



ACCENTURE LIVING IN THE CLOUD WITH MERIM BECIROVIC AND CHRIS WEGMANN, | AWS RE:INVENT /EXECUTIVE SUMMIT 2021 VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

(Music)

Lisa Martin: Welcome to the AWS executive summit presented by Accenture at AWS re:Invent 2021. I'm Lisa Martin, and I've got two Cube alum here with me, please welcome Merim Becirovic, Managing Director of Global IT Enterprise Architecture at Accenture and Chris Wegmann, Accenture, AWS Business Group Technology and Practice, Senior Managing Director. Gentlemen, welcome back to the program.

Merim Becirovic: Thank you, Lisa, great to be back.

Chris Wegmann: Thank you, Lisa. Great to be here.

Lisa Martin: It is nice to be back in a way, right, here we are at this hybrid event, but we want to talk about what Accenture is doing with its – with AWS serving its clients. And then we're going to get into your own internal use case, drinking your own champagne. Chris, let's go ahead and start with you, talk to us about what Accenture is doing with AWS to serve its clients?

Chris Wegmann: Yeah, Lisa, it's exciting, as you said to be back in this hybrid event and you know, for me, this will be my 10th re:Invent and for Accenture, we're in year 14 of our partnership with AWS and actually, year six of our partnership called Accenture AWS Business Group. And, you know, the focus over the last year has been helping our clients come out of the pandemic stronger than where they started, right? And a lot of that has been around focusing our customers getting past cloud migration, past cloud modernization, and getting further into what we now call the Cloud Continuum, starting to truly leverage all the AWS assets and capabilities and services to truly speed their transformation. You know, we work with a lot of our customers who are needing to transform even faster today than they were before the pandemic. And, you know, we're focused on helping those customers do that with AWS services.

Lisa Martin: So, Merim, let's bring you into the conversation now. Accenture's internal IT organization has been leveraging AWS and public cloud for a while. Talk to me about that you completed the journey a couple of years



ago, 95% in the cloud. Talk to me about what you're doing there?

Merim Becirovic: Sure, Lisa. So our journey into the public cloud is complete, as you said. We put a bow on that project a couple of years ago. We started in 2015, and we went all in on public cloud. So the number 95%, 95% represents a true measure of everything it takes to run Accenture. Everything addressable is in the public cloud today. So the 95% just represents a small component of things that have to live outside of the cloud. But other than that, our journey to the cloud is complete, and we are very happy being in the cloud because it has opened tremendous doors for us as a business. I'm sure we'll talk about here as we go, but it's fundamentally a different place we live in today than where we were before we were in the cloud.

Lisa Martin: Merim, you said something really powerful there a second ago. The Accenture's journey to the cloud is complete. I don't think I'd ever heard anybody say that. Talk to me about the impact, especially during the last 18 months that that cloud journey is delivered?

Merim Becirovic: I mean, one of the things I am extremely proud of for our collective global teams around the world, when obviously, when COVID hit and the pandemic engulfed the world, the only difference for us was that people just did not come into an office to work. Our capabilities in the cloud, our capabilities of having everything in the cloud really made it that much easier for our people to go to work. We weren't fighting over resources around infrastructure. People could just work from home directly. So I'm extremely proud of the collective global team that made all of that happen as part of that execution of all those things. So it was really a very proud moment, I would say for all of us running IT.

Lisa Martin: As well, it should be. Chris, talk about that from your perspective of facilitating that massive pivot 18, 19 months ago, and what your group was responsible for doing to enable this cloud journey to be complete?

Chris Wegmann: Yeah. I always laughed at, you know, Merim and our internal CIO organizations, as we call it was our first

customer, right. You know, way back when I started working in this partnership, you know, we were already starting to leverage AWS, S3 and EC2, and that inside Accenture, and we took a lot of those best practices and started helping our clients leverages those best practices. So, you know, from an Accenture, we always kind of harvest from internally what we're doing. But, you know, over the last several years, we really are our focused with the CIO organization, Merim's organization has been, you know, expanding the usage of non, you know, IS, as I call them IaaS services, right? So PaaS EC2, you know, PaaS S3. Obviously, there's always storage. There's always compute. But, you know, truly doing and building serverless applications, truly using, you know, services, fully managed services. So, you know, the CIO organization doesn't have to spend their time doing that. And, for our customers, that's while it's, they're still early on in a lot of their journeys, that's a novel idea is to truly try to sunset IaaS services or EC2 and things like that, you know, and whether that's through some containerization or things like that.

