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*Podcast Transcription*

*Implementing Lean Marketing Systems*



## The Next Step in Cloud Computing –Humans

Guest was Thomas Koulopoulos



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*Cloud Surfing* is the groundbreaking book that will explain how to access the full value of the Cloud. Author, **Thomas Koulopoulos** is the founder and president of Delphi Group, a Boston-based think tank providing thought leadership to global organizations on the intersection of business and technology for over 20 years. The Delphi Group was founded to provide a resource for organizations that offers depth in understanding key technology markets, access to the largest community of buyers and suppliers of these technologies, and objectivity and commitment to developing a knowledgeable team.

Koulopoulos has provided advice to over 2,000 organizations, including Intel, Microsoft, and Cisco. He also introduced industry concepts, frameworks, and vernacular which are widely used today in describing the impact of technology on business -*cloud surfing*, *single point of access*, *touch points*, *corporate IQ*, and *smart sourcing*. The author of eight previous books, including **THE INNOVATION ZONE** and **SMARTSOURCING**, Koulopoulos is a recognized authority on the implications of technology and business trends and has been named one of the industry's most influential information management consultants by *Information Week* magazine.

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## **Transcription of Podcast**

**Joe Dager:** Welcome, everyone. This is Joe Dager, the host of the Business901 podcast. With me, today is Thomas Koulopoulos. Tom is an expert on the intersection of business and technology and is uniquely qualified to explain the cloud to us. He has just authored a recent book, "Cloud Surfing," which is a new way to think about risk, innovation, scale and success.

Tom, I would like to start off the conversation here with maybe you defining what the cloud is.

**Thomas Koulopoulos:** It's a great place to start, Joe. Thanks for having me on your podcast, first of all. There's so much talk about the cloud that the first thing we want to think about when we think about the cloud is technology. I want to shift that focus a little bit.

Let's look at the cloud as a means to become connected in a way that we never have been able to before. This goes well beyond the connectivity that we have today on the Internet. I call it being hyper-connected.

Just to give you an idea, the analogy that I often give people is that the cloud is to the Internet what intelligent life is to the primordial soup of biology. We believe that through evolution we evolved from these single cell organisms. They weren't connected. They just bounced off of each other. Think of amoebas with no real intelligence. From that primordial soup, we created this wonderful thing called consciousness and intelligence.

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That is as dramatic as the leap from the Internet to the cloud, a hyper-connected world where we will change our behaviors in ways that we are just beginning today to appreciate. That's the best way to look at the cloud, a new form of behaviors for how we live, work and play as opposed to just a bunch of applications and technologies that are scattered about the globe.

**Joe:** There's got to be some hardware. I mean, it's just not a hard drive up in the sky, right?

**Tom:** No. That's a great way to think about it, a hard drive up in the sky. A lot of folks, when they think of the cloud, think of what we call in the information technology industry, "data centers," these large monolithic warehouses of computers and storage devices. By the way, they're so big, Joe, that most of these have to be located near a power source, like a local hydroelectric plant because they draw so much power.

That's the infrastructure of the cloud. By infrastructure, I mean all the computers that allow us to create these connections, to store this data. When Apple talks about its iCloud, it's taking what you would otherwise have on your local hard disk on your laptop or your desktop and putting it somewhere where it's accessible to you no matter where you are.

You don't have to worry about, "Gee, did I bring my laptop with me? Does my iPad have the files and the contacts that I need?" All of this exists in a place where it's accessible no matter where you happen to be.

That's a really important part of the cloud, but it's just the thin veneer of what we're today experiencing. As the cloud begins to mature, it won't just be this as you put it, this large

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hard disk in the sky. It'll be access to other people and to resources in a moment's notice. No matter where you are, in your car, on vacation, at home, in the office...You'll have access to the same exact resources without regard to location.

That means that you can get things done just about anywhere, based on the immediacy of your need. That's a whole different way to look at how we use computers, certainly, but also a whole different way to look at how we live our lives.

**Joe:** Most people, especially small business people, when they look at the cloud, the big concern to them is risk and security.

**Tom:** Of course. Of course.

**Joe:** How does the cloud address that recently? Where are we moving with that? Has that been solved? Is it just as comfortable to have it out there somewhere as it is on your own server?

