ACCENTURE AWS BUSINESS GROUP (AABG) TECHNICAL VISION

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

SPEAKER: From around the globe, it's TheCUBE with digital coverage of AWS re:Invent Executive Summit 2020, sponsored by Accenture and AWS.

JOHN FURRIER: Welcome back to TheCUBE's coverage of AWS re:Invent 2020. This is special programming for the Accenture Executive Summit, role of thought leaders are going to expect significantly share with you their perspective of this year's re:Invent Conference as it respects to customer's digital transformation.

Brian Bohan is the Director and Head of Accenture AWS Business Group at Amazon Web Services. Brian, great to see you. And Chris Wegmann is the Accenture Amazon Business Group Technology Lead at Accenture. Guys, this is about technology vision this conversation.

CHRIS WEGMANN: Yeah, it was epic as always from Andy, a lot of topics, a lot to cover in the three hours. There was a couple things that stood out for me. First of all, hybrid. The concept, the new concept of hybrid and how Andy talked about it, bringing the compute and the power to all parts of the enterprise, whether it be at the edge or are in the big public cloud, whether it be in an Outpost or wherever it might be, right, with containerization now, being able to do Amazon containerization in my data center and that's awesome. I think that's going to make a big difference, all being underneath the Amazon console and billing and things like that, which is great

I'll also say the chips. I know compute is always something that we always kind of take for granted, but I think again this year, Amazon and Andy really focused on what they're doing with the chips and compute. And compute is still at the heart of everything in cloud and that continued advancement is making an impact and will continue to make a big impact.

JOHN FURRIER: Yeah, I would agree. I think one of the things that really – I mean the container thing was, I think, really kind of a nuance point. When you have Deepak Singh on the opening day with Andy Jassy and he runs a container group over there, you know, small little team. He's on front stage. That really is the key to the hybrid. I think this showcases this new layer of taking advantage of the Graviton2 chips, which I thought was huge.

Brian, this is really a key part of the platform change, not change, but the continuation of AWS, higher level servers, building blocks that provide more capabilities, heavy lifting as they say, but the new services that are coming on top really speaks to hybrid and speaks to the edge.

BRIAN BOHAN: It does. Yeah, and Andy talked about and we talk about we really want to provide choice to our customers first and foremost and you can see that in the array of services we have. We can see it in the hybrid options that Chris talked about, being able to run your containers through ECS or EKS, anywhere. It just gives the customer a choice.

And one of the things that I'm excited about as you talk about going up the stack and on the edge are things, well, certainly Outposts, right. So now Outpost is launched last year, but then with the new form factors. And then you look at services like Panorama. Being able to take computer vision and embed machine learning and computer vision and do that as a managed capability at the edge for customers.

And so, we see this across a number of industries. And so, what we're really thinking about is customers no longer have to make trade-offs and have to think about those choices, that they can really deploy natively in the cloud and then they can take those capabilities, train those models and then deploy them where they need to, whether that's on premises or at the edge, whether it be in a factory or retail environment. I think we're really well positioned when, hopefully, next year, we start seeing the travel industry rebound and the need more than ever really to kind of rethink about how we kind of monitor and make those environments safe, having this kind of capability at the edge is really going to help our customers as we come out of this year and hopefully rebound next year.

JOHN FURRIER: Yeah, Chris, I want to go back to you for a second. It's hard to pick your favorite innovation from the keynote because, you know, Brian just reminded and some of the things I forgot happened. It was like a buffet of innovations. Some keynotes have one or two. It was like 20. You got the industrial piece, that was huge. Computer vision, machine learning, that's just a game changer. The Connect thing came out of nowhere in my opinion. I mean it's a call center technology, so it's boring as hell. What are you going to do with that? It turns out it's a game changer. It's not about the call, but the contact and that's just an intermediating in the stack as well. So, again, a feature that looks old is actually new and relevant. What was your favorite innovation announcement?

