



For Cloud Professionals, part of the On Cloud Podcast

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Title: The Road to Cloud Success Starts with a Change in Culture

Description: In the rush to cloud computing, companies often get enamored with the technology and projected benefits but fail to build a business case that articulates their needs and constraints and takes their organization's culture into account. Thus, cloud adoption failure rates remain troubling. To help smooth their cloud journey, companies should assess their business needs, manage the systemic changes that will occur during their cloud journey, and map out a plan to construct their own, unique cloud architecture. In this episode, David Linthicum and guest Kevin L. Jackson discuss why the journey to cloud can be difficult and ways companies can change their culture to incorporate different perspectives, smooth their path, and change faster than their competitors. According to Kevin, it boils down to being open to change, having the right data, and being educated on the process of cloud adoption and migration.

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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 Kevin L. Jackson, a good friend of mine. Kevin is a globally-recognized cybersecurity and cloud computing expert cited as a top 5G influencer and a top 20 tech blogger. He provides digital transformation, education and social media services to global firms and educational institutions and national governments. He's authored many books, including Architecting Computing Solutions, Practical Cloud Security and Cloud Computing: The Business of Government. Cloud

positions have included Vice President of JP Morgan Chase and IBM, Global Sales Executive, and Mr. Jackson retired from the US Navy in 1994 and has supported the digital transformation initiative for NATO, Saudi Arabia, and the US intelligence community. So, when do you sleep, Kevin?

Kevin L. Jackson:

Well, you know, that's so overrated, sleep. Good to be with you here, David. Thanks for the invite.

David Linthicum:

Yes, just my own personal feelings on Kevin, if people are asking me to name the top ten cloud computing thought leaders in the space, I've known Kevin forever, and I've seen him speak at conferences and read his writing, and he is truly an influencer. He's one of those guys that has a pragmatic view of this stuff, understands how to make it work, and really provides very good advice to anybody in the industry as to how to make this stuff work. And his background's amazing, you know, coming from the Naval part of it, and really kind of understanding how government works, how commercial works, basically all aspects of business and how it's related to technology. Am I overselling you, Kevin?

Kevin L. Jackson:

Well, I really appreciate it, and I'll send you the usual amount later. But you know, it's really fun working with these large organizations as they try to infuse digital aspects into their business and their missions. It's hard trying to change the status quo, and as a practitioner, I guess I really love doing it and helping them to do this transformation.

David Linthicum:

So, what are the trends that you've noticed in the last five years? We've known each other longer than that, but just kind of share war stories. What are the trends that you're seeing in the commercial space, in the government space as far as utilization of cloud computing?

Kevin L. Jackson:

Well, really it's the big swings from, we'll never do cloud, we don't trust anybody with our information and data to, okay, throw away all the data centers, where everything is going into the cloud, we're all in, to now where – which I think it should have been from the very beginning – is that okay, we have made big investments in data centers and they work great. And in fact, some things need to stay in the data centers. But the cloud has some great value. Maybe we should have some type of balance, maybe we need to use them all. And that's really where these organizations are right now. They're realizing that the business case is key to whatever you do, and you're not in data centers currently because they don't work. You're there because they're very effective, but they're not effective for some things, and the cloud is great for some things, but it's horrible for others. And you need to understand your business model, understand your mission models and your own workflows and make a determination as to which stay in the data center and which go in the cloud. And I think that's the challenge right now. Everybody thought it would be easy to go into the cloud, and nothing's really easy in this world.

David Linthicum:

Yeah, it isn't easy, and I think we're getting into the harder layers now. I think the first five years of cloud-based systems we moved maybe 100 of the easiest applications there. They're typically applications that have platform analogs in the public cloud, so we could do a lift and shift if we had to, moving fairly quickly. Now we're realizing we have to remediate these things to get them down into cloud native capabilities, leveraging the native security systems, leveraging the native governance systems, things like that. And it's really going to take some gutting of some of these applications and data sets to make them work. And one of the things that I think you said that's very profound, there's no written law that things have to move into the cloud. And I've written and spoken about this before, and I know you have as well, that we're typically going to reach a saturation point where it doesn't make pragmatic use of our time and money to move something into the cloud, and that's typically going to be between 60 and 70 percent. So, we have these other 30, 40 percent of applications that have to go into co-lo provider, managed service provider, stay in traditional data centers. And so we're going to be moving into kind of this hybrid IT world where we're going to have to be able to maintain these on premise systems or pseudo on premise systems and stuff in the public cloud. So, what does that look like moving forward?

Kevin L. Jackson:

Well, I agree whole-heartedly. It's really a multi-cloud or a hybrid IT future that all organizations have – will have. But the hard thing is really not the technology. It's how the organizations manage themselves, it's their internal governance, it's how they measure the performance and value of their data centers versus the performance and value of cloud and the managed service providers. But more importantly, it's how they measure success within their organizations. And it's this governance thing and internal culture that's the hardest part of the future. And I think education and training is also a big part of that. You can't do things the same way and expect different results. And as you go into these integrated, composable infrastructures, infrastructures that you leverage like software, that can change on a dime within seconds based upon, either your customer's needs and requirements, or your own internal measurements, the governance of the organizations, the processes that you have, have to be as fluid as well. And changing those policies, changing those methodologies, really looking at metrics and using them with your operational processes is important. Culture is key, and changing culture is hard. Humans don't like change.

