

MARKET NOTE

AWS Breaks New Ground with "Level 1" Certification for Managed Cloud Security Services and a Digital Selling Path Through AWS Marketplace

Christina Richmond

EXECUTIVE SNAPSHOT

FIGURE 1

Executive Snapshot: AWS Level 1 MSSP Certification Breaks New Ground

This IDC Market Note discusses the launch of a new certification program for AWS managed security service provider (SP) partners and the creation of a new digital selling path for MSSPs through AWS Marketplace. The announcement on August 24, 2021, kicked off a new AWS competency program and digital go-to-market path intended to provide prescriptive guidance for customers to quickly cull through a vast trove of managed security SPs to find the AWS partners with the broadest security services expertise and the ability to transact through AWS Marketplace.

Key Takeaways

- The COVID-19 pandemic escalated digital transformation and cloud migration but left many security laggards in its wake. Cloud architecture configuration, threat visibility, and breach response are difficult; across hybrid architecture these are even more so.
- AWS has a history with competency certifications and has partnered with managed security SPs for a long time, but the new Level 1 MSSP Competency Program breaks new ground.
- AWS has created a program to enable its managed security SP partners to reach broader cloud security potential while reassuring the buyer that they've attained this status.
- The combination of a competency program and an AWS Marketplace dedicated category provides a unique new development in the industry; additional assurance and ease of transaction for customers through the validated managed security SPs while leveraging their AWS commitments and incentives; and a new growth path for MSSPs to reach new customers.
- Ten competency areas require managed security SPs to demonstrate cloud security competence. For this effort, these SPs earn the right to market AWS competency on their websites and through the AWS Marketplace, they receive channel benefits such as market development funds (MDF), eligible for discounted pricing for solution partner program offerings, access to enhanced tools and AWS resources, and prioritized analyst communication with AWS.

Source: IDC, 2021

IN THIS MARKET NOTE

On August 24, 2021, AWS announced the Level 1 MSSP Competency Program intended to help customers not only find all service providers (SPs) that have met the rigorous AWS L1 MSSP Competency requirements but also managed security SPs that can procure and transact through AWS Marketplace.

To gain the Level 1 MSSP Competency, any service provider must demonstrate skills across 10 key areas in managed security services, from vulnerability scanning to security operations and automation. Figure 2 lists ten 24 x 7 managed security services that all service providers in the Competency must provide in accordance with AWS' new Level 1 Managed Security Services baseline standard, which defines what areas of AWS environments should be monitored for security threats.

FIGURE 2

The 10 Level 1 Managed Security Services



Source: AWS, 2021

Concurrent with and because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the digital divide narrowed as organizations engaged in massive digital transformation (DX) and cloud migration, but sadly, at the same time, security vulnerability and risk gaps widened. To help with these gaps "enterprises are adopting a cross-functional set of foundational cloud services (FCS) from leading cloud providers for compute, data, and app frameworks to speed access to technologies and be digitally resilient" (see *Automated Governance and Deployment Options Are Top Asks for Foundational Cloud Service Providers*, IDC #US48238621, September 2021). Buyers seeking to remedy security gaps specifically through engagement with managed security SPs can now rely on AWS to help them quickly compare providers.

IDC'S POINT OF VIEW

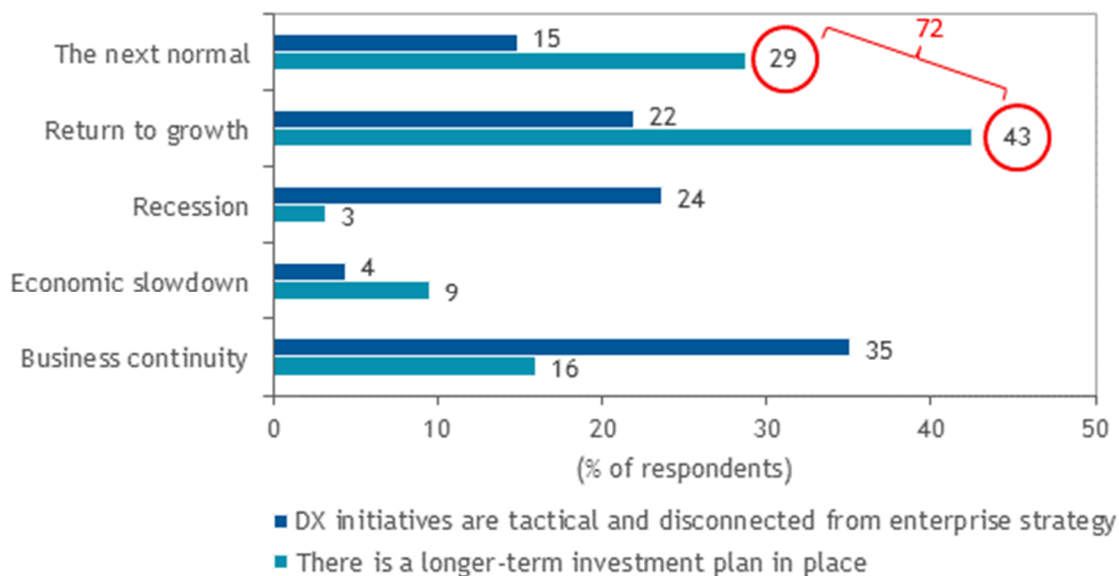
IDC research confirms that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation and cloud migration. A longer-term investment in an organization's DX journey correlates to faster economic recovery, leading to what IDC calls a "return to growth" and the "next normal." Organizations with less strategic DX initiatives are slower to recover (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Committed Investment in DX Leads to Return to Growth and Next Normal

