



WHITE PAPER

Microsoft Azure ISV Partner Success Guide

Sponsored by: Microsoft

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INTRODUCTION

Cloud is a powerful force in our industry. Spending on public IT cloud services is growing at five times the rate of overall IT spending, while spending on cloud applications is growing at seven times that of traditional apps, offering an unusually rich opportunity for cloud ISVs. Microsoft Azure is a leading cloud platform player that excels at simplifying the migration to the cloud, particularly for the large community of end customers that use Microsoft solutions on-premise. The success factors revealed in this white paper will help ISVs that invest in a Microsoft Azure application maximize their success.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, we interviewed six Microsoft Azure ISV partners that represent a range of product categories from horizontal security applications to very specific vertical market solutions. The companies interviewed were Barracuda Networks, Apprenda, Alert Logic, Bitnami, Xenomorph, and New Relic. These partners were handpicked by Microsoft for this study based on their success with using the platform. The titles of the individuals interviewed ranged from CEO to Partner Marketing Manager, which provides a range of levels of Microsoft interaction from high level to very detailed. Each respondent was asked about his/her company's experience developing and launching apps on Azure. We also took each interviewee through a list of 35 Azure Go-To-Market (GTM) programs to determine if he/she was aware of them, if he/she had used them, and, if yes, what his/her experience was.

The study was requested by the Microsoft Cloud OS GTM team whose mission is to help ISVs successfully launch their Azure applications. The team provides partners with Azure App Launch resources to enhance end-customer exposure, build better cloud businesses, and improve app performance.

THE CLOUD OPPORTUNITY

There is real and ample evidence that the IT industry is moving rapidly to the cloud. This section outlines both the market dynamics providing this momentum and the key opportunities for ISVs that are building cloud practices.

The Market Is Moving to the Cloud

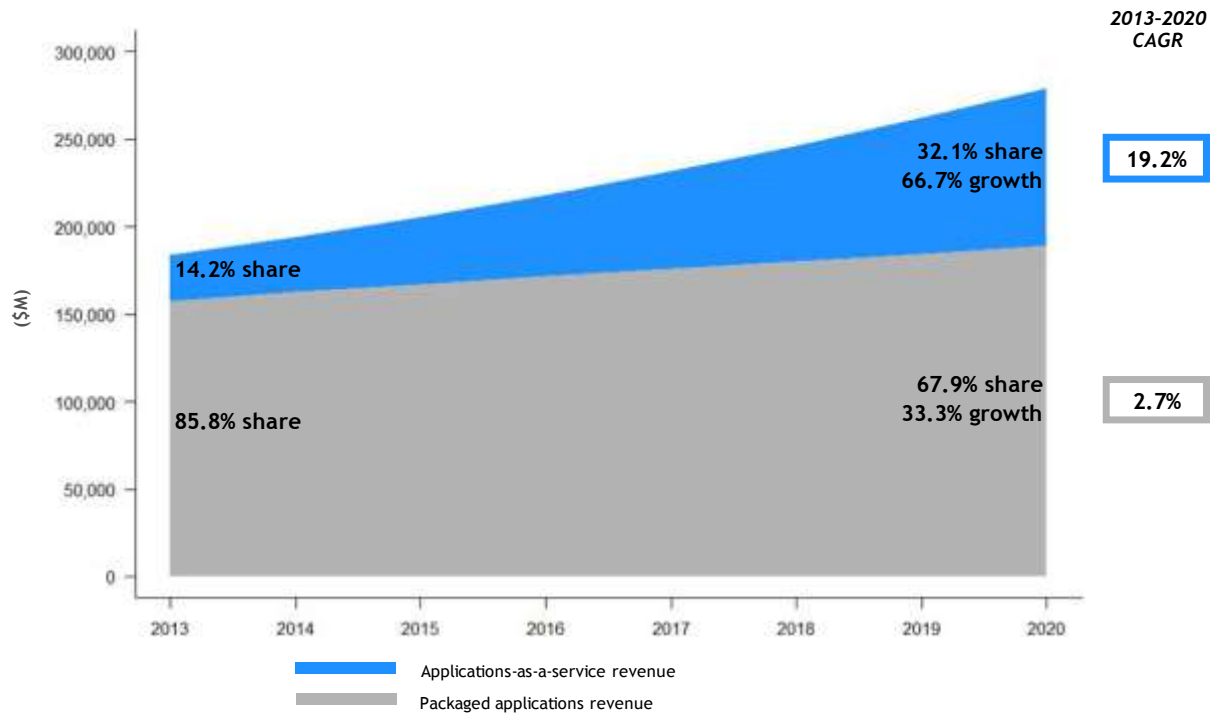
The cloud is arguably one of the most significant trends to hit the IT industry. It is more disruptive than the change to client/server or the Internet. It provides end customers with lower costs, reduced complexity, and greater agility. While early adopters were attracted to the economic benefits of the cloud, more and more customers are excited about the business innovation that cloud can offer.

