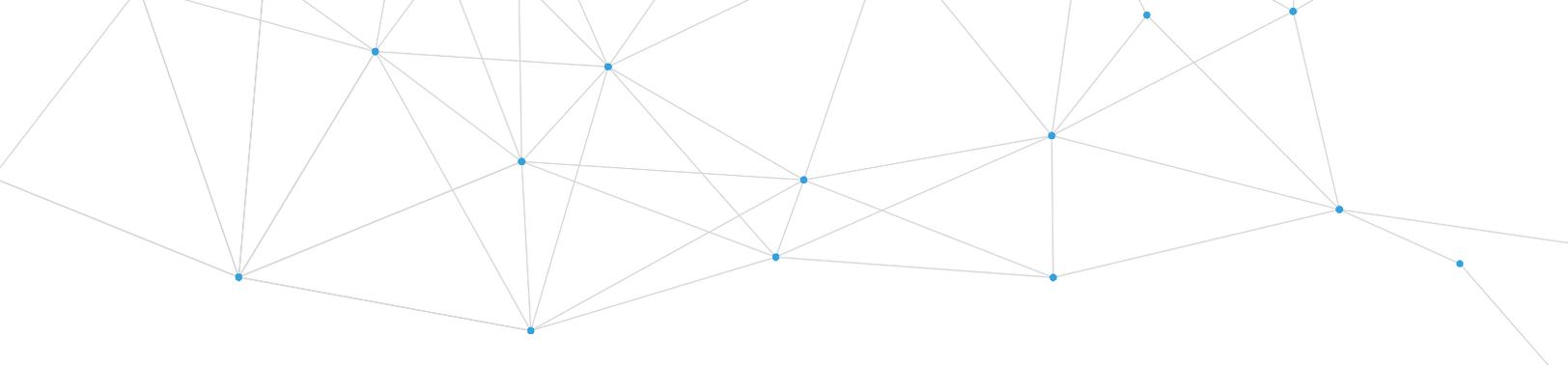# 2021 Cloud Predictions
"Unmasked"

BY EMIL SAYEGH | NTIRETY PRESIDENT & CEO

As I work with folks across the country in the wake of this ongoing global pandemic, I get to witness real-time business challenges and emerging opportunities throughout the land. Even after all the time spent in this industry, this moment is not unlike the things that history has shown us. It is consistently striking how the relationship between cloud computing and world events continuously intersect - one event or opportunity interchangeably driving the other, changing the world or stepping up to challenges. Cloud technologies are among the hidden channels behind culture, health, and experiences that define and affect the world we live in today. The future of cloud technologies is therefore essential to understanding where we go from here, how we rise to occasions, and how we evolve technology that suits our needs.

In 2020, we witnessed how cloud-borne conferencing helped businesses and classrooms sustain operations and how web technologies help carry businesses when storefronts had to shutter. The next year for the cloud will be defined by increased needs for flexibility, to be able to intelligently react to opportunities and ideas as well as challenges. The cloud industry delivered when it was needed most, but the stage is set for further maturation and development in a landscape of consumer and business environments forever changed.

Here is what you can expect to see in 2021.

Prediction 1

An Office Evolved

Straight out of the gate, the obvious thing on everyone's mind is the office work scenario. It is time to recognize that there are some co-workers you might not see in the office again (or meet in person in the first place). However, at some point the office will evolve and reintegrate into a case-based hybrid model.

There is no substitute for in-person interactions in certain situations, such as brainstorming sessions, on boarding new employees, or call center operations.

Businesses will still be learning how to navigate this hybrid work scenario for months to come. Among the challenges that are still in the works is the handling of data. Across a variety of endpoints and remote work locations, securing data, access by design, compliance audit capabilities, and privacy issues represent just some of the issues that many organizations never had to consider before. Many will continue to wrestle with these issues while others benefit from around-the-clock hybridized managed security services to help build, track, and monitor where and when a company's data is being accessed.

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Prediction 2

Existential Cybersecurity and Compliance Issues Force Their Way into the Board Room

In one survey, 66% of technology executives ranked data loss as their biggest concern. Data privacy and confidentiality ranked a close second, followed by the accidental exposure of credentials. Conversely, survey results found that the adoption of new security tools ranks low.

