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Education cornerstone to fighting unscrupulous cloud providers - Venturian -

Cloud technology is a disruptive force that can help Latin American countries leapfrog some developed countries, but there are some players in the region taking advantage of knowledge asymmetries to make a quick buck, according to US hosting company Venturian CEO and founder Allen Firouz.

As such, "there's a lot of education that needs to happen. Everyone talks about cloud computing and it's picking up steam, but there's a tremendous amount of confusion and misinformation about what the cloud really is and why it's important," he told BNAmericas. "Many companies are capitalizing on that confusion to take advantage of the situation and bring in a lot of money that doesn't offer a lot of value in return."

"We're huge evangelists against that. Our goal is to educate in Latin America for people to understand what the value is and the impact it has on business and society, and be able to push ahead of the curve with expertise and access to systems that they've never had before, to put them on the same level playing field that some of their biggest competitors have access to."

Earlier this month, the company announced a partnership with Brazilian IT firm Triad Systems to extend its cloud computing offerings to Latin America. To educate users, Venturian will focus on specific seminars, conferences for customers, peer discussions with CIOs from different organizations, and one-on-one meetings with organizations, Firouz noted.

And the challenge is significant as some cloud players are not well intentioned, Firouz warned, but he declined from naming specific companies. "Some of what's being offered in Latin America is nothing but a hollow promise. In the long run it will hurt the region as a whole, and in the short term it will empty pockets without adding value. It's important for Latin America to be vigilant in understanding it all and being careful about what they get into."

For example, "I've had conversations with customers who tell us what they've been offered as the cloud, and it's a tiny offering of rooms within an area that doesn't have any kind of redundancy, it's extremely prone to the elements and doesn't provide any kind of scalability or anything as a cloud," he said. "It may be a little better than what the customer has in-house, but it definitely is of no value for the prices that they offer. Cloud isn't storing data offsite; that's nothing more than data vaulting, and it's obscene how much they charge for something so menial."

FOCUS ON BRAZIL

Venturian services customers throughout Latin America, including in Argentina, Colombia and Chile, as well as in the Caribbean. The company has decided to focus on Brazil, and in Triad "we found a partner that moved us into that realm very easily. We're focusing on Brazil rather strongly, Firouz said.

However, the company is in no rush to sign further partnerships, he noted. "Triad has some internal initiatives to move beyond Brazil, so we'll work with them on that and come up with a strategy to address needs and growth" in other countries throughout the region, besides the local development.

The primary focus for Venturian is on midsize and large organizations, with companies from 50-100 users to about 3,000-5,000 users, covering several sectors including government and health services, insurance, banking and telematics.

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Venturian employs systems from Cisco, EMC, Citrix and Microsoft to build its cloud solution, and it has a data center at the facilities at Terremark's NAP of the Americas, with another coming up at the NAP of the Capital Region, in Virginia for full replication.

The company feels it has a unique infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) offer, which creates a dedicated environment for companies to run their business.

"We come from a solutions mentality, so we help customers design the environment that's perfect for their organization, and help them move into it," Firouz said. "What separates us greatly is that where most suppliers charge you for CPU, RAM, bandwidth and storage, we don't charge for any of that. We charge per server, and it's a fixed cost, so there's no concern about going over or under." The solution removes worries for companies that may have to sacrifice performance to remain within their service contract limit, or that may overpay for solutions that go unused.

And the solution seems to be working well, according to the CEO. "In 3.5 years of doing this, we've built up such a robust environment that we've never had a single failure that has affected our customers. No other cloud provider can say that," he noted. "In the same amount of time we've never had a security breach that has reached our internal network, based on our ability to architect, manage and monitor the environment efficiently."