




CLOUD REALITIES

CRLIVE004

Cloud driven business
transformation with Jonathan
Allen, AWS



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Cloud driven business transformation with Jonathan Allen, AWS

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[00:00:00] Hi, hello to everyone listening on the expo floor. This is the cloud realities podcast and we are about to get going.

Welcome to Cloud Realities, a conversation show exploring the practical and exciting alternate realities that can be unleashed through cloud driven transformation. I'm David Chapman and I'm Rob Kernahan

And as you've said on these special shows, unfortunately, Sjoukje. He's not with us this week, so I am joined again by our roving reporter, Rob Kernahan. Rob, how you plugging yet? No, no. Still got enough energy to keep going. So, like, we are now sort of four o'clock, day two. Yeah. And you look, I'm not sure you're as bright eyed as you were this morning.

It's been a tough day, I [00:01:00] would say, day, but I've got my theme, so I've done what you've asked and they'll be ready. Thank Evans for that. That gives us half a show, mate. Well done. And we have, I am delighted to say, with us... Uh, Jonathan Allen, Director of Enterprise Strategy at AWS. John, it's so good to see you again, mate.

How are you? I'm very good, Dave. It's great to be here. Thank you for inviting me. And, oh, it's always a pleasure. And how's the show for you so far? Uh, unbelievably busy this year. But, um, this is my seventh re invent. Seventh. And, uh, yeah, I think it's the best so far. You know what? I think it's pretty... I think the Expo is really exceptionally good this year.

It's got a hell of a buzz about it this year, I have to say. And, uh... You know, this week I've spent most of my time actually in the executive summit, which is on the top floor of the Venetian. Yeah, yeah. It's pretty, it's pretty busy up there. It's pretty busy up there as well. Is it? Yeah, yeah. Has it got, has it got a buzz too?

What's it, what's it like? It certainly has. You know, we're just providing a dedicated space up there for executives. You know, they've got different demands on their [00:02:00] time, slightly different needs. And, uh, they've got a different talk track up there. So I actually did the keynote, uh, in that session yesterday.

Uh, how not to sabotage your transformation. I am so looking forward to getting into some of that in a minute. So that was, uh, that, that, yeah, got a lot, a lot of, uh, a lot of questions afterwards. So that's always a good sign. Well received? I think so. You know, I think it would be pretty weird of me to say, yeah, it was excellent, you know, considering I did it, but that wouldn't be very British.

But uh, yeah, you know, I always, when I'm, when I'm presenting on stage, there's a couple of indicators for me. It's like, is anybody looking at their phone? Yeah. Right. That's the lead indicator. Like executives, you know, don't have a strong attention span if they're not, if they're not interested in seeing.

That's right, if you don't capture them in the first couple of minutes, you're dead, right? Yeah, you know, one or two seconds and they're picking up their phone, right? So, look, there weren't many phones in the air, and I see that as a good sign, and lots of questions afterwards is a good sign, right? Right.

Brilliant. Brilliant. And yeah, we were saying just before we started to record that like... It does feel busy this year. Yeah, it does feel busy. I mean, it feels like really back [00:03:00] from the pandemic. Yeah, you know, a lot of people have said that with, you know, understandably, we were all wearing masks last year, right?

And this year we're not, and yeah, different feel. It is indeed, it is indeed. And I've heard numbers anywhere between sort of 40 and 80, 000. Where would you put your pin in that scale? Oh, I'm not going to comment on that yet. I'm not even going to put a pin on that yet.



But I think it's a very good turnout.

I think we'll just leave it at that. And we've been tracking some themes emerging. So Rob's going to cover them later in the show. Right. But I think what we're going to talk about is cloud driven enterprise transformation. Yes. I mean, it is the reason that all this stuff exists in the first place, really.

So, let's start with, you know, it might be one of those things that you might expect cloud driven enterprise transformation to be relatively self evident. But actually, to you, what does that mean? Like, what's going on in there? Well, you know, I always break it down actually away from the technology when I'm speaking to customers.

