

# **Solar Powered Camera**



Powered by solar energy, this kit sets up without any electrical wiring.

## **Easy installation**

Easy set up without mechanical equipment-reducing the installation costs and time.

Can withstand bad weather

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## A term that has been coined over the last decade is that technology is not just deigned to empower, but to

inspire."

## OKEN GESTURE

A term that has been coined over the last decade is that technology is not just deigned to empower, but to inspire.

That statement certainly rings true when it comes to the front cover feature of September's edition of CNME.

In my capacity as a technology journalist, I have covered the broad topic of digital transformation extensively over the last 8 years.

I have witnessed the seismic impact digitalisation has had in transforming the entire operational processes of many industries from healthcare to education and retail to telecommunications.

The power of technology is evident throughout our society, but the most acute illustrations of the capabilities of disruptive technologies is when they are used to harness what appears to be the most rigid of industries.

When it comes to the rigidity of an industry vertical, a good example was real estate.

That was until the creation of Propchain.

Robin Ubaghs is a pioneer and a trailblazer, and technology 'inspired' him to make the global real estate marketplace more 'accessible'.

His company is on a mission to digitise the entire real estate value chain.

It is an utterly compelling interview, and makes for a fantastic front cover feature for September's CNME.

I'll concede that the area of decentralisation, tokenisation and fractionalisation were all quite grey to me in terms of what it all meant.

However, during our exchange Ubaghs perfectly articulated their vision, and the impact their suite of solutions, services and technologies are having in relation to drastically transforming the real estate industry.

"There are so many factors coming into play when you are trying to digitise an industry that has never been digitised. We need to get to a point where we see global recognition and equality in regulatory frameworks and that really is the next stage. That will really change the way we invest, trade, manage and actually finance the assets behind it."

I know I'm biased, but it is a great read, and you can check out the interview on Pages

I also caught with Sue Azari, eCommerce Industry Lead at AppsFlyer, in a bid to further explore and examine the findings of their annual State of eCommerce App Marketing

Hugely fascinating conversation, and the old Android V iOS power struggle was brought to the surface, with the data indicating that retailers see much more value in return spending from iOS users than that of Android.

You can check out that exchange on Pages 20-23.

The world of remote working is now the norm, and we know it is here to say.

That being said, it is a space that continues to evolve as businesses continue to grapple with striking the right balance.

Innovations Group UAE are an expert in this space, and have undergone an evolution of their own as a company.

They have pivoted away from focusing on HR and Payroll services exclusively, to position themselves as a market leader when it comes to recruitment.

Nikhil Nanda, a Director at Innovations Group UAE, explains their own journey of discovery, and the key role they are playing in helping companies find the right talent for their vacancies.

He also sheds light on the world of remote working, and shares some of the trends he sees emerging in the space.

In addition to this, we have superb interviews with Zealous, Fujifilm Middle East and SCOPE, and have some great thought leadership features from Avaya, Nutanix and

Our next edition of CNME, will be our most eagerly anticipated of the year – as we gear up for GITEX 2024.

We will have exclusive interviews with the most prominent technology leaders in the industry in October's GITEX edition of CNME!

Enjoy this month's CNME.

Mark Forker

**Editor** 







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News

CNME rounds up the biggest regional and global developments in enterprise technology, which includes the news that Kaspersky has appointed a new distributor for its consumer portfolio in the KSA, Nutanix appoints Sven Schoenaerts as their new EMEA Channel Sales Leader - and Pure Storage will showcase their new Al portfolio at GITEX 2024.

10 Nikhil Nanda, Director at Innovation Group UAE, outlines some of the factors that are influencing change and transformation within the global remote working ecosystem.

**20** Sue Azari, eCommerce Industry Lead at AppsFlyer, highlights some of the key findings from their Annual State of eCommerce App Marketing Report, which again shed new light on the ongoing Android v iOS power struggle.

**35** Rodolph Khoury, Managing Director - Dubai and Northern Emirates, Avaya, has reiterated the need for businesses to adopt a holistic approach to CX in order to retain and build customer loyalty in the digital economy.

Mamoun Arsan, General Manager, Smart Enterprise Solutions - SCOPE Information Systems, explains his vision for the company, and stressed that their Al -powered solutions are designed to enable cities and businesses to flourish.

**42** Kentaro Iwai, Division Manager, Device Technology Division at Fujifilm Middle East, articulates the impact digitalization has had on the global printing industry, and why he believes their diverse portfolio of solutions and services will resonate with the marketplace across the Middle East.

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While the publishers have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of all information in this magazine, they will not be held responsible for any errors therein.

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### SentinelOne and Intezer team up to simplify reverse engineering of rust malware

#### SentinelOne and Intezer have

launched a project aimed at illuminating the blind spot surrounding Rust malware so that threat researchers can better understand and accurately characterize the complex malware ecosystem before it reaches critical mass and blindsides the industry.

As part of the initiative, researchers from SentinelLabs and Intezer have teamed to develop a methodology to make reverse engineering Rust malware more approachable and engage the security community to create and release tools to tackle the problem head on. The project is known as OXA11C.

"In malware analysis, the arrival of a new programming language introduces an entirely new set of challenges that obstruct our ability to quickly grasp the malicious intent of a threat actor", said Juan Andrés Guerrero-Saade, AVP of Research, SentinelLabs. "With the current state of our tooling, Rust is practically impossible to reverse engineer, and as a result, many analysts are shying away from researching the Rust malware ecosystem. Together with Intezer, we aim to change this".



Juan Andrés Guerrero-Saade, AVP of Research, SentinelLabs.

## Kaspersky appoints new distributor for its consumer portfolio in KSA



# **Kaspersky has appointed Al-Falak** Electronic Equipment & Supplies, a long-standing leader in Advanced IT and Communication Services in the region, as its distribution partner for

The agreement which was officiated this year means that Al-Falak is able

the full Kaspersky consumer portfolio

in Saudi Arabia.

to sell Kaspersky award-winning solutions, designed to ensure full protection against all cyber threats.

These products include Kaspersky Standard, Kaspersky Plus and Kaspersky Premium. Alongside these products, the portfolio also includes tools such as the digital parenting assistant, Kaspersky Safe Kids, and Kaspersky Password Manager, designed to conveniently store sensitive data.

In a region facing rapid digitization and a subsequent rise in cybersecurity threats, Kaspersky, contributes a comprehensive combination of advanced threat protection, userfriendly solutions, and a global reputation for excellence.

# Bybit and DMCC extend successful partnership, pioneering growth of Dubai's crypto ecosystem



#### $By bit, the world's \ second-largest \\$

cryptocurrency exchange by trading volume, announced the extension of its strategic partnership with Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC),

After a year of successful collaboration, Bybit is thrilled to announce its new role from a key ecosystem partner to an advisory role, solidifying its position as a leading force in Dubai's thriving crypto and Web3 industry.

This elevated partnership marks a new chapter in Bybit and DMCC's joint commitment to fostering the growth and development of the region's crypto ecosystem. From August 2024 to July 2025, Bybit will serve as a DMCC Ecosystem and Advisory Partner, providing strategic guidance to the DMCC Crypto Centre and its members on key initiatives.

"We are honoured to be the first organization appointed to this advisory role by DMCC," said Helen Liu, Chief Operating Officer at Bybit. "By taking on an advisory role, we are excited to leverage our expertise to drive innovation and support the growth of the industry in Dubai".

Belal Jassoma, Director of Ecosystems, DMCC, added "Bybit have been true partners over the past year, bringing substantial value to Dubai's crypto and Web3 community. We are thrilled to expand this through Bybit's advisory role, which will support our Crypto Centre members in new ways as they look to scale their crypto businesses and tap into some of the world's most exciting markets".

## Nutanix appoints Sven Schoenaerts as their new EMEA Channel Sales Leader

#### Nutanix has recently announced that

Sven Schoenaerts has been appointed as the new Senior Director, Channel Sales EMEA. In his new role, effective 01 August 2024, he will be responsible for Nutanix' routes to market. All EMEA Regional Channel Sales Leaders will report to Sven.

"Partners have been a cornerstone of the success of Nutanix, and will play an even more important role in helping customers achieve the benefits of hybrid and multicloud architectures," commented Sven Schoenaerts. "I also look forward to building on my extensive work with Service Providers and



Hyperscalers, as those routes-to-market take a more important role in Nutanix' future "

## Yellow.ai launches Analyze to elevate CX automation



#### Yellow.ai, a leader in AI-first

customer service automation, recently announced the launch of Analyze, a groundbreaking solution designed to improve bot interactions with in-depth conversational insights and advanced self-learning capabilities.

Powered by an in-house LLM model, Analyze reduces ticket volume by 30% and boosts containment rates by 10%.

Yellow.ai's Analyze not only delivers detailed insights but also uses this information to continuously improve the bot's ability to handle a broader range of customer queries without human intervention.

"Customer interactions and contact centre data hold immense potential to elevate customer experience, yet many businesses are missing out due to outdated technology", said Raghu Ravinutala, CEO & Co-founder of Yellow.ai. "With the launch of Analyze, we aim to meet this market need and help enterprises close gaps in their customer service strategies. Analyze provides comprehensive metrics that enhance containment opportunities and drive more effective automation".

