

Migrating Enterprise Workloads to the Cloud

Customer Experiences with Oracle Cloud and Amazon Web Services

PIQUE SOLUTIONS

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Pique Solutions is a competitive research and market analysis firm supporting Fortune-500 companies in the information technology sector. Pique is based in San Francisco, California.

Executive Summary

Companies are increasingly migrating business-critical workloads to the cloud. These migrations include popular enterprise applications and database workloads, as well as custom and independent software vendor (ISV) applications. Oracle Cloud makes it very easy for customers to migrate Oracle and non-Oracle workloads running on other vendors' platforms to the cloud, manage them efficiently, and even extend, integrate, and innovate rather than just simply lift-and-shift.

Study participants found that migrating these business-critical workloads to Oracle Cloud, as compared to Amazon Web Services (AWS), delivers significantly better price/performance, lower ongoing operations cost, and an improved ability to innovate. Participants also reported that lower service-level agreement (SLA) risk and business continuity risk due to performance consistency and resilience gave them the confidence to migrate to Oracle Cloud versus AWS.

The key findings of the study were as follows:

- ⊕ **Lower Cost:** Oracle Cloud was found to be significantly less costly overall when compared to AWS. Among the reasons for higher costs for AWS were higher operational expenses, the need to buy additional compute and storage to achieve performance on par with their on-premises environments, charges for storage request and retrieval and for transferring data from service to service within AWS, as well as to and from external sources, and higher support cost.
- ⊕ **Superior Performance:** Performance was another key driver of cloud provider evaluation and decision. A supply chain software ISV found a 55% price/performance advantage when running their Microsoft-based applications on Oracle Cloud versus AWS, and a 100% price/performance advantage when running their Oracle-based applications on Oracle Cloud versus AWS.
- ⊕ **Ease of Migration:** Study participants found that the migration process to Oracle Cloud required less time and effort than AWS due to a variety of reasons, including migration automation, less need for custom scripting, and better interoperability of cloud and on-premises systems and applications. A feed, fuel, and food ingredients provider was able to migrate 16 production instances of Oracle E-Business Suite over a weekend, as compared to their experience with AWS, which took months.
- ⊕ **Better Manageability:** Study participants found that Oracle Cloud offered a more comprehensive and mature set of tools for manageability of operations, as compared to AWS. It significantly reduced ongoing operational cost. An applications migration provider found a 30% to 40% reduction of run/maintain costs due to the automation capabilities of Oracle Cloud versus those of AWS, such as entity map visualization, automated remediation using run-book automation, and the leverage of machine learning to search, analyze, and correlate log files, greatly reducing time to troubleshoot.

“For our applications running on a Microsoft stack, we found a roughly 40% performance improvement running on Oracle Cloud vs. AWS. That difference increased to 55% when factoring in price because Oracle Cloud is less expensive than AWS.”

CTO

Supply Chain Software ISV

- ⊕ **More Reliable SLAs:** Finally, study participants shared that Oracle Cloud provided more reliable SLAs and delivered better support for unique business requirements than AWS. A security software ISV found that Oracle Cloud more reliably met their SLAs: “The level of support from Oracle is tremendous. Compared to AWS, Oracle is a more agile and more valuable business partner and trusted advisor.”

Introduction

With the maturity of cloud services, organizations continue to increase the scope of workloads migrating from on-premises and their own datacenters to the public cloud. Companies are now migrating major enterprise workloads by leveraging a lower cost profile and higher agility of the cloud with elastic scaling. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate several common enterprise migration scenarios and compare the experience among customers who have migrated to Oracle Cloud and/or AWS. The key workloads we evaluated are as follows:

1. Enterprise applications including popular ones from Oracle, such as PeopleSoft and Oracle E-Business Suite. The migrations sometimes involve a lift-and-shift of the on-premises deployment or as part of a modernization initiative.
2. Oracle Database workloads with a variety of Oracle and non-Oracle applications.
3. ISV or custom-developed applications running on a variety of databases and platforms.

Pique Solutions spoke with several enterprise customers, systems integrators, and ISVs who conducted migrations of one or more of these workloads to Oracle Cloud and/or AWS and then explored the differences relative to pre-migration considerations, the migration process itself, and the post-migration costs and benefits.

