

Microsoft Azure presents

CLOUD CULTURES

The image is a promotional graphic for Microsoft Azure. It features a background collage of four cityscapes, each occupying a vertical strip. From left to right: London, showing the Gherkin and other modern buildings; Copenhagen, showing colorful historic buildings and a church spire; Stockholm, showing a waterfront with a large white ship and a bridge; and New York City, showing a dense skyline with a prominent skyscraper and a bridge over water. Overlaid on this collage is the text 'Microsoft Azure presents' at the top, and 'CLOUD CULTURES' in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters in the center.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Cloud Cultures goes beyond code and computing to discover the cultural sources of innovation. It explores how traditions, values, and beliefs influence the ways people are using cloud technology locally—and how that work changes lives globally.

LOST IN THE CLOUDS

With over 10,978 data centers worldwide, the datacenter market is absolutely massive and growing steadily.

In a fiercely competitive market where differentiation between major players is limited, Microsoft faced a significant challenge: how to increase awareness and build interest in-market for new global datacenter capabilities.



TECHNOLOGY MEETS TRADITION

Culture shapes everything we create, from culinary delights and artistic undertakings to chart-topping hits and the latest fashion trends. It's what gives the things we create a distinct identity, flavor, uniqueness. So how come no one has ever looked at its influence on technology and innovation?

We wanted to explore this, so we created a docu-travel video series to do it.

And because we couldn't find the right term to describe the complex relationship between technology and tradition, we invented our own — Cloud Cultures.



CLOUD CULTURES

As a series, this was an opportunity for us to tell larger, more emotional, global stories — highlighting people and businesses from some of the fastest growing cloud markets around the world.

From enterprise to grassroots, we cast a spotlight on real-world stories of ingenuity and transformation.

Along the way learning about their approach to innovation, how culture influences it, and the ways they're using Azure to solve challenges.

By showcasing the human potential inherent to each market, we inspired audiences with real possibility for impact, while positioning Microsoft Azure as an essential catalyst for innovation in the region.

PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

Using a baseline-authentic tone, we'll tell each episode's stories through conversational, non-marketing language, focusing on the richness of human achievement.

Over several months, we immersed ourselves in local news and stories to identify key themes and trends driving innovation in each target market. We combined this with additional interviews and research to uncover cultural insights and potential partner stories.

Local subsidiaries played a crucial role in vetting episode themes to ensure they were authentic to the cultural fabric of each region.

NORTH STAR

Series purpose

Inspire our audience with the potential and possibilities for impact with Azure global cloud infrastructure.

Series theme *

Curiosity. Humility. Empowerment.

What can *we* learn from *them*?

(From the countries and cultures that are applying this new human capacity)

* This helps us draw a direct connection to the larger, Microsoft tone and mission.

EPISODE THEMES BY REGION: SWEDEN

Sweden's Cloud Culture is one of:

Global-first mindset (holistic solutions)

What our TDM/BDM audience can learn:

How to see innovation, not as a one-off, but as an extensible, system.

Link to history/background:

"Ambitious entrepreneurs in Sweden codify expectations for expanding internationally into their thinking"

As one of the largest countries in Europe by landmass but one of the smallest in population, ambitious entrepreneurs in Sweden are forced to adopt a global-first mindset from day one. Not just because the market demands it but because as one of the most egalitarian societies in the world, thinking holistically is as authentically Swedish as *Surströmming*. This mindset, coupled with the country's long-term focus on education and research, has led to an astonishing capacity for innovation generating more billion-dollar VC-backed companies per capita than anywhere else in the world.

Expanding beyond the initial scope of launching a single data center in Poland, the first six episodes of Cloud Cultures took us to some incredible places.



POLAND

Theme: Bold Action



SWEDEN

Theme: Holistic Solutions



UNITED KINGDOM

Theme: Pursuit of Excellence



ITALY

Theme: Exceptional Experiences



MEXICO

Theme: Continuous Reinvention



MALAYSIA

Theme: Collective Growth



THE CINEMATOGRAPHY

Modern, if not futuristic, and always on the move. We mixed beautiful aerials and super-wide shots to establish location and scale and combine them with intimate portraits of our subjects to strengthen the connection between audience and story.

Innovation moves at a breakneck pace and to capture this, we used hyperlapses as a visual thread between stories. This technique also allowed us to highlight local landmarks and sights of the region in a visually stunning manner.



THE JOURNEY

There's a romanticism to returning to travel in post-pandemic times: getting back out into the world, meeting people face to face where they are, and experiencing their truths first-hand.

In this spirit, we followed our hosts on their journey to reconnect and explore the real impacts of the Microsoft Cloud.



THE TALENT

Our storytelling scaled multiple altitudes and we need talent to represent each appropriately.

