

Tech Marketer's Guide

# Cloud products and services

How to engage and market to cloud buyers

**C**loud remains a high priority for CIOs and IT teams everywhere. Yet, the focus has shifted. The pandemic ushered in a new era of growth and adoption for cloud services and infrastructure, forcing CIOs and their teams to prioritize operations. Now, businesses face macroeconomic challenges that are changing how business leaders think about adoption and integration. Internal pressures around cost overruns and cloud optimization require IT teams to shift from an operations mindset to demonstrating the business value of cloud.

**Public cloud services  
2027 worldwide  
spending forecast**

**\$1.35  
trillion**

The burden is on tech marketers to help them show the value. The bright side is there are no signs cloud spending will slow down. According to [IDC's Worldwide Software and Public Cloud Spending Guide](#), worldwide spending

on public cloud services is forecast to reach \$1.35 trillion in 2027. From a business level perspective, Foundry's [2024 Cloud Computing Study](#) found that the average

budget organizations are allocating to cloud computing is currently \$99 million.

"Cloud infrastructure spending remains resilient in the face of macroeconomic challenges," said Kuba Stolarski, research vice president for IDC's infrastructure systems, platforms, and technologies group, in a statement. Eileen Smith, program vice president for Data & Analytics at IDC states, "Looking forward, the cloud model remains incredibly well positioned to serve customer needs for innovation in application development and deployment, including as data,

**"Cloud infrastructure spending remains resilient in the face of macroeconomic challenges."**

**Kuba Stolarski**, Research Vice President, Computing Platforms and Cloud Infrastructure, IDC

# 70%

**of IT decision-makers say their organization defaults to cloud-based services when upgrading or purchasing new technical capabilities.**

artificial intelligence/machine learning (AI/ML), and edge needs continue to define the forefront of innovation.”

To better understand how the purchase process for cloud services is distinct from those of other technologies, Foundry analyzed research from two recent buyer's journey studies—[Customer Engagement](#) and [Role & Influence of the Technology Decision-Maker](#). This white paper aims to help guide tech marketers around the latest buyer's journey trends. Here, we'll explore who is involved in cloud purchase decisions, the content types and sources buyers turn to, and how they want to be engaged in digital, in-person, and sales settings.

## The current cloud landscape

The results show that the expedient adoption of cloud computing is beginning to settle. Since the pandemic, we saw organizations accelerating their migration to the cloud (69%), however that number has dropped to 63% today,

indicating that businesses have made their primary shift and are now in the stage of maintenance, upgrades, and realizing the business value of the solutions they implemented. Still, there is no question that organizations are continuing to move IT applications to the cloud. Today, 36% of organization's cloud-based applications were purpose built for the cloud (cloud native applications) versus a migration. When asked about the percentage of new applications that will be purpose-built for the cloud over the next 12 months, that number jumps to 42%. Plus, more than two-thirds (70%) of tech decision-makers say their organization defaults to cloud-based services when upgrading or purchasing new technical capabilities.

Yet, while adoption is settling, investment is only increasing. About one-third (30%) of an organization's total IT budget is allocated to cloud computing. With the average total IT investment of \$330 million, that means the average budget allocated to cloud spend is around \$99 million. Over the next year, 65% of IT decision-makers expect their cloud spending to increase, with that number jumping to 72% for enterprise organizations.

Investment is complex, though, and there are a few signals tech marketers should be aware of when it comes to an organization's spending on cloud services and products. Close to two-thirds (63%) of IT decision-makers agree cloud capabilities helped

28

IT: 15  
LOB: 13

Average number of influencers involved in cloud purchases.

their organization achieve increased and sustainable revenue over the past year, which has increased from 50% last year, and is 65% for enterprise organizations and only 54% for SMBs.

The complicating factor is cloud costs. If not tied to detailed, strategic business plans or a comprehensive cloud strategy, further cloud investments could balloon a company's balance sheet and threaten the increased and sustainable revenue many have achieved. Tech decision-makers acknowledged that controlling costs was the number one challenge stalling cloud adoption, followed by concern about long-term cloud cost.

### Understanding a complex purchase process

It's no surprise that cloud purchases have become increasingly complex. Sixty-five percent of tech decision-makers agree on that fact. Its ubiquity across

the business, combined with costs, puts it front and center with executives, finance teams, and business leaders alike. Each has its objective on business alignment around cloud adoption and integration. So, it makes sense that the average number of influencers in cloud purchases has ballooned from 21 in 2017 to 23 in 2020, taking its highest jump to 28 in 2023 and this year. The makeup of the purchasing team is pretty evenly split between IT (15) and line of business (13).

