

Public Cloud Platforms Buyers Guide

Software Provider and Product Assessment



EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

***ISG** Research



Public Cloud Platforms

The Public Cloud has emerged as a necessity for enterprises looking to harness the power of scalable resources while minimizing costs. By leveraging third-party services accessible via the internet, enterprises can focus on innovation rather than infrastructure, facilitating a rapid deployment of applications and services. However, as appealing as the cost efficiencies may

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IT leaders must tread carefully, balancing the advantages of shared resources with the concerns of data security and regulatory compliance.

be, IT leaders must tread carefully, balancing the advantages of shared resources with the concerns of data security and regulatory compliance. As the adoption of Public Cloud services continues to rise, understanding its implications for governance and risk management becomes crucial for decision-makers.

ISG Research defines Public Cloud as services owned and operated by third-party providers, making them accessible to everyone over the internet. This widespread reach allows multiple enterprises to share resources, fostering cost efficiency and scalability. The Public Cloud model is characterized by its on-demand service delivery, where users can scale resources up or down based on real-time needs. This model is particularly advantageous for startups and small to

medium enterprises that benefit from reduced capital expenditure while swiftly deploying applications and services.

Industries such as e-commerce, media and entertainment and software development are among the strongest adopters of Public Cloud software, as they require rapid scalability and collaboration. Larger enterprises also take full advantage of Public Cloud applications, often for non-sensitive workloads or as part of a diversified cloud strategy. Such enterprises may utilize Public Cloud services to enhance innovation and competitive agility while carefully managing any associated risks regarding data security and compliance due to the shared nature of these platforms.

The journey of the Public Cloud began in the early 2000s when pioneers like Amazon Web Services (AWS) introduced the concept of on-demand computing resources. Initially, this model appealed primarily to startups and technology innovators seeking cost-effective solutions to launch applications without heavy upfront investments in infrastructure. As businesses rapidly embraced digital transformation, the Public Cloud evolved, with service providers expanding offerings to include comprehensive cloud services that support platforms, storage and analytics. By now, enterprises across all sectors recognize the Public Cloud's capacity to facilitate rapid innovation and agility, defining it as a cornerstone of today's enterprise IT strategy.



The Public Cloud continues to evolve with advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML) and serverless computing. These innovations provide enterprises with increasingly sophisticated tools to drive efficiency and optimize performance. The rise of multi-cloud strategies also illustrates how companies are navigating the complexities of the cloud journey, balancing the benefits of public services with the necessity for robust data governance and security measures.

Enterprises need to prioritize a thorough understanding of the specific business requirements and the potential implications of adopting a third-party managed Public Cloud infrastructure to make informed buying decisions. Key considerations should include evaluating technical needs, such as the required storage, processing power and application compatibility. Additionally, it is crucial for enterprises to assess the provider's reputation for reliability and security, as well as compliance with relevant data protection regulations.

Enterprises must also analyze the total cost of ownership (TCO) associated with Public Cloud usage. This encompasses not only the pricing structure of the services, but also potential costs related to data egress, support and unanticipated usage spikes. As the landscape of Public Cloud offerings continues to diversify with a plethora of providers, businesses should conduct comprehensive market research, compare features and pricing and engage in proof-of-concept testing to ensure that the chosen application aligns with long-term technological strategy and operational agility.

ISG asserts that by 2027, one-half of enterprises will adopt AI-driven automation and serverless architectures in public clouds to transform scalability and developer efficiency.

Successful Public Cloud software must prioritize scalability and flexibility to meet the dynamic demands of enterprise environments effectively. As business needs evolve, enterprises require applications that can quickly adjust resource allocation to scale operations up or down without unnecessary delays or costs. Strong automation capabilities are also necessary to streamline resource management, reduce manual workloads and ensure a more responsive IT infrastructure.

Security features are also paramount; enterprises must have robust protocols in place to safeguard data, maintain compliance with industry regulations and protect against potential breaches. Successful Public Cloud applications should provide a comprehensive set of security tools, including encryption, identity management and monitoring services, allowing enterprises to maintain control over critical data assets. Seamless integration capabilities with

Cloud & Infrastructure
Market Assertion

By 2027, one-half of enterprises will adopt AI-driven automation and serverless architectures in public clouds to transform scalability and developer efficiency.

