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For Cloud Professionals, part of the On Cloud Podcast

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Title:	**Closing the cloud-skills gap: build an in-house cloud learning center**
Description:	As cloud adoption grows, many companies find that one of the biggest obstacles to fully embracing the cloud is a lack of cloud-based skill sets within their organization. At Deloitte, the solution to building cloud-based competence in its workforce was to build the Deloitte Cloud Institute, which combines technical training with applied learning. In this episode of the podcast, David Linthicum and guests, Deloitte's Ranjit Bawa and Myke Miller, discuss the development of the Cloud Institute and how companies can build their own cloud learning centers to create a culture of learning that can close the digital skills gap and help them leverage the cloud's ability to transform their business.
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Operator:
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David Linthicum:
Welcome back to the On Cloud Podcast, your one place to find out how to make cloud computing work for your enterprise. This is an objective discussion with industry thought leaders who provide their own unique perspective around the pragmatic use of cloud-based technology.

So in a new survey, OpsRamp, a cloud management and monitoring technology company, found that 94 percent of organizations are having trouble finding and hiring the right cloud developers, multicloud operators, and DevOps/SREs, which is site reliability engineers, and professionals. And ultimately, in addition, 95 percent of the hiring managers report their digital skill gap is either somewhere near big, quite big, or huge – not much of a choice there. So enterprises are now dealing with not only how they're competing for the best talent, but also how in essence they're moving this stuff forward and their ability to find ways within the market to get the right skills they need to augment the existing staff, to make cloud computing work for them.

So recently many enterprises are turning to internal training over outside hiring. However, solving the problem at training at scale is still a challenge. In this podcast we're going to examine the development and deployment of a successful training program, something that a lot of the listeners have asked me for directly.

So today on the show we have two of our own, Ranjit Bawa and Myke Miller. As Deloitte Consulting LLP's US leader, Ranjit brings the perspective that some of the most powerful opportunities for disruption come when new technology solutions enable the transformation of core operational processes and financial models. It's a perspective sharpened over the course of nearly two decades spent designing solutions for some of the world's technological-centered enterprises including leading global financial institutions where technology is the foundation of the services delivery model. Myke Miller is the Dean of Deloitte's Cloud Institute, where we're going to talk about during this podcast. He enjoys helping clients leverage technology to solve real world problems. He has over 30 years of experience bringing new technology from the lab to highly-scaled solutions which impact client and industries. Myke has deep expertise in hybrid cloud and networking. His experience spans many industries including energy and resource management, airlines, financial services, to telcos, to cable providers, and he currently focuses on cloud and infrastructure. So, Ranjit and Myke, welcome to the show.

Ranjit Bawa:
Thanks, Dave. Thanks for having us. You know, I'm excited to be here today.

David Linthicum:
Yeah, and this is an interesting topic because this is one of the biggest obstacles that people typically don't talk about: the ability to find skills within their organization to really kind of move into the cloud. And if you look at why people are hindered to move to the cloud, the biggest barrier that they have is basically a skill shortage, the inability to find the people either inside or outside the company to kind of take things to the next level.

So we're looking at internal training or the ability to in essence run our own center of excellence training programs, you know, training automation systems, things like that to kind of bring the skills into the modern age of cloud computing. So, Myke, this is for you. You know, you started the institute, so how did you get started and what was really kind of the genesis of the whole thing?

Myke Miller:
Well, Dave, I think the genesis goes back to the fact that we were having challenges around getting the scale of integrated technology skills with the industry skills that our clients are looking for. We had a pretty big investment in ad-hoc training where people could go through the training on their own path and at their own speed, but the thing that we found is that people were really sort of struggling to get through all the certifications in the first pass. So they would then have to spend another three to six months going through and trying the second time to get the certifications. And we also found that the training wasn't consistent. So from one practitioner to the other, they were just having a different experience. So what we did is we stood up a curated program with five different pathways and three different levels of depth. And then what we're doing is we're driving cohorts through these curated paths to give both a hands-on experience, as well as leveraging all the e-learning capabilities that are out there and the content – the massive amount of content that's online. This includes hands-on labs, and case studies, and leveraging Deloitte's accelerators, as well as the technology providers' training environments. So we're seeing a pretty significant impact in taking a very structured and formal approach to how we drive – how we enable the workforce.

David Linthicum:
So, Ranjit, interesting question kind of based on Myke's response. Why is cloud learning important to Deloitte?