I think the other big part is the maturing security footprint, right? Obviously, as you use more and more of these AWS services, your security posture, your presence, how you think about security. We created an asset called Secure Cloud Foundation, leveraging many of the AWS services in the security space that have come out like GuardDuty and others, really to help make that security foundation stronger, make it easier for our customers, including CIO to leverage those services and truly enable that move further up the cloud or further down the continuum, as we call it.

Lisa Martin: Merim, I want to get your thoughts on security for a moment, because we have seen such a dramatic change in the threat landscape in the last 18, 19 months. We've seen a huge spike in ransomware. It's getting much more personal. It's now a household word. We've got the executive order. We had this rapid pivot to and hundreds of thousands of Accenture employees working from home. Talk



to me about, you feel very confident in the cloud journey that you did, where's your competence level from a security perspective?

Merim Becirovic: As you said, security is the fastest growth in our business collectively, like you said, the bad guys don't sleep. We don't sleep either when it comes to security. One of the things that we're constantly thinking about is how do we turn on a lot of our capabilities as an example. So even, I would say at an enterprise level, it's different when you're running a big multinational corporation, 650,000 people like we do. We can't just turn everything on and hope for the best. We are very scripted in terms of how we think about those services, how we think about the processes, how we work with our CSO organization, so that we're very meticulous and very thorough in terms of what services we turn on, how we turn them on, when we turn them on? How long we make them available, because this is the new world, right? We have extended our corporate structure out into the cloud.

That means we have to think of different ways for how we want to consume those capabilities and services. So like Chris said, you know, the journey to the cloud for us is complete. A lot of it was IaaS. I would tell you, a lot of it was lift and shift for less. And we can talk about that if we get time, but it was more about getting into the cloud and taking advantage of the cloud where we are today, because now that we're there, we get to take advantage of all those capabilities that are there. And I would say the best part of being in the cloud is also having the providers like AWS there with us, helping us with that security posture. So it's not just us doing this by ourselves.

Lisa Martin: So, Chris, I want to talk about that. Merim just said, this was mostly lift and shift. Talk to us about that 'cause when we talk to organizations in every industry, the cloud transition, the cloud journey is extremely challenging. It's complex. How did you do this? How did you facilitate this and in a relatively short time period, Chris?

Chris Wegmann: Yeah. And, and you're right. Every one has conversations I have with my clients, you know, there's a huge debate whether to lift and shift or modernize or build

new, build cloud native, right? So, you know, in Accenture's situation, very early on, it was identified that we can do a large savings by doing a lift and shift migration, right. We were not a big data center owner, that wasn't – we're not a big capital intense organization. So for us, that journey we had, coLOS and that stuff coming up for renewal. And we knew that we could, you know, get some early savings there and really, you know, reduce our footprint and take that investment and then invest it into true modernization.

So Merim and his organization worked very closely to build the factory, to do the migrations, get that done in a very short amount of time and then turn their attention on truly refactoring, rebuilding the applications. I'm super proud of the number of applications that we've rebuilt. I'm super proud of the number of applications that now are cloud native. And we live in these applications every day. You know, they're everything from our performance to how we do our payroll and do our time charging and things like that. But which, you know, was a big reason why we can access our systems remotely and at home versus going into different systems to get to that stuff. So, you know, it was very much heavily lift and shift early, then really focusing on modernization. And as Merim said, getting, you know, now it's about living there and continuing to modernize, continuing to accelerate what we're doing in the cloud.

Merim Becirovic: Yeah. if I can add to that maybe, Lisa, a little bit, so our journey lift and shift was a core component of it. But the minute we decided to go to the cloud, one of the things, the first things we did, as I said, no more VMs. So any new capability that we were going to build, we were going to build a cloud native microservices based, and that's been our standard for the last 3 or 4 years. Any new capability that comes along today that we must do custom, we build a cloud native microservices because one of the other things that I've got on my plate is I'm trying to reduce our overall technical debt. So all of these IaaS platforms, I still have to maintain them, patch



them, support them, upgrade them and I would rather be much more efficient at doing those things as I can and reinvest money into refactoring and modernizing the rest of the application through containers, through microservices, etc., which then gives me the agility right back to actually go even faster, to enable more services for the business.

