

The 15 Minute Guide to:
Windows Azure



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Foreword

Dear Partners

Consumers and businesses are increasingly using the cloud for their day-to-day needs. This means System Integrator (SI) and Independent Software Vendor (ISV) partners have more opportunities than ever before to offer flexible web-based and mobile applications and services to their customers.

Cloud computing also means simpler and lower-cost computing for partners and business customers. This is because Microsoft® looks after the data centre systems for our partners, enabling them to offer pay-as-you-go services to customers which scale up as their needs require.

The way we do this is through the Windows Azure™ cloud computing platform. Windows Azure allows developers to run applications and store data for their customers on servers owned and operated by Microsoft.

There is no need to invest upfront in expensive infrastructure, and customers pay only for what they use, scale up when they need capacity and pull it back when they don't. Microsoft handles all the patches and maintenance, all in a secure environment with over 99.9% uptime.

So, developers can use existing skills and familiar tools to develop cloud applications. ISVs and SIs can rapidly reach the market, offering pay-as-you-go services and access to applications. IT managers gain access to a new set of resources without adding complexity, and businesses of all sizes can quickly respond as business needs change.

The Windows Azure platform can also be utilised in a variety of ways by our partners. For example, an ISV that creates a cloud application targeted towards business users; a VAR that performs large-volume storage or batch processing for a customers, or an enterprise that uses Windows Azure to run its own line-of-business applications or large-volume computations.

With Microsoft's cloud computing solution, the sky's the limit, and we're here to help you reach it.

Simon Gautrey

Cloud computing lead, SMS&P, Microsoft UK

What is Windows Azure?

Discover how Windows Azure can help your customers manage their costs, while exploring new technologies

Building an infrastructure that supports web services or applications can be expensive, complicated and time consuming. Forecasting the highest possible demand, building out the network to support peak times, getting the right servers in place at the right time, managing and maintaining the systems all cost money, time and staff.

As more and more customers look for an IT infrastructure that is not only able to scale up or down with their business, while at the same time enabling their business to innovate and keeping costs regulated, Microsoft partners are under ever increasing pressure to supply a flexible technology solution.

The Windows Azure platform is a scalable cloud computing platform that lets partners focus on solving business problems and addressing customer needs. Microsoft's business has been built

by providing platforms on which its partner ecosystem can build products and services. This includes Windows Server®, Windows Client and Microsoft® SharePoint®, for example. Windows Azure is the latest platform from Microsoft and is based in the cloud.

With Windows Azure, partners do not need to invest upfront on expensive infrastructure. Azure is hosted in Microsoft data centres, which offers Microsoft partners high levels of virtualised computing power and storage, as well as monitoring, and automated management for applications and services. Microsoft handles all the patches and maintenance - all in a secure environment with over 99.9% uptime - removing this costly and time consuming element for partners and customers.

By alleviating many of the day-to-day non-core elements of computing for partners, Windows

Azure empowers Microsoft partners, including Independent Software Vendors (ISVs), custom developers, System Integrators (SIs), hosters, and VARs to join the world of cloud computing.

As a result of the pay per use model, partners can develop innovative pay-as-you-go applications and services for their customers, enabling easier budgeting and cash flow. Additional revenue opportunities come from hosting and managing key parts of customers' IT systems using the Windows Azure platform.

As part of the Windows Azure suite, Microsoft has also developed SQL Azure™, a fully relational, cloud-based database platform, and Windows Azure platform AppFabric™, a series of powerful developer tools, for partners who want to develop their own cloud applications to offer their customers.

How Windows Azure can help you:

- Partners across the spectrum have the opportunity to unlock economic value with the transition to cloud-based services.
- System Integrators (SIs): With Windows Azure, SIs have the infrastructure they need to develop cloud-based applications and service offerings. SIs can extend the scale and reach of their services without huge capital outlay or significant increases in logistical staff. They benefit from new consulting opportunities and associated revenue streams offered by the cloud computing environment.
- Independent Software Vendors (ISVs): Using the cloud has the potential to increase an ISV's revenue and decrease its costs. Running code and storing data on computers in Internet-accessible data centres operated by another organisation offers compelling advantages.

Windows Azure: The partner opportunity

With Windows Azure, partners can capitalise on the growing cloud services market and increase business growth



Cloud computing is becoming more and more pervasive and many customers are starting to examine how and where cloud computing is relevant to their businesses. With benefits ranging from a more flexible infrastructure, scalable as the company grows, a pay-as-you-go IT service, greater room for differentiation and innovation, it is no surprise that analyst firm Gartner predicts that the worldwide cloud services market will be worth \$68bn by 2012.