Study Approach and Methodology

The primary research phase consisted of an in-depth data collection and multiphase interview process. Pique identified and qualified nine customers, systems integrators, and ISVs involved in implementations in medium and large organizations. These organizations provided detailed primary research and quantifiable data where available. The research focused on enterprise workload migration to both Oracle Cloud and AWS. We evaluated the impact of choice of cloud vendor platform on the IT environment and the broader business considerations.

The research process and methods were as follows:

- ⊕ Reviewed publicly available information and secondary research on cloud application trends, drivers of adoption, use cases, and key value drivers.
- ⊕ Identified and qualified nine customer interviewees who participated in multiphase in-depth interviews and data gathering for each of the different cloud solutions.
- ⊕ Synthesized data and research findings.

Table 1 lists the companies analyzed and interviewed in the data-gathering phase of the research project along with the migration scenarios they represent.

Table 1. Companies and Vendor Solutions Included in Primary Research

Company	Title	Scenario(s)
Application Migration Provider	CEO	Migration of Oracle applications (PeopleSoft)
Food, Feed, and Fuel Provider	Cloud Architect	Migration of Oracle applications (E-Business Suite, Hyperion)
Health System Company	Director, IT	Migration of several workloads, including web application running MongoDB
Regional Medical Center	Director, IT	Migration of Oracle Database with Oracle and non-Oracle applications (SAP)
Financial Services Company	Director of Cloud Infrastructure	Migration of niche trading applications
Global Systems Integrator	Cloud Practice Lead	Migration of Oracle Database with custom applications
Global Systems Integrator	Director, Cloud Practice	Migration of both Oracle and custom applications
Supply Chain Software ISV	CTO	Migration of entire ISV application portfolio, part of which is running on Oracle stack and part running on Microsoft stack
Security Software ISV	Senior Product Manager	Migration of ISV application

Migration Considerations

Our study included a range of companies that had conducted migrations to the cloud, with some being more recent and others having evaluated and made cloud provider decisions several years ago. Yet others evolved in their cloud provider strategy, with several at first migrating to AWS but, more recently, migrating to Oracle Cloud based on alignment to a broader IT and cloud strategy.

The companies we interviewed that made the decision to migrate three to five years ago told us that at that time the field of cloud providers was not as robust; AWS was considered the only viable service option at that time. Those who evaluated more recently found the maturity and rapid evolution of Oracle Cloud to offer a compelling value and cost proposition relative to migrating to AWS.

Service Cost

Many customers have found that AWS is more costly than Oracle Cloud for a variety of reasons, the most prevalent one being the cost customers paid to achieve the requisite performance.

For example, several AWS customers were surprised at the additional compute and storage required to achieve performance on par with their on-premises environments. They reported having to pay up to double the expected AWS fees to achieve performance relative to on-premises deployments.

Moreover, AWS charged customers for storage request and retrieval and for transferring data from service to service within AWS services, as well as to and from external sources, which, based on our research, can contribute upward of 30% of the total AWS bill. The cost of AWS networking was also higher. For example, AWS Direct Connect was 5 to 20 times more costly compared to Oracle FastConnect. In addition, AWS's enterprise support added an additional 3% to 10%, whereas support fees were already included in the Oracle Cloud subscription.

Reports of high-value customers leaving AWS due to its high costs are becoming more prevalent. When file-sharing provider Dropbox moved 90% of its data off AWS to its custom infrastructure in 2016, it saved \$74.6M in operational expenses over two years, based on the documents Dropbox filed for an IPO. When the ride-hailing company Lyft filed for its IPO in March 2019, it disclosed paying AWS around \$300M a year to provide cloud services, a cost some analysts contended to be higher than would be the cost of a private cloud infrastructure.

“We found that performance was 60 times faster running on bare metal in the Oracle Cloud as compared to AWS. ... This resulted in significant cost savings, which was passed on to customers.”