**Tom:** Well, the first thing that we should talk about because it's really important, is the perception around security. Let's write that down. One of the concerns people have is, when my information moves from my local hard disk, or from my local server that's housed somewhere where I can lock it up, whether it be in my home or in my office or in some facility, there is this sense that only I control access to it. That's just not true. As

If you look at what's happened recently with the alleged hacking of Iranian nuclear power facilities that are generating potentially material for nuclear weapons, those were devices that were not hooked up to the Internet, by the way. Yet, supposedly, now we don't know this for a fact. From what we've been told, the US government was able to hack into those

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machines and create some enormous damage to the centrifuges that actually create the nuclear material.

All this, without anyone being aware it was happening until the centrifuges spun out of control. We have this sense that, just because we have locked it up, it's not on the Internet, it's not attached to the cloud, it's safe. That's just not the case. Any system can be hacked. Security is a fundamental challenge in any computer-based system.

I'll give you another example. At Los Angeles International Airport, which I often fly in and out of, in a single week there are over 1,000 laptops that are lost, stolen or misplaced. That's an astronomical number. I can't get my mind around that, over 1000. It's actually 1200 at last count. Where's the security there? There is none.

As we move to the cloud, we actually create a high level of security and here's why. This is the part that most folks don't often understand. The reason the cloud has the potential to be more secure is because the cloud is constantly on the offensive, constantly looking for patterns and trends that indicate that someone is hacking it or attempting to hack it.

You've got a tremendous ability, because of the resources being applied to the cloud, to be much more protective and much more diligent around intruders and possible corruption of data than you ever would on your personal computer or, as a small business, what you would be able to bring to bear on that problem would be so small in comparison.

Half of all small businesses don't even back up their local hard drives. Again, where's the security? If the hard drive crashes or the server crashes, where's that information? Half of all businesses don't even back up what they have today. We've got to be very careful here

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because we can't hold the cloud to some arbitrary 100 percent secure standard because that standard does not exist.

What does exist in the cloud that is a much more sophisticated ability to constantly be on the watch for security threats. That to me is what we should be talking about. How do we invest in that security in such a way that all of us, small businesses, individuals, large businesses, nations have the ability to protect what needs to be protected? That only happens through a concerted, coordinated effort, which is what you have in the cloud.

**Joe:** One other thing that I'd like to ask your advice on then, servers crash. We know that. Technology fails. We've all been there. What happens about your cloud? How do you pick a cloud provider? Companies go bankrupt. They go out of business. They get purchased and shared. How will I go about saying, "OK, I will buy into this, my stuff will go on the cloud." How do I know whom to pick?

**Tom:** Well, you talk about small businesses. Let's pick a small businessperson, first of all, and look at their options. One of the things that I think is really important to understand today, and I talk about this a lot in the book, is that there are different ways that you can mitigate risk.

One element of risk is what you just talked about. What if my cloud provider gets sold, or what if they go bankrupt, or they go under, what happens to all of that information? The simple answer to that is that by and large, what happens to those companies is no different than what happened with many software companies as they went under.

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You would migrate to the next generation of software. You can do the same with your information in the cloud. Those companies that cannot survive for whatever reason aren't able to be around for the long term, that data won't just disappear. It will move to some other provider. Their assets will be bought. There will be some value in that company that will certainly make the path forward possible for you, if you buy into their approach.

The other thing that we're missing here is that, as you invest in a cloud provider, it's not just capturing your data, or housing your applications that you're investing in. You're also investing in the ability to use best practices. A good cloud provider is going to help you to not just back or implement your infrastructure and make more efficient use of it, but they'll probably provide you with applications that you otherwise wouldn't even be able to afford to buy as a small business.

All of that begins to offset the risk. Does the risk ever go away completely? Of course, it doesn't. There is always some risk in any transaction that a business is going to engage in. The point is how do you minimize that risk?

I would counsel folks to go with larger cloud providers. I think going with a provider such as Amazon is a very safe bet today. I think Google is a very safe bet as well. Microsoft, IBM, all of these, Dell, are all playing in the cloud, Oracle. There are a lot of large providers, Salesforce.com, that you can bet on. They're relatively safe bets.