## IFS to demonstrate Al-Powered Utility Solutions at World Utilities Congress 2024

#### IFS, the leading technology provider

of enterprise cloud and industrial AI software, has announced its participation at the World Utilities Congress, 16-18 September 2024, at ADNEC Centre, Abu Dhabi, UAE.

The company will highlight the IFS Cloud Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) solutions, which have been recognized as #1 in Gartner EAM Market Share 2023.

Speaking on the company's participation, Vijay Jaswal, Chief Technology Officer, APJ, ME&A, at IFS commented: "Utility organisations in the Middle East must balance the pursuit of net-zero targets with operational efficiency. IFS solutions empower utility companies to navigate the challenges of the energy sector, ensuring compliance with industry regulations and demands while optimizing performance. We are thrilled to connect with our customers in the region and showcase how our AI-powered management solutions can efficiently drive business outcomes".



Vijay Jaswal, Chief Technology Officer, APJ, ME&A, at IFS.

### Pure Storage to demonstrate their new Al innovations at **GITEX 2024**



Omar Akar, Regional VP for CEE & META at Pure Storage

#### Pure Storage, a developer of data

storage technologies and services, recently announced its participation (Hall 6, Stand C40) at GITEX 2024.

Underpinned by its unique Evergreen® architecture, Pure Storage provides agility and risk reduction to organisations with a simple, energy efficient, consistent storage platform delivered as-a-service. At the event, Pure Storage will outline how it helps customers with issues such as implementing tech to support AI initiatives for long term success.

"Between the pace of technological advancement, demands to incorporate more AI, focus on sustainability and managing disparate systems, it's no wonder today's customers are struggling. Pure Storage continues to innovate and set the industry benchmark for what a storage platform should deliver", commented Omar Akar, Regional VP for CEE & META at Pure Storage. "I look forward to GITEX and the opportunity to show customers and partners how Pure Storage's unified data storage platform can be the engine that powers regional organisations' business transformation strategies".

### The malware that must not be named: Suspected espionage campaign delivers "Voldemort"

#### In August 2024, Proofpoint

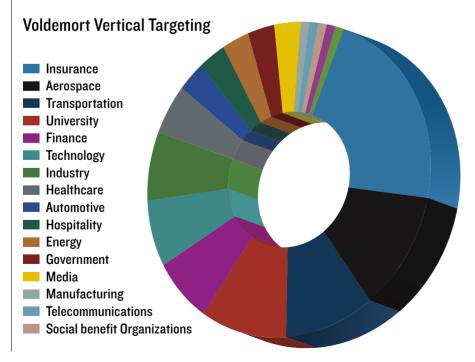
researchers identified an unusual campaign using a novel attack chain to deliver custom malware. The threat actor named the malware "Voldemort" based on internal filenames and strings used in the malware.

The attack chain comprises multiple techniques currently popular within the threat landscape as well as uncommon methods for command and control (C2), like the use of Google Sheets. Its combination of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), lure themes impersonating government agencies of various countries, and odd file naming and passwords like "test" are notable. Researchers initially suspected the activity may be a red team. However, the large volume of messages and analysis of the malware very quickly indicated it was a threat actor.

Proofpoint assesses with moderate confidence this is likely an advanced persistent threat (APT) actor with the objective of intelligence gathering. However, Proofpoint does not have enough data to attribute with high confidence to a specific named threat actor (TA). Despite the widespread targeting and characteristics more typically aligned with cybercriminal activity, the nature of the activity and capabilities of the malware show more interest in espionage rather than financial gain at this time.

Voldemort is a custom backdoor written in C. It has capabilities for information gathering and to drop additional payloads. Proofpoint observed Cobalt Strike hosted on the actor's infrastructure, and it is likely that is one of the payloads that would be delivered.

Beginning on 5 August 2024, the malicious activity included over 20,000 messages impacting over 70 organizations globally. The first wave of messages included a few hundred daily but then spiked on 17 August with nearly 6,000 total messages.



## Omnix to showcase its innovative solutions at Dubai Al and Web 3 Festival

#### Omnix International, a leader in

digital transformation and innovative technology solutions, is proud to announce its participation in the upcoming Dubai AI and Web 3 Festival from September 11–12, 2024, at Madinat, Jumeirah.

Omnix's participation highlights its dedication to staying at the forefront of technological advancements while supporting businesses in navigating the complexities of the digital landscape.

Omnix will showcase a range of cutting-edge technologies, including Conversational AI, process mining, Metaverse/Extended Reality, Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Digital Twin, and Computer Vision solutions, along with its HOT Systems' Hardware Optimised Technology



Walid Gomaa, CEO of Omnix International.

offerings. Omnix stands out as the only company in the region providing Conversational AI as a service, which will be a key feature at the event. Additionally, the company will introduce a unique consulting service designed to help clients realise the value of AI.

"At Omnix, we believe that the future belongs to those who embrace change. AI and Web 3 are pivotal technologies for digital transformation, and we are committed to equipping businesses with the knowledge and tools they need to stay competitive in an increasingly digital world. Our participation in the Dubai AI and Web 3 Festival will allow us to engage with current customers and potential clients, showcasing solutions that drive innovation, efficiency, and growth", said Walid Gomaa, CEO of Omnix International.

## Network International signs referral partnership with Zand Bank

#### Network International, an enabler of

digital commerce in the Middle East and Africa, has signed a referral partnership with Zand, the UAE's first digital bank, aimed at enhancing and expanding financial services for fintechs and startups in the region.

Michael Chan, CEO of Zand Bank, stated: "Our partnership with Network International marks a significant milestone in our journey to revolutionise the financial services landscape in the UAE. By leveraging Network's extensive expertise in card processing, we can provide fintechs and startups with the tools they need to innovate and grow. This collaboration aligns perfectly with our vision to be a catalyst for digital economic growth in the region, and we look forward to driving greater financial inclusion and accessibility through this strategic alliance".

Navneet Dave, Managing Director & Co-Head of Processing Services –



(L-R) Navneet Dave, Managing Director & Co-Head of Processing Services – Middle East & Michael Chan, CEO of Zand Bank

Middle East, said: "We are excited to partner with Zand to transform the fintech landscape in the UAE. As the largest payment processor and acquirer in the region, Network has built long-standing relationships with many of the leading financial institutions, merchants and payment networks. Our experience and capabilities allow us to be the partner of choice for governments, banks, fintechs, merchants and public sector companies. We look forward to working with Zand to realise its objectives".

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Our partnership with Network International marks a significant milestone in our journey to revolutionise the financial services landscape in the UAE. By leveraging Network's extensive expertise in card processing. we can provide fintechs and startups with the tools they need to innovate and grow. This collaboration aligns perfectly with our vision to be a catalyst for digital economic growth in the region, and we look forward to driving greater financial inclusion and accessibility through this strategic alliance."

Innovations Group UAE

# SUPPLY AND DEMAND

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Nikhil Nanda**, Director at Innovations Group UAE, in an effort to learn more about some of the trends influencing change with the remote working space, how they leverage their bespoke services to find the right talent for organisations – and the factors behind their decision to pivot away from HR and Payroll services to focus more on recruitment.

Nikhil Nanda is the Director at Innovations Group UAE.

Innovations Group has been operating for almost two decades across the UAE, and during that time has firmly established itself as one of the leading market players in recruitment and employee outsourcing.

Nanda joined Innovations Group as a Project Manager in 2016 and has quickly climbed the corporate ladder within the organisation and was subsequently appointed as a Director of Innovations Group in 2022.

He has played an instrumental role in the evolution and digital transformation of the company over the last 5 years.

In a candid discussion with CNME Editor Mark Forker he explained that evolution in more detail.

He kickstarted the conversation by outlining in more detail some of the



services that they provide to businesses on a global scale.

"Innovations Group UAE manages HR, recruitment, and payroll for various entities across the world. When I say HR, recruitment, and payroll, what this essentially means, is we take the requirements from our clients, and we source candidates from across the world based on certain skills,

budgets, and designations - and we employ them under our own sponsorship. We manage their entire payroll, visa processing, and their mobility solutions in terms of helping them source suitable housing, schools and healthcare, and other various elements that an individual needs when they move into a new job, or relocates to another country," said Nanda.

As a caveat to that, Nanda added that their mission statement was all about identifying the right talent for the right job.

"Our mission statement is to identify people with the rights skills and deploy them to a position where that skill is most valued and required. We have entities across Europe and the United States, India, and the Middle East, so any client that requires a particular type of skill would come to us, we then identify the candidate and help them



move to the relevant region," said Nanda.

The bespoke services provided by Innovations Group is all born out of the fact that businesses need to concentrate on the core services they provide to remain both relevant and competitive amidst a backdrop of an increasingly evolving digital world that we all operate in.

"The whole idea and concept behind Innovations Group is driven by the fact that companies need to focus on their core services. It does not matter if a company is in advertising, or construction, they need to be 100% focused on the services that they are providing to their customers. However, we know that a lot of entrepreneurs and conglomerates focus on things like HR, managing payroll, and identifying the right people to join their company. In addition to this, they are looking at the legal

side of things, compliance, and medical insurance, which just consumes a lot of your time, and ultimately detracts them away from the core services that you want to deliver to your customers," said Nanda.

The world of work changed forever as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and from that global crisis, remote working is now the new norm.

However, Nanda outlined that the rush from employers globally to provide remote working opportunities for all their employees was in hindsight the wrong thing to do.

