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Value of migrating epic to azure: unleash your EMR data

Video transcript

Chris D'hont: Welcome to our webinar on migrating Epic to Azure.

How to unleash the power of your EMR data?

My name is Chris D'hont.

I'm a managing director at Accenture and I'm our global EMR Cloud solutions lead.

With me today, I have Jeff VanSleet, a Managing director at Accenture who's our EMR cloud migration lead, Mike Lonze, who's a principal architect at Microsoft.

And our distinguished guest, Mark Odom, whose Jefferson University's CTO and Chief Information Security officer.

And we're going to be talking about the value of migrating epic to Azure.

Today we see the provider landscape changing dramatically.

The healthcare landscape is more and more complex.

New players from other industries are getting involved in patient care and introducing new technologies and new care delivery models.

Patients demand personalized experience and more access to care.

Cybersecurity threats and cybersecurity attacks continue to increase and are putting pressure on our organizations technology capabilities.

Clinicians desire better experiences and more time for patient care and costs continue to rise and resources are being diverted from taking care of patients.

Organizations seek data, cloud and artificial intelligence to enable greater compute power and bring new possibilities to care delivery.

We're embarking on a new era of healthcare and the next wave of EMR technology.

There's an indistinct opportunity to improve the healthcare experience while optimizing costs and de risking your organization. Next generation winners who act now to modernize their technology and enable an EMR to the cloud transformation are setting the foundation for humanized healthcare.

So what is the value of moving epic to Azure?

Healthcare organizations face growing demands. Population growth, challenges with staffing and care delivery and nursing growth of alternative care delivery such as telemedicine, improved experience and access and unforeseen public health emergencies.

We see that the traditional on premise on premise systems struggle to scale dynamically.

Azure enables an elastic.

Scalability, application and infrastructure.

Allowing epic workloads to scale during peak hours and scale down during quieter times to optimize your costs.

Purpose built infrastructure such as the M Series V Ms. ensure low latency and high performance for critical epic applications and data, clients are reporting improved user experience for their clinicians. Faster access to patient data and reduce frustration caused by lag, lagging systems and down time.

Protecting the patient's data with improved security and compliance. Healthcare data is the most sensitive and targeted data in cybersecurity attacks, making security and compliance the top priority for providers.

CIOs' and chief information security officers, ensuring HIPAA high Trust and GPDR compliance is a significant challenge with on Prem applications and infrastructure.

Azure's multi layered security approach including encryption, identity management and zero trust architecture, provide enhanced protection built in compliance certification help healthcare organizations meet regulatory requirements with less overhead.

Features like defender for Cloud proactively monitor threats, while Azure Sentinel ensures rapid incident response.

Clients are gaining confidence knowing that their patient data is secure and compliance requirements are being met even as regulations evolve.

Operational agility and innovation on prem infrastructure ties up IT resources in dollars in maintenance and system stability, leaving little room for innovation.

At the same time, healthcare organizations need to adapt quickly to these new technologies that are supported for artificial intelligence and data analytics automation first within Azure treats, takes tasks like patching, updates and backups in an automated fashion.

Which reduces operational burden. Azure's ecosystem integrates seamlessly with tools such as Dax Copilot, enabling automated documentation and delivering insights to clinicians.

Clients can explore artificial intelligence, powered solutions, advanced analytics and even in predictive modelling to improve patient outcomes.

Clients shift from keeping the lights on and maintaining day-to-day systems to focusing on strategic initiatives such as personalized care or telehealth expansion.

In today's world, we look at it at the EPIC to Azure migration is in a standard 15 month timeline. Now this 15 months can vary depending on the complexity of your epic environment.

The number of environments you have, the size of your user base and the volume of data that you store.

But we begin with the reinstallation of training, non production and disaster recovery Epic environments, providing each client the opportunity to mitigate any issues and risks in the cloud prior to beginning Epic production.

Along the way, you must have the proper governance model with program management and value realization, and you must build in the infrastructure operations and run that are necessary for a cloud migration and cloud operations.

These reasons such as scalability, performance, security, operational agility, cost, innovation and experience are why healthcare organizations are considering moving Epic to Azure, but the real value is in the detail. How these benefits translate into clinical satisfaction, cost efficiency and improve patient outcomes.

I'm excited to dive into these areas with my colleagues during the Q&A session.

Let me reintroduce the panel.

