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Marketing 201

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**Marketing Microsoft Azure**

Company Profile

The company in my marketing plan is going to be Microsoft Corporation. Industries that they’re a part of are computer software, computer hardware, consumer electronics, cloud computing, video games, and others. Major products and services that Microsoft offers are Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Office, Microsoft Office 365, Microsoft Azure, Xbox, Surface line of laptops, Skype, Bing, LinkedIn, Visual Studio and various others. The product this marketing plan is going to focus on is Microsoft’s Azure, which is a cloud computing service, providing software as a service, platform as a service, and infrastructure as a service, as well supporting numerous programming languages and frameworks.

The target customers are corporate enterprises, the education sector, start-up companies, and hobbyists. The distribution channels for Azure is through the Internet because Azure is a cloud computing product and service and the Internet is the only place they offer Azure. The headquarters for Microsoft is in Redmond, Washington in the United States of America, with various other sites around the world. Microsoft has a total of 144,106 employees as of 2019. Microsoft has a revenue of roughly $126 billion US dollars, also as of 2019. Some key competitors that come to mind are Google with it’s Google Cloud Platform product and services, Amazon with it’s Amazon Web Services product and services.

You can find Microsoft’s website [here](https://www.microsoft.com/) and Microsoft’s Azure’s website at [here](https://azure.microsoft.com/). The Yahoo! Finance page is [here](https://finance.yahoo.com/quote/MSFT).

Market Segmentation and Targeting

The problems cloud computing, namely Azure, solves is staggering to say the least. If one looks back and sees what technologies and frameworks have grown over the years, one can definitely see the difference from then to now.

One problem Azure solves is the convenience of having the development environment everywhere you go. By opting into Azure, one has the ability to access any machine, that you have a leased of course, and spin up a cloud based service without any time constraint and regardless of your location. Another problem Azure solves is the reduction of cost, specifically operational cost. As stated above, computer hardware and an information technology team is quite expensive. The buildings to house that equipment and the time it takes the information technology team to install that hardware is not looking too hot either on your checkbook. With a cloud computing service like Azure, you don’t have to pay the the team, you don’t have to buy the hardware for the need that you have, ultimately saving you money on those things. With Azure, you always have professionals at your side. They will answer your questions whenever you have a new idea or need for customers or they will help you out if you are stuck. Furthermore, professionals take care of the hard work for you. For example, no more spending time maintaining your server and maintaining the software you bought with it, such as Windows Server. The cloud computing service professionals will take care of that for you. Another problem Azure solves is that Azure will save you time. Mitigating the distractions of administrating a data center, you can focus your time and effort on things that matter most in business, not your data center. This is especially crucial for small organizations and start-up companies. Benefits of Azure include standardization efforts and public investment. Standards will reduce or entirely eliminate risk from many current barriers to Azure. Large enterprise organizations and governments are investing to create economic regions of cloud technology development, like in China and Japan, or migrating their infrastructure to Azure and other cloud computing services in an effort to set an example for up and coming businesses.

Potential customers are enterprise businesses, the education sector, small or start-up organizations, and hobbyists that are into technology for the reasons I stated above. The key segments in these markets are most likely demographic, geographic, behavioral and decisional because of several different reasons. One reason would be for a freelance web developer and he needs to host a few websites. Running a server in his home would cost electricity and cause noise pollution. Cost and accessibility are main focuses for the web developer since he can access Azure anywhere he is, whether the web developer is at home or on vacation and leasing a web service is economic for the web developer because a server can be very expensive up front and who knows if it’s reliable to sustain his workload and how much traffic he is going to receive. Another example would be for a small organization or a start-up. In the majority of cases, start-ups or small organizations have very limited resources, especially money and labor. It would be ideal for a small organization to explore Azure because you have the help and expertise of professionals and you wouldn’t have to hire a team of professionals and purchase all the hardware that you need. Another example is enterprise businesses wanting to explore cloud computing, namely Azure. It would ultimately benefit the enterprise because having all the computational power up in Azure, they would have more time to focus on the things that keep the business moving, not administering the data center and the information technology staff. My last example is the education sector. Colleges, universities, and schools have a lot on their plate in today’s technology space. Sure, you’ll need staff to administer all the technology being distributed across the institution but some institutions don’t have enough cash to purchase new hardware and various other equipment. With Azure, you’d be able to free up some the dollars spent on the technology distributed to the pupils. The final example applies to all markets when your power company charges too much for your electricity and based on where you happen to live, the government may have set a price floor for electricity. Thus, you could make the assumption that Azure may be cost effective for your needs.