Senior Product Manager
Security Software ISV

Workload Performance

In addition to cost, performance was a leading decision criterion. Those companies that evaluated both Oracle Cloud and AWS for either production or a proof-of-concept found the performance of Oracle Cloud superior to AWS. A senior product manager for a security software ISV that migrated a non-Oracle application from AWS (using VM extensions) to Oracle Cloud stated, “We found that performance was 60 times faster running on bare metal in the Oracle Cloud as compared to AWS.” This enabled them to meet customer-facing SLAs, which they were unable to do with AWS, but it also reduced cost, as the primary issue was CPU utilization. He went on to say, “In our previous model [with AWS], we had tremendous problems with low CPU utilization (3–5%). This would obviously translate into the need to spin up more VMs to get the desired performance levels, raising costs. With Oracle Cloud, the CPU utilization went up to 75%. This resulted in significant cost savings, which was passed on to customers.”

Ability to Innovate

Another key criterion mentioned by many of the study participants is related to innovation and the ability to leverage or eventually evolve to software as a service (SaaS). They found that the ability to innovate is much greater with Oracle Cloud via extensions for applications with low-code application development; mobile, chatbots, and containers; and integrations for cloud and on-premises applications. Specifically, the feed, fuel, and food ingredient provider found that integration of cloud and on-premises applications is far easier in Oracle Cloud. They shared that Oracle Applications Unlimited (Oracle’s existing on-premises enterprise applications) and Universal Credits allow them great flexibility with deployment on-premises, cloud services, and connectivity between the two. “We’re a Universal Credits customer, so we can spin up applications and additional add-ons to our Applications Unlimited. We’re currently using Oracle Integration Cloud. We can spin that up and do some integrations to Salesforce, and we’re also now looking at integration of a credit card payment system.”

Another reason for customers preferring to migrate their applications to Oracle Cloud is the ability to evolve eventually to SaaS. Oracle has an extensive portfolio of market-leading SaaS applications, including Customer Experience, Enterprise Resource Planning, Enterprise Performance Management, Human Capital Management, and Supply Chain Management, as well as various industry solutions. An application migration provider with experience with both AWS and Oracle Cloud pointed out the alignment with their long-term strategy for SaaS applications, saying, “The fact that Oracle Cloud gives you the option to eventually move to SaaS also creates a long-term competitive advantage vs. AWS.”

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CEO

Application Migration Provider

The Migration Process

Beyond the cloud provider evaluation and considerations for selection, our study also captured feedback on customers' experiences with the migration process, again attempting to understand the relative differences of migrating to Oracle Cloud versus AWS.

Many of the study participants interviewed had experience migrating to both Oracle Cloud and AWS. They found that the migration to Oracle Cloud required much less time and effort, which reduced their migration cost and improved their deployment time. While some participants conducted the migrations on their own, many felt that Oracle engaged in partnership with them to a greater degree than AWS to ensure successful migration.

Migration Effort and Time

The feed, fuel, and food ingredients provider was one that performed the migration themselves, writing their own scripts to conduct lift-and-shift of Oracle applications, including Oracle E-Business Suite and Hyperion. They noted that the migration to AWS was slow without the help of migration tooling. They found in a parallel evaluation, however, that it was much easier to move to Oracle Cloud than it was to AWS, as there wasn't as much scripting and configuration required. According to their cloud architect, "The migration process with AWS took a few months with a lot of stops and starts, but with Oracle Cloud we moved 16 systems/instances over a weekend into production, so we were really happy with Oracle Cloud." He went on to share that having a single vendor approach with both infrastructure and applications also made it easier with Oracle Cloud. "It was a lot smoother with Oracle Cloud because we could get a bridge call going between the infrastructure engineers and the Oracle EBS and Hyperion product teams as well."

Another application migration provider shared with us their extensive experience migrating PeopleSoft from on-premises datacenters to both AWS and Oracle Cloud. The CEO told us that the migration process to AWS is "all manual, while Oracle offers tools that automate and streamline the migration. This makes migrating to AWS much more time consuming, complex, and expensive. Also, since migration is manual in the case of AWS, it is prone to errors." The automation of Oracle Cloud enables them to provide a higher level of assurance to their clients. "For what we needed weeks for on AWS we can now accomplish within days on Oracle Cloud." All in all, he estimated that it took 50% less effort on Oracle Cloud versus AWS for a typical PeopleSoft migration. As a result, they can complete their migration projects much faster and offer their customers an affordable migration program.