First, a primary voice to bring continuity and could speak about industry-defining technology on an enterprise level. We found that in Corey, a CVP for Microsoft Cloud.

Coming in as outsiders, we also wanted to include local voices as cohosts that could support the narratives while adding human experience and local context.



THE CONVERSATIONS

Rather than crafting a one-size-fits-all message for the series, we elevated local voices so our messaging could address the needs and interests of regional business decision-makers.

Our person-to-person moments aren't interviews; they are conversations between people who are genuinely interested and invested in the what they are talking about.



THE LOCATIONS

One of the most crucial elements of any travel series, the locations. We cast ours as third characters in the scene.

By shooting in public locations, and including the atmosphere — the sights, the sounds, the people — they were able to add context and personality to our conversations. Truly bringing our audience into each country with us.



THE COLOR

To further immerse viewers in the vibrant landscapes and cultural tapestries of each destination, we developed custom color grades for each episode.

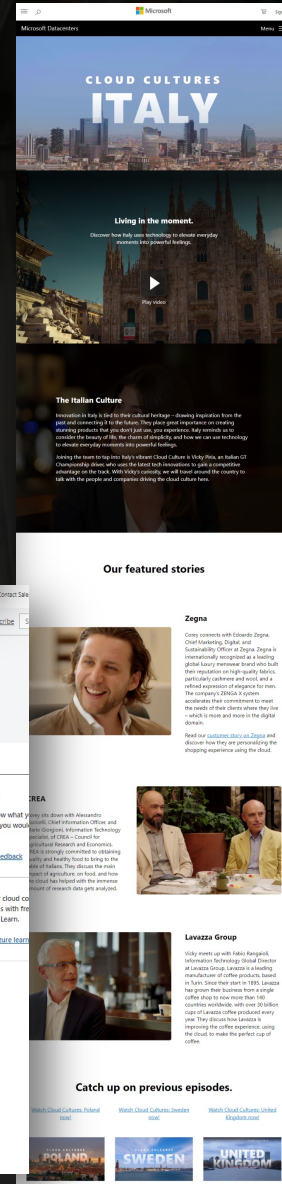
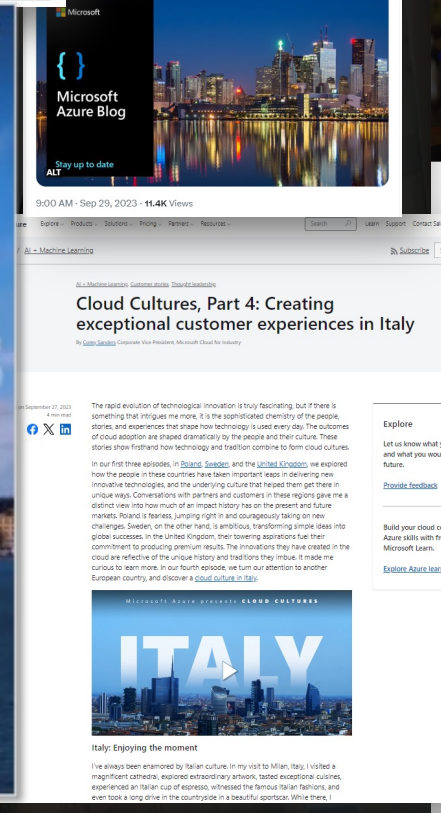
It felt important to embrace the natural hues and materiality of each locations. From the golden hues of our Mediterranean piazzas to the rich blacks and vibrant reds of central London, the color grading helped add depth and resonance to our storytelling.

CLEARED FOR LANDING

The first four episodes made up Season 1 of the series and were released weekly on YouTube and shared on Twitter and LinkedIn across a collection of relevant Microsoft social handles to ensure maximum visibility and engagement with our audiences globally.

Each episode release was accompanied by a companion blog piece that gave in-depth discussions, behind-the-scenes insights, and outtakes from the episodes.

To further amplify our reach and impact, a targeted email program was developed to reach contacts in our Azure Conversation program.



UP, UP, AND AWAY

Cloud Cultures surpassed our benchmarks and expectations, delivering exceptional outcomes across KPIs. With over 1M views and counting, the series achieved remarkable reach, surpassing other content on the Microsoft YouTube channel by +533%.

Engagement metrics outperformed our expectations, with a remarkable view-through rate +123% above benchmarks and a 69.27% view-through-rate — indicating high relevance and interest in the content to our BDM and ITDM audiences. Emails containing Cloud Cultures content exhibited high content relevance and interest as well, with a 37% open rate, surpassing benchmarks by 11.6%

1.1M

Views

69%

View-through-rate

523%

Increase in viewership compared to Microsoft YouTube channel content in last year.

78

New passport stamps

75,894

Total miles traveled

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