



For Cloud Professionals, part of the On Cloud Podcast

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Title: Scaling cloud innovation to the enterprise with agile pods

Description: As many companies are learning, developing cloud apps using traditional methods doesn't work very well, because those methods just don't move at the speed of cloud. In this episode, David Linthicum and guests, Deloitte's Rajeev Vasudeva and HashedIn Technologies CEO Himanshu Varshney, discuss Deloitte's recent acquisition of HashedIn. The trio focus on how HashedIn's pod-based, agile development methodology—coupled with Deloitte's digital transformation experience—can help companies speed their cloud journey with pod-based, agile delivery, a process he calls applied innovation. Himanshu also shares his take on what he thinks the very bright future of pod-based, agile software delivery holds as more companies adopt it.

Duration: 00:22:29

Operator:

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David Linthicum:

Welcome back to the On Cloud podcast, your one place to find out how to make cloud computing work for your enterprise. This is an objective discussion with industry thought leaders who provide their own unique perspective around the pragmatic use of cloud-based technology. Today on the show, we have

Himanshu Varshney, and we have Rajeev Vasudeva. And Himanshu is the CEO and co-founder of HashedIn Technologies. They have 17-plus years of experience in software industry and wears multiple hats at HashedIn, primarily leads sales, marketing, operations, and, in addition, he helps with delivery of HR functions. He follows a philosophy of “lead-by-vision.” Rajeev is a managing director at Deloitte Consulting. He leads native cloud development capabilities across all industries and sectors. Rajeev is a serial capable builder—boy, I want to learn more about that—with a long track record for creating capabilities for initial ideas and incubation and scale-up. So, Rajeev, let's go to you first. What is a serial capable builder?

Rajeev Vasudeva:

Yeah, what that means is I've been trying—I've been at least known in the firm for building capabilities that we have done for a number of years. When I joined the firm twenty-six years ago, my role was to help build the client-server capability. That seems like such an old word from the '90s. Object-oriented programming had just started, and we used to be a big mainframe shop, and so my first assignment was to go get the client-server capability built up to form. Then I built the healthcare capability when the Obamacare and the Affordable Care Act happened. Everyone was implementing EMRs. And then I built the life sciences R&D IT capability. So, that's a very long way of saying building new capabilities, scaling them up so you can take advantage of what the market trends are, and which way you need to move as a firm to take advantage of the conditions, so that's what I've been focusing on in my career at Deloitte.

David Linthicum:

Wow. So, Himanshu, what is “lead-by-vision?”

Himanshu Varshney:

So, I think there are a lot of things which could come with lead-by-vision, but it's all about, let's say in our case, we have been a tech-services company, and the focus was more about how we build products, and that's where if you see the HashedIn history, it's more about product development services company. And it required a different kind of thinking, a different kind of vision, and the vision is also kind of related to the philosophy that we follow, which is more about creating pods which can be autonomous, which can look at the big picture and then work out with the customers to lead to that kind of destination. So, keeping that intact, because there are always, when you are on a pod, you always find some road blockers here and there, and making sure that whatever the vision and mission that you have set, you are able to follow those guidelines. I think that is the important thing, and with me being there, there is a good aspect where the people who work along with me are able to see and follow some of those paradigms, so that whatever things that we have set goes there.

David Linthicum:

That's very cool. I remember my days as a CTO, that was very important as well. You had to kind of set the vision within the company, which I found pretty intimidating in my 20s as a CTO, but as I got to my fifth CTO position, it became easy. But, ultimately, people follow visions, and you have to really kind of have a visionary and a cheerleader leading the pack in terms of how you're going to build and deploy any technology, any sort of creation and innovation. So, Rajeev, tell us about the acquisition of HashedIn, and how it came to be, and what's the purpose of it, and what do we plan on doing with it?

Rajeev Vasudeva:

As you know, Deloitte has always been active, and we have done acquisitions in the past as well, more of a string-of-pearls philosophy and approach, and we always look out for capabilities in firms that will be creative and help us expand what we are trying to do. So, the thing that was very attractive about HashedIn was they had been a born-in-the-cloud company, not a company that had kind of made the move into cloud from cloud migrations or something, and they had focused—they have a very specific software-engineering message—and that's what they had done.

