In Conversation

## In Conversation with Justin Augat and Sam Woodcock

Carol Baker

iland is well known in the industry for Disaster Recovery (DR), its award-winning Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), cloud back-up services, and now Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS). We talk to iland's Vice President of Product Marketing, Justin Augat (JA), and Senior Director, Cloud Strategy & Enablement at iland, Sam Woodcock (SW) to find out what's next on the agenda.

Justin Augat, *Vice President of Product Marketing at iland (https://www.iland.com/), is a seasoned technology marketing leader focused on enterprise IT and services GTM. He is experienced in developing and leading teams, establishing GTM process, and driving business strategy for traditional IT and emerging solutions.*

He has a diverse work experience including IT engineering, management, and marketing at global conglomerates such as Dell, EMC, and Hitachi, and industry experience in financial services (sales/account management) at Credit Suisse and Silicon Valley Bank.

Justin received a BS in computer science and mathematics and earned a MS in Finance and an MBA from Boston College.
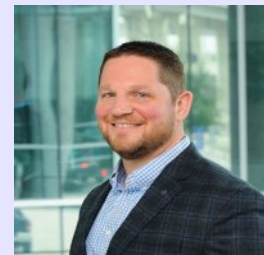
Sam Woodcock, *Senior Director, Cloud Strategy & Enablement at iland (https://www.iland.com/) and has a vast experience in virtualization technology and customer implementations, he understands the needs of IT professionals and their businesses and how to create solutions that meet their requirements.*

During his career at iland, Sam has worked across many teams including support, product development, engineering and deployment to ensure that the input of customers is reflected in the products and services of the company – and that customers have the best possible cloud experience.

Q.   Give us an overview of iland.

A – JA.   We have been in business now for at least 25 years – pretty impressive when you consider what the amount of companies which have come and gone in the sector – but the last 12 years we have mainly been focusing on data protection in the cloud, particularly in the areas of DR, and DRaaS.

Owing and operating our own data centres means that we can run own enterprise graded VMWare based platforms with HPE storage, and have spent quite a bit of time and effort in our strategy in partnering up closely with the likes of VMWare, Veeam and Cisco, to name just a few.

But in the last couple of years, we have started to evolve beyond just back-up disaster recovery, and have moved further into application cloud hosting which now makes up the lion share of our revenue. So we have pivoted quite a bit – at least from a revenue perspective.

From a scope and focus perspective, we are still pretty much known for data protection and disaster recovery, but now we have another parallel thread of application hosting which is particularly appealing to our customers as they move their VMWare workloads to the cloud.

Today, we have a very robust portfolio of services to offer customers, and we have focused on working with partners and our customers to build an ecosystem around how we serve these partners.

If you look at some of the hyper scalers Amazon, Azure etc. they only tend to provide the infrastructure and services. At iland we have gone far beyond that and have built-out a very comprehensive services portfolio to do the planning, onboarding, migration, and deployment of applications both for production and disaster recovery. Then on the back-end of this, we have developed disaster recovery as a service.

For VMWare customers which are looking to move workflow application to the cloud either for protection or hosting, we are making their journeys to the cloud extremely simple and easy, and reducing many of the roadblocks which customers normally face as they go from on-premise to the cloud.

Q.   **Are you seeing a fast adoption of companies for DRaaS?**

A – JA.   We have seen a fast adoption for DRaaS. If we look at the Four Vs around data – volume, variety, velocity, and veracity – we must also now look at the value of data.

It is becoming much more important to customers to ensure that they have got their businesses online; that they don't lose any data; and that any downtime is short, and DR is becoming a logical choice.

But for years, DR was always been something that customers overlook. This meant that they were either doing it in a less efficient way, or if they were using the back-end of their data centre, and they are not creating that risk reduction environment where they are putting to a data centre proximity that is well protected geographically.

As natural disasters in the world continue to increase, companies which have put together DR plans in the cloud are the ones who are able to quickly switch to a different geographical location that is not being impacted by the local disaster event taking place.

In the last two or three years, cybersecurity and the need to provide an environment that mimics the protection environment so that companies can test that their cyber defence strategies are working have become paramount. Then in the event of a DR or downtime event in security or breach of some kind, then a proper DR solution can provide immediate defence.

A – SW. We have certainly seen a rise in cybercrime incidents such as ransomware attacks in different regions across the world, but these are a common occurrence globally. DR is not just about covering the next cyber breach. It is also about providing cover for power failures, explosions, natural disasters, and in some cases, even wars. Add to that the reputational risk, or the prospect of loss of revenue – and it is clear to see why DR has moved to the top of the corporate agenda.

DRaaS takes a different approach and is a totally different platform where we have vulnerability scanning, and security scanning within our environment. We are often asked how long it is going to take, and whether the scanning has been successful. At the same time, the actual systems are being security scanned, clients can see in an unintrusive manner whether their actual systems are hardened against attacks, and take proactive approaches to mitigate against attacks. This allows customers to test before running it out across their systems. So, DRaaS becomes even more useful as a solution.