Each year, Foundry's research measures leadership throughout the purchase process, assessing the involvement of 18 different job titles across seven decision stages. While top IT executives have the most or one of the most influential voices in five out of the seven stages, it's not surprising to see other roles play essential parts throughout, especially with such a large purchasing team.

We see specific roles dominate in typical stages. For example, CEOs are most influential when determining the business need and authorizing the purchase, where CFOs also dominate. CTOs step in when determining the business need, evaluating products and services, and selling internally.

IT management and architects are prominent in determining technical requirements, evaluating products and

### Obstacles stalling cloud adoption

- Budget/cost **(48%)**
- Security and/or compliance concerns **(35%)**
- Integration/migration challenges **(34%)**

## Leadership throughout the cloud purchase process

Key **1** **2** **3**

	Determine the business need	Determine technical requirements	Evaluate products or services	Recommend and select vendors	Sell internally	Authorize and approve	Post-sales engagement
CIO or top IT executive	<b>38%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>26%</b>
CEO	<b>31%</b>	14%	11%	14%	17%	<b>35%</b>	9%
CTO	<b>28%</b>	<b>31%</b>	26%	<b>28%</b>	<b>27%</b>	22%	<b>22%</b>
CSO/CISO or top security executive	26%	26%	25%	22%	16%	22%	17%
CFO	22%	12%	13%	14%	17%	<b>38%</b>	9%
Chief Digital Officer or equivalent	22%	19%	18%	19%	17%	19%	14%
COO	22%	11%	14%	13%	17%	21%	14%
IT/networking management	22%	<b>32%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>23%</b>	23%	<b>25%</b>
Line of business management	22%	19%	21%	19%	17%	21%	<b>22%</b>
Business relationship manager	21%	16%	18%	18%	16%	13%	18%
Chief Data Officer or equivalent	19%	19%	23%	22%	21%	19%	16%
CMO or top marketing executive	19%	13%	15%	13%	13%	15%	12%
Architect	18%	<b>32%</b>	<b>31%</b>	24%	15%	6%	20%
Data scientist	17%	19%	21%	16%	14%	8%	17%
Chief AI Officer	15%	19%	17%	12%	10%	7%	13%
IT/networking staff	15%	28%	29%	16%	11%	7%	<b>26%</b>
Engineer	14%	25%	29%	17%	9%	3%	<b>22%</b>
Security management	13%	25%	21%	21%	18%	18%	18%

services, and selecting vendors. Engineers are far more involved when evaluating products or services, and security staff play an important role during product evaluation. However, when it comes to post-sales engagement, the CIO, IT staff, and IT management all take a leadership role.

Even as buying teams grow, the findings remain consistent. In a complex landscape, domain specialists are relied on to lead throughout the purchase process alongside others outside of IT to make a purchase that benefits everyone. Tech marketers would do well to understand the key stakeholders

### Tech marketer takeaway

It's not a one size fits all. Be sure to understand the key stakeholders at each stage of the purchase process and tailor engagement to those individuals.

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## What influences vendor selection

Tailored messaging and engagement are just part of the equation, though. With greater scrutiny around cloud investment decisions, IT decision-makers (63%) are looking to vendors to help them develop the business case around investment in their technology. Showing business value is especially important as the purchase process is most likely to stall during determining the business need, evaluation, and determining technical requirements.

**74%**

of cloud computing buyers are more likely to consume content from trusted brands.

And those that show value will win, regardless of whether they're an existing cloud vendor. When asked what type of vendor a business would seek to purchase from, 54% said they'd seek to purchase from an existing vendor and 46% from a new

vendor. Close to half (42%) said they'd buy from a new vendor because the vendor or product is more innovative or feature-rich.

While cloud purchasers are open to the vendor who will provide the most value, certain aspects influence vendor selection—brand awareness being one of

them. It influences everything from content engagement to making the shortlist. Seventy-four percent are more likely to consume content from trusted brands. When making the shortlist, 77% say a known or trusted brand is more likely to be added. Nearly the same amount (73%) agree that when all stakeholders know a brand, it makes the internal sell-through process easier. Brand reputation also plays a strong role in vendor selection. When making purchase decisions, 74% say that technology vendor reputation is one of the top factors they consider.