David Linthicum:

So, how would you suggest that a company approach really kind of systemic change in culture that they need to deal with? And that's probably one of the toughest things as well, and I don't have a psychology degree. I didn't see that in your bio, and so yet we're technologists, yet we have to kind of change the minds and the thinking of existing, as-is, states of IT, and that seems to be the toughest things to do. So, what are the first three steps that we need to do? Is it a matter of firing people, or controlling budgets, or is this command and control issue? Is there something we can influence?

Kevin L. Jackson:

Well, I think there's three things you've got to think about. First of all, you have to have a team that's open to change. Individuals or groups that want to maintain the status quo with any cost are bad for your future. So, you have to be open to change. Second, you need to be able to collect and review data – data about your operations, data about your economics of what you're doing, the choices that you're making. And then you need to have education. People have to understand what they're doing. Know that you're not buying technology when you're going to a cloud service provider; you're consuming technology services. And when you're looking at something out of your data center that you bought technology, you need to understand the services that are being delivered by that technology so that you can compare based upon consistent metrics, and you need to use those metrics to evaluate and select

your managed service providers as well. So, it's like three things. Like I said, be open to change, have data, and be educated. You need all three to change your culture in your organization.

David Linthicum:

So, what about the external motivators? I mean, one of the things I'm seeing as a dynamic in business right now is that the disruptors, which were typically very limited by the capital that they could leverage, are getting really, really good at leveraging technology such as cloud computing as kind of a force multiplier. And so they're, in essence, disrupting a space with technology with better processes, better ways to do it, better customer support. The ability to track a motorcycle build completely through from, you know, the inception all the way to their delivery and have pictures sent to the customers and have all this various automation that really wasn't available from the larger providers, and therefore they're disrupting the market. People are choosing to buy automobiles and motorcycles – I'm just picking on their business hypothetically – and really so this becomes kind of a protection thing.

So, in other words, if you aren't able to step up and leverage technology like cloud-based systems as force multipliers within your own established business, that you're bound to be disrupted and some of the big disruptors in the space have kicked the traditional companies out of the market. And we see that happening in healthcare, we see that happening in insurance, we see that happening in banking. And over the next ten years, we're going to see this upheaval in some of these smaller providers, some of these smaller companies that are able to punch way above their weight because they're able to leverage technologies like cloud computing, and so the big companies need to basically make sure they're able to defend themselves.

Kevin L. Jackson:

Yeah, I mean, change used to be an anomaly. Even the verbs that we use like upheaval and disruption, they seem to be things that only happen every once in a while. We're in an age now that change is constant, and if you don't disrupt, you will be disrupted. So, you have to have a culture, an organization, and a mindset that is always looking forward to the next best thing. And change as we know it is actually accelerating. So, it's those "disruptors" that you need to have around you. You need to have a team. Like I said, this is a team sport, because no one individual knows everything. And the different viewpoints are really the essence of innovation. Being able to look at the same thing from different perspectives will enable an organization to change faster than their competitors.

David Linthicum:

So, when are organizations typically engaging you? Are they at this panic where they think they're about to be disrupted, there's not many companies in that position yet? Or they realize that cloud computing is a systemic change coming forward, they really don't have a choice moving into the cloud so they're trying to figure out how to move that forward, get smarter around the technologies and leveraging that correctly? Or is this kind of an evolution where it's kind of a more laidback kind of a, "Yeah, we're going to move into the cloud and we're going to do so in a stepwise, very controlled way?" So, those three degrees out there, you seeing the panic, or are you seeing the lackadaisical attitude, or are you seeing the healthy progression?

Kevin L. Jackson:

What I've seen is a desire, or a requirement, from management or boards of directors that say go to the cloud. And then like a reflexive action to consume as much as possible from the cloud and then failure. And then they try to do it again, because the demand never goes away to go to the cloud, and the requirement for success seems to be financial. They try it again and they fail. And then they call me. It's after they've failed twice doing it on their own. That's when they seek outside assistance. And I guess people think, you know, I've done this for years, this is just a new technology, which it isn't. This is a technology thing, which it isn't, because it involves every aspect of the business: acquisition, procurement, legal, business processes, operational processes. So, it seems that you have to fail twice before you convince yourself that you need help. And so – and then it's really – it's really a problem. It's an emergency then, so they – they will just grab on every word you say, and they become successful. So, I've come to accept the fact that my clients come to me after they've failed twice and they're in a panic.