I would also add that there are a wide range of backup services. In our opinion, a good level of approach is to have a multi-layered approach. Yes, have a great SaaS solution, but you also need a good local backup solution so that if something is able to impact the technology of one service, you also have multiply routes to get to a solution back in place.

When it comes to Office 365 one of our market observations is that organizations who move towards Office 365 for their storage, and for their SharePoint systems think that because it is in the cloud it will be automatically backed up and protected from disasters.

In reality, this is not the case. What we find is that in SaaS based solutions like Office 365 the solutions provider is providing the infrastructure and the service, but the user, the organization who is actually consuming those services are responsible for backing it up. We spend a great deal of time from an operational perspective letting customers know which areas they need to look at protecting and which systems.

Office 365 users can consume the service, and then rely on a provider such as iland to ensure that all of their data is securely backed up, as well as give them a way to bring that data back should the worst case scenario happen.

A – JA.   iland lives in a multi-site cloud, and companies are now being pressurised to go beyond cloud first and shut down the data centre. But they need to find a new home for those existing system mission critical applications which have been customized and built-up over the years. This is where iland has really gained traction.

But moving a physical workload that is rooted within a company that has dependence on performance, resources and has an expected cost structure associated with it, and moving it to the cloud, is a lot harder when you don't have a strong VMWare based cluster on side – but we provide that.

We have been helping customers take those workloads – they are virtualized but our point is that they are not going to be imported to the cloud, or redeveloped in the cloud – but instead are going to be ported over the cloud through our migration service to our VMWare based infrastructure in the cloud.

We have developed a free tool call Catalyst (https://www.iland.com/iland-catalyst/) which is a major market differentiator that addresses the complexities of cloud sizing and cost forecasting and helps companies to accurately model application performance and capacity requirements, removing the guesswork of right-sizing their cloud environment before they begin. Over-provision your cloud environments, and you risk paying more for resources that you don't need. Under-provision your cloud solution and you risk impacting your application performance.

A – SW.   So with CTOs and CFOs pushing organizations to get out of the data centre business and move to the cloud, Catalyst is able to assist both the top level management in an organization, as well as the technical guys working behind the scenes to get this done and achieved, and provide solutions to answers around that strategy.

One of the aims of Catalyst is to provide the customer with a very detailed, very quick assessment of whether their systems are going to be practical in a cloud environment regardless of the requirement they are looking for.

Once the organization has moved to the cloud, obviously from a technical perspective that need is increasingly important as they move their systems into a different place, maybe outside of the corporate offices, having great connectivity is essential.
Cloud services needs to provide a great solution so assessing that within the design stage allows us to say, "Hey, this is all ok and things seem to be great". Or we have had those conversations with customers along the lines of "Hey, we would look at recommend this change to your connectivity network."

The CEOs/CFO within an organization is really interested in cost. Not only the costs now, but also how cost scales over time. They are also looking at potentially taking a phased approach to the cloud affecting their tier 1 systems, or they may decide to take their less typical systems to the cloud, and take a phased approach to see how it goes.

Catalyst also allows CEOs/CFOs to look at the budgeting side and assess what is the actual real world cost if they were to move to the cloud, and then get that up for assessment so that they can set the right expectations in the business.

From our side, Catalyst also allows us to accurately assess the client's environment with this tool. We look at the true utilization of the underlining technology within their environment, and the different applications in the environment, and take a phased approach.

Or we can represent to the customer how they can actually save money in the cloud, make things more optimal, more efficient. A lot of the time, customers are over allocating resources within their own environment because they have had a lot of spent in the past, and moving them to a more consumption based approach will make them more conscious of what they are using. So we can assess things and say "Hey, you can remove some of these, you do not need that, and make things far more optimal from a cost and technology side."

We can also provide our customers with recommendations for utilization as well, so even if they want to keep those resources as they are, we will still only bill them based on the actual utilization. We can give the customer a very upfront real idea of what that actually costs will be.

The same goes for disaster recovery, and with our model we only bill customers for the resources used in an actual test or fail over.

The ideal behind Catalyst is to really validate the sense check and right sizing technically to provide an outcome that the customer is looking for. Really what we want to do is upfront at the design stage is really validate everything, and tell the customer "hey, we are the right guys for you and this is the reason why", or "we recommend that you look at these options because these certain elements may not fit into the plan"

Catalyst can be run by our channel community, or prospects and customers to give a very quick assessment for the organisation's executive teams, and helps reduce the amount of time organizations spend in design stages – and gives access to, in a matter of minutes, an actual estimate. Then that cuts down the actual design phase for an organization.

We can do all the design work upfront, the project phases, then the actual implementation can occur quicker because the information from

Catalyst is transferred across our teams so that they can do the actual design we have put forward.