Jeff VanSleet, Mike Lonze and Mark Odom to share some of their perspectives on the journey of moving Epic to Azure.

First question for the panel, why is now the right time for healthcare organizations considering a move of EPIC to Azure?

Jeff VanSleet: So healthcare organizations are under immense pressure to improve patient outcomes while managing costs.

Cloud adoption, particularly for critical systems like EPIC allows for scalable infrastructure, enhanced performance and better integrations with emerging technologies like AI, which are becoming essential in the healthcare space.

Mike Lonze: Azure is uniquely positioned to support epic workloads.

We focused our engineering efforts to meet the unique needs of of Epic and their customers and you know to the point where we can scale up to meet the needs of 94% of of Epic customer base.

This comes with built in compliance, robust security frameworks and specialized offerings really built for for healthcare that that helps us and is helps us position ourselves into that space.

Mark Odom: I think when considering the challenges of maintaining an on premise infrastructure along with the scaling of security issues that we're seeing today, having an cloud infrastructure is really going to be critical to us going forward.

It also gives us a springboard in the future uses of AI.

Chris D'hont: Thank you all.

You really point out some really tangible things that each of our clients should really consider as they contemplate the journey of Epic to Azure.

So what's next?

What are the strategic benefits healthcare organizations can expect from running EPIC on Azure?

Mike Lonze: So Azure provides the flexibility to scale resources up and up and down based on demand, which is very critical for for healthcare, whether it's to upgrade to the latest product version or to rapidly scale to meet the needs of a public health emergency we give you the tools to ensure that your IT teams and your clinicians are successful in their journey to treat and help our patients.

Mark Odom: I think about the the challenges in scale today, but also about resiliency, resiliency and security may go hand in hand is covering the CTO and CSO office, both for Jefferson and seeing what the last years brought to healthcare, the ability to have that high availability and resiliency in

our operations, is critical to our success going forward.

Jeff VanSleet: And you know what we've seen too is migrating epic to Azure is really just the first step in the journey. It's all about what can you do next that drives a lot of the value above and beyond the secure infrastructure, you know.

So running an epic on Azure allows you connect to the broader ecosystem of of solutions, especially the ones that Microsoft of Taylor fit for the healthcare industry, like Dax copilot.

And we've seen really good results there.

Reducing clinical administration burden on documentation you know and and improving kind of you know the time that clinicians can work with with their patients.

So it's more about what it enables on top of what it can do for you immediately.

Chris D'hont: Thank you. As you can see, it's not just about a technology change, there's really a lot of things that organizations must contemplate, and the benefits they can realize for an epic to Azure journey.

Next question, what are some of the technology challenges healthcare organizations face when migrating Epic to Azure? And how do you address them?

Mark Odom: I think every environment has challenges on prem or in the cloud.

There're just different ways you address them and they all evolve around great solid fundamentals. You don't have those in place.

You're not going to be successful on prem or in the cloud, you know, having great teams surround yourself with great partners. Those exist in both environments. If you don't have those in place, you're not going to be successful in either place.

So, you know to say that one is more successful than other. I just don't believe that. I believe you have to have all the foundational pieces no matter where you operate at.

In the cloud, we just have higher scalability, have higher availability and higher resiliency.

Jeff VanSleet: And, you know what we've seen is, you know, Accenture's experience really comes into play here.

You know, having migrated a few clients, you know Epic to Azure, we've built a lot of intellectual property for Azure's dedicated landing zone, making sure that it, you know, works specifically with how epic functions we've got, you know, step by step in terms of how we go about migrating to derisk clients moves, right.

You know, and make sure that any challenges that come up, you know whether technical.

You know or process or people related are identified and addressed early on, right?

And then of course, as Mark mentioned, you have to have good partnership and we work really well with you know, the partners that you know we deliver this overall solution with whether that's Net app or Citrix or Palo Alto or F5 or you know any other kind of the solution that is core to running Epic on Azure and we come together with leadership from Microsoft to jointly check you know the work and make sure that everyone's ready.

We stack hands with the client and and then we we migrate the workload and we found success doing so.

Mike Lonze: And I'm gonna build on top of that that partnership aspect because that that that's key, you know, being having a partner, having good, good people both at Accenture and at Jefferson was was instrumental in in making this happen. And and that's being very transparent even if some of those conversations are are uncomfortable, you know, making sure that everybody knows the risks. If we've identified them and agreeing, how do we mitigate them, even if we can't, how do we you know, do they do the extra to make sure that we minimize that those risks as as much as possible.