Q. *IDC defines digital transformation (DX) as the act of transforming an organization into one that can scale all or part of its business and innovate at a pace that is an order of magnitude greater than traditional businesses. Digital organizations are driven by a customer-centric and empowered workforce that embraces risk taking as it seeks to continuously innovate. Technology and data are the lifeblood, fueling more efficient operations, new revenue streams, and customer loyalty. In the wake of developments during the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you assess where your organization is with respect to its digital transformation compared with peers?*

Q. *Of the following choices, which one best describes where your organization currently is?*



n = 854

Source: IDC's *Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey*, April 2021

Digital maturity coupled with economic recovery are the good news, but rapid cloud migration introduces vulnerabilities. The shared responsibility model is just that: shared. The cloud service provider side of the street requires the infrastructure to be secured; the client is responsible for data movement between the cloud SP environment, the wild, and the client's datacenters. This is where visibility gets tricky. The cloud SP monitors its environment for anomalous and potentially malicious entrants and remediates vulnerabilities in its infrastructure; the client needs to do the same.

Regardless of FCS strategy selected, "enterprises place a high priority on specific extensions to their providers' FCS portfolios (in this case, AWS), such as expanded service deployment options (edge, network, and core), automated governance (manage, optimize, and secure), and robust partner ecosystems for connectivity, security, and industry-specific and cross-cloud management." All three of these service deployments are enriched by AWS' competency programs, but this last is where the new ground is emerging.

AWS recognizes that managed security SPs are the frontline for many of its customers in providing security monitoring and management on customer's premises and in their cloud instances. Therefore, the cloud giant is wisely arming its Marketplace and buyers with enhanced validation of provider proficiency in what AWS considers the basics, or Level 1. This is a prescriptive program, which means that it is "all or nothing" to gain the benefits offered.

Today's digital landscape requires a broad set of cybersecurity services to solve for resource shortages, provide threat monitoring, respond when necessary to events, and simply to help them operationalize and make the security program stronger. Over the past decade, the highest tier of managed security SPs have expanded into cloud configuration and cloud management and monitoring capabilities, but the cybersecurity solutions market is overly crowded and confusing. The Level 1 competency assists customers in sifting through the many potential managed security SPs in the market and allows them to choose one that is validated to have high competency through the AWS Marketplace where they can leverage many AWS integrations and incentives to simplify both risk management efforts and the procurement process. In addition, before these service providers are eligible for the competency program, they must first go through the AWS evaluation process that includes customer references. Next the AWS Partner Solution Architects validate the service provider's technical proficiency and work through customer use cases to gain an understanding of the service provider's capabilities in the managed security services arena.

The potential benefit to customers of the AWS Level 1 MSSP Competency Program cannot be understated. There are far too many managed security SPs to choose from, and buyers can be at a loss to find the right partner, at the right time. Through this program, AWS is rightly narrowing the field and providing its partners with a way to set themselves apart both in capabilities and in marketing those capabilities. And they provide extra partner benefits to both entice these SPs to participate and to help them grow their businesses through the AWS Marketplace.

Note: All numbers in this document may not be exact due to rounding.

LEARN MORE

Related Research

- *Automated Governance and Deployment Options Are Top Asks for Foundational Cloud Service Providers* (IDC #US48238621, September 2021)
- *IDC MarketScape: U.S. Managed Detection and Response Services 2021 Vendor Assessment* (IDC #US48129921, August 2021)
- *MDR: The Next Generation of Managed Security Services* (IDC #US46427920, June 2021)

Synopsis

This IDC Market Note discusses the launch of a new certification program for AWS managed security service provider (SPs) partners. The announcement on August 24, 2021, kicked off a new AWS competency program intended to help customers quickly cull through a vast trove of managed security services providers to find the AWS partners with the broadest security services expertise.

"The potential benefit to customers of the AWS Level 1 MSSP Competency Program cannot be understated. There are far too many managed security SPs to choose from, and buyers can be at a loss to find the right partner, at the right time. Through this program, AWS is rightly narrowing the field and providing its partners with a way to set themselves apart both in capabilities and in marketing those capabilities," says Christina Richmond, program VP, Security Services at IDC.

About IDC

International Data Corporation (IDC) is the premier global provider of market intelligence, advisory services, and events for the information technology, telecommunications and consumer technology markets. IDC helps IT professionals, business executives, and the investment community make fact-based decisions on technology purchases and business strategy. More than 1,100 IDC analysts provide global, regional, and local expertise on technology and industry opportunities and trends in over 110 countries worldwide. For 50 years, IDC has provided strategic insights to help our clients achieve their key business objectives. IDC is a subsidiary of IDG, the world's leading technology media, research, and events company.

Global Headquarters

140 Kendrick Street
Building B
Needham, MA 02494
USA
508.872.8200
Twitter: @IDC
blogs.idc.com
www.idc.com

Copyright Notice

This IDC research document was published as part of an IDC continuous intelligence service, providing written research, analyst interactions, telebriefings, and conferences. Visit www.idc.com to learn more about IDC subscription and consulting services. To view a list of IDC offices worldwide, visit www.idc.com/offices. Please contact the IDC Hotline at 800.343.4952, ext. 7988 (or +1.508.988.7988) or sales@idc.com for information on applying the price of this document toward the purchase of an IDC service or for information on additional copies or web rights.

Copyright 2021 IDC. Reproduction is forbidden unless authorized. All rights reserved.

