David Starr: Welcome to the Microsoft Industry Experiences Team podcast. I'm your host, David Starr, and in this series you will hear from leaders across various industries, discussing the impact of digital disruption and innovation, sharing how they've used Azure to transform their business. You can find our team online at aka.ms/indxp, or on Twitter @IndustryXP.

David Starr: Today we're joined by a great team from Solix Technologies. And before we get started, we'll set the stage by saying that today's topic is data, and more data, and more data, and what we can do with it. So with that, I'm going to ask people to go around the table and introduce themselves.

John Ottman: Hi, my name is John Ottman, I'm executive chairman of Solix Technologies.

Kalyan Manyam: Hi, I'm Kalyan. I'm the director for Cloud products at Solix Technologies.

Jim Lee: Hi, my name is Jim Lee. I'm the VP of data services, and sharing customer success on the journey to new data platforms.

Sai Gundavelli: Hi. My name is Sai Gundavelli, I'm founder and CEO of Solix Technologies.

Paul Maher: Thanks David. Paul Maher here from Microsoft. I'm a general manager and I lead the Industry Experiences Team.

David Starr: Wonderful. And we're on that team together.

Paul Maher: We are indeed David. So super excited to be here Solix at Microsoft today. So if you were in the elevator with a potential customer, what would be your 60 seconds of who Solix are and what you do? Sai, maybe do want to jump in.

Sai Gundavelli: Yeah. We help companies to monetize data, enterprise data for security, for improving their cash flow, and you know, optimizing their compute, is why they buy Solix.

Paul Maher: Yeah. So I mean I've had the privilege of working with Solix for probably 12 to 18 months on the journey to the Cloud. Super awesome Microsoft partner, and I've learned a lot. I mean I thought I knew about data and databases, but you guys leave me kind of in your dust sometimes with your knowledge.

Paul Maher: But if I put my CIO hat on, or my CTO hat on, so as David said in the opening introduction, data, data, and more data, it's super important. If I think about some of the predictions from the analyst, I know you do a lot of work, maybe you can kind of share some of the insights, but I think there's some prolific predictions about data proliferation and the growth of data.

Paul Maher:	So if I was the CIO today thinking about what are the challenges I'm facing, what are they, and what are the analysts saying? And maybe how are you helping, what are you seeing in terms of trends and opportunity?
Sai Gundavelli:	So storage costs are obviously reducing per terabyte, et cetera, but the actual enterprise costs are actually increasing.
Sai Gundavelli:	And a lot of times it's a question, data storage is cheap. But if you look at the backup cost, the DR cost, the compute costs, the maintenance costs, et cetera. If you look at all of, your costs are actually increasing.
Sai Gundavelli:	So it's all about, that's the dimension when we speak to CIO's.
Sai Gundavelli:	But this data platform messaging, when we meet a CIO, it's all about data infrastructure optimization. You need a CFO. It's all about how can you use to improve your cash? How can we do to improve your cash flow, et cetera. Or if I meet a security, it's about how does it really help your compliance?
Sai Gundavelli:	So this platform, it's like an elephant. It's like a what do you want to touch and what do you want to feel, et cetera. But it does impact a CEO to a CFO to supply chain to all of that. That's typically what we've seen. John, you want to add anything?
John Ottman:	Well, I mean, everybody today is trying to get to the data-driven enterprise. That's sort of the goal. And in order to get to the data-driven enterprise today, you've got to be able to get to all data. And it could be logged data. Maybe you're trying to get to security, and you need to look through all the log data of all your routers, which is a tremendous amount of data. And how do you get through this data? Or maybe you're looking to look at all your transactions for fraud detection and whatnot. And maybe some of the data's not traditionally stored in a relational database like it was for many years. And being able to manage it all, all these different types of data, all in a single place is the challenge. It requires a new information architecture in order to deliver that.
Kalyan Manyam:	Absolutely. I completely agree with what John was saying too, because if today, in the CS, they are dealing with a completely different enterprise data landscape, and you know, they're also struggling between making the data available. Also at the same time in the state compliant, and the data solidarity tools, it could be the the data privacy tools. It could be their own information policies around what data is being shared with which employees. There's a lot of challenges that CS are facing today, and the information architecture is the right approach. Building the right enterprise information architecture [inaudible 00:05:24] proof for them to create an enterprise wide path to really driving value out of the data.
David Starr:	I'm going to start with a question for Sai. What market opportunities do you see in this world of data that we're talking about?