This marketing plan focuses on the behavioral segment of the common marketing segments. Based on the occasion, readiness, and purchase price, some people might or might not be ready to move to Azure quite yet. Although it will benefit anybody that needs a service to run twenty-four seven, a power outage or low enough price to lease servers from Azure will push a start-up or a enterprise move everything from their on-premise location to Azure in the long run. With more customers on Azure’s platform, Microsoft has to offer more services and then market those segments as they come out.

Situation and Company Analysis

Economic Environment

Cloud computing is always growing, no matter what angle you look at it as it’s a new way to run a computer. A different computing paradigm one could say. The same thing can be said about Azure. The most powerful aspect you need to consider is cost because it all depends on that. Of course, accessibility, usability, and the number of support options also play a factor in the consumers’ purchasing power. As one individual or entity needs grow, they will spend more on Azure. Staff will increasing easy to find from people starting new careers in computing and people entering college having a interest in computing. However, a study shows that the whole computational workforce is two thirds underwhelmed so we could use some more people in our field. The interest rate for Azure, for cloud computing in general, is growing at exponential rate because of their savings.

Technical Environment

The realm of computing changes rapidly. Thus, Azure, as well as other cloud providers, have to implement solutions to new technologies. Trends in cloud computing will always be the same so one could say they are not really trends. In any case, data mining, machine learning, internet of things, blockchain, and artificial intelligence when I think of trends in the computing space, especially cloud computing, including Azure. In the internet of things, abbreviated IoT, space, Azure has this program called IoT Hub, IoT Edge, and IoT Central, which all connect and monitor billions IoT devices, like the Raspberry Pi, BeagleBone, Arduino, just to name a few. In the artificial intelligence and machine learning spaces, Azure offers Azure Machine Learning, or Azure ML, that enables predictive analysis and interaction with data. Azure also offers Cognitive Services, which are application programming interfaces and software development kits to help and empower developers make their applications more intelligent. There are different ways to solve a problem, especially with large corporations at the helm of cloud computing, such as Google commands Google Cloud Platform and Amazon has control over Amazon Web Services as well as Microsoft, which of course has Azure. They are already some standards written by IEEE as far as cloud computing goes. However, standards come few and far between when it comes to cloud computing.

Competitive Environment

As stated above, Google and Amazon with Google Cloud Platform, abbreviated GCP and Amazon Web Services, abbreviated AWS, respectively are the two competitors that Microsoft should be worried about. There are other hosting providers out there, like Linode, DigitalOcean, HostGator, and GoDaddy, just to name a few. Amazon’s biggest advantage is its biggest dominance in the public cloud computing market versus the private cloud computing market because they went to this new paradigm first and it’s massive scope of operations also make AWS really popular. Amazon’s biggest weakness, however, is cost as more expensive to run Amazon’s hardware than Google’s or Microsoft’s hardware. Google has a strong advantage with a container orchestration software called Kubernetes, which Google developed and now is standard on GCP, AWS, and Azure. Another strong advantage Google has is high compute power, such as analytics, load balancing, and machine learning. Because Google runs the largest search engine in the world, Google knows fast response time. However, Google doesn’t offer as many services than Azure and AWS, like Azure’s IoT Hub I mentioned earlier and AWS’ similar service that Google doesn’t have.

Azure, rather Microsoft, came late into the cloud computing market as it entered into the market in 2014. However, by making their on-premise products, like Windows Server, Microsoft Office, SQL Server, Sharepoint, the .NET Framework (including C#, F#, and VB programming languages), Active Directory, and others, Microsoft re-purposed them for the cloud. Because many enterprises rely on Microsoft’s products, it makes a lot of sense to switch to Azure, if an enterprise is to switch to the cloud of course. Plus, if you are an existing Microsoft enterprise customer, expect big discounts of services and service contracts. However, there are some platform imperfections as with anything Microsoft as I have personally dealt with several imperfections with Microsoft’s desktop offering, Microsoft Windows, which has been in the works for over thirty years, which is saying something.

