ALLAN THRAEN | 15 years ago | PDF |

GOING CLOUDY WITH AZURE

Saturday evening, when my plane was about to land in L.A. it seemed like we descented into a cloud, the last couple of hundreds feet - which was weird because the visibility above that had been clear, providing a beautiful dusk view of L.A. Whether that was in fact a real cloud, smog, or smoke from forest fires I was never able to find out - but for some that was still the right way to start a week which turned out to be focused on The Cloud.

On Mondays keynote Microsoft announced Windows Azure - their *operating system for the cloud* as they called it. *Cough, cough* did anybody say "Google Apps" or "Amazon Web Services"? Oh well. It does look promising and interesting - and I like the idea about running your applications on the cloud (the cloud being a bunch of centralized data centers) as well as storing your data there. There's nothing really new about the idea - but it's great to see it embraced also by microsoft.

Microsoft's cloud exists around a number of services - storage services for queues, blobs and relational data and managed code execution in apps you upload and control. Besides not having to run a server environment yourself, the really cool thing about is the ability to scale. The number of running instances of whatever application you have uploaded to the cloud is simply a setting you make.

Imagine you have an EPiServer/Cloud web site running (yes, I do enjoy scifi) and you send out a newsletter that you know will cause a lot of traffic - then you simple change the number of running instances from 5 to 50 and they will automatically be load-balanced. Upgrading will be quite easy as well. Data storage is automatically handled, meaning you don't have to worry about backups and scalability with that either (in theory).In fact it all sounds too good to be true - where's the catch?
One thing that I've been able to spot so far that might be a major business problem is that fact that it seems like the only .NET supporting cloud there is, is the one Microsoft provides. And although they promise to offer "competitive pricing" on that service - what's it worth if there isn't any competitors. True,the difference between code meant for the cloud, and code meant for local servers isn't all that big, but it's still there. My fear is that once you've invested a lot of time and money into building your application (or web application) for the cloud, you're pretty stuck with having it hosted with Microsoft, meaning that they can in fact set their prices as they please. I'm not saying that they will abuse that position - but will you rely your business model on that?

Oh well, back to the technical aspect..And from there is does look promising. I'm dying to try it out - and see what it can do. The relational data-store which would be quite important for a system such as EPiServer doesn't seem all that sophisticated so a good place to start would probably be to make a set of providers (PageProvider, Virtual Path Providers, Personalization Providers, ...) that uses it for a locally run EPiServer CMS - and see if that's even doable. The next step could be to try to get a website built on EPiServer to run in the cloud as well - but that's for the future. ..

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