It's like investing in US Treasuries. Does the risk ever completely go away? Of course not. Is there a likelihood the US government could go bankrupt? Of course, there is. Is it a high likelihood? The rest of the world doesn't seem to think so. There are always risks in every transaction.



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The point is how do you minimize that risk? You do that by working with more established players. The good news is that the costs here don't vary widely from smaller to more established players because the economies of scale that folks like Amazon can realize. There are a lot of safe bets to be made.

The real benefit to the small businessperson is that they can now begin to do things, to experiment, to use applications and technology that otherwise they simply would not be able to afford. As a result, they can compete with much larger organizations but they can also innovate so much faster. They can put a business model in place overnight. Try it. If it works, great. If it doesn't, OK, we failed. Let's move on to the next business model.

That right there is the real essence of a growing economy. The more we experiment, the more we can take risks, the greater the appetite for that and the lower the overall financial risk, which is what the cloud presents us with, is a lower overall financial risk, the more likely we are to experiment. That creates a great economy. That, to me, is really the value proposition of the cloud.

Short answer, risk doesn't go away. It's always there. Make some safe bets but focus on the value. With the cloud, you can experiment more and you can innovate more.

**Joe:** I don't really have to back up my cloud, because they're already doing it. If I'm with a known provider, I can pretty much assume that I will always be able to get my data.

**Tom:** The amount of redundancy is incredible, Joe. If you go with an Amazon, for example, as your cloud provider, or a Salesforce, the amount the amount of redundancy

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that they have baked into their architecture is incredible. Your data is infinitely safer than it is on your local infrastructure. That's the bottom line and that's what we have to look at.

I'm better off using iCloud than using my laptop because I'm much more likely to lose my laptop, to have that hard disk crash, to forget to back it up. That, to me, is really where the focus should be, yes.

**Joe:** Or, leave it at the airport. [laughs]

**Tom:** Or leave it at the airport. Can you imagine the 1200 laptops? People just leave these things behind. They get on a plane, they get to a destination and they realize, oops, wait a minute, when they open up their backpack, what happened to my laptop?

**Joe:** That's what I always do when I get off an airplane or do whatever. I do three checks. I hit my wallet with one hand. I hit my phone on the side to see if it's still there and I stick my hand in to see if my tablet or my notebook's in my briefcase. Then I stand up.

**Tom:** Absolutely. I do the same thing. When I go through TSA security, my eyes never leave that bin that my laptop is in. I guess I'm somewhat of an exception from that standpoint.

**Joe:** Well, let's get to the fun stuff now. Let's talk about the cloud itself and what a lot of your book centered upon. Because you named six components of the cloud that I don't think everybody thinks about all the time. The first one you started out with is the truth in the cloud. What do you mean by truth in the cloud?

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**Tom:** Look, part of what we struggle with when we talk about the cloud is this whole issue of identity. How do you know that I am really who I say I am, whether I'm a business, or whether I'm an individual?

Today there's not much in the way of identity verification. There are certainly companies like reputation.com, which I talk about in the book, which are making great efforts to help you protect your identity.

What doesn't exist is this concept of a digital locker. Part of what will have to develop as the cloud evolves, and as our understanding and our use of it evolves, is this notion of how do we absolutely verify that a business or person is whom they say they are? That's this notion of truth in the cloud, making sure that we can conduct transactions freely without friction, without concern, without overwhelming fear as a result of that.

If you go to Facebook, a lot of celebrities already are doing this, or if you go to Twitter. There's verification that they are whom they say they are. But we all need that, not just celebrities. Look, I value my finances and my business as much as Brad Pitt does. I'm not a celebrity, but it's still pretty darn important to me. I want to make sure that I protect that identity and that others know that it really is me whom they are transacting with.

**Joe:** You bring up a point there that I thought was really one of the interesting parts of the book, is that digital locker. You're saying that digital locker goes with you, and that reputation continues with you forever. The cloud makes you very transparent, right?

**Tom:** Right. You said something which is very interesting. The cloud certainly has an element of transparency. That identity goes with me everywhere.

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But that identity exists even after I'm long gone. The results are if I got hit by the proverbial bus today, my Facebook page would still be up and alive. My Twitter handle, all my social networks, all of this would still be in place. Now, we can laugh and chuckle and that and say, oh, that's a quirk of where we are right now.