As it stands currently, the market is strong and will continue to grow strong. Because the interest rate is high and the adaptability of cloud computing is soaring, there is nowhere but up. Since some enterprises have not moved to the cloud yet, and most of those enterprises use Microsoft products, the move to Azure makes more sense than Amazon Web Services or Google Cloud Platform.

Political Environment

The political system around Azure is Microsoft’s Board of Directors, which compirses of Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft, and several shareholders. They dictate not only what happens to Azure, but every single Microsoft product and service out in the public as we speak, including the products and services I mentioned above. With the Board of Directors, the federal and state governments have invested in making standards throughout cloud computing as a whole, including Azure. Besides that, there isn’t really any other political activity around Azure, and around Microsoft as a whole. As Microsoft is coming up with contracts for businesses to sign, Microsoft has to only worry about that as no other regulation or license that comes into play as they have created and developed their on-premise products in-house.

SWOT Analysis

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| --- | --- |
| **Strengths**   * On-premise products adapt * Backed by Microsoft * Brand reputation * Vast array of features and services * Constant growth | **Weaknesses**   * Platform imperfections * Confusing and complex user interface |
| **Opportunities**   * Enterprise users have incentive * Superior customer loyalty * Amazon, Google lack features that Azure has * Partnerships, contracts formed | **Threats**   * Amazon, Google have similar features, users may switch to those platforms * Vendor lock-in * Outages once every year or more |

Mission, Objectives, and Goals

Microsoft’s mission statement is as follows:

“to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.”

One objective is empowerment as it’s easy to point out when one reads the mission statement. As one might infer, Microsoft has and continues to provide many products and services to its end users, with varying benefits I might add. In any case, when one gets their hands on one of their products or services, they are attracted to more, making Microsoft an integral part of their life. The second objective I can point out is that Microsoft have this expectation that they have to meet, and sometimes going leaps and bounds and bending over backwards for their customers. For example, Munson Healthcare, a regional non-profit hospital, uses Microsoft products. Whenever somebody has a problem, Microsoft support staff is always on the ball. Some goals that come out of the objectives are quite straightforward. If Microsoft continues to meet expectations and even go beyond even the wildest expectation like it has been doing for a long time, we should see customers wanting more and more customers coming on-board. In other words, one goal is to maintain customer relations through customer support, an increase in market share by 10% in the next year. Another goal I could see happening is Microsoft could keep growing by innovating into newer markets. Microsoft has already done this by creating Microsoft HoloLens, a mixed reality headset system, one of the first mixed reality headsets on the market today. In fact, Microsoft has already signed a contract with the United States Government to ship HoloLens to the US Armed Forces. In other words, another goal is to increase the amount of innovation to increase market sales by 10% in the future.

Marketing Information and Research

Research Question

To make sure Microsoft’s Azure is greatest cloud platform in existence, Microsoft has to improve, or otherwise fundamentally fix, the platform imperfections and make the conundrum that is the user interface. One can’t build and host a website on Azure if the user interface is utterly confusing, for instance. Furthermore, securing the market on all people who don’t which way to go as far as which cloud provider to host on isn’t get you anywhere as there is vendor lock-in in place and other cloud providers might very well have the same offerings as Azure has. It’s great if Azure mends the way for new companies and individuals with new offerings and ways out of vendor lock-in to more options to the user but, like with the every project, Azure must start with it’s core. Without the core being solid as everything else that sits upon that core, Azure doesn’t seem like a cloud platform worth one’s time. With that being said, my question is the following: With the platform imperfections and the clunky and confusing user interface, what can we do to make Azure a better place to host and manage cloud infrastructure? This question will answer the objective of empowerment by helping users obtain a better user experience than other cloud platforms, such as AWS and GCP.