The Director at Innovations Group UAE pointed out that some jobs just cannot be done remotely, and the one size fits all approach that was initially offered in relation to remote working is now obsolete.

"There are always a lot of trends around remote working, with many companies looking to reinvent, or reimagine their workplace. However, what I think is very evident when it comes to remote working is the fact that it is not a one size fits all concept. I think what companies did in order to maintain fairness at the very beginning of the move to remote working was to offer remote working to everyone across the board. They couldn't be seen to allow one department to work remotely, and another department to retain the status quo. We know that it doesn't really apply like that, because some positions like sales, IT and tech are all very doable whilst working remotely, and companies appear to be happy to accommodate people working in these roles to operate remotely. However, if you look at departments such as finance, legal and HR, they are actually quite hands-on. Take finance for example, there is a lot of cash handling, transactional work where you need someone to responsibility and be supervised day-to-day. In terms of HR, it's all about

What we did at Innovations Group was take every single application and business process and make them more digitalised and data driven."



people at the end of the day. If you are communicating warnings, or promotions online then it just does not have that same impact. The one size fits all policy that was adopted by businesses really hurt them. They were acting in good faith, and were trying to be fair, but it didn't work," said Nanda.

Nanda used their IT operations in Romania as an illustration of how successful and efficient remote working can be for certain departments within an organisation.

"In relation to Innovations Group, our entire IT team in Romania all work remotely. We have seen an increase in productivity and efficiency – and we believe a big factor in that is the fact that Europe is a much more developed market, and the concept of remote working has caught on a lot more because there is less attrition, and people generally stay for longer. Whereas in the UAE, and across the Middle East, there

is always an ongoing process around visas, contract periods, and these factors lead to higher levels of attrition, and an increase in costs around the onboarding process. In Europe, there is no real onboarding coast, you hire someone, and very quickly you can get an understanding of how efficient they are, and they generally stay for a longer period of time," said Nanda.

The conversation then shifted towards the new kind of hiring trends emerging in the talent acquisition space.

Nanda highlighted how psychometric assessment were now being adopted by businesses globally to ensure that not only do they find the right candidates, but can also determine, whether they are suited better to working remotely, or in an office.

"The new ways of assessments have really defined whether an employer is comfortable with a new employee working remotely. When I say assessments there are a lot more psychometric assessments that are being used and background checks, and there is a lot more offline tests that are conducted during the screening process. In relation to psychometric technical competency and background screening compliance, if all these factors meet quite well during the interview process, then it allows employers to be confident to say this is the right person to work remotely. However, at the same time it can also be the opposite as a lot of employees actually prefer to work in the office, many of them feel that they are not appreciated and not valued. From the trends that I have seen it has become evident that you need to understand the employees' approach to their work, it can't just be the employers' approach to work and how they believe the operation should be run," said Nanda.

Nanda used an analogy of someone growing up with siblings compared to an only child, to better explain the science behind these psychometric assessments.

We actually started to become more of a luxury than a necessity, so that's when we decided that we had to start to evolve with the market."

"Take for example, an only child versus someone that has three siblings. If someone growing up has always been around people, sharing and working with them and has had to sacrifice their time for others, then that inevitably results in them becoming a more community-centric personality, whereas if I'm a single child then I'm used to doing everything on my own. I want my own time and my own space, but as an employer how do you provide the same strategy to both those different personalities? That is where the level of psychometric assessments have grown exponentially over the last 3-5 years. They are able to identify these parameters within people's personalities that would allow you to change your strategy on employment across both those different personality types," said Nanda.

In the technology space there is always a lot of focus on the 'culture' of a particular organisation, with many claiming that their own unique culture is ultimately what differentiates them from their market rivals.

However, many technology executives have been quite open and transparent regarding their fears over the impact remote working can have on their culture, fearing that those being onboarded will not actually be able to get a proper feel for the culture of the organisation.

Nanda is sceptical of how important the culture really is to most employees within a technology company and claimed that the most important thing was for employees to feel 'valued'.

"The way technology companies are run are extremely unique, and I think as a result of that is why they focus so much on their culture. We understand what a tech employee would require in terms of flexibility, and are cognisant of the fact they don't want to deal with too much bureaucracy, and quite a number of them aren't overly interested in participating in many social activities, they like to say it how it is to some extent. I think it is extremely difficult to hire someone remotely to show them that aspect, but the question is does that employee really care about what's going on in the office environment, or the company culture? Or does he really care about their team specifically and their tasks. Most technology companies work off a massive ticketing system, and these tickets are assigned to various teams within the company, and the time taken to complete these tasks are a KPI. They are essentially saying that employees are completely recognised digitally, where they know how many tickets you are completing, and they know how much you are doing - and that's what I believe a developer, or a program manager cares more about rather than what sort of events are happening within their company. That's a big part of how they are pushing the remote working culture, but there is enough

data with the ticketing system to give employees a monthly report on their performance and show them how valued they actually are," said Nanda.

Nanda then explained the evolution Innovations Group UAE underwent as part of their efforts to be more digitalised and gain more visibility on the data they had across all areas of their operations.

"What we did at Innovations Group was take every single application and business process and make them more digitalised and data driven. We needed visibility on the number of processes, services, and tasks that were being completed. Before we embraced on this digital transformation program and implemented all this current technology, the process we used was fairly basic. We would track the total number of joiners that my recruitment team had hired in the last month, and although that was great, it didn't tell you the entire story of the efforts that were being put in to get that joiner onboard. So, when we set-up our tech system, we started tracking the number of CVs submitted, the number of interviews that were conducted, and the number of candidates that dropped out of the process. We started realising that within this data a large part of the hiring process was about the input being put in at the beginning, as opposed to the output of hiring the joiner at the end," said Nanda.



Nanda added that gaining access to this type of data changed their thinking towards the performance of their own recruiters.

"The visibility on all this data enabled us to examine how good were the quality of CVs being shared, and how many of those CVs actually got to the interview stage? The access to this type of data allowed us to see more accurately how our recruiters were performing. Instead of thinking they weren't performing, we could see that maybe the portal they are using, or the headhunting strategy they were implementing was not

effective, or in some cases they simple didn't know the client well enough. Having this visibility brought a lot of efficiency to our entire operation, and value to our employees that were working remotely as recruiters. Because now they were being given a clear KPI on each of these processes, so if I am not having success then this where I'm going wrong, instead of just saying this recruitment isn't performing. We have implemented this across all our business functions, such as HR, visa processing, the number of payrolls and accuracy of payrolls, and we brought

in data and analysis across the entire service line," said Nanda.

Nanda said that the biggest change undertaken by Innovation Group UAE over the last number of years was their shift towards recruitment.

As Nanda pointed out, as the market had evolved and matured, the company had become a luxury instead of necessity.

"We actually started to become more of a luxury than a necessity, so that is when we decided that we had to start to evolve with the market. We realised that the game was on the supply side, and in recruitment. In the past, we would not recruit as much, we were more of a HR and payroll provider. Our recruitment then became our core focus, we realised that if we identified the right supply of people, where there is a clear shortage and difficulty in sourcing candidates in this area, then selling was going to be easy," said Nanda.

"Changing the way that you are recognised in the market is how you evolve when times change. Without these technologies and without the advent of remote working then we wouldn't have been able to cross borders. We're not just about visas and HR anymore, we are committed to solving the problem businesses have in terms of finding the right people wherever they are in the world to make sure they are the right people for your entity," concluded Nanda.



# **FUTURE ENTERPRISE AWARDS** 2024

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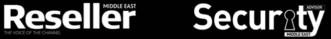
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Zealous

# THE 'ZEAL' TO SUCCEED

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with **Maryam Ahmed Hassani**, co-founder and CEO of Zealous, who explained how their mission is to democratise technology in order to help people to capitalise on the opportunities provided by Al technology – and how Abu Dhabi can be a global launchpad for start-ups.

Maryam Ahmed Hassani is committed to levelling the playing field in technology, enabling software developers and companies to launch products faster, reduce costs, and maintain high-quality software as they grow.

Following her graduation from NYU Abu Dhabi with a BA in Political Science, Maryam entered the innovation space as a strategy consultant at EY.

Some of her notable achievements include leading the Special Olympics Innovation Challenge and playing a key role in the MBRIF Accelerator Program.

Alongside Zealous, Maryam is the Head of Trends & Innovation at the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA), where she oversees strategic projects focused on advancing the early childhood development field.



Zealous was co-founded by you in 2022, but can you give our readers a broader overview of the driving factors that inspired you to establish the company, and what is the mission statement of Zealous? Our mission has always been to leverage AI to help people.

We started off looking to address a very tedious problem — making meaningful professional connections and creating serendipity using AI.

Although that resulted in two successful products, an AI-powered networking app, and an AI event assistant, we didn't quite land on the right idea initially. It was very much a journey of refining and testing, and the only way to do that was to talk to users.

During one of our regular calls to go over our success metrics, including retention and frequency of use across features, my co-founder and I came to a humbling realization: while we are passionate about helping people in emerging markets achieve their objectives through intention-based networking, the challenges were more in the category of annoyances rather than problems people desperately wanted solved.

To make the inevitably difficult journey of building a start-up worth it, we needed to ensure we were solving a problem painful enough for a large enough market.

It was during this journey of talking to users and iterating the product that we ended up creating an in-house AI framework to help us develop products faster and more efficiently.