Jeff Orr
Director of Research, Technology Research

ISG Research



existing on-premises systems and other cloud platforms are also essential for ensuring a cohesive and efficient IT strategy that amplifies the best aspects of multiple environments.

In the realm of Public Cloud, three of the leading enterprise use cases for generative AI include content generation, advanced analytics for customer insights and real-time collaboration tools. Enterprises are maximizing generative AI within Public Cloud services to

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In the realm of Public Cloud, three of the leading enterprise use cases for generative AI include content generation, advanced analytics for customer insights and real-time collaboration tools.

create personalized marketing materials, automated write-ups and multimedia content at scale. Additionally, AI algorithms are utilized to analyze vast amounts of customer data, generating actionable insights that inform product development, enhance user experiences and optimize marketing strategies. Cloud-based collaboration platforms with GenAI capabilities are also facilitating enhanced teamwork, where teams can brainstorm and iterate on creative projects in real-time, utilizing AI to suggest ideas and streamline workflows.

In Public Cloud environments, one potential use case for incorporating agentic AI technology is in automated customer support systems, which can proactively engage with customers to resolve issues and enhance user satisfaction. By using natural language processing and machine learning algorithms, these systems can understand customer inquiries and provide timely, context-aware solutions, effectively reducing response

times and freeing human agents to focus on more complex queries. Additionally, agentic AI can be employed for real-time market analysis and competitive intelligence, continuously scanning the digital landscape to gather insights that inform business strategies and optimize service delivery based on emerging trends.

Enterprises considering Public Cloud software providers should prioritize evaluating the security and compliance features offered by various providers, as data protection and adherence to regulations are important in shared infrastructure environments. Businesses should conduct thorough assessments of each provider's service level agreements (SLAs) to understand performance guarantees and support availability. Enterprises also need to analyze the total costs associated with the Public Cloud, including potential hidden charges related to data transfer and resource usage. And fostering a multi-cloud strategy can mitigate vendor lock-in risks, allowing businesses to focus on the best capabilities from multiple providers while maximizing operational efficiency.

The ISG Buyers Guide™ for Public Cloud evaluates software providers and products in key areas. These include IaaS, PaaS, SaaS, infrastructure, security, regulatory compliance, data encryption, identity and access management, performance and usage monitoring, scalability,



load balancing, resource management, cost structure, cost optimization, professional services, application marketplace, use of GenAI and agentic AI and investments in capabilities. By focusing on these essential dimensions, the guide equips enterprises with the insights needed to make informed purchasing decisions that align with strategic business objectives.

This research evaluates the following 24 software providers that offer products to address key elements of Public Cloud platforms as we define it: Akamai, Alibaba Cloud, AWS, Baidu AI Cloud, China Unicom, Clever Cloud, CloudFerro, DigitalOcean, Google Cloud, Hetzner Cloud, Huawei Cloud, IBM, IONOS, Kingsoft, kt cloud, Leaseweb, Microsoft, Oracle, OVHcloud, Scaleway, Schwarz Digits, T-Systems, Tencent Cloud and Vultr.



Buyers Guide Overview

For over two decades, ISG Research has conducted market research in a spectrum of areas across business applications, tools and technologies. We have designed the Buyers Guide to provide a balanced perspective of software providers and products that is rooted in an understanding of the business requirements in any enterprise. Utilization of our research



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methodology and decades of experience enables our Buyers Guide to be an effective method to assess and select software providers and products. The findings of this research undertaking contribute to our comprehensive approach to rating software providers in a manner that is based on the assessments completed by an enterprise.

The ISG Buyers Guide™ for Public Cloud Platforms is the distillation of over a year of market and product research efforts. It is an assessment of how well software providers' offerings address enterprises' requirements for public cloud platforms. The index is structured to support a request for information (RFI) that could be used in the request for proposal (RFP) process by incorporating all criteria needed to evaluate, select, utilize and maintain relationships with software providers. An effective product and customer experience with a provider can ensure the best long-term relationship and value achieved from a resource and financial investment.