CHRIS WEGMANN: It's hard to say. I will say my personal favorite was the Mac OS. I think that is a phenomenal addition and the fact that AWS has worked with Apple to integrate the Nitro Chip into the iMac and offer that out. A lot of people are doing development for iOS and that stuff and that's just going to be a huge benefit for the development teams.

But I will say, I'll come back to Connect. You mentioned it, but you're right. It's a boring area, but it's an area that we have seen huge success with since Connect was launched and the additional features that Amazon continues to bring. Obviously with the pandemic and all that, customer engagement through the phone, through omnichannel has just been critical for companies and to be able to have those agents at home, working from home versus being in the office was a huge, huge advantage for several customers that are using Connect. We did some great stuff with some different customers. But the continued technology, like you said, the call translation and during a call, to be able to pop up those keywords and have a supervisor listen is awesome. And some of that was already being done, but we are stitching all the services together. Now, that's right out of the box and that simplification is only going to make that go faster and make us to be able to innovate faster for that piece of the business.

JOHN FURRIER: It's interesting, not to get all nerdy and business school like, but you got systems of record, systems of engagement. If you look at the call center and the Connect thing, what got my attention was not only the model of disintermediating that part of the engagement on the stack, but what actually cloud does to something as a feature or something that could be an element like say Call Center, the old days of calling the agent number and getting some support. You've got Infra Chip, you have machine learning, you actually have stuff in the stack that actually makes that different now, so the thing that impressed me was Andy was saying, you could have machine learning detect pauses, voice inflections. So now you have technology making that more relevant and better and different. So a lot going on. This is just one example of many things that are happening from a disruption innovation standpoint. What do you guys think about that? I mean is that like getting it right? Can you share other stories?

BRIAN BOHAN: I think you are and what's implied there and what you're saying, even in the Mac OS example is the ability – we turn out features, which by themselves, you're saying, oh wow, what's so unique about that. But because it's on AWS and now, because whether you're a developer working on whether it was Mac OS and you had access to the 175+ services that you can then weave into your new applications, talk about the Connect scenario. Now we're embedding that kind of inference and machine learning to do what you say, but then your data lake, it was also most likely running in AWS. And then, the other channels, whether they be mobile channels or web channels or in-store physical channels, that data can be captured. And I'm saying machine learning could be applied there to get that full picture across the spectrum. So that's the power of bringing together on AWS, the access to all those different capabilities and services and then also where the data is and pulling all that together for that end-to-end view.

JOHN FURRIER: Can you guys give some examples of work you've done together? I know stuff we reported on in the last session we talked about some of the Connect stuff. But that kind of encapsulates with us where this is all going with respect to the tech?

CHRIS WEGMANN: Yeah, I think one of them it was called out in Doug's Partner Summit is our SAP data lake accelerator. Almost every enterprise has SAP. And SAP, getting data out of SAP has always been a challenge, whether it be through data warehouses and SAP BW. What we focus on is getting that data when you're on, have SAP on AWS, getting that data into the data lake, getting it into a model that you can pull the value out and the customers can pull the value out, use those AI models. So that was one thing we worked on in the last 12 months, we're super excited about. We're seeing great success with customers. A lot of customers had ideas, they want to do this, they had different models. What we've done is made it very simplified framework that allows customers to do it very quickly, get the data out there and start getting value out of it and iterating on that data.

We saw customers were spending way too much time trying to stitch it all together and trying to get it to work technically. And we've now cut all that out and they can immediately start getting down to the data and taking advantage of those different services that are out there by AWS.

JOHN FURRIER: Brian, you want to weigh in on those things you see as relevant builds that you've guys done together that kind of tease out the future and connect the dots to what's coming?

