

Yes, there is this cloud thing

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When [Microsoft Azure became generally available a decade ago](#), few fully realized it would become the most credible enterprise cloud platform worldwide. In the book, [Hit Refresh, by Microsoft's CEO Satya Nadella](#), he talks about those early days when the organization was deeply divided over the importance of the cloud business.

According to Nadella, there was constant tension between diverging forces, particularly at a time when the servers and the tools business at the peak of commercial success and yet, they were missing out on the future. On the one hand, the division's leaders would say, "Yes, we should incubate the cloud business. But on the other hand, remember, we've got to focus on our server business."

Microsoft made the right choice

Microsoft leadership decided to move more aggressively to the cloud and on February 1, 2010, the company released Microsoft Azure to the public. Azure is an ever-expanding set of

cloud services to help organizations meet their business challenges.

Looking back no one could have accurately predicted the massive move to remote working and growth in cloud usage and a pandemic that would impact the world. Fast forward 10 years and Microsoft reported cloud usage continues to grow and expand worldwide.

In fact, [Microsoft's overall commercial cloud business](#) – which includes the Azure cloud computing platform Office 365 and other cloud services – reached \$13.3 billion in sales for third quarter, up 39% year over year.

Greatest lesson learned

As the Azure community and partner ecosystem celebrates its anniversary, one of the greatest lessons I've learned is that the best way to help our clients compete and be market leaders is to help them anticipate and act on external opportunities before they become obvious.

After the first wave of digitization, where the focus was primarily on data storage, access options and communication, the key technological component now is data and artificial intelligence (AI), which naturally benefits from the enormous data volumes and immediate availability and processing capabilities in the cloud.

Realizing the full value of AI

The power of data and AI has yet to be fully realized and that's true with Azure as well. Organizations are just beginning to comprehend how to use and scale AI to drive the greatest business value throughout the enterprise.

Avanade recently published a [global AI Maturity research](#) study highlighting organizational progress in the adoption of artificial intelligence. The research findings showed that out of 1,700 respondents across roles, industries, geographies and company size, most organizations are early in their progress to AI adoption, with 7% falling into level 1 (Avid Learner) and 64% falling into level 2 (Go Getter). Only 28% were at level 3 (Busy Builder) and just 1% were at level 4 (High-Flier, the most mature).

While many organizations are still early in their AI journey, I believe we're at an inflection

point. It's the start of a decade where the cloud and digital technology are now expected to be embedded in every aspect of companies, governments, and society.

Recognized as a leading Microsoft innovator

Avanade recognized the power of the cloud early on and we invested in establishing the technical talent, business acumen and industry expertise to bring our clients advances in data modernization, artificial intelligence, advanced analytics, robotic process automation and automated digital solutions.

Today we have the largest community of Microsoft experts in the world (outside of Microsoft itself), and more than 24,000 Microsoft certifications. In 2020, [Accenture and Avanade won the prestigious Global Alliance and SI Partner for the 15th time](#) and several other awards including Global AI and Machine Learning Partner of the Year.

Yes, we've won countless awards for our unrivaled technical expertise on the Microsoft platform and for the innovative thinking that goes into our work. Why is this important? For our clients, it means we can simplify their journeys to the cloud and boost the value of their investments in AI.

Preparing clients for the future

With today's worldwide events, we are committed to helping our clients get some relief from the urgency of today and help them wisely invest in the full power of the cloud and AI to help them be ready for whatever comes next. That's why I'm so glad to be celebrating Microsoft Azure's 10th anniversary.

I'm looking forward to the next decade with confidence, knowing that the decisions we make today will help our clients be more resilient, grow their business and emerge stronger in the future.

[*Learn more about becoming AI driven and reaching your AI maturity potential.*](#)