Microsoft Donates $1 Billion in Cloud Services to Nonprofits, Universities

News Staff | January 25, 2016

In what seems a waterfall release of free services, Microsoft Philanthropies has revealed intentions to donate $1 billion in cloud tools to universities and nonprofits.

The word comes from Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, who on Jan. 19 lauded the action as a new and vital resource for social and economic change. The resources are calculated to touch more than 70,000 organizations in a swift three-year span, with as much as $350 million donated in 2016. The reasoning, Nadella writes in a company blog post, is to confront an emerging digital divide, one rooted in the ecosystem of advanced technologies like predictive analytics and big data. Many nonprofits and research groups struggle to afford the tools, and Nadella said an intervention was the only foreseeable remedy.

"Philanthropy is a start," Nadella said, "but to truly harness the public cloud for public good, businesses, governments and NGOs must come together with a shared vision and relentless passion to improve the human condition and drive new growth equally."

Notwithstanding charitable ambitions, the donation may have financial benefits as it seeds and secures new academic and nonprofit customers in a try-before-you-buy

experience. Microsoft, Google and Amazon Web Services are all embroiled in a battle to be the leader in cloud services, and generating greater adoption may start with such an investment.

But whatever the results, Nadella — who's nearing the two-year mark as Microsoft's CEO — has directed staff to open up the Microsoft Azure Cloud so organizations can benefit from company data centers around the world for computing, storage and app development. Atop these offerings, the measure will furnish a host of CRM, business intelligence and predictive analytics tools while answering a few connectivity challenges.

Microsoft has committed itself to a "last-mile broadband" initiative to spread the digital reach of its cloud services in unconnected communities. Specifics are vague on this front; however, a company release did mention public-private partnerships with governments and went as far to enumerate expectations of 20 such projects in 15 countries by the middle of 2017.

For tangible examples of what results might look like, Microsoft pointed to its partnership with the São Paulo Research Foundation's Biodiversity Research Program. The foundation used its cloud technologies — coupled with 700 wireless sensors — to study impacts of climate change on communities supported by rainforests. Similarly, in Botswana, Microsoft has collaborated with various health and innovation groups to manage digital health records and deliver specialized medicines.

http://www.govtech.com/computing/Microsoft-Donates-1-Billion-in-Cloud-Services-to-Nonprofits-Universities.html