The cloud practice director of a global systems integrator shared that migrating Oracle applications to Oracle Cloud typically takes 30% less time than to AWS. Perhaps even more interesting, he told us that custom applications optimized to run on Oracle Database require 70% less effort moving to Oracle Cloud as compared to AWS. He shared that custom applications that run on Oracle Database and that are optimized for Oracle are extremely difficult to migrate to AWS because of the excessive manual labor involved in customizing the application framework so that it can run on AWS.

"The migration process with AWS took a few months with a lot of stops and starts, but with Oracle Cloud we moved 16 systems/instances over a weekend into production, so we were really happy with Oracle Cloud."

Cloud Architect

Feed, Fuel, and Food Ingredients Provider

Resource Challenges and Refactoring Applications

In addition to the impact of migration time and cost, other interviewees we spoke with shared concerns related to resource challenges and the need for refactoring applications when migrating Oracle and other enterprise applications to AWS.

An IT director for a regional health system provider shared that, being in a Tier 2 market, they felt like AWS engineering and integration partners were all “new” to the cloud migration process. In the end, they found it was much longer and harder than what they had expected going into it. They also found AWS lacking in terms of governance policies. Furthermore, he stated, “We found it difficult to find people who have worked and supported enterprise-level applications in production. Very few people have AWS migration experience. Most of the people we interviewed were learning on their own.”

He also shared that moving to AWS typically involved refactoring, which required significant investment and in some cases a loss of on-premises capabilities. He shared, “We had to rewrite part of the application to use AWS RDS functionality; as a result, some of our stored procedures and logic couldn’t be leveraged from our on-premises datacenter.” It is not surprising given that some of the on-premises Oracle Database features, such as Oracle Real Application Clusters, Multitenant, Database Vault, Flashback, and others, are also not available in AWS RDS.

Some customers told us that migrating to AWS is somewhat of a binary decision in terms of either simply lifting and shifting the application on the one hand or completely refactoring or rearchitecting on the other end of the spectrum. The former is much easier, but it precludes companies from taking advantage of some underlying AWS capabilities. A large financial services company articulated this consideration, with the director of cloud Infrastructure citing that, while you can lift and shift to AWS, “Lifting and shifting would be easier but they would be more expensive to run than on-premises.” As a result, their approach is to totally refactor and rearchitect their applications when moving to the cloud to leverage certain AWS capabilities. The impact is on cost and agility. “It might take you very easily 9 months if not 12 months even to migrate that because you’re going to have to rewrite your application.”

Another customer also shared their experience migrating a completely non-Oracle workload to AWS, including a web application running on MongoDB. They found that it took them two years to rearchitect and refactor to leverage AWS capabilities/services, much longer than their expectation.

A large financial services provider echoed a similar concern and elaborated, “It’s very difficult to use AWS if you’ve never done it before, starting out from scratch. The fact is that everything is code, and it is a young person developer world. And the fact that they must do CloudFormation templates and they have to become a lot more responsible because historically developers, especially in big enterprises, write code and hand off to operations managers. It’s a shifting of responsibilities, maybe a little bit more to developers. One of the biggest challenges of AWS in general was the fact that they are more developer-centric, and that makes them more startup-centric than enterprise. Many developers are not prepared for this in the AWS world.”

Interoperability of Cloud and On-Premises Deployments

Several study participants cited challenges with AWS regarding interoperability in hybrid cloud scenarios where coordination of on-premises and cloud elements was required.

A large U.S. medical center uncovered challenges relative to coordination of cloud and on-premises aspects of a phased database and application migration for AWS. They tried to move the database portion to the cloud initially and experienced several technical issues. According to the IT director, “We figured out pretty quickly that the application and the database had to be in [an AWS] cloud to work pretty seamlessly.”

When they finally did move the application itself, it did not prove to be a trivial exercise. They used a partner to help with moving various parts of the application, including a three-person team that relied heavily on AWS engineering. “When we did our HR application on AWS, there was a lot of rebuild that had to happen. We did create images, but we couldn’t really just drag and drop the images over. So, on the HR application side it gets very, very tricky because you go to the intricacies of payroll. You go to intricacies like tax information. So, all those kinds of things did not cross over. All those configurations, all those builds, deployment, pretty much, had to happen again. In the end, the overall migration cost of just the HR applications was roughly \$400K and lasted roughly 6 months.”

“When we did our HR application on AWS, there was a lot of rebuild that had to happen.”