Sai Gundavelli:	Thank you David. Every enterprise talks of data as the new oil to mine. And what we're seeing is how you can use data to improve customer satisfaction, how you can upsell, cross sell, how we can improve your compliance, how we can improve your cashflow, how we can improve your, optimize your costs. So we are talking about how we can help an enterprise in optimizing all their assets using data. And that's what we are pioneering this entire enterprise data management, which becomes the IA, Information Architecture for AI for an enterprise.
David Starr:	And does this data come from existing resources typically, or is there more added in to bring it all together?
Sai Gundavelli:	So if you look at the past, data is all about data that is generated internally. Now it's data generated internally, externally, socially. It's all data. You are going to be seeing what products do I want to develop? So you're going to look at social data to see whether people are liking it, which dealer is able to sell, which dealer is not able to sell. So we are looking at all data that influences an enterprise. It's data internal, external. It could be even weather data, it could be traffic data, all aspects of data that can help an enterprise to do the next generation analytics.
David Starr:	So what's working well and what could use a little improvement in this world that you're describing?
Sai Gundavelli:	So, enterprises understand the value of data, but they don't know how to kind of really get to that. So what we're doing is fundamentally first of all, making them understand what data you have. What is the metadata of the data that you have? What are the governance rules, sort of that data, what are the legal rule? What is the retention management? What is data sovereignty, can you use Multi Cloud or Hybrid Cloud, et cetera. We are laying the foundation for them to understand the data fabric of an enterprise. And that's the foundation. Once you have the data, then you can expose the data to the next generation AI, deep learning, machine learning, et cetera, is the whole thought process.
David Starr:	So one thing we talked about before we even got on the podcast here, someone stated that even social data is important to the enterprise. So I would like to understand how that's true.
John Ottman:	The whole subject we're talking about is really the rise of Cloud data platforms. And why is this happening? It goes back to an old axiom that a consultant, Peter Drucker, famous consultant [crosstalk 00:08:24] said, "You can't improve something unless you can measure it." And so in the past, data platforms were all about structured data and that gave rise to databases where you do materials resource planning, or enterprise resource planning, or enterprise data warehouses, all based on structured data, which gave you a lot of key performance indicators you could build on, and improve your business results.

Now what we're seeing is the data is exploding, not just in structured, but also unstructured, and semi-structured data as well.

John Ottman: So we have to have a whole new concept here to be able to collect all of this data, which previously we didn't think of as being as valuable. Actually the growth of data is exploding as well, exploding at exponential rates. And so how do you manage and store all of this data so that you can run these next-generation processes on it that allow you to become a data-driven enterprise?

Sai Gundavelli: So let me add some context to that right. So think of a, you have a prospect for an enterprise. And you're going to the sales process right now. If I can see what clicks am I getting, are there downloading any white papers? Are they going into my LinkedIn and searching me? That's a social data. If I can connect all the dots, then I can, potentially, my guesstimate will be higher in terms of will this be my customer? Or potentially I'm going to lose my customer. So bringing in all their data together is what we see as a next-generation opportunity with the social data as well.

Kalyan Manyam: That's true. And in fact also when you talk about social and general, right? So the whole concept of influential influencer-driven marketing is also really taking rise, right? If you think of how Instagram is being used, how is Twitter is being used to really propagate a message and on a particular brand. And really able to build their influence around that particular brand. And then have more people really even think of trying it right? And earlier it used to be just based on a few popular profiles out there. But now organizations are really trying to tap into the social data as well. And bringing in a lot more intelligence into how you exactly negate the transfers as well, to really promote your brands. I think that's a huge influence of how data is coming in, and how the data is being used by organizations. Yeah.

David Starr: So you're reaching out to those top influencers in a given field, in a given vertical, and starting a conversation with them about [crosstalk 00:11:05] your organization, and then promoting it potentially. Is that the idea?

Kalyan Manyam: Yeah, and also being able to bring in those insights back and connect it with the insight, the sales data that you also have, and being able to merge that together and be able to really make it much smarter in a campaign around your brands, and your outreach programs, is how organizations are actually using the digital mediums today, they're trying to make it more smarter in terms of, and more personalized. And that sound social is definitely in a very useful today.

David Starr: I didn't realize it was so deeply entrenched in-

Kalyan Manyam: I'll give you another example, right? Even in health care, it's all about a prescriptive care right now. The future is going to be predictive and preventive care. So you know, getting into the data demographics if in the zip code, if, if you're seeing a lot of the viral and if you know your particular patient has more

susceptible to that viral. If we can say, Hey, you know what, you might potentially get it now instead of prescriptive care. Now you're predictive and preventive care. So I think bringing in all the, the all of this data together, it doesn't have to be bringing it as long as you're able to connect to it. And that's the whole idea of the fabric. You know, all the data that influences a particular problem.

