

Hey Martin, do you have time to resume our chat about "The Cloud?"



Spring 2012



Sure Rob, how about now?



CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF COMPUTING

PART 2



Martin Miller Talks About the Cloud
with Rob Argento

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Cloudy with a Chance of Computing—Part 2

IBM is pitching the cloud by envisioning the future workplace as a merger of social with mobile in the cloud. Your thoughts...

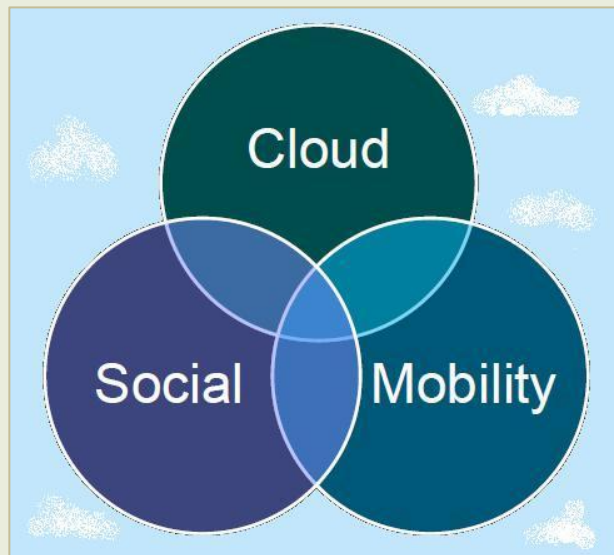


Rob Argento, Technical Communications

It's true, because integrating mobile and social in the cloud makes remote entities present to the community. And IBM would know. With hundreds of thousands of employees worldwide, IBM has a lot of data points on the pervasiveness of social computing and the convenience of mobile services. And with the cost of mobile services at a critical point, integration with the cloud will lower costs.



Martin Miller - CTO, M-Vision



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Looks like IBM assumes an ever increasing dependency on social and mobile. And in order to do that optimally, from the computing point of view, you are inevitably pulled into the cloud, right?



Yes. This follows that metaphor of "cloudy, with a chance of computing," doesn't it. 😊



Certainly does!



And now with smartphones and tablets that are much more powerful than the desktop computers of recent past, they will support more work on the go. In cases where a laptop or desktop is unavailable, mobile devices can offer low cost alternatives. More and more work is being done around mobile. Integration of mobile with the cloud makes sense all the way around.



But, now, what about my data? If I'm Starbucks, I'm not going to trust you to bank my data, am I?



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The real issue is, "Who do I trust to hold my data?" and "What data do I want to have available for a social commerce relationship?" You can keep all your data private, and you can have a "private cloud." You might think of it as something like a "gated community" in cyberspace. Some data might be in a temporal relationship as to when it's shared, and you may set an expiration date.



So, like a payment processing key exchange when using a mobile phone instead of a credit card...something like that?



It should definitely disappear in that type of disengagement, when you consider that this data is only temporarily held for some transitory operation and not to be held for any transactional relationship beyond that point.



So, different kinds of persistence models for different kinds of data. And cloud application vendors will have to allow for these new capabilities?



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YES, and... It may be better to think in terms of Platform as a Service (PaaS), where you consider the functional utility metered as an integrated service. So, instead of buying a computer you're buying a platform-as-a-service—inclusive of the operating system and the software that it runs, as well as the resulting services that it provides.



Now, what about competition in the cloud: we won't end up with only one Big Cloud, will we?



No! Competition occurs at different levels of service: some as a full platform-as-a-service; others as a full open-stack-as-a-service. Something more interesting to look at might be a consortium of companies that come together to define semi-open standards for the cloud. Open Stack Foundation is doing this and gaining adoption. Single-standard solutions and single-vendor solutions are declining. You will be seeing more platforms being offered, versus bare-bones dedicated-host solutions. And platforms are better held in the cloud than behind the firewall. The expertise, support, and scale of your PaaS will serve as all-important due diligence criteria.



With regards to a cloud services platform, can you name some of the basic components of the platform, and how functionality actually partitions?



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The services platform can comprise a bundling of several building blocks as a service. So, at one end of the spectrum are the turnkey platforms or Software as a Service (SaaS). And at the other end are the cloud hosting providers. As for components, think of a computer with an operating system (Linux, Windows), and probably a virtual hosted instance. Or an application on top of a virtual host, like WordPress—or one of my favorites, SugarCRM. 😊



So, you're buying components from major vendors for both hardware and software, as well as open-source software. You could architect that mix any way you want in order to provide specific solutions to specific verticals and market them any way you want. Something like that?



That's exactly what I'm getting at. An example of this might be DropBox or SugarSync. In the case of SugarSync, they built a client app that integrates with almost every hardware platform, and you back up your data there. Now, from the user point of view, you have no clue where that's ending up. But ultimately it's SugarSync you are trusting, not the vendors behind them.



Okay, let's get down to the nitty-gritty: the business model. How would you meter your services and collect revenue?



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Hey, who says you have to make money ? 😊

All kidding aside, and to your point, the revenue model is what makes a business out of an idea—and that's the excitement that wakes me up every day. 😊



What about services granularity. In the mobile networks space, they offer a pay-per-use basis for SMS texting. That's pretty fine granularity. Can cloud providers also work in those terms?



Absolutely, and some already do—with metered services based on utilization models. But only the analyses will tell you whether you're talking about micro-pennies or dollars per unit of time. Everything is going to be measured in some form of units: time, bits, bytes, bandwidth, or transactions.



We talked about competition. How does a start-up possibly compete with a powerhouse like Salesforce.com!



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Instead, how about using [Salesforce.com](https://www.salesforce.com) as your platform? That gets you to market faster. And you compete at precisely those points where even the heavyweights are soft, their coverage is hazy. You're identifying and capitalizing on "cloudy opportunities." 😊



So new providers could use [Salesforce.com](https://www.salesforce.com) as an IaaS and PaaS to write their own services applications on top of it?



Yes, and several successful businesses are already doing this. Salesforce: It's not just an SaaS, such as a CRM. It's a triad of SaaS, IaaS, and PaaS, through its partnered network of solutions.



Martin, thank you for joining us and, uh, unclouding the cloudy business of cloud computing for us. 😊



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Martin is a Software Technology Leader with over 20 years of practical operational and management skills. He is able to create and drive a technical vision as well as contribute to the business strategy as part of an executive team. Martin has provided interim and retained CTO and CIO services with focus on: professional software development; solutions creation; service-scaling of turnkey solutions; analysis and due diligence; and devices through service integration (e.g., iPhone-to-CRM, Business Intelligence, and Media delivery).

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Rob is a technical communications specialist, having logged more than 20 years with industries ranging from NASA launch vehicles to "Web-TV." Sometimes as consultant, other times as staff writer, Rob has researched, developed, and edited innumerable documents and whitepapers elucidating bleeding-edge technologies for M-Vision, General Dynamics, Sperry Systems, Oracle, Xerox, Sony, VeriSign, and others.

Rob holds degrees in Physics and Theological Studies, with continuing education in operating systems, computer languages, systems integration, molecular biology, cloud computing, and more.

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