10/3/2010

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Advice as of the 2010 HBS case

Plaz

Jeff Wilke

And the Amazon Web Services Team

Amazon Inc.

Dear Amazon Web Services team,

I think you are doing a great job with Amazon Web Services (AWS). You started the service to make sure of your “spare” computing power, which you kept online to handle spikes in traffic to the site. Since then the system has likely caused Amazon to think deeply about how your computer systems are run. You run crucial parts of your business on AWS, because it is so easy to start up and scale new services.

I think you are correct in only offering raw computing power, and letting other companies build services on top of it. This is somewhat confusing to people unfamiliar with cloud computing. The truth is your service is for developers, not end-users. Many people have likely used services built on AWS, such as GridView, Dropbox, Basecamp. Organizations that develop their own line of business applications, such as Swisstopo, the Swiss Federal Office of Topography, have also built applications on top of AWS. Many end-users will not, and should not recognize that the application is built upon AWS.

Security and availability guarantees will continue to hold back cloud computing adoption. You can build trust in the service by publicizing that your retail operations rely on AWS. If AWS goes down, so does your operations, so you have an obligation beyond the SLA to keep the service online. You could help bolster security by publicizing more about the physical security measures you employ to protect AWS servers.

–Michael Plasmeier