In this Buyers Guide, ISG Research evaluates the software in seven key categories that are weighted to reflect buyers' needs based on our expertise and research. Five are product-experience related: Adaptability, Capability, Manageability, Reliability, and Usability. In addition, we consider two customer-experience categories: Validation, and Total Cost of Ownership/Return on Investment (TCO/ROI). To assess functionality, one of the components of Capability, we applied the ISG Research Value Index methodology and blueprint, which links the personas and processes for public cloud platforms to an enterprise's requirements.

The structure of the research reflects our understanding that the effective evaluation of software providers and products involves far more than just examining product features, potential revenue or customers generated from a provider's marketing and sales efforts. We believe it is important to take a comprehensive, research-based approach, since making the wrong choice of public cloud platform can raise the total cost of ownership, lower the return on investment and hamper an enterprise's ability to reach its full performance potential. In addition, this approach can reduce the project's development and deployment time and



eliminate the risk of relying on a short list of software providers that does not represent a best fit for your enterprise.

ISG Research believes that an objective review of software providers and products is a critical business strategy for the adoption and implementation of public cloud platforms. An enterprise's review should include a thorough analysis of both what is possible and what is relevant. We urge enterprises to do a thorough job of evaluating public cloud platforms and offer this Buyers Guide as both the results of our in-depth analysis of these providers and as an evaluation methodology.



Key Takeaways

Public Cloud Platforms have moved from cost-saving options to essential enablers of enterprise agility and scale. Organizations of all sizes use them to accelerate innovation, launch applications and meet shifting demand. Cost efficiency and elasticity remain drivers, but adoption now also depends on security, compliance and governance. Providers are adding AI-driven automation, serverless computing and multi-cloud strategies to help enterprises balance efficiency with resilience.

Software Provider Summary

The research identifies Microsoft, Google Cloud and AWS as overall leaders, with Microsoft ranked highest across multiple categories. Classification placed Akamai, Alibaba Cloud, AWS, Google Cloud, Huawei, IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, OVHcloud, Scaleway, Tencent Cloud and T-Systems in the Exemplary quadrant, while IONOS was categorized as Innovative. No providers were placed in the Assurance quadrant, while Baidu AI Cloud, China Unicom, Clever Cloud, CloudFerro, DigitalOcean, Hetzner Cloud, Kingsoft, kt cloud, Leaseweb, Schwarz Digits and Vultr were categorized as Merit. The research assessed providers on Product Experience and Customer Experience to highlight strengths and areas for improvement.

Product Experience Insights

Product Experience represented 80% of the overall evaluation, weighted across Capability, Usability, Reliability, Adaptability and Manageability. Microsoft, Google Cloud and AWS led in overall Product Experience. In Capability, Microsoft, Google Cloud and AWS excelled, while Google Cloud, AWS and Oracle led in Reliability. Google Cloud, Oracle and AWS distinguished themselves in Usability, while Oracle, Google Cloud and AWS led in Adaptability. Microsoft, Oracle and IBM were strongest in Manageability. Leaders demonstrated strength in delivering broad cloud functionality, high reliability and usability, along with adaptability and manageability features that support enterprise-scale operations.

Customer Experience Value

Customer Experience accounted for 20% of the overall evaluation, focused on Validation and TCO/ROI. Oracle, AWS and Google Cloud led in Customer Experience by demonstrating strong commitment, proven success cases and lifecycle support. In TCO/ROI, Oracle, Google Cloud and IBM performed best, showcasing clear value frameworks and alignment to enterprise goals. Vendors outside the leadership group often struggled with limited published case studies, weak ROI documentation and gaps in customer onboarding or support processes, which undermined buyer confidence.