Of course, effective sales follow-up also influences who gets the business. More than two-thirds of cloud IT decision-makers say that the vendor who responds to their questions quickly and thoughtfully usually gets the business. In fact, most cloud buyers expect a response to their inquiry within an average of 16.5 hours, and 21% expect a response the same day or within six hours.

When asked what most prompted cloud buyers to respond to vendor outreach, the primary reason was because the vendor was knowledgeable about their business or specific challenges. That was closely followed by the vendor sharing valuable content or information with them or describing features or capabilities that stood out from competitors. Honesty, respect, and timing also impact a cloud

buyer's willingness to respond. Peers have a strong influence as well, as 75% are more likely to respond to outreach from a tech vendor if they know a colleague or peer is already using their technology.

So, the most valuable thing a vendor can do is show their value by knowing the customer's challenges or demonstrating a clear product fit. That, plus a dose of honoring one's time, goes a long way to winning the business.

### Marketers have some work to do

**85%**

of cloud computing-focused IT buyers say it's challenging to find high quality content.

**46%**

say that the work-related content they downloaded over the past 6-12 months provided them with value.

## Delivering value through content engagement

It's not that cloud buyers are unwilling to share their information for access to content. In fact, 93% said they're willing to register for content from a technology vendor. And they're willing to register for a variety of it. Top content types include product testing and analyst research, followed closely by vendor presentations, product demos, case studies, and technology news.

The problem lies within the value that content provides cloud buyers.

- 85% of cloud computing-focused IT buyers say it is challenging to find high-quality content.
- Only a little more than half (46%) of the work-related content they downloaded provided cloud buyers value over the past 6-12 months.

To overcome this disconnect, tech marketers will want to tailor their content more specifically to buyers, especially because 96% of cloud buyers are interested

### Tech marketer takeaway

Provide value to customers by understanding their challenges, providing detailed product information, and always showing respect for their time.

### **Cloud buyers prefer content tailored by:**

- Industry **(61%)**
- Technology platforms already installed at their organization **(48%)**
- Job responsibilities **(29%)**

in it. When asked how they'd prefer the content to be tailored, the responses highlighted opportunities for tech marketers to deliver what IT decision-makers are looking for. The top way they'd like content to be tailored is by industry (61%), followed by being based on the technology platform already installed at their organization (48%).

The same can be said for content in advertising. When researching solutions, cloud buyers (92%) will take additional actions after seeing an advertisement for technology solutions, like contacting a vendor or channel partner (57%), conducting further online research (51%), and consuming content on a vendor's website (48%). The caveat is that for cloud buyers to take that action, the ad must address their current challenges or business objectives (52%). Similar to content tailoring, the majority of cloud buyers (93%) are interested in ads specifically tailored to their needs, primarily by their industry (52%) and technologies in use (42%).

Marketers should also note the information that cloud tech buyers find most interesting during each stage of the purchase process. Without a doubt, tech buyers want to know the business value of the technology, as noted in six out of the seven stages of the purchase process. During the beginning stages, buyers are interested in new tech implementation versus outsourcing, and the pain points that tech addresses are beneficial when determining the business need. Once buyers get to the middle phases, they want to know what's needed to deploy and support the technology in terms of skills and roles. Finally, regarding the later stages of the process, tech buyers are most interested in information about a subscription-based purchase model versus capital expenditure and the estimated ROI.

### **Content consumption trends**

During the purchase process, cloud tech buyers download an average of six pieces of content, and the majority of them will consume it within four days. Forty-one percent will consume it on the same day.

Buyers rely upon various sources for cloud content, but technology content sites are the most highly regarded year over year, with analyst firms close in preference this year. That said, cloud buyers also pay significant attention to white papers and webinars. The good news for marketers is that their own



### **Buyers rely on various information sources for cloud content**

1. Technology content sites
2. White papers
3. Webcasts/webinars
4. Technology vendors (via vendor website)
5. Technology vendors (via phone, email, video conference)

company websites and information through phone, email, video conference, or in-person meetings are among the top-ranked content sources. The key message here is that content sources range.

Not surprisingly, different sources assume more or less importance at different stages, with an average of seven used in the purchase process. Though, an interesting aspect of this year's research is that technology vendors, in varying capacities, are among the top five influencing sources at every stage of the purchase process. They exert their strongest influence when determining technical requirements, taking the top three

spots; however, that's not to diminish their influence across the rest of the stages.