And with that, it's it's it's really planning and preparation, an important piece here is it's not just the Epic components, it's all of the other systems that are feeding into that clinical experience and it takes experts like the folks at Accenture and the folks at Jefferson to make all of that work cohesively.

Chris D'hont: As you can see, it takes a true partnership between Accenture, Microsoft, and our clients. In this case, Jefferson University, on how to proactively address and collaborate on each and every issue and each and every task and outcome of the migration timeline.

Next question, how does moving Epic to Azure impact operational costs and what do you consider the ROI for healthcare organizations?

Mike Lonze: So one of the advantages of of moving to the cloud and moving to Azure is really we are able to turn CapEx into to OpEx and another aspect of of this is a predictability of we can we can grow to a certain size and use that and expect it which which is also an advantage we can actually start to right size our environment where in the on premise world we have to have these large upfront costs. And if we've bought too much we still own that hardware and we still have to leverage that hardware in the cloud. If we provision too much, we can spin those down and bring those.

Bring those costs back down and and move those two other other useful projects and and tools and some of the tooling with with an Azure from a monitoring standpoint to operational efficiencies really help highlight where we can enable these features and really save costs.

Jeff VanSleet: Yeah, you know to to build on that, Mike.

You know, we've also seen organizations save, you know, cross compute Storage network database, you know security services.

We've seen an organization go in there and there's 7% utilized across their compute footprint, right?

You know, and we're able to put that to a much healthier state and you know in addition when organizations migrate, it creates an opportunity for them to rationalize what they have, right.

You know, not only from infrastructure services, but applications as well, and you know, organizations are as they move you know they can move out data centers, they can move out server rooms in out closets and you know for healthcare organizations often times that's co-located in the hospital.

So that creates another opportunity for them to expand their ROI by freeing up that space for clinical. So lots of opportunities to generate ROI through these programs.

Mark.

Mark Odom: CRI trying to be counted. You know, calculated for the cloud and said, I always find it an interesting conversation because how you calculate innovation into that and what the future holds.

It's something I think is a very difficult thing to calculate when you're holding your business back from innovation and things like AI, how do you calculate that value?

The other thing is it it's for us. It's an operational diversity.

How are you operationally spreading your risk between cloud and On-Prem?

To me, if you're all in one or all in the other, you're probably at a higher risk of having a diversified portfolio. If you would of your place in cloud and on Prem.

You're giving your business the highest protection level, highest resiliency and probably like I said, a most diversified operational model, everybody lowering our overall risk.

Chris D'hont: I think you can all see it's a very complex model.

Each organization has their sets of challenges. It's important that you frame the benefits in the in the way the organization realizes those benefits and delivers value to your clinicians and your patients.

Next question, how does Azure address the unique security and compliance challenges in healthcare?

Mike Lonze: Yeah, so Azure has enabled a physical, technical and administrative safeguards required by both HIPAA and the High Tech Act. In addition to that, we offer HIPAA BAA to enable our customers and partners to meet their, you know, unique compliance requirements. So in addition to that, these tools allow.

The enablement of anything from encryption at rest to encryption and transits, as well as advanced threat detection as we move into the security landscape.

Along those lines, with security, our security and AI monitoring tools enable you to really to stay ahead of threats and help automate that compliance and that reaction to those threats.

These tools are enabled to monitor the infrastructure 20 by 7, identifying unusual activity and really triggering automated responses, ensuring that our teams and our security folks are up to date and responding to events as they occur in real time.

Mark Odom: I think if you're not speaking about security at least once a day and you're working, healthcare IT, you're probably not doing your job.

Is that critical to what we do in all aspects of it working in healthcare, this long and for years we've talked about what we inherited in the On-Prem infrastructure, things that were not hardened. DHRs that weren't built to standards EDRs not in place.

The push back we would get as we look to do those things in live environments, this was our opportunity to hit the reset button and get it right this time.

This was not going to be an environment that I was going to build that someone's gonna come behind me in the future and say I cannot believe they didn't put these things in place.

This was our opportunity to do it right this time.

Jeff VanSleet: And you know, in our experience, you know Azure's defense adapt approach provides a comprehensive protection really at every layer, you know, starting from the furthest output post, you know, at the network all the way down to the individual resources contained within the the landing zone, you know.

