In just a few short years, cloud computing has taken the corporate world by storm. According to a recent survey conducted by IBM and the Economist Intelligence Unit, 67 percent of companies with revenues less than U.S.$1 billion have adopted cloud at some level. Companies recognize that being able to share resources changes the economics of business by eliminating the hefty budgets that come with dedicated hardware. It’s a win-win situation. The company saves money while its employees spend less time on IT maintenance. Everybody is happy.

But those who deploy cloud in their business solely to save money are merely scratching the surface of what cloud can do. In fact, companies that are narrowly focused on using cloud to cut costs will find that, after a while the company will have wrung out all the savings it can and may be left looking for other tangible benefits. The question is, how else can we use cloud?

The answer lies in a small but growing number of companies that are starting to use cloud in truly disruptive ways. These companies are breaking into new markets and industries or creating new revenue streams. And they aren’t alone. An IBM Institute for Business Value report titled “The Power of Cloud” found that 16 percent of survey respondents are using cloud as a tool to innovate. Certainly, tapping into the cloud to drive innovation may not be as readily apparent or as easy for businesses as using cloud to reduce fixed IT costs. It requires forcing businesses to consider cloud in entirely new ways.

Disrupting an industry

Drivewyze, based in Canada, knows firsthand about leveraging the cloud to drive innovation. The relatively young company recognized the market need to safely reduce the inefficiencies in the trucking industry. With an estimated 1.2 million trucking companies in the U.S. moving nearly 10 billion tons of freight, the trucking industry is often referred to as the backbone of the country’s economy. And with so much at stake, maintaining safety on the roads for both trucks and other vehicles is a top priority for law enforcement agencies.

As part of following safety measures, truckers must regularly stop at roadside inspection stations which are set up to identify unsafe vehicles. A consequence of requiring all trucks to stop, regardless of their individual safety records, is that safe trucks often face unnecessary delays in delivering their freight. While making good time and maintaining a high level of safety are both important goals to the trucking industry, they are goals that are often at odds. And with 4.5 million trucks required to report to weigh stations in North America and only 13,000 inspectors, Drivewyze believed there had to be a better way for law enforcement to reduce needless inspections on safe trucks and focus on the unsafe ones.

Drive into production

In response, Drivewyze piloted a hands-free application called Drivewyze PreClear, which offers a safe and secure way for truckers to request and receive bypass clearance at both permanent weigh stations and mobile inspection sites. Using GPS and existing cellular and Internet networks, the Drivewyze system can verify safety
information on approaching trucks, and if a truck meets the screening requirements that have been established by state law enforcement, a bypass is granted.

After its successful pilot, Drivewyze needed to move the service into production. Evaluation of the costs of building its own infrastructure, however, resulted in less than desirable outcomes. The company determined that owning and maintaining its own infrastructure would be expensive and would likely slow down the move to production. These were costs that the company simply could not afford. With one Drivewyze competitor already dominating the industry with 60-70 percent market share, Drivewyze needed to quickly move from product roadmap to market deployment with minimal resources and effort.

Drivewyze decided to build the Drivewyze PreClear service based on IBM SmartCloud® Enterprise+, which provides a fully managed and production-ready cloud infrastructure. IBM’s cloud offered a highly secure environment, a critical component to a Drivewyze service that accesses carrier and vehicle safety records that are screened by law enforcement. In addition, the cloud solution offered high availability as well as backup, recovery and monitoring features that are important to gaining acceptance by customers. Today, Drivewyze is up and running across numerous states and offers easy onboarding for other states and provinces throughout North America.

**Much more to explore**

The possibilities of cloud, as evidenced by Drivewyze, can do so much more than just shave costs. Cloud has evolved to the point where it is freeing companies from the restrictions of just a few years ago. Cloud technology offers increases in computing power accompanied by decreased costs – resulting in companies that are much more agile at delivering new products and service at lightning speed.

Make no mistake: other companies are catching on to all that cloud can do. The IBM Institute for Business Value projects that the number of companies that are using cloud to drive innovation will more than double, from 16 percent to 35 percent, in just a few years. If you’re looking at cloud through the narrow lens of cutting costs, you’ll soon be behind the times. The full potential of cloud is just beginning to be fully explored.

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