



# Building the Leading AWS Partner in EMEA

**HeleCloud enables businesses to transform, become more competitive, and grow. By providing business and technology consultancy, engineering and Cloud-based managed services, HeleCloud helps companies of all sizes make the journey to the Cloud, where only sky is the limit. But how did it all start? In the first part of 'Meet the People behind HeleCloud', Dob tells the story of HeleCloud.**

Before his HeleCloud days, Dob was at AWS, one of the first employees in EMEA. "It was a great company to work for, one in its very infancy. We were on a mission to change the world. Cloud computing was niche, misunderstood, feared. Yet to those willing to listen, there was so much to tell, so many compelling reasons to consider it, so many opportunities to do business better. It took a while but today AWS take pride in millions of amazing customers." says Dob.

## Dob's AWS Journey

AWS has built an immensely scalable, powerful and still fast-growing business, where IT is a utility. Dob recalls the old AWS story that draws analogy to electricity as a utility service:

"In 19th century Europe, there were no power plants, and there was no power grid; every business needed their own power generator – they had to invest in one, and then maintain it, put fuel in it, etc, alongside everything they did as their core business. From the perspective of modern Europe, this really begs the question what business were these companies in; it seems that everyone was in the utilities business and producing electricity, besides running their core business. This is inefficient, so in 20th century Europe countries and organisations built power plants and established the power grid. Today, utility companies produce electricity, and banks focus on what they do best – they manage investments and loans, and consume electricity from the utility companies, paying only for what they use."

"Indeed, Cloud computing is very similar: unless IT is your core business, you consume it from someone that does it really well and can provide it as a utility service. AWS only does Cloud. Banks can focus on managing finances, on their core business, and consume Cloud from the industry leader. Banks only care – and should only care – about what provides competitive advantage to them and to their customers, and not about what is commoditised, and everyone has access to it. Banks can finally do finance, not datacentres."

"AWS provides powerful utility IT services. It is designed to be an organisation to operate at scale and it is a general-purpose IT utility company. However, someone needs to design "appliances" to make the "electricity", or in this case - the Cloud, work for you in the way that you want it to work; to add business value; in a way that is contextually aligned with your specific needs. This is similar to you having access to electricity but still needing a desk lamp, or a laptop, or a fridge to do something of use for you with this electricity. That's where we saw the need for companies that contextualise the standard general purpose Cloud to the context of each individual Cloud customers; that's why HeleCloud was born – to serve such Cloud customers, alongside AWS."

## The two main challenges when talking to AWS customers

There are two main challenges that Dob used to see when talking to AWS customers: first, they needed help to transform their technical estates, but they didn't know where to start, and what to do next; second, Cloud is not just a technology tool – it is a mindset, and one that needs to be established at the business level; it requires a vision, a strategy, and leadership to implement effectively. "It is because of these two challenges that we came up with the early portfolio of services at HeleCloud", comments Dob.

Existing AWS partners in those days were typically organisations that were very capable and had a lot of history but possessed mainly knowledge and capabilities in traditional technologies. They had a lot of legacy. In order to successfully transform, they had to cannibalise their existing business models and create a new ones – radically different and Cloud-native. To date, many of them have not made this step yet; they continue to struggle. Such unconstrained and able to leverage Cloud capabilities to the full are only economically viable to organisations that are born in the Cloud, as they do not drag any luggage from the past with them, into the future."

## Dob and the First Team Members

Dob shared his thoughts with Paul, who used to coach rugby at the local club, and their sons were schoolmates, besides spending time together on the pitch. Watching the games from the side, Dob and Paul were discussing Cloud business. They created a business plan that clearly defined a European, Cloud-native, AWS-focused business.

Dob, originally from Bulgaria, called one of his old colleagues and friends from his HP days – Stefan, who had just successfully transformed and handed over to new owners a sizeable IT and Business Process Outsourcing business. The stars aligned, as Stefan was just considering his next venture. He had strong IT background, and at the same time the reputation and experience of running and scaling businesses. Stefan soon became involved as a co-founder, investor, and senior executive in the business.



“Now we were on a mission. In order to be the most capable partner for our future customers and to be a leading AWS partner, we had to acquire a lot of knowledge and skills. AWS launches more than 15 new features every single day, so we really needed to be on top of our game. We needed to be honest to ourselves and customers, so we decided to focus on the one thing we could be true experts in – the AWS platform.”

“This was a business built to grow, last, and perform. Finances are in the foundation of such businesses, so Stefan and I called Alex, whom we knew from HP, too; he used to be the financial director for the region there.” It turned out that Alex was also considering his next venture. He decided to invest in the business and become the CFO.”

## HeleCloud's Growth

As HeleCloud continued to build Cloud solutions and empower Cloud adopters, it grew rapidly. But it could go even faster. After a few conversations with potential investors, the HeleCloud executive leadership team, found the right partner to accelerate their journey – the Business Growth Fund (BGF). Duncan McIntyre was unanimously appointed the Chairman of the Board. A few weeks later, HeleCloud expanded in the Netherlands, building upon the heritage of OlinData.

And before we knew it, we were a mid-sized scale-up expanding geographically. That was going to be our trajectory going forward. We were ready for the next stage.” Five years on, HeleCloud is a company of about 130 people, all passionate and excited about Customer success in the Cloud. We've got our unique identity and culture that underpin it. We constantly learn and develop; we aggregate, synthesise, and generate new knowledge and skills. That's what's required at the forefront of the Cloud revolution; that's in our DNA.

In 2020, after many years of partnering together, HeleCloud acquired DataStork. This allowed the company to design and develop Cloud-native software in house.

“We are upfront and honest with our customers: we work with them to deliver value; we don't engage if we can't. We are in pursuit of customer value, and it's built upon our AWS knowledge, skills, history of successful delivery, and trust,” says Dob. “We will continue to be at the forefront; that's where we belong. We've developed unique and powerful, well-integrated Cloud infrastructure, software and operations capabilities. Cloud is not just a datacentre; Cloud is a lot more. Infrastructure in the Cloud is code, and Applications in the Cloud orchestrate business processes with Cloud as the operating system. Cloud operations manage such infrastructure and applications through automation, proactively, and in a way that enhances capabilities daily, as AWS innovate. We don't just write applications or configure infrastructure in silos; our teams work in unison to a single goal – customer value.”