Obviously, we do a lot of software engineering and cloud as well, but it seemed like, given their dedicated focus on software engineering and a broad-based delivery model, which we can get to at some point, and their focus on edge, we thought that would be a great way for us to use this capability as an advantage or an edge. They were incredibly focused in the space, and, for us, when we are trying to look at doing cloud transformation for our clients who are trying to depend on cloud to do things differently, we thought it was a great match.

David Linthicum:

So, Himanshu, moving forward, ultimately, what do you see the vision here, the vision of the acquisition, the vision of where we're going to be, kind of a one-plus-one-equals-three relationship. How does that come about?

Himanshu Varshney:

So, we could see the tremendous growth which is in front of us. And as Rajeev was talking about, we were more like born-in-cloud. We have been, since inception, we have been here the industry for ten years. And as everyone knows that cloud is growing faster, and for us, the last three years has been pretty great. We are also growing at a rapid, fast speed. But actually, cloud is growing faster than what it could previously, and, with this partnership, what we could see is that we could grow much bigger and faster and can help the businesses with their digital- or business-transformation journey.

I know 2020 has been a pandemic year, but that also created lot of opportunities, and, more specifically, there is lot of expectations which have come with respect to the business transformation, and some of the businesses are looking how they can grow faster, and who are the people who can help in that journey. And with Deloitte being a big name, HashedIn who has lot of exposure, experience in building the next-gen products, I could see this partnership going to the next level, and that not in-a-year-time kind of thing, we have already started seeing some of those results, and I do see we together helping businesses in their cloud journey in an effective and optimized manner.

David Linthicum:

So, Himanshu, what would be the core capabilities of your company as it's being acquired with Deloitte. Say you're in an elevator on a one-minute ride and someone asks you what your company does. How would you answer that question?

Himanshu Varshney:

Yeah, so I will tell you in 30 seconds is what usually is it's all about, but I would again go back to the same thing that I did talk about earlier, that we do help out businesses in their product journey, and some of these product journeys are a little longer, because they don't just need the execution part. They do

need a thinking capability, which is where the consulting comes into play, that this is what we want to achieve, this is the big destination or the big picture that we have.

Now how we divide that big picture into small chunks which are important and doesn't go as a waterfall approach kind of thing where you do all the work and then couple of years down the line, you realize this is not what the consumers or the market was expecting. So, using the philosophy that we have internally, and which we will talk at some point, the important thing here is that how you work in an iterative manner, start showcasing something which the consumer can feel and touch, and keep working over it, right? So, that is something which I do see going forward.

David Linthicum:

So, Rajeev, having been acquired a bunch in my career, ultimately, the ability to look forward as to what we're going to be, what we're building, so this isn't about just combining two entities. This is about combining something and kind of taking things to the next level. So, how is this around implementing future industries, products? What's kind of the core thing you can talk about here that is really going to be apparent once we do the acquisition and get it integrated inside the firm?

Rajeev Vasudeva:

You know, we're already well underway in the integration aspect, and the initial feedback that we have gotten is pretty good, that it actually doesn't need as much integration as you might think, and I think there is a reason for that, but I'll come to that in a minute. But I think to answer your question, HashedIn's singular focus on software engineering and broad-based delivery, combined with Deloitte's reach on what our clients are trying to do with the transformation, that was the opportunity that we saw in this partnership, and that's what we're trying to expand, and if we can scale that up, that's where the value to our client comes in, and the—what we are seeing is that the broad-based delivery model like they have delivered well is not new. It's basically scrum teams, but it requires a certain amount of discipline both with our clients and ourselves, and that's where we are finding out actually the initial results that are coming in where we have deployed already HashedIn pods.

The industry is moving in that direction, and as always, the folks who are ahead of the curve, some people take it like fish take to water. So, I think we have been able to deploy HashedIn pods in a lot of situations where I defined, or we were already doing pod-based delivery there. So, it seems to be going pretty well. And in other cases, we'll probably end up moving to that model. So, it's that combination of, as software engineering becomes widespread, the delivery models also need to change. I think the days of assembling your own team for each project and then orchestrating the work, I think that's not very efficient, and that's also a function of scaling or industrializing software engineering delivery.