During the business need determination phase, analyst firms, peers inside their company, and technology content sites are the most valuable information sources. During the evaluation phase, technology vendors assume the most significant prominence, followed close by white papers, tech content sites, and analyst firms. And when recommending vendors, the most influential sources are tech vendor websites and analyst firms. But as buyers move into the later stages of the decision process, their preference shifts, with peers inside their company being the top source relied upon for the selling internally and authorization stages.

Preferred content types also differ depending on the buyer's stage in the journey. For cloud purchases, product tests, and demos are near the top of the list at every stage. Vendor presentations also make the top five list for five of the seven stages. Analyst research comes to the fore when selecting vendors but then plays much less of a role. Overall,

### **Tech marketer takeaway**

Cloud buyers rely on vendor websites when determining technical requirements and evaluating products and services. Make sure your content is up to date and appropriately tailored to the individuals involved in these stages.

**Content types relied upon by cloud-focused IT decision-makers:**

- Technology news
- Product demo/product literature
- Product testing/reviews/opinions
- Analyst research
- Feature article about technologies

technology news is one of the main types of content tech buyers rely on during the purchase process and takes prominence when determining the business need and technical requirements. Peer presentations and ROI tools also have high perceived value when selling internally. After finalizing the sale, how-to guides and product demos are among the preferred types of content.

**Keeping tech buyers' attention amongst the noise**

The abundance of content available to tech buyers makes engagement more difficult for tech marketers. It takes engagement across multiple mediums to grab tech buyers' attention, with audio, video, and events among them.

Nearly all cloud tech buyers (97%) watch tech-related videos, with industry research/tech analyst reports being the top they're likely to watch. They are also likely to watch in-depth product reviews, live coverage of news events/tech news reports, and interviews with industry experts.

Podcasts are a dominant way people, cloud-focused IT decision-makers included, consume information. Sixty-seven percent say they listen to business-related podcasts primarily to learn about new or emerging technology.

In either case, ensure your audio or video is succinct to catch tech buyers' attention. The average amount of time they're willing to spend on online video content ranges from 10 to 17 minutes, with in-depth product reviews, webcasts, and interviews with industry experts holding their attention the longest. The average desired length of time for a podcast was 13 minutes.

Events have long played a role in connecting with and between IT decision-makers. Yet, there continues to be a willingness to lean into different formats,

**Tech marketer takeaway**

Create consistent and relevant content in a variety of formats. It takes engagement across multiple mediums to grab cloud buyers' attention, with audio, video, and events among them.

in-person or virtual. Sixty-three percent of cloud buyers said they'd be more likely to attend in-person industry events in the next year. At the same time, 74% said that given the ease of attending, virtual events will continue to be an important source of information. And 96% have attended an event in both formats within the last six to 12 months. When asked what types, trainings and workshops took the top spot, followed by one-day conferences and tradeshow.

# 96%

of cloud-focused IT decision-makers have attended an in-person or virtual event in the past 6-12 months

### Primary types attended

- Training/workshop **(81%)**
- One day conference **(79%)**
- One day tradeshow **(67%)**

## Key takeaways

- Cloud is still a major priority for businesses and IT leaders; however, the focus has shifted to how investments are made through a comprehensive cloud strategy rather than simply continuing broad adoption as cost overruns become increasingly threatening.
- Ballooning buying teams means tech marketers should dive deeper into who is involved at each stage of the purchase process and understand how best to engage them in those stages.
- CIOs and IT teams everywhere are being asked to demonstrate the business value of cloud purchases. The vendors who can help align buying teams on product value to business objectives will win.
- Tech buyers want tailored content, whether they're being served an advertisement or downloading a case study. Tech marketers who note how tech buyers want their content tailored and the topics that interest them most will have a better chance of grabbing their attention and ultimately winning their business.
- A variety of information sources and formats are used by cloud-focused decision-makers throughout the technology purchase process. Create a wide range of assets that speak to multiple titles as these individuals and the format they rely upon varies depending on the stage of the purchase process.