Information Needed

Azure will need both user and development information. What I mean by that is Azure will need what users deploy the most. For a hypothetical example, Azure sees that users deploy web applications, Active Directory servers, and virtual machines the most out of any other deployment offering on Azure. Then, that ties into development when the Azure development team fixes what’s wrong with deploying web applications, Active Directory servers, and virtual machines, like in the hypothetical example. To go deeper, to get information on the development of the platform of Azure, one might need the programming practices that are being used and how they are implemented. One also might need how platform interfaces with the actual hardware, because the cloud isn’t magical. A wise, or not so wise, person once said the cloud is just another person’s computer.

Research Recommendations

On the users’ side, I would implement some kind of user tracking tool so that we can obtain helpful and useful information about why users use Azure. Also, I would take an optional survey of everyone using the Azure platform, asking the people what they think of the platform. For example, questions included on the survey would be like the following, but not limited to:

* What do you use Azure for?
* Have you used other cloud platforms and how do they compare to Azure?
* What do you deploy on Azure the most? (Pick/up to five?)
* What are some problems with Azure that should be addressed?
* What new features do you want to see in Azure that are not Azure already?
* What additions do you want to see in Azure?

The users would receive this optional survey through both email and on the platform as a notification. I should point out that the user tracking tool that I previously mentioned will be first in consideration above the surveys. Let’s face it, only the vocal minority speaks up about any issues they may have. The silent majority is going to move from some where other than Azure and won’t even bother filling out the survey or even go as far as filling out a bug report to the development team.

From the development side, I would focus more on what development and deployment practices are happening within their team. Knowing a marketer is not very familiar with research and development, I wouldn’t say a thing even remotely considered a research and development topic and I would sit down with the team lead/team manager and discuss what is happening with users and let the team lead/team manager make the decision on whether to change the practices or not. Also, the question where it asks if a user has used another cloud provider before and how it would compare to Azure, it will give us some insight into competitors.

Customer Decision-Making Profile

Identifying the Customer and Problem

Azure’s main customer is going to be companies and corporations. Thus, they will make up

the majority of the decision making in Azure’s customer base. All be it other customers of Azure, such as the start-ups, the hobbyist, and the education sector as mentioned previously, make a lot of the decisions too. However, the type and the severity of their decisions will be, frankly, life or death of platform because they make up the bulk of the customer base. Companies and corporations can either be an organization of people or a single person. The decision, be it nonsensical or not, is the outcome, no matter how you slice and dice it. One of the decision maker’s problems will be alleviated by Azure by not worrying about the power bill and the cost of maintenance, freeing up resources such as employees and funds. Another problem Azure solves is that it’s very cheap to spin up whatever the scenario may take. For another hypothetical example, let’s say that you’re team lead says that we need to scale our web application. After gladly taking the responsibility, you spin up another server and deploy the web application on to said server. Before cloud ‘experts’ say that the hypothetical team lead constructed the server architecture wrong and should have just used Kubernetes, remember that this is just a hypothetical. At any rate, the spin up of that server was very cheap and only bumped up the company’s Azure bill only a couple of dollars. However, that is not to say that other cloud providers will have the same offering at the same price as the market they’re competing in is indeed an oligopoly. Not only is this a benefit for Azure, but other cloud providers. Another problem that Azure solves for companies is obvious to some people is that amount of features that Azure provides. For example, you can manage IoT devices that are deployed in the field. You can deploy Active Directory services from Azure and you can manage Active Directory from the web service. Those examples I would call features. Allowing people to manage and control their cloud infrastructure right from their own browser any where in the world is really convenient for system administrators.

Factors Influencing Customer Decisions

Geographic and personal characteristics don’t really play a factor in the overall process of decisions of a company or corporation when it comes to information technologies. The social characteristics would fall under the influencing category because of the motivation and attitudes towards the cloud could influence the company’s decision to move their infrastructure to Azure. The situational characteristics would also fall under the influencing category as well because based on the level of readiness, the buying situation, and the market offerings of company could very well influence the green light to jump to Azure. Last is business to business, or B2B, buying considerations as some company is already using Microsoft’s products. Thus, placing an incentive on the company to go towards Azure, when of course the situational and social requirements are satisfied.

