



eFolder White Paper: Top Seven Features MSPs Should Look for in a Cloud File Sync Solution

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Introduction

Managed service providers and value-added resellers are constantly looking for new ways to differentiate themselves from the competition and generate new sources of revenue.

Cloud file sync solutions offer an excellent opportunity for MSPs and VARs to provide value to their clients, while increasing revenues and cash flows.

Such solutions enable end-user organizations to provide real-time file sync between mobile devices, laptops and desktop computers, delivering anytime, anywhere access to files on virtually any type of device.

Selecting the right partner for a cloud file sync solution is critical to the success of MSPs and VARs. Choosing the wrong partner can result in frustration for both the service provider and its clients. Choosing the right one can lead to satisfied clients, revenue growth and improved profitability.

This white paper describes seven key features and attributes that MSPs and VARs should look for when choosing a cloud file sync solution.

1. Meets the Needs of Increasingly Mobile Clients

A cloud file sync solution must effectively support organizations as employees become ever more mobile and need to access files across a wide range of devices.

The mobile workforce continues to expand, with more people working from home or other remote locations. In addition, the bring-your-own-device (BYOD) trend means more users are relying on their personal smartphones or tablets to accomplish work-related tasks.

According to research firm IDC, by 2015, the world's mobile worker population will reach 1.3 billion, representing 37% of the total workforce.

The Americas region, which includes the U.S., Canada and Latin America, will see the number of mobile workers increase from 182.5 million in 2010 to 212.1 million in 2015, IDC predicts. North America has the largest number of mobile workers in the region, the firm says, with 75% of the workforce mobile in 2010.

A file sync solution must be equipped to help the growing number of mobile users more easily access their files wherever and whenever they need them.

2. Business-Class Capabilities

The file sync solution should have business-class capabilities, such as the ability to enforce granular permissions at the client and user levels. MSPs should be able to implement fine-grained permissions on how users sync and share their files with their devices and with internal and external users. Some deployments might require file sync and read-only restrictions or Web portal-only access. The solution should also integrate with existing corporate user database and authentication systems such as Active Directory.

The solution should enable file sync with anytime, anywhere and any device access. Users need file sharing and collaboration via email, URLs, team shares and network-mapped drives. MSPs must be able to control access with user, group and client permissions.

These types of business-class features ensure that MSPs and VARs can offer robust file sync services that please even their most security-minded clients, while increasing the likelihood that clients will recommend the service to others.

3. Strong Security and Control Capabilities

The desire to prevent data leaks is driving the need for business-class and secure cloud file sync solutions.

Cybersecurity continues to be a concern and a challenge for businesses — and it gets only more complex as more workers use mobile devices and cloud-based services. Many workers today resort to consumer-grade cloud services such as Dropbox, creating huge security and data leakage risks.

Consumer-grade solutions permit users to sync to uncontrolled mobile devices or home PCs. With consumer services, administrators cannot block syncing or control how file sharing is performed. In the case of lost or stolen devices, remote wipe features are nonexistent with consumer-grade offerings.

Administrators also cannot implement corporate authentication mechanisms to control data access. And in most cases, consumer services lack the necessary encryption processes business users require. While convenient for some users, consumer-grade file sync solutions are a huge risk to businesses of any size.

A business-class and secure file sync solution needs to include features such as military-grade data encryption for when files are in transit or being stored in a cloud environment. Remote wipe of easily lost mobile devices should be standard. At the same time, MSPs and VARs need the ability to implement these fine-grained access control and permissions at the user, group and client level.

4. Support for Regulatory Compliance

In many industries, such as healthcare and financial services, companies need to be in compliance with government and industry regulations, or risk potentially steep fines.

For example, healthcare providers must comply with the security and privacy rules of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. HIPAA regulates the use and disclosure of protected health information (PHI) held by healthcare clearinghouses, employer sponsored health plans, health insurers and medical service providers.

PHI is any information concerning health status, the provision of healthcare or payment for healthcare services that can be linked to an individual. This can be broadly interpreted to include any part of an individual's medical record or payment history.

So, particularly for organizations in the healthcare and health insurance industries, a cloud file sync solution must be designed so that it provides sufficient data privacy provisions to meet the standards of HIPAA and other regulations.

Minimally, data in transit or stored in the cloud should be encrypted. Another consideration is whether the file sync solution vendor is willing to sign a business associate agreement stating that its cloud solution has been certified as HIPAA-compliant by a qualified third party.

5. Multi-tenant Management and Monitoring

Yet another consideration when selecting a file sync solution provider is how the cloud service is managed and monitored, and whether the solution is ready for deployment by channel partners.

A key question: Does the solution offer capabilities such as a multitenant management console that enables MSPs and VARs to easily deploy, manage and monitor all provisioned clients of the file sync solution?

Multi-tenant management and monitoring is especially important to MSPs and VARs, which will offer the solution to multiple clients. Without visibility into how the cloud service is being used and the ability to manage the solution in a simple way, channel partners will spend too much time and money managing the solution, eating into the recurring profit margin.

6. Brandable Web Portal

Branding is important in today's business environment. Virtual Social Media, an independent online marketing services company, cites a number of reasons why it's vital to build an online brand.

These include recognition (clients can learn about the business and what it has to offer); preference (clients gain trust in the brand and prefer it to other businesses); brand loyalty (one of the most

important aspects of any business); differentiation (branding clearly marks companies as different from others in the market); and recommendation (it's hard for clients to recommend a business to others if they are not sure what the brand is).

So a key consideration when selecting a cloud file sync solution is whether the solution offers any branding features that allow the MSP to make the service its own.

Many MSPs and VARs want to be able to offer solutions to their clients under their own brand and logo and often with their own unique pricing and packaging. When considering a solution provider for cloud file sync, MSPs and VARs need to make sure it provides a white-label cloud service that allows them to brand key components of the service, including the Web portal.

7. Recurring Revenue Model, with Attractive Gross Margins

What channel company is not looking for opportunities to expand revenue and profit opportunities? MSPs and VARs are in business to not just provide excellent service to clients, but to also make money.

To be most profitable, a cloud file sync solution must have a recurring monthly revenue model and attractive gross margins.

MSPs and VARs need to work with a solution that offers a monthly recurring service plan or can be bundled within an overall managed service offering. Most channel partners want to make gross margins of 50% to 70% on a monthly basis, and the wholesale pricing and packaging of the solution should allow for that level of profit.

Make Sure the File Sync Solution Meets the Needs of Your Business and Clients

With the growth of mobile devices and highly distributed work environments, companies increasingly rely on file sync solutions to ensure that everyone is on the same page when it comes to accessing files and critical corporate data. By selecting a business-class, secure and channel-ready cloud file sync service, MSPs and VARs can have the best opportunity for success in this fast-growing market.

About eFolder Anchor

eFolder Anchor is the only cloud file sync solution built from the ground up for MSPs and value-added resellers. Anchor is unique in that respect, and delivers multi-tenant management, partner branding and flexible pricing to IT channel partners.



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