



Google wants to help mainframe owners throughout their journey to the cloud

Press and public used to see Google as the archenemy of mainframes. The recent acquisition of Cornerstone, however, puts Google's strategy of recent years in a different perspective. Google doesn't want to fight mainframe-centric organizations, but rather help them reap the benefits of modernization, regardless of how advanced they are right now.

Whenever I'm asked how many mainframes we run at Google datacenters, I reply: "it depends on your definition of mainframe". If they define 'mainframe' as a platform running applications that are mostly written in Cobol and sporting outdated technologies, I can safely say we don't run any mainframes at all. Using such technologies not only puts you at risk from a technology perspective - because it will become an increasingly important obstacle for innovation - it will also dramatically decrease your appeal with new talent. And talent acquisition will become key to success and even survival in the digital era, as we have all understood by now.

If, on the other hand, you define mainframe by the main qualities it is supposed to deliver - reliability, accessibility, serviceability and speed - we might argue that all of Google's servers are mainframes. Google has been known from the start to create its own servers, with custom-built chipsets, strong-encryption, servers, storage, and game-changing cooling technology. Each of these adaptations to existing designs leads to a higher cost- and energy-efficiency and limitless scalability. You could call these mainframes, but there is one major difference: everything we have created is also designed to drive modern, open source architectures. This enables an environment that allows modern development techniques and that can interact with any hardware or software, provided that they are built with the same focus on openness and integration.

Meeting customers wherever they are

Google has become one of the leading cloud platform providers worldwide largely due to our focus on innovation and openness. We believe that we can help organizations by allowing them to move to this open, scalable and secure environment that the (public) cloud has become. And we further believe that organizations that still heavily rely on mainframes, can most particularly benefit from such move. That is one of the reasons that we have bought Cornerstone, a Dutch company that specializes in helping enterprises migrate their legacy workloads from mainframes to public clouds while ensuring operational excellence and connectivity throughout the process.

Does this mean Google intends to move all workloads from mainframes to the (Google) cloud as soon as possible? Not quite. Our strategy is to help organizations modernize at their own pace, supporting them with their legacy workloads whenever necessary and helping them migrate towards a modern digital architecture whenever possible. We don't expect customers to struggle their way towards the cloud before helping them, instead we meet them wherever they are. From that point onwards, we jointly develop a gradual migration path towards an environment where they can fully focus on innovation rather than on maintaining costly legacy environments.

Fully hybrid multi-cloud strategy

Google is ideally positioned to fulfil this ambitious promise: we are the only provider who can offer a fully hybrid multi-cloud strategy, offering organizations the choice between on- and off-premise, as well as between private and public cloud, regardless of the cloud provider. This is largely due to Google's unparalleled openness and flexibility, allowing organizations to run almost any operating system or application on Google Cloud, from Linux and Windows up to IBM's AIX.

Google thus creates a huge value proposition: by enabling customers to gradually migrate towards more open and cost-effective environments at their own pace, we help realize a maximum cost-saving and risk avoidance while ensuring a minimum of downtime and interruption in the daily operations, regardless of the source environment.

Conclusion

Google can no longer be viewed as the enemy of all things mainframe, in spite of (or rather: thanks to) our acquisition of Cornerstone. This strategic purchase allows us to help organizations with mainframe-based architectures even better than ever before. And we will gladly help customers gradually modernize their legacy. But until that day we will support any organization in their journey to innovation and the cloud, regardless of how far they have advanced on this journey.

