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The Deloitte On Cloud Podcast

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Title: **How one solutions architect is forging a unique path to career success**

Description: The great thing about cloud is that there are many career opportunities, and many paths to seize those opportunities. In this episode, David talks with Lucy Wang, owner of the YouTube channel, "Tech with Lucy," about her non-traditional career path. The wide-ranging discussion covers Lucy's background as a solutions architect, how she started and grew her channel, the skills and training solutions architects need to be successful, how the role is changing, and how cloud itself is evolving.

Duration: **00:18:06**

David Linthicum:
Welcome back to the On Cloud podcast. Today on the show I'm joined by Lucy Wang, ex-AWS Solutions architect, cloud YouTuber, influencer called "Tech with Lucy." Lucy, welcome to the show. How're you doing?

Lucy Wang:
I'm doing good. Great to be here, David.

David Linthicum:
So, tell the listeners where you're calling in from.

Lucy Wang:
So, I'm based in Sydney, Australia, 8:00 AM here for me. What about you?

David Linthicum:
Well, we're in Washington, DC, but it's just amazing that we can have such far reaches and, of course, it's in the morning where you are, in the evening for me. I'm just glad it worked out. So, tell us about yourself. What was your journey like up to where you are now? Where did you come from? Anything that relates to your career as it gets to your YouTube channel.

Lucy Wang:
So, at the moment, I'm a full-time YouTuber. I run the YouTube channel called "Tech with Lucy." But I started off my career at AWS as a solutions architect, so I was doing that for 2.5 years, and then throughout that journey, I was making YouTube videos to help people build their technical skills and sort of just documented my journey working at AWS and shared any videos that I thought would be helpful for people who are aspiring to be in the cloud industry. So, that's my journey I studied information systems in university, so that really helped understand the business and technical side of the technical landscape.

David Linthicum:
Were you a traveling solutions architect, or did you just work primarily out of the office?

Lucy Wang:
I started at AWS back in 2020, during the whole lockdown and pandemic, but I primarily worked with small to medium businesses, so it was mainly in the office because there were so many customers that I was working with. Rather than having a dedicated account or a dedicated customer, those solutions architects would typically be more onsite and working directly in the customers' offices.

David Linthicum:
So, why start a YouTube channel? Looks like you were doing some solutions architect stuff, working for a provider, and decided to get out on your own, become an influencer. What motivated that?

Lucy Wang:
So, I think the start of it was quite simple in that I was getting a lot of questions from students and people back in my university about how to learn cloud and how to get started because you know those LinkedIn certification badges where, when you pass a certification exam, you share online. I was getting a lot of questions from people asking me, "What was your journey like? What resources did you use to pass it?" So, my first video was actually just sharing my experience of passing one of the certifications, and it sort of just went on. I didn't really have a long-term plan of what I wanted the channel to be like. It was just whatever questions I got asked from students or people around me, I'll make a video so that whenever they ask me the same question then another question similar pops up, I will then just link them the video and it's all condensed in a five-minute video for them to look at, so I wouldn't have to be sharing the same thing with everyone every single time.

David Linthicum:
Provide advice, but have the advice scale because people can just watch the video over and over again. I watched some of your videos, and you have really the heart of an educator.

Lucy Wang:
I think it's a skill that sort of developed over time, but that's something I really enjoy, helping people by trying to explain technical concepts or new concepts in a way that's easy to understand and break down. So, I like to use different analogies and just try to link it to maybe things that they're more familiar with in their daily life. So, definitely something I really enjoy, and it's just grown over time.

David Linthicum:
You and I share that passion. I think the ability to teach somebody and get them involved in understanding something they didn't understand before. There's a certain amount of satisfaction in that. So, starting the YouTube channel, what kinds of things did you learn? What went well? What would you do differently? What worked out well, better than you thought?

Lucy Wang:
So, starting off with what went well. I think I was very lucky in finding a cloud niche because on YouTube there's people making videos on every single topic, but there weren't too many videos on the cloud. So, I think I was quite lucky in that there was a demand for cloud videos, but there weren't too many people making it, so finding that gap in the market. I think what could be improved on, I would have said that it would be uploading more consistently because there were times where I wouldn't upload for months on end.

But I think looking back, though, I don't know if I would be able to change that because I was working on YouTube part-time whilst working full-time at AWS. So, I think I had a good balance between working, and when work got busy, I would upload less on YouTube. So, in hindsight, I don't know if that's something I could change, but I was very fortunate in that I was able to dedicate some of the weekends into making YouTube videos and just being able to do both at the same time, so, then when the channel did get to a point where I could do it full-time, I was able to make that transition.