Ranjit Bawa:
So, Dave, as you know, right, as a firm we've always had a strong culture of learning and personal growth. People are our biggest asset, and unless we invest in them, we can't sort of continue to grow and drive the impact we want to drive. So that's always been the case. But now in the cloud space and in the modern delivery space, which again, as you know, the rate of change has been accelerating exponentially over the last several years now. And just keeping up with the rate of change of technology innovation, of products and services, is a challenge in itself. And then if you layer on top of that the ability of our clients across different industries and sectors to embrace and adopt that change, that isn't keeping pace with the rate of change itself. If you think of them as two lines in a graph, the rate of change is accelerating up, but the rate of adoption is not. It's kind of a slack line. It may even be tapering off as people get change fatigue.

I think our opportunity or what consulting firms, and Deloitte in particular, do really well is helping our clients bridge that gap. And whether we do that through sector depth and the application of technology to their specific business problems, or by looking at the problem very differently and reimagining it, I think is really critical in our clients' ability to be able to embrace and drive that change. And for all of that, we need adequate training for our teams to be keeping ahead of the change, but also more importantly, to be able to drive the concept of applied innovation that makes the most sense for our clients to solve their biggest problems. And that's really what this institute starts to do, is bridge that gap and be more deliberate about the courses and the pathways and how people can apply all those changes to real-life situations and use cases.

David Linthicum:
So, Myke, what makes the Cloud Institute unique unto itself? And what advice would you give to enterprises that are looking to stand up their own cloud training program?

Myke Miller:
It's a great question. There's a couple things that make it unique. The first is our blending of the deep technology expertise along with the industry expertise that Deloitte's traditionally known for. I think combining those things together into one prescriptive curriculum that's curated on a learning platform that includes AI, is pretty unique. We're driving content to the participants in a way that's interesting and compelling to them.

Another aspect that I think is fantastic about this is because we are running cohorts with mentors and sponsors. Through the Cloud Institute we are creating a community of learning and skills building that goes beyond those initial classes and really extends into, just as Ranjit described it, a culture of learning. So it's – all of those things together I think really give us a unique differentiator.

David Linthicum:

So, Ranjit, obviously this takes a tremendous amount of investment from the firm to get behind building something like this, ultimately. So what value did you think about or basically metrics that you had or objectives that you were looking to reach as you thought to really kind of cost justify building the Cloud Institute?

Ranjit Bawa:
You know, that's a great question, Dave, but let me look at this way, right? As we look at the next five or ten years, most of our clients are going to undergo a significant transformation as they leverage new tech, new operating models, new business concepts. And we could either be in the front-row seat helping them shape and drive that change and, in some sense, help reshape industries and sectors and be part of that history, or we could stand on the sidelines and support them as we would normally do through other programs. And we chose the path of leadership, and to be able to help shape and define some of those challenges and solve them, you needed to be at the cutting edge. That in itself, that was the biggest agreement, or the biggest philosophical agreement, that we all got to. After that, in terms of finding the right business case and establishing that was easy. You know, when we chose to be a leader in this space, we chose to do that through insight and true impact, and that's really what drove the whole concept of the Cloud Institute under the umbrella of the broader Deloitte University, which in any case is vitally central to our ethos.

David Linthicum:
When I hire people, I always look for the autodidacts, the ability to have a self-learning culture, the ability to understand that, even though I have a certification in terms of an instance of knowledge of a particular technology, that the journey to learning is going to be something that never ends. And ultimately I think the professional that's going to be most effective is someone that's able to learn on demand and make things – in essence understand the speed of need, how things are changing. So what accommodations have you made for the self-learner?

Myke Miller:
That's a really tough question, but I think one of the things that we've done is the aggregation of multiple different platforms, learning platforms are tied together in the learning management system. So as you go through different courses, it will identify areas of interest and it will drive additional content from multiple different platforms to you. And that could be from one of the cloud providers. It could be one of the big online learning platforms. It could be from one of the boutique platforms that we're just beginning to work with. And it can be Deloitte-specific content that we're developing because we see a gap in the marketplace. And again, for the self-learners that want to go on, this curated platform will drive that additional content to you as part of your day-to-day usage of the platform.

David Linthicum:
So, Ranjit, I'm going to put you a bit on the spot here. So we're going to get in the time machine and go forward five years. So what would be your most desirable impact of the Cloud Institute?