BRIAN BOHAN: I'll use a customer example. We worked with – and it just came out, with Unilever around their Blueair Connected Smart Air Purifier. And what I think is interesting about that, I think it touches on some of the themes we're talking about, as well as some of the things we've talked about in the last session, which is we started that program before the pandemic. And Unilever recognized that they needed to differentiate their product in the marketplace, move to a more of a services-oriented business which we're seeing as a trend.

We enabled this capability, so now it's a smart air purifier that can be remote managed. And now, when the pandemic hit, they are in a really good position, obviously, with a very relevant product and capability to be used. And so, that data then as we're talking about, is going to reside on the cloud. And so, the learning that can now happen about usage and about filter changes, etc., can find its way back into future iterations of that product. And I think that's keeping with what Chris is talking about or even one of these systems of record like an SAP. How do we bring those in and then, start learning from that data, so we can get better on our future iterations?

JOHN FURRIER: Hey, Chris, on the last segment we did on the business mission session, Andy Tay from your team, talked about partnership within Accenture and working with other folks. I want to take that now on the technical side, because one of the things that we heard from Doug's keynote and during the partner day was, integrations and data were two big themes.

When you're in the cloud technically, the integrations are different. You're going to get unique things in the public cloud that you're just not going to get on premise, access to other cloud native technologies and companies. How do you see the partnering of Accenture with people within your ecosystem and how the data and the integrations play together? What's your vision?

CHRIS WEGMANN: Yeah, I think there's two parts of it. One, there's from a commercial standpoint. So marketplace and you heard Dave talk about that in the Partner Summit. That marketplace is now bringing together this ecosystem in a very easy way to consume by the customers and by the users and bringing local partners together. And we're working with our ecosystem to put more products out in the marketplace that are integrated together already.

I think, one, from a technical perspective though, if you look at Salesforce and I talked a little earlier about Connect. Another good example technically underneath the covers, how we've integrated Connect and Salesforce, some of it being pre-built by AWS and Salesforce, other things that we've added on top of it, I think are good examples.

And I think as these ecosystems, these ISCs put their products out there and start exposing more and more APIs on the Amazon platform, make opening it up, having those pre-built network connections there between the different VPCs and the different areas within the customer's network, and having that all opened up and connected and having all that networking done underneath the covers. It's one thing to call the APIs, it's one thing to have access to those and that's been a big focus of a lot of ISVs and customers who build those APIs and expose them, but having that network infrastructure underneath and being able to stay within the cloud, within AWS to make those connections to pass that data, we always talk about scale. It's one thing if I just need to pass, like a simple user ID back and forth. That's fine. We're not talking massive data sets, whether it be seismic data or whatever it be, passing those large data sets between customers across the Amazon network is going to open up the world.

JOHN FURRIER: Yeah, I see huge possibilities there and love to keep on this story. I think it's going to be important and something to keep track of. I'm sure you guys will be on top of it.

One of the things I want to dig into with you guys now is Andy had kind of this philosophical thing in his keynote, talking about societal change and how tough the pandemic is. Everything's on full display. And this kind of brings out kind of like where we are and the truth. If you look at the truth, it's a virtual event. I mean it's a website and you've got some sessions out there, we're doing remote best we can and you've got software and you got technology. And the concept of a mechanism, it's software, it does something, it does a purpose.

Accenture, you guys have a concept called Living Systems where growth strategy is powered by technology. How do you take the concept of a living organism or system and replace the mechanism staleness of computing and software? And this is kind of interesting because we're on the cusp of a major inflection point post-Covid. We get the digital transformation being slow. Yes, that's happening. There's other things going on in society. What do you guys think about this Living Systems concept?

CHRIS WEGMANN: Yeah, so I'll start. I think the Living System concept, you know, it started out very much thinking about how do you rapidly change a system? And because of cloud, because of DevOps, because of all these software technologies and processes that we've created, that's where it started, making it much easier, making it much faster, being able to change rapidly. But you're right, I think as you now bring in more technologies, the AI technologies, self-healing technologies. Again, you heard Andy in his keynote talk about the systems and the services they're building to attack problems and be able to resolve those problems. Obviously, automation's a big part of that.

