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Innovation All-Star – Private Company: Skytap

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If Seattle is Cloud City, then Skytap is helping companies find their piece of the cloud.

The Seattle-based company led by Thor Culverhouse helps companies move their IT systems into the cloud. It provides a platform for developers to test their applications to make sure they work before they go live with their changes. Think of it as a lab in the cloud.

The company also functions as a broker for the big cloud services, helping companies shift their systems into the cloud without rebuilding everything.

Skytap's competition is not huge cloud computer companies such as VMware, Azure and Amazon Web Services; those are actually its allies. Instead, the company views its competition as enterprises with on-premise labs that are building test environments themselves.

The company was founded in 2006 by University of Washington researchers Brian Bershad, Hank Levy and Steve Gribble and has since found its sweet spot as a critical part of the development value chain with its Environments-as-a-Service (EaaS) model. It serves millions of environments a month to hundreds of leading enterprise customers, including Dell, IBM, Cisco, Sage, Calypso and Fulcrum Technologies.

The company has grown and shows no signs of slowing. In April, it opened a new London office to service the European market. It's increased the number of employees from 53 to 160 in the past two years. And revenue has increased more than 148.4 percent between 2011 and 2014, making it the 19th fastest-growing technology company in Washington state and ranking 419 in the nation on the Deloitte Technology Fast 500 list.

A recent market trend report from Gartner predicts that growth won't slow down any time soon. Gartner says that within the next year 5 percent of Global 2000 organizations will be adopting some form of DevOps technology, fueling demand for technologies developed by Skytap and similar companies.

The venture capitalists are betting big on Skytap's technology and innovation. In late 2014, Skytap nabbed a \$35 million series D financing round led by new investors Insight Venture Partners, with existing investors OpenView Venture Partners, Ignition Partners, Madrona Venture Group, and Washington Research Foundation participating. The total now raised is \$64.5 million.

Brad Schick

Chief Technical Officer

Proudest tech accomplishments in 2014-15: Scaling up to handle a five-times increase in customer demand while at the same time adding many product features and increasing overall service availability to four nines.

Biggest advancements in your company's tech in 2014-2015: Skytap has realized many technical advancements over the past few years – from the integration of tunneled L2 in L3 networking to HTML5 based remote desktop access – but I think our most important advancements have been in our development, deployment and operational processes. Through improvements to our technical processes, we've managed to increase the rate of software delivery without sacrificing quality.

Ways your company was more innovative than competitors in 2014-2015: I'll leave that to others to decide.

How your company inspires staff to be innovative: We encourage everyone in our company to propose features for our product road map. We weigh ideas by their potential value rather than by their source. The source of many of our best features is Skytap's staff.

Biggest challenge facing IT departments: In the Seattle area, hiring talented people is the biggest challenge.

What's the biggest challenge in tech recruiting today: Finding great people who are recruitable.

Must have technology for all businesses today: I hear integrated circuits are all the rage.

What technology do you wish existed that does not: Those beds in Star Trek that cure any ailment. Or transporters... transporters would be cool.

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