To capitalise on this burgeoning market, there are many ways for Microsoft Independent Software Vendor (ISR) and System Integrator (SI) partners to build profitable cloud practices based on the Windows Azure platform. Windows Azure is a flexible environment, helping partners to offer customers a solution that is tailored to their needs, while keeping costs regulated. A common thread among the experiences of Microsoft partners is that Windows Azure

solutions are a key addition to their services portfolio, enabling them to offer their clients a broad range of options for taking advantage of cloud-based services.

Microsoft has more than 640,000 partners globally and therefore has different ways for partners to work with or on the Windows Azure platform. For example, Microsoft partners that are looking to develop their own applications in the cloud will be looking to utilise

Five ways Microsoft partners can utilise Windows Azure to grow customer relationships

- 1** Partners can utilise the Windows Azure platform to offer a range of business applications on a cloud basis.
- 2** Windows Azure enables cost-effective and highly scalable storage and archiving services in the cloud.
- 3** Marketing/content-based websites can be created quickly to boost a customer's web presence, and the Windows Azure platform will scale up to support peaks in web traffic.
- 4** The Windows Azure platform can help reduce the operational overhead of a customer's datacentre, giving them confidence in their system integrator services partner.
- 5** Windows Azure can minimise the development lifecycle for new application development, again strengthening relations.

the Windows Azure platform in a very different way to those partners who are looking for additional storage or support services.

Right partner, right benefits

For Microsoft SI partners, Windows Azure provides the infrastructure they need to develop cloud-based applications and service offerings. Integrators can more readily offer their clients options for moving all or part of on-premise applications to the web, for extending existing applications' functionality with new web-based features and for enhancing current on-premise operations with the benefits of cloud computing. In some cases, key functionality can be migrated to a cloud-based service, while the bulk of the application remains on-premise. The Windows Azure architecture also enables complete applications to be recast as services, removing the requirement for on-premises equipment and operations.

Also, for those customers who require more technology assistance than just applications, the Windows Azure platform provides readily scalable processing power and storage, along with tools and services that support dynamic capacity adjustment, load balancing and failover. A great advantage of this method of computing, especially relevant in the current economic situation, is that technology infrastructure becomes easier to budget for because it is on a pay-per-use basis.

Variety of advantages

Perhaps the simplest way an

ISV partner might use Windows Azure is to store data from applications. Windows Azure Storage can be accessed from on-premise applications as well as from Windows Azure applications. For example, an application that currently does back-ups to an on-premise storage system might instead choose to use Windows Azure Storage™. This has myriad advantages: it might lower costs, given the economies of scale provided by Microsoft's very large data centres or for an application that provides large amounts of data to its users (video and audio files, for example), Windows Azure Storage offers higher availability.

ISV partners can also use Windows Azure to create a cloud version of an application. Unlike conventional packaged software, cloud applications run in an internet-accessible data centre, and are typically delivered to customers via the web.

Providing supporting services for cloud platforms

Using Windows Azure, Microsoft partners can extend the scale and reach of their services without huge capital outlay or significant increases in logistical staff. Partners can concentrate on designing and building applications and services that their clients need without committing resources to the operational tasks involved in deploying, managing and hosting those services themselves. Many SIs and ISVs today provide infrastructure and management services for

on-premise environments. New opportunities now exist to make money by adding value to Windows Azure. For example, Windows Azure provides access to performance data about running applications. A tool that aggregated this data, then presented it through an effective user interface, could help Windows Azure customers manage their cloud applications.

Getting Started with the Windows Azure platform:

- 1 Training:** Undertake sales and technical Windows Azure training via the Partner Learning Centre (www.microsoft.com/uk/partner/plc). You will need your Live ID to sign in to the Partner Learning Centre.
- 2 Try the Windows Azure platform for minimal cost:** Compare partner offers (www.microsoft.com/uk/partner/azureoffers), which are only available via the Microsoft Partner Network.
- 3 Discuss Windows Azure with your customers:** Add your company details to PinPoint (www.microsoft.com/uk/partner/pinpoint) to ensure customers seeking a partner to work with can find your services.

IMGROUP offers customers flexible and scalable IT solutions

This System Integrator (SI) has been offering on-premise solutions for more than a decade and has now developed hosted applications and managed services

Leading SI, IMGROUP, has been using Windows Azure since summer 2009, and said it enables the firm to offer customers a flexible, scalable and powerful computing solution that matches their budget in challenging economic times.



