



Meeting the Unique Server Needs of the Public Sector

Different industries place different demands on their servers, and the public sector is no exception. As buyers of servers, the public sector represents a mix of two primary groups of entities:

1. Governmental agencies, departments, and public educational institutions.
2. Private companies that have contracted with these entities to supply computer equipment to them. These companies are responsible for selecting and offering IT components, often from multiple vendors.

The unique processing, security, and budgetary needs of the former combine with the unique contract constraints of the latter to make the public sector a very particular kind of server customer—one for which off-the-shelf (OTS) server solutions rarely fit the bill.



Specialized Requirements

While most public sector entities have fairly straightforward server needs, a sizable contingent of public sector entities requires very high performance or unusual configurations. Or, the sheer size of the constituencies that many public sector organizations serve—sometimes the entire U.S. population—drives the need for unusually fast processing speeds and storage configurations. This often necessitates custom solutions and close collaboration with the hardware supplier.

Many mission-critical tasks that used to be handled by supercomputers are now managed by specialized servers, such as:

- Weather and climate monitoring and predicting
- Defense and space exploration
- Healthcare research
- University research and modeling

The unusual performance, processing, and security requirements of these entities make it less likely that an OTS server from a name brand vendor's warehouse will suffice. Instead, a more collaborative server provider can help identify needs and build servers to the exact specifications of the public sector entity.



Tight Budget

Server cost is also a major concern for the public sector, with available funds normally falling within the rigid confines of governmental budget allocations or grant awards. It is particularly important, then, for public sector entities to get as much value as they can out of their server investment.

OTS servers may be less than ideal because they will often include components that a public sector entity does not need for the particular role a server will play. With a tight budget, it is imperative to purchase the exact hardware required, and to avoid paying extra for unneeded features or components.

Whether the purchasing entity needs high-performance processors to crunch vast amounts of data, enough storage to handle millions of personnel records, or pre-determined institutional operating system and form factor requirements, it will know best what its requirements are. Working with a custom server provider can allow it to tailor a solution to fit them exactly.



Use-It-or-Lose-It Contracts

The final concern, and the one that is almost exclusive to the public sector, is the “use-it-or-lose-it” nature of most government contracts. Government agencies and institutions receive a certain level of funding each year based on their needs and the previous year’s spending.

These entities are motivated to spend every penny they are allotted in order to keep the funding flowing for the next year. By spending less, they signal that they need less—which will be taken into account when that entity’s next budget is allocated. That means that these entities not only have a very specific spending target to hit, but a very specific deadline.

These organizations often find themselves with unspent IT budget dollars toward the end of the fiscal year—and in a rush to find ways to spend them. They may be able to find an OTS server close to their target price and performance requirements...or they may not.

It’s more likely that they’ll need a collaborative and responsive server supplier that can custom-build hardware to meet that price point, and deliver it within the required timeline.

For many consumer goods, the word “custom” often implies expensive or slow to produce, but that’s not necessarily the case with custom servers—as long as they come from the right provider. It’s even possible to get a custom chassis or prototype built within days or weeks—not months, as one might expect.



Choosing the Right Provider: OTS or Custom?

There's no reason public sector entities should ignore the availability of OTS servers—they may find one that fits their unique performance, budget, and timing constraints. It's much more likely, however, that custom servers will be a better fit. And a collaborative custom server provider will make staying within budget and ahead of deadlines possible, and even easy.

Some important characteristics to consider when choosing a hardware supplier are the vendor's history, size, reputation, and the consultative nature of its sales staff and technology.

The right supplier can steer public sector entities away from costly purchasing mistakes, and it can optimize the equipment they do purchase to better match their needs, reduce energy consumption, and minimize space requirements with the latest technology and options.

Pricing and timely delivery are important, but they are not the only considerations. The right server supplier adds value over each budget cycle by understanding and meeting the specific needs of public sector entities, including those that are mission-critical or a matter of public safety.

In these cases, settling for off-the-shelf just doesn't cut it.

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