The growing dominance of the cloud is evidenced by the following IDC insights and predictions:

- IDC is seeing end customers shift from buying servers to buying services. IDC predicts that service providers will account for a whopping 43% of total server shipments by 2017. In turn, customers will buy online services from these service providers instead of owning and running their own servers.
- IDC has defined a server submarket called "hyperscale" made up of approximately 25 companies with massive server farms (think Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and Facebook but also large banks, pharmaceutical companies, etc.) that together are buying about a quarter of all server units today. This number will grow to almost 39% by 2018.
- IDC predicts that over 90% of net-new commercial apps will be developed specifically for the cloud in 2014 and beyond.
- By 2018, 27% of all software revenue will be subscription based. When you include maintenance revenue, 60% of software revenue will be recurring by 2018.
- As of 2014, over 50% of buyer firms have adopted some form of cloud.
- IDC predicts that 70% of CIOs will embrace a "cloud first" strategy in 2016. This doesn't necessarily mean "cloud in the end." Companies will look first to public cloud options to solve a problem before looking at hosted or even on-premise options.
- Total public IT cloud services (SaaS, PaaS, and IaaS) spending will reach over \$127 billion in 2018. The total IT market will grow at a CAGR of only 4.1% from 2013 to 2018, while public cloud will grow at a CAGR of 22.8%. This means public cloud spending growth is over five-and-a-half times total IT market spending growth.
- Cloud-based software applications will grow much faster than their noncloud brethren. As shown in Figure 1, cloud applications revenue will grow at a CAGR of 19.2% from 2013 to 2020, while noncloud applications revenue will grow at only 2.7%. This is a factor of over seven times growth of cloud over noncloud applications. Cloud applications are forecast to represent 32.1% of the market share by 2020.

FIGURE 1

Cloud and Noncloud Applications Revenue, 2013-2020



Source: IDC, 2015

BENEFITS OF A CLOUD PRACTICE

It's clear that the market is shifting in a dramatic way, and when markets shift like this, there is opportunity for those that want to seize it. On top of the tremendous market momentum, there are other specific benefits to ISVs.

Cloud as a Door Opener

So far, cloud applications and offerings have proven themselves to be fantastic door openers for software partners. Customers are thirsting for any information and guidance they can get on the cloud. As mentioned previously, companies are largely going to adopt a cloud-first mentality. So partners can flourish by introducing cloud solutions to their clients first and getting in the door with either a simple meeting or a first application. From there, they can upsell and cross-sell other cloud and noncloud solutions.

Higher Business Performance

Several IDC surveys have shown that partners with higher percentages of cloud-oriented revenue are outperforming their peers in key areas, such as revenue growth and gross margin percentage. This doesn't necessarily mean that the cloud alone is causing these impressive results, and it doesn't mean that if you start selling one or two cloud applications, you'll revolutionize your business. More likely, partners that have been successful in general over the past 5 or 10 years have adopted the cloud in their businesses earlier than their peers and brought their already impressive KPIs to the table.

Predictable Recurring Revenue

The ability to predict revenue to a high degree of certainty is golden for all businesses. With predictable recurring revenue, you know you can make payroll and when you can afford to invest in the business – all because you have customer contracts that will keep coming in month after month. This is a KPI that we see more and more partners focusing on.