Reaching the Customer

With search engines and web browsers capable to create a digital profile of oneself, also known as a digital fingerprint, I would market with web advertisements to certain digital fingerprints. Digital fingerprints can contain your browser information, your computer information, your public internet protocol, and many other protocols used, and other helpful bits of information. This would be helpful because with capability of creating fingerprints of users by search engines, such as Google or Yahoo, I could create an advertisement and use Google’s AdSense to reach people that fill my criteria. Another way to market to companies to try the Azure platform for free for a certain time frame or a certain amount of credit or a certain amount of services. This will be helpful because it will let companies get their feet wet in the platform before committing to it. Another way to market towards companies is to write little “getting started” pages for all of their different services available on Azure. This will be helpful because not only assist someone if they are new to the service, but what if the service is known to them but what if they don’t know how to deploy said service on Azure? I think this particular market strategy that mentioned is a real game changer.

Positioning and Differentiating

To be better than the Amazon and Google and take over AWS and GCP respectively, we first have to improve the user experience and user functionality within the platform. However, we just don’t want to make the user experience better and call it a day. That’s why I think we need to make the user experience the best it can be. As someone has used Azure before, we need to make Azure dead simple, even a ten year old could understand what is going on. Furthermore, we could to go farther and implement separate levels of content. That may come a little vague to some so let me explain myself a bit. Let’s say a team lead has gone the Azure deployment process many times before and he/she doesn’t want something like a wizard that walks you through the steps of getting the deployment all set up. He/she wants something straightforward so that he can get on with the deployment process. Thus, we have an advanced level of deployment for the seasoned veterans of Azure and we have the simple level for people coming to Azure.

Competitive Advantages

* Better user experience
* Better user functionality
* Simple and advanced stages of deployment
* Elimination of vendor lock-in
* Backed by Microsoft, who created and maintains Windows, Office, Edge, and several enterprise software products
* Enterprise users have incentive

Market Niche and Positioning Strategy

With the user experience being top notch, users need very little time to set up and deploy a service on Azure. To do this, we need to improve some development practices and simplify the steps a user takes to set up a certain kind of service. The management process should straightforward as well with fixing up some development practices.

Positioning Statement

To companies and corporations, Microsoft’s Azure cloud platform is the only cloud platform that offers a better user experience than Amazon or Google because we made the Azure deployment and management both easier for new users and more straightforward for veterans of Azure.

Branding

Brand Description

To fit the Microsoft branding of products, it has to be modern, effective, and provide power to the user. Microsoft’s big focus is innovation, diversity, inclusion, social responsibility, and trustworthy computing. Azure being part of Microsoft’s family of products, it should follow suit.

Brand Promise

Microsoft, Azure in particular, promises to bring business value through proactive, innovative, compliant, and cost effective solutions. Azure does that well through it cost effectiveness and it’s current user feedback system. However, the user feedback could much improved and Azure needs some kind of tracking system that is open source that way the Azure community can know what is and isn’t monitored and that the Azure community can contribute to the tracking system.

Brand Voice and Personality

Microsoft, namely Azure, is making the cloud easier to use, manage, and deploy with improved customer experience and is cost effective compared to Amazon Web Services and Google Cloud Platform. Microsoft, namely Azure, is never convoluted, confusing, or expensive.

Brand Positioning and Strategy

My recommendation to Microsoft is make customers feel Azure has the best user experience by telling said customers they will have a better time using, managing, and deploying cloud services with Azure. Also, Microsoft has to push their cost effectiveness to customers as well with Azure compared to paying into Amazon and/or Google. This will contribute to Microsoft’s success by having not only pleased and happy customers but also having a easier to use cloud that Microsoft can use.

Marketing Mix

Product Strategy

Microsoft’s Azure service is cloud computing platform, similar to Amazon’s Amazon Web Services, Google’s Google Cloud Platform, and others. Azure is still growing as Azure started out in 2014 as well as Google Cloud Platform starting in 2008 and Amazon Web Service starting in 2006 have more maturity than Azure. Ways it could benefit the target market are cut out the unused features by using surveys and the digital fingerprint mentioned previously and write documentation or modify existing documentation on how to get something running on Azure. That something could be really simple such as getting a web app running or something as complex as a blockchain server. With the surveys and the fingerprint, we can safely eliminate any services that Azure has just by looking at the statistics of the surveys and the fingerprints and find which services have the appropriate cut off point for decommission.