## Connect with cloud buyers

Foundry's editorial brands are at the forefront of cloud related coverage, arming IT leaders and professionals with the tools and information needed to develop and expand upon their organizations approach to cloud adoption. Explore Foundry's B2B brands that cover cloud computing topics:

### CIO

#### Business technology leadership

CIOs,  
Business execs

- 
- IT strategy
  - IT leadership
  - Digital transformation
  - IT governance
  - Project management
  - Certifications
  - BI/analytics
  - **Cloud computing**
  - Artificial Intelligence
  - ERP
  - Healthcare IT
  - CRM
  - Skills and training
  - Careers/jobs

### CSO

#### Business risk leadership

CSOs, CISOs,  
Enterprise security decision-makers

- 
- Hacking
  - Data breaches
  - Cyber attacks
  - Careers/jobs
  - Network security
  - Malware
  - Passwords
  - Ransomware
  - Privacy
  - Windows security
  - **Cloud security**
  - Authentication
  - Compliance
  - Identity management
  - Phishing

### COMPUTERWORLD

#### Making technology work for business

Enterprise IT,  
management,  
LOB, SMB

- 
- Collaboration
  - Future of work
  - **Cloud computing**
  - Productivity software
  - Small business
  - Browsers
  - Blockchain
  - Business applications
  - IT management
  - IoT
  - Windows
  - Careers/jobs
  - Healthcare IT
  - Office Software

### InfoWorld

#### Building the next-gen enterprise

Developers,  
IT architects

- 
- Software development
  - **Cloud computing**
  - AI/machine learning
  - NoSQL
  - Big data analytics
  - Open source
  - Careers/training
  - APIs
  - DevOps
  - Agile methodology
  - Serverless computing
  - Microservices
  - Enterprise architecture
  - Kubernetes

### NETWORKWORLD

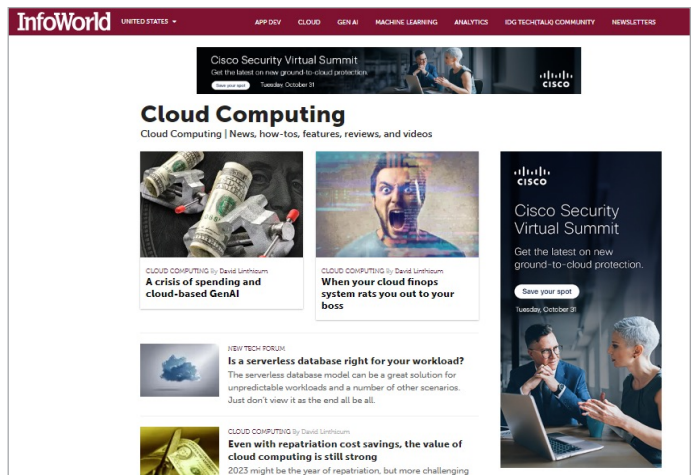
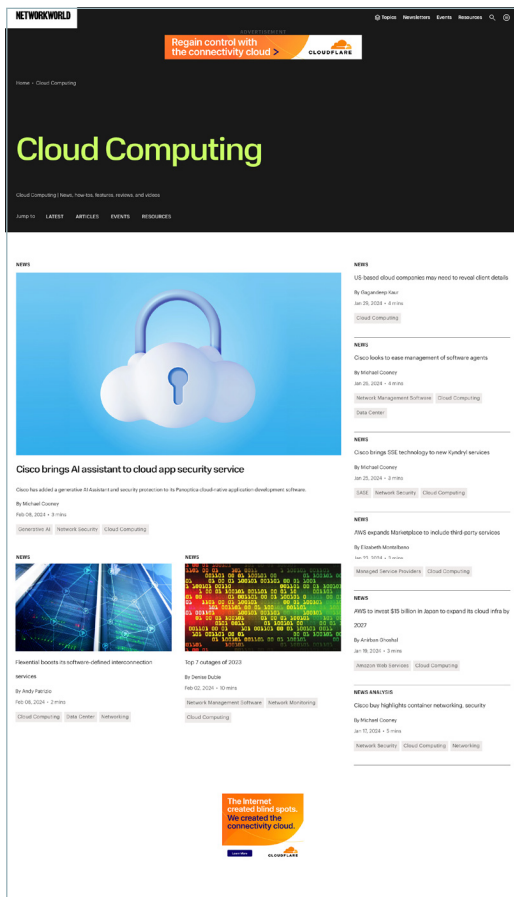
#### From the data center to the edge

Network management, data center managers

- 
- Networking
  - Data center
  - Internet of things
  - Storage
  - SASE
  - Linux
  - SD-WAN
  - Servers
  - VPNs
  - Virtualization
  - Windows server
  - **Hybrid/Multicloud**
  - SDN
  - Backup/DR
  - 5G wireless
  - Data-center-as-a-service