Particularly vital to us as a bootstrapped company, we were able to iterate our products at record speed without having to hire





additional resources and developers.

Shifting from B2C to B2B was a significant pivot, but also a natural progression as the constant feedback loops led us there.

The mission in essence remains to empower and support people, and our unique AI framework drives that forward. We have just understandably pivoted to leverage a game-changing product we know can bring immense tangible value to software developers and companies around the world.

Zealous has branded itself as an AI code generation framework that enables developers to build products faster and more efficiently, but can you tell us more about your two flagship products the Zealous Social App and the Zaia Event Assistant, and what impact they have had for businesses and end-users that have adopted them?

Our products are available on the market for free, and people are still using them, but our attention is not laserfocused on them.

We still have daily active users. The Zealous social app, which employs AI to make networking more efficient, grew to about 1,200 users in a few months.

We started small, doing a soft launch for a focus group of 40 people at an in-house event where guests scanned a QR code and were asked to provide their "brutally honest" feedback.

After a few iterations, we attended a global tech event, Gitex, and gained 400 organic downloads in just three days.

The products are a direct result of feedback from the market; it helped us discover how a variety of users prefer to network and their intentions behind it. How a salesperson interacts versus a

The mission in essence remains to empower and support people, and our unique AI framework drives that forward."



visiting entrepreneur is very different, for example.

You need to meet users where they are—people are always going to go to events—but how could they get more value from their time there? With Zaia, the AI event assistant, we addressed the challenge of remembering everyone you meet.

We doubled down
on capturing that oneminute interaction more
meaningfully, using computer
vision to extract information
from business cards or QR
codes to provide suggestions
on how best to engage with
the person in real time.

The product also logs when and where you met each contact, their job description, and any notes you made on the day for easy recollection through AI search. Following the democratization of AI through the introduction of public LLMs such as ChatGPT, the topic of Generative AI seems to have completely taken over the tech landscape. Can you give us your views on Gen AI, and is Zealous looking at developing their own Gen AI tools and applications?

Zealous is an AI-native company. Our AI framework is flexible so that you can use whichever LLM you prefer. For instance, if you're a government entity or enterprise that requires high data security, our product provides complete transparency of code and can be set up on-premise.

We are very bullish on the AI space, and we're banking on the fact that these emerging technologies are just going to get better with time.

Our framework is AI-native, which means that the AI itself is doing the coding and testing under the supervision of a software developer.

40-50% of software development time is spent on testing alone, and our aim is to free up that time by introducing the possibility of around-the-clock AI testing, with cost savings and code enhancements as byproducts.

Our AI-native framework enables developers to automate the minuscule repetitive work so they can spend their time more meaningfully on strategy and solving complex problems. A lot of tech analysts across the Middle East region have claimed that Abu Dhabi is on the cusp of being a global launchpad for start-ups, do you concur with this opinion, and if so, how has Abu Dhabi managed to foster such an environment that is allowing start-ups to thrive, what measures did it implement to enable this?

I believe there is still a long way to go, but there are clear steps in the right direction with the needed support and investment—the UAE invested \$410 million in AI in 2023. The country has a strong willingness to work with global stakeholders, and we are fortunate enough to have that visionary leadership.

The Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) is in Abu Dhabi, as part of the UAE's "National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence 2031," to become a world leader in AI by investing in people and industries that are key to its success.

In terms of attracting founders and start-ups, there are mechanisms in place that simplify building or setting up your business (i.e., free zones). Though personally, I believe the real value will be in getting a long-term commitment from founders who need more than just good business conditions.

Many founders look for a place they feel welcomed and where they can raise a family. Initiatives that position Abu Dhabi as not just a favorable business location but a place where founders can set down roots and contribute meaningfully to the ecosystem will truly differentiate Abu Dhabi from other start-up hubs.

As someone who is the CEO of a start-up company born out of Abu Dhabi, what advice would you give to other technology leaders like yourself starting out on their journey to build a tech start-up?

You are in for a fulfilling and challenging experience like no other.

As a founder, you need to be open to the journey, doing the work that needs to be done—talking to users constantly, being humble to everything they are saying, and deriving the information you need to build products they need and love.

Building a tech start-up teaches you core lessons from strategizing solutions to effective communication which every founding team needs to succeed.

Learning by doing is the greatest part of it, so be open and know it's going to be hard but worthwhile if you give yourself the grace to be part of that journey.

Another big one is to remember, you are not alone. The point of having a cofounder is not just about diversifying your skill sets within the team but also because you need someone

to bounce ideas off of and explore other perspectives to a problem.

Talk to more people, more founders, and experienced founders; there are a lot of first-time founder mistakes that sometimes have to be made to grow but it helps to learn from others. Just look at my founder journey with Zealous!

Finally, it's been just over two years since Zealous entered the marketplace, how happy have you been with your growth in that period, and what can we expect from the company over the next 12 months?

I'm proud of the progress we've made over the past two years, discovering our ideal customers and achieving a strong product-market fit. Every twist and turn has been essential in bringing us to where we are today.

Since our significant pivot to our AI framework for code generation and testing, we have received tremendous interest from software developers and companies.

In the coming year, we aim to raise a round of funding to prepare our product for front-facing customers—software companies and developers—and to onboard our first enterprise customers, establishing our path to revenue generation.

Since our significant pivot to our AI framework for code generation and testing, we have received tremendous interest from software developers and companies."

AppsFlyer

# STAYING LOYAL

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Sue Azari**, eCommerce Industry Lead at AppsFlyer, in an effort to better understand the user behaviour driving change with the eCommerce mobile app space, why businesses see more long-term value with iOS users compared to Android, the factors driving the return of paid marketing campaigns – and how businesses can achieve the customer loyalty they want through a seamless CX.

Sue Azari is an e-Commerce industry lead at AppsFlyer.

AppsFlyer is one of the world's leading players in mobile attribution and analytics, and its platform has been specifically engineered to help marketeers make better informed decisions in the constantly evolving industry vertical that is the e-commerce mobile app space.

Over the last decade, Azari has established herself as one of the brightest minds in the global eCommerce mobile app marketplace.

Azari's day-to-day role is to empower eCommerce businesses to scale their mobile applications, and she provides them with the best practices for app growth and retention strategies in what is an ultra-competitive and extremely volatile marketplace.

In a candid and fascinating discussion with CNME, Azari brilliantly articulated some of the key findings from the 2024 State of eCommerce App Marketing Report that was commissioned by AppsFlyer.

#### **ANDROID VIOS**

Azari began the conversation by interestingly highlighting how many eCommerce businesses see a much higher value in iOS users compared to Android.

"Typically, what we have seen in the marketplace, and what has surfaced from speaking directly to shopping applications, is the fact that they see a much higher lifetime value in return app spend for users that are on iOS. The data clearly indicates that over time, iOS users are likely to spend much more than those using Android devices. The other thing that we have been able to identify, which we believe has been aided by the economic recovery we have enjoyed of late, is a 21% spike in in-app purchases on iOS in Q4 of 2023, versus 9% on Android," said Azari.

Azari stated that the data was indicative that end-users on iOS devices where spending much more on apps versus Android users, and also highlighted that this trend was also reflected in budgets.

"We also saw that

marketing budgets in Apple's platforms jumped by 43% in contrast to Android, who actually saw their spend decline by 18%. It is really interesting because the marketing spend overall has increased, but it has been weighted way more towards iOS, and it has actually dipped quite significantly on Android, and we believe that's because those that are investing in paid media for apps in the shopping space just see much higher value and return from iOS users. So they are shifting their spend towards them, and it is becoming a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy off the back of that - and they are then seeing a growth in installs and in-app purchases.

Azari added that the alleviation of privacy concerns with iOS has also been a factor in this market upsurge.

"I think in the past there has been a lot of nervousness and uncertainty on iOS because of changes in the privacy landscape post iOS 14. However, I think the fact that people now have more confidence in terms of the measurement that is now



available on iOS, has resulted in businesses investing more in iOS, and are shifting more to iOS rather than Android," said Azari.

#### **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:**

Many analysts have labelled the current climate as the 'experience economy'.

As consumers, we now demand convenience and expect a seamless customer experience, if businesses fail to deliver good CX then it could be the death knell for them as an entity, such is the competitive nature of eCommerce.

Azari said that in order to achieve that customer loyalty that businesses crave, it is imperative your strategy is built around customer experience.

"I think the most fundamental component for

brands in terms of achieving customer lovalty is all around user experience. Businesses that have a really slick onboarding experience are going to be successful. If end-users can go from install through to adding items to the basket and then checking out as seamlessly as possible, then businesses are on to a winner. But that's easier said than done. Businesses can enable this seamless experience by integrating mobile payment options such as Apple Pay into the purchasing experience. In addition to this, they can have biometric logins to avoid having to manual create logins to access your account via a password. Having all these elements serves to enhance a seamless end-user experience, and that is key to holding on to your customers and building that customer lovalty element," said Azari.

Azari also disclosed that 70% of shopping carts are abandoned at checkout, which only serves to reinforce how important it is for businesses to deliver a seamless experience.

Azari also touched on the importance of reengagement campaigns.

