The Deloitte On Cloud Podcast

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Title: **Strategies to meet cloud challenges head-on and return more value to the business**

Description: As cloud becomes the norm for many organizations, both challenges and opportunities abound. In this episode, David Linthicum talks with Nasuni Chief Product Officer Russ Kennedy about the challenges companies face migrating to cloud, controlling costs once they get there, and securing their cloud environment. Russ also discusses best practices that organizations can leverage to turn their cloud challenges into opportunities that return more value to the business.

Duration: **00:25:42**

David Linthicum:
Welcome back to the On Cloud podcast. Today on the show I am joined by Russ Kennedy, Nasuni's chief product officer. How're you doing, Russ?

Russ Kennedy:
Good, Dave. How are you?

David Linthicum:
What does a chief product officer do? What's a typical day in the life like for you?

Russ Kennedy:
Well, first of all, I'm responsible for Nasuni's product strategy and product direction, so essentially a roadmap of where we're going, what products we're going to build, what features we're going to add to our core products, what technology partners we're going to work with in the world. So, I really have leadership and direction for where we're going as a company, and really in that role my job is to primarily understand what our customers need, what the market needs, and what we can build in order to address those needs.

David Linthicum:
I remember in my days as a product CTO years ago, we had product managers. I kind of viewed them as little CTOs, the ability to kind of look at where the product is going specifically and keep an eye on it. They were invaluable in understanding where the market is, what the clients were asking for, and were able to interpret that, like you just said, into a roadmap. It's really important that you have this loop in terms of people's desires for the product and where the market is going, because you're going to have to strike a balance between the two, and also understand you have a limited number of resources, and then putting things together and prioritizing how you're going to improve the product moving forward. Am I close?

Russ Kennedy:
You're really close. We actually expand the role a little bit beyond just a product CTO to a GM. We really have our product managers operate as a general manager for their specific product or product feature. In that, they have to understand certainly the market, the availability of the market to be addressed by the technology that they're building. They've got to understand the cost to build that technology, the cost to deliver that technology, certainly what price you would sell that feature, that technology for in the marketplace. So, they really operate as mini-GMs. We hire people that are excited about that role and to be able to control their destiny, where they're going and what they're building, and how they help customers with their technology choices going forward.

David Linthicum:
What does Nasuni do? What kind of technology do you sell in the marketplace?

Russ Kennedy:
Nasuni is a file data services company. We help our customers leverage the cloud, move their data to the cloud so that they can consolidate all of their file data in one repository in the cloud, and then provide access to that data globally, wherever they have operations, whether that's in physical offices, that might be in manufacturing facilities, that might be in test facilities in other parts of the world. So, we help them consolidate as part of their digital transformation, and then allow them to access that data wherever that data access may need to be.

We offer a file data platform, which is really a software-defined solution that is cloud native. It's been built from day one to operate very efficiently in the cloud, and it gives our customers the ability to consolidate that data in the cloud and to lower their overall cost of file management, which is one of the big things that people look for. How can I do more, especially in today's world when my data is growing exponentially? How can I do more with either the same or declining resources? That's really what Nasuni helps our customers deliver.

David Linthicum:
What's a typical use case that you run into? I know there's lots of different use cases, certainly backup and recovery, ransomware protection and things like that. But what are the top three ways that people use your product?

Russ Kennedy:
One of the biggest things that people do is collaboration. They work together in designing a new building, for example, or building a new park for a manufacturing process or line. They're typically not in the same physical location when they're collaborating. They may be in an engineering facility in one location and a manufacturing facility in another location, but they need to share information and collaborate on that information. So, file collaboration is one of the big benefits that Nasuni provides because, again, your data is consolidated in the cloud, but you have access to it wherever you need access to, if that is in a manufacturing facility or design facility as I described.

