cloudControl Case Study

European Platform as a Service leader impresses analysts

How Analyst Relations has impacted cloudControl's business success

Summary

Cloud is one of the big disruptive forces in technology and platforms play a key role in its adoption.

cloudControl is the first European Application Platform as a Service provider. Building a strong Analyst Relations programme has helped cloudControl get on the radar of several analyst firms e.g. Gartner, Forrester, 451 Research and Bloor. This in turn helped them forge partnerships, drive brand awareness and create greater traction in the market.

Philipp Strube

Founder and CEO of cloudControl.

Industry: Cloud

Location:
Berlin, Germany
Palo Alto, USA

Challenges:
Forging Partnerships
Geographic Expansion
Business Growth
Entering Enterprise Market

Setting the scene

cloudControl is an innovative and fast growing technology provider based in Berlin, Germany. cloudControl offers an easy to use Platform as a Service under its own brand and White Label PaaS technology for 3rd parties. The company was founded in 2009 with the goal of providing a multilingual Platform as a Service. It is a privately held company and is backed by venture capital. cloudControl has grown into a company with, at this point in time, 20 employees, running 35,000 apps on its platform.

cloudControl's PaaS offering enables an easy entry into the Cloud for any company, ISV or agency developing and/or operating applications in the Cloud. The platform offers the scalability needed to stay flexible, ensures the availability of deployed applications and supports multiple programming languages (e.g. PHP, Java, Ruby, Python, Node.js) and more than 40 add-ons.

cloudControl was the first European PaaS provider to support each language and ecosystem natively. cloudControl offers a white label model for hosting providers, telcos and IaaS providers aiming to offer the full 'Cloud stack' including a PaaS offering to compete with the likes of AWS, Heroku/Salesforce,

Cloud Foundry and Red Hat. The product is enabling the agile application lifecycle, offering an 'app-store like' add-on marketplace for third party applications and services as well as a solution partner network.

cloudControl acquired dotCloud from Docker in August 2014, giving the company a strong presence in the USA. The addition of dotCloud doubled doubled the customer base and revenue of cloudControl.

"We started focussing on startups, SMEs and primarily developers. In the evolution of our company, we started targeting bigger companies as well. This has led to our White Label PaaS offering, which is very interesting for telcos, hosting companies and service providers with an IaaS offering. Customers are looking for suppliers that can offer the whole Cloud stack so having a PaaS offering on top of their IaaS is a key requirement which will become even more important as the Cloud market matures. Key benefits of a white label partnership with cloudControl are higher quality, faster time to market and lower initial investment than the alternative of implementing a PaaS layer on their own".

The Challenge

At a certain point in the life of a technology company, customers get bigger and more corporate and products will be treated as enterprise level solutions. You need to be prepared for the requirements corporate customers have and the different questions they will ask you.

When cloudControls' customers became bigger they started asking about the opinions of industry analysts. cloudControl figured out that not being mentioned by any of the big analyst firms was a problem. Sometimes the comment was: "I looked in the Gartner database and couldn't find you."

"I was under the impression that you build something cool and they find you and write about you, which is not the case obviously"

The leadership team decided they needed to fix this, ***cloudControl needed to be known by the analysts.*** Philipp Strube: "This is my first company. I had no idea how the analyst market works. I was under the impression that you build something cool and they find you and write about you. Which is not the case obviously. You need to be proactive with them. You have to make briefings, have to organise them. You have to be prepared for those briefings in a specific way".

The main trigger for starting Analyst Relations was a partnership discussion with a large European Telecom company. They really value the opinion of analysts. For this prospect alone cloudContol decided to work on being included in industry analysts' reports.

"We wanted to have more partnership discussions. Analysts knowing your company not only works in the sales processes but also when forming partnerships. We decided: the next time we talk to companies of this size, we can't hit this roadblock. **Decision makers in big companies care about analysts. That is why we invest in Analyst Relations**".

Key epiphanies

+ The bigger the companies you are selling to, the more important analysts become

+ Analysts help their clients, your enterprise prospects, make informed decisions about their IT strategy

+ Analysts need to know your company to be able to evaluate and ultimately recommend it to their customers

The Solution

"That is what Kea Company helped us with. They identified all the relevant analysts for us, then helped me prepare my presentation, and arranged the analyst briefings. I then had the briefing and we discussed feedback, evaluated, what went well, what didn't, improved the presentation. Kea makes sure we continuously update our relevant analysts" says Strube.

"We didn't have the experience ourselves. We needed someone to guide us. It's not only about having the relationship with the analysts, to have their ear. Kea has the experience of knowing what they want to hear, how they expect to receive the information, how to make an impression on the analysts. That has worked very well for us. "

"Kea Company shortened the learning curve dramatically. Picking the analysts is difficult for us, because we don't really know who is out there, what their field of expertise is. It would be a lot of footwork for us, to go through all the databases, websites and find the relevant analysts."

Giving the briefings yourself is important. Analysts get a good sense by discussing the company and its products with the leadership of the company. Strube: "Often there is some form of discussion, which in a briefing is not common. But analysts ask questions, state things. I see it as a sign of interest in what we are discussing".

"**By talking to analysts, I learned a lot, personally**. I didn't have a lot of experience with how enterprise customers really think. Analyst feedback shows where enterprise customers are coming from. Usually the reason they ask particular questions is because it are the things enterprise customers worry about".

