Lenny Williams – Overview of Azure and Cloud experiences.

At Inviso, I was the lead UI/middle tier MVC developer for a team of 8 developers that were responsible for creating a reporting/business Intelligence application for Microsoft’s Global Marketing team. The data was derived from global marketing data and merged into a data set located on an Azure platform. Access to this data, and subsequent user security filtering was done though the UI interface that exposed data based on the roles and security profiles created through the administrative components created to support this application.

Azure was used for supporting both the web application, and the database for each of three environments – development, staging, and production. The team utilized agile project management to establish the user stories and subsequent task commitments from development, database, and QA team members. Azure management was accomplished through the Azure management portal. New builds for the portals were published through the Visual Studio UI and azure management tools.

I created the UI, created the controllers and models, provisioned each of the new builds, and insured that the code-first Entity Framework was aligned properly with the azure SQL implementation.

After leaving Inviso and moving to Florida, I worked briefly with a financial client on a contract to manage a 45 server SharePoint azure farm used as multiple developers sites. Part of my job was to optimize the configurations and reduce costs to the firm. These servers were tasked for DNS services, files services, developer prototyping and builds, QA testing. I reduced the number of servers from 45 to 15, saving $45K a year in costs. I used remote access and azure management portal to insure that nothing was compromised in mitigating the bloat caused by so many SharePoint server implementations. My background as a MIS director gave me the experience required to manage this level of network support for this particular azure implementation. My background in setting up and working with SharePoint and working as a .NET developers gave me the experience required to assess what the development team actually needed to support their efforts. My efforts also included a good deal of SQL administration and configurations.

My continuing interest in these technologies and my belief that cloud computing will be the standard for development in the years to come. Visual Studio, office 365, and many other technologies are running successfully in the cloud and provide experiences that far exceed anything that has come before.

Azure development has some challenges, but provide some amazing opportunities for any company willing to pay that price.