While concerns are high, the non-action by executives will only continue to fuel cybercriminals rendering it an existential threat to business continuity. Cybercriminals are akin to the pirates and highway robbers of yesteryears, impeding commerce. Cybersecurity will continue to rise in prominence, and company boards will get more active in demanding compliant security postures from their C-levels.
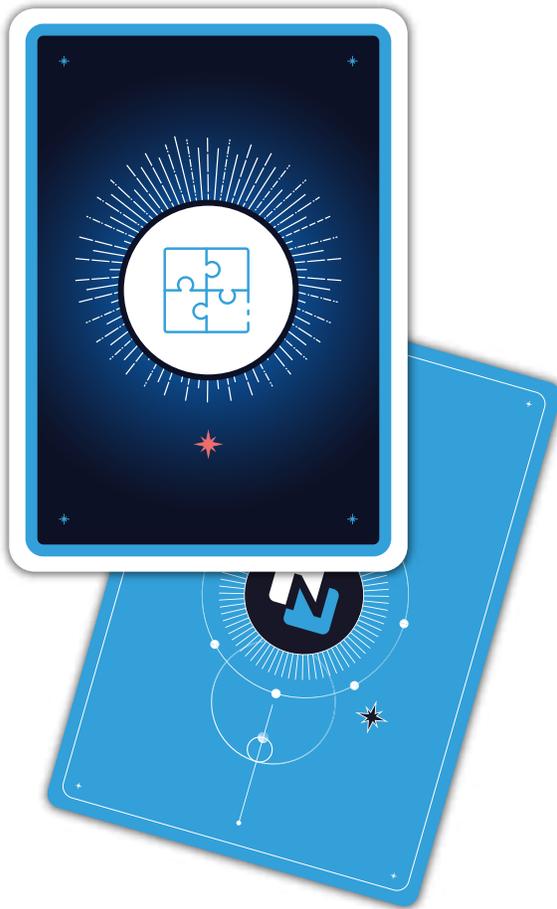
It seems that the cybersecurity drum is beat year after year, but 2021 is the year that may finally crack the psyche of companies across the land. With so many employees, students, and individuals working remotely, the opportunity for security chaos is feverishly high.
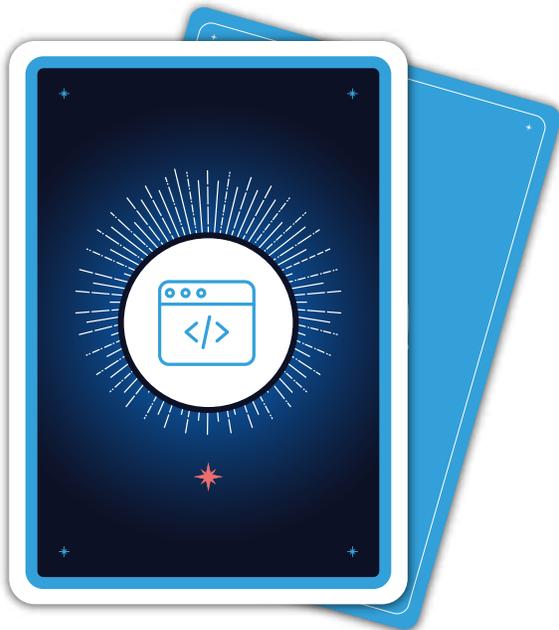
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Prediction 3

Big Tech Breakups

Breakups attract so much more attention when they are perceived to be sudden or unexpected. Those that have witnessed this industry however have seen this movie before. Under increased scrutiny, the feelings of invincibility of Google, Amazon, Facebook, Twitter, and others will quickly become a cry for forgiveness. Big names are going to change, along with some consolidation along the way, but the big focus will shift from just big-tech censorship to the anti-competitive nature of tech giants where highly competent startups get rolled up or bought, only to be shelved and dismantled.

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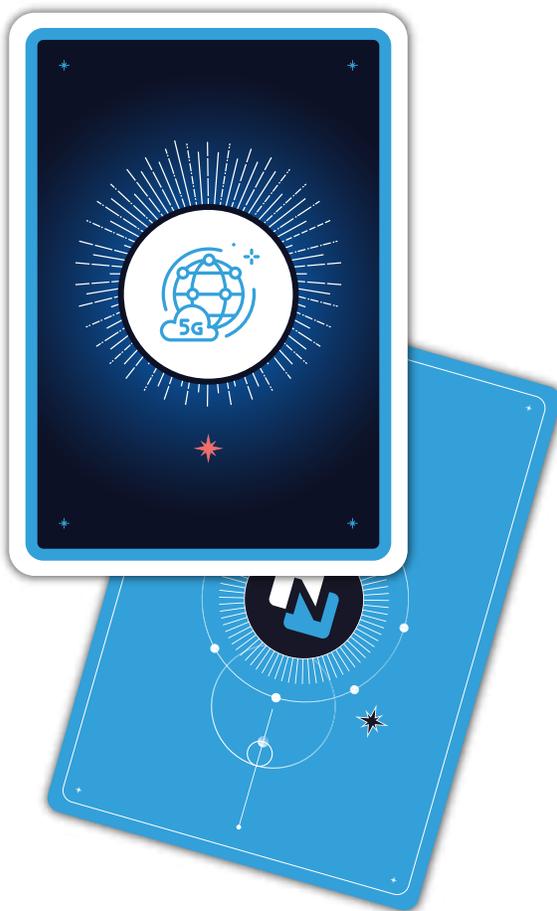
Prediction 4