Working with Kea

"The reason why we have results and have achieved results quite quickly is because Kea Company managed it for us" says cloudContol CEO Philipp Strube. "If we had tried it on our own, we would have to start from zero and we do everything from scratch. There would have been a lot of trial and error. And it would definitely have taken very long to get where we are now".

The other big benefit for cloudControl was getting their messaging right. Prior experience, with a PR agency, was not positive. The agency saw itself as responsible to distribute cloudControl's message, but not for crafting the messaging together with cloudControl. "But we needed someone who helped us get the message right. This is where the Kea approach is different. Kea did not only ask for our presentation and pitch deck. Kea helped us to get the briefing materials right, get our message spot on. This is key, because it helped us so much".

Value Added

+ Starting with an Analyst Relations programme involves a lot of legwork

+ There is great value in shortening the learning curve

+ Analysts can help you understand the thought processes of enterprise customers

The Alternative: Doing it ourselves

"Trying to do Analyst Relations by ourselves would have easily taken twice the time, even more probably. We didn't know AR, how the analyst business works. At some point in a company's life, customers get bigger, more corporate and your product will be treated as an enterprise level solution. You need to be prepared for the different questions they will ask you". The challenge is when to start with finding answers to these questions, and building relationships with industry analysts is one of the answers. **If you start too late, it is harder to get the results you need by the time you really need them.**

Time Investement

"The time we need to invest in AR is really very good for us. What I really like is that I only have to give the briefing. Kea Company takes care of everything. I get briefed on the background of the analyst that I'm talking with, the relevance of our company to their research, what emphasis we need to put in the briefing, everything. All the preparation is taken care of. Kea makes sure the analysts continuously get updates from us. I can focus on my strength which is explaining our product, technology and company in briefings. It is very easy to work with the Kea people".

Investors

"We leverage the analysts' recognition in several ways. Investors for instance value the valid feedback that analysts provide about companies". Analyst recognition is a valuable asset for a tech company. It helps in discussions with existing and new investors. Investors look at the valuation by the traction you have. Traction in terms of revenue, your customer base, user base, share of the market. Analyst recognition is one of the more prominent things to prove traction. It is hard to put a number to it, but it definitely helps with your valuation.

Share your news

"The acquisition of dotCloud was an excellent opportunity to update our analysts and the feedback has been very good. They agreed with us that acquiring dotCloud and doubling our business was a unique opportunity. After the initial round of briefing our analysts, we are now talking to them regularly. We can show them good development, all our business metrics are up, we have multiple new partnerships, the dotCloud acquisition. It all makes a very good story that resonates with the analysts."

Analyst Recognition
Named in Magic Quadrant for
Enterprise Application Platforms as a Service
by Gartner in January 2014.

Other mentions include 451 Research,
Bloor Research and Forrester Research

More info at www.whitelabelpaas.info/news

Forging partnerships

"The analyst recognition has helped when building partnerships as well. Recognition is important in partner discussions, it brings validation and a higher level of trust. cloudControl can prove it is known and recognized by analysts. It is valuable for partners who have not achieved analyst recognition. It is "indirect credibility" towards their customers and ecosystem. Our relationship with analysts is an added bonus in our relationship with partners".

More traction through credibility

White Label PaaS is a big strategic area for cloudControl. In the process of building out this value proposition, cloudControl engages a lot of different people who care about analyst recognition. "Being able to show that analysts know us has given us credibility in these discussions. I make this part of the very first presentation. It brings trust to the discussion. While we target big telecom providers and hosting providers, we also put a lot of effort in partnering with smaller companies who already have an infrastructure offering. Our White Label PaaS is a good match for them".

What would you advise your peers at other tech companies?

"It depends on your go-to-market strategy. If you have a B2B focus, find out if your market is covered by analysts. How do they call your market. Figure out who the relevant analysts are. "

+   When you are entering a new market

"Our strategy for market entry is to work with partners, hence our white label offering. Analyst recognition has a big impact in these discussions. It is highly relevant to work with analysts, potential partners value their opinion. Don't start from scratch, it will take you a lot of time, trial and error. "

+   Timing

"For us, the timing was just perfect. Kea Company doing a good job, our story being good, and the timing was just right. Everything came together and now we are in the first ever Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Application Platform as a Service from Gartner. And this is only the tangible result with one of the analyst firms. "

+   Why work with Kea Company

"Simple; it worked for us.

Usually I'm skeptical about the concept of consulting. If you are so good at something, why consult people instead of doing it yourself?

But especially where relationships are critical, it is a different story for me. Because you need these relationships before you make an impact. The analyst market is not very well understood by a lot of people. Nobody really knows how it works. It is mostly about relationships building. Relationships always take forever. This is why it makes sense to work with a firm that has a head start. For us, Kea Company works great. The results obviously speak for themselves."

As an upcoming technology provider you can trust Kea Company to match your business standards when it comes to developing an effective Analyst Relations programme. Whether kickstarting your AR programme from scratch, or looking to expand your existing capabilities long term, we have flexible solutions to fit your requirements.

You deliver the facts, **Kea delivers the influence**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about how Kea Company can help you achieve success in business, please contact our office nearest to you or visit **www.keacompany.com**. For a complete list of worldwide locations, visit **www.keacompany.com/contact/office-locator**.