Strategic Recommendations

Enterprises should treat Public Cloud Platforms as strategic investments that unify scalability, security and governance with automation and AI services. Buyers should prioritize providers that combine compliance, reliable performance and transparent AI with measurable cost and value frameworks. Platforms that deliver audit-ready governance, responsive scalability and clear ROI evidence will inspire stronger confidence and adoption. Using this framework, enterprises can align providers with organizational needs, agility and long-term priorities.



How To Use This Buyers Guide

Evaluating Software Providers: The Process

We recommend using the Buyers Guide to assess and evaluate new or existing software providers for your enterprise. The market research can be used as an evaluation framework to establish a formal request for information from providers on products and customer experience and will shorten the cycle time when creating an RFI. The steps listed below provide a process that can facilitate best possible outcomes.

1. Define the business case and goals.
Define the mission and business case for investment and the expected outcomes from your organizational and technological efforts.
2. Specify the business needs.
Defining the business requirements helps identify what specific capabilities are required with respect to people, processes, information and technology.
3. Assess the required roles and responsibilities.
Identify the individuals required for success at every level of the enterprise from executives to frontline workers and determine the needs of each.
4. Outline the project's critical path.
What needs to be done, in what order and who will do it? This outline should make clear the prior dependencies at each step of the project plan.
5. Ascertain the technology approach.
Determine the business and technology approach that most closely aligns to your enterprise's requirements.
6. Establish software provider evaluation criteria.
Utilize the product experience: Adaptability, Capability, Manageability, Reliability and Usability, and the customer experience in TCO/ROI and Validation.
7. Evaluate and select the technology properly.
Weight the categories in the technology evaluation criteria to reflect your enterprise's priorities to determine the short list of software providers and products.
8. Establish the business initiative team to start the project.
Identify who will lead the project and the members of the team needed to plan and execute it with timelines, priorities and resources.



The Findings

All of the products we evaluated are feature-rich, but not all the capabilities offered by a software provider are equally valuable to types of workers or support everything needed to manage products on a continuous basis. Moreover, the existence of too many capabilities may be a negative factor for an enterprise if it introduces unnecessary complexity. Nonetheless, you may decide that a larger number of features in the product is a plus, especially if some of them match your enterprise's established practices or support an initiative that is driving the purchase of new software.

Factors beyond features and functions or software provider assessments may become a deciding factor. For example, an enterprise may face budget constraints such that the TCO evaluation can tip the balance to one provider or another. This is where the Value Index methodology and the appropriate category weighting can be applied to determine the best fit of software providers and products to your specific needs.

Overall Scoring of Software Providers Across Categories

The research finds Microsoft atop the list, followed by Google Cloud and AWS. Providers that place in the top three of a category earn the designation of Leader. Oracle has done so in six categories, AWS and Google Cloud in five, Microsoft in three and IBM in two categories.

The overall representation of the research below places the rating of the Product Experience and Customer Experience on the x and y axes, respectively, to provide a visual representation and classification of the software providers. Those providers whose Product Experience have a higher weighted performance to the axis in aggregate of the five product categories place farther to the right, while the performance and weighting for the two Customer Experience categories determines placement on the vertical axis. In short, software providers that place closer to the upper-right on this chart performed better than those closer to the lower-left.