Living Systems, you know, being able to bring that all together and to be able to react in real time to either what a customer asks, either through the AI models that have been generated, and turning those AI models around much faster and being able to get all the information that came in, in the last 20 minutes. Society's moving fast and changing fast and even in one part of the world, if something in 10 minutes can change and being able to have systems react to that, learn from that and be able to pass that on to the next country, especially in this world of Covid and things changing very quickly and diagnosis and medical response, all that so quickly. To be able to react to that and have systems pass that information, learn from that information is going to be critical.

JOHN FURRIER: That's awesome. Brian, one of the things that comes up every year is, oh, the cloud's scalable. This year, I think, we've talked on TheCUBE before, years ago, certainly with Accenture and Amazon, I think it was like three or four years ago. The cloud's horizontally scalable, but vertically specialized at the application layer. But if you look at the data lake stuff that you've guys have been doing, where you have machine learning. The data's horizontally scalable and then, you've got the specialization in the app, changes the whole vertical thing. Like you don't need to have a whole vertical solution or do you? So how as this year's cloud news impacted vertical industries? Because it used to be, oh, oil and gas, financial services. We've got a team for that. We've got a stack for that. Not anymore. Is it going away? What's changing?

BRIAN BOHAN: Well, that's a really good question. And I think what we're seeing and as the Summit called this morning talking about banking and capital markets and I do think the challenges are still pretty sector specific, but what we do see is the commonality. And when we start looking at – and we talked about the industry solutions that we're building as a partnership, most of them follow the pattern of ingesting data, analyzing that data and then, being able to provide insights and then actions.

So if you think about creating that kind of common chassis of that ingest, the data lake and then the machine learning and you talk about the announces around SageMaker and being able to manage these models. What changes then really are the very specific industries algorithms that you're writing within that framework. And so, we're doing a lot and Connect is a good example of this two where you look at it and customer service is a horizontal capability that we're building out. But then when you snap it into insurance or retail banking or utilities, there are nuances then that we then extend and build, so that we meet the unique needs of those industries and that's usually around those models.

JOHN FURRIER: Yeah, and I think this year is the first re:Invent that I saw real products coming out that actually solves that problem. We knew it was there last year, SageMaker was kind of moving up the stack, but now you have apps embedding machine learning directly in and users don't even know it's in there, I mean because this is kind of where it's going, right?

BRIAN BOHAN: Yeah, you saw that was in the announcements, right. How many announcements were machine learning is just embedded in? So I mean so CodeGuru, DevOps Guru, Panorama we talked about. It's just there.

JOHN FURRIER: Yeah, I mean having the knowledge about the linguistics and the metadata, knowing the business logic, those are important specific use cases for the vertical and you can get to it faster. Chris, how is this changing on the tech side, your perspective?

CHRIS WEGMANN: Yeah, I keep coming back to AWS and cloud makes it easier, right. None of this stuff – all this stuff can be done and some of it has been done, but what Amazon continues to do is make it easier to consumer by the developer, by the customer and to actually embed it into applications much easier than it would be – if I had to go set up the stack and build it all and then embed it. So it's short-cutting that process and, again, as these products continue to mature and some of the stuff is embedded, it makes that process so much faster and it reduces the amount of work required by the developers, the engineers to get there.

So I'm expecting you're going to see more of this. I think you're going to see more and more of these multi-connected services by AWS that has a lot of the AI, ML preconfigured data lakes, all that kind of stuff embedded in those services, so you don't have to do it yourself and you continue to go up the stack.

We always talk about Amazon's built for builders, but builders have been super specialized and we're becoming – as engineers, we're being asked to be bigger and bigger and to be able to do more stuff. And I think these kind of integrated services are going to help us do that.