But hold on a second. This stuff has value. My heirs want to leverage that value. My children want to leverage it. Is there some mechanism by which they can? The answer is today there isn't. This notion of transparency goes far beyond what we today think of, when we think of transparency. It really has a permanence to it that goes well beyond most of what we've...those of us who've grown up without this technology around us since we were very young, don't have a good sense for.

But these kids? These kids understand that permanence. They know that their Facebook page will be a digital history of who they are for many, many years to come. As a result, it allows us to understand each other in a very intimate fashion and that's a different way to look at the world.

Now, you and I might say, "Well, that's a threat. If you go for a job interview twenty years down the road, your boss will be able to see your Facebook history." Well, hold on a second. Your boss will have a Facebook history, as well. It levels the playing field, right? [laughter]

We're thinking about it in antiquated terms. The reality is that that transparency has value. It allows me to find people that have the same kind of intellectual DNA, the same interests that I do. That might mean greater levels of innovation if I collaborate with people that are more like me.

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There's a company called connectmyDNA.com. They'll actually go one step further with this. They'll actually take your DNA they'll analyze 70 percent of it, and they'll match you up with people who have similar DNA's. Now, I'm not entirely sure that works. But again, I'm not entirely sure it doesn't either.

There will be all kinds of new ways that we'll collaborate in the Cloud around this notion of digital identity that will make transparency much more than just a threat. I think it'll make it a tremendous platform for collaboration and innovation.

**Joe:** I like the way you even the playing field because your boss has a Facebook page, too. One of my questions was going to be, there's no way to expunge your record when you get through college, right? It's still there.

**Tom:** Not yet. But it's interesting. I think we have to catch ourselves. If you listen to what you just said, there's no way to expunge your record. You and I think about expunging it, cleaning it, sanitizing it. These kids don't. These millennials, they're not concerned about expunging their record. They really want those flaws to come out because they believe that by showing their true person, their true nature, there will be a benefit in that.

There will be some social benefit. They're not entirely sure what that benefit is. I'll give them that. They're experimenting without knowing the results of the experiment. But maybe we're creating a platform here that will help us solve problems that we haven't yet encountered. In many ways, we're building a capability in mankind to deal with enormous problems that we have yet to come across.

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I think that's an important part of what we're doing with the Cloud. We're creating an intelligence. That's what I call it, an intelligence. An intelligence that's going to help us cope with some very big, complex problems that can only be solved through intense, hyper-connected collaboration.

**Joe:** The other part of that digital locker concept is there's been a lot of talk lately that we're moving to an area that we're going to have control of our own records and who we allow into "our digital locker." Is that possible with the Cloud?

**Tom:** It's not possible. I'll give you some examples here. If you think of contemporary poster children for this whether it be Facebook or Google or Twitter. I'm out there, but I can't protect the value that's being gained from my behavior. Google really owns my behaviors, and they sell it to advertisers. Facebook does the same thing.

Boy, you know what? If my behavior is that valuable, I'd like a little piece of that. Maybe not a whole lot, but a bit of it. If I'm Justin Bieber, I can get that piece back by getting paid on folks who advertise as a result of coming to my site, or doing queries on me.

There's value in all of our behaviors. I think owning my digital identity allows me to capture some of that value. That's a great motivator, too, because my sense is that the part of what these millennials will end up doing is renegotiating this social contract with the providers, Google's and Facebook's of the world, the Amazon's.

And say, "Hey look, if you're going to use who I am to your benefit, then I should have some ownership stake in that. I should get some value back from that."

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That's not something that today we've been able to do very well. Google is ultimately selling the greatest asset in the whole world, which is you and me. If that's that big of an asset, they should have to pay something for it. They shouldn't get that for free.

**Joe:** Is that not what I'm giving up by going to the Cloud?

**Tom:** Absolutely. Today we're giving it all up. There's a wonderful site called realage.com. I stumbled across it some months ago while I was writing a book. I preach this stuff. I live it. I try as hard as I can to maintain an open, objective outlook about what the Cloud is, and how I interact with it.

With realage.com, I found myself over the course of 15 to 20 minutes giving it my entire medical history. I'd never been to the site before. I was telling it the prescription drugs that I take, my behaviors, how healthy I am. Ultimately, it finally dawned on me. This site now knows more about me than my Primary Care Physician does.

