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Transcript:

I love being a cloud engineer. I haven't always felt this way. Last month, I was facing tight dead lines. I felt overwhelmed with the new technologies I was learning when I felt defeated. In moments like these, I like to remind myself of why I got into this career in the first place. And when I started noting these down, it felt like the worries were slowly being lifted off my shoulders. In this video, I'd like to share five of my reflections that reignited my love for cloud engineering. This will be useful for those that are new to cloud and also those of experience, too. But first, what actually is a cloud engineer? Okay, here's a really quick, simplified explanation. Imagine the cloud as a big, invisible storage room in the sky where you can keep all sorts of digital stuff like photos, videos, and complex software applications. Now, instead of storing this data on your personal computer, laptop, or a storage device, it's kept on the internet, which means you can access it from anywhere, anytime, as long as you have an internet connection. Now, the cloud engineer's job is to make sure this digital storage room is well organized and secure. They're the ones using data and services from this room to build applications and solve any problems that pop up. Data day, this could mean setting up the networking in the cloud. So, for example, how services talk to each other, or managing access policies to make sure no application or service has the ability to do stuff that I shouldn't, or even writing code to automate workflows. Usually, a cloud engineer specializes in one of the major cloud providers, Amazon, Google, or Microsoft. These are basically just big companies that offer up space in their storage room for your data. Personally, my specialty is working with Amazon Web Services, and this leads me to the most significant thing I love about my job. So, the other day, I was looking to my friend who's a software engineer at a startup. She was telling me how she loves her job, but sometimes feels like she only gets to work on a small piece of the application. And it's got me thinking. A lot of people think that cloud engineering is very specialized, but I would disagree. As a cloud engineer, you're not boxing to one little corner. You get to sort of play around in all these different areas. So, for example, one day you might be doing some network engineering. The next day, you're switching it up and optimizing some code or implementing a new feature. I remember this one project where we redesigned an application using a serverless architecture. Now, I went into it not knowing much about serverless tools. Not only did I learn a ton about serverless itself, but it was great to see the impact it had on a business when we didn't have to worry about managing how the app scales. But, you know, it's more than just the technologies themselves. I'm working across so many different domains. I've developed this amazingly well-rounded perspective. I feel like I can jump into lots of different projects or discussions and really add value because I understand how all the pieces fit together. That's the funny thing. I understand why people think that cloud engineering is very specialized. And, sure, there's a lot of depth that you need to know, but I've found the breadth to be just as valuable, especially as someone early on in their tech career. It's made me a better engineer and a better partner to the business. The tech landscape is always changing. There's always a new service to learn, a new architecture pattern to try, a new problem to solve. But that's what energizes me. And I think being a cloud engineer really enables this. But, although the variety in the work is great, there's something else I love that's just as important. More and more companies are moving to the cloud these days. According to a recent report by Gartner, the global cloud services industry is predicted to grow by over 20% in 2024, to a whopping $679 billion. And, with so many companies making the switch, they need cloud engineers to make it happen. But, okay, why is it good to be in a career with high demand? Naturally, the first thing that comes to mind for most people is the money. Lots of different companies are hiring cloud talent right now. From small startups to huge enterprises. When demand outstrips supply in the job market, these employers are usually willing to pay above average salaries to attract the right people. According to Glassdoor, the average salary for a cloud engineer in the US is

