SOME OF THE MOST COMPLEX CLOUD PROJECTS ARE COMING OUT OF INDIA, MICROSOFT EXECUTIVE SAYS

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Robotics & Artificial Intelligence

Shivir Chordia, Azure Business Group Lead, Microsoft India. | Photo Credit: Microsoft

Organisations are transitioning to the cloud for different reasons. For some, it played a crucial role to cope with the pandemic, and for some others, it is the way forward as they re-strategise workplace policies.

Microsoft is one of the leading global providers of cloud services, which witnessed significant growth in the last few years. In an exclusive interview with *The Hindu*, Shivir Chordia, Azure Business Group Lead at Microsoft India, spoke about the growing cloud ecosystem, the pandemic's role in driving cloud adoption across different sectors, and Microsoft's plans to support the development of India's cloud environment.

It's no secret that a lot of organisations have shown an urgency to move to the cloud. While organisations - from governments to enterprises to startups - were already innovating and transforming using the cloud, migrating to the cloud has now become inevitable. The pandemic has made it evident that no business is 100% resilient. However, those fortified by digital are more agile, more resilient, and more capable of transforming when faced with a crisis.

Cloud is at the heart of accelerating digital transformation and innovation. We have more than doubled our cloud capacity in the last 20 months. We also saw organisations use the cloud in innovative ways to keep employees as well as customers safe.

India is one among 14 global regions for Microsoft. India has been amongst the best-growing regions and extremely strong across all of the product lines. The sheer volume and scale in India are so much more in comparison to many other countries.

So, gone are the days when one looked at a mature country and thought that they will be far ahead in cloud adoption, and the reality is, India is really galloping far faster. India might be behind, but it's just a matter of a couple of years where across all the cloud workloads India would be far ahead. Some of the most complex projects are coming out of India. The country offers scale, complexity, and has the population, so the projects can be large.

The complexity, the regulation, the challenges, the population throw in some unique advantages, and between us and our peers, I think, we are throwing up some of the finest projects, and the world is learning from India.

I don't think there is one segment that will grow faster than the other, because we are seeing this urgency across. Even the small and medium-sized businesses, their urgency is very different across the board. Many of them are turning to the cloud for their websites as they cannot operate it on their own. So, even a small requirement like a website migration is hitting the cloud.

The MSMEs in India are also showing a sense of urgency on moving to the cloud, disaster recovery, virtualization, website migration, simple app migrations, and small HR solutions. Then, there's the very new age segment on the startups, and that's a space which is increasing dramatically. A few years back one wouldn't even consider that as a logical segment. But the

bootstrap segment has become promising, because we never know, when one turns into a large startup and then a unicorn over time. I think, across the board, whether it's the midmarket, whether it is the government, manufacturing, information technology, unicorns, we are seeing a massive set of uptakes across the board. So, I don't think it's a segment-specific view, I think it's across the board.

A startup founder is really building upon an idea. Where cloud comes into play for them is, we lighten up that idea for them. And then show them, how they can scale that idea as it grows volumes. For example, sitting on a PC they can't assume how a set of applications or solutions they have, can scale to a certain extent, but they can actually build that out, synthesise that in the cloud, and actually test whether it really works.

Cloud can help a startup to conceptualise the framework, technology, architecture, and test out an idea in a very quick time. Once their product is launched, they can start testing for volumes, performance and get feedback from users to improve their product. All of this feedback loop of performance, scale, testing, rework, cloud can make that happen in less than a month in many cases. But, if they do it in the old world, they would never get the feedback loop.

So, clearly, for startups, the cloud is the way forward. It's more cost-effective, they keep building as they keep spending, and they only spend on what they need. So, really, all those economics also work out beautifully for them.

The challenge is more mindset, as at any point a large enterprise has various stakeholders and the risk in their mind is higher, it's not real, but I would say, in their minds, it's higher.

For example, a large bank would think about all the protocols and the RBI regulations very strongly upfront. Somebody in the CDO function would look at design principles, and what are we trying to integrate and build that out. Then, there are traditional app heads and infra heads, who don't want to let go of, what's been working for several years. So, it's essentially coming to them and saying, let's move to the cloud and let's change the way we're doing things.

It's a massive organisational shift, in both their culture as well as their thinking. Now, whether cloud solves many of the challenges is immaterial for the moment because the shift itself is a culture change. The technology can offer far more than one can even imagine and the cloud is going to be the future. But where the challenge comes in is, people should be really willing to make that mindset change, and the organisation should make the culture change, because many things which they are used to doing, may be different, but the objective of scaling out of the cloud is massive.

Businesses are rapidly turning to hybrid cloud for improved agility and maximising efficiency. Hybrid cloud is evolving from being only the integration of a datacentre with the public cloud, to becoming units of computing available at the edge, including even the world's most remote destinations. Leading IT/ ITeS companies, banks, financial institutions, healthcare, media companies, e-commerce organisations, government departments, and telecom providers have been the early adopters of hybrid cloud.

Worldwide, many of the Fortune 500 companies take a hybrid approach to the cloud and are taking advantage of Azure hybrid capabilities to fuel innovation and deliver great business outcomes.

Our support in developing the Indian cloud ecosystem starts essentially with skill development. We are working with the National Skill Development Organisation and the Government of India. We're building up a lot of skilling for people to cross-sell themselves, and cross-train themselves

on the cloud. We've also taken a view that we need to go back and skill people on both SAP and Microsoft and that's a larger effort which is going on.

The second thing is, in the past, IT was largely restricted to maybe 10-12 towns in India. What we've done is to expand our footprint into 100 cities in India from say a Jamshedpur to a Coimbatore where you will find work happening at an Azure community level across the board. So really what we said was let's go and create excitement for people to start looking at technology and getting them to learn, understand and give them the same opportunity that we do for people in the large cities.

The third one is, what we're doing with the government. We're doing a lot of work on a partnership model with the government, whether, it's the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture, Labour etc. We've looked at partnership models where we can go and help departments on what's new in technology, and how they could leverage many of these.

The fourth is, then looking at the sectoral play across industries and how we can be more relevant for a particular set of customers. And that's the big play which you're seeing at the industry level where we are going out educating, skilling, enabling, bringing in more meaningful solutions and all of that eventually is going out to the end-user.

Our code of editorial values

The chips are Intel's first effort in many years in the market and will take on leader Nvidia, which had graphics chips sales of $9.8 billion in its most recent fiscal year, a 29% increase.

The concept car uses less than 10 kWh of electrical energy to travel 100 km. When translated into fossil-fuel consumption, this is around 1 litre per 100 km.

END