Episode 34
CLOUD CITY with David Haselwood
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Danielle Royston   00:00:00
I'm Danielle Royston and this is Telco in 20.

COVID continues to wreak havoc on everything causing the whole telco industry to ask: "Are you going to MWC in Barcelona?" Can you believe we're asking the same question for the third year in a row? Make it end! So a lot of people have been asking me, are you going to MWC? Will we see another CLOUD CITY? Well, my answer is yes and no. I will be in Barcelona and I am doing another CLOUD CITY. But this year, we decided to do CLOUD CITY 100% in the clouds. We put together a list of amazing vendors, building cloud-native products for our industry. And you guessed it, TelcoDR, Totogi, and my new company Skyvera, will all be there in full force. Wondering what I'm up to? I thought you might have some questions. So I invited my buddy David Haselwood back on the podcast to talk about what we're doing, why we're doing it, and why you should come check it out. So let's take 20.

Today we have David Haselwood to interview me about what we're doing in CLOUD CITY. Hi David!

David Haselwood   00:01:25
Hey! How you doing, DR?

Danielle Royston   00:01:26
I'm doing great. Raring to go. MWC time is always the first quarter of the year. And MWC is back on.

David Haselwood   00:01:34
Am I gonna get a chance to use my passport this year? Finally, I finally got it back after the major log from COVID.

Danielle Royston   00:01:41
I was going to ask you about that!

David Haselwood   00:01:42
But, it's looking here, like maybe if I want to attend CLOUD CITY, I can probably leave my passport here. Is that true?

Danielle Royston   00:01:51
Well, you know me, changing it up and doing crazy things, but yeah, I'm hosting another CLOUD CITY and I'm super psyched, but there's a twist.

David Haselwood   00:01:59
So CLOUD CITY, which was the big, huge, enormous thing you had last year, Jon Bon Jovi, tons of people — stole the show at Barcelona. The one that I didn't get to go to because of

COVID and also my passport. So it's CLOUD CITY, but according to what I've seen here in this tweetstorm you put out – it's a virtual form of it? Is that what's going on?

Danielle Royston   00:02:20
Yeah. So, you know, tough decision.. this stupid pandemic. MWC is the biggest show in telco. The one that's in Barcelona usually starts the last Monday in February and last year, '21, because of the pandemic, they shifted it to June. You know all these big vendors bailed, and I quite famously took over the Ericsson space and turned it into CLOUD CITY. And it was a huge physical presence. And as you mentioned, Bon Jovi played and it was amazing. So for '22, they shifted it back to "its regular time" in February. And towards the end of November, this variant of concern, Omicron, was starting to maybe take off. And we were like, "oh, this is going to be another tough year for MWC. Will it happen? Will it be postponed? Who's going to go from an exhibitor perspective?" But then even more importantly, "what about attendees?" And so, we decided – a little bit of a bet. I think it's going to be better to do a virtual CLOUD CITY. You know, the most important thing about MWC is the meetings, and we can meet with more people with a virtual platform. And so that's what we're doing.

David Haselwood   00:03:31
Okay. So CLOUD CITY, if you really kind of boil it down, was a place where you, with TelcoDR and Totogi along with a bunch of other companies that were, I mean, theoretically, maybe even competing with you – didn't you have them all in one place? That's really the essence of CLOUD CITY, right? It was about getting to see people that are moving things to the cloud. That is what the essence of CLOUD CITY is.

Danielle Royston   00:03:54
You know, I've been this sort of lone loud voice in telco about the public cloud being this megatrend. And we took over the Ericsson space, 65,000 square feet; 6,000 meters, super huge. We're like, how are we going to fill it? At that time, I was a startup. You and I joked that maybe I should put a tennis court. You know, get Rafa Nadal to play with us. And one idea we had was, well, there's a lot of vendors out there, startups, some more established players that have made the move / are making the move to the public cloud. They're starting to work with AWS, GCP and Azure. And we're like, we could create a community, an Army if you will. And I do call them the CLOUD CITY Army. The army of vendors, even competitors to my business, Totogi, invite them in and make it part of this movement. And I think we actually had a huge impact. We got 750 articles written about us and CLOUD CITY. And I think it's been such a movement that even at MWC 22, they now have a whole theme dedicated to the cloud. They call it CloudNet and that's never happened before. And I think without CLOUD CITY 21, that wouldn't have happened. We really brought it to the forefront. So it was awesome. Yeah.