IT Director

Large U.S. Medical Center

Postmigration Experiences

After the migration process itself was completed, companies experienced the stage of running their applications in the cloud and the result on production operations in terms of price/performance, consistency of performance, vendor support, manageability and operations, billing, and other issues. The price/performance, vendor support, and manageability aspects were most frequently discussed with study participants.

Price/Performance and Consistency of Performance

The price/performance of services for organizations that used Oracle Cloud and/or AWS yielded some stark differences that resulted in a considerable business impact.

A supply chain execution software ISV offers a suite of applications with most components running on a Microsoft stack and some running on an Oracle stack. Their customers—retailers managing inventory operations—are cost sensitive and require very high performance. They initially migrated their portfolio of applications to AWS. In a recent and thorough evaluation, they found Oracle Cloud to provide not only better performance, but also better price/performance for their applications running on both Oracle and Microsoft stacks.

Specifically, they found that moving their application running on the Microsoft stack to Oracle Cloud offered a 30% to 40% pure performance advantage compared to AWS and, when factoring in the lower Oracle Cloud service cost, they raised it to a 50% to 60% price/performance advantage. Similarly, for their applications running on the Oracle stack, they found a 75% to 80% performance advantage, which increased to 100% when factoring in the lower service cost of Oracle Cloud. The CTO explained that this directly translated into the competitiveness of their offering and the cost savings for their customers. He shared, “We saw a substantial benefit, both to our business in terms of profitability and market competitiveness but ultimately to our customers, because they were able to more effectively manage total cost of ownership.”

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Some study participants shared that they incurred redundant costs for a lengthy period of time after they migrated to AWS because they had to run their original on-premises applications and the newly migrated applications on AWS in parallel due to concerns about the performance and reliability of the applications running on AWS. In contrast, those migrating to Oracle Cloud shared that they did not require a lengthy parallel deployment process.

The feed, fuel, and food ingredients provider experienced challenges with consistency of performance with AWS. Comparing the two cloud infrastructures, they found consistency of performance better with Oracle Cloud. “If you look at AWS, it is typically a consumer model with bursty, non-consistent traffic. You may have noisy neighbors, and you may have competing issues on bandwidth as well. Whereas, honestly when I look at Oracle Cloud or Oracle’s Gen 2 Cloud with non-oversubscribed network and customer isolation, we found greater consistency of workload performance.”

The IT director of the health system provider also shared the business impact of performance challenges with AWS, saying that they had to configure and pay for peak level performance to accommodate spikes in user activity. “We happen to hit a peak, which could happen any time, so then, yeah, there’s going to be a performance issue. So, we knew pretty early into the AWS migration that what we had bought is not going to be sufficient from a performance standpoint. So, we had to upgrade pretty quickly. That one event alone cost us between 15 and 20 thousand dollars.”

Vendor Support

In the area of vendor support, many study participants cited the importance of vendor SLAs, particularly in terms of their own need to provide SLAs to their end customers. Beyond just SLA accountability, customers spoke about their cloud provider’s ability to partner with them more broadly in terms of their unique business requirements and strategy for their own product and service delivery. In both areas, study participants talked about the stark difference in working with Oracle versus AWS, with Oracle providing more holistic and reliable SLAs and generally being a more active and agile business partner.

The senior product manager for the security software ISV who migrated their non-Oracle application from AWS to Oracle Cloud said about working with AWS, “We were not able to guarantee performance (SLAs) to our customers. Being a security product, performance and reliability are obviously paramount and hence we concluded this model was unsustainable.” He went on to say, “The Oracle team works with us very closely. They understand our business requirements and can quickly deliver what we need. They are better than AWS from this perspective. With Oracle Cloud we can offer our customers predictability, as well as guarantee the performance. If they make a change to their security policy, we can guarantee that the policy changes will be rolled out through their workloads in that fixed time.”

Manageability and Operations

Another major point of feedback from interviewees was related to the manageability and ongoing operations differences with Oracle Cloud versus AWS. The sentiment shared by most study participants was that Oracle Cloud offered more comprehensive and mature tooling and automation for the full cloud stack as compared to AWS. The resulting business impact was higher staff efficiency, enablement of hybrid cloud support, and reduced third-party tool costs. In short, study participants cited reduced operational cost using Oracle Cloud as compared to AWS.