JOHN FURRIER: And certainly need it more now when you have hybrid Edge that are going to be operating with microservices on a cloud model and with all those advantages that are going to come around the corner for being in the cloud. I mean I think there's going to be a whole clarity around benefits in the cloud with all these capabilities and benefits, Cloud Guru, I think is my favorite this year because it just points to why that could happen. I mean that happens because of the cloud data. If you're on premise, you may not have a little Cloud Guru. You got to get more data. But they're all different. Edge certainly will come in too. Your vision on the Edge, Chris, how you see that evolving for customers because that could be complex, new stuff? How is it going to get easier?

CHRIS WEGMANN: Yeah, it's super complex now, right? I mean you got to design for all the different Edge, 5G protocols are out there and solutions. Amazon's simplifying that. They're going to come back as simplification, right. I can build an app that works on any 5G network that's been integrated with AWS or I don't have to set up all the different layers to get back to my cloud or back to my bigger data set.

And I was kind of joking, I don't even know where to call the cloud anymore. I got big cloud which is the central and then go down and add a cloud at the edge. So what do I call that?

JOHN FURRIER: It's the computing. It's the (inaudible)

CHRIS WEGMANN: Exactly. So, again, I think as this next generation of technology with the edge comes and we put more and more data at the edge, we're asking for more and more compute at the edge, whether it be industrial or for personal use or consumer use, that processing is going to get more and more intense, to be able to manage that under a single console, under a single platform and be able to move the code that I develop across that entire platform, whether I could go all the way down to the very edge at the 5G level or all the way back into the bigger cloud and how that process in there. To be able to do that seamlessly is going to be the speed of development that's needed.

JOHN FURRIER: Wow, you guys have done a great job and no better time to be a techie or interested in technology or computer science or social science for that matter. This is a really perfect storm. A lot of problems to solve, a lot of change happening, positive change, opportunities, a lot of great stuff.

The final question, guys. Five years working together now on this partnership with AWS and Accenture. Congratulations, you guys are in pole position for the next wave coming. What's exciting you guys? Chris, what's on your mind? Brian, what's getting you guys pumped up?

CHRIS WEGMANN: Well, again, I come back to Andy mentioned it in his keynote, we're seeing customers move now. We're seeing five years ago, we knew customers were going to go do this. We built the partnership to enable these enterprise customers to make that journey, but now even more, we're seeing them move at such great speed, which super excites me because I can see being in this for a long time now. I can see the value on the other end and I really been wanting to push our customers as fast as they can through the journey and now, they're moving there and they're getting religion, they're getting there, they see they need to do it to change their business. So that's what excites me is just the speed at which we're going to see the movement.

JOHN FURRIER: Brian.

BRIAN BOHAN: Yeah, I'd agree with that. I mean so obviously getting customers to the cloud is super important work and we're obviously doing that and helping accelerate that. It's what we've been talking about. When we're there, all the possibilities that become available through the common data capabilities, the access to 175 some odd AWS services and I also think, and this has kind of permeated through this week at re:Invent, is the opportunity, especially in those industries that do have an industrial aspect, a manufacturing aspect or a really strong physical aspect of bringing together IT and operational technology and the business with all these capabilities. And I think edge and pushing machine learning down to the edge and analytics at the edge is really going to help us do that. So I'm super excited by all that possibilities. I feel like we're just scratching the surface there.

JOHN FURRIER: Yeah, it's a great time to be building out and this is a time for reconstruction, reinvention, big themes. So many story lines in the keynote and in the events. This is going to keep us busy here at SiliconANGLE and TheCUBE for the next year. Gentlemen, thank you for coming on. I really appreciate it. Thanks.

CHRIS WEGMANN: Thank you.

BRIAN BOHAN: Thank you for having us.

JOHN FURRIER: Alright, great conversation. You know, getting technical, we could have gone on another 30 minutes. A lot to talk about, a lot of storylines here at AWS re:Invent 2020 Accenture Executive Summit. I'm John Furrier, thanks for watching.