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View from the airport: AWS Re:Invent 2019



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Opinion

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Multi-cloud and JEDI kicked into touch as machine learning and American Football take centre stage

Gather round kids, because AWS Re:Invent is over for another year and this is now a safe space to talk about all those subjects that were off-limits during the cloud conference.

Namely [multi-cloud](#) and [project JEDI](#).

Having safely left Las Vegas via McCarran International Airport, I feel I can finally discuss these hot topics. I can say what I want about [Microsoft winning the Pentagon's \\$10 billion cloud migration project](#) (AWS is appealing that) and also anything about the term for using services from more than one cloud provider.

The [multi-cloud discourse](#) had no place at Re:Invent. It was definitely not mentioned by any AWS executives. But it's so hot right now that it almost burns Amazon because it refuses to acknowledge it.

The very word is banned if recent [reports](#) are true. Back in August, the cloud giant released a "co-branding" guide for partners that said it would not approve the term "multi-cloud" or "any other language that implies designing or supporting [more than one cloud provider](#)".

Unfortunately for AWS, that word was brought up in various briefings I attended throughout the event. Such as at the end of a Sophos security roundtable, where journalists were invited to ask questions and clearly took pleasure in asking

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difficult questions like "what's your beef with multi-cloud?" and "how much did it suck to lose out to Microsoft?"

Ouch.

Many companies have gone 'all-in' on AWS, but many more have merely added a single services or integrated certain products to offer their customers – regardless of their cloud provider(s). This is the case for Sophos, which had to confess to offering [cloud security to multi-cloud environments](#).

It was a strange end to an otherwise brilliant session. Sophos is a great company with a broad range of security expertise, but with AWS trying to quash talk of multi-cloud, it forces partners to tackle the difficult question.

"Our products do - sorry to my AWS brothers - support multiple clouds..." Sophos director Andy Miller said while the room collectively cringed. "We work in [AWS](#) and [Azure](#) and [Google](#)."

The Seattle Seahawks, which has integrated AWS machine learning algorithms into various parts of its organisation, found itself in the same position. From player performance to business processes, the technology will run throughout the NFL franchise over the next five years. But as its tech lead, Chip Suttles, told me, it also uses [Office 365](#) and [Azure](#).

Similarly, when I asked the platform team lead of Monzo, Chris Evans, why his company uses AWS, he told me it was partly due to Amazon having the technology they needed at the time. If it started now, they could use Azure, Google Cloud and so on... he even used that dirty word 'multi-cloud'. Evans and co are more than happy with what AWS gives them and it's also a large part of the [fintech](#) company's success, but nothing suggests that wouldn't be the same with different providers.

[AWS may be the biggest provider of cloud computing](#), but its massive lead on its rivals is due to it being the first to capitalise when it was an emerging technology. The big trend within that technology now is using multiple providers and AWS is strangely taking a legacy-like approach. It wants you and your company to use it exclusively, but no matter how many great tools and functions you provide you can't please everyone. In the world of multi-cloud, AWS is fighting a losing battle.

On Wednesday, Andy Jassy was pencilled in for a Q and A session. Journalists were asked to submit questions beforehand, presumably to vet them, and the word on the street (or strip) was that JEDI questions had been sent in. With an active litigation underway, Jassy couldn't say too much beyond repeating previous statements about the bidding process, but he did throw some shade at Microsoft.

"If you can do a truly objective and detailed apples for apples comparison of the two platforms... most of our customers tell us we're a couple of years ahead in functionality and maturity," he said.

He rounded it off with further suggestions of political interference before kicking the subject into touch and getting back to talking football with NFL representatives.

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