Kalyan Manyam: If you connect to that, there are a lot of answers in that now. It is going to be, it's up to us. Can you ask the questions and get those answers?

David Starr: So you're implying that I would start with a question rather than starting with data and looking for insights into the data?

Kalyan Manyam: I'm seeing first connecting all the dots of the data that becomes a foundation. Now you have all the answers in their data. Now for instance, I'll give you another example. you have all the payroll data on your data platform. Your algorithm can potentially say how much increments female are getting worse as Milar getting in a particular if that is unusual compared to all the rest of the other departments in an organization your algorithm can say potentially that could be something over here. You know, so it's, it's an algorithm that is a predicting because let's say, you know women are getting less or higher or whatever that unusual patterns I think. Yeah, I think our potential possibility where this entire enterprise data can play an important role.

David Starr: The potential that have personalized data, meaning identifying data about myself. What are some of the governance issues that you have to deal with with these big data warehouses and data lakes and such?

John Ottman: Well, I mean the, the, when people say data Lake, the negative side of that is that it doesn't become a data swamp and it's very, very easy to copy data. And, and keep copying data and you end up with more and more data and you don't always know where you are in terms of compliance.

John Ottman: So compliance means that you know where your data is and you can get to it and you can describe it, et cetera. So when you start taking your data and building data lakes with one or two clicks and they start proliferating across your entire enterprise in the same ways that in, in past times file servers proliferated across the enterprise. There has to be a governance framework to oversee the whole thing. And so data governance in the sense of information life cycle management is critical from when data is created to the policies that are going to govern that data throughout its life cycle until it's finally deleted or destroyed. And so as a CIO, I think you have to really be thinking, if I unleash data lakes all over my enterprise, what sort of governance challenges might, might I be unleashing as well?

Jim Lee: In addition to what John said, just as important as understanding what I have, knowing what I have leads to, the way I have, knowing what I have is allowing to

define what policies I should have that says, how can I share the data, who can I share it with and then what's the final disposition of that data? Do I keep it?, Do I delete it?, Et cetera. I want to share data to gain maximum value while protecting the data from those who don't have access and shouldn't have access.

David Starr: and we have lots of rules around data sovereignty in different countries that causes to treat data in different ways, right? How does that impact your business?

Kalyan Manyam: That is one of the reason why customers buy our data platform. It's understanding the data sovereignty rules. It's understanding how even departments operate with each other. Understanding rule based security from a data perspective. Sometimes you also want to understand by tax sharing data, shared among like in a healthcare, this blood group, I want to be shaped by all these doctors, et cetera. It's not rule, but that blood group, that bag is what, how you share. So this is one of the important dimension why, you know, enterprises want this data platform. You know, having a, I want to be able to optimize my storage, I want to be able to optimize my compute. I want to be able to optimize my data sovereign, uh data security, data governance. That's the foundation. And without that, you can't really monetize the data

David Starr: Yeah, and and the cloud offers a lot of specifically cloud native architectures, so to speak, offer a lot of advantages for things like data sovereignty. If you're thinking of GDPR and you're, you're located in the European union for instance, the ability to use object storage and containerized storage to be able to, house your data in a geographic location required by law and maybe you're a multinational company and you, you have data requirements to be housed in multiple countries and the ability to containerize your data in the cloud is, it's a native capability. So I think this is one of the big reasons why data is moving to the cloud so fast.

Paul Maher: So, so you know, the, what's interesting is of course we're talking generically about data and you know, it's been fun speaking to Solix and you know, of course you whack across multiple industries and we talk about financial services, healthcare and so and so forth. You know, we have the boards and the listeners here, so, so perhaps maybe could you share some, some examples of what are the challenges whether it's financial services, whether it's healthcare and manufacturing and so on, but maybe some examples of what you're dealing with and how the solution is helping.

Paul Maher: And then my semi provocative segment would be of course, people talk about data and sometimes it's understated, right? And to me and you've kind of reaffirmed that I think data is King, data is that of the journey of transformation. So as you think about the, what the innovation you're driving with your solutions in industry, perhaps you could share some of the, the transformation that's happening. So, yeah, we talk about getting data into the cloud and so on

and so forth, but, and driving meaningful insights. But what, what innovation are you seeing at the end of the pipeline as well? But let's start with the what are some of the common problems you are seeing and you're solving? And then I'd be super interested in terms of the innovation at the end of the pipeline.