Lisa Martin: Speed is something that we've seen become even more critical in the last 18, 19 months where we needed to everybody pivot businesses multiple times over and over. But part of the challenge though, Merim, I want to get your thoughts on this is this is a big cultural shift. Talk to me about, you've been at Accenture for a long time. Talk to me about the cultural shift needed to facilitate this massive transformation to cloud and how Chris's team was a facilitator of that?

Merim Becirovic: So, you know, one of the things for us, I have probably in the last five years spoken to a thousand of our clients around our cloud journey and this culture conversation always comes up. And I will say, you know, the biggest thing for us was interesting. We had those same fears. We had some same, you know, when we first talked about going to the cloud, you know, six years ago, it was very – not everything was there that's there today. So the teams were extremely nervous and they were confident that we could never be as good in the cloud as we were on-site. Yet, here we are six years later and we're constantly finding ways to add value and take – bring value back. And though, it's so same teams. And one of the things is just, we gave them the challenge to say, Hey, this is the future. We're telling our clients this is where we're going. We have an opportunity here to do something different and they took it and the team really took it on. And they said, okay, let's do it. And we looked at how we run into cloud, the many different ways, whether we're using reserved instances, whether we're using containers, whether we're using, you know, different computer capabilities, we went through all of it and we're running such a highly efficient machine right now that it's like, we're still able to continue to eke out savings even five years after the program. Even two years after the program is complete, we're still able to get savings.

Lisa Martin: That's outstanding. That's ROI that every business and every industry hopes to be able to achieve from this. I want to switch gears a little bit now because this is actually pretty cool. Accenture is really focused also on sustainability. You guys have signed onto the Amazon climate pledge, which if you don't know what the Amazon climate pledge is, this is back in 2019, Amazon co-founded this, a commitment to be net zero carbon across businesses by 2040, which is actually 10 years ahead of the Paris Agreement. Merim, talk to us about that and from Accenture's perspective why it was important to sign on to that?

Merim Becirovic: So on a personal level, I love obviously sustainability as a whole, that I think about the world for my children that are growing up. So it's very important to me on a personal level as well. But I would say at a company level, what I love about the cloud is I am there, right there with them. As they make investments, all of our enterprise capabilities are there. We are able to very quickly shift and use those capabilities. So as Amazon, for example, in this scenario, creates new capabilities, new compute offerings, new storage offerings, whatever it may be. They're doing it with a sustainability lens and me by being in the cloud already, I can then turn to start using those things too. So as much as I can, on that perspective, I'm in a great place with, as Amazon puts these sustainability capabilities out there, I'm right there consuming and making them more efficient. And then the other one is obviously as much of our workloads, as we can get to a cloud native perspective, microservices perspective, then we keep reducing that compute consumption and everything else that goes along with it. And lastly, I would say, you know, the, the other thing is we're very aggressive in managing all of our systems in terms of uptime. So, for example, in a data center, most organizations don't think about turning off their development environments and everything else. But for us, we're very rigid in this process. And we have a target of all of our development environments being down 55% of the time. And primarily that's also a sustainability play in addition to a financial savings play.



Lisa Martin: Awesome. Great stuff, Chris, last question for you, as we wrap up here, what are some of the things that you were excited about that's coming in cloud in the next few years? Obviously, here we are at re:Invent, going to be hearing a lot of news, a lot of announcements about cloud in the coming days. What excites you most, Chris?

Chris Wegmann: Yeah. You know, obviously, the machine learning and AI stuff is always the most exciting things right now in cloud. And, you know, we've put a lot of those to use here inside of Accenture as well in our synopsis platform, which we use with our customers to run in a more intelligent operations, we use that internally as well. But you know, one of the things that excites me the most is the continued innovation at the core, right. And, you know, whether that be chip sets, you know, Merim talked a little bit about improvement and performance improvement and power consumption, you know, graviton, those types of stuff that, that excites me. Every year, I look forward to seeing what they come out with and then how we're going to put that to use.

Lisa Martin: Well, I look forward to talking to you guys next year, you've done such a tremendous job. You should be proud of the massive transformation that you've done. I imagine this would be a great case study. If it's not already written up, it should be. It's really impressive. Merim and Chris, thank you for joining me at the Summit, talking to me about what's going on with Accenture and AWS and some of the things that you are looking forward to. We appreciate your insights and your time.

Merim Becirovic: Thanks again, Lisa.

Chris Wegmann: Thanks, Lisa.

Lisa Martin: You're very welcome for my guests. I'm Lisa Martin. This is the AWS Executive Summit presented by Accenture at AWS re:Invent 2021.
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