

Q&A with Darragh Kennedy

Darragh Kennedy 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.

As we approach **Cloud World Forum** in London this June *Business Cloud News* had the opportunity to get a few minutes with one of the conference speakers, Darragh Kennedy, online platform manager of Lonely Planet, who shared his views on the challenges of cloud migration, and IT in the travel industry.

Q. Can you give us a sense of some of the unique attributes of the travel vertical, and how it may shape or impact your IT estate?

Travel is a very dynamic vertical with technology driving huge changes from the affordability of airline travel to booking engines and the content that people consume to inspire and plan their travel. With the web celebrating it's 25th anniversary this year it is a poignant time to acknowledge the effect it has had enabling travel. Our flagship website lonelyplanet.com has been around since 1995 and our Thorntree forum, the largest travel forum in the world, since 1996.

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

Cloud computing has democratised access to scalable IT and driven huge innovation in the start-up community. Businesses like Instagram which were able to handle exponential growth would not exist without cloud. It allows entrepreneurs to take risks and deal with both failure and success in a cost effective manner.

The ironic thing is this competition from startups leveraging cloud is probably one of the main reasons enterprise IT has to also embrace it. If a business is using scarce resources (capital and staff) to rack servers, build data centers, run email servers, ERP instances etc. the business is immediately at a disadvantage to new disrupters in its vertical who are solely focused on their product and customers.

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 think trying to answer this question with accuracy is foolish, for a simple reason that technologies can come along out of nowhere and render long term technology strategies redundant.

I do however think cloud should be closer to the utility many believe it will become. The strategy cloud is helping us to enable is for us to focus on what matters to our business, building trusted travel products that inspire our customers to travel.

The technology will take care of itself, we have spent the last number of years building our content platform to serve whatever method of distribution comes along. The other large transformation has been organisational, using agile methodologies to rapidly build and iterate on products, cloud is a key enabler of this allowing us to consume our infrastructure using code as I reference in my talk.

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

Latency is always an issue for some workloads but I see innovation helping to solve this as the market matures. A real issue is how apps are architected for in the cloud is often very different to on premise. This is fine for green field builds but forklifting apps over and expecting them to work is foolish, this is a real angle for the hybrid pushing vendors.

The other challenge is again organisational, skilled staff are a scarce resource we need to encourage retraining and new entrants.

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

I always meet interesting people at these events as well as inspiration from the talks and the line-up looks fantastic.