"Reengagement campaigns are also very important in an effort to bring users back into the apps. So you need a strong marketing strategy around that to make

sure your engaging users, and at the same time are attracting new users to your applications. In addition to this, some interesting things that I am starting to see are paid for loyalty programs, which sort of replicates the Amazon Prime model. In the US, Target just launched a membership program for \$99 per-year, and that gives users things like free nextday delivery, perks on your birthday, and points. I think businesses who make it very clear to end users what they are getting back for their purchases are going to do well. Price can be a factor, but it is also about how you are being rewarded for that, and often that is through points, product exclusives, early access, and cheaper delivery options," said Azari.

#### **META V TIKTOK:**

Azari said that another interesting feature of their comprehensive State of eCommerce App Marketing Report was the return of paid marketing campaigns.

She highlighted how many companies built their success off the back of a platform such as Meta, but over the last few years the investment in Meta exclusively has declined, and there has been much more diversification of marketing spend across different platforms.

What has surfaced from speaking directly to shopping applications is the fact that they see a much higher lifetime value in return app spend for users that are on iOS."

"There was a huge number of companies that built their success on Meta, certainly that was the case around 4 or 5 years ago, before some privacy changes kicked in. The advantage Meta provided back was from a demographic targeting point of view from within the platforms. However, as that data has become more restricted, we have seen quite a bit of pullback from investing so heavily in just one platform like Meta, and because competition is so fierce, businesses rely on paid media budgets to help them stand out. What's interesting is that we are seeing them diversify across more channels, so they will still work with Meta and Google, but we are seeing more investment now in the likes of TikTok, Pinterest and Reddit, which we would call demand-side platforms. There has been a huge investment in the gaming space overall, so businesses in general are really diversifying where they put that put that different media spend into different platforms to try and reach different audiences," said Azari.

Azari also revealed that companies like Temu and Shein have triggered what she described as a 'mobile-first' shopping experience.

"I read a report a few months ago that revealed Temu and Shein spent almost \$150m per-month on Meta alone. The added benefit of this type of investment is it provides this sort of Halo effect for other brands, because what we have seen in other markets is Temu

and Shein are app first, they don't have a transactional website, or offline store. So, in turn they are really promoting this mobile-first shopping behaviour - and that means brands are starting to capitalise on that, and as a result are starting to invest more in things like Apple Search adverts in order to capture that intent within the app store. We have also seen that almost 75% of conversions within shopping apps are via remarketing campaigns, so that just serves as a further indication of how important it is that they bring users back to the app," said Azari.

Azari said she was pleasantly surprised by data from the report which indicated that 60% of first-time buyers will make another purchase.

"What jumped off the page at me from the report was the data which showed 60% of first-time app buyers will buy again, and that's so much higher than I thought it would be. That's fantastic for e-commerce brands because it shows you just how important securing that first purchase is in creating that customer lovalty. That data also enables you to remarket them with an upsell, or cross-sell campaign that is personalised to them. I think this data shows positive signs

to anybody in the shopping app space that if you can do everything you can to drive that first purchase then it's going to much easier to try and bring them back," said

#### UAE:

Azari concluded a brilliant discussion by documenting the differences between the UAE e-Commerce mobile app marketplace to that of Europe and North America.

"The UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have consumer engagement on apps that are 1.6x times higher than that of developed markets like Europe and North America. So, the Middle East, including the UAE, massively over-indexes in terms of mobile usage which is amazing, and I feel there is more of this mobile-first approach across the GCC region in comparison to Europe and the United States. I think the Middle East, and the UAE in particular is really leading the way for that mobile-first shopping experience, and I think they do the loyalty perspective very well too. They use lots of QR codes in-store to be able to drive users to be to download and use the app, so they do the whole omnichannel approach brilliantly, with apps sitting central to all of that," said Azari.

What jumped off the page at me from the report was the data which showed 60% of first-time app buyers will buy again, and that's so much higher than I thought it would be."



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**Nutanix** 

# THE STRAIN GAME

**Reshma Naik**, Director, Systems Engineering, Emerging EMEA, Nutanix, has penned an exclusive op-ed for CNME, in which she examines how AI is placing considerable strain on aging IT infrastructures, and has called for modernisation in order to enable sustainable growth in 'intelligent automation'.



It's been just over a year and a half since the launch of ChatGPT and yet generative AI is now on the lips of most business execs. GenAI has been what Forrester CEO George Colony referred to as "the most important technology thunderstorm of the last 40 years," and tech leaders across the EMEA region seem to agree. AI is now a priority for 90% of IT, DevOps, and platform engineering decision makers, at least according to the Vanson Bourne and Nutanix State of Enterprise AI Report.

But as with any rapid advance in technology, questions start to be asked of the existing IT infrastructure and its ability to cope. Are current systems really up to the demands of an AI gold rush?

The short answer is no. To begin with, we have an energy efficiency problem. This is something Gartner warned about back in December 2022, saying that by 2025 "AI will consume more energy than the human workforce, significantly offsetting carbon-zero gains."

Also a study called the Growing energy footprint of AI, suggested that the AI industry could consume as much energy as a country the size of the Netherlands by 2027.

The need to address, or at least the need for ESG reporting considerations to be addressed, was highlighted in the State of Enterprise AI Report. Today most AI/ML model inferencing and training is conducted on high-performance GPUs, which are supported by equally high-performance memory and storage.

Combined, these solutions consume significant amounts of electricity and require additional power to actively cool within a private or public data centre.

The report also identified additional challenges around

skills. Gaps in AI capabilities, as well as ESG, are big concerns.

Over 40% of EMEA respondents in the report claim they lack GenAI and prompt engineering skills, and desperately need data scientists. This will inevitably impact organisations' ability to meet their own expectations with AI projects.

This becomes even more pronounced when considering other major factors such as managing data and scalability in back-office functionality.

Skills shortages and a need to modernise systems do not go well together, so addressing skills is important in meeting the on-going demands of infrastructure change.

## THIS IS THE MODERN WORLD

AI will only add pressure to existing systems, so there is also growing recognition of the need to address the managing and support of running AI workloads at scale

In fact, EMEA respondents ranked this as the number one challenge over the next two years. In addition, respondents also cited security, reliability and disaster recovery as important considerations in their AI strategy.

With infrastructure modernisation and data security outranking cost (the third-lowest consideration for EMEA organisations running or planning to run AI workloads), there is a clear indication within the

region that organisations recognise that to really benefit from AI they have to get their infrastructure house in order.

This is further illustrated by the report, with over 90% of EMEA respondents agreeing that their IT costs and cloud spending will both increase due to AI applications.

In short, EMEA organisations are showing a willingness to spend in support of their AI initiatives. The challenge is where and how to spend it wisely.

It will come down to prioritisation. While identifying and remediating skills shortages are a constant issue, especially when it comes to emerging technologies, infrastructure modernisation is key.

AI applications and services have a symbiotic relationship with their underlying datasets, models, and infrastructure.

This is something the report shows that enterprises are acutely aware of, so the challenge is how to develop data security and quality strategies to make their AI technology as reliable and resilient as possible.

Inevitably, the gold rush nature of GenAI adoption will lead to some shortterm over-spend to plug skills gaps and deliver infrastructure capabilities.

However, a longer-term modernisation plan is needed to really benefit from the technology, to ensure scalability and intelligent workloads that optimise costs and energy use.

This will mean effective implementation and management of data across multiple environments – data centre, cloud, and edge – as each will play a critical role in supporting an end-to-end AI workflow.

This data management should also consider security, data quality and data protection. Given data sovereignty requirements, especially in the EMEA region, this should be a core tenet of any AI strategy.

Of course, this is all a work in progress. Organisations are still trying to work out how best to use GenAI but use it they will. Inevitably, there will be early adopters, accelerating adoption and making mistakes along the way but for the majority there are some fundamentals here. Existing infrastructures are not enough. They will creak and fail under the strain of AI, if not physically then almost certainly in terms of capability and governance. Thankfully, on that score, for most organisations, AI will be a marathon, not a sprint.

Al will only add pressure to existing systems, so there is also growing recognition of the need to address the managing and support of running Al workloads at scale."



Propchain

# TIME TO GET 'REAL'

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Robin Ubaghs**, Executive Director at Proptech company Propchain, in an effort to explore how emerging concepts such as tokenisation and fractionalisation are completely transforming the once rigid world of real estate, and how the digitalisation of the sector has now made the industry more accessible and more efficient, representing a seismic shift for all the major players across the real estate marketplace globally.

Robin Ubaghs is a serial entrepreneur with a visionary mindset.

As the CEO and co-founder of Propchain, he has firmly established himself as one of the most prominent thought leaders in the burgeoning world of decentralisation.

His company Propchain, is on a mission to digitise the entire real estate value chain.

Ubaghs wants to disrupt the status quo that has existed in the rigid world of real estate, and his company Propchain, have enjoyed remarkable success under his tutelage and guidance.

In simple terms, Ubaghs wants to make the real estate market 'accessible' to millions of people, and 'unlock' the liquidity that is trapped within the industry due to the way it is designed and operated.

On their website, Propchain declare that they are on a mission to provide the real estate industry with resources, technology, and market intelligence to digitise the entire value chain, stimulating bottom-line results and immutability in a socially responsible manner.

CNME managed to secure an exclusive interview with Ubaghs, and it was difficult to ignore his unwavering belief in Propchain during our exchange – and it was hard not to be convinced and swayed by what appears to be a transformation that will enable more people with accessible to the real estate market.

Ubaghs believes that developers and government bodies need to be more proactive in terms of fostering an environment where we are building for the better on accessibility and immutability to crucial data, such as ownership and due diligence.