Pricing Strategy

Microsoft’s Azure’s price is very much comparable to any cloud computing platform on the market currently as Azure sits in a oligopoly market structure. The reason I say it’s a oligopoly is because the three major players take part in the majority of the market which is about 80% of the market, with Amazon taking between 60% to 70% of the market. The market players take only a fraction of what the major market players are serving. If we draw a Cartesian Coordinate graph, the X axis shall be quantity of X and the Y axis shall be the price of X. In oligopoly market structure, there exists a theory called the Kinked Demand Curve theory. The Kinked Demand Curve theory comes into play here, as with . As the name states, there is a kinked demand curve, the kink typically falling right in the middle of the demand curve. Above, or before, the kink is said to be elastic and below, or after, the kink is said to be inelastic. To take a step back, the elasticity of demand is an economic measure of the change in the quantity demanded or purchased of a product relative to its price change. Expressed mathematically, the elasticity of demand equals the percent change in quantity demanded divided by percent change in price. As the theory states, there a significant barriers to entry here. There are significant barrier-to-entry at play here when entering the cloud computing market when applied. Lets say that a firm, Amazon, namely AWS, for instance, wants to change their price. For that to take place in other cloud computing firms, said firms have two options. One option is to match Amazon’s price. That can only happen if Amazon lowers it’s price. If that does indeed happen, the other firms, Microsoft and Google, will follow suit. The other option is to ignore the change in price. This will happen if Amazon raises their price. If Amazon does indeed raise their price, it can be assumed that Microsoft and Google will keep put. Each option has it’s pros and cons. If one firm raises their price, the quantity will go down severely because the slight decrease in the demand curve, hence being more elastic. If one firm lowers their prices, the quantity will slight increase because the decrease in the demand curve is more severe than before the kink, hence being more inelastic, with the hope of gaining more people purchasing their product because the firm is less profit per purchase. Thus, if nobody changes their price, Microsoft, namely Azure, is not going to change their price either. With revenue coming in from other products that Microsoft produces, such as Windows and Server to name a few, Azure doesn’t really need to worry about revenue at this moment in time. However, as time moves forward, as trends show, computing workloads, such as web servers and application servers, will move to the cloud and revenues will drop from those other products that Microsoft produces. Moving forward, we must grab the attention of consumers of the cloud computing market with new features and a better user experience with separate levels of content and great, simple, easy-to-read documentation, as previously mentioned. Let’s take the economies of scale definition and apply it to the cloud computing market for a minute. The definition of economies of scale is where the average cost per unit of output decrease with the increase in the scale of the output being produced by a firm. As cloud computing platforms increase output, input costs per unit decrease because of bulk purchasing, organizational efficiency, and virtualizaition technology that allows for high utilization of the cloud infrastructure. To enter the cloud computing market, a firm must make huge investments not just in facilities and equipment, but technologies that make the cloud fast and reliable like high elasticity and and scalablity. Unlike corporate companies who hire teams to do maintenance and build these massive data centers and purchasing power to purchase equipment by the truckload, small companies can’t exactly do that, which they have to turn to Microsoft, Amazon, or Google for their cloud computing needs or sink a lot of money into the firm, jeopardizing bankruptcy. Economies of scale happen once the hardware is in place, thus small entrants are unable to compete due to barriers to entry.

Placement Strategy (a.k.a distribution strategy)

The current distribution strategy is a direct distribution strategy meaning that the product or the service gets produced by the producer and from the producer, said product or service gets consumed by the consumer. As far as the cloud computing market is concerned, I am not seeing missed opportunities or disconnects with the market as the Internet is the most defined way to purchase, use, and maintain consumer products on Azure through Microsoft. Since Azure is a service and Azure isn’t franchised, there is no need for wholesalers or retailers as it operates over an Internet connection.

