

InfoWorld

February 12, 2009

GET TECHNOLOGY RIGHT®

Amazon, IBM, and Savvis bridge datacenters to cloud

Companies unwrap cloud-based offerings, plans, and partnerships to bring more flexibility to customers

IBM HAS HAD A BUSY WEEK, CLOUD computing-wise, but it's not the only company making such waves. Savvis is embarking on Thursday on an ambitious plan to offer enterprise customers a complete virtualized datacenter. Amazon.com, meanwhile, joined up with Big Blue and DataSynapse in separate partnerships.

The common thread among all the announcements is the aim of providing customers with more flexibility in managing infrastructure resources that reside in the cloud.

Savvis CTO Bryan Doerr explains his company's ultimate goal: "The grand vision is that we'll have a cloud that gives our clients the ability to do entire datacenter outsourcing that applies all the best practices of security, storage, and networking."

Toward that end, the company on Thursday took a first step by unveiling the Savvis Compute Cloud, which, Doerr explains, brings two primary benefits to customers: the ability to perform more self-directed tasks for managing hosted pieces of a datacenter and a multi-tenant option.

The latter enables companies to sign up for a slice of the hardware rather than a dedicated system, thereby offering a finer granularity of capacity while cutting costs. Perhaps most important, though, are the new self-service capabilities that enable customers to log in to SavvisStation portal to provision virtual compute and storage capacity within either private or shared infrastructure

resources, the company says.

Presently, managed hosting is "kind of a black box" in which customers don't have much visibility into their applications or infrastructure and often need to submit work orders to hosts like Savvis, says Melanie Posey, research director of hosting and telecom services at IDC.

"The first thing that has to happen before this grand vision of cloud computing can be realized is service provider offerings that give customers' continued visibility into and control of the IT infrastructure that their applications are running on," Posey explains. Such control, in turn, "makes it easier for some customers to feel comfortable with outsourcing. They still have a level of control even though the actual infrastructure lives outside the enterprise datacenter," she adds.

Indeed, Doerr says that Savvis will follow Thursday's news with an ongoing series of announcements throughout 2009 and beyond. The next set of steps involves another dimension of the cloud paradigm. "Our goal is to give users enough control to amplify the rewards of hosting while dialing the risk down," Doerr adds.

Also heading down the long cloud-laden horizon, IBM announced this week at its Pulse conference in Las Vegas a new cloud unit replete with its own czar, and on Monday IBM joined forces with Juniper Networks to give a glimpse into a forthcoming interface the companies claim will arm enterprise IT shops for more easily reallocating resources among private and public clouds. Big Blue also on Monday detailed

what it considers to be building blocks for the 21st-century IT infrastructure, which one official said extend service management beyond IT and provide the foundation for cloud-based resources.

Then Big Blue and Amazon revealed on Wednesday that some IBM software is available via Amazon's EC2 on a pay-as-you-go basis, meaning that developers can access IBM's DB2, Informix Dynamic Server, Lotus Web Content Management Standard Edition, WebSphere sMash, and WebSphere Portal Server under what the companies claim is a "new and flexible licensing model."

Amazon also teamed up with DataSynapse to foreshadow on Wednesday a beta version of Federator 1.5, software that will help "DataSynapse customers bridge traditional datacenter resources and the Amazon EC2 cloud" to better control capacity, according to DataSynapse's Web site. The beta program is slated to begin in April.

That sweet spot where users feel comfortable with someone else hosting their datacenter won't come quickly. "It's not pie-in-the-sky," says Gary Barnett, analyst with the Bathwick Group, "but the truth is customers are going to take a long time getting from 'my infrastructure is a mess' to 'I'm starting to get control and outsourcing some pieces' to, ultimately, 'I'm OK with outsourcing a substantial amount of it.'"

— Tom Sullivan