David Haselwood   00:05:06

Didn't some people that were vendors, again, these are people that you have no connection to you just trying to bring them all together. Didn't some people sign some big deals? Some pretty big business came out of that.

Danielle Royston   00:05:15
Yeah. And certainly you use MWC to fill your sales funnel. You get prospects and you work that the rest of the year, but a lot of people had some things pop out of the bottom of that funnel. We had Wavemax, which is a company here in Austin, sign an $80-million joint venture deal, which is probably the biggest deal I heard of. There were lots of pictures on social media of other vendors, signing deals with telcos that were there, small deals and big deals. I mean, MWC is a deal-making show and deals were made in CLOUD CITY. And so, yeah, it was super beneficial. I think last year we had just shy of 30 vendors in our booth. We had a limited amount of space. And so we filled up the slots, but what's so great about virtual CLOUD CITY is it's in the cloud. And, so it's unlimited and we're trying to get about the same number of vendors. But, if other vendors are listening to this podcast and hear about CLOUD CITY and want to participate, it's really easy for us to add their logo to our website and turn on a little stand or a booth for them in our platform.

David Haselwood   00:06:14
They can just, right now, if they heard this or saw your tweet, they can still sign up and be a vendor?

Danielle Royston   00:06:18
They'd need to get their ass in gear, but yeah. Right? Like, I mean, if they have stuff ready to go.. We've designed it in a way that you can participate if you're going to MWC and if you're not. Both for attendees and for exhibitors. You know, virtual experiences kind of suck, and we're really trying to push the envelope on how do we make it great? And, why do people go to big trade shows and what are they looking to do? Obviously the networking piece is very difficult to replicate virtually, but I think the other big thing you do is you'd go visit a lot of stands and you walk the halls and your feet hurt and you're super tired and you're traversing the Fira in Barcelona, which is massive. And so, we're like, okay, how can we bring that experience onto a virtual platform of an attendee who's shopping for cloud-native tools in telco? How do we make that experience great for them? And so that's the genesis of the idea and what we're trying to do this year.

David Haselwood   00:07:14
You know I got to boil things down so my reptilian brain can understand it. So if I imagine what this is going to be like: I am a telco exec and I log in on a day that's convenient to me. I'm either going to MWC, so I'm going to do it before... There's going to be a ton of virtual booths that I can go in, right? That's what you're saying. Probably to have some keynote on there, but they're not going to be a bunch of panels. There's not going to be webinars or anything like that.

Danielle Royston   00:07:40
Yeah. It's not school. I'm not running a big content agenda. It really is highlighting the exhibitors.

David Haselwood   00:07:46
So I can click on one of these vendors. There'll be somebody there manning the virtual booth. I can do a demo right there because it's all in the cloud. I can see how it all works.

Danielle Royston   00:07:54
Yep. It's ready to go.

David Haselwood   00:07:56
Can I lurk? I mean, people like to lurk in booths, can we virtually lurk?

Danielle Royston   00:08:00
People can lurk! Yeah.

David Haselwood   00:08:02
Can I just see what's going on?

Danielle Royston   00:08:03
You can come into their space. They could host a little video, or download a presentation or a product slick or a white paper. You can visit three or four booths or however many, then just lurk. But like you said, yeah, you can book an instant meeting. You can schedule a meeting for the future at a time that's convenient. You can just chat with a rep. Number one, I think the problem with virtual platforms is you feel very lonely. You're like, am I the only one here? And so we're going to really encourage our vendors to be hospitable and welcome people as they come across that threshold and into the booth. And then we have these ways that we can chat with you. We can book an instant meeting, you can book something in the future. And then again, lots of times, like if you want a demo, you've got to like contact sales and negotiate back and forth with ideas. Really just bringing it right then and there, like you would in a show, but you can traverse through so many vendors so quickly and kind of get an idea of what's going on in things that you want to go further with or not.