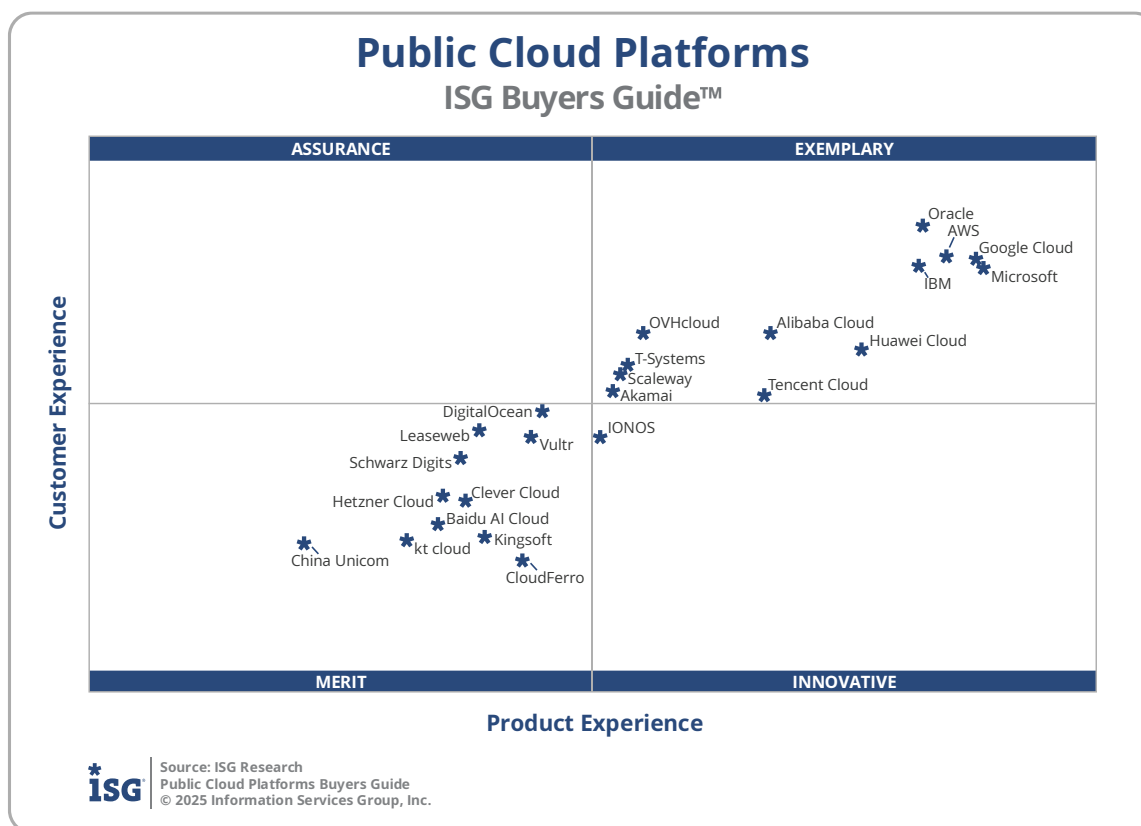
The research places software providers into one of four overall categories: Assurance, Exemplary, Merit or Innovative. This representation classifies providers' overall weighted performance.

Public Cloud Platforms Overall

Providers	Grade	Performance
Microsoft	A-	Leader 83.3%
Google Cloud	A-	Leader 82.7%
AWS	B++	Leader 81.0%
Oracle	B++	80.2%
IBM	B++	79.3%
Huawei Cloud	B+	73.0%
Alibaba Cloud	B	67.9%
Tencent Cloud	B	65.4%
OVHcloud	B-	60.5%
Scaleway	B-	57.5%
T-Systems	B-	57.5%
Akamai	C++	55.9%
IONOS	C++	54.4%
DigitalOcean	C++	53.2%
Vultr	C++	50.7%
Leaseweb	C+	47.6%
Schwarz Digits	C+	46.1%
CloudFerro	C+	46.1%
Kingsoft	C+	44.2%
Hetzner Cloud	C	43.3%
Clever Cloud	C	43.1%
Baidu AI Cloud	C	40.9%
kt cloud	C	40.4%
China Unicom	C-	32.4%



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Exemplary: The categorization and placement of software providers in Exemplary (upper right) represent those that performed the best in meeting the overall Product and Customer Experience requirements. The providers rated Exemplary are: Akamai, Alibaba Cloud, AWS, Google Cloud, Huawei, IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, OVHcloud, Scaleway, Tencent Cloud and T-Systems.

Innovative: The categorization and placement of software providers in Innovative (lower right) represent those that performed the best in meeting the overall Product Experience requirements but did not achieve the highest levels of requirements in Customer Experience. The provider rated Innovative is IONOS.

Assurance: The categorization and placement of software providers in Assurance (upper left) represent those that achieved the highest levels in the overall Customer Experience requirements but did not achieve the highest levels of Product Experience.