around $146,000. Now, although I don't think money is the main reason you should get into this role, it's undeniably something you should consider when picking a career. But, more importantly, I think being in a high demand role has given me job satisfaction. There's always work to be done and lots of different opportunities within the field. This kind of links back to what I was talking about earlier, where cloud engineers have the freedom to work in areas that they're interested in. And this freedom has made me feel more energized and satisfied about the work I'm doing. But, it's not just how I feel about the work. It's important that I can see the business impact of my work. In 2016, Spotify decided to migrate its infrastructure to Google Cloud. They had previously been running everything on premises, and it was really becoming a real headache. Scaling was tough, and they were running out of engineers to maintain everything. But, the main issue was that the work they were doing on their data centers wasn't really contributing to the business. If I'm really honest, what we really want to do at Spotify is to be the best music service in the world. None of that work on data centers actually contributes directly to that. Ramon Van Altren Spotify's director of engineering. Now, yes, after the migration was complete, Spotify saw all of the typical cloud benefits. For example, improved scalability, improved reliability, and lower infrastructure costs. But, more importantly, Spotify noticed that their engineers time was freed up to tackle more important issues. Issues that had a bigger impact on the business. And this is one of the things I love most about being a cloud engineer. We get to have this direct, visible impact on the businesses we work with. With engineering work in general, it's easy to get lost in the technical details. Like, sure, I love diving deep into containers and serverless and all that good stuff. But, at the end of the day, it's really about how we can use those technologies to solve real problems. A really simple example. A few months ago, I created a script to automate the cleanup of unused resources across a few AWS accounts. When the script was deployed, I was able to see instant results, i.e. cross-going down day by day. And this is the kind of stuff I love because it feels very rewarding. You can see the impact of your work straight away. But the next point is probably what I love most about being a cloud engineer. So, I remember attending my first cloud event a couple years back. It was the AWS Summit in London. Keep in mind, at this point, I have been working as a cloud engineer for just a few months. So, this was really my first opportunity to meet other engineers. I walked into the main expo hall and was just blown away. There were over 10,000 people there. Everyone I met was really friendly and you could tell that most people there had a passion for what they were doing. Now, that experience really highlighted for me one of the biggest reasons I love being a cloud engineer. The great community is out there. Cloud Confusing is a rapidly evolving area. So, I found that the people working in it tend to be really enthusiastic and eager to learn from each other. Now, these communities exist online too. Online, you've got stuff like forums, slack workspaces and subreddits. Whenever I run into an issue or want to explore a new topic, I know I can find one of these communities and connect with someone that can help out. But the in-person meetup, so where I think the real value is, I found that there are lots of different groups that cater to different interests within cloud. For example, there's a meetup on Genai on cloud for serverless, for networking. Personally, I've gone to a few of these now. I met some really interesting people. If you've been in a job for a while, I think it can be easy to get tunnel vision. You can think that the way your company does things is the only way and the right way. But meeting people at these events, you end up getting exposed to new ideas. You've got people coming from all sorts of different backgrounds, traditional IT roles, software engineering, even some non-technical roles. Everyone has a unique perspective. Maybe someone suggests something that you can even implement at your company. Plus, there tends to be free-peat term, which is a good enough reason in itself. But although having a local community is great, it's also important to have flexibility. I actually know a few cloud engineers who are hardcore digital nomads. They're constantly traveling the world, spending a month here, a few months there, working from cafes and Airbnb's in different countries. Seems like a good life. With cloud roles, you're not usually tied down to a particular office or location. You can work from home, from a co-working space, you

can work while traveling, even from a different city or country or together if you want. As long as you have a solid internet connection and your company allows it. Now, this location independence isn't necessarily unique to cloud engineering. You can apply to IT jobs more broadly, especially these days with remote work becoming more common. But I'd say cloud roles tend to have an even higher degree of geographic flexibility since everything you're working with is already offsite by definition. No one cares if you're not on site because all of the hardware and all the infrastructure is offsite too. For me personally, not having to commute every single day is a great help. It saves a lot of time. Time that I can spend focusing on my actual work or on my interest outside of work. And it means that when I was looking for apartments, I could look slightly outside of central London where prices tend to be the most expensive. In a role where the work itself can be quite demanding a lot of the times. With long hours and intense mental energy, this flexibility really makes a huge difference. Now, I've said a lot of positive things about cloud engineering in this video. But there are a few crucial things that I wish I knew before becoming a cloud engineer. If I had known all of these things, I'd be much further in my career and would have avoided a lot of mistakes. And you can learn what these things are in this video.

Summary

The average salary for a cloud engineer in the US is $146,000 . The global cloud services industry is predicted to grow by over 20% in 2024, to a whopping $679 billion . With so many companies making the switch to the cloud, they need to make it happen . The most important thing that comes first to mind for most people is the demand for most engineers right now . But more importantly, I think being in a high demand in the field has given me job satisfaction .