David Haselwood   00:08:59
Got it. That makes a lot of sense. That sounds really cool. What if I'm a telco exec and I'm just not really sure, and I want to learn more about going to the public cloud.. I mean, are there not gonna be panels, is there gonna be any other information for me out there so I can come up to speed on that?

Danielle Royston   00:09:12
Yeah. So I'm putting together a keynote talk that does a little bit of a vision in terms of why you should move and how you should move. But, then I think a really good destination for a telco

exec that's looking to learn more about the public cloud – I think you visit the TelcoDR booth. And so that's my consultancy company that works with telcos to help them create a plan, create the business case; then number 2: actually move stuff, migrate things. And the number 3: I think a really big part of moving to the public cloud is your FinOps, your financial operations around cost optimization of cloud. And I think telcos are just starting to realize, "ooh, we didn't know that it's such a different way to manage cloud." So for people who are learning, TelcoDR's booth is going to be a really great destination. But also just looking through what's out there, who's doing what and with what hyperscaler I think is a big part of it.

David Haselwood   00:10:04
Got it. So something for everyone there. So on your site, vendors can still sign up. Like you said, if they get their act together. How does someone like me – how do I register for it? Does it cost me anything?

Danielle Royston   00:10:15
It's totally free. And so you're going to TelcoDR.com. The very front homepage will redirect you to the registration page. Like I said, it's totally free. The event is running – you'll love this, David, cause you're a nerd like me – It's starting on a palindrome date, which is February 22nd, 2022, which is awesome. And you know what's even better. It's a Tuesday. It's like the date only has twos and it's on a Tuesday. Ha ha ha ha. I'm such a dork. But anyways, so the event starts on the 22nd and runs through the 25th and then we have the weekend and then we're actually going to run it overlapping with MWC a couple of days, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. So that's February 28th through March 2nd. And the idea here is if you're going to MWC as an executive and traveling, then you can catch our platform ahead of time. And that's why that week before is open. And then if you're not going to MWC and you have a little bit of FOMO and you want to go check out some booths, the platform's open then as well. And so we're running it for two weeks and then the platform will stay alive on-demand for 30 more days. So it's a really good way for these vendors to put their message out there and hopefully get a lot of leads and get a lot of meetings.

David Haselwood   00:11:30
Let's talk about the elephant in the room. What, what does this mean for you and MWC? Is this a shot across the bow to GSMA or you're really confusing Ericsson on what they're supposed to be doing?

Danielle Royston   00:11:43
With my nimble judo strategy?

David Haselwood   00:11:45
What should everybody else in the industry take from this?

Danielle Royston   00:11:47

I think in a non-pandemic year, I'll be at MWC 22 in a big way. I think Ericsson is planning their return and they are taking their space back. They're probably gonna smudge it, you know, with like a little Sage stick – about what we did. But yeah, I love MWC. It's a deal-making show. It's one of the best shows, I'd say, in the world of all the industries. It's just, I think one of the key parts of that show is the people that go. And I think, you know, when we were looking at Omicron and I was like, what is this going to do? And I think it is safe to travel. It is highly contagious and it's going to be hard for attendees to go. And that's where the value is in the show. It's in the meetings. It's a deal-making show. And if people don't go, then it doesn't matter the size of your booth if no one is there to see it. So that's why we went virtual.

David Haselwood   00:12:38
Yeah. It just affects so many things. It affects schools. I mean, my kids have been in and out of schools with things. It just makes life really, really difficult and way more –

Danielle Royston   00:12:46
I agonized over this decision for months. But I'm doing as much as I can with GSMA and MWC as a virtual participant. We're going to be a featured exhibitor, virtually. I've bought the biggest package I could buy. And I bought it for all three of my companies. And so we're really trying to partner with GSMA and we're like, "We're virtual. We're not going to be there, what can we do?" And this was like the best thing we could do to present ourselves as a company. So we're super excited to do that. Are you going? I'm talking, you know – me and my talks, they're fricking crazy and awesome.

David Haselwood   00:13:19
Are you going? So you're going to be there talking in person.

Danielle Royston   00:13:20
Yeah. I'm going to go to Barcelona.