Um, and actually, I've just passed over, um, engaging with over a thousand customers in nearly [00:04:00] six years. Is that right? Yeah. Is that right? Yes. Did you get a carriage clock or something like that? I'm not sure about that. But, uh, it certainly provides an interesting perspective. And, um, you know, the first thing to say is, you know, cloud is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Yeah. Right, is to open with that. So it always comes back to... Actually, what is the business outcome you're trying to achieve? And one of the amazing things is, of course, and what attracted me as a customer, and I think what attracted you as a customer and you be using is, well, actually it solves a hell of a lot of issues for me on so many levels.

You know, the word agility, uh, is actually one of the primary motivators. It comes up once every nine minutes. and my conversations with leadership. And I assume you're saying that with a small A rather than a capital A. That's a small A, right? How, you know, I want to be quicker. I want to be faster. And of course, I want all the other things, right?

I want security, durability, availability, speed, scalability. But I actually want to, I want to get to that agility of my business. Yeah. Of delivering a business outcome. [00:05:00] And, you know, when you look at the spectrum, and this is one of the things I talked about in my keynote yesterday, The most precious commodity that enterprises have is, of course, the humans that are working for them right now.

And you want those humans working on the things that are going to differentiate your business. Absolutely. You know, drive customer satisfaction. So, in that, that start of that, you know, that keynote question you just gave me is, Okay, what's your business? What are you trying to achieve? And, and I'm, I'm, I'm almost sure in every single time, yes, cloud can help you in so many spectrums.

Let's, let's break it down to that one thing that you're trying to achieve and work backwards from there. And let's, let's just, let's dive into the agility point a little bit. So, like a lot of people perhaps think, well we'll put cloud in, and then hopefully we'll go faster. No. But there's a number of other components that go around with that, right?

So, yes, cloud provides you with some infrastructure, and it will also provide you with some, Platforms and some additional tooling, but what are the what's the secret sauce and the thousand customers you've worked with the ones that have succeeded [00:06:00] in increasing their speed, you know, what are the patterns that you're seeing?

Yeah, there's primarily two actually, which which come back to it. One is as an executive team again, what are you trying to achieve? You know, so much of strategy comes back to what's going on here. What are the actions we need to achieve to achieve that business outcome? And when they go through the sort of the inflection point in the epiphany that like, hold on, there's actually a better way of doing business.



There's a better way of doing business. And so many of the assumptions over the last decades of how we've structured enterprises, from the infrastructure team delivering infrastructure, to applications team, to using software vendors, to these silos of marketing and operations and finance and HR and... And actually, well, if you're going to try, go faster, do you know what, let's start moving to business outcomes that are self contained.

Right, right. And suddenly you go, well, I can't do that if I'm on, if I'm using on premises infrastructure because I still need my silos in place. And, and, [00:07:00] and suddenly they start going, well, you don't, you can break those silos down now. So now you can start moving towards a business outcome that can be achieved.

These smaller autonomous teams can start to actually be, you know, the deliverers of their own destiny. And that starts to challenge the business operating model. That starts to unlock a lot of agility. And those teams, presumably in the model you've just described us, are deeply empowered. Deeply empowered, but with the caveat that obviously in highly regulated entities such as banking, energy, healthcare, government, they're also going to need the right preventative and detective guardrails, right, right in place.

And on Monday this week, we actually launched one of my, well it is my most exciting, actually, release. Is this the narrative you're telling us about? Yeah, so I had a little bit of a hand in helping, you know, craft this. Um, and this came back to, you know, one of the challenges when you've got, you know, over 225 services, Um, is how do you ensure that while you can put all the preventative [00:08:00] and detective controls in place, how do we make that even easier, right?

How do we reduce some of that coordination tax? Yeah. Because a lot of the really highly regulated, you know, customers... Do elements like allow listings. So they want to understand, well if I'm spinning up DynamoDB, how do I make sure encryption at rest is enabled? Right, right. And on Monday we, uh, in preview, Control Tower, we introduced over 350 controls.

Aligned to common frameworks like NIST, PCI. Uh, you now can select what you want as a control and a control objective and the downstream programmatic enforcement of that is done with the inclusion of a new control called a proactive control. So if you're instantiating cloud formation and you now got a guard hook that will go actually you're pushing a cloud formation pattern which isn't congruent with an assertion or a standard that your enterprise wants to meet.

