

# **Weekly Review**

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## **In this issue:**

- **Cloud Foundry and the Rising Tide**  
By Charles King, Pund-IT, Inc.

Pund-IT, Inc.  
Hayward, CA  
U.S.A. 94541

Contact:  
Office: 510-383-6767  
Mobile: 510-909-0750  
[charles@pund-it.com](mailto:charles@pund-it.com)  
[www.pund-it.com](http://www.pund-it.com)



# Cloud Foundry and the Rising Tide

By Charles King, Pund-IT, Inc.

When U.S. President John F. Kennedy famously said, “A rising tide lifts all boats”, he was referring to a common economic aphorism that reflects the general benefits of a buoyant economy. But we believe the notion extends much further. An idea or broadly applied concept, for example, sometimes inspires enough attention, energy and activity to generate a tidal flow that lifts the fortunes of all its supporters.

We see evidence of this dynamic in the growing momentum around Cloud Foundry and its original creator/sponsor, Pivotal. For those unfamiliar, Cloud Foundry began as a project at VMware when then-CEO, Paul Maritz, recruited Marc Lucovsky, who previously worked at Google (where he was Technical Director for the Ajax Search API) and Microsoft (where he helped develop the APIs for Windows NT).

Over the course of the next eighteen months, Lucovsky’s team, which also included Google AJAX alums, Derek Collison and Vadim Spivak, developed Cloud Foundry, an open source framework for cloud-independent Platform as a Service (PaaS) environments. In short, Cloud Foundry enables software developers to create web applications that can be easily deployed and rapidly scaled without regard to the underlying hardware or support infrastructure. As Maritz eloquently stated, “If cloud is the new hardware, we want to be the new operating system.”

In April 2011, VMware announced the availability of Cloud Foundry as a (PaaS) project and “Micro Cloud” PaaS solution. Then, in April of this year, VMware and EMC announced the formation of Pivotal, an independent company that contains employees and assets from both companies, including EMC’s Greenplum and Pivotal Labs organizations, and VMware’s vFabric (including Spring and Gemfire), Cloud Foundry and Cetas organizations. Paul Maritz is Pivotal’s CEO.

## Open Source—The Power of Collaboration

Open Source doesn’t have the revolutionary imprimatur it did in the late 90s when Linux was successfully making its way into corporate data centers. That may simply be because in the years since then, open source solutions and methodologies have become a common-as-dirt part of the enterprise IT landscape. So it’s easy to forget that Linux’s advance was a surprise for many IT traditionalists who were used to the primacy of proprietary development environments and platforms.

What moved Linux and, by extension, open source, decisively forward was the support of Tier 1 enterprise vendors, including IBM, HP and others. They agreed to actively collaborate in open source activities and communities and have made many significant contributions since then. But their involvement also lent a kind of blue ribbon legitimacy to projects and



open development methodologies that some in the industry considered implausible, at best.

We believe Cloud Foundry is generating energy and momentum similar to those early open source efforts but with a couple of key differences. First, Cloud Foundry is drawing interest from a far deeper and wider collaborative community. Yes, traditional system vendors, including Dell, and open source software players like Uhuru, are active in Cloud Foundry. But so are major cloud players and service providers, including Baidu, HP Cloud Hosting, NT, Rackspace Hosting, Rakuten and Tier3.

That reflects the broad interest in and practical applicability of Maritz's concept of a "new operating system" for cloud infrastructures that contrasts significantly with traditionally-bound OSs. But that leads to our second point—that momentum around Cloud Foundry continues to accelerate and grow. In just the past few weeks, two more major players have signed on to support the technology and community—IBM and Savvis—both of which are important but in distinctly different ways.

For IBM, Cloud Foundry has obvious commercial connotations—the company, after all, has over 9,000 cloud customers. But IBM is also actively involved in numerous other open source and open standards efforts, and Cloud Foundry represents a next step in those efforts and strategy. In fact, Daniel Sabbah, GM of IBM's Next Generation Platforms, stated, "IBM will incorporate Cloud Foundry into its open cloud architecture, and put its full support behind Cloud Foundry as an open and collaborative platform for cloud application development, as it has done historically for key technologies such as Linux and OpenStack."

Savvis, the most recent addition to the community, has aligned commercial interests with Cloud Foundry. Savvis' parent company, CenturyLink, is the third largest telephone service provider in the U.S. and also owns the Prism and DirecTV brands. CenturyLink recently added its AppFog PaaS assets to the Savvis cloud portfolio, and the company intends to closely align its AppFog developer community with Cloud Foundry.

Finally, both IBM and Savvis are joining the newly-formed Cloud Foundry Advisory Committee with Pivotal which will collaborate on further development of the platform and work towards establishing an open governance model. That is likely to help validate PaaS as a solution category for enterprises and SPs to consider. But if the Committee achieves what its members hope, CIOs should soon be asking what their organizations' PaaS strategy is and what role Cloud Foundry and other open source solutions will play in it.

## **Final Analysis**

These events lead to a pair of logical conclusions. First and foremost, that Pivotal's efforts around developing and promoting Cloud Foundry as a cloud-independent operating system are striking a chord with a widening variety of organizations. This certainly involves enterprise vendors and service providers, like IBM and Savvis, but also extends to Web 2.0 play-



ers like Baidu. In other words, Cloud Foundry is anything but a one trick pony today and, over time, we expect it will find ever wider applications and success.

In addition, Cloud Foundry's market momentum suggests that cloud computing may also be fundamentally altering the role of open source and open standards. Rather than offering alternatives to often overblown packaged software, open technologies could hold the key for organizations to fully leverage the disparate platforms and tools that make up the vast majority of IT infrastructures. While energy and enthusiasm are figuratively buoying the Cloud Foundry community today, the absence of it and other open source and standards efforts could literally sink hopes for the future of the cloud.

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