

Highlights from a Webcast on Cloud Migration with Microsoft Azure

OVERCOMING HURDLES AND SIMPLIFYING VALUE FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS



There are many opportunities open for partners with Microsoft Azure. Migrating customers to Office 365 has been a major one. But there are more including taking advantage of Azure's endless ability to scale and integration with new technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) as well as Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence (AI). However, this can be intimidating for partners who haven't worked with Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) or Platform as a Service (PaaS) to know where to start or how to expand. This Digital Dialogue based on a recent webcast moderated by Scott Bekker, Editor in Chief of Redmond Channel Partner, and featuring Bryan Hamilton, Cloud Solution Architect at Arrow Cloud Digital Group, and Woody Walton,

Principal Partner Technology Strategist at Microsoft, explains the high end capabilities as well as nuts and bolts information that partners need to know as they begin to take advantage of Azure to grow their businesses.

Executive Support for Cloud

One key take away from this discussion is that C-level executives are now pushing a cloud-first strategy because of the economic advantages of having cloud vendors including Microsoft provide and manage the infrastructure and major business apps – email, document processing, spreadsheets, etc. – in the cloud. So cloud-based IaaS is no longer the hard sell it once was for partners to convince customers of the value of migrating to Office 365 and Azure. Also there is growing demand

by developers who want the advanced services that are available in Azure.

Today the issue is how partners can help their customers successfully reach the goals they have as they begin planning migration to the cloud.

Helping customers get started

How can partners present the Azure opportunities to their customers? How do you start the conversation? As noted above, the answers to those questions have gotten easier.

With companies leading the gold rush to the cloud, partners have a smoother path to getting customers to start talking about cloud migration. However, many companies may not be familiar with all of the issues involved in migration. So the first task for partners is to help customers get up to speed.

Our experts on the webcast suggest avoiding overwhelming customers. Don't boil the ocean. Focus on the basics first. Down the road there will be time to explore advanced technologies including AI, machine learning, and Blockchain. But the best initial strategy is to start where your customers are with the applications they rely on to get their business done. Focus first on Microsoft product suites your customers require. They are probably using on premises versions of Outlook for email, Microsoft Word and Excel for daily business documentation, and most likely they have become reliant on SharePoint including customizations and workflows. Migrating the Microsoft Office applications end users rely on for the day-to-day operations of the business is a major task. It has to be done in a way that minimizes disruptions and makes end users feel comfortable with their favorite apps.

Focus first on Microsoft product suites

- Office 365
- Windows 10
- Windows Server

Planning and implementing the migration

One of the most valuable and value-added services partners can provide customers is providing expertise and support for planning and implementing the cloud migration. With your knowledge of their business you can help in tailoring the migration to meet the customer's specific business needs.

Chances are good that your customer does not have in-house skills for doing this. Providing that skillset is going to be very important. Of course, partners need to make sure they have those

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skills, so developing in-house expertise in Office 365 and Azure architecture must be a priority.

Experts are available to help

Partners may believe they don't have the capabilities to move into the cloud migration business. However, Woody Walton of Microsoft said that while there's a fear that you have to know everything, there are third parties such as Arrow and also tools that come with Azure that can help partners move from working with customers' on-premises systems to providing professional services for cloud migration and the expansion of cloud implementations.

If you don't have the skillset in-house, you can bring in experts. "I will do anything for a partner," says Bryan Hamilton of Arrow Cloud Digital Group. Arrow aims to help partners get started providing cloud service and then support them as they take a larger and larger role. "If you want me to be involved with the first call with your sales team because they are at the point where they don't know where to start the conversation, I'll engage," he says. "But I'll do it under the auspices of I'll lead the first meeting. The second one, we'll co-chair. The third one, I'm going to be quiet. After that I'm not going to be there, you just reach out when you need some help."

Arrow has capabilities across the entire migration process, starting at pre-sales, demonstrating value, all the way to providing advanced consulting services.

"Maybe you've got a customer who is semi-cloud-savvy," Hamilton says. "They've done the initial migration and now they are looking to get better. They want to do some refactoring, application modernization, consuming microservices, moving to containers, Arrow has an entire software development shop. Arrow can weigh in and accelerate any part of your customers cloud journey. They might need us to provide 80 percent of the expertise in the first phase. But at the end of the day we want to see them take over more and more of the professional services, because at the end of the day, that's where the margins are."

The expertise Arrow can provide to partners includes:

- Channel account manager
- Inside sales rep
- Systems architect
- Marketing resources
- Arrow capital resources expert

Find out about technologies that can help you

It can be a daunting task to research, build, align suppliers, and deploy the right hybrid cloud solutions for your customers. But with Arrow's pre-build, market-validated, best-of-breed cloud Solution Playbooks, you'll have everything you need to kick-start your customer's cloud business.

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