Eric Kalin on the Question He Still Asks Before Any Cloud Recommendation

Eric Kalin, SVP of Data Platform Industries at Oracle, shares a story from early in his career and the habit of mind it left him with.

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Years before Eric Kalin led industry strategy at Oracle, he sat in a room with a customer who had already decided what they wanted to buy. The technology was impressive. The slide deck was polished. But nobody in the room could answer a simple question: what business problem was this solving.

Kalin asked it anyway. The silence that followed told him more than any requirements document could have.

That meeting has stayed with him across four decades of work at Accenture, AWS, IBM, and Microsoft Azure, and now at Oracle. The technology changes. The question does not.

A Pattern Across Four Companies

Kalin has worked inside consulting, systems integration, and three major cloud providers. Each one had its own products, its own sales process, its own way of describing value. What he noticed, moving between them, was a pattern that had nothing to do with any single company's technology.

The customers who got real value from a platform were the ones who could describe the outcome they wanted before anyone opened a product catalog. The ones who struggled were the ones chasing a feature list, hoping the outcome would follow.

That distinction shaped how Kalin leads at Oracle today. Data Platform Industries covers Manufacturing and Transportation, Energy and Utilities, High Tech, Retail, and Communications, Media and Professional Services. Five industries, five sets of pressures, and one habit he carries into every one of them: start with the business problem, not the platform.

The Way of Thinking It Illustrates

Kalin describes his approach as client-focused, and he means it literally. Before he talks about Agentic AI, multicloud environments, or infrastructure, he wants to understand what the organization is actually trying to accomplish. Faster decisions. Lower latency. A single source of truth across regions. The technology conversation comes second.

This is not a method Oracle asked him to adopt. It is a habit built from years of watching what happens when the order gets reversed. A customer who buys a platform before naming the outcome usually ends up retrofitting the outcome to fit the purchase. That rarely goes well, and it is expensive to unwind.

Kalin's background in sales leadership, solution engineering, and systems integration gives him a vantage point most executives in his position do not have. He has sold the technology, built it, and integrated it into customer environments that were already running something else. Each seat gave him a different view of the same question: does this actually solve the problem, or does it just look like it does on paper.

What This Looks Like Today

At Oracle, that question shows up most often in conversations about multicloud. A customer already running its applications on AWS, Azure, or Google Cloud does not want to hear about a full migration. What they want to know is whether their database, their AI tools, and their existing investments can work together without a disruptive rebuild.

Kalin's answer starts the same way it did in that early meeting: what are you actually trying to accomplish. Sometimes the answer points toward Oracle AI Database running inside a hyperscaler environment the customer already uses. Sometimes it points somewhere else entirely. The outcome drives the recommendation, not the other way around.

It is a simple habit, and Kalin would be the first to say there is nothing complicated about it. But simple habits are easy to skip when a room is full of impressive technology and nobody wants to be the one asking the obvious question. He still asks it anyway, in every meeting, with every customer.

About Eric Kalin

Eric Kalin is Senior Vice President of Data Platform Industries at Oracle, based in Alpharetta, Georgia. He leads industry strategy across Manufacturing and Transportation, Energy and Utilities, High Tech, Retail, and Communications, Media and Professional Services. His career includes leadership roles at Accenture, AWS, IBM, and Microsoft Azure, with experience spanning sales, operations, solution engineering, and multicloud transformation. Outside of work, Kalin is a classic car enthusiast who enjoys fishing, golf, and time outdoors, and he supports charitable organizations including the American Cancer Society and the MS Society.

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