So, file collaboration is one of the big use cases. We talked about protection as well, certainly protection from ransomware, protection from inadvertent or malicious deletion of data. Those kinds of things are offered by the Nasuni architecture, and many of our customers take advantage of that because really it's all about ensuring that your data is available, it's secure, it's protected. If it is infected by some sort of malicious attack or malware or cyberattack, it can be recovered quickly, so you can return to full productivity and get your users back up and running as quickly as possible.

David Linthicum:
So, you guys can be kind of the heroes of technology. In other words, you provide the ability to find, leverage, and use information. Certainly things like that have saved me before because I've deleted stuff or had stuff corrupted. That seemed to happen a bunch. The ability to have a backup and recovery system that's able to keep up, certainly something like this would seem to have a tremendous amount of value.

Russ Kennedy:
We try to make our customers heroes for their end users and their organization. So, it really is all about giving them the tools and the knowledge and the understanding on how to leverage those tools from Nasuni, to make them the most successful they can be. A lot of it is, like you say, recovering information, recovering from a cyberattack very quickly, so you're back up and running as quickly as possible. So, we're all about enabling the people that make the choice to go with Nasuni to be heroes inside of their own organization.

David Linthicum:
Let's talk about the cloud in general, and specifically your review of the cloud, and really, its challenges, the possibilities of the systems, the use cases. Kind of walk us through your thinking in terms of where the challenges lie, how enterprises can deal with the challenges in certain ways that are going to bring more value back to the business. Then even some overall general advice in terms of how they should leverage the cloud moving forward.

Russ Kennedy:
Sure. As you know, the cloud has evolved quite rapidly over the last decade or so. Many more services are now available as cloud services, where in the beginning, when Nasuni first came to market, really storage was the most available resource and service that cloud providers provided for their customers. But nowadays, you have tons of compute. You have tons of services around integration, around certainly data intelligence and analytics.

Those services are now ubiquitously available in cloud service providers. So, there's a lot of capabilities and choice that customers have out there. But one of the big things that we see when we engage with customers is really they need to understand which cloud provides them with the benefits that they need for their business, making sure that you evaluate all of the different services that you're going to use. Certainly, the data services like Nasuni offers inside one of the major cloud providers is one of the big decisions and choices that customers have to make.

But picking the right cloud vendor for your business needs, and ensuring that you also have flexibility if, for whatever reason, something doesn't go well and you need to move your data to another cloud, et cetera, you have that flexibility and choice in your decision. So, it's very important that customers make sure that they have that broad understanding of the capabilities, and then how to avoid being sort of locked into a specific cloud provider if necessary.

One of the other challenges that we run into quite extensively is what we call the fear of migration. One of the things that is hard for people that are stewards of data and managing data is really to go through the exercise of moving that data from one set of storage platforms to another set of storage platforms. Certainly when you're going to the cloud, that offers another set of challenges. Is my data secure? Is it protected? Can my neighbors see my data? Can my competitors see my data? All those challenges come up. So, one of the things that we encourage customers to do is to evaluate the capabilities of the vendor and the cloud provider that they're choosing to migrate their data seamlessly to the cloud and ensure that it's protected, ensure that there's security around the data, that you have access controls to make sure that only the people that have access to the data can see it and others can't.

So, that's really one of the biggest challenges we see, making sure that in the migration process you understand how data is going to be moved, how it's going to be secured, how it's going to protected, and to do that as seamlessly as possible, so your users don't even know that it's happening. One day the data is on a physical set of infrastructure in your datacenter, the next day it's in the cloud, and make that as seamless as possible for users. It's possible today, but you need to take that into consideration as you go forward.

David Linthicum:
What about the cost? Twenty twenty-two was kind of a comeuppance with lots of different surveys that I was looking at. People were very concerned about the cost of cloud versus—you know, the perception of what they thought it was going to be versus what it actually was. How do we figure out the cost trade-offs in picking cloud providers? Maybe some insider advice from you as a product officer. What advice would you give your neighbor, who is looking to pick a cloud and wants to spend the minimal amount of money and get the most value, which everybody does? But that seems to be the objective now.