I think initially, to use an analogy with housing or housing construction. If you're only building a couple houses, yes, you can have your crew, drywall guy, plumbing guy, HVAC guy, electrician; you can give them directions. But if you are developing communities of three-, four-, five-bedroom houses, and you are doing a number of them, you have to go to a different model of delivery, kind of industrialize it, and that's what the pod-based delivery does, and that's where we truly felt that combining what HashedIn has done with Deloitte's reach was going to be useful for us.

David Linthicum:

So, Himanshu, looking forward, we're changing the delivery models, and I think it's for the good. If you go back in my early days when I was in my 20s, we did structured analysis and design, and Rajeev just mentioned, we moved that into object-oriented analysis and design. And then we went into an area where things were more agile, and so we removed a lot of the impediments for people being creative and the ability to kind of build software in such a way that it aligns better with the business and accelerates their ability to deploy solutions into the business faster. Now we're here in 2021, moving quickly into 2022. Where do you think the models are now, and what are the core benefits of doing things in a more agile way where we're delivering things with continuous integration, continuous development, continuous design, continuous deployment, all these sorts of things?

Himanshu Varshney:

That's a good question, David, and, again, I don't know how much you know about the full-stack developers, but that is one of the buzzwords that has been into the industry for last few years. And as you could see that agile is what everyone has been talking about, and earlier it was a waterfall approach where it takes months and years to start seeing something. Whereas in the agile, you start seeing something within weeks. If you see the engineers who like to solve some of the interesting problems, and if some of those business transformations are impactful and meaningful, then it kind of acts a lot more (Inaudible) there. And some of the things like as you were talking about, continuous integration, continuous delivery, those are some of the things which are pretty mundane, and this is something, which you set it up once and start getting lot of advantage from a productivity, from a delivery point of view.

These are some of the things which have now become the basic things. If you are doing any business transformation or helping out businesses on some product innovation, this setting up, you do it in the first few weeks and then you start getting the benefits of this over the whole journey. So, some of these automations are kind of increasing the productivity as well as removing some of those human errors, some of those basic things which now with these frameworks it is coming up. So, that's my take on the CI/CD, the HIE part, and the delivery methods.

David Linthicum:

So, back to you with another question, Himanshu. Ultimately, we're moving forward with agile methodologies, and moving forward with DevSecOps, and moving forward with, in essence, kind of removing the impediments to building things. We're moving into cloud basically for the same reason. So, in other words, I'm in the cloud, it's typically going to be cheaper, not always, but the ability to access resources almost instantaneously as I need them, to scale up almost as instantaneously as I need them, and the ability to use different components and allocate those components almost instantly.

Going back in time, and I'm an old guy, everything took months, sometimes years in doing procurement cycles to get the hardware and software configured and get the space within the datacenter, things like that. Cloud computing would not have the value if it wasn't for agile delivery and DevOps and the ability to kind of look at things in a more innovative way where we're kind of removing the impediments or blockers. I do remember the waterfall days. I taught waterfall as a professor in college, and I never really agreed with it as a good way to do it. I thought it was just a time waster. Am I wrong?

Himanshu Varshney:

Yes, I think one of the things that I was taught, and that you're kind of also highlighting here, is the extreme ownership, which is coming at the hands of the developers or the engineers. So, if you go back to your scenario, earlier a developer or the software engineer has written software. Now he's waiting for

someone from the IT department to procure the hardware and then waiting for the person to set up those kind of things, so there was a lot of leakages which was happening, which was kind of demotivating those software engineers, because if they are building something, they do want to see that team in action also.

As well as some of the consumers, or from the customer's point of view, they also want to see that, what earlier I was thinking, whether it's coming to that level or my thinking was different, and when I see the things, I don't think it's making sense. So, the whole thing is moving much faster with some of these paradigms which is coming up, and this is what I was talking about that cloud is going faster, and having that born-in-cloud kind of kind of philosophy as well as the DNA, I think we could do much better, and I think the next couple of years will also prove that out.

