARE MIKE'S TIPS:



## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION PART 1

Generally, if you are out of market, being closer to an airport, ground transportation and hotels is more important than being in a downtown area. The reality is that in most cases, very little of the performance to the end user is dependent on the actual location of the data center in the metro area. One millisecond equates to 186 miles. Do not be concerned about choosing convenience. You just need to be in the area.



## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION PART 2

Tour the site thoroughly and choose an area that you are comfortable commuting in and out of daily. A data center in a bad part of town or difficult to drive to is one that quality support personnel will avoid; employees will churn, and typically, will create longer-term challenges for your business.



## SERVICES

Is there space and power to accommodate your growth plans? Do you have power density requirements? Do they offer services in the way you want to buy them – e.g. are they a retail data center, but you have wholesale needs? What has been the uptime at the site? What support services are available?

Do they have the carriers you want to work with? Can they offer a reasonable connection to the cloud? Are there managed services options?

Make sure that the facility really meets your real needs today and tomorrow.



## THE MSA

Does the MSA enable you to operate comfortably or are you making several compromises that create concerns? How were the negotiations? Are you comfortable with the SLA? When there are disagreements, are they still being reasonable? Can they explain their position in a rational way? Expect that if the process was comfortable, it will remain comfortable. Expect that a painful negotiation is an indicator of a challenging relationship longer term.





## PRICE

Be realistic about what your needs are then get multiple bids and compare the value you receive. The data center is not a house where you will spend a lot of time. It is not a car or other status symbol. It is an apartment for machines that only cares about the power being on, the air being cooled and the Internet being available.



## MEET THE TEAM

Not just the sales folks, who are paid to be nice and responsive, but the data center operations & executive team. It is important to be confident that the data center team is competent. You will interact with them regularly. They need to be quick, courteous and skilled. And you need to be able to trust that they will do what they say they will. If you do not get that feeling, move on.



## CHECK OUT THE CERTIFICATIONS

SOC 2, ISO, PCI, etc. All document certify that a third-party has formally reviewed their services and reached a conclusion about the fitness for a particular purpose. They compare the facilities and operations against real standards. You should not blindly follow their suggestions, but audits may validate a feeling or elevate a concern to a real issue. Pay attention to security and availability. Operationally, these represent your biggest risks....and they may make your own compliance processes easier.



## Why did I not mention resiliency?

Do not get me wrong, resiliency is important. The design of the infrastructure though is maybe less so. First, more and more often, resiliency is in the software. Second, no one is building a better mouse trap. Infrastructure is a commodity and “innovation” is all about how cheaply it can be built and how quickly it can be deployed. For 99% of data centers, it is all the same. Ask about uptime and move on.

## Why I do not think a carrier hotel is important

1. Consolidation of carriers has made this less critical.
2. How many carriers do you really need?
3. SDNs are changing the world and enabling most key carriers to be a cross connect away regardless as to whether they are actually present in the site.

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