Russ Kennedy:
Well certainly there's a set of upfront costs. I mean most cloud providers offer on their website what it's going to cost you to store a gigabyte of data over this period of time. You can factor that into your decision around cost, but one of the biggest challenges that we find is there's a set of unavailable or hidden costs that most customers get hit with, and that's some of the challenges that you were talking about in some of the reporting that's come out recently. Most of the hidden costs associated with cloud people don't realize are going to happen. Like if I access my data frequently, that's going to add cost to that data. If I use a particular service inside a cloud vendor, like say I want to use a backup service inside the cloud vendor, I want to use some sort of analytics service, that's going to cost more.

If I have infrastructure in the cloud in order to provide access to that data, that's also going potentially going to cost more. So, you need to look at the big picture when you're understanding a move to the cloud. And does it make business sense to move your data to the cloud because you can save overall on your costs? One of the things that Nasuni does, when we sit down with a customer, we show them all the costs that are going to be associated with the Nasuni deployment, all the Nasuni charges as well as all the infrastructure charges, as well as all the cloud charges, both upfront and hidden costs, so you can see the full total cost picture. Then we compare that with either what they're doing today or what they're looking at going to with another competitive solution, for example. We give them that side-by-side picture upfront.

We call that an economic business impact assessment. We give them that side-by-side picture upfront, so they see all the costs in black and white, and they can make the choice. Does it make sense from a business perspective for us to go in this direction because we're going to save this amount of money? Or it may make sense for us to look at something different. We are very upfront with that. We help our customers really understand those, especially those hidden costs, because sometimes those are the ones that bite you and those are the ones that I think are contributing to a lot of the negative press around cloud these days.

David Linthicum:
Now ransomware, one of the things that I notice when I do a postmortem on a ransomware attack, there is kind of a chain of custody. In other words, when it moves up into cloud-based systems or some of the on-premise-based systems, it's been passed off from system-to-system. So, what are some of the best practices in detecting ransomware? Where should we look to stop it?

Russ Kennedy:
Well, certainly one of the things that we talk to customers about, especially if you're in a cloud-based deployment, is you need to stop it at the edge. You need to detect ransomware as it enters your system. Typically that's at an edge location. It's either in a facility that you're managing, where you have users or applications accessing data. It may be from a home user that's accessing data over the wide-area network. Those kinds of things are edge situations, where you need to stop ransomware from infecting or impacting the data that you have. So, detection at the edge is really a key thing, and that's one of the key capabilities that Nasuni provides. Not only is detection important, but actually taking steps to mitigate the spread of the attack once it's detected.

Once you see an attack is happening, data is being changed or it's being exfiltrated or it's being encrypted, I need to stop that as quickly as possible so it doesn't spread across my entire data footprint. If you can stop it at the edge, you can prevent it from getting to the cloud or prevent it from getting to other locations where other users are accessing that data. That can reduce the overhead associated with recovery and can improve the speed associated with recovery, so you can get back to normal production.

Users can get back to productivity as quickly as possible. That's one of the key hidden costs about ransomware. Certainly, there's a fee typically associated with ransomware that the hackers are going to charge, but one of the big hidden costs associated with ransomware is how long does it take your organization to get back to full recovery. So, from a Nasuni perspective, we encourage our customers to use our technology to detect ransomware at the edge, mitigate it as quickly as possible, and then take advantage of some of our rapid ransomware recovery techniques to get your data restored to a known good point in time, so that your users can go back to normal operations and productivity as quickly as possible.

David Linthicum:
That's awesome. Ultimately, this is about preventing things and being proactive. There's too many times when you certainly see this in the paper where people haven't been proactive and they let this thing spread, and they have unprotected data that's not in some redundant state. In other words, they don't have a backup and they can't recover very quickly from it. Let's talk about paths to success for cloud in general. I'm looking to moving to cloud. I have some SaaS systems in place. I may have some in cloud in place, where different divisions in my company have made the relationship with their own credit cards, shadow IT. What are some of the best practices in moving into cloud, from your perspective as a product manager?