Ubaghs began a wideranging and in-depth conversation by outlining some of the factors that led to the inception of Propchain.

Frustrated by the lack of accessibility within the real estate marketplace globally, there was a strong belief amongst Ubaghs that their needed to be an 'Amazon' within the industry and that fractionalisation was the best way forward.

"I've been following the tokenisation movement since 2015, and I always had an unwavering belief in the fractionalisation of certain markets that were

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I always had an unwavering belief in the fractionalisation of certain markets that were traditionally inaccessible for certain types of investors."

traditionally inaccessible for certain types of investors. It was only later that I found out that this particular principle is not necessarily the most valuable part of the digitalisation of a certain industry, but that was the initial belief. Why is there no Amazon for the real estate marketplace where you can scroll around and select a property, or a portion of a property in a high potential growth market anywhere in the world? We have been in real estate development for the last 7 years and I think a common theme that we have always encountered is where do you find the right investor, and where do you start investing," said Ubaghs.

Ubaghs said that the regulatory environment in many developed and mature markets have inevitably made digitalisation within the real estate sector difficult, but he conceded that favourable regulations and frameworks in certain locations, such as Dubai, represent huge opportunities.

"I think as a real estate investor you're always so closely tied to your local area because you know that particular market inside and out. However, I think we are at a stage in the cycle where returns are lower than ever before, and regulations are making it harder than ever to make money, especially in a market like Europe, but on the other hand we are also involved in real estate markets that thrive hard. Dubai is a perfect example of this, and there

are other huge opportunities in different places globally when it comes to the real estate market. That being said, it requires a lot of knowledge and effort for a regular investor to capitalise on these opportunities. We started to build the concept of fractionalisation, and began tokenising real estate propositions from around the world. As a real estate developer, we already had operations globally, so we had connections in Dubai, and in other markets, so essentially, we had our fingers in multiple pies - and we had the perfect canvas you could say to test this technology out," said Ubaghs.

Ubaghs said when he starting examining the market much closer in terms of competition, he quickly realised that many other competitors were always lacking a certain component, and didn't have all the moving parts synchronised.

"When I started to explore the market competitors in this space, and maybe using the word competitors is wrong, because I strongly believe that everybody that is building concepts in this new movement is not necessarily a competitor, because the market is large enough for everybody. I think what became evident was that a lot of businesses were

always missing a certain link. They either had great knowledge of the technology, but not enough on real estate, or they had an intrinsic understanding of real estate, but were missing the knowledge of the technology. For us, when I noticed that, and coupled with our exposure in both real estate and blockchain technology then it was a no brainer for us. We started to build the basic concept in order to start digitalising these opportunities on a platform where they can actually be traded amongst interested investors," said Ubaghs.

However, Ubaghs quickly discovered that his approach wasn't necessarily going to drastically change the market in the way he expected.

"There are so many factors coming into play when you are trying to digitise an industry that has never been digitised. The front end is maybe investing in a fraction of a real estate asset, but there's such a backend behind that, so where does the data live? Today, data lives in very isolated frameworks all around the world. Dubai Land Department is one, but if you are looking at Mexico, there's a very outdated land registry history, and if you start looking at Europe, there's a bucketload of outdated

There is so many factors coming into play when you are trying to digitise an industry that has never been digitised."

SEPTEMBER 2024



land registry history, so how does an investor in the front end know that this property is actually owned in realtime by the actual platform? We eventually came to the understanding that by just offering a digital proposition in the front end is not what is going to change this industry, and just by fractionalising and tokenising wasn't going to be enough," said Ubaghs.

Ubaghs said that quite frankly their initial approach was never going to create the liquidity that everyone is pursuing, because liquidity stems from a globally recognised framework.

Ubaghs said that in order to 'unlock the liquidity' then it is absolutely imperative that a global framework is designed to accelerate this movement.

"If you start looking at the digitisation of securities like treasury bills then you'll see that the reason it has been successful is the fact that there is clear infrastructure all around the world that is recognised by all stakeholders. For a private market, like the real estate sector then that type of infrastructure is not present, yet. That was the realisation and stark reality that we got from building out the initial concept, it became very clear that if we want this to succeed, and we want to unlock that liquidity that everyone is preaching about by selling fractions of real estate assets then we need infrastructure. You need several layers to this framework and you need land



registry's that work on one standard, and you need a land registry that is on the chain, so that every single country that is issuing digital real estate, or fractions of real estate has an infrastructure that is globally recognised," said Ubaghs.

Ubaghs added that on top of all this infrastructure is the need for the facilitation of a data layer.

"On top of all of this you need a data layer, you need to determine how the data goes from an off-chain infrastructure to an on-chain infrastructure, in order for businesses that actually offer this like ourselves have a platform that can always have the data accurately rat any single moment of the day. All of this brought us to the realisation and subsequent vision that if we want to do this right then the only way to do this right is by digitising the entire value chain, otherwise tokenised real estate simply doesn't work," said Ubaghs.

We all know that it is human nature to resist change, and the powerbrokers within the real estate market were not immune from the feeling of resistance towards the digitalisation of their industry.

Ubaghs conceded there the reception towards the digitalisation of the global real estate market has been somewhat of a mixed bag, but began by highlighting the businesses that have been positive towards them.

"There certainly has been mixed feelings, but I can

explain to you why. First of all, the people that are really positive regarding this movement of digitalisation are businesses that have a business model that is more focused and geared towards data verification, and they want to be part of this, and are acutely cognisant of the fact that this is something that can really drive what they are doing in a much more advanced way, and could see their costs drop significantly. For example, we are working together with EY, which is doing all of the auditing on the tokenised securities that we issue. Thus far, they have been generally

data starts flowing in a more accurate and less fraudsensitive manner then it will naturally drop the need for speculation and the valuation that they put on properties. However, at the same time they don't want to say no either because they are very aware of the fact that they need to keep advancing and evolving as a company, and want to be part of things like pricing algorithms that use AI technology. We also see resistance with notaries, because you can really outplay them by leveraging the capabilities of smart contracts. Dubai is a great example of smart contracts

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### We need to get to a point where we see global recognition and equality in regulatory frameworks and that really is the next stage. That will really change the way we invest, trade, manage and actually finance the assets behind it."

very positive about what we are doing – and other auditors such as Deloitte and KPMG are very positive about the tokenised era, which is logical for them because they have a lot more efficient access to data," said Ubaghs.

Ubaghs stated that he sees resistance from businesses operating in valuation and speculation, claiming that their business model is under the threat of becoming obsolete as a result of digitalisation.

"I do see considerable resistance from valuation companies, who are concerned about their business model because when and the vast majority of transactions done by the government in Dubai is on the blockchain," said Ubaghs.

Ubaghs also outlined how he has seen resistance for businesses operating in due diligence.

"We're seeing a big shift, and I think there is a reluctant realisation amongst these companies that over the next 5–10 years there might be no necessity for them any longer, and they really could be left out of the equation. There's also resistance from due diligence firms, especially when you are looking at large institutional developments.

If you're spending months and months on due diligence on a project that needs to be sold at completion, and then the buyer comes in and spends 3 months on due diligence then that inevitably means there is three months of dead apital. At the same time, you're spending around \$500-750,000 on average on due diligence fees, which is just crazy, I mean you're just going nowhere. There's going to be resistance because essentially with the access to the right data we can settle that due diligence in 10 minutes at the fraction of the cost currently," said Ubaghs.

As referenced throughout this discussion, Propchain have enjoyed remarkable success over the last number of years, so much so, that they are now poised to become the market incumbent when it comes to tokenised real estate globally, with the company confident of tokenising \$200m by the end of 2024.

There are a number of factors that have led Propchain to this position, and one of these according to Ubaghs was the establishment of a tokenisation factory.

"The front-end technology that we have built over time is the tokenisation infrastructure, such as the smart contracts that are able to issue security tokens that are backed by some form of security. With our particular proposition, it is generally our debt securities that are collateralised by real estate assets. However, we



have established our own tokenisation factory, which we use both for our own purpose as well as external parties that basically rent our technology. We do most of the hosting, and that has been quite successful, and we have close to \$80m of tokenised real estate, and there is another \$60m in the pipeline. We're on the verge of taking the No.1 position when it comes to tokenised real estate. The market incumbent currently has around \$120m, but we have set ourselves the target of surpassing them by the end of this year - and that's a great example of what we have been able to accomplish over the last few years through our concepts," said Ubaghs.

Ubaghs said that another key focus area for Propchain was in relation to the credit marketplace, and explained the term 'digital mortgages' in more detail.

"Undoubtedly, a key focus for us has been the credit marketplace, and we are really looking at building an opportunity for people to utilise the traditional leverage they would be able to get from a bank. We have built the infrastructure for collateralisation, so people can use the tokens and the fractions of a real estate asset that they bought as the collateral for what we call digital mortgages. This enables people to effectively scale their portfolio on the basis of leverage," said Ubaghs.

One other key differentiator

for Propchain according the Ubaghs was its 'hybrid' approach to the Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 communities.