Company Valuation

One of the most important benefits coming from cloud is the fact that companies that invest in the latest technologies, and especially those that have recurring revenue, will garner a higher company valuation from an acquiring company, a venture capitalist, or the stock market. Acquiring partners and M&A experts have told us that they may pay double or more for a company with recurring revenue versus traditional resale or services revenue. There is much more to company valuation than just this, but predictable recurring revenue is a great path to a stronger valuation.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERS

Now that you're convinced that the cloud is real and here to stay, and that there are tangible benefits now and in the long term for Microsoft partners, let's take a look at some practical advice for partners.

This section offers advice to Azure-focused ISVs based on our research and is organized in three key sections:

- Designing and Developing Azure Products
- Growing Your Azure Market
- Networking for Success

Designing and Developing Azure Products

The process of developing a product for the Azure platform can be complex. In this section, we review the recommendations for successfully designing and developing apps for the Azure platform compiled from the companies interviewed for this white paper.

Specialize – Identify Unmet Customer Needs

The interviewees felt that the best Azure applications are those that resolve customer pain points or fulfill unmet customer needs. Products that are sticky or that are used by customers every day tend to be the most successful. Find out how you can make your product indispensable for your target niche, and you probably have a winner.

If you have legacy on-premise applications, prioritize those products in your portfolio that would gain the most by being in the cloud. Also, make sure that you optimize legacy products for the cloud and for Azure. A direct port to Azure with only incremental improvements may suffer in comparison with natively built apps. Cloud users often expect different features from cloud and Azure apps than from an on-premise application. You must deliver on these expectations to succeed.

Several of the ISVs interviewed discovered opportunities for new products when implementing other cloud products. So keep your eyes and ears open for new product ideas. Barracuda created a successful cloud product by identifying a suite of security capabilities that customers often require before they are willing to move from on-premise to the cloud.

Customers told us, 'We want to move part of our physical datacenter to the cloud but need to have some security assurances in order to do so.' We saw that as a tremendous opportunity. With our security heritage and our virtual licensing expertise, we were able to quickly build what the customers wanted. – Jan Poczobutt, Director, Enterprise Web Application Firewall (WAF) and Application Delivery Controller (ADC), Barracuda Networks

Start Small

The first release of a product does not have to be everything to everybody. In fact, there are advantages to starting small with a focused design. You can focus by capability or by the needs of a particular target market, whatever makes sense for your business, but keep the scope tight so you can get it into the market quickly and get feedback. Your early customers may lead you in revolutionary directions.

When first deploying a cloud product for a customer, start with relatively small initiatives and build to larger engagements. ISVs have had success providing customers with multiphase plans that allow the accomplishment of the customers' objectives in digestible "line-of-business (LOB) stories." Start projects at minimum design functionality and then add features and capabilities as the customer absorbs the previous step and is ready for the next. The partners interviewed found that this process results in ongoing customer revenue growth and completion of road maps. A benefit of this approach is closer ongoing engagement with customers as you build out their plan together.

We've focused heavily on new customer acquisition rather than initial revenue. The first year was all about giving customers initial-reference implementations and proving those out. And it has been very successful; once reference architecture has been proven, customers are more willing to move more applications into the cloud. And now, we're starting to see the follow-on additional business cases. – Jan Poczobutt, Director, Enterprise WAF & ADC, Barracuda Networks

Invest in Experts

It is important to have experts on your team who have a deep understanding of the cloud in general and Azure specifically. These experts need to have the capability to build ongoing relationships with Microsoft technologists and other key ecosystem players. Their accumulated experience will allow you to replicate your cloud successes and provide you the ability to react quickly to changes or opportunities that occur. A manager who is responsible for both on-premise and cloud versions of a product may not be the Azure expert you need.

At Barracuda, we organize similarly to the way Microsoft sets up an incubation team so we can get good critical mass with experience, repeatability, and refinements. We think of it as an overlay organization who is laser focused on helping customers deploy – securely on – public cloud solutions. – Jan Poczobutt, Director, Enterprise WAF & ADC, Barracuda Networks

Growing Your Azure Market

The process of developing a market for your Azure products can take time. Building the application is not easy, but of course, there's also the substantial effort to market and sell it. In this section, we review recommendations for successfully marketing and selling Azure apps.

Understand Your Competitive Position

Make sure that you understand your strengths and competitive advantages and market to them. Don't try to do everything yourself. Assess your advantages and unique capabilities and let that analysis direct your focus. Work with other partners – including other ISVs, SIs, and value-added resellers (VARs) – to complete your solutions. Part of the advantage of the Azure marketplace is that other products are readily available and can be easily bundled.