I think looking back as well, something else I would change is just less overthinking before making videos. I think I would think a lot about whether this video would be useful, trying to make it perfect, and spending a lot of time on every single video. But I think, especially for those who are looking to start their own YouTube channels or side hustles, I think just go for it, and it's always hard to know whether something would do well, like whether a video would do well or whether an idea would stick with people is it's good to just test it out with the market, see what it's like, and then iterate based on that.

David Linthicum:
Did you change your approach to doing videos based on the comments that you got back on your YouTube channel?

Lucy Wang:
Exactly. So, I tell this to people. My videos at the start were just collating the FAQs from all the comments and then just picking the most frequently asked questions and making videos about it.

David Linthicum:
It's funny, you mention the ability to have consistent posting. I found that with the blogs as well, that you've got to post twice a week, has to be fairly routine, and sometimes you may not have great ideas, but you still come up with an idea and get it out there because that's how you build an audience moving forward and also build credibility in the market. If you're a consistent poster, people look to you for reliable information, and they keep coming back.

So, we're going to talk about the career path of a solutions architect. Say I want to move and become a solutions architect and I'm trying to move down this career path. What do I do? Where do I find the training? What are the first few steps in me moving to a career and becoming a cloud solutions architect?

Lucy Wang:
So, first of all, a solutions architect is someone who is a trusted technical advisor for customers as they go along their cloud journey. So, in terms of the skills need, it would be a mix of the technical and nontechnical skills. Technical side, I would focus more on the IT fundamentals and the cloud fundamentals. So, more specifically, just understanding what the cloud is, what the different services are, but, also, more importantly, how the services connect together to build solutions. And then on the nontechnical side of things, it's all about understanding how to help customers in the best way possible, so that will be the customer-facing skills, learning how explain concepts in a way that's easy to understand, and just being able to communicate effectively with customers.

So, these skills can be built just mainly online through self-study.I know university sometimes does a really good job in covering some of those topics, but nowadays there's so much free training out there, so you could get a certification exam, for example, the AWS cloud practitioner exam, and there's a lot of communication workshops and other free resources out there to help you hone your nontechnical skills.

David Linthicum:
It's amazing how much education is better and also commoditizing. And so do you agree? Do you think that this is a step in the right direction where we can access any piece of education we need to learn any number of skills to take our career to the next level, including becoming a solutions architect?

Lucy Wang:
Definitely. I think back then you would have to start a whole bachelor's degree or master's degree just to build up the skills. But nowadays, There's things like six-month bootcamps or self-study curriculums where people can learn things much faster and just focus on learning the things that will be useful to what they're interested in. So, I think it's definitely a step in the right direction, and especially with things like generative AI coming along, I would see that shifting the technology landscape a lot as well.

David Linthicum:
So, let's talk about things are evolving moving forward. So, what topics are new and emerging that you would recommend someone understand and learn and based on what they're learning right now, and how are the ways in which we're going to understand these topics evolving as well, the ways and mechanisms that we're going to do training?

Lucy Wang:
So, at the moment, all the talk is around generative AI, machine learning, and data analytics. But as you mentioned as well, there's other things also moving a lot in the cloud space, for example, containers and serverless. So, where cloud is headed really depends on customer demands because the cloud is essentially used to help enable customers to build things, build their businesses without having to worry about the heavy lifting or the IT infrastructure. So, as companies build applications that focus more on generative AI, for example, then there'll be services from the cloud providers that would need to be enabling that. So, for example, I know Amazon just recently announced Amazon Bedrock and Amazon Titan, which are two AWS services focused on doing exactly that. So, providing that fundamental layer so that customers can build on top of it and then build their generative AI applications. So, that's sort of where I see it headed. So, depending on customer demands, depending on customer, their needs, and what they need to build, then the cloud providers would be trying to build tools to support that.

David Linthicum:
So, when you have your channel up and running, do you ever get comments back from people who listen to it where they got into a career because of listening to your channel and understanding what you need to do a particular job and the ability to get the education lined up behind it, so you're guiding people to enter into this as a career path?

Lucy Wang:
That's always the best part of the job. Those people who leave comments saying that. Because sometimes I have interview question videos or AWS certification videos, and they'll be like, "Oh, the video helped me a lot with landing my own job as a solutions architect or a cloud engineer." So, I would say

that's the most fulfilling part, when you get a comment like that, and you feel like all the effort that you put through the YouTube channel has been really rewarding. Because the good thing with YouTube is that, once you put content out there, people just are able to find it through search or through, for example, through word of mouth. So, it's you make the content once and then it stays on the channel and people can find it when they need help.