The CEO of the application migration provider told us that a lack of tooling and automation, as well as weaker support on the part of AWS, makes Oracle Cloud more attractive to customers. He shared that Oracle management costs are generally lower than those of AWS, mainly because of higher automation.

“So, we knew pretty early into the AWS migration that what we had bought is not going to be sufficient from a performance standpoint.”

IT Director

Regional Health System Provider

“The Oracle team works with us very closely. They understand our business requirements and can quickly deliver what we need. They have proven better than AWS from this perspective.”

Senior Product Manager

Security Software ISV

Specifically, he noted Oracle Management Cloud capabilities such as entity map visualization, automated remediation using run-book automation, and the leverage of machine learning to search, analyze, and correlate log files to help identify any potential security problems or performance anomalies that might occur.

Based on total cost of ownership analyses that they developed for their customers, this application migration provider found that Oracle Cloud offers lower ongoing costs mainly due to less effort and time required for key operational activities, such as issue identification, troubleshooting, and resolution as compared to their experience with AWS. Overall, he estimates a 30% to 40% reduction of run/maintain costs versus AWS as a result of the aforementioned automation capabilities of Oracle Cloud.

**“We estimate a 30–40%
reduction of run/maintain costs
vs. AWS due to automation
capabilities of Oracle Cloud.”**

CEO

Application Migration Provider

The cloud architect for the feed, fuel, and food ingredients provider also shared that manageability was an important differentiator for Oracle Cloud vis-à-vis their experience with AWS. He told us, “That’s actually a differentiator to a large extent for me, and that you can use Oracle’s management cloud. You can also use some of the security tools and actually get an overall picture of how your ecosystems are running.”

The cloud practice lead at the global systems integrator cited the benefits of Oracle manageability particularly as it relates to hybrid environments, sharing that “support of hybrid cloud is better with Oracle vs. AWS, mainly due to Oracle’s EM/OMC capabilities.” He found that a key advantage of Oracle Cloud is the ability to monitor multi-clouds, including Oracle Cloud and AWS, and on-premises datacenter elements via a single interface. For example, he cited the ability to build dashboards providing visibility to all of their compute infrastructure. All the data and log files were collected from their cloud and on-premises infrastructure and brought under one management console and view in Oracle Management Cloud. Besides alerts based on static thresholds, Oracle Management Cloud also leverages machine-learning algorithms to detect anomalies and can send early warning alerts.

The CTO for the supply chain execution software ISV shared, “Management capabilities are very important to us. As with many businesses, we are very focused on operational efficiency, and maybe even I would use the term operational excellence. And so, having the right tools to run lean but run responsively is a critical component of what we define as market success. We have had long experience with AWS and, while it’s fair to say they’ve come a long way, their focus has not been on enterprise management capability. And so while I would say their APIs are quite good, when you want to integrate their management solutions into something that’s pre-existing, they’re really not nearly as sophisticated in terms of empowering a cloud operations organization to provide that best-in-class support on a direct basis as Oracle Cloud.”

Conclusion

When considering which cloud infrastructure to use to migrate their workloads, customers generally take into account pre-migration considerations, such as service cost and performance; the time, cost, and complexity of the migration; and post-migration of price/performance, ongoing operational cost, vendor support, SLAs, and service manageability of the stack.

This research paper has established that many customers experienced significant benefits by migrating their enterprise workloads to Oracle Cloud versus AWS. These advantages include 30% to 50% lower service costs, 55% to 100% better price/performance, up to 70% less effort to migrate, and 30% to 40% lower operational costs.

A key notion dispelled by many customers interviewed in this study was the perception that Oracle Cloud is only well suited for Oracle workloads. While it is true that Oracle applications and databases run exceptionally well on Oracle Cloud, more than half of our study participants achieved significant business and technical benefits by running non-Oracle workloads on Oracle Cloud versus AWS. The CTO of the supply chain software ISV summed this up best by stating, “Oracle’s hallmark, historically, has been that Oracle Cloud was great for Oracle. What we found in the selection process is that it’s a very fundamental piece of DNA that Oracle has been reshaping, especially around their cloud offering, to be beyond any other cloud provider in the level of welcoming all comers and really trying to provide the best cloud platform, irrespective of your technical underpinnings.”

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