

BUYING AWS MANAGED CLOUD SERVICES



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The No-Nonsense Guide for Business Owners

AWS offers incredible scalability and security, but it's not "plug and play." Without a strategy, the cloud can quickly become a maze of spiraling costs and technical debt. Before you sign a contract with a Managed Service Provider (MSP), use this checklist to ensure you're making a smart investment.

1. Don't Migrate Everything at Once

The "all-in" approach is a recipe for chaos. A phased migration is almost always more stable and budget-friendly.

- **Ask yourself:** Which systems are currently causing the most headaches? What can stay on-premise for now?
- **The Goal:** Move the workloads that slow down your daily operations first.
- **Pro Tip:** If a provider can't explain their migration phases in plain English, they likely don't have a solid plan.

2. Security is not an "add-on."

AWS provides the tools, but *you* (and your provider) are responsible for locking the doors.

- **Non-negotiables:** Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), strict Identity Access Management (IAM), and encryption for data both at rest and in transit.
- **Red Flag:** If your provider talks about pricing before they talk about security protocols, keep looking.

3. Calculate the True Cost of Downtime

In the cloud, "five minutes of downtime" isn't just a technical glitch; it's lost revenue and eroded customer trust.

- **Inquire about:** Proactive monitoring and the specific incident response process.
- **The Standard:** A great partner focuses on **prevention**, ensuring issues are caught before they take you offline.

4. Predictable Scalability

AWS is famous for scaling, but if your architecture is messy, your bill will scale faster than your performance.

- **The Bottom Line:** Your environment should be built so that resources grow automatically during peaks and shrink during lulls, keeping costs predictable.

5. Master the "Shared Responsibility Model."

One of the biggest pitfalls in cloud management is assuming "AWS handles everything."

- **Clarify roles immediately:** Who is responsible for backups? Who monitors for intruders? Who manages user permissions?
- **The Reality:** Ambiguity leads to security gaps. Know exactly where the provider's job ends, and yours begins.

6. Build the Lifeboat Before the Ship Sails

Disaster recovery isn't a luxury; it's a requirement. You need to know your **RTO** (How fast can we get back up?) and **RPO** (How much data can we afford to lose?).

- **Requirement:** Demand regular, automated backup testing. A backup that hasn't been tested is just a hope, not a plan.

7. Demand Transparent Pricing (FinOps)

Cloud sprawl is real. Hidden data transfer fees and "zombie" storage charges can double your bill overnight.

- **The Strategy:** Look for a partner who practices **FinOps**—active cost optimization that ensures you only pay for what you actually use.

Final Thoughts

Managed AWS services should simplify your business, not add another layer of stress. Take your time, ask the hard questions, and choose a partner invested in your long-term stability.

Your Next Step: Before calling a provider, list your **top three IT frustrations** from the last year. A high-quality AWS partner will focus on solving those specific pain points before they ever try to sell you more "tools."