So actually, you know, if you're, if you're, if you're doing that, you need to turn this on. Right. So then, so if, [00:09:00] if, effectively, it helps you encode the guardrails. Correct. So it's like a deeper version of policy code. Yep. And we're making that a lot easier. So yes, teams can go faster and even safer. And we're reducing that undifferentiated heavy lifting on some of that downstream programmatic enforcement to make sure that, yeah, as they use the services.

They're also staying safe. Well, it's interesting because one of the themes, Rob, that you've been picking up this week is about simplification, right? Yeah, right. Absolutely. Have you got a perspective on what John was saying? So, I think, uh, it was one of the themes that we've been discussing is the product and the platform, align it to the business, make sure you drive your outcome.

But how do you let the product go fast? And control risk. And what you're talking about there, John, is a way that I can control risk or mitigate risk and give freedom. And with freedom, you get delivery velocity focused on what the business needs. So the concept of what the product does and what the platform defines or controls gives even more autonomy



to those end operational teams that can go do great things [00:10:00] for the business.

Yeah. And the thing I particularly like is, you know, back from when, you know, we were engineers. If I'm blocked from doing something because I'm denied to do it, there's probably a good reason to deny it Yeah but even better and I think more effective is telling me and educating me on that journey that actually there's a better way and A more secure way to do something and I can go.

Okay, so I'll You know, I'll turn encryption at rest on and now I can move forward again. Yeah, that's, that's a better experience. I think the mantra I always like is make the right thing easy to do and the wrong thing. Correct. Yes. And this is exactly what you're providing through that control mechanism.

I'm plagiarizing that now. Okay. It's yours. Copyright. It's gone. Copyright Rob. And have you launched? Is it launched? It's in preview. It's in preview as of Monday. Um, you know, so it's interesting cause there was some really big announcements right in the keynotes this week. And, uh, you know, alongside data zone, which was another one when we took it like, uh, you know, staying, staying even safer with your data and making it easier.

[00:11:00] I particularly liked that one. Uh, also, you know, pretty attracted to nitro V five, you know, that came out on, uh, on Monday night, the geek in me was like, yeah, more performance. Well, let's return to that in a second in terms of the trends, because we will come on to that in a sec. What I want to do though, is just go back to where we were in the enterprise transformation journey there.

So series of teams. They've been empowered. More policy is code, so you can control, you can control that empowerment, but not in a way that's going to necessarily impede their velocity, which is, which is great. And I think I agree entirely with the sort of, the sort of organizational transformation that needs to go on around that.

Changes to organizational governance, and therefore you get to increase velocity, e. g. it's not just the cloud. But of course there's... And much of an interesting side to some of these things, which you've been talking about in a recent presentation called, I think... How not to sabotage your transformation.

Yeah. This sounds like the really good stuff, John. [00:12:00] So, so, set out some of the, some of the criteria that you've seen on, in all of the engagements that you've done that, where you've seen clients self sabotage. Yeah, so, you know, this is a presentation that we've been using and delivering for the last year at a lot of our summits around the world.

And really what we're trying to do is, is help businesses. Get that business outcome deliverable. And again, cloud is a means to an end. Not an end in itself, it's a massive enabler. And really, what we talk about in this is, look, there's two or three things that are going on, as we look at this, as businesses are going towards the cloud.

And the first one is, actually, um, siloed organizations. You know, they're still pretty rife out there. Right? Yeah, and by that you mean like, Infrastructure siloed away from applications, applications split down randomly by market unit. Yeah, and, and, you know, we, we did a, you know, we've, Amazon's a [00:13:00] pretty academic company.

You know, we're very narrative and written driven. And one of the things we did when we researched this presentation was kind of like started asking five why's. Oh yeah. I'm going, so, hold on, why, why, why do we do that in modern enterprises? Hm. Hm. And, and you go back in time and you start going, hold on, actually some of the principles that were laid down in the 1930s from, from, you know, leading academics at the time in, in, in, in business studies



from Fehl and Ehrwich's time, they actually came up with some really interesting principles, which for the time in a, in a, in a manufacturing driven organization.

Industrial age company. Yeah, industrial age company. We're fine. And, and for whatever reason, those have carried forward. Yeah. Yeah. So like, things like the span of control, you'll have no more than five or six individuals that a function will specialize. And, and, you know, when you're on premises, that actually carried through.