David Linthicum:

So, everything's going to be emergency time. You have to move quicker and faster, and so they actually are in the panic state. They're in a panic stage. It's not a lackadaisical thing. They're definitely not progressing at a comfortable pace. It's, "Well listen, look, we have our existing on premise technology, all the R&D dollars are being spent in the cloud and we're not seeing the updates or the love for the on premise systems as much as we did ten years ago, five years ago. So, we view this as kind of a forced march, whether we want to go to the cloud or not, and so we have to be able to set sail in that space." So, do they really view cloud computing as something that's going to be all-encompassing within the enterprise or they view it really kind of as a platform change?

Kevin L. Jackson:

So, most of them see it initially as all-encompassing, and then once they look at the value that their existing platforms are delivering, they don't want to get rid of them. So, then they morph into this hybrid IT mindset, because everything is driven, or should be driven, by the business case. When organizations first go onto the cloud, they never do a business case of change. They assume that it will be cheaper and easier in the cloud, both of which are false assumptions for many processes. So, it's critical for the organizations to understand and evaluate their entire application portfolio and not try to pick one application that goes into the cloud because you miss a lot of the nuances, a lot of the connections between applications, the dependencies with your business processes across multiple applications. So, these are the critical aspects of a hybrid IT environment that organizations really need to understand.

David Linthicum:

So, you kind of hit something pretty profound, the ability to kind of look at your current as-is state and have a good understanding of the applications, the processes and the data that you're storing. Are we spending enough time in doing that before making migrations to the cloud? Are we just kind of picking fast and furious various things that we think would be good things for the cloud and it's a political decision, it's not necessarily based on technological understanding?

Kevin L. Jackson:

Unfortunately it's the latter, not the former. You will have a group or a team that wants to jump in the cloud or there will be political pressure to do the cloud at any cost. And then, without understanding the interconnections and the dependencies, you either don't get what you expect, or you don't reach the goals you expect, or you have a complete failure. Once again, this should be a rationalization of your entire platform, your information technology platform. And it takes a business case looking at not just your operational needs and requirements, but the metrics associated with those operational

processes and how it links to the economics and the quality of the products and services that you're delivering to your constituents or your customers. So, it is not an easy thing. It should be a measured thing, and it has to be a holistic thing that's transitioned to a hybrid IT environment.

David Linthicum:

So, let's fast-forward five years and we've been in cloud for a long time, kind of started to emerge in 2008-2009. I think that's when we first started to hang out. And, ultimately, we're looking at the different corporate impacts that occurred with cloud computing, and so, bring out your crystal ball and kind of tell me where we failed and where we succeeded in cloud computing likely, based on the patterns you're seeing today.

Kevin L. Jackson:

So, we failed by trying to do it too fast. The fast and furious mentality of going into a cloud-first policy or executing a cloud first policy. That's where many organizations have failed. We also fail by not educating ourselves first. Organizations just pick somebody to lead the forced march into cloud, irrespective of doing a business case or looking at policies. But now, and in the future, I see the vast majority of organizations in a hybrid IT environment. I see them understanding or working and focusing on doing a balance between cloud, traditional data centers, and managed service providers. I also see an ecosystem growing that will help these organizations measure and manage these three environments in a proactive manner. The reason this is going to happen is because of digital transformation. The products and services that are being delivered in the future are less and less physical. It's all about information. It's identifying information syncs: people, things, organizations that need data, and information sources that provide. And the business models are connecting the information syncs to the information sources. And the organizations that can leverage these hybrid IT environments to quickly identify both syncs and sources, and connect them, will be the leaders in the future. And doing that requires a high degree of automation and a high degree of standardization across their IT environment. And by the way, that will also increase the security of the IT environment.

David Linthicum:

Pragmatic advice, I mean, from Kevin, who's been there and done it. Out of all the other influencers out there, people have a tendency to get into these meetings and go cloud, cloud, cloud, cloud, cloud, multi-cloud now, hybrid cloud. And it really is about you taking a breath, your ability to kind of understand this requires a systemic change in culture, this requires a systemic change in how we view technology, and this is probably the most significant paradigm shift that we've gone through, you know, since we created IT in the '50s. So, final advice and also where can the listeners find you on the web?

Kevin L. Jackson:

Yeah, so once again, thank you very much for having me here. The advice I would give anyone that's trying to do this is be open to change and educate yourself, because things are changing so rapidly, you have to continually educate yourself. And I'm happy to help you with that by – we provide training organization at my company, Gov Cloud Network. We're at GovCloudNetwork.com, and I'm all over social media at Twitter @kevin_jackson and Kevin L. Jackson on Facebook and LinkedIn. So, feel free to reach out.

David Linthicum:

Check out Kevin. He's one of the big leaders in this space and I think is going to continue to be that going forward. So, if you enjoyed this podcast, make sure to like and subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. Also check out our past episodes, including the On Cloud podcast hosted by my colleague and friend, Mike Kavis. His show is called "Architecting the Cloud," and if you would like to learn more about Deloitte's cloud capabilities, check out DeloitteCloudPodcast.com. And if you'd like to contact me directly, you can reach me at dlinthicum, L-I-N-T-H-I-C-U-M, @deloitte.com. So, until next time, best of luck in building your cloud solutions. We'll talk to you guys next week. Take good care.

Operator:

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