Promotion: Integrated Marketing Communications Strategy

My approach is an approach that has a few things in mind. My approach has a sales promotion where somebody writes a blog post, telling and teaching other people in the field how something is done is Azure. We choose the best blog post, out of the people that work on Azure, developers, marketers, and managers alike, and put said blog post, with the author’s permission, into our documentation. In exchange for that, we offer him or her free Azure $100 credit. We do this for four weeks as a marketing campaign to make our documentation better. For example, let’s say that we have a “contest” of sorts and we have people write blog posts about how to deploy Cosmos DB, a distributed, multi-model database that’s part of Azure’s offering, and hook the database up to a web application, again on Azure. We, as developers, marketers, and managers working on Azure, choose the best blog post, and we get in touch with the person who wrote the blog post. In exchange, we give that person $100 Azure credit to spend on whatever he or she desires in Azure. Another step in my approach is extend the Azure free credit when someone joins by the amount of dollars he or she is willing to spend in Azure. For example, Azure credit is up $200 for anybody that joins Azure, $100 for students that join Azure. This concept as it stands is a little backwards. First, I would reverse it, meaning that $100 for anyone that joins, $200 dollars for students. Second, I would increase the dollar amount by $100. So, in conclusion, that would it $300 dollars for anyone who joined and $200 dollars to students. With more money offered to anyone that joins, people, more so students, can a better feel for Azure without paying actual hard-earned cash up front. Another step in my approach is to have an email marketing scheme where we dish out interesting, informative, otherwise “fun” facts to consumers that have stopped using our service for a long time and we would measure that using the digital fingerprint I mentioned earlier. For example, going back to Cosmos DB, we could promote it by giving interesting facts about how you can only find Cosmos only on Azure, and how it is elasitc and scales as far as the eye could see, and you can compare other databases with Cosmos DB, with latency and performance for each.

Our goal is not just one goal but a few goals that are achievable. One goal is to grab the attention of Amazon Web Services consumers and bring them over to Azure. That part is somewhat obvious when Amazon Web Services consumes 60% to 70% of the market share. Another goal is to attract more attention and more awareness that Azure exists. With the market share so high, some of the target audience might not be aware of Azure. We have to watch out for Google Cloud Platform, however, because they could be taking some of our market share as well. Another goal for us is to increase Microsoft’s conference attendance numbers. These Microsoft conferences range from developer conferences, like Microsoft Build, to infrastructure conferences, like Microsoft Ignite, that occur annually. We do this by offering discounts. For example, if you are a student, you receive a 50% discount on your entry ticket. Or, you are a partnered business, you will receive a 20% discount. For people not aware of the conferences, we send out internet advertisements on to advertising platforms. Another is that we have a messaging board such as Slack channel or a Discord server or better yet, a Skype group conversation, to increase activity around Azure. The target audience could join for free while having a civil, friendly, and informative discussion about Azure and it’s services. There would several moderators, keeping the conversations from getting out of hand.

The annual developer and infrastructure conferences is an incredible experience for training, exploring new technologies, and networking with others in your field. These conferences accepts those who are just beginning or those who are already seasoned. Those who are already seasoned come back for more interesting technologies and to meet with other seasoned technicians. We welcome you this conference. Please join us today!

The promotional mix is applied the following concepts: internet advertisements, digital marketing, and direct marketing. Internet advertisements are the bane of every end-user of a browser. However, that is the way we move people to our service. Any other kind of advertisement would be pointless. Take television advertisement as an example. Working people don’t watch television in the middle of the day as they watch television in the morning as they are getting ready for work or during the evening when they are relaxed. Those two scenarios don’t work for a cloud computing platform, let alone a conference. I once saw an Amazon Web Services television advertise go for about two weeks then ended. I never seen it since. Digital marketing is where the core of the marketing is at. We advertise and market the conference times and dates and location(s) on the web site where the conference information is being hosted. Direct marketing is where we ask last years attendees to return to the either conference, depending on which conference they went to. We reach out to last year’s attendees and those who have signed up for Azure to come join us for next years conference.

Sales Alignment

Building relationships and discovering needs is where this campaign operates. This campaign supports this point in the sales process because one reason why people go these developer and infrastructure conferences is to network with other people and talk about new and exciting things that Microsoft is coming out with at these conferences. One key performance indicator is total sales of tickets. We can then gauge how many ticket holders come to the conference. Then, on top of that, we have employees from Microsoft come in and ask consumers of the cloud computing platform what they would like to see in Azure. If they or their company are running Azure already, what would they like to see improved on Azure’s platform. Another key performance indicator is engagement on various social platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. I’d like to see activity and awareness around Azure on various social platforms. They could be candidates for upcoming conferences. The last key performance indicator is net promoter score. This will show us the loyalty towards Azure. If the loyalty is low, we need to engage the employees at Microsoft to talk to people to see what we could improve.