We are defining a market and in the early stages of the PaaS hyper curve ... We have a 360-degree sales strategy with a focus on cold calls, direct and partner sales, and business analytics ... We wake up every morning thinking about growing our market and beating our competitors. – David Kim, Director Business Development, Apprenda

Leverage Azure Hybrid Solutions Support

Most enterprises are adopting cloud in hybrid environments, where there is shared data and more, between on-premise and cloud systems. Interviewees pointed out that Azure supports hybrid solutions better than the competition. This was believed to be true because the Azure platform was originally designed to be compatible with Microsoft's on-premise products.

This study suggested that Azure has significant appeal to customers that want a hybrid solution. One respondent suggested that Amazon Web Services' requirement for "pure cloud" may inhibit its market share. Another respondent noted that Azure is a logical step for partners and customers that have come to rely on Microsoft.

Speak the Language of LOB and IT

Much of the demand for cloud solutions is coming from the line of business. But IT is usually involved and might even hold the budget. IDC predicts that by 2016, 80% of IT purchase decisions will be influenced by LOBs. When working with LOBs, it is critical to speak the language of the LOB decision makers, including using their industry terms and metrics. Take the time to explain clearly in their language how the proposed solution will benefit them and solve their problems or give them a competitive advantage. You may even want to optimize your products for specific LOB decision makers.

The other thing that is changing is who owns that budget. Traditionally, it's been centralized within IT, but the LOB – particularly in the enterprise – now has that purchasing power, and they don't care about where the app is hosted as much as what they want that target app to do ... We're seeing different people from a CXO [chief experience officer] title becoming engaged and involved in not only the decision to deploy New Relic, but the results utilizing our software ... We've developed additional products that specifically target people outside of DevOps. The analytics of software falls much more into an executive operations role, as well as a CMO or a COO. – Paul Burstein, Global Account Manager, New Relic

As many partners know, if you can provide a business outcome to a business problem, you can charge a premium for the technology and service that deliver that outcome. Conversely, selling technology to IT has traditionally meant a decrease in gross margins over time. However, IT must be satisfied that a cloud-based solution will be stable and secure. IT often establishes specific cloud-compliance requirements that must be addressed to proceed through the sales motions. It may make sense to sideline fear, uncertainty, and doubt (FUD) up front by explaining Azure's and your products' security credentials or by bundling your solutions with cloud-specific security products. When the product requires security- or other IT-controlled purchases, the process often involves an RFP and a referral from an SI or a Microsoft sales rep who is familiar with the customer's security pain points.

The security guys who are blocking these implementations – we make them smile because we address their concerns. We show them how to reduce the attack surface in the cloud. We show them how their best practices – for on-premises – can be as good or even better in the cloud, and we relieve their fears of moving applications. – Jan Poczobutt, Director, Enterprise WAF & ADC, Barracuda Networks

Integrate with Azure Marketplace

The interviewed partners felt that the Azure Marketplace can provide significant exposure for a product. To be eligible for inclusion in the marketplace, a product must be Azure certified and then accepted by Microsoft. To begin the certification process, go to the Azure certification page at <http://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/marketplace/partner-program/>. The Azure Marketplace is an online store that connects ISVs with Azure customers around the world. The marketplace also enables ISV and Microsoft Azure services to be combined to build powerful cloud solutions. Services sold through the Azure Store can utilize the Azure management portal so that service usage can be included in a single bill from Microsoft. The Azure Active Directory allows you to easily create single sign-ons to different SaaS applications from multiple vendors by providing the most popular SaaS applications pre-integrated and ready to use.

Interviewees stressed the importance of the marketplace in growing their Azure business. Several ISVs pointed out that the Azure Marketplace provides a "seamless" end-customer experience for deploying complex, multivendor solutions. They felt that the Azure Marketplace helps differentiate Azure from the competition by making it easier for users to deploy hosted applications.