Yeah. You would have a Windows team, a Storage team, a Batch team, and, and actually suddenly, that actually like, makes businesses go slow when they're passing tickets between [00:14:00] team or using waterfall methodology to lever. When the world has now moved forward and everything's configurable via an API. Wow, that's a different, that's a different thing.

Now I'm actually now need a multi skilled team, right? So we kind of look at it as yes, silos bad. Hold on. The second thing is that comes from principles that the companies have established, compounded by the fact that when you look at back at the history, we've got this huge skills gap still. Absolutely.

Right. In terms of like. The, the workforce is generally, you know, before you even get to technology, is generally leadership skills and how to sort of function in professional organizations are still being driven by industrial age thinking in so many places. Yeah, yeah. Still being driven. And then when you look at the skills gap, and we, again, we looked at some of the, uh, again, we look back in time, um, when you look at these new general purpose technologies.

You know, the academics call them GPTs and you look through human history, you know, we actually do a bit of a math, a history lesson in this presentation, you know, and to give you an example of what a [00:15:00] GPT is and one of my favorite ones is, is a few thousand years ago, uh, one of the general purpose tools that humanity You know, invented was the bronze chisel.

Like what? , I thought you were gonna go with hammer and I was gonna be facetious, but literally is a chisel. But why was the bronze chisel important in time? Right. Well, actually is important 'cause the first time ever we could forge a wheel and axe to allow us to defeat friction. And create transport.

Right? Then you fast forward, you've got things like electricity being discovered. You know, the telephone public ISPs. You know, the, uh, the binary based number system all the way through to cloud being a GPT. And in each one of those, we've seen a lag in skills. Even the original skill from the Industrial Revolution, we saw a skills gap.

So, we've got to, you've got to double and triple down on these things. Find a mechanism approach. And then in the rest of the presentation, I talk about some of the principles to start breaking up this thinking. And to break up some of the anti patterns. That happen on the journey to cloud. And, and, and, just to maybe bring our conversation for today to a bit of a conclusion.

What, [00:16:00] what, what general bits of advice would you give to people who are sort of thinking about some of these big themes for their organization? Yeah. And, and thinking like, maybe thinking where the hell do I start? Look, you know. A few things, you know, and the executive team understanding why we are going to do this is number one priority.

It really is. It really is. And a personal reflection on that is I used to be, you know, when I was, when I was working customer side, which I did for the vast majority of my career, I was



absolutely one of those guys who is like, Like, like really well intended and quite driven and I was like, no, no, we don't have to bother leadership with this.

We just have to sort of get on and do good things. But actually, I think this changes is so profound when you engage with it that you absolutely have to engage the senior levels of the organization. It's not about being hierarchical, is it? No, it's about just understanding, look, you know, if the word agility comes up every nine minutes, this is a pretty powerful catalyst to achieve that.

Yeah. So let's understand why. And then after that. Let's lean in to [00:17:00] start small, but let's really compound the reskilling so that everybody starts to understand what is now possible. And you know, humans generally, we get unconsciously comfortable in what we're doing. Right. And unless you can have some of that psychological safety to push yourself out to go, it's okay.

Yeah. Let's try the different way and then find the right partner to help you on that journey. Right. Absolutely. John. Always a pleasure. Super insightful. Thank you very much indeed. Rob, a lot of themes in there that we've been we've been seeing. Absolutely. In fact, today, big conversation going on about the product and the platform.

How do we organize ourselves to embrace this enabler? To go fast, get the outcome. Um, and there's a big change in that. The way we operate, the ways of working, the way the whole organization is structured, lines of finance, and how even a CFO needs to think differently about how you pay for things and get capacity to deliver the outcomes.

So some quite big conversations that we've covered there. One of the interesting ones [00:18:00] that's coming out with the themes of this week where we see lots of data and ML and serverless is FinOps. FinOps do about this? Because if you have a deterministic compute cycle, hey, it's easy to predict spend and you can forecast and that gets very easy and you can control it.

Yeah. Now if I, if, uh, if I have to run undeterministic processes through serverless or ML analysis, what's that going to cost me? Right. And suddenly as you sit back and you have this long conversation about the power of ML and AI and what serverless can do, still this. Mantra of, but I don't know how much it's going to cost me, so should I use it?

