"This has been a fantastic journey," said Cristian Mora, founder of Synergy Advisors. His Sammamish, Washington-based company helps enterprises achieve compliance for on-premises and cloud solutions. The journey Mora refers to is Synergy’s cloud and hybrid roadmap. Founded in 2011, the security consulting services company has managed to, in a short span of five years, ride the wave of the cloud to great success. To get there however required understanding, skill, and a little luck.

An opportunity to deliver value

When Mora first started his company, he focused on providing professional services around on-premises Microsoft identity and security technologies. Back then, Microsoft Azure Active Directory was still a twinkle in a coder’s eye. Enterprise Mobility Suite (EMS) lacked the “M.” Microsoft Intune was out of tune, in fact, not even a written tune. In spite of the state of cloud solutions back then, Mora could see the future rapidly approaching. “We started to see a need to go above and beyond just cloud collaboration to do security on top of those workloads,” said Mora.

Synergy had seen instances in which core functionalities provided by Microsoft customized solutions had hinted at the possibility and flexibility of the platform. This made the jump to secure cloud connectivity seem plausible and potentially very powerful. The hard part was convincing customers to buy into the idea of cloud security and compliance.
Overcoming customer skepticism

“Most of our customers were cloud-hesitant,” said Mora. “They didn’t have a clear understanding of how the cloud could deliver the same level of security as an on-premises solution.” Synergy had to show customers that they could utilize cloud services and still meet their regulatory needs. Microsoft played a big role in proving that.

When Microsoft announced different security features in Azure, especially EMS, it marked a big milestone in selling security.

“Instead of telling customers to implement technologies one by one to be more secure, Microsoft was saying to use its power and capacity to protect your solution instead.”

Cristian Mora, Founder of Synergy Advisors

Also, seeing solutions such as Microsoft Office 365 securely facilitate collaboration between organizations helped customers jump to the cloud and feel that they were making a safe bet to leverage such services.

Keeping up with the Joneses

One of the simultaneous bonuses and challenges of the cloud journey involves the fluidity of features and technology. “We no longer can have a person who only knows about a single topic,” said Mora. “It’s a continuous learning process for both customer and service provider.” Organizations unwilling to make that change struggle to survive. To avoid that pitfall, Synergy keeps consultants up to date with the frequent trainings and uses social media to let customers know about new functionality.
“We are in constant contact with Microsoft product groups so we know the latest and greatest technologies.”

Laura Bailey, Business Operations and Marketing Manager

“We can then share and demonstrate our expertise to customers.”

The company also developed its own training practice as a lucrative service where customers can come and learn about new features in services such as in Azure. These classes could be for current customers or ones who want to improve their knowledge and learn a bit more before making a decision about a purchase. The way Synergy sees it, the more you can get closer to technology, the more you can differentiate yourself.

The Microsoft advantage

Synergy could have gone elsewhere for a cloud services provider, but chose to stick with Microsoft. Why?

“Microsoft has the most comprehensive security umbrella out on the market. It offers end-to-end information protection for identity, devices, applications, and data. No one else can provide that.”

Cristian Mora, Founder of Synergy Advisors

For Synergy, the advantage is about consistency and simplicity as well. When the company approaches a customer, having EMS as a solution from one vendor becomes more attractive to the alternative of trying to integrate multiple solutions from a collection of vendors. “They have all that they need, the collaboration and security infrastructure,” said Mora. “So customers invest on a single suite instead of having to buy and maintain the relationship with different vendors.”

Microsoft also offers Synergy a level of support, as in “I
got your back” support, that gives Synergy confidence with customers. “We know that they’re out to help us succeed all the time,” said Mora. “We can’t say the same about other cloud providers. They just don’t deliver the same service, support, or partnership you expect to have.”

Growth in leaps and bounds

The move to incorporate cloud services into its wheelhouse of services has proven quite lucrative for Synergy.

“We are an organization that started with just a handful of people and we are more than 100 right now in less than 5 years,”

*Cristian Mora, Founder of Synergy Advisors*

That helps explain why the company is in the midst of opening offices in Latin America. The company hopes to grow the business by 100 percent in that market in less than two years.

Some of that growth will come from managed services, a relatively new area for security.

“We have the opportunity to be there as trusted advisor and help them to continue on this journey. It’s a new door to open to get us providing services to people.”

*Cristian Mora, Founder of Synergy Advisors*

In addition, the company has expanded from enterprises to Corporate and SMB customers. “It’s a fantastic opportunity for system integration partners like us that are always looking for upsell opportunities;” said Mora. “We’re not just talking to them about the same thing over and over again, but keeping them up to date. It makes it more fun but also more profitable.”

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