IMGROUP has hundreds of successful information management projects in the private and public sectors. It is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and was Microsoft's Worldwide Partner of the Year in Business Intelligence and Data Management for four consecutive years.

For the past 12 years, IMGROUP has delivered on-premise projects, where its specialists would build business solutions as discrete engagements for customers. But over time, customers have asked IMGROUP to provide hosted applications, managed services and ongoing support, all for a fixed cost.

For this, it needed to develop more flexible services requiring less capital outlay from its clients, and this has been one of the great strengths of Windows Azure, said Jeremy Neal, head of cloud services at IMGROUP.

"With the elasticity of Windows Azure, we can offer scalability in the face of unpredictable demand, economy of scale, pay-as-you-go services and delivery-neutral computing. Cloud computing is a complete game-changer," he added.

In one particular case, IMGROUP harnessed Windows Azure

to enable a local authority to massively scale up its web portal application using the power of the cloud. This allowed it to offer information on demand to its staff, as well as health and education partners and members of the public.

"With Windows Azure you don't have to provision IT to a theoretical demand, because you have complete flexibility and scalability as part of the fabric," said Neal.

He added that as well as supporting scalable and flexible computing, Windows Azure also enables partners to introduce a new breed of pay-as-you-go applications to their customers, to boost productivity.

"We are passionate about the usability of apps and do a lot of work with people to improve the look and feel, and user experience of their web portals and mobile apps. Cloud is a catalyst for this as individuals use more and more apps on their phones and portable devices. Ultimately, cloud computing enables us all to be more productive in our personal and business lives through the use of well-crafted user interfaces. It's all about workflow," Neal concluded.

Windows Azure and Bing Maps help Earthware to punch above its weight

This online mapping website designer was able to support the BBC's World Cup website using a cloud-based infrastructure for greater server capacity

Hertfordshire-based interactive web mapping company Earthware uses the very latest 2D and 3D mapping technologies to create highly visual and engaging experiences for its clients to communicate their products and services.

Earthware is a Microsoft Certified partner that also specialises in developing online mapping solutions and websites using the latest technologies, such as Microsoft® Silverlight® and Bing™ Maps. Earthware has been building its business on Bing Maps for Enterprise as a trusted, highly available cloud computing service from Microsoft for several years. In recent months, it has extended that trust in Microsoft and worked with the Windows Azure platform, exploiting this powerful cloud computing technology to create websites for the likes of the Financial Times (FT) and United Business Media.

Just two weeks before the World Cup 2010, Earthware used the Windows Azure platform to rapidly develop a high definition video map which was featured on the BBC's official World

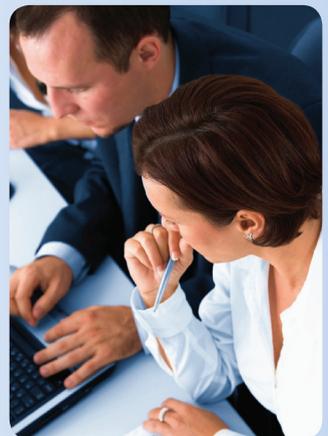
Cup website, with the map going live as the World Cup commenced. Brian Norman, Technical Director at Earthware, commented: "Without cloud computing, there is no way we would have provisioned servers in that timeframe."

Although the World Cup map experienced massive surges in demand during the tournament, the Windows Azure cloud infrastructure coped with ease, said Norman. This is because it harnessed the flexible and scalable storage and delivery capabilities of Windows Azure, also benefiting from other cutting-edge Microsoft web technologies such as Silverlight and IIS Smooth Streaming.

Norman added that Windows Azure empowers the company to "punch above its weight". Earthware works with large global customers who have big requirements and expectations for hosting and support. Norman added: "With Windows Azure, we have the confidence that Microsoft has engineers prepared and ready to support our clients around the clock. Partnering with

Microsoft has provided us with great internal-use software licences and fantastic client credibility amongst other benefits. In the three and a half years we have been in business, we have grown phenomenally thanks to our Microsoft partnership."

He continued, "With the global nature of the Windows Azure cloud computing platform, and the fact that Microsoft is able to guarantee its performance and reliability, our clients have the assurance they need that we can deliver the applications they require. With Windows Azure, we are able to confidently offer dedicated hosting and support to large companies."



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