colt

The reality of carrier neutrality

Six considerations for evaluating carrier neutrality

Executive summary

Carrier neutrality is a commonly used term in the data centre industry. The relevance and importance of what carrier neutrality means for your business is often not explicitly shared and can be overlooked.

This paper highlights six considerations you need to discuss with your data centre provider surrounding carrier neutrality to ensure you have a truly suitable and beneficial solution.

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Written by

Adelle Desouza
Jeff Aberle

About Colt

Colt is the information delivery platform, delivering integrated network, data centre, voice and IT services. Customers include 18 of the top 25 bank and diversified financial groups and 19 out of the top 25 companies in both global media and telecoms industries (Forbes 2000 list, 2014). In addition, Colt works with over 50 exchange venues and 13 European central banks. Colt operates in 28 countries across Europe, Asia and in the U.S. with connections into over 200 cities globally and metropolitan area networks in 47 cities. Colt operates 22 carrier-neutral data centres in Europe and 7 in the Asia-Pacific region.

1. What's the difference: service provider vs carrier?

Many data centre companies claim to have a vast number of carriers or network providers available within their data centres. Some even go as far as to say they have over a hundred, but in reality these are often service providers using the same fibre for access, not unique carriers.

It's important to understand that service providers utilise infrastructure that they do not own to deliver service to any given site. So it's key to ask about pure carrier diversity. Carriers build the telecommunication network or connection in and out of the data centre. Service providers use this network to provide telephony, internet, and other services.

The majority of businesses will look for at least two separate and distinct carriers for diversity, but before rushing into any decisions, ask yourself: how many do you actually need to support your business requirements? Discuss with your provider what you are hoping to achieve and what success looks like for you.

2. Think about diversity

With access to a number of carriers fundamental for a resilient strategy, paying specific attention to diverse infrastructure is vital. A data centre may offer access to multiple carriers, but it is important that these carriers enter the site through multiple points. It is fundamental to understand that if there is only one single point of entry there is a single point of failure, meaning there is no resiliency. If anything were to happen to this connection, then access to all service providers would be lost. Diverse fibre access entry points is standard with most best-in-class colocation hosts.

3. Look for future flexibility

Understanding that business objectives evolve, your carrier-based decisions should take into account your long-term, as well as short term, business goals. Three years from now, you may want to change to a different carrier, bring in new services or expand into new geographies. What you need is a data centre partner that will meet your current requirements, while providing the flexibility to meet your future ones too. Make sure your provider can future-proof your communications strategy, with the options to review your choice and number of carriers as your business requires.

4. Don't take everything at face value

It is very important to question your provider's views and support for carrier neutrality. Feel free to question what you are told. Your final decision is strategic to your business. Take the time for due diligence on the site, including looking at the power and security. Not only should you have transparency with your provider, but also don't forget to ensure that the commercials support the infrastructure requirements. You might have multiple carrier options, but does your contract allow you to benefit from this? You want the ability to switch between services to enable cost efficiencies for your business. It's small factors like this that can easily be overlooked.

5. Consider the cloud

In addition to being a safe place for companies to house their infrastructure and technology platforms, data centres can enable a direct connection to cloud ecosystems. Understanding the importance of carrier neutrality, best in class data centres should extend this concept to offer diversity and neutrality in the cloud. A data centre that can provide you with multiple cloud services provides you with options. These include a possible strategy for data that cannot always travel across international borders, and flexibility to meet constantly changing business requirements.

6. Carrier neutrality and colocation providers can be one and the same

Historically, it's perceived that vendors who have their own network only offer single-carrier solutions, but this is not the case. It is important not to overlook or underestimate the value of those providers who are specialists in both networks and carrier-neutral data centres. With the need for resiliency a key business driver, best-in-class providers can now leverage their expertise on both counts. Allowing direct, fast and secure private networks alongside the ability for back-up and migration to other on-net data centres, those data centre companies with their own networks can offer solutions that can truly enhance your overall IT resiliency.

Conclusion

The data centre has become a vital business asset. Today almost every activity within the business depends on it, so organisations should not make any rash decisions when choosing a data centre provider. By evaluating the six considerations above, you can be confident that your strategy not only meets your carrier neutrality requirements, but also will support your business now and into the future.

For more information, please contact us on:
Tel: +44 (0)20 7390 3900
E-mail: dcsinfo@colt.net
Web: **http://datacentres.colt.net**