David Haselwood   00:13:23
So, you're going to be there. So everything's good. Everyone's happy. The only people aren't happy are going to be Ericsson... Cause they're going to be confused why no one's going to be there in person this year.

Danielle Royston   00:13:32
Yeah. It sucks to be Ericsson almost always. But so I'm doing a talk as part of the CloudNet track. It's on Wednesday at 11:00 AM. It's two speakers in the panels. I'm the lead off speaker, which means I need to like fricking bring it. So we're working on that talk and it's super exciting. And then I'll be running around MWC, handing out little gifts. So I have little presents. So I hope people can find me. I think I'm recognizable. Maybe I'll wear a sign or something like TelcoDR. But yeah, so I'm talking, we're featured exhibitors. I just don't have a physical presence there. So that's the only difference. And I think looking towards '23, pandemic be damned. I mean,

hopefully this is the last wave and these restrictions and rules about traveling start to subside. I don't know.

David Haselwood   00:14:16
Okay. So last question I have about this because I really, really want to use my brand new unused passport. What do you think the deal is going to be for '23? Is CLOUD CITY going to come back in its physical form? Is this going to be a new thing where the virtual one, what do you think is going to happen? And what should we be looking for?

Danielle Royston   00:14:32
I don't want people to think that I'm pivoting into virtual only. We're doing it this year, but looking to '23, I'm super hopeful that all this is behind us. Everyone's back, it's back to the big show that it's always been. And I totally would love to see CLOUD CITY erected again. It was so beautiful and amazing. And I think anyone that walked through it was like, "oh, this is such a great experience." And so I hope to bring them back and I'm very hopeful that that will happen.

David Haselwood   00:15:00
That sounds great! I am really excited. I think this virtual program sounds awesome. I get a chance to see all these different vendors all at once, and we'll see. Maybe I'll get a chance to go in 2023.

Danielle Royston   00:15:09
Well, I hope so. I mean, Barcelona is amazing. We love Barcelona. I mean, I'll be honest. I love it in June more than I love it in February, but I think MWC is happening. I'm super psyched. I'm psyched about my CLOUD CITY and my CLOUD CITY army. And I think it's a really great way for people in either case, if you're traveling to MWC catches the week before, scope out some vendors that maybe you wouldn't be able to see or wouldn't have time, this is a really great way to do it from your desk. And then if you're not going to MWC, come visit us and set up a meeting. And I hope everyone checks it out. (Sounds awesome.) As always, David, such a great time talking with you. Thanks for coming onto the podcast.

David Haselwood   00:15:49
Thanks for having me.

Danielle Royston   00:15:50
Stick around because we're ending each podcast with a Telco in 20 takeaway. I have 20 seconds to tell you something you need to know.

You just heard me talk with David Haselwood about our amazing CLOUD CITY plan. We're inviting 30 vendors and more to join us. These are the companies that are using the public cloud, driving the conversation forward and changing the playing field. You gotta come check it out. CLOUD CITY is a virtual event that will take place starting Tuesday, February 22nd through

Wednesday, March 2nd. That's right, Tuesday the 22nd of February, 2022. How epic is that? And, be sure to visit TelcoDR.com to register for this completely free and totally awesome event. Be sure to watch my keynote. I'm hilarious. Meet with the vendors and visit their stands to watch product demos and catch all the haps with public cloud and telco with our CLOUD CITY News and last but not least be sure to book a meeting with my company Totogi.

And if you're gonna be in Barcelona, come find me. I'll be easy to spot at my talk on Wednesday, March 2nd at 11:00 AM in Hall 5, Stage B. I promise you, it'll be worth your while, badoom bump tshh. And let's grab a cava or play some tennis on the fluffy Barcelona red clay. If you're game, DM me on Twitter @TelcoDR. Let's connect on LinkedIn. And you can always call or WhatsApp me at 925-TELCODR. Don't forget to share our podcast with your colleagues. And, if you liked what you heard, leave us a review. If you're a telco leader, making your move to the public cloud, I'd love to have you on the podcast. And finally sign up for our awesome email newsletter on TelcoDR.com. Hasta later, nerds!