Just to add, this is something we are going to be constantly evolving. We have basically developed everything within our cloud environment.

On the of the primary drivers for all our innovation is our customer base. We hold regular customer counsels, we have sessions online, we gain feedback actively and directly to our cloud platform.

So being a privately held company, driven by customers, and customers' growth is a very beneficial thing for our customers. For iland, our customers can control the best of which is going to be within our environment. We listen to that feedback, and we drill it in, and try to find an optimal experience.

Q. **With the growth in the channel, do you think the Catalyst solution will fuel that growth even further?**

A – SW. One of the primary drivers of this tool is about the design. Iland continues to grow in the channel, and it is a great route to market for iland.

Also one of the benefits for the channel community is the prospect of customers looking to consume through their channel partners, iland's 12 years experience in disaster recovery as a service.

Along the way, we would like to say that we got everything right. But the reality is that every organization is on the leading edge of technology are going to come up across a few road blocks.

The benefits is that over time we can plan how we implement things with customers in an environment, and what we did is to build that logic into the tool so in effect when we run the disaster, when we get to the other side, the tool actually runs a bunch of all different validation checks against a customer's environment to ensure that the end result will be a good outcome for the customer.

The benefit for the channel community is that they may be working with multiple vendors and technology partners, but it is hard to get access to the right training or understanding of how to go to market with a solution.

One of the benefits of this tool is that it actually sends that knowledge and that process into the software itself, so that in a very short amount of time they can running and working with their customers using this tool without them having to have that upfront investment in terms of training to understand how to work with that solution set as well.

A – JA. So I have been at iland now for about a year, and I came from a competing outsourcing provider, and one of the things that we run into all the time was the significant professional services hat, or meeting the expectation of the CEO/CFO when you move to the cloud.

But the meeting of that expectation happens once you move to the cloud is one of those things that not often discussed that is usually solved through an additional period of time or spend of professional services.

So when I joined iland and I saw we can do with Catalyst, pre-empting expectations early on as far as performance and costs go, it was really something special that Sam and the team have built over the last year and allows customers to see their environment, and how it is going to perform; before they press the migrate button; before they write the cheque, and before they make the move.

Q. **It is nice that you have done your market observations and actually talk to your customers on a regular basis, but more than that you actually take notice of what they are saying because often we get companies saying "yes, of course we listen to our customers feedback and then they don't do anything with it. It is nice that you actually take the feedback forward and develop something that customers actually need, and want, and you drilled down to find out what they really want out of you and that is lovely to come across that in a company – so our readers will love what they are hearing. Can you explain more about your 'autopilot service'?**

Q – JA. We are extremely well-known in the market for disaster recovery, so our focus has been on how we create more automation, how we create simplicity for our customers, and how we can reduce risk.

We have what I would consider to be from a disaster recovery perspective, the 'easy button' for customers. It is very easy for customers to actually implement the DR button and say we declare an event, we want a fail over.

However, there is still that feedback and we have customers saying "we love this button and its simplicity, but we just want to get out of the business of IT and managing IT, specifically get out of doing DR ourselves – can you manage all of it for us?"

So that is what was behind the development of our autopilot service – a fully managed disaster recovery solution – planning, manage, onboarding, testing, validation, and fail over to back data in the event of data loss – all managed by iland. So it complete relieves the customer.

From my perspective it feels kind of funny because customers are saying "it's great, but even pushing one button is far too many" so that is where our autopilot service sits and you will see more from us where services are concerned, and it represents a major growth area for us.

Q.   **Is there a closing statement that you would like us to get across to our readers what would it be?**

A – SW.   From CEOs/CFOs perspective, there are a lot of products and services already out there, and from our point of view what we want to get across is we really want to focus on what are your challenges, what are you trying to achieve.

It's not just go to the cloud, it is a case of why do you want to go to the cloud, what is it you want to solve as a business, let us focus on that, then lets provide solutions that actually work for you whether it is something technology led, and work with you as a partner to really curate all that knowledge, all that technology providing the right solution for you and the business.

Let's work together as a partnership to get that all on board, and let's work with you and support you on that journey because one of the things we didn't mention at the start of this interview was, that we have always done right from the outset by providing 24/7 365 support without any additional cost to the customer.

Our customers get through to a human being, rather than some automated service. Customer experience is part of everything we do, and organizations are looking to people as a partnership, not just an organization – and that is where iland sits.

It is a privately held company that has organically grown and we are only going to succeed together if we provide a great service to you. That has always been the ethos from the start.

A – JA.   Adding to that position is that cloud is evitable – at least in part of an organization's strategy. Nearly every customer of an IT organization out there will adopt cloud at some point.

The biggest challenge moving to cloud is changing technology and operational and financial strategies. At iland, we believe that we have managed to remove a number of major hurdles which customers have, the objections encountered, or the reasons for pause in adopting cloud, by creating services which have a similar look and feel and have a level of comfort that they have on premises today.