Russ Kennedy:
Certainly. Well, the first thing is to choose the right cloud partner, but maintain flexibility. Ensure that you have the ability to move or if you have use cases that let's say another cloud partner can provide better, let's say it may be a specific cloud provider for an industry application that you're using, maybe not a general cloud provider, but a specific cloud provider. So, you need that flexibility, but choosing the right partner is probably the first, most important thing that you have to do. Once you've done that, ensure that your cloud journey is going to meet your business objectives, not just your technical objectives.

By that I mean evaluate the total cost. Evaluate all the upfront costs as well as all the hidden costs. Make sure that your business is ready for that transition from a cost perspective, so that you can meet those business objectives and then the technology will follow along. You should plan for a transition. Make sure that you plan the steps to make it as smooth as possible for your users and your applications. One of the biggest challenges we see with customers if they don't plan for a transition to the cloud, their data gets moved and then let's say their applications aren't ready for that or their users aren't ready for

that, and the experience that they get from the cloud transition is negative. Therefore, even if the business requirements are met or the objectives are met, if the users don't have a good experience then they're not going to feel comfortable about your transition, and they're going to leverage that capability.

So, make sure that you plan that transition and make it as smooth as possible. Security and protection of your data is one of the biggest aspects that you need to plan as a data steward or an IT administrator. Make sure that your data is protected. Make sure that it's secure, that only the people that need to have access or should have access to your data have that access. So, you want to make sure that that umbrella is built around it. Then, as I said, if you want to start to take advantage of other capabilities that the cloud providers offer, let's say it's an AI use case or an ML use case or other analytic services, make sure that the cloud provider can offer those services to you, that you understand how to use those services, that you understand the costs associated with those services, so that you can take advantage of all the great things that the cloud providers offer and make sure that it meets your business requirements as well.

David Linthicum:
How do you see the rise of generative AI as it affects our data storage strategy in the cloud?

Russ Kennedy:
Well, it's really important. Again, one of the big things that you want to make sure that you look at when you're looking at generative AI solutions is that your data, the data that you're maintaining and that you're responsible for is protected, that it doesn't leak into these language models, so that others can get access to it. So, you want to leverage the capabilities that cloud providers offer and make sure that you protect that data and secure that data, so you get the answers that you need. You get the responses that you need from your data, but you're not exposing your data unnecessarily to other users or other inquiries, et cetera. So, I think that's one of the biggest things that you as an organizational steward can make sure that you keep track of, to protect your data from inadvertent access or inadvertent leaks.

David Linthicum:
How can enterprises manage data gravity and leverage it within the notion of the cloud? So, we're moving into cloud. How do they look at data gravity? How is it mitigated? What are some of the best practices that are arising right now?

Russ Kennedy:
Typically, what we say with customers is ensure that the data, the final resting place for your data, whether that's in a cloud provider, one of the bigger hyperscaler cloud providers or in a specialized regionalized cloud provider, is stored in the location that you need it to be stored in from a data governance perspective, from a regulations perspective, et cetera. Secondly, choose a solution that is hybrid in nature, so that access to the data is made available where the users and the applications need to access that data. So, from a gravity perspective, if you have access at a certain location, then the data can live there.

The access to that data can be made available and seamless from that location. The users can have a pleasant experience. They're not delayed by typical cloud latency and other things that could impact their experience with accessing data. So, from a gravity perspective, make sure that you provide access to the data. Even if it's living in the cloud and even if you've chosen a cloud region in some other part of the world because you need to for data governance purposes, make sure that the access to that data is localized, so that the users and the applications have the experience that they need in order to be able to do their job and perform the tasks that they need to perform.

David Linthicum:
Yeah, it's important. I think that enterprises probably don't manage data gravity issues as much as they should, how you deal with performance and how you deal with cost and where you store stuff. It's just something that really needs to be baked into the strategy, and in many instances it's not. So, where do you learn about cloud? Where do you go for your own information and updating yourself on current news and things like that? What are your sources?

