

Ten Questions To Ask Your QuickBooks Hosting Provider

We've prepared this list of ten questions for you to use to interview your new, existing or potential QuickBooks Hosting partner. Although you may not know it now, your potential QuickBooks Hosting Provider will soon become one of your most important business partners. The work you do now to prepare for this new partnership will go a long way towards defining what your future success looks like and how well you will compete in your business arena. If you're presently using hosted QuickBooks, you might consider asking these questions in re-evaluating your provider relationship. Then, [contact Painless QuickBooks](#) and ask us.

What is your up-time guarantee?

No company can promise 100% up-time guarantee, but you should make sure they can promise a 99% up-time guarantee. Evaluate exactly what 99% means to your business.

Is your IT Support up to par?

One of the greatest advantages of application hosting is the ability to save on overhead costs by only using the IT resources that you need. For most companies, the application hosting provider then becomes your 24×7 on-demand IT support for a low monthly rate. Before you sign up with an application hosting provider, you should check to make sure IT support is up to par.

Does your IT Support work 24 × 7 × 365?

Running a small business isn't just a 9-5. It is important to make sure that the application hosting provider's 24×7 help desk is available when you need it—even at 3am on a Saturday night when you have a work deadline.

Is your IT Support personnel located in the United States?

For some, there's nothing more frustrating than trying to communicate a complicated IT issue to someone that doesn't speak your native language. Many application hosting providers try to cut costs by outsourcing their IT support overseas, but many times, even though the monthly price may be slightly cheaper, you may regret it when you are trying to resolve an important technical issue.

What level of encryption do you use to secure data?

When you host your application(s), you also host all of your important data, and thereby rely on the application hosting provider for security & protection. 128 bit encryption is the minimum requirement. This is the same type of encryption utilized by major banking companies (such as Chase & Bank of America) for online banking.

128 bit encryption means that the key used to encipher the message is 128 bits long. A key of this length is sufficient to prevent decipherment of the message by using randomly chosen keys. This encryption is considered sufficiently secure to be used for all purposes where secure communication is required.

How often does a data back-up occur?

Ideally, your application hosting provider automatically backs up data as soon as it is entered to help prevent downtime. This is also referred to as “live mirroring of data.” Companies that have implemented storage area networks have automated data mirroring.

Is the data sent to an off-site location; if so, how often?

In the event of a disaster, such as a fire or earthquake, it is reassuring to know that your application hosting provider is sending the data to an off-site location. Ideally, the data is backed-up and sent to an off-site location at least once a day.

Can I download and take my data with me if I want to leave?

Many hosting providers control your data and will not allow you to download it in a form that you can readily use to maintain your business. Data files should be readily accessible for recovery testing and removal.

Are you certified by Intuit to host QuickBooks?

Intuit requires certification to participate in the Intuit Commercial Hosting Program. Intuit requires Certified hosting providers to have a SAS 70 Type II data center. Intuit arranges for independent, third-party accreditation through the International Association of Managed Service

Providers (MSP Alliance). MSP Alliance reviews commercial hosts before they can become authorized, and requires them to pass an examination and on-site facility inspection, which is designed to gauge the ability of the commercial host to provide a safe and secure environment for QuickBooks data. Intuit Hosting supports special hosting versions of QuickBooks Pro, all versions of QuickBooks Premier, and QuickBooks Enterprise Edition for Certified Commercial QuickBooks Hosting Providers.

Is your hosting software structure Citrix or Terminal Server?

There are two popular technologies utilized to host applications: Citrix & Terminal Servers. Citrix is lauded as being the superior, though slightly more costly option due to several benefits including:

- Enhanced Citrix receivers for Macs – Seamless access to the server through the new Citrix receiver
- Universal Smartphone Support – Access from any smart phone including iPhone, BlackBerry, Windows Mobile, and Android
- App-V Integration – Citrix and Microsoft virtual applications can interact and share data seamlessly
- Expanded support of devices – USB access supports POS devices, webcams, microphones, scanners, digital cameras, and more
- Built for Windows Server 2008 – Improves speed and reliability of QuickBooks applications delivered through Xenapp 6.0.
- Self Service – Using Citrix product Dazzle, user can now subscribe to applications from their PC and MAC
- Multi-Language Support – Access can be customized to up to 8 different languages
- Supports 64 bit computing – Applications run faster with 64 bit computing versus 32 bit computing
- One-click access – the application runs on your computer as if it were installed on the actual machine

There are several new software providers recently introduced to compete with Citrix. These companies argue that most small businesses don't need all the features Citrix offers—that it's like buying a Mercedes when a Yugo will get you where you want to go. Yet, the majority of these companies are charging the same rate for the Yugo application delivery (non-Citrix technology) as the Mercedes (Citrix). When searching for an application hosting provider, make sure they offer Citrix hosting. [Consider Painless QuickBooks for Hosted QuickBooks.](#)