Merit: The categorization of software providers in Merit (lower left) represents those that did not surpass the thresholds for the Assurance, Exemplary or Innovative categories in Customer or Product Experience. The providers rated Merit are: Baidu AI Cloud, China Unicom, Clever Cloud, CloudFerro, DigitalOcean, Hetzner Cloud, Kingsoft, kt cloud, Leaseweb, Schwarz Digits and Vultr.



We warn that close provider placement proximity should not be taken to imply that the packages evaluated are functionally identical or equally well suited for use by every enterprise or for a specific process. Although there is a high degree of commonality in how enterprises handle public cloud platforms, there are many idiosyncrasies and differences in how they do these functions that can make one software provider's offering a better fit than another's for a particular enterprise's needs.

We advise enterprises to assess and evaluate software providers based on organizational requirements and use this research as a supplement to internal evaluation of a provider and products.



Product Experience

The process of researching products to address an enterprise's needs should be comprehensive. Our Value Index methodology examines Product Experience and how it aligns with an enterprise's lifecycle of onboarding, configuration, operations, usage and maintenance. Too often, software providers are not evaluated for the entirety of the product; instead, they are evaluated on market execution and vision of the future, which are flawed since they do not represent an enterprise's requirements but how the provider operates. As more software providers orient to a complete product experience, evaluations will be more robust.

The research results in Product Experience are ranked at 80%, or four-fifths, of the overall rating using the specific underlying weighted category performance. Importance was placed on the categories as follows: Usability (15%), Capability (30%), Reliability (15%), Adaptability (10%) and Manageability (10%). This weighting impacted the resulting overall ratings in this research. Microsoft, Google Cloud and AWS were designated Product Experience Leaders.

Public Cloud Platforms

Product Experience

Providers	Grade	Performance
Microsoft	A-	Leader 66.8%
Google Cloud	A-	Leader 66.5%
AWS	B++	Leader 64.6%
Oracle	B++	63.1%
IBM	B++	62.9%
Huawei Cloud	B+	59.1%
Alibaba Cloud	B	53.0%
Tencent Cloud	B	52.7%
OVHcloud	C++	44.7%
T-Systems	C++	43.4%
Scaleway	C++	43.2%
Akamai	C++	42.9%
IONOS	C++	41.7%
DigitalOcean	C+	38.9%
Vultr	C+	38.3%
CloudFerro	C+	37.2%
Kingsoft	C+	35.0%
Leaseweb	C	34.8%
Clever Cloud	C	33.8%
Schwarz Digits	C	33.5%
Hetzner Cloud	C	32.4%
Baidu AI Cloud	C	32.1%
kt cloud	C	30.4%
China Unicom	D	23.3%



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Customer Experience

The importance of a customer relationship with a software provider is essential to the actual success of the products and technology. The advancement of the Customer Experience and the entire lifecycle an enterprise has with its software provider is critical for ensuring satisfaction in working with that provider. Technology providers that have chief customer officers are more likely to have greater investments in the customer relationship and focus more on their success. These leaders also need to take responsibility for ensuring this commitment is made abundantly clear on the website and in the buying process and customer journey.

The research results in Customer Experience are ranked at 20%, or one-fifth, using the specific underlying weighted category performance as it relates to the framework of commitment and value to the software provider-customer relationship. The two evaluation categories are Validation (10%) and TCO/ROI (10%), which are weighted to represent their importance to the overall research.

The software providers that evaluated the highest overall in the aggregated and weighted Customer Experience categories are Oracle, AWS and Google Cloud. These category leaders best communicate commitment and dedication to customer needs.

Software providers that did not perform well in this category were unable to provide sufficient customer case studies to demonstrate success or articulate their commitment to customer experience and an enterprise's journey. The selection of a software provider means a continuous investment by the enterprise, so a holistic evaluation must include examination of how they support their customer experience.