That they have amazing capabilities and services across the range, you know and we see organizations, in particular making a big change in their network security posture.

You know, moving from a flat network into a zero, you know, trust model where every request is validated and confirmed at at multiple different levels where we see so much benefit from. This is even if the attacker does gain access, you know through one layer of defense they cannot move laterally across the the environment and take advantage of other services so.

Now using Azure's PHIs ready environments, ensure data is protected. Just helps everyone feel more comfortable.

During that migration journey and beyond.

And you know, to Mark's point, if you're not talking about security in a regular basis and healthcare IT, you should.

And you know, Azure provides a really great capability to defend against risk.

Chris D'hont: As we mentioned in the beginning, security threats and cyber security attacks continue to grow in an exponential basis and it's very important that you take a security first mindset.

I appreciate each individuals specific insights.

Next question, how does Azure improve the day-to-day operations of the Epic workloads? Once in the cloud?

Mike Lonze: So there's a there's a couple aspects here in in improving those day-to-day operations.

One I I touched on a little bit before is the upgrading upgrading infrastructure to the latest release.

It's just, you know, kind of as easy as a click of a button.

So we take weeks and months of of planning and in the data centre work away and then you know it's it's now can be automated like hey, when we're ready to make that move, we're going to execute that automation script and and our systems are are up to date.

In addition to that, we provide tools such as Azure monitor and logging out of Linux that give you real time insights into what the system is doing and how that system is performing.

Allowing IT teams to identify issues and and address them before they they affect and impact our our clinicians and our caregivers. You know the predictive the predictive analytics of these tools are are great for really easing that burden. When we talk about those day-to-day operations.

Jeff VanSleet: You know and Azure is, you know, Simply put highly automated data center get the automation is very different, right.

You know the Azure automates all the routine tasks.

You know, patching backup policies compliance, reporting it all reduces some of the manual, you know, workload on your IT teams and also integrates really nicely with DevOps tools like Terraform, Enhancedable to streamline upgrades, deployment process, you know, really a little bit of everything.

Tip to tail is automated, right?

You know, and even high availability, which is, you know another, you know, series of systems you know is pre built into multiple layers of the services that Azure offers.

So you know provides like automation against you know things that are inside your control along with outside of your control.

So you know the level of resiliency that it offers is really crucial for, you know, such an important application like EPIC or downtime can disrupt patient care.

Mark Odom: Think about you know how this helps us in a day in, day out fashion.

You know we can list all the items you've all touched on already and and the automation and the metrics and the speed to market.

But you know, there's one that we don't touch on that often and that is that is workforce management, the ability to attract, recruit, retain talent. This is where the future's at.

This is where the best talent wants to work.

You've got to be in cloud if you want the best talent. You've got to be staying up with where the future is going.

So it's an important aspect I don't think is is talked about as much as it should be.

Chris D'hont: The epic workloads are critical to care delivery and patient outcomes, and it's important that you manage those as diligently in the cloud as you did On-Prem.

Thank you for those insights.

Next question, would you share an example of how running EPIC on Azure has impacted Jefferson University?

Mark Odom: So one thing I'd say is the operational effectiveness in that we have multiple models available for our researchers or education or health plan and our clinicians.

Whereas before we had this very long capital process when they wanted to add resource, add new platforms.

It could take up to 18 months for many of these to go through the capital process by having a cloud based system that is spun up and ready to go.

We have operational models that we can spin up in hours.

This adds significant agility for the teams, which makes a real difference in a research type institution as we are.

Mike Lonze: And kind of take that as like how has Jefferson impacted us here at Microsoft and in one of those areas as we kind of talked earlier around partnering is a Jefferson team pushing Microsoft to be better and get better, which is we've taken that to heart and some of that is what we've introduced recently with some new M series, VMs.

What are the requirements of Jefferson being one of the larger epic organizations out there, and how do we meet those needs and how do we put those into future products and and drive those forward?

In addition to that, I'd say like the other aspect here is in a new deployment patterns not only moving the cloud but a hybrid approach where certain components of of epic, some of the hyper drive desktops are still on premise in Jefferson, some of it's delivered via Citrix and they leading the way in that and we're able to help as well as as learn and improve based on this.