Is that a smart thing? Should I be giving up this information to a site that I've never visited before? Of course, at that point, I stopped. It stopped me dead in my tracks. I think we all are giving this up without even knowing that we're giving it up. It's valuable and it's also, of course, in today's Cloud a bit of a threat. Because it's not clear what might happen to that.

LinkedIn recently had a huge breach where many tens of thousands of passwords were compromised. A lot of these sites that I think are very, very secure are certainly subject in today's model of the Cloud to some risk and to some threat.

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It just means that we have to be careful and we have to be diligent. I think we will evolve out of that. We always, when we approach new technology, always stumble at first and take a little bit of the anxiety away by becoming more sophisticated in how we deploy the technology.

The Cloud is no different. It's going to require some time until we figure all this out. But again, that's just focusing on the cost and the risk. It's not focusing on the value. It might very well be that when I combine realage.com with connectmyDNA.com, it might tell me to modify my lifestyle in ways that I'd never considered. That could have huge value to me as an individual. You've got to look at both sides of that equation before we pass judgment.

**Joe:** It's funny that we started talking about the six characteristics of the Cloud and we just never really even mentioned them in the last 10 - 15 minutes, because there's so much to talk about the Cloud.

**Tom:** There is. That's what happened with the book. I began writing a book that I was convinced would not be more than 10,000 to 20,000 words and I ended up with 70,000 words because I became so fascinated with the topic. Began to realize how rich this is. It's social. It's political. It's economic. It's commerce. It's education. All of these things are impacted by the Cloud.

**Joe:** There're six characteristics and I'm going to name them. OK? It's truth, innovation, commerce, reputation, learning and community.



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Another one of these subjects before time gets away from us that I want to touch upon, is the learning. I think that learning in the Cloud is really...I going to have access to, let's say, the greatest professor in the world on a certain subject soon. If I don't already.

The interesting thing I find about that is that e-Learning, now that Harvard's putting their label on it, let's say, or MIT is putting their label on it, all at one there's legitimacy to e-Learning. Is that really going to affect learning? Is something like that going to happen? Is that going to hurt us because we're not going to get such a disparity of opinion about a certain subject?

**Tom:** Learning has always been primarily about the intent and the sincerity of the learner, of the student. The more sincere, the more intensely that person wants to learn, the better the learning experience will be.

It has been secondarily about the place where the learning occurs. I think you can take any institution, from a Harvard to your local Community College and say, look, those students are truly motivated to want to learn, will end up learning, and will make use of that education in the best possible way.

We tend to apply that just to institutions of learning as we've known them up until now. We've got seven billion people on the planet. Let's say a billion of them are too young to be in any form of learning. Yet we're educating, in the true sense of the word, perhaps two billion of the remaining six.

That's four billion people that still are in some very rudimentary, primitive stage of learning because they don't have access. They don't have the financial resources. It's not affordable

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for them. They have a local school system or local opportunities for education that are far less enriching and sophisticated than what might be provided by some of the more prestigious institutions of learning.

What happens if we take that model and we blow it wide open? We say, and look we don't have to do this, it's already been done. Harvard, MIT, Stanford, take your curriculum, make it available to anyone who wants it. Don't give them a degree, just make it available to anyone who wants it.

I can guarantee you, Joe, there's a few billion people on the face of the planet that would be incredibly motivated to better their position and their stature in life financially, economically, in any way that you want to measure it, as a result of having access to those core courses and to those materials.

That's what's going to happen, Joe. We will find, I think, over the next 10 to 20 years, a tremendous expansion of the number of people who are able to access learning and who are able to leverage it. That creates value for us as a planet, as a global community. I'm excited about that. I think that is a single, most exciting aspect of the Cloud that I can even begin to contemplate.

**Joe:** When we look at innovation but it seems so often that the guy that left Harvard, or the Bill Gates, the Steve Jobs, the people that didn't finish school, they learned what they wanted and had the idea, and moved on. We spread that across millions now to be able to gather that learning.

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**Tom:** That's exactly right. I was coincidentally just talking with someone a few days ago. A very bright young lady was in her second year at Harvard and decided, "You know what? I have nothing left to learn. I'm not motivated anymore." Now, her parents weren't very happy about this when she first told them.

