

Q&A with Charles Ewen

Charles Ewen will be speaking at the Cloud World Forum, taking place on 17-18 June 2014 in London. The Cloud World Forum is EMEA's leading Cloud event welcoming 8000+ attendees and 250+ exhibitors over the two days. Visit <http://www.cloudwf.com/> for your free delegate ticket. The 6th Annual show features 12 theatres led by Cloud end-users: more than 300 speakers from multinationals, SMEs, public sector organisations, online players, regulators, telcos and analysts take the floor in engaging, thought-provoking keynotes, hands-on labs, brainstorming sessions and live demos over two days.

Q. Can you give me a sense of some of the unique attributes of your business or vertical, and how they shape or impact your IT estate?

The Met Office performs two fundamental roles that are heavily reliant upon technology. Firstly, it conducts research Science to better understand the atmospheric and other coupled systems that drive weather and climate. Secondly, it pulls that science through into operations to deliver predictions and simulations at all timescales and to deliver them as products and services to a wide group of stakeholders. This results in an IT estate that is unusually broad in terms of scope ranging from Supercomputing through production IT and into large-scale digital and social media technologies.

Q. What do you think the most disruptive elements of cloud computing and enterprise IT are currently?

Cloud computing certainly has its place and presents opportunities to change the way that we deliver IT, some of which we have taken. It also allows anyone in 'the business', to exploit IT and potentially use it to deliver 'official', outputs off the radar of the IT profession. This 'shadow IT', effect is likely to be the most disruptive factor in the short and mid-term as organisation wrestle to develop policies and governance that exploits cloud where it makes sense but in a way that balances the corporate risks of poor or unsustainable implementation.

Q. In five years, what do you think your organisation will look like and what kinds of technologies do you think will be needed to support this vision?

I believe that our organisation will run multi-pace IT that better matches factors such as reliability, resilience and governance with the need to innovate, evolve and compete. Increasingly IT has an emerging role of demonstrating the 'art of the possible', to the rest of the organisation and IT has become the source of strategic differentiation for a much wider range of organisations than has been the case before. Structured 'trust zones', that afford systematic choices to be made around balancing factors such as resilience versus time-to-market will be the norm. The core capabilities of the organisation will be fully service enabled and those core, standards based services will be the key area for the application of governance. The information delivered by those core services will be used in a wider variety of apps, sites and platforms as well as direct consumption by internal and external expert systems.

Q. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges involved with moving your IT estate over to the cloud?

Protecting Information is still an issue and in some of our more demanding use cases, the reliance on vendor architectural strategies presents long-term risks. Whilst cloud is demonstrably good value for money in many applications, it is not always the case and losing the skills to deliver 'in-house', solutions could be a problem as more moves to the cloud. In my organisation, the sheer volume of data being dealt with presents 'internet I/O', problems as today, a Supercomputer environment is the only viable approach to our Science challenges and this changes the TCO balance to favour in-house capability in more cases than is typically the case.

Q. What are you most looking forward to a Cloud World Forum this year?

We are always looking for ways to improve service and reduce the cost of delivering world-class IT. To that end and in a rapidly changing landscape, I am looking forward to understanding what the next generation of cloud technologies will deliver.