

Driving Microsoft Cloud Adoption

A conversation with members from the PlumChoice Cloud Services team

In a recent interview, PlumChoice discussed the importance of streamlining the delivery of Microsoft Cloud services to drive adoption, and shared their thoughts on additional opportunities where companies can maximize service delivery.

Question: What influence is Cloud Services having on the go-to-market strategy for channel partners?

Answer: "Many channel partners have built strong businesses based on selling their customer's hardware and software products. With the world accelerating at a hyper-pace, and the cloud changing the way businesses are operating, channel partners must evolve. If a channel partner does not transform, they will not be relevant in the future. Channel partners must incorporate cloud-based solutions that include managed services with their customers, or their customers will look elsewhere." (David Hauser)

Q: How would an organization and their partners benefit firsthand from the PlumChoice and Microsoft Cloud Services partnership?

A: "We (PlumChoice) are active at multiple levels within Microsoft. We have field relationships that help us understand business drivers and how customers are truly benefiting from Microsoft Cloud Services. We have strategic Channel Sales relationships with executives from the US SMB Sales Organization, providing us the opportunity to regularly contribute and receive updates on partner needs and trends. We also have a programmatic commitment to Microsoft and continue to stay connected to the teams that own the Cloud Solution Provider (CSP) program. These two-way dialogues enable PlumChoice to understand Microsoft's future strategy and assist in enabling us to provide valued services to our partners that drive differentiation.

An example of informative knowledge obtained from these relationships is the evolution of the CSP message from partners providing technical support directly to the end user customer. Many of these partners are now utilizing third party vendors to provide Cloud Enablement technical services to their end customers." (David Hauser)



(Left: Robert Bergman, Al Koch, Robert Black, David Hauser, Jon Allen, Wah Lee)

Q: How are Managed Service Providers (MSPs) transforming into the O365 CSP support services business while innovating around the Microsoft stack?

A: "That transformation is a tough proposition and many MSPs are turning to a strategic partner for assistance. The ideal partner has a focus on being a "Services as a Service" company to augment and support the partner's current strategy while helping them rapidly transform and broaden their portfolio with robust support services. This is exactly the approach that PlumChoice has taken. We have not only innovated around the core with O365 services, but we have added wrapper services with Azure Services, Help Desk as a Service, Migrations, AD SYNC and Connect, Exchange Server Decommissioning services and additional managed services that ultimately help broaden an MSP's portfolio with the right service offerings." (Jon Allen)

Q: Let's go a bit deeper on this. What is the impact to a business that makes this transformation to an O365 support service business and innovation around the broader Microsoft stack so compelling?

A: "Many businesses think of services as reactive support and as a cost to be mitigated by the business. In actuality, unique and value-add services can drive additional revenue to a business and strategically differentiate themselves in the market while at the same time, delivering important benefits to the business. End-user experience and effective on-boarding, support and understanding of these various Microsoft products is essential to driving additional sales, adoption and consumption." (Al Koch)

Q: But wouldn't delivering these additional services add complexity and cost to their selling model?

A: "Adding service and support provides a stickiness that you just do not see if you were merely selling the product and moving on to the next customer. Customers want to have a single place to go to purchase products and the support that is needed. That is where choosing and working with the right services partner is most beneficial to a reseller. For example, PlumChoice's partners are engaging with their customers through the customer's lifecycle beyond just reactive support. Our SKU-based services span Onboarding and Migration, Support Services, Admin Services, Project Services and Advisory Services. They are SKU-based for a clear defined scope and faster sales cycle. We also work with our partners to design individualized services that will help them become more competitive and differentiated in the market, and be able to deliver each in an expedited timeframe. Leveraging services broadly and strategically is a win-win for our partners and their customers."
(Robert Black)

Q: What value do these additional services bring to Microsoft CSP products outside of Office 365?

A: "Ongoing support is a basic requirement for any CSP product, but as you move through the CSP stack outside of Office 365, additional services become even more critical. Without these services, customers will struggle to gain maximum value from their CSP product investment.

For example, enabling disaster recovery services with Azure can be difficult for SMBs in terms of both Azure technology and general disaster recovery practices. Our Advanced Cloud Services for ASR (Azure Site Recovery) builds a partnership between PlumChoice and the customer to ensure that they are aware of ASR capabilities, enables the preferred set of features with the proper settings, and successfully tests and uses site redundancy via recovery to the Azure cloud.

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In addition to Advanced Cloud Services, we offer Cloud Enablement Services for Azure Onboarding, Ongoing Support Services, Administrative Services which include Reporting, and Project Services to enable MFA (Multi-Factor Authentication) and SSO (Single Sign-On) with Azure AD (Active Directory).

Cloud Enablement Services will help your customers start realizing the full value of your CSP products, and ensure that their configurations evolve with their ever-changing business needs. Our Advanced Cloud Services include monthly touchpoints to share best practices and help enable and fine-tune optimal features via hands-on assistance. These touchpoints also include end-to-end cloud product management to ensure that your customers have optimized their cloud infrastructure. PlumChoice helps our partners achieve maximum stickiness, and helps your customers gain maximum value out of their technology investment." *(Robert Bergman)*

Q: Speaking of Azure - how do you see it affecting change in the landscape of backup and cloud, and how will customers benefit from these changes?

A: "Azure and moving to the cloud itself is a game changer to any business. By moving a part or all of their workloads to Azure whether it be backup, database or computing, it instantly gives a business the ability to be more agile and makes their data more secure with higher levels of availability and accessibility.

As an example, using Azure Backup or Azure Site Recovery, one can create a robust plan to have minimal or no business impact when a business faces cyber attacks or any number of technology disasters which are becoming more and more commonplace*." *(Wah Lee)*

* Forrester, The State Of Business Technology Resiliency, Q2 2014

Interested in learning more?

Schedule a call with members of the PlumChoice Cloud Services team.

Please send your request to partners@plumchoice.com

To learn more about PlumChoice and their Cloud Services portfolio, please visit www.plumchoice.com.

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