

Microsoft reveals new tools for business customers

July 11 2012, By Janet I. Tu

If the first day of Microsoft's Worldwide Partner Conference focused more on its consumer offerings, with talk of tablets and touch-centric devices, Day 2 focused squarely on Microsoft's bread and butter: its business customers.

On Tuesday morning, the keynote address covered a disparate array of topics, from cloud to business technology, Office 365 to [Windows Phone](#). But they were all geared toward showing the audience how Microsoft's offerings work for [business customers](#) and those at other large organizations.

About 16,000 people are attending the Worldwide Partner Conference, Microsoft's annual gathering of some of its 640,000 partners worldwide. At the event, the partners - including resellers, distributors, consultants and more - learn about the roadmap for Microsoft's products in the year ahead.

Satya Nadella, president of Microsoft's Server and Tools Business, began Tuesday's keynote with three pieces of news:

- Windows Server 2012 will be released to manufacturers in August and be generally available in September.

- A Community Technology Preview version is available now of a set of new technologies that will run on top of Windows Server and Systems Center.

These new technologies will enable hosting service providers to deliver capabilities consistent with services running on Windows Azure, Microsoft's cloud-[computing platform](#). That includes high-density website hosting and [virtual machine](#) hosting with self-service user interfaces that service providers can use to service those websites and [virtual machines](#).

-A "Hyper-V Switch Program" for customers moving from Microsoft competitor VMware to Microsoft's Hyper-V. The program includes training and software tools.

It's been a few years since Microsoft execs first said that the company was "all in" on the cloud - a mantra that's been repeated often since.

Nadella re-emphasized that point Tuesday as he talked about how the company built Windows Azure and Windows Server as one continuous set, creating a "boundary-less data center powered by Windows."

Kirill Tatarinov, president of Microsoft's Business Solutions division, also emphasized the cloud, saying some 60 percent of Microsoft Dynamics CRM customers are choosing to use cloud services for their operations. Dynamics CRM is Microsoft's software for sales teams. Dynamics CRM Online launched in January 2011.

Separately, Vahe Torossian, corporate vice president of Microsoft's Worldwide Small and Midmarket Solutions and Partners Group, said in an interview Tuesday that the company is now aligning its strategy of getting into the cloud with executing on that strategy.

"The train has left the station," he said.

Torossian said Microsoft has 55,000 partners actively selling Microsoft cloud products each month.

And he said that, taken as a whole, Microsoft's three major online business software products have 80 million customers. They are Office 365, the online version of Microsoft's core productivity product; Windows Intune, a cloud service for PC security and management; and Dynamics CRM Online. The vast majority of the 80 million are Office 365 customers, Torossian said.

Eighty percent of small and medium-sized businesses that are buying cloud services are new to Microsoft. "It's a massive opportunity for us to engage and reach out to new customers," he said.

Some partners found Microsoft's enthusiasm for the cloud heartening while others thought that enthusiasm was more bluster than show - in at least some of the company's offerings.

Sasha Krsmanovic is director of marketing at Telerik, a company based in Sofia, Bulgaria, that also has offices in the U.S. It sells tools to help software developers create applications easier and faster, Krsmanovic said any new customers for Microsoft is good for Telerik.

"Only if there's a good and healthy ecosystem ... will we have developers to sell to," he said.

But the CEO of another company, a reseller of Microsoft cloud products, said Microsoft has been promising for years to deliver its enterprise resource planning, or ERP, software to the cloud.

A year ago, for instance, Microsoft said it was revealing "a path for its ERP customers to move to the cloud."

But so far, its Dynamics CRM offering is the only Dynamics product in the cloud. Others, such as Dynamics NAV (for supply chain and manufacturing management and Dynamics AX (for financial, human

resources and operations management) are not.

"It's a good thing that Microsoft is marketing 'the cloud' so people know about it. There's a level of comfort with it, a trust," said the CEO, who declined to give his or his company's name for fear of possible business repercussions. "But there isn't the level of delivery."

Which, as it happens, isn't a bad thing for his own business, given that people who now know more about the cloud sometimes turn to him for his customized cloud offerings.

"The longer Microsoft keeps doing that, the better for us," he said.

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