David Starr: Right? So I, we, we have one very large customer, very large bank. And I asked him that question. I say, why did you, why did you choose us and what's your big problem? And his problem was that he could not get a hold of the data. He didn't have the data. Now he's a CTO of a big bank and that's kind of crazy to say he didn't have the data, but actually data in large corporations, it's usually owned by app owners. And you know, a CTO can't just go to an app owner and say, give me your data. It's like, well, what are you going to do with my data? Right? So ingestion becomes a critical challenge for CIOs and CTOs to be able to move data into these new formats like cloud data platforms so they can get after those data-driven applications.

David Starr: And what we're able to do is, is provide best practices of ingestion such as archiving as opposed to which is moving data as opposed to copying data as a, as an ingestion process. And there's this thing called the data fabric, which is a tremendous challenge. Now if you think about where the data is, it's all over your corporation. It's in file servers, it's in email servers, it's in mainframes, it's in unique servers, it's in Oracle, it's in SAP, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. It's all different formats, different connectors. And how do you, how do you connect everything together like some giant octopus and and make it as a smooth and seamless architecture so that you have a semantic layer to run applications from the source of the data to the actual data discovery of which is the end user use case.

David Starr: So, this data fabric is a huge, huge challenging and just ingesting data in a compliant best practice way. Also a huge challenge for CIO's.

Kalyan Manyam: Let me just add something to John. I can take like a healthcare as an example. CIO's healthcare companies are operating on a list of 10 margins. Costs for you plays a very important role and they're collecting massive data; all the x-rays, all the documents and all of that. Compliance is also another big angle. Any compliance issue for healthcare, they get into a huge multimillion dollar lawsuit.

Kalyan Manyam: So can we solve cost and compliance using data as an example. So, like how do we do that? So we optimize the storage of data like you know hey if you're at least using it can we optimize in an archive layer, you know? An [inaudible 00:21:15] store as an example or can we optimize on cloud because there'll be a backup and you know lot of constructs, you can reduced with that. So that's an angle we talk to a healthcare company. At the same token, how do we really do that? We do this because we have the metadata repository, we have the data governments in place, we can help on GDPR compliance are the new rules that are suppose only in Germany or Canada, et cetera. So this is how a cost and compliance is a primary or driving factor to why I want to use a data platform.

Paul Maher:	Interesting. So you're obviously having to have informed conversations with mixed demographics at the customers and obviously different requirements and regulations, security compliance plays a big part. And then what are you seeing in terms of the, the innovation at the end of the pipeline. So you've got all this, this interesting data that's being pulled together and what are the end points, what's the, the kind of the exciting and meaningful insights of being through them.
Kalyan Manyam:	So this is any area typically when we talk, let me explain the data platform. We simply explain as like a five C's. Using data, you can optimize your cost compliance, cloud customer three 60 degree and your cashflow. But more importantly our, what we are kind of really wanting to do is how do we help enterprises monetize the data. And if you see all the articles here, we need a lot of data scientists and all of that, et cetera. And we are kind of really exploding a model of more like a in mobile phone you've got these apps tool. Can we create the [inaudible 00:22:55] kind of an infrastructure with the governance, with the ILM and with the retention management and all of that and make the data available as an API? Are very easy for even internal employees to consume the data, searching, quitting, etc.
Kalyan Manyam:	Are like providing the data as an API for a third party? If I give you my sales data, can you tell me which customer will pay or which customer will buy or not buy? Etc. So I think if you can open up the data and the middle data for this marketplace, like what Microsoft adds it, et cetera. I think there's an opportunity to bring a lot of innovation.
Kalyan Manyam:	A lot of CIOs don't have time to think what can they do with the data. If somebody had given a mobile phone and said, these are our labs, you can develop it. I don't know how many people would have developed it, but just making it available. You made it easy for people to consume the mobile phone. I see, you know that also has an opportunity and a to see how we can bring ecosystem of partners, which are pre-built, pre-certified applications where I can improve your GDPR compliance. I can improve your cashflow. I can collect money faster, simple, easy applications that customers can use it, but they don't really care whether you're using deep learning or machine learning or AI. Help me solve the problem underlying, we can make this manageable.
Paul Maher:	So great to hear about Solix. So we talk data, data, data. Let me just throw out the elephant in the room. So when we think about data, are you thinking on premise or are you thinking the Cloud? And how you know how the Solix think about that?
John Ottman:	You know, there's tremendous momentum of cloud going of data going into the cloud. I think. I think everybody knows that. And you know, there's good reasons for it because these next generation data-driven enterprise applications like machine learning and artificial intelligence, they're incredibly compute intensive. They're very, very expensive. And, and now using for instance, the