David Linthicum:
Years from now they'll be looking up that and getting guidance from that, so it's amazing. You talked about that at the beginning of the conversation. You're creating something that's sustainable over time, a repeatable method of learning that people can use over and over again, versus you going around and having to talk to everybody and provide the same message, which doesn't scale. So, moving forward, obviously the big focus now is on generative AI, gen AI in the cloud and where that's moving forward. Is that changing the way in which you're defining what a solutions architect is and changing the way in the technologies you're defining that you need to understand to be a cloud professional?

Lucy Wang:
I think it will in the future, but at the moment, those core building blocks of cloud still remain the same. You need compute, storage, networking, security, and so on. And at the moment, generative AI is more sort of that extra layer to add onto the core services. But maybe in the future there'll be generative AI, or AI in general, could be replacing all the core building blocks of cloud computing, I'd love to get your thoughts on that as well. Do you think it would be changing the tech landscape in the cloud industry?

David Linthicum:
It was defined to me as something that's going to have an amazing amount of capabilities, and I came up through my career dealing with AI and certainly deep learning and machine learning, and now generative AI is the next progression of that. Ultimately, it's going to be a hugely valuable tool. It's going to reflect our knowledge and reflect our skills, and, so, the ability to do that in a repeatable way, and, therefore, be a consistent coder, and have many things that are checked and many things that are coded for us. The ability to be consistent and provide standard mechanisms for doing something is where the value is.

One of the things I did look at a couple months ago was, can generative AI replace an architect, a solutions architect being an instance of that. And it became part of the fact of the journey that we're getting to a set of tool sets that are going to be much more valuable to us, and, therefore, provide relatable solutions. And I also think that I like about it's going to provide consistent solutions. If you take two architects right now and you put them in – take five architects, put them in five different rooms and give them the same problem, they're all going to come up with different solutions to the problem, and yet there's only one solution that's going to be approaching something that's optimized for the business. So, why can't we use technology to standardize how these solutions are going to be created? We define them as humans to these generative AI engines, but the answer that comes back is something that's consistent and repeatable and then something that's going to approach being optimized. What are your thoughts on that?

Lucy Wang:
Completely agree because, at the moment, solutions architects, they need a training period, maybe one to two years, to understand the best practices and understand what are the patterns in the architecture, and that normally comes with experience from working with customers, but I think even from what you said, it could help upskill solutions architects even faster and help streamline some of the processes. So, if there's a tool that they can use to understand or to figure out the most optimized solution in an easier way, or a faster way, that could be something that can help solutions architects save a little time as well.

David Linthicum:
Doing something like network design, and network design is complicated unto itself, but there's very much similar, repeatable patterns in how you build an enterprise network and how you support cloud-based systems and building a VPN and a VPC, virtual private network and virtual private cloud. And the components it's going to make to do that, based on the situation, there's no reason we can't have an AI engine, a knowledge engine make those decisions or assist us in making those decisions for us. So, we, too, as solutions architects don't have to focus and be an expert on lots of different things, expert on networking, expert on databases, expert on security. So, we have these engines that are able to take over for the details behind once we define what the solution patterns are.

We need to take things to the next level. So, we've had tools like that emerging for years, generative AI inclusive of that, and I think that the ability to leverage these tools is a force multiplier for the creative process of creating these technical architectures, these technical configurations, and getting them right to the point they just don't work, but not only do they work, but they're, again, approaching something that's going to be fully optimized to bring the most value back to the business is where the value's going to be for that, and I think that's going to be a core tool that not only solution architects are going to use, but everything else, the ability to do risk analytics, the ability to do customer-experience assistance, the ability to do digital enablement, and all the millions of use cases we're finding for AI technology and certainly generative AI technology that we're finding useful today, the ability to write thank you notes all the way to the ability to do advanced engineering, software engineering coding and take things to the next level. So, Lucy, where can the listeners out there find your YouTube channel and where can we find you on the web?

Lucy Wang:
So, YouTube channel just type in "Tech with Lucy." I have a Twitter YouTube channel and also LinkedIn as well, so LinkedIn is Lucy Wang, W-A-N-G, and you'll be able to connect there as well.

David Linthicum:
Urge you guys to go check it out because it's one of the better tech channels out there. There are lots of them out there, but her ability to explain things in a way that's going to make sense to people who are either new to this business or in the business, and that's a unique talent, Lucy.

Lucy Wang:
Thanks so much, David.

David Linthicum:
Well, thank you. So, if you enjoyed this podcast, make sure to like us, rate us, and subscribe. You can also check out our past episodes, including those hosted by my good friend, Mike Kavis. Find out more at deloittecloudpodcast.com. If you'd like to contact me directly, you can email me at dlinthicum@deloitte.com. So, until next time, best of luck with your cloud journey, and you guys stay safe. Cheers.

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