Budget

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| **Item** | **Purpose** | **Est. Cost** |
| Email marketing | Author email to choose blog post near the date of conference, choose blog post, post it as documentation, feature it at conference to garner better and more feature-rich documentation | $1000.00 |
| Employees asking questions | Have Microsoft employees talk to target audience to gauge what we need improvement on at conferences | $450.00 |
| Conference graphics | Design conference graphics to go onto banners, fliers, etc. to appeal to the target audience. Information about target audience based lat year’s conference | $2000.00 |
| Development of Azure services | Fix and improve Azure’s platform imperfections to market at conference through banners, fliers, etc. | $5000.00 |

Action Plan

First, we need to improve Azure’s platform to cure Azure’s from it’s platform imperfections. Improving said platform imperfections will let us market better stability and reliability on banners, fliers, and other market material. This will effective immediately up until two weeks before the next conference, which is Microsoft Build. The audience is everybody who attends the conference. The owner of this project is the manager of the development team for Azure. Second, we need to design and print out graphics for the conference. Materials those graphics get printed on include banners, fliers, and other marketing material. The graphics must appeal to the target audience. The audience are whoever attends the conference. The owner is whoever is the manager of the design team for Azure. Third, we need to implement email marketing. Email everyone who registered on Azure and for the conference about the sales promotion of writing a blog post and Azure credit. The audience will be whoever attends the conference and whoever registered with Azure. Both of those conditions must be met to be able to get on the list. The owner is whoever is the manager for the marketing team of Azure. Lastly, we need marketers of Microsoft to be able to attend this conference to be able to ask questions of people that attend this conference. The audience will be whoever attends the conference. The owner will be whoever is the manager of the marketing department.

Executive Summary

Company Description

Microsoft Corporation is in the industry of computer software, computer hardware, consumer electronics, cloud computing, video games, and others. Major products and services that Microsoft offers are Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Office, Microsoft Office 365, Microsoft Azure, Xbox, Surface line of laptops, Skype, Bing, LinkedIn, Visual Studio and various others. The product this marketing plan is going to focus on is Microsoft’s Azure, which is a cloud computing service, providing software as a service, platform as a service, and infrastructure as a service, as well supporting numerous programming languages and frameworks.

Target Segment

The target customers are corporate enterprises, the education sector, start-up companies, and hobbyists. Azure’s main customer, however, is going to be companies and corporations. Thus, they will make up the majority of the decision making in Azure’s customer base. All be it other customers of Azure, such as the start-ups, the hobbyist, and the education sector as mentioned previously, make a lot of the decisions too. However, the type and the severity of their decisions will be, frankly, life or death of platform because they make up the bulk of the customer base. Companies and corporations can either be an organization of people or a single person.

Competitive Advantage

Azure will provide better user experience and better user functionality. We will have simple and advanced stages of deployment as part of platform imperfection upgrade. We will push towards the elmination of vendor lock-in. Azure is backed by Microsoft, who created and maintains Windows, Office, Edge, and several enterprise software products. Enterprise users have incentive to use Azure over other cloud platforms.

Positioning Statement

To companies and corporations, Microsoft’s Azure cloud platform is the only cloud platform that offers a better user experience than Amazon or Google because we made the Azure deployment and management both easier for new users and more straightforward for veterans of Azure.

Marketing Plan Objectives

We will provide email marketing to those who register to our conferences and register for Azure to offer Azure credit and a discount to the conference. We will also make sure that the graphic designs appeals to the target audience on which will be printed on the marketing materials, such as but not limited to banners, fliers, etc. We will provide a well suited and complete revamp of the Azure platform without any platform imperfections in Azure currently. The platform imperfections are driving consumers away and we need to change that before our market share hits the single digits. Azure, is never convoluted, confusing, or expensive as stated in our brand voice. We want to make Azure as accessible and welcoming as possible.