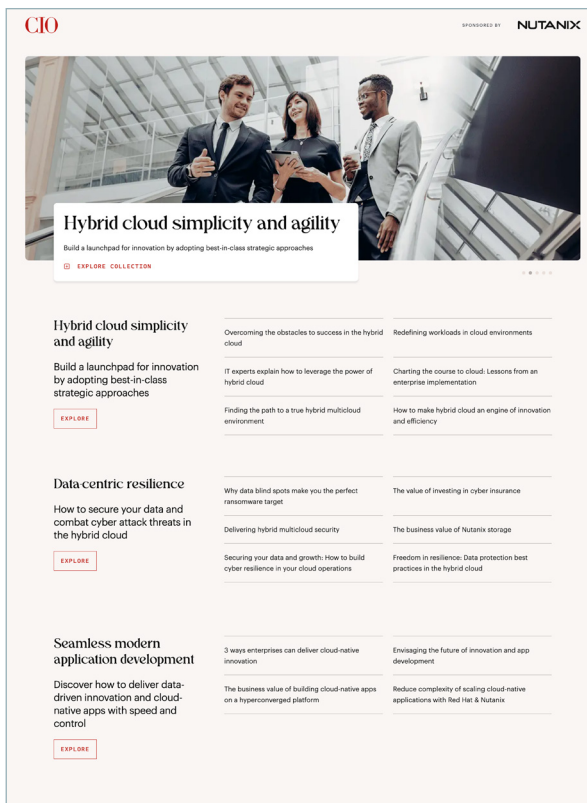
## Cloud computing topic sponsorship

Increase brand awareness through a sponsorship of the 'Cloud computing' topic pages across Foundry's award winning B2B brand sites. These month-long sponsorships include guaranteed impressions and an editorial newsletter sponsorship to maximize engagement within marketers' target audience.



## Educate through organized storytelling

Foundry's BrandHub creates a brand-to-demand native experience. The BrandHub is designed for client storytelling—nurturing a target audience from brand awareness to demand generation—integrated with the third-party credibility of a Foundry premium brand. ITDMs consume educational resources in one trusted location, no matter their stage in the buying journey.



- Co-branded with trusted B2B tech editorial brands
- Original content collection aligned to topics and buying process
- Intuitive and immersive quality UX with multi-format content
- Multiple uses: Global, local, partner, multiple product groups, and more
- Branded promotions across Foundry's editorial brand ecosystem
- Exposed and engaged users are nurtured for deeper engagement and conversion
- Turnkey: Dedicated production team with established process and track record for seamless execution

## Engage with cloud decision-makers where they are

Leveraging 50+ years of Foundry rich media brand industry expertise and relationships, our unique event content is delivered through the trusted lens of our world-class family of brands.

Ranging from multi-day educational symposiums and prestigious awards programs to intimate roundtable discussions, Foundry and IDC tailors the event type to deliver on audience objectives and needs.

## Event formats



### Leadership events and awards

Thought leadership events give you access to engage with over 200+ executive IT and security leaders



### Roundtables and dinners

Virtual or in-person discussions with 7+ executives



### Virtual summits

Virtually connect with 400+ powerful IT buyers



### Custom events

Bespoke events to fit your marketing strategy

### Topics covered

- AI and Machine learning
- CIO
- Cloud
- CSO
- Digital innovation
- Data and analytics
- Data center and storage
- Leadership
- Future of work
- Security

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**Find it all on** [foundryco.com](https://foundryco.com)

## About Foundry

Foundry's vision is to make the world a better place by enabling the right use of technology, because we believe that the right use of technology can be a powerful force for good.

Foundry (an IDG, Inc. company) is a trusted and dependable editorial voice, creating quality content to generate knowledge, engagement and deep relationships with our community of the most influential technology and security decision-makers. Our premium media brands, including CIO®, Computerworld®, CSO®, InfoWorld®, Macworld®, Network World®, PCWorld® and Tech Hive®, engage a quality audience of the most powerful technology buyers with essential guidance on the evolving technology landscape.

Our trusted brands inform our global data intelligence platform to identify and activate purchasing intent, powering our clients' success. Our marketing services create custom content with marketing impact across video, mobile, social and digital. We simplify complex campaigns that fulfill marketers' global ambitions seamlessly, with consistency that delivers quality results and wins awards. Additional information about Foundry is available at [foundryco.com](https://foundryco.com).