"I think a very unique thing that we have done compared to what other companies have built in this space is the fact that we like to build in what we call a 2 and a half manner. The Web 2.0 crowd is essentially every single investor that is competent and accustomed to digital investing, but at the same time they have no affiliation with blockchain, or wallets. Then you have the Web 3.0 community and they are blockchain native, and they are using blockchain and De-Fi applications. We are focused on the mixture between those two communities, and we build in a very hybrid manner, which means we are not excluding the Web 3.0 community, but we realise that the volume of that community is too small now for a business concept like ours to succeed," said Ubaghs.

Ubaghs concluded what was a wonderfully engaging, fascinating and candid exchange by outlining how the verification process when it comes to land registry at this point had the most impact in the digitalisation of the real estate sector.

He also added that the creation of globally

recognised rules, regulations and frameworks would pave the way for the acceleration of the digitalisation of the real estate industry.

"I think what has made the most impact thus far in the digitalisation of the real estate sector is the layers of verification that we will see in registry, and I think that's where most of the sensitivities reside in this market, but at the same time I think it is the fundamental cornerstone for a private market asset like real estate to live a digital life. I think the biggest advantage that we will see in terms of the digitalisation of the industry is that real estate can start living a secondary life. What I mean by that is the fact that it can start living a life in decentralised finance, but also in their daily finances. If you look at the current volume that is trapped in terms of equity in real estate assets around the globe, if you could unlock that then it would lead to a whole new financial spectrum opening up. We need to get to a point where we see global recognition and equality in frameworks, and that really is the next stage. That will really change the way we invest, trade, manage and actually finance the assets behind it," concluded Ubaghs.



Deloitte and EY are very positive about the tokenised era, which is logical for them because they have a lot more efficient access to data."

## WHAT'S THE BEST CYBERSECURITY EVENT?







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SCAN HERE TO REGISTER

Avaya

# MAKE OR BREAK

**Rodolph Khoury**, Managing Director – Dubai & Northern Emirates, Avaya, has written a thought leadership article in which he makes the case that only a holistic approach to CX will deliver real customer loyalty.



Having a great product is no longer enough to guarantee loyalty and keep customers coming back. Even brands known for their loyal followings based on their great products, are seeing customers 'switch sides', or move to completely different brands.

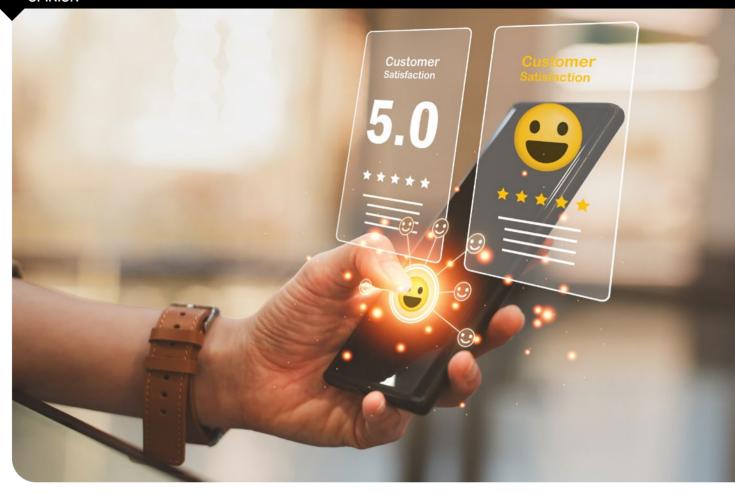
But there is one thing that can drive both loyalty and business growth — a holistic approach to outstanding customer experience.

The level of competition is strong no matter the industry, and there is an everincreasing number of brands entering markets to stake their claim.

Add to the mix the impacts of unpredictable global challenges, such as rising inflation and economic uncertainty, and it's clear why winning and retaining customers – many of whom are tightening their purse strings – is incredibly complex.

Then there's the everevolving criteria which inform customers' buying decisions. Corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability commitments and humanitarian causes are just some of the influential factors everyday citizens research before committing to a brand, whether it's a bank, insurer, retailer, airline, or fast-food restaurant.

This plethora of variables makes customer service imperative. A report found 97% of consumers feel customer service interactions correlate directly with their loyalty to a brand, and 60% have switched to other



brands on the back of a bad experience.

The data correlates with a separate report which indicates 81% of consumers are likely to become repeat buyers following a positive customer service experience. In addition, more than 70% of Middle Eastern businesses understand the significance of service availability and reliability.

But customer service isn't easy; customers are demanding and can be fickle, and come with a broad range of preferences that businesses must constantly adapt to. Where once politeness and a smile may have appeased customers, today's expectation is for organisations to accommodate the expectation for completely

personalised experiences that can vary day to day.

This is especially true now that brand interactions are becoming more digital. In the UAE and Saudi Arabia, the average percentage of users choosing to interact through digital or remote channels has shot up to 78%. Customers want to self–serve, talk to AI bots, or speak with real people on their own terms, and don't just expect responses almost instantly, but demand brands to anticipate their queries.

Among the biggest

challenges in delivering customer service that meets these requirements is bridging the gap between current capabilities and these evolving customer expectations while mitigating the risks associated with overhauling business communications infrastructure and the costs that come with it. Other contributing factors are the continuing difficulty in finding and retaining top talent, alongside the imperative to drive revenue and growth amid competitive pressures.

Where once politeness and a smile may have appeased customers, today's expectation is for organisations to accommodate the expectation for completely personalised experiences that can vary day to day."

SEPTEMBER 2024

## A

Overcoming them relies on a holistic approach to customer experience (CX) – one which integrates CX with employee experience (EX) and business growth.

The formula for
Enterprise CX, CX + EX = BG
(business growth), reflects
a symbiotic relationship
whereby organisations are
committed to investing in
fulfilling customer needs to
ensure every interaction is
meaningful and contributes to
brand loyalty, regardless of a
customers' preferred method
of communication.

One part of that commitment means constantly evolving and refining employee training and upskilling programs. The other part is adapting and enhancing communications and engagement strategies to keep up with customer demands.

However, the prospect of making an abrupt change from existing communications infrastructure carries high risks for businesses, including disruptions to operations and customer service continuity. It's instability that can not only hurt the CX brands offer today, but also cause consequences to future innovation and new business outcomes.

That's precisely why any such transformation doesn't need to happen overnight. On the contrary, a pragmatic, step-by-step strategy enables organisations to forge ahead into new territories, introduce new services and channels, and explore advanced capabilities such as generative

## CX, can make or break a brand in a world where customers are more willing to jump ship than ever before."

AI without compromising existing strengths.

It's about building upon what already works — leveraging familiar processes, systems, and technologies as a foundation for introducing new innovations. For most companies, the safest route to innovation is identifying specific functions or departments primed for change, and uphauling those before a new service is rolled out across the whole organisation.

This approach is especially pertinent for implementing AI, which, while far from a new concept, is still an early-stage vision when it comes to customer service.

Companies looking to supercharge their employees' productivity while removing cumbersome administrative tasks have the opportunity to test a large language model (LLM) within a specific team, evaluate the outcomes, and make necessary amendments to ensure the final product that other teams gain access to won't create disruption or demand steep learning curves.

This method is equally valuable for chatbots; research shows 94% of leaders believe AI can enhance customer self-service, but before all customers are asked to engage with a chatbot, it must be trusted to handle complex and unexpected enquiries.

CX, can make or break a brand in a world where customers are more willing to jump ship than ever before. By adopting a holistic approach to CX, rather than being tempted by a rapid overhaul that only solves for one part of the equation, organisations and their teams will be geared to meet the expectations of customers without exposing their existing successes to high-risk disruption.



**SCOPE Information Systems** 

# MORE 'SCOPE' FOR SUCCESS

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Mamoun Arsan**, General Manager of SCOPE Information Systems - Smart Enterprise Solutions, in an effort to learn more about how their Smart Enterprise Solutions entity is leveraging a broad product portfolio that is championing change and transformation across a number of industry verticals in the Middle East region.

Mamoun Arsan has enjoyed a remarkable career thus far in the IT industry across the Middle East region.

He is regarded by many of his peers to be one of the most prominent and visionary CXOs in the industry.

Arsan, is best-known for his time at Omnix International, where he spent a quarter of a century.

During that time period, he established himself to be an astute strategic and tactical leader, and played a key role in ensuring the successful selling, installation, customization and support of software solutions on behalf of Omnix International.

He left Omnix in 2019, in pursuit of new goals and challenges, and after spells with Technologica IT and Sword Middle East, he was appointed the General Manager of SCOPE Information Systems - Smart Enterprise Solutions in August of this year.

CNME managed to secure

an exclusive interview with Arsan, ahead of his new role, and he began the conversation by explaining in more detail what Smart Enterprise Solutions is all about.

"Smart Enterprise Solutions was created in an effort to harness AI, IoT, and Machine Learning to transform industries like smart cities, transportation, utilities, and public safety. Our business model is centered on providing customized, AI-driven solutions through a mix of software licensing, hardware, and services. Our solutions are focused on burgeoning verticals such as smart cities, predictive analytics, AI-driven security and intelligent automation," said Arsan.

Arsan reiterated how

Smart Enterprise Solutions really drive values for their customers and ultimately enhances their operational efficiency.

"Our solutions help customers enhance decision-making, improve operational efficiency, boost public safety, and remain scalable and adaptable to future needs. By focusing on innovation and customization, we deliver real value and enable our clients to thrive in a rapidly changing environment," said Arsan.

Arsan then illustrated how their cutting-edge solutions transformed the optimization of bus route planning in one of Europe's major cities, and as example of how successful their implementations have been.