Public Cloud Platforms

Customer Experience

Providers	Grade	Performance
Oracle	A	Leader 17.9%
AWS	A-	Leader 17.1%
Google Cloud	A-	Leader 17.0%
Microsoft	A-	16.9%
IBM	A-	16.8%
OVHcloud	B+	15.0%
Alibaba Cloud	B+	14.9%
Huawei Cloud	B+	14.5%
T-Systems	B+	13.8%
Scaleway	B	13.7%
Akamai	B	13.4%
Tencent Cloud	B	13.2%
DigitalOcean	B	13.0%
Leaseweb	B	12.6%
Vultr	B-	12.5%
IONOS	B-	12.4%
Schwarz Digits	B-	11.8%
Hetzner Cloud	C++	10.5%
Clever Cloud	C++	10.4%
Baidu AI Cloud	C+	9.7%
Kingsoft	C+	9.4%
kt cloud	C+	9.3%
China Unicom	C+	9.2%
CloudFerro	C+	8.8%



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Appendix: Software Provider Inclusion

For inclusion in the ISG Buyers Guide™ for Public Cloud Platforms in 2025, a software provider must be in good standing financially and ethically, have at least \$100 million in annual or projected revenue verified using independent sources and sell products and provide support on at least two continents. The principal source of the relevant business unit's revenue must be software-related, and there must have been at least one major software release in the past 12 months.

The research is designed to be independent of the specifics of software provider packaging and pricing. To represent the real-world environment in which businesses operate, we include providers that offer suites or packages of products that may include relevant individual modules or applications. If a software provider is actively marketing, selling and developing a product for the general market and it is reflected on the provider's website that the product is within the scope of the research, that provider is automatically evaluated for inclusion.

All software providers that offer relevant public cloud platforms and meet the inclusion requirements were invited to participate in the evaluation process at no cost to them.

Software providers that meet our inclusion criteria but did not completely participate in our Buyers Guide were assessed solely on publicly available information. As this could have a significant impact on classification and ratings, we recommend additional scrutiny when evaluating those providers.



Products Evaluated

Provider	Product Names	Version	Release Month/Year
Akamai	Akamai Cloud	N/A	June 2025
Alibaba Cloud	Alibaba Cloud	N/A	June 2025
AWS	AWS	N/A	June 2025
Baidu AI Cloud	Baidu AI Cloud	N/A	June 2025
China Unicom	Unicom Cloud	N/A	July 2025
Clever Cloud	Clever Cloud	N/A	September 2025
CloudFerro	CloudFerro	N/A	June 2025
DigitalOcean	DigitalOcean	N/A	January 2025
Google Cloud	Google Cloud	N/A	July 2025
Hetzner Cloud	Hetzner Cloud	5.1.0	June 2025
Huawei Cloud	Huawei Cloud	N/A	June 2025
IBM	IBM Cloud	1.54.0	July 2025
IONOS	IONOS Cloud	1.48.0	June 2025
Kingsoft	Kingsoft Cloud	N/A	April 2025
kt cloud	kt cloud	N/A	March 2025
Leaseweb	Leaseweb	N/A	June 2025
Microsoft	Azure	N/A	June 2025
Oracle	Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI)	N/A	August 2025
OVHcloud	OVHcloud	N/A	April 2025
Scaleway	Scaleway	N/A	June 2025
Schwarz Digits	STACKIT	N/A	August 2025



T-Systems	T-Systems	N/A	July 2025
Tencent Cloud	Tencent Cloud	N/A	May 2025
Vultr	Vultr	N/A	June 2025



About ISG Software Research and Advisory

ISG Software Research and Advisory provides market research and coverage of the technology industry, informing enterprises, software and service providers, and investment firms. The ISG Buyers Guides provide insight on software categories and providers that can be used in the RFI/RFP process to assess, evaluate and select software providers.

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About ISG

ISG (Nasdaq: [III](#)) is a global AI-centered technology research and advisory firm. A trusted partner to more than 900 clients, including 75 of the world's top 100 enterprises, ISG is a long-time leader in technology and business services sourcing that is now at the forefront of leveraging AI to help organizations achieve operational excellence and faster growth. The firm, founded in 2006, is known for its proprietary market data, in-depth knowledge of provider ecosystems, and the expertise of its 1,600 professionals worldwide working together to help clients maximize the value of their technology investments.