Ranjit Bawa:
I think our most desirable impact would be when we are pushing new boundaries, not only for our individual clients, but across sectors and across industries, right? So part of the Cloud Institute and as we start to merge the Cloud Institute with some of our more sector-focused learning programs, we want to be able to be at the forefront of the health-plus-wealth conversation, or we want to go drive the next retirement platforms that not only backs the insurance firms but also banks, et cetera, and drives to a completely different cost-income ratio for those, or be able to go drive climate change and the industries that matter the most and be at the forefront of how technology can be better leveraged for those kinds of outcomes. And I think the Cloud Institute prepares us for those conversations and to be able to materially, not just refine the vision and the strategy, but actually go implement and drive impact all the way through. So I certainly think in five years we'll be well positioned across a number of industries to be creating that impact and making that mark.

David Linthicum:
So, Myke, how long did it take for you to build the Cloud Institute and where are you located and what are the details behind it?

Myke Miller:
So it took us about nine months to stand up the Cloud Institute. So far about 2,000 practitioners have gone through the training, and we're really targeting to get around 10,000 people through the training in the next year and a half. So we're scaling it pretty quickly. You know, in terms of where is it, it's everywhere because the way the cohorts run is they are run remotely for the first six weeks, then we bring the cohort together, either at Deloitte University, or in one of our offices, for a week of hands-on learning and collaboration with the rest of their team. And then there's another six weeks of remote learning followed by a capstone project where we bring people together to problem solve again in a hands-on nature. So it's very virtual and we are going to continue delivering that model as we grow.

David Linthicum:
So, Ranjit, what advice would you give to an enterprise executive who's trying to drum up the funding for some sort of a learning center dealing with cloud computing or other technology? What are some of the processes they have to go through?

Ranjit Bawa:
You know, when they're thinking about the overall business case, they really need to think about where the puck is going and to be able to, yes, take advantage of the change that's coming and the change that's already here – it's just not evenly distributed – they do need to rethink their work strategy and their future of work strategy. And to that end the business case is there now to retrain, repivot existing teams and groups within their technology organization.

The second thing I would think about really is, you know, how do you incubate or catalyze the Cloud Institute, right? Do you take a bunch of folks there and get into a train-the-trainer model, or do you get some external help? I think usually it's a combination of both. You know, for certainly leverage external expertise to get us going, but now we've got very much a train-the-trainer kind of model, which not only helps spread the training out faster, but it also gives people opportunities to train other people and there's no better way to learn than to be a teacher as well. So that I think certainly works well and I'm excited to see that continue to expand.

And then thirdly, I think the point Myke mentioned, the right dose of practical training and then going back to the program and then rotating through projects and real-life use cases is pretty critical. And, you know, the one thing we're all starting to get our arms around is we're really focused on learning to learn, and the institute isn't a once and done thing. We expect throughout our careers we're going to continue to go back to the institute like we go back to Deloitte University to stay refreshed and stay ahead of our game. So I think, you know, similarly executives shouldn't think of this as a once and done program, but really look at opportunities to continue to drive their teams through this continuously in the interest of self-development and growth.

David Linthicum:
So, Myke, this is the last question, by the way, so don't mess it up. What was the one lesson learned as you built the institute that you didn't know when you started the journey?

Myke Miller:
So I think when we started the journey, I think we assumed that we would have people flocking to the doors. And it's taken a little bit of work on our part to help people understand the advantages of this. And Deloitte's got a unique problem. We have to take people out of market in order to get them through these training programs. And I think that barrier was something that I didn't anticipate as we were getting ready to launch the Cloud Institute. We're now over that barrier. We figured out how to address that, and we're now in a situation where we have people knocking on our door asking for almost continuous iterations of these courses and multiple courses in multiple geographies. So I think that was the biggest barrier I can think of. I'm sure Ranjit's got others that he would toss in the mix.

David Linthicum:
Well, we're going to leave it there, man. That's a very candid discussion, what it takes to build a cloud learning center within an organization and ultimately the challenges that you need to go through. But there really is no other choice. I think you have to build a learning environment, a learning culture, and a continuous learner within these organizations in order to take your organization to the cloud, or any technology for that matter. So if you enjoyed this podcast, make sure to like and subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. Also check out our past episodes including the On Cloud Podcast hosted by Myke Kavis on his show, Architecting the Cloud. And if you'd like to learn more about Deloitte's cloud capabilities, check out DeloitteCloudPodcast.com, and if you'd like to contact me directly you can reach me at DLinthicum@Deloitte.com. So until next time, best of luck in your cloud projects. We'll talk again real soon. Take good care.

Operator:
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