*The fact that any Azure customer, whether enterprise or SMB, can find us on the marketplace, acquire our software, deploy it, and monitor their applications all within that single portal is **very significant**. What Microsoft has done is create this **better customer experience** for deploying not only Microsoft components but third-party applications like New Relic. To deploy it as seamlessly as the rest of the Microsoft technology stack, it is the big **differentiator** for Microsoft, and it differentiates Microsoft across all the other environments that we support. – Paul Burstein, Global Account Manager, New Relic*

Networking for Success

Building relationships within Microsoft and its ecosystems of engineers, direct sales teams, and channel partners (SIs, VARs) is critical to an ISV's success. Working within and across the various ecosystems can help you more clearly identify market needs, better target customers, and build awareness of your solution. One respondent suggested that partners view Azure as a gateway to the universe of Microsoft users.

We're transforming thinking within New Relic to look at Microsoft as a market, not solely as a partner... – Paul Burstein, Global Account Manager, New Relic

Leverage the Expertise of Microsoft Go-To-Market (GTM) Launch Leads

Microsoft GTM launch leads can be critical to your success. Azure GTM's success hinges on your ability to navigate Microsoft's organizational structure and the vast array of support programs. There are endless resources inside Microsoft. You need to reach out to your launch lead, a partner business evangelist, or the concierge desk to find the information, people, or programs you need to accomplish your goals. Understanding which marketing programs best fit your needs at a particular point in your development can be difficult, given the expansive options. If you focus on a particular vertical, you should be in contact with any Microsoft experts for that vertical. For each Microsoft product or technology that is part of your solution, you need to ensure that the Microsoft product and technical leads know how your solution leverages their product. Launch Leads can often help make these connections so that you can optimize your products and GTM plans.

They've been really helpful in engaging us with the right people with Channel 9 and a lot of the other corporate activities. – Amanda Russell, Marketing Manager, Alert Logic

If you demonstrate a strong commitment to Azure and Microsoft, you are more likely to get help beyond the standard services. This commitment can come in the form of investing in your own specialized Azure team or investing to grow your Azure business. Another way to show your commitment is to "bake" Azure into your solution by bundling it into a standard sales unit.

The secret sauce was New Relic making a conscientious decision that we were going to invest in the relationship, and to do that we were going to hire an Alliance Manager that would understand Microsoft culturally, have the contacts and context within Microsoft, and be able to move across Engineering, Marketing, and Sales ... [That is] one of the key indicators about how serious the partner is about the relationship with Microsoft – actually hiring somebody that was dedicated to the Microsoft relationship.
– Paul Burstein, Global Account Manager, New Relic

Build Awareness with Azure Sales Teams

All partners interviewed advised ISVs to foster a close relationship with the Microsoft Azure sales team and relevant Azure SIs' and VARs' sales teams. Your salespeople should strive to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with all teams. Azure sales teams are in a position to recognize opportunities and facilitate introductions to promising prospects. Working with the Azure sales teams can help ISVs identify target customers as well as their specific needs and use cases. Also make sure that all sales teams know about your successes. These customer success stories can help you find other customers with similar needs so you can replicate your successes. Make sure your sales team takes the time to find out what customer needs the other sales teams are encountering; the investment in time may result in a new sales opportunity or even help you enhance your products or create new products that solve critical customer pain points.

Microsoft invited us to their internal sales meeting, and there have been some great sales introductions from it. – Brian Sentance, CEO, Xenomorph

We had really good interactions with the Microsoft team and their partners from the very beginning. The partnership began with joint field engagements; then as we got success stories, we had much broader exposure to the Azure sellers at Microsoft. – Jan Poczobutt, Director, Enterprise WAF & ADC, Barracuda Networks

It is a missed opportunity if you focus only on Microsoft sales resources. SIs and VARs and other channel partners often have closer working relationships with end customers and a good understanding of customers' pain points. They can also help you implement your solutions, increasing customers' satisfaction with your products. Most of the ISVs we talked to did not have their own professional services or consulting organization; they relied on SIs or VARs when such services were required. Those ISVs that did have an internal professional services team did not identify it as a profit center, considering it only an enabler to deploy software.

