Your future cloud is hybrid, and so is Azure

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When we talk to our customers about their cloud strategy, it comes through loud and clear: they need choice and flexibility in where to run their workloads and applications. There’s no question companies are rapidly turning to the cloud and seizing the opportunities it brings – increased agility, faster innovation, just to name a few. The conversation is rarely “all cloud or nothing.” In fact, for most enterprises, or highly regulated industries, it’s a hybrid approach to cloud that makes the most sense.

Customers choose hybrid to future-proof their cloud strategies

Hybrid cloud made a great deal of sense to our customers like CarMax, who needed to reduce latency between their corporate data center and store locations. It made sense to Willis Towers Watson, who leveraged an on-premises data warehouse together with Azure to perform compute intensive analysis. It made sense to AVID, an Emmy Award-winning entertainment and media solutions company, who built an innovative media processing solution for global broadcasting corporations using a hybrid cloud approach for fast processing in local newsrooms.

The conversation around hybrid cloud continues to evolve. Hybrid is essential in a world of AI and IoT as we move towards an Intelligent Cloud and Intelligent Edge working together. A distributed hybrid cloud enables a future-proof, long-term approach – which is exactly why we see it playing a central role in cloud strategies for the foreseeable future. We asked 2,500 IT professionals about their approach to cloud, and 91 percent of these IT workers believe hybrid cloud will remain the approach for their organizations five years from now.

Recently, other major cloud players have finally started listening to customers and admitted the need to offer hybrid solutions. Azure has always been hybrid by design, based on our decades of enterprise experience. We stand alone in offering a hybrid cloud experience that is consistent across on-premises and the cloud. Meanwhile, cobbled-together partnerships like AWS and VMWare (and others) fundamentally miss the ability of hybrid to meet customer needs, and the great value of this model to customers.
Let’s talk about what hybrid is, and isn’t

Hybrid is the future of cloud. One of the most promising things about cloud is the application innovation that new approaches like containers, microservices, serverless, and platform-as-a-service enable. The arrival of Azure Stack, just one of our many solutions to help advance hybrid scenarios, is an absolute game-changer. It enables a consistent development experience for cloud-native and traditional applications, with the flexibility to deploy in the cloud, on-premises, or at the edge.

Microsoft has set the bar in terms of hybrid – we’re proud of it. The consistency of our hybrid approach is exactly why customers find it appealing. When we say consistency, we do mean consistency across data, management, identity, and security. Customers must secure and manage their data and users across both the cloud and on-premises, and not having multiple systems helps reduce complexity.

True hybrid cloud helps address customer requirements around industry regulations, connectivity and latency. Regulation might evolve, but it won’t go away. The speed of light won’t get faster. And, geopolitical environments will always be dynamic. Our customers tell us a hybrid approach to cloud also lets them use existing on-premises technology as an asset in digital transformation as opposed to treating them as purely legacy investments.

Hybrid is not taking the virtualization customers have historically done and putting it into someone else’s data center. That’s why the AWS and VMWare offer as hybrid fails to address the real reason hybrid cloud is attractive to customers - and customers are left with the complexity of two vendors, two platforms, two portals and so on.

New customer-focused hybrid solutions at Ignite 2017

This week at Ignite we’re excited to continue the conversation about hybrid cloud with many of you. We’ll showcase our hybrid capabilities and announce new updates. You’ll hear about Azure Stack shipping, the extension of Azure Security Center to hybrid environments, and a new fully-automated Database Migration Service, and the GA of SQL Server 2017 – the first born in the cloud database that’s also available on-premises on Linux, Windows Server and Docker containers.

At Microsoft, we’ve always been passionate about the value of hybrid cloud. Our enterprise roots run deep and we look forward to continuing to bring you game-changing hybrid solutions as you transform your business.