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Six future trends involving cloud

Anytime, anywhere computing is here to stay and it's only becoming stronger in the realms of rapidly growing data and analytics gathering. Companies and individuals alike are finding the benefits of cloud to be extremely valuable, and it's no doubt that because of this, cloud innovation will continue to thrive. Here's my take on the future trends involving cloud.

Intercloud and more of it

Some people talk about hybrid cloud, I tend to talk about cloud mix or multiple clouds, in what is called an Intercloud format. Intercloud systems means you may have an integration of complex corporate resources distributed geographically among various cloud providers. For example you may have resources in Amazon, some in a private cloud hosted by a company like Q9, and perhaps, you have private cloud resources in your own company building. This kind of hybrid cloud management or Intercloud, allows you to best manage your resources and to make the best use of your assets and aggregates. You're combining private cloud and public cloud to reshape your external connectivity and enable your business to deliver data anywhere securely and efficiently.

Big data analytics are here to stay

Data mining and knowing what the customer wants before they do is a business necessity, and the experience continues to be sharpened, as businesses hone their approach in order to provide optimum customer service and to sell, sell, sell. This is not a psychic approach with tarot cards or where palm readings take place, this is analyzing buckets of unique customer buying behaviours and demographics that companies have collected and/or purchased to decide where a customer is at in their buying cycle of a product or service. Technology may come to know you, better than you know yourself. This may sound scary, but it's already here as customer intelligence and market trends that are extracted from big data become more automated, intelligent and more targeted. When you get a chance, consider reading: How Target Figured Out A Teen Girl Was Pregnant Before her Father Did.

Customer service on steroids

Increasing speed of service and tracking your orders while they are on route to your final destination, wherever that may be, is happening today courtesy of the cloud. You can place food orders and trace every minute of their delivery via online mapping/tracking systems from wherever you are and on any type of device. Businesses can offer a higher level of customer service from cloud and leveraging other cloud services like BPS, service automation, customer service ticketing and providing direct information to their customers. By now, I can tell that the pizza you ordered is two stop signs away from your home. There's also talk about products in your home, like your AC for example, where it's connected to cloud, and can self diagnose itself when it needs a routine maintenance check from an HVAC specialist. Cloud can identify an issue whereby a repair technician is notified and dispatched without a customer or customer service phone agent having to be involved.

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Hyperconverged solutions will make it easier for businesses to build out and manage private clouds

If you're looking to build a cloud, one of the more interesting developments over the past few years has been the rise of hyperconverged infrastructure. Hyperconverged infrastructure uses a software-driven, or software-defined, architecture that allows the use of commodity hardware to build highly scalable, high performance, cost-effective cloud systems. There are two things that are really special about hyperconverged from a technical perspective. The first thing is the cost-effectiveness and linear scalability of performance of this architecture, as I just described. The other really attractive thing is that unlike a tiered architecture, where your data storage and your compute are actually separate elements, in hyperconverged architecture, your cloud's data is directly attached to the compute resources that need it. That means you can expect a high level of data throughput on all of your cloud workloads, especially if you're using local storage that includes flash. In total, if executed well, hyperconverged architecture allows businesses to build private clouds more quickly, and cost-effectively, while maintaining ease of use and maximizing performance. For enterprises with private cloud needs, this can be a real game changer.

The globalizing potential of cloud will begin to flow both ways

What I mean by this is that when it comes to cloud, business, the market, and the media have so far focused mostly on the impact of the global hyperscale IaaS providers – that is, Amazon (AWS), Microsoft Azure, and Google Compute Engine. To be fair, the focus has been on these players for good reason – this is where most businesses cut their teeth on how to use cloud, and it's where they first start to test and grow in many cases. But as businesses start to mature into what I call a cloud mix – that is, matching the right workloads to the right clouds and providers – those businesses are starting to learn about all the other offerings that make up a really rich cloud provider ecosystem. This next wave of adoption is all about looking at industry-specific clouds and application- or workflow-specific clouds that can offer

a higher level of value or management to the end user – value that can actually lead to a competitive advantage in the instant-fulfilment world of cloud services.

Containerization, efficiency, and portability

Part of what's enabling businesses to mature into a proper cloud mix is the evolution of both better cloud migration tools, as well as the advent of containerized virtualization. Both of these are enabling businesses to design their workloads to be not only much more efficient, but also more portable.

What does this mean? Well, for most businesses, one of the biggest challenges in moving to cloud, or moving from one cloud to another, is managing the migration of those workloads and data. With good migration tools and with containers, making workloads truly portable becomes a reality, and gets rid of many of the headaches and manual labour associated with migrations as well as reducing the burden of managing a hybrid cloud or cloud mix.

About Nabeel Sherif

Nabeel Sherif is the Cloud Product Manager at Q9 and has spent most of his career in technology conceptualizing, developing, and marketing computing and communications products for a variety of ICT providers and global electronics manufacturers. For the past decade, his focus has been in developing and creating the next generation of services and products in hosting, cloud computing, datacentre services, and application networks. Nabeel is active in technology education, and is the creator and lecturer for University of Toronto's Cloud Computing Certificate program. You can follow him @themightynab.

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