Our primary go to market has been through channel partners. It's those channel partners that typically do the implementation and professional services that may be required. – Jan Poczobutt, Director, Enterprise WAF & ADC, Barracuda Networks

Access Microsoft Engineers

A good relationship with the Microsoft Azure sales team can lead to deeper engagement with Microsoft's technical staff, providing you deeper Microsoft product understanding and therefore better applications. A close relationship with the Azure technology team can also help ISVs become more in tune with the rapid evolution of the market. Microsoft provides online, on-demand application design

guidance and support, which are critical to getting an application started. It also offers ISVs of all sizes flexible Azure support options, providing expertise to increase productivity, reduce costs, and accelerate application development. However, interviewees pointed out that to further enhance an application and optimize it for the Azure platform, personal relationships with key engineers are invaluable.

As we continued to get success stories, that led to some really good discussions with the engineering product management side of the house. We've been able to work together to build new features and functionality that come up as we move forward, making it even more interesting and useful for the customers. – Jan Poczobutt, Director, Enterprise WAF & ADC, Barracuda Networks

We had access to the engineers over some of the difficult technical aspects of what we did ... It was more done informally – being personally introduced to the right people rather than through a formal program. – Brian Sentance, CEO, Xenomorph

FINDING THE BEST GTM PROGRAM

Now that we've heard advice from partners on getting started, let's hear what Microsoft Azure GTM programs the interviewees have had the most success with. Of the 35 Azure GTM programs we asked interviewees to tell us about, a number of programs stood out as the most helpful. First we take you through the most popular design and development programs, followed by the most frequently recommended marketing programs.

Design, Development, and Business Planning Programs

- **BDF:** Business Development Funds (BDF) was recommended by most of the partners interviewed as a good way to get started. When respondents were asked to identify the five most valuable programs, they cited BDF as the single most important program. These funds are provided to partners that meet specific criteria and are typically matching in nature. Development funds also appear to help reduce barriers to entry for smaller companies. Interviewees felt the funds they received helped them launch their Azure businesses.
- **Channel 9:** Channel 9, an online video series, is an information resource during product development and an awareness builder following product launch. More of the respondents used Channel 9 as a way to build awareness rather than as a product development/education tool.

We did a Channel 9 spot in January, and we have gotten close to 200,000 views of that video. I believe that video is one of the most viewed spots they have in the cloud. It's been great. We've had conversations where people said, 'Hey, I saw your spot on Channel 9, and I want to learn more about it.' – Jan Poczobutt, Director, Enterprise WAF & ADC, Barracuda Networks

- **Azure Technical Support:** Tech support was considered worth utilizing across a variety of subjects. Partners also found that employing tech support could lead to engagement with key technologists.
- **Visual Studio with Microsoft Developer Network subscription bundle:** The Visual Studio bundle was viewed as a good way to get started and was used by most of the interviewees.

Azure Go-To-Market Programs

The most frequently used and recommended marketing programs are summarized in this section. We believe that all the following programs should be part of a well-planned marketing campaign:

- **Press releases:** Microsoft works with partners to publish press releases to announce their collaboration with Microsoft and their solution(s) built on Azure. The ISVs interviewed all found the Microsoft's press release program was productive and worthwhile, with several ISVs noting that Microsoft's process was "very smooth" or "seamless."

It was seamless. It was quick turnaround time. We always got a quote. No problems there. – Amanda Russell, Marketing Manager, Alert Logic

- **Microsoft blog posts:** The interviewees pointed out that Microsoft blog posts can be very effective. They also felt the blog posts were very cost effective because, if you write the blogs internally, Microsoft does not charge for posting.
- **Worldwide Partner Conference (WPC):** WPC is an annual global event where partners come together to network, drive business growth, and identify new opportunities. Those interviewed felt that WPC helped them build awareness and helped them find channel partners and prospective customers.
- **Azure Marketplace:** As mentioned previously, participating in the Azure Marketplace is a good incentive to get your products certified. It was recommended by all partners interviewed.
- **Digital marketing campaign:** The digital marketing programs received very positive reviews among respondents who had used the service. One ISV felt that the third-party agency delivered expertise that justified the price because of the deep digital marketing knowledge employed by the agency coupled with comprehensive Microsoft insight. Another ISV perceived that it was "too expensive" and/or irrelevant if there were significant in-house capabilities. But other ISVs felt that it would be more expensive to produce the same results in-house.
- **"App of the day Twitter campaign":** The ISVs that tried the App of the Day Twitter campaign were very positive about it and felt it was a good investment of their time. It was pointed out that Microsoft's Twitter following is substantial and engaged.