Russ Kennedy:
There's a lot of sources out there. I typically look at all the different publications and research that's out there to learn about new things that are coming down the road. Again, in my job I've got to understand where the cloud providers are going with their capabilities, so that we can align our solutions to that direction and that strategy, and make sure that we're aligned with and in sync with where they're going. So, I look at a variety of different sources. Certainly, there are some that are more rich and thorough than others. Some are more headline-oriented. Some are more detail-oriented, depending on what you really want to understand.

You need to dive deep and do your research. Certainly there's a lot of sources available today, and as organizations look to move to the cloud, they need to really do their research, look at reviews, look at other experiences, understand from the vendor what they recommend as best practices and other things in order to be able to meet your specific requirements. So, I encourage people to look at all kinds of sources and cull that information down to a specific set of requirements and needs that are attuned to your business needs, so that you can make the right decision for your organization.

David Linthicum:
Yeah, and look to read between the lines, too. I think that, ultimately, we get a lot of information out here. We have to draw conclusions in terms of patterns that we see and things like that. So, don't always take one resource as a single source of truth. Even though single sources of truth are good in ID, in that aspect it's not. The ability to get a variety of different opinions and get to some deep thought leadership in terms of where this stuff is going and understand those opinions as well. So, where can we go for more information about your company and yourself?

Russ Kennedy:
You can visit Nasuni at www.Nasuni.com. There's a lot of information about…

David Linthicum:
Can you spell that?

Russ Kennedy:

Sorry. www.Nasuni.com, N-A-S-U-N-I. You can get a lot of information about our solution, our technology, some of the customers that have embraced our technology. You can get use cases and information about best practices and deployment, et cetera. You can find a little bit about me on the website as well. There's a bio page about our leadership and I'm included there. So, if you want to read about my experiences, I've been doing this for 30 years now and have seen a lot of transition in the data storage industry. Certainly, cloud is one of those big transition items. And now with AI and generative AI coming onboard and leveraging data in many new ways, that's going to be really exciting for how the world continues to do work going forward. I think this is a really interesting time to be in this industry and be in this transition, if you will.

But you can learn a lot about Nasuni is doing, what our customers are doing at our website. Certainly, as I said, look at other opinions out there. Look at other research out there. There's plenty of articles. There's plenty of documentation around what we do from others in the industry, from reporters and analysts, et cetera, that you can find more about what Nasuni is good at and what we can deliver for you as an organization, as you look to make a journey to the cloud.

David Linthicum:
I think you have an event coming up in October?

Russ Kennedy:
We do. We have the CloudBound event. It's scheduled in October, so look for announcements there. That's an industry event. It's virtual, so you don't have to travel anywhere, but you can get really good insights in how industry leaders are looking at cloud in general, and how they're looking at cloud as it relates to data and the transition of data into the cloud. So, I encourage you to attend that event if you can. Certainly look for the announcements and the details around that. They should start to come out in the next several weeks, but it's a really good place for you to learn about what's important in the cloud and how can I take advantage of the most important things for my business.

David Linthicum:
Yeah, and what's important about the messages provided in this podcast. This is about cloud data and the ability to manage it effectively. I think that's a huge part of why we're moving to and changing technology. I think enterprises need to really kind of have that on their radar screen. I know that AI stuff is coming up, but you've got to have the data to really manage the AI stuff. You've got explosions of different technologies and different trends, but ultimately it comes down to your ability and your expertise in protecting and managing your information, because it's everything really associated with your business in terms of value. So, if you enjoyed this podcast, make sure to like us, rate us, and subscribe. You can also check out our past episodes, including those hosted by my good friend, Mike Kavis. Find out more at DeloitteCloudPodcast.com, all one word. If you'd like to contact me directly, you can e-mail me at dlinthicum@deloitte.com. So, until next time, best of luck with your cloud journey. You guys stay safe. Cheers.

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