Azure cloud machine learning algorithms can be used in a, in an elastic computing sense. In other words I can use that compute for an hour and because I only need it for an hour and as opposed to having to go out and inquire a whole infrastructure yourself. So the, the pays you go concept of elastic computing is, really, really key for when you're, when you're talking about these monster compute intensive lot of, lot of data intensive environments that these next generation applications have. And so we, we're seeing momentum of everything, frankly, headed to the Cloud, ease of use, speed of deployment, click, click your instances is up and running. You know, this is a big enabler for the data-driven enterprise.

Kalyan Manyam: Yeah. One more thing too. You know, few decades back, the most highest paid in an enterprise was CEO, chief electrical officer, not chief executive officer. It was a chief electrical officer. Now you see what happened, electricity, you can get it when you wanted it. Same thing, see happening on the IT side. The infrastructure will be available on demand when you need it. You don't need to create this massive data centers. You don't need this cooling air conditioning and what are you about the storage costs and security, et cetera. That's what we see happening.

Kalyan Manyam: Enterprises will in the next decade, we'll all be on a Cloud platform. And that's what we are helping customers to see. How can you be, a Cloud kind of an enterprise? And by doing that, how we can bring all these other applications on top of it? So the Solix Cloud [inaudible 00:26:46], we made it work on top of Azure platform and as like, as John said, this is pay as you go and on demand and good route to kind of really get started, the Cloud journey, et cetera. And then I'd see like a more and more data can come through the Cloud. And it really helps the enterprise in terms of managing their costs and compliance.

Paul Maher: Fantastic.

Jim Lee: And as compute goes on, elasticity on demand. Imagine the next step. Imagine data on demand. [crosstalk 00:27:17] you get on a Cloud, I want data today. I push a button, I should get my data, not wait. So we moving now from compute to data.

David Starr: What does having been a Microsoft partner bring to your product development? How has it helped you to be a Microsoft partner?

John Ottman: I mean, first of all, it's a very mature and and very widely used platform. So, so we actually have customers coming to us telling us that this is where they want the data. So that's, that's reason number one. And reason number two is the products that we're rolling out in what we call Solix Cloud, are two suites, there's one called enterprise archiving, which is database archiving, file server, archiving, email archiving, and also application retirement. That's one suite of products that we use as an ingestion process into the, into the cloud. And then there's the enterprise data lakes, which is the uniform data collection

mechanism for all, for all of this data into the cloud. And what Microsoft's got is a wonderful set of services that works very well with the Solix enterprise data Lake for instance, the machine learning studio is a wonderful service to be able to use against data that we've collected in an enterprise data Lake with Solix Cloud.

John Ottman: So there's a lot of complimentary or services that are helping us and certainly your customer base wants us to be there. So that's it.

Kalyan Manyam: I want to also add we all are pretty inspired by the Microsoft Azure ecosystem. I've seen some for your partner applications, your [inaudible 00:29:11] please. And also the way held us to get onto azure platform. I really want to comment that bond because you know, it was new here we would of running an RFP across multiple Cloud players and all of that. And we finally selected Azure platform and the support that we received from Microsoft was amazing. And so that helped us and really truly liked the oral version of Microsoft Azure and we believe that we can play an important role and customers are also asking in a fairly big large companies are saying we want to you know, do this on Microsoft Azure platform. So both the customer as well as the support as well as the ecosystem in terms of what you plan to do. I think together I believe we can do lot more to enterprise customer that is what is really inspired us to work with Microsoft.

Paul Maher: What would you like the people to take away?

John Ottman: You can just come visit us at Solixcloud.com and check out Solix Cloud enterprise archiving and so it's Cloud enterprise data Lake and and the services native cloud services that we're integrating with the Azure cloud.

Paul Maher: Fantastic.

David Starr: And that would add that if you want to get on and and learn more about Azure, that you can also get a free account. Just go to Azure.com

David Starr: I want to thank everybody for being here today and for contributing your awesome perspectives. This was actually a great show, and I know that a lot of people are going to learn as much as I did, so thank you all very much.

Paul Maher: Thanks, David. [crosstalk 00:30:41] Thank you. Thanks. Thanks. Thanks, Paul.

Speaker 7:   Thank you for joining us for this episode of the Microsoft industry experiences team podcast, the show that explores how industry experts are transforming businesses with Azure. Visit our team at aka.ns/indxp. And don't forget to join us for our next episode.