But she went out and started three business. One business which is making huge inroads in the child sex trade, and is helping make that a more visible problem, and helping to solve that problem. One business that, by the way, is meant to develop a whole new type of University for entrepreneurs.

There are people who sufficiently motivated can do incredible things. They need some basic access to education, K-12 as well as higher learning. Once they have that access, you know what, the world is going to be a vastly different place, and vastly different for the better.

That, to me, is a future that I am very optimistic about. And frankly, hope I live long enough to inhabit. At the rate things are going, I think you and I will see the impact of that and the impact will be profound.

**Joe:** Who is your book meant for? I mean, who's going to pick it up and read it?

**Tom:** It's not meant for the technologist. It's not a book about technology. I think when folks see the Cloud, the first thing they think about is, "Oh, it's a technology book." It's not. It's a book about behavior.

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It's for the businessperson who wants to understand how they can better leverage these new behaviors in the Cloud. It's for us as individuals, who will need to, in very little ways, be able to surf this tsunami of connections.

That's why I call it cloud surfing. In many ways, whether we like it not, we've got to grab that surfboard and learn how to ride that wave. Otherwise, we're going to be swamped by it.

It's for any individual, not a technical person, any individual who really wants to understand this new way of working, of living and playing. How they can leverage it to their benefit to create a better life, a better organization, and ultimately to create a better world.

**Joe:** Tell me a little bit about what you do outside of authoring a few books.

**Tom:** This is my ninth book. I love to write. It's a bit of my pathology. I tell people it's a sickness of sorts. But to me it's a great exercise in learning. I love to learn.

I speak all the time. Much of my time, at least half, is spent on the road doing keynotes, talking to people about these ideas. I love to share what I know, and I love to learn from the input of others. That really is my classroom.

Then I run a consulting organization that does a great deal of work in the area of innovation. Helping organizations to navigate this new, very uncertain, fast moving territory. Not just the technology, but the way that the organizations will behave. How they will lead. How they will build collaborative partnerships and environments for their employees, and also for their marketplace.

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**Joe:** What I took from it is that the book was a great bridge from technology to the human person, and them bridges are tough to build. I thought that was something that I really enjoyed out of the book because I had to initially force myself to read it, a little bit. Once I got into it, it was like, yeah. Yeah.

**Tom:** It's funny. You know what? So many people have said that to me. A lot of folks have said to me, "When I saw the term cloud. I immediately thought well it's a technology topic, a technology discussion. "While some of it is, I like the way you characterize it. It is a bridge.

It's a bridge from technology to, ultimately, this new behavior. We all need to know what's coming at us if we're going to cope with it, right? My role is really just to man the post on top of some high point and be able to look out at the horizon and say, "Hey. This is what's coming. Get ready for it, and benefit from it."

**Joe:** How can someone contact you and find the book? Is there a book website?

**Tom:** There absolutely is. They can go to [cloudsurfingbook.com](http://cloudsurfingbook.com). There're lots about the book right there. They can go to my personal site, with my blog and all kinds of information about my speaking. They can find me at [tkspeaks.com](http://tkspeaks.com).

**Joe:** I would like to thank you very much. This podcast will be available on the Business901 blog site and the Business901 iTunes store. Thanks again Tom.

**Tom:** Awesome, thank you very much Joe.

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**What others say:** *In the past 20 years, Joe and I have collaborated on many difficult issues. Joe's ability to combine his expertise with "out of the box" thinking is unsurpassed. He has always delivered quickly, cost effectively and with ingenuity. A brilliant mind that is always a pleasure to work with." James R.*

Joe Dager is President of Business901, a progressive company providing direction in areas **such as Lean Marketing, Product Marketing, Product Launches and Re-Launches. As a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt**, Business901 provides and implements marketing, project and performance planning methodologies in small businesses. The simplicity of a single flexible model will create clarity for your staff and, as a result, better execution. My goal is to allow you spend your time on the **need versus the plan**.

**An example of how we may work:** Business901 could start with a consulting style utilizing an individual from your organization or a virtual assistance that is well-versed in our principles. We have **capabilities to plug virtually any marketing function** into your process immediately. As proficiencies develop, Business901 moves into a coach's role supporting the process as needed. The goal of implementing a system is that the processes will become a habit and not an event.

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