Jeff VanSleet: And similarly, you know it's been a a really great journey with Jefferson.

You know the that organizations you know really high performing IT organization and you know I think like what we've learned as a SI partner was a couple of things. You know one really making sure that we're in full lock step with our clients in terms of the risk profile, as we go live, right?

You know, making sure we all feel comfortable with you know pre go live activities clearing out all the to do and testing and and so on and so forth.

So we've made, you know, some some strides there that you know, looking at Jefferson's results, you know, on, you know the the go live right, very few issues cleared very rapidly. All the third party applications validated quickly. You know, thanks to you know the really incredible efforts of Jefferson staff to to validate all that, but that's also tucked into, you know our ability to improve and deliver the work faster and we hope to do so in in future iterations with Jefferson.

Mark Odom: We we spoke a lot today about resiliency and readiness, you know and as we move to the cloud and and that's all there and there's many cloud options available to someone, but you have to think about the strategic imperative of your business too.

And then what I'm referring to there is you could go with SAS solutions, but then you're kind of tied to what that SAS provider's providing to you.

So when you think about what Microsoft and Accenture can bring to us, it's it's more broad solutions.

It's not just a single point solution in one application, it's a more broad platform.

So these are strategic imperatives for Jefferson, we're a broad, you know, delivery system that has many aspects to our business. And so being tied to just a single platform of SaaS wasn't going to meet our needs.

So that's why when we look to the cloud, we look for a platform such as in a partner such as Microsoft and Accenture.

Chris D'hont: Again, it was a true partnership between Microsoft, Accenture and Jefferson University, along with EPIC to complete this journey. And we're excited to see all the benefits that Jefferson University has realized since day one.

Next question, looking ahead, what role does cloud adoption play in shaping the future of healthcare IT?

Mike Lonze: So I think you know really cloud is a foundational aspect of of innovation for the future. You know whether whether it's this kind of advanced dictation and automation within our our workflows, right, providing more time for our clinicians and our care teams to spend time with the patients in front of technology like really reducing that barrier into utilizing technology.

And one of those ways as as well as using artificial intelligence for better diagnostics, you know and that's where you know, to, to Mark's point, partnering and not just bring a generic solution to market, but partnering with Jefferson, but partnering with those researchers, enabling them to to build the models that are meaningful to them and their patient population, and that's where you know cloud is helping by bringing all of these new technologies to light and to bear for our our partners and customers.

Jeff VanSleet: Yeah, and now I, I I see the same thing, right.

You know, I see.

You know, adopting cloud, adopting Azure as really an enabler to a very large meaningful transformation, right?

You know and Mark mentioned it earlier.

You know you can identify and pull in the best staff, right?

You know, by staying, cutting edge but also you know the the services provided by Microsoft really in the healthcare space are tailor fit and are some of the things that organizations can take advantage of again, like the DAXs co-pilot.

So I see it as a big step forward in evolving their landscape and for mission of, you know, having secure data, resilient systems and you know being able to do the great research that those organizations need to do.

Mark Odom: When you think of future proofing your organization, I think you know there's no way you're going to do this without the cloud.

You know, when you whether it be a resiliency play or whether it be a high availability or whether it be your financial stability of your organization, you're going to be in the cloud.

So you know, CTOs out there, you know, their minds are always around.

How are they reducing risk?

How are they ensuring the the future proof of their organization? This is.

This is where it's at. It's in the cloud today.

Chris D'hont: Thank you for those answers.

You know, cloud can be scary for a lot of organizations.

Is your organization ready?

Are your processes able to adapt to the new technology?
Do you have the right skill set?

And it's very important you look at how how cloud adoption will help your organization, your technology organization as well as your end users, the clinicians, the nurses and your patients.

I wanna offer a big thank you to Jeff, Mike and Mark for sharing their insights.

So what do we do next?

Take your phone out and scan the QR code and it'll take you to links both on the microsoft.com and accenture.com websites, or you can visit the Epic on Azure page and the Accenture Healthcare Healthcare Cloud page to learn more about our partnership, our delivery model and our services.

Again, I want to thank you for all joining this webinar.

We're very excited about this period of time.

In the healthcare space, as we talked about, organizations are faced with a lot of challenges and need to leverage modern technologies to address patient care, patient experience, clinical outcomes, improve cost and operational stability and resiliency.

Thank you again for your time.

I look forward to meeting you all.