And this, I'm a bit scared to put my toe in the water because I don't know what's going to happen when I click the button. Right. And we're seeing a lot of conversation going on in the forums about, you know, great, but, dot, dot, dot. So I think FinOps has to go through a, um, a maturity cycle there as well.

And that's trying to have, just so, to make sure I understand your point. Is that, is that trying to make sure therefore that FinOps can deal with undeterministic situations? Correct. Absolutely right. It's very, very good at telling you. [00:19:00] What you already know. What you should already know, correct. But if you think about the power and the autonomy that we discussed earlier, and then you have undeterministic workloads, Yeah.

that can be a bit of a headache. So we're starting to see the, but what do we do next? So applying machine learning to FinOps. Yeah, probably something like that to try and predict better from past behavior to future behavior. I have a different take on that. Ah. Go for it. See, one of the patterns, which I think is an anti pattern, is And this happens again.

It's sometimes that the control elements play out, but central functions going, we'll have the cloud usage report, you know, we'll look after that. And I'm like, that's the wrong behavior. Like, you know, cloud is like sunlight in a dark corner when you get that cloud usage



report. And it's really important that the teams, the teams that own the business outcomes understand and can realize The, the downstream impacts of the decisions and can make a deterministic choice on what they're going to use with full insight of what that's going to cost them if they need to use that.

That, [00:20:00] you know, we've got to get to a point where they understand the consequences of their decision. Now, there's always going to be some elements of like auto scaling. And elements like that, that you've got to then look at the mechanisms. But the biggest thing I find is, Okay, let the team that have incurred that cost see that cost monthly, be accountable for it.

Yeah, and I think that goes back to the role of the business aligned product. Yes. So you're responsible for the outcome, but you've got the budget to deliver it. You pay for your action. Yeah, yeah. It's just provisioned IOPS, right, because you've got an absolute business need to do so, then, yeah, you need to obviously pay for that.

Conversely, you know, if you want to look at using Spot. Yeah. Because that's the right thing that you do. And many, many customers use Spot to dramatically drive down the price of their EC2. Awesome. You also then, you know, if you're paying for that, that's then your gift to enable that. So I think the conversation that I've heard today is, organizational maturity isn't there to do the sorts of things that we're discussing here.

So there is a fear associated with it and they need to change [00:21:00] the way they think about it to get over it. That and use principles to underlie it. So you, just saying, look, let's put the report out there isn't how you do it, you've then got to turn it into a principle to say, let, let teams be accountable for the costs that they're going to use.

Yeah. No, no. That's the line. It's principle driven. It, it comes hand in glove with me for the, with the empowerment point you talked about earlier. Yeah. Which is like, it's not partial empowerment. And, and with, you know, to, to coin a phrase from Spider Man's uncle, with, with an element of empowerment comes great responsibility.

Yeah, and, and, you know, the ultimate kicker of that conversation is you build it, you support it. Yeah, yeah, exactly, exactly. Easy to say. But boy, does that really suddenly take the enterprise to go, wow, what does that mean? But it's, it's tearing apart traditional enterprise structures and rebuilding them.

And for many, that's a, that's a big change. It's a big change. Massive. Yes. You start moving towards that business outcome focus. Yeah. And I keep coming back to that business outcome because I also find people getting a little lost on internal versus external [00:22:00] products. Yeah. Oh yeah. Right. Absolutely. So I'm like, hold on, what's the business outcome we're trying to achieve?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's where I keep bringing it down. I mean, I, I think that, um, yeah. Rob, next I lost my enormous, I had, I had, I had an insight. It's gone. It's the expo floor. It's, should we move on? Move on. Well, I think we can all agree big changes required in the, that's actually what, thank you very much for that.

Have I reminded That's exactly where I was gonna go. Which is, it is, it is. Again, I'm gonna sort of go back to the theme of this episode, which is, Which was actually written a few weeks before, you know, our outline for this episode was written a few weeks before the show. But, but what's going on is a lot of the themes are really, are really sort of underpinning what, what enterprise transformation when it's cloud driven really means.

It's a, it illustrates the scale of the change. And it isn't, it isn't just putting cloud in as another



data center. It isn't just thinking about cloud as a technical aspect. To create the sort of agility of movement that [00:23:00] we were talking about earlier. All of the things we've just covered in the last five minutes are sort of the beginning of really fundamentally changing your organization.

