

# **Making it Modular - IO**



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# IO Blog



## Making it Modular

November 8th, 2010 / admin / 0 comments

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You've probably heard by now how a **modular data center** can provide a fast, flexible, reliable, cost effective and energy efficient way of deploying an always-on IT and network facility.

Modular data centers are gaining popularity because they can help any business gain more compute and network capacity without having to build or expand a traditional data center. You can put a modular data center almost anywhere, such as next to your headquarters building, on a spare piece of land, on a company parking lot or inside a warehouse. The costs are low and the benefits are high.

For the money, a modular data center lets you pack a lot of computing power into an often surprisingly small space. But what you may not have heard is how there are two basic ways of creating a modular data center, one of which provides many more benefits than the other.

Compare these two approaches:

### Approach A

This is the original way of deploying a modular data center. You go to a provider—typically a major IT systems vendor—that offers a pre-built structure that's fitted out with racks and a central aisle for servicing. Two or more of these structures can be "snapped" together to provide as much capacity as you require. The power and cooling units are also modular and attach directly to the structure (often to its roof).

With this approach, the modular solution is really little more than a piece of hardware supplied by the vendor. As the owner, you'll be expected to handle all of the necessary ownership obligations, such as arranging financing and figuring out depreciation. You'll also be responsible for the modular facility's placement, maintenance and management. In other words, you're more or less on your own.

Suddenly, the benefits associated with having a modular data center don't

seem quite as compelling.

### **Approach B**

A better, more modern and efficient approach to modular data center deployment is to turn to a provider with multiple years of experience supplying data center services to enterprises of all types and sizes. By licensing your modular data center as a service, you can take advantage of all of the concept's benefits—such as fast, convenient and strategic deployment, easy scalability and integrated power, cooling and network systems—while effectively shedding upfront acquisition costs in return for a pay-as-you-go service. You'll also be able to shift data center management responsibilities to the provider while you focus on business operations.

Unlike a hardware or software vendor that suddenly decides to get into the data center business, a service provider understands that customer support doesn't end on the day the modular facility is delivered. By partnering with a skilled and dedicated data center specialist, you'll always get the support you need when you need it.

Unfortunately, most data center providers haven't yet fully embraced the modular concept; many industry players even view the trend as a direct threat to their core business model. So when looking for a modular data center service provider, make sure that the company offers a custom, integrated, modular structure that can be scaled to almost any capacity. Also check to see that vital support resources such as power, cooling and networking are integrated into the structure and not supplied as afterthoughts. The modular unit should also be able to accommodate any IT infrastructure.

Next, check the provider's commitment to long-term support. The critical infrastructure services required to operate an always-on data center—including primary and backup power generation, power conditioning, cooling and network connectivity—should all be supplied by the provider. Finally, be sure that the modular offering is supported by a service level agreement (SLA) that guarantees 100 percent uptime.

### **Bottom Line**

Along with virtualization and cloud computing, the modular data center model is a top-three data center trend. In fact, it's generally believed that the modular concept represents the future of all data centers.

If you haven't already started about thinking about deploying a modular data center, there's a good chance you may find yourself doing so sometime in the future. When that day arrives, be sure you follow the right approach.

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