David Linthicum:

And back to you for kind of a follow-up to the question. Do you think we'll hit a -- well kind of flatten out in the ability for—to leverage agile technology and DevSecOps and things like that. In other words, we'll just hit a point where we can't improve upon our ability to be more agile and ability to be more speedy. Is this something that's going to go on in perpetuity?

Himanshu Varshney:

So, I don't think that we have reached that saturation point. I think there are tons of things which still need to be explored, and as you were talking about, DevSecOps. I think right now there is a new word, DataOps kind of thing, where you don't want some analyst, or some people, to just do an analysis of the data and finding out the monitoring and some of the 24-by-7 (Inaudible) things. There are frameworks that are tools which need to be developed, which are—there are many which are in the market right now, but that's a journey where you want to automate some of those basic things where some of those human error or some of those rejections were happening. At the same time, you want to use the engineering aspect to innovate the things in a much better and faster way.

David Linthicum:

Yeah, it's so exciting. I mean, the reality is that we're removing the barriers to being creative and innovative. I think the biggest thing I had certainly to do in my career was the bureaucracy in terms of building software. And once we're breaking that down and using small, innovative teams—pods—to, in essence, wrap themselves around a problem and then create technology that's able to solve that problem in a record amount of time, it's just weaponizing technology in a way I don't think we've seen in the past. So, Rajeev, this really goes to innovation and creativity. So, what is applied innovation?

Rajeev Vasudeva:

Good question. I think my interpretation of that is that you have to be able to do innovation at scale, and you also have to be, as the name implies, sort of things you can always test in a lab or in a controlled environment, and as even your previous question to Himanshu, you know some things are great when you're teaching or starting the things, but can you apply them to scale? And to a certain extent, this is creating the steam engine was great, but if there's no one to lay out the railroad tracks, it's not going to be useful to everyone.

And I think that's where the rub comes in, and that's where we actually—I actually think that the combination of having proven this model in the past, and applying it the way Deloitte does, applies to our clients, and I'm sure other firms do it in their own method too—that's where the differentiator comes in. In other words, how do you apply the innovation at a wide scale, because we think, given some of the early data as well as some things we have done in the past, that we have a way of combining what HashedIn has done in the past for the last few years, and combining with Deloitte's reach, that we're going to be able to scale it up and apply the innovation at a wider scale.

David Linthicum:

Yeah, I think that's absolutely the objective for doing any of these things. So, Himanshu, I'm going to ask you the last question. I'm going to put you on the spot a bit. Say we're going to get in a time machine and go forward in time five years. Where do you think the market's going to be, and what are you going to be talking about in the halls of Deloitte or HashedIn?

Himanshu Varney:

Tough questions. I'm just thinking of a few years down the line from here. I think I do see our delivery paradigm to be changing over time, and I think it will see that you started with that. The earlier days, up until now, we still haven't—we have just seen the initial adoption. There's more about, you give me team people which is engineers, and we'll find out what could be done. But if I do a fast-forward, I think you need small, autonomous teams which have the bonding, which have the right set of collaboration tools, which have the right DNA, which I usually call it as ownership aspect, and there is a purpose we want to achieve. And a multiple of parts with a bigger goal. And some of these small parts are taking some of those independent function units and working toward that bigger destination or goal is what I see as a delivery version to change, which I do see. And I do see that with Deloitte and HashedIn, we're maybe speeding or accelerating that model across the—because I do see that's a change which is coming up, and that is what is required: thought innovation and to do the things in a faster manner.

David Linthicum:

That's a great way to leave the show. Himanshu, welcome to the team. I'm glad to have you here. Rajeev, it's always great to talk to you. And I'm looking for some updates in the future, so please feel free to come back on the podcast and tell me how things are progressing, but I'll probably hear about it in the halls. So, anyway, if you enjoyed this podcast, make sure to like and subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. Also don't forget to rate us. Also check out our past episodes, including the On Cloud podcast hosted by Mike Kavis and his show Architecting the Cloud. If you'd like to learn more about Deloitte's cloud capabilities, check out deloittecloudpodcast.com. If you'd like to contact me directly, you can reach me at dlinthicum@deloitte.com. So, until next time, best of luck in building your cloud projects. We'll talk again real soon. You guys stay safe. Bye-bye.

Operator:

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