I think it was great for awareness, and the Azure social media platform also had a great impact and a lot of engagement, which, again, is a great tool to kind of generate awareness and then make our name kind of known out there. – Amanda Russell, Marketing Manager, Alert Logic

Other ISV-Recommended GTM Programs

Other Azure GTM programs that the ISVs we interviewed had success with are summarized as follows:

- **Academy Live Webinars:** One ISV placed Academy Live Webinars among the five most valuable programs offered by the Azure GTM team. It highly recommended using Academy Live to reach Microsoft audiences.

- **Case studies:** The ISVs interviewed had an overall positive reaction to case study programs offered by the Azure GTM team, with most ISVs recommending the programs. We asked interviewees about three case study programs: Video, 5-Page, and Mini. All were popular and considered effective tools, with the Video case study program receiving the most positive feedback.

The case study is critical – particularly within Microsoft audiences – because that's the primary currency for the next-step action ... If you've got the proof point, people will listen to you. – Paul Burstein, Global Account Manager, New Relic

- **EBC briefing sessions:** Partners that participated in executive briefing center (EBC) sessions felt they were very helpful and provided an important view into Microsoft's road maps. They also found that the sessions resulted in follow-on conversations with key contacts inside Microsoft and the broader Microsoft ecosystem.
- **Microsoft-hosted events:** Partners felt that the events held at Microsoft facilities and hosted by ISVs were productive and worth doing. Some partners were able to pull in 70-180 people per event.

We ran an in-person event in New York for clients and partners and an in-person event in London for clients and partners. At both events, we had about 70 external people turn up. – Brian Sentance, CEO, Xenomorph

- **TechEd:** This annual conference brings together technology professionals to meet and increase their technical expertise through hands-on technical learning, sharing of best practices, and interaction with Microsoft and industry experts. Partners called TechEd invaluable because it provides a chance to discover opportunities for their companies in the broader Microsoft universe.
- **Concierge desk:** If you have questions about Microsoft GTM programs or need guidance to get started, you should contact the concierge desk. One partner noted that it finds the concierge desk particularly helpful when developing a new marketing campaign.

Partners' Own Marketing Programs

The Azure marketing programs can help ISVs get started, but as you achieve success, you should consider adding internal expertise that allows you to customize your marketing to your exact needs. Even if you are small, you can take materials and content that you generated through Microsoft programs and repurpose it for blogs, Twitter, or other social media vehicles. Independent programs that ISVs had success with included:

- **Videos:** ISVs felt that videos are good tools to explain product or solution concepts, particularly when coupled with Web marketing that drives traffic to video landing pages.

We had some videos developed showcasing a few of the solutions. Those really help people to understand the simplicity that Bitnami delivers on Azure ... We put together some landing pages, and we're now running ad campaigns around those to drive people to landing pages, which contain the videos and additional content about the particular solutions. That worked well. – Erica Brescia, COO, Bitnami

- **Direct email marketing:** Bitnami has also run direct email marketing campaigns that have been productive for the company when employed as part of a complete marketing plan.
- **Trade shows:** One ISV has had success at trade shows hosting happy hours. The company has been able to bring in anywhere from 100 to 200 leads per event by ensuring that participants come by the booth before the happy hour.
- **Webinars:** Partners have hosted successful Webinars with Microsoft and with service integrators. These Webinars were more successful when they focused on a single market.

ESSENTIAL GUIDANCE

There is plenty of opportunity in the cloud both in the long term and in the short term if you proceed thoughtfully. This document can be used to learn methods for succeeding on the Azure platform. The best practices evident in the ISV interviews indicate the following steps for partners considering entering this market:

- Identify your market or vertical focus and find the customer pain points in that market. Next, determine how your solution can eliminate that pain.
- Develop a solution working with the relevant Microsoft experts while leveraging the extensive Microsoft ecosystem.
- Grow your market through the Azure Marketplace and by networking with all sales teams in the Microsoft ecosystem.
- Optimize your solutions by partnering with other ISVs and channel partners.
- Expand your team with Azure experts who know their way around the Microsoft ecosystem.
- Take advantage of the extensive Azure GTM resources.
- Grow the solution with each implementation, addressing more pain points and providing competitive advantages to your customers.

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