

Netflix Offers \$100,000 for Cloud Computing Improvements

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Netflix is challenging global developers to improve the features, usability, quality, reliability, and security of cloud computing, and will hand over \$100,000 to the teams that can do it best.

"Cloud computing has become a hot topic recently, but the technology is still emerging," Netflix CPO Neil Hunt said in a statement. "No doubt many of the key ideas that will take it to the next level have yet to be conceived, explored, and developed."

The Netflix Cloud Prize is divided into 10 categories, which will be judged by a panel of independent, renowned technology pioneers, including Amazon CTO Werner Vogels, Thoughtworks chief scientist Martin Fowler, Netflix Cloud vice president Yury Izrailevsky, and others. Each category will offer a \$10,000 prize.

Netflix called itself "a cloud pioneer," starting the move to the cloud in 2009 via Amazon Web Services.

"We're laying railroad tracks for cloud adoption and usage," Hunt said. "The Netflix Cloud Prize is designed to improve understanding of what it takes to build native applications for the cloud that take full advantage of the opportunities for scalable computing."

The Netflix Cloud Prize entry period opened yesterday, and will run through Sept. 15. Winners will be announced in October, and invited to attend the Amazon Web Services Re:Invent conference in November to receive their awards.

To get an idea of what the Netflix Cloud Prize contest is looking for, check out the prize categories and existing open source projects online.

Hopefully this contest will work out better than the original Netflix Prize, announced in 2006. It promised \$1 million to the person or team that could make a 10 percent improvement in the company's recommendation engine, an award that was finally given to seven technology professionals in September 2009. By December, however, Netflix was hit with a lawsuit that said the improvements made to the recommendation engine made it easier to identify people through supposedly anonymous information. Ultimately, Netflix ditched plans for a sequel to its million dollar prize as part of a settlement for that lawsuit.

Earlier this week, meanwhile, Netflix launched two new features: an ISP Speed Index, which houses stats on which ISPs provide the best video-streaming experience, as well as new Facebook integration for U.S. users.

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