Code, Code, Code

The cloud continues to move towards a code-first open network architecture as the traditional solution stack fades into the background. 2021 is the year where infrastructure-as-Code becomes the big difference maker. You are probably familiar terms such as DevOps, CloudOps, and countless other code-focused principles. Ultimately, the match between these practices and your ultimate cloud experience varies by no shortage of factors, including the capability of your organization, the evolutionary pace of your core applications, security factors, analytics, the need for compliance, and more.

Do not sleep on code; don't even blink because the dawn of infrastructure code and managed services combined are only now hitting the industry and its challenges. More software than ever is being pushed right now and the pressure to accelerate these efforts has only increased due to Covid-19 conditions. Code and infrastructure-as-Code are helping CIOs reimagine the bottom line in a world where automation is everything and collaboration is critical to continuously improving environments, business results and the user experience.

Prediction 5

Edge and 5G Displacing Some Wi-Fi

The world changed in 2020, and we now have implications of remote work to deal with, along with an expansive future of opportunities. More people are moving out of cities while 5G is beginning to hit an early stride. Pair that with Edge computing and things are ripe for something amazing.

It is early in the game, but there is a real possibility that in specific corporate scenarios, 5G will replace Wi-Fi. Corporate connections over privately deployed 5G means continuous connection as well as simplified and improved security. Company-owned endpoints can be more secure, redefining Internet of Things (IoT) devices and pushing the computing edge further into new realms. Considering the amount of remote offices and facilities that consume bare internet services, once affordable and made available, the 5G-connected private web will begin a wave of internet subscription disruptions in markets across the country.

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Prediction 6

CIO^2

there is no stopping this critical shift. Enterprise goals and achievements are contingent on the success of modern technologies.

These modern technological needs feature an intense focus on user and employee experiences, profitability, and 24x7x365 availability that depend on rapid, flexible technologies in addition to well-run operations. The CIO leads this charge with innovation as the technological heart that drives everything forward.

Remote work, IoT and AI systems, rapid application development, and global capabilities are just a few of the difference-making journeys that CIOs must embark on. The untapped capabilities for the average organization are essentially limitless. With innovation and proven cloud technologies powering enterprise sails, a lone CIO can be the catalyst that raises the bar across business units and delivers transformative value to the organization.

The Chief Information Officer will further move forward from day-to-day operations to picking up innovation, becoming de facto Chief Innovation Officer formally or informally. With each passing year, the role of CIOs become increasingly important to the core operations of a company. With everything that has happened this last year, technology is more critical today than ever and as we roll into the future,

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Prediction 7

Better Hybrid Means Better Prepared

If the past year showed us anything it is that **"expect the unexpected"** is perhaps the most important prediction you should follow. Whether we are talking about disaster recovery, rapid response and technology iterations, remote work, or compliant security, the best way to incorporate an all-points foundation is to strategize technology and business processes around a cloud foundation.

Organizations continue to perfect their clouds this year. At this juncture, advanced companies have the capability to design around cost, while leveraging disaster recovery needs, enhanced security, as well as a complete spectrum of features across their digital environments.

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Prediction 8

Talent Shortages But Talent Grooming Will Fill the Gap

The pains of operations with a stressed, overworked, and difficult to find workforce will begin to make headway in a continued tough situation. Global business, industry needs, security issues, and various factors create increased opportunities and complexities to master. These gaps will be filled through groomed talent in a process known as "upskilling."

Already, there is a wealth of technological training materials available online for free or at an extremely affordable price. With so much of our work scenarios in a hybrid or completely remote state, look for continued career growth opportunities that are made possible through remote learning and training.

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Prepare for
Anything

It is an exciting time to work in the cloud technology field. Cloud computing is well established as an enterprise platform, but in the face of a changing landscape, escalating threats and uncertainties, organizations are now seeing how cloud is enabling changes and opening up opportunities to do things better than ever before.

We will be here, and we will see you next year.