

Cognizant's Cloud360 facilitates multiple clouds for enterprise customers

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Cognizant's Cloud360 product portfolio is the spear tip of the company's push into multi-cloud management and brokering, providing provisioning and orchestration, monitoring and auto remediation, metering and chargeback, and analytics and advisory services. The technology platform is called Hyperplatform – its Xi Automation layer supports a range of clouds and a set of Managed OS services specifically for AWS users that are also resold by Amazon as part of its Premium services. Cognizant recently provided an update on Cloud360 progress.

The 451 Take

Cognizant believes its Cloud360 approach will be successful because it provides the kind of service-oriented delivery that its existing customers expect. Cloud360 customers – most of which will already have accounts with Cognizant – typically regard AWS and other clouds as technology platforms, rather than service organizations. But if Cloud360 is to address a wider opportunity, the question is whether it can be successfully deployed without being attached to substantial consulting work.

Context

Cognizant's Cloud360 offering is taking the company's managed services capability into the cloud era, and forms part of the company's investment in its OnTarget approach to service automation. Cloud360 is a homegrown product that includes Hyperplatform as the cloud technology platform, along with several other integration platforms. It's positioned as a manager and broker of cloud services, providing service and operations management. It was built in 2009; Cognizant started selling it in 2010, and had its first customer for it in 2011. Microsoft SCOM, HP NNMi and BMC BPPM are the tools that are used to provide additional services.

For integrations, Cognizant uses 'manager of manager' industry-standard tools and a custom-developed tool for case exchange. In this way, the company can integrate cloud into the main management stack so that it can monitor services in a nonlinear way. With Cloud360, Cognizant can manage the existing customer estate along with the virtualized layers, so it is a good fit for customers looking to experiment with cloud in public, private and on-premises scenarios because it keeps processes consistent. The platform uses BMC event management to enable customers to use their own tools while the company integrates to alerts. The alerting is then converted to the ITSM ServiceNow layer that was added a couple of years ago.

Hyperplatform

The key automation function in Cloud360's Hyperplatform is provided by Cognizant's own Xi Automation layer (language and APIs), which abstracts terminology, methods, and access controls from AWS, VMware, and other cloud environments to monitor and manage those environments from a single console. What's key here is that Xi reconciles the operations of different APIs – for example, a 'shutdown' command that means different things to different clouds has the same effect across all supported clouds when issued from Xi. It also sets up policies that can work across all clouds, such as consumption limits. Deployment and integration are supported by Cognizant managed professional services or via a self-service portal (or both).

Hyperplatform provides provisioning and orchestration via a self-service portal, policy-based monitoring and auto-remediation, metering and chargeback, and analytics and advisory services. It allows customers to do their own scripting, but also provides integration with Chef and Puppet, as well as with Splunk, ServiceNow and BMC. Customers' existing management tools (plus data) can also plug into Cloud360's service management layer. It operates across private (VMware, Hyper-V, NetApp, Xen, PowerVM), public (Cognizant, AWS, Azure, Terremark, Sawis) and hybrid cloud environments, and claims to support any application on any platform across custom apps, commercial codes and dev/test environments. Cognizant provides a number of what it calls 'powered-by solutions' using Cloud360: FlexD desktop on-demand (in conjunction with Microsoft), recovery on-demand (with NetApp Private Storage for AWS) and SharePoint on-demand services atop Cloud360, which also bundles Qualys.

Managed OS for AWS

For AWS users, Cloud360 provides Cognizant's Managed OS service for managing cloud operations, including backup and restore, EBS, apps, OS, DR, networking, management portal, SSL, antivirus, user management, and support team. It also offers SLA managed app services within this. Managed OS is resold by channel partners and is a multi-tenant service – the management console, which shows inventory, runs on Cognizant datacenters, while the service console, which sits in the AWS VPC or a customer datacenter, can run as multi-tenant (and is deployed in all AWS regions).

Business model

There are some 200 staff members in the Cloud360 unit, which is funded, Cognizant says, like a startup. The CEO oversees the Cloud360 unit. It serves all verticals, but financial services and life sciences are currently the biggest markets. With some 52 enterprise customers (a dozen or so using the Managed OS operations and applications capability), 50% of the customer base is in the US – around 40% in Europe. It has a greater proportion of large enterprises with multi-year contracts in Europe. By the end of this year, the mix may be more diverse as it picks up business in Singapore and other regions. It claims a top-10 pharma company and a large US healthcare provider (both AWS and Microsoft users), as well as a top-three airline (Linux, Microsoft, AWS and VMware), as customers.

Cognizant is positioning Cloud360 as an accelerator that can be used for one VM or 10,000 VMs. It is available as a product, and Cognizant sells perpetual licenses as well as subscription licenses on a SaaS model. Hyperplatform is now also used to manage the company's own customer-facing datacenters, both single and multi-tenant resources, plus other internal resources, including its own IT, which has some 6,000 VMs. Cognizant's 2013 net income rose 16% to \$324.3m, compared with \$278.7m in 2012, on revenue that increased 20.4% to \$8.84bn from \$7.35bn.

Competition

Although headquartered in New Jersey, Cognizant's heritage (and most of its workforce) is in India, where it competes with India's top IT services provider Tata Consultancy Services, as well as Infosys, Wipro and HCL. Looking specifically at the Cognizant Cloud360 Hyperplatform, it competes with VMware vCloud Automation Center, RightScale, CSC ServiceMesh, Dell Enstratus and a host of small independents, such as Ostrato, Gravitant, Interworks, Semperity, LTech, Apptio, Cloudyn, CloudSwitch, Cloudability, CliQr, Fedr8, CloudVertical, Nephos Technologies, AppZero, UShareSoft, ECmanaged, Novell PlateSpin, CloudVelocity, RiverMeadow and Zimory. IT services and integration firms coming to the migration, management and brokering market include Infosys, Capgemini, Accenture, Atos, Dell, Fujitsu, IBM, HP and Wipro. Cognizant, along with Capgemini and Wipro, is one of the top-three AWS provider partners in terms of volume of business – it's an AWS Premier Consulting Partner and Channel Reseller.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Cloud360 customers point to a principal benefit, which is the ability to ensure that T&D goes through an internal portal rather than firing up a shadow IT operation.

Weaknesses

The Cloud360 engagement model begins with being a Cognizant customer, which will limit its appeal outside of this universe. In any case, the problem for all firms here is that there is more talk about multi-cloud than actual deployment, although hybrid cloud is moving out of assessment and into planning in a significant way, according to our TIP Wave 6 survey.

Opportunities

With a mix of software, service, advisory and packaged offerings, Cognizant believes it's better positioned than point-

Threats

One of the biggest threats to service providers offering cloud brokering or infrastructure management from a 'single pane of

product technology and incumbent services firms to deliver against the range of requirements organizations now have when considering cloud.

glass' is that buyers must feel confident that they are not simply moving from multiple cloud providers to multiple cloud platform integration providers. In other words, they must feel that lock-in is itself not simply happening at a higher level of abstraction – if they do, market acceptance will slow down.

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