And actually, when I, when I talk to customers about it, and I talk about digital transformation, you know, to, to use the, the, the inverted commas phrase, I talk about things like, well, how does your governance work in your organization? How does, how does, how does your delegation work? And, and as an organization, are you, you know, are you planning two, three years ahead?

You know, and is that, do you think that's possible in a, in an exploratory digital world? Uh, you're talking about succession planning and, and elements or... You're like... annual financial planning and you know, five year strategy. You know, we, we don't, we don't tend to comment on that as AWS. So I've not got an opinion on that, but I think, I think organizations have got to look at, um, a whole range of different things, you know, as they move, moving forward.

Nicely said. Where are we on the trends, Rob? Uh, last one, a [00:24:00] quick one. Uh, it's basically the dashboard may be dead, which is let the machine tell you what you should be interested in. And get the insight through programmatic ML. And not worry about staring at metrics all the time. So now, what is your proposed interface to that?

Like, uh, Alexa, tell me. Tell me what I should worry about today. Yeah, yeah, what do I need to worry about? Whereas you see a lot of vendors push a lot of technology associated with presenting metrics. But actually, what does that actually mean for my business? And how should I treat it? Because you can get data overload associated with a lot of that.

I do actually like the idea of that very much. Like when... My previous, two organizations back when I was on the customer side, we didn't, we didn't actually get to a point where we started to invest in it, but we did explore quite a bit of having, and it was Alexa's at the time, it was having Alexa's in every meeting room in the organization, where you could inquire on the organization.

So you could say, Oh, Alexa, um, [00:25:00] how many people have you got at the moment? Um, uh. You know, kind of, how is, you know, what's the current state of such a business unit? Um, and then, you know, and then you can imagine how that gets. Is that the sort of thing? Yeah, that is the type of thing, which is don't worry about looking at hundreds of reports.

Ask the questions that you're interested in and get the answer back. Yeah, absolutely. A different way of thinking about inquiring into your business, your business model, its performance and etc. Yeah, just make it easier, right? Nobody wants to be writing select statements in SQL, right? Natural language all the way.

Natural language. And, you know, as you saw, you know, maybe in this morning in Swami's keynote. You know, a lot of the developments that we're seeing in some of that analytical is starting to move towards question basis. Yeah, natural language inquiry into the data. Yeah, I think that's phenomenally exciting.

There is, I think, an organization in Japan, isn't there, where it was the first organization to put an AI as the chairman of the board. Oh, yes! Now, I thought that was a bit gimmicky. Maybe. And it's [00:26:00] obviously been done to sort of successfully draw attention to that organization. I can't remember. I've not heard of this.

No, it isn't. So you Google it, I can't remember exactly the organization. Um, but I would



imagine that's come from the similar sort of thing. Yeah, absolutely, it's the same sort of thing about... Because it's like a personification of the organization, if it's backed up behind it with machine learning and data.

Well, it's to the governance point. Every governance interaction should be because of an exception. If you're having governance boards to run BAU, maybe you need to think about how you're thinking about governance, yeah? Because what's the point, what's the value you're getting out of it, yeah? Right, exactly.

Work by exception. So there we go. Another good set of trends, Rob. It's going alright, isn't it? Yeah, so far, so good. One more to go, the pressure will be off. We're going to get a real cracker for tomorrow. Uh, we'll try. Brilliant. Thank you so much, guys. So, John, we like to end every show by asking you what you're excited about doing next.

Now, that could be something at the show, it could be something tonight. So, I am actually, uh, I've got one more [00:27:00] travel to Istanbul next week. Yeah, so I'm speaking at the AWS Transformation Day over there. I'm excited about that. And then, uh, travel for me is done for the year. Oh, so Christmas after that.

Yeah, fantastic. Who isn't looking forward to a well deserved rest? Yeah, well, thanks again, guys. Thank you, John. It's always a pleasure talking to you. Tons of insight as usual. Uh, and Rob, great work. Keep it up. Uh, we're, we're all on LinkedIn, so feel free to join, feel free to give us a follow or connect with us and we will see you back in the re invent reality next time.

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