

Beyond Uptime: The New Rules of Reliability

Simple uptime is table stakes. Are you getting all four pillars of reliability? Here's a gut-check for the next conversation with a network provider. Ask these questions. Listen for what they say — and what they don't.

 **Ask Your Provider**

 **What Good Sounds Like**

 **Red Flags**

Pillar 1: Infrastructure

<p>Can you show me documentation of your physical path diversity?</p>	<p>Provides actual route documentation. Can explain where paths diverge physically, not just on a diagram.</p>	<p>They lead with uptime percentages. They describe redundancy but can't confirm the paths are physically independent.</p>
<p>What happens to my traffic during a fiber cut? How fast does it reroute, and how do you know?</p>	<p>Names a specific reroute time (sub-50ms is achievable). Describes the mechanism — ring architecture or equivalent. Has examples.</p>	<p>They say "our system handles it" without specifics. They can't name a reroute time or explain how it works.</p>
<p>Was this network purpose-built for enterprise, or adapted from something else?</p>	<p>Can describe the original design intent and how enterprise workloads were accounted for from the start.</p>	<p>They get vague. They talk about upgrades and investments without addressing what the network was originally built to do.</p>
<p>Is security built into the network architecture, or offered as an add-on?</p>	<p>DDoS mitigation, firewall, and traffic isolation are native. They can explain where each sits in the stack.</p>	<p>Security is a separate service tier. They can't explain how it integrates at the infrastructure level.</p>



Pillar 2: Delivery

<p>Who handles my deployment — local engineers or a national queue?</p>	<p>Local teams with operational authority handle troubleshooting. Decisions don't wait on distant approval chains.</p>	<p>They reference a "deployment team" without clarifying local vs. centralized. They can't name who specifically would own it.</p>
<p>What happens when a deployment timeline slips? Who contacts me, and how quickly?</p>	<p>Proactive communication is standard practice. There's a defined process for scope changes and timeline shifts.</p>	<p>They say "we keep customers informed," but can't describe the actual process or who owns the call.</p>
<p>Can you give me a realistic go-live timeline and tell me what typically causes delays?</p>	<p>Offers a specific range. Acknowledges real factors that affect timelines. Demonstrates experience with complications.</p>	<p>They give a number with no context. They can't speak to what commonly goes sideways or how they handle it.</p>



Pillar 3: Support

<p>When I call with a critical outage, who answers?</p>	<p>In-house engineers, not a general call center. The person who answers has context on your environment.</p>	<p>They describe "tiered support" and "escalation paths." Nobody who answers will know your setup.</p>
<p>Do your support engineers know my environment, or do they start from scratch every call?</p>	<p>Support is tied to the team that deployed and manages your environment. Context carries over.</p>	<p>They describe a ticketing system. They can't confirm the same people engage across issues.</p>
<p>What's your average response time on a critical issue, and how do you define "critical"?</p>	<p>Gives a specific number. Explains what triggers it and how it's measured. Their definition of critical matches yours.</p>	<p>They cite an SLA without explaining what qualifies. Response time starts when a ticket is opened, not when you called.</p>



Pillar 4: Partnership

<p>If something goes wrong, who owns the issue end-to-end?</p>	<p>They can name a person or team with clear accountability. No seams between carrier, reseller, and support.</p>	<p>They describe a process involving multiple teams. Accountability varies by issue type.</p>
<p>Are your account and engineering teams local to my market?</p>	<p>Team members are based in the region. They know the infrastructure they built and the market they serve.</p>	<p>Account management is regional, but engineering and the NOC are centralized elsewhere. Local presence is just the sales team.</p>
<p>How does our relationship change after the contract is signed?</p>	<p>Describes ongoing engagement — not a handoff. Same people. Continued involvement.</p>	<p>They talk about a “customer success team” that takes over. The people you worked with during the sale move on.</p>

The Bottom Line

The best time to identify reliability gaps is before a deployment or an outage surfaces them for you.

If the answers you got were vague where they should have been specific, that’s useful information. Providers who have the answers don’t have to think hard about these questions. They’re just describing how they operate.

DQE was built around these four pillars. We’ll answer every question on this list — and show our work.

Schedule a conversation at dqe.com/network-reliability-standard/

