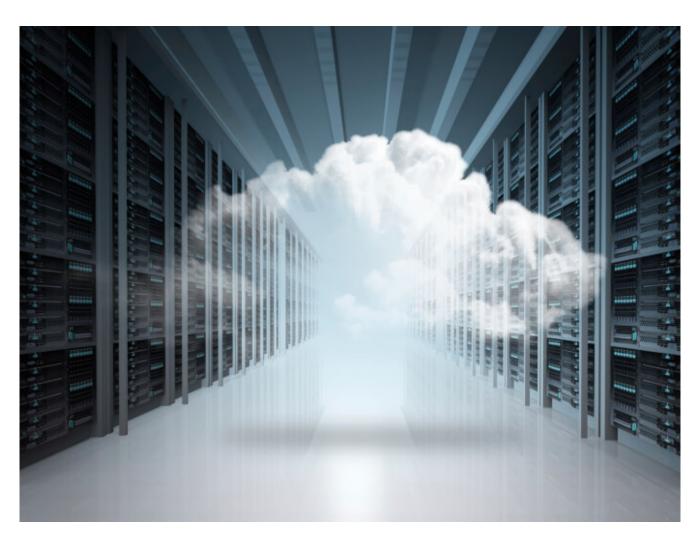# Are All Clouds Created Equally?

Cloud-based services are quickly becoming the backbone of industry. At CNSI we know it all too well — we pioneered the use of cloud computing for state Medicaid infrastructure in a system that [recently went live in both Michigan and Illinois](#).

In the past, we've [written about the basics of cloud computing](#), so hopefully you have a good grasp on what the term means. Too often, however, we find that the general user considers the cloud out-of-sight, out-of-mind. True, the cloud is literally out of sight, usually in a different state, but that doesn't mean you should forget that it has qualities that can contribute to the success or failure of your business or project.

The server farms that make up the cloud, wherever it might be housed, are not all created equally. Just like your everyday computer, cloud servers have varying levels of security, performance, and maintenance required. It's important to understand these terms and audit cloud options for strengths and weaknesses.

First, in order of importance, is security, and for good reason. With the near ubiquitous nature of [data breaches](), choosing a cloud that has the highest level of physical and digital security is a necessity. Be sure to have a strong, unified security system that mirrors current server security requirements and standards.

Performance is a close second when it comes to must-have features. Your business can outfit employees with the fastest computers on the market, but if the cloud can't keep up, they won't be fully realizing efficiencies. First, understand the needs of your database or application. Your cloud should be able to handle your current requirements as well as be able to scale-up as your business grows.

The final quality for consideration is reliability. When it's down for service, so is your operation. You're going to want a minimum amount of downtime per year (often measured in number of hours/year). But as downtime decreases, the price will increase. You will have to make a decision as to what is right for your business and budget.

How have you gone about choosing a cloud provider? Are there other cloud attributes that should be considered? Visit us on Twitter [@CNSICorp]() to join the conversation.