"Smart Enterprise

Our solutions help customers enhance decision-making, improve operational efficiency, boost public safety, and remain scalable and adaptable to future needs."

SEPTEMBER 2024



Solutions targets a range of industries where AIdriven technologies deliver significant value, such as Smart Cities, Transportation & Logistics, Utilities, Healthcare, Public Safety and Retail. For example, public buses route optimization and planning in one of the major cities in Europe, where we increased efficiency by 30%. The measurement of drivers and driving behavior through predictive analysis also yielded great benefits, as did training suggestion and training delivery. In addition to this, we also had surveillance using UAV

with video analytics
across the Middle
East, and these are
just a few examples of
how we demonstrate
the capabilities our
AI solutions have in
terms of transforming
operations to deliver
measurable results
across various
industries," said Arsan.

AI is everywhere now, and the benefits of Generative AI have been well documented, since the advent of ChatGPT by OpenAI.

According to Arsan, Smart Enterprise Solutions harness AI to power its diverse product portfolio, which inevitably drives innovation and efficiency across industries.

He went into forensic detail to highlight the AI offering they have across their product portfolio.

"In relation to our predictive analytics, our AI

analyzes data to provide insights for better decisionmaking in all businesses, with regards to intelligent automation, our AI automates repetitive tasks and processes in sectors like finance and retail, reducing costs and errors. In addition to this, our AI powered surveillance uses computer vision for real-time threat detection and facial recognition to enhance public safety. Our smart city management uses AI to optimizes traffic, lighting, waste management, and safety, improving urban efficiency and sustainability. By integrating AI, we enable smarter, safer, and more efficient solutions that help businesses and cities thrive," said Arsan.

Many businesses can be resistant to change, whilst many adopting new technologies are sometimes reluctant to embark upon the transformation, even though they know it will benefit the company overall, but are fearful of the pain that can come with a protracted integration process.

Arsan explained again in detail, the approach they take when it comes to their implementation process.

"We start with a thorough assessment of the existing systems and needs. This helps us customize our solutions to fit seamlessly with the client's current infrastructure. We develop a step-by-step integration plan that minimizes disruption, ensuring compatibility with

legacy systems through APIs, middleware, and data migration tools. We implement solutions in phases, allowing gradual adoption and testing — and this reduces risk and allows for adjustments based on real-time feedback. Finally, we also provide training for staff and continuous support to ensure a smooth transition and effective use of the new technology," said Arsan.

In terms of the challenges, Arsan said there was a lot of commonailty across different industries, with a combination of legacy and resistance being prevalent ones.

"In terms of the common challenges that we see, the most recurring ones are; integrating with outdated systems can cause data inconsistencies, or require significant customization. Resistance from staff and stakeholders that unfamiliar with new technologies. Transferring large amounts of legacy data can lead to potential data loss or corruption – and ensuring new technologies are scalable and adaptable to future needs. We work closely with clients to address these challenges, providing tailored solutions with world-class tools and support to ensure successful integration," said Arsan.

The GCC region has been undergoing huge economic reforms underpinned by digital transformation, and the UAE has led the way in this regard, but one of the most ambitious programs is that of Vision 2030 in the KSA.

Arsan confirmed that in terms of their strategy, Smart Enterprise Solutions is very much aligned with those reformation agendas.

"Smart Enterprise Solutions aligns itself closely with the GCC's ambitious digital transformation programs by focusing on key areas that support national visions like UAE's different strategies for 2030 and KSA's Vision 2030. Actually, the business portfolio of Smart Enterprise Solutions is influenced by those visions and strategies. Whether it is Smart Cities, Computer Vision, AI, and Predictive Analytics. By focusing on these strategic areas, we help drive the digital transformation agenda of the GCC, enabling smarter, more efficient, and future-ready societies," said Arsan.

We know that in the current digital economy, it is imperative for businesses to deliver seamless customer experiences in order to both meet the evolving demands of customers and stay relevant amidst the

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By integrating AI, we enable smarter, safer, and more efficient solutions that help businesses and cities thrive."



backdrop of an increasingly competitive marketplace.

"Smart Enterprise Solutions enhances customer experiences through a number of factors, such as AI-powered personalization, which tailors' interactions and recommendations based on customer behavior and preferences. We use data analytics to anticipate customer needs and resolve issues proactively. We integrate with existing systems to ensure a smooth transition and consistent experience. We also employ AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants for 24/7 support and efficient service. These elements ensure that customers receive timely, personalized, and efficient interactions, improving overall satisfaction and loyalty," said Arsan.

When pressed on what he would do if faced with a prospective client that is sitting on the fence wrestling with the idea of adopting Smart Enterprise Solutions, Arsan says he would focus on the 'competitive edge' that they would provide them with.

"We focus on in our sales pitch on the returns and competitiveness. Customers can see tangible improvements in efficiency and cost savings right from the start. Also, scalability where customers grow and adapt with technology that evolves as their business does. Additionally, customer experience, where they can deliver faster, more personalized service, boosting customer satisfaction and loyalty. Investing in our solutions means investing in your

business's future. Let us help you turn potential into performance and secure a competitive edge in a rapidly changing market," said Arsan.

Arsan concluded a brilliant exchange, by highlighting their participation at GITEX 2024, which kicks-off next month.

According to Arsan, Scope Information Systems is set to make a significant impact at GITEX 2024, by showcasing their latest innovations and solutions.

"We can't wait to demonstrate and showcase our broad portfolio of solutions at GITEX 2024. Attendees who visit our booth can expect to see, AI and smart city solutions that demonstrate our advanced AI-driven technologies for smart city management. Hands-on demonstrations of our latest technologies in UAV and Digital Twin. Our team will provide insights on the latest trends in digital transformation, AI applications, and their impact on various industries - and we will engage with our experts and explore potential partnerships designed to drive their digital transformation journey," concluded Arsan.

SCOPE will be present in Hall 24 (H24-C20) and will be co-partnering with industry-leading technologies in addition to 20+ technologies on their portfolio. Attendees can expect to witness unmatched expertise and best-of-breed solutions.

#### **FUJIFILM MIDDLE EAST**

# BLUE 'PRINT' FOR SUCCESS

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Kentaro Iwai**, Division Manager, Device Technology Division at Fujifilm Middle East, to learn more about their strategy for growth in the UAE marketplace, the impact digitalization has had on the global printing industry, the importance of its partnership with MPS Company and ultimately what differentiates the Japanese company from its competitors.

Kentaro Iwai has enjoyed a distinguished professional career and is revered as a prominent thought leader in the global printing industry.

His journey began in 2003 with Fuji Xerox in the Sales Division in Nagoya, Japan. Over the years, Iwai has demonstrated exceptional sales and business development skills, drove growth and expanding market presence across multiple regions.

He has successfully led sales initiatives in China, Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan, forging strong relationships with key stakeholders.

His strategic vision and ability to navigate complex markets have made him instrumental in capturing new opportunities and enhancing the company's competitive edge.

In 2023, he brought his extensive experience and expertise to the Fujifilm Middle East FZE Device Technology Division in Dubai, UAE, where he continues to contribute to the company's success.

In a candid discussion with CNME, Iwai covered a few different subjects, but our conversation began with Iwai outlining the impact of its Apeos MFP series in the early success the Japanese multinational conglomerate has enjoyed in the UAE.

"The successful implementation of Fujifilm's Apeos MFP series in the UAE market can be attributed to several key factors The Apeos series is LED technology, which is designed to reduce environmental impact, aligning with the region's sustainability goals and features the Super-EA Eco toner with low-temperature fusing performance. Additionally, our innovative hardware and solutions provide enhanced convenience for enterprises with fewer clicks. By leveraging automated

workflows and AI (Artificial Intelligence), data can be analyzed, interpreted and acted upon to work faster. Our intelligent office printing solutions continuously analyze data and information, providing full visibility into costs and access across the organization. In the UAE, Fujifilm has positioned the Apeos series as a leading solution in the region's printing industry," said Iwai.

Iwai outlined that
Fujifilm's short-term goals
for the thriving UAE market
is to simply 'empower' its
customers with the ability
to optimize their business
process across multiple work
environments.

"Our primary goal is to optimize customers' business processes across all work environments. By implementing workflows that enable effective information and knowledge sharing, we empower customers to leverage their organizational strengths further. Over the



years, FUJIFILM Business Innovation Corp. has earned a strong reputation in the Asia Pacific region for providing high-quality hardware solutions with secure and easy operation, software that enhances users' workflows to accelerate digital transformation and reliable maintenance support to minimize downtime. We hold a 25% market share in this region for A3 color MFPs and printers, producing over

1 million units annually and achieving a No.1 market share for A3 color MFPs with a 93% customer satisfaction rate," said Iwai.

Iwai declared that the company wants to

build long-term lasting relationships in the UAE and become a permanent fixture in the printing sector across the UAE.

"Our long-term goals for the UAE are aligned with market demand & our historic achievements and we are confident in achieving them through strategic alliances with local partners like GCG, leveraging their strengths to expand our market reach," said Iwai.

Like most industry verticals in the UAE, the market dynamics are constantly evolving and with that comes the need for businesses to have the ability to adapt in order to stay relevant to the needs of their customers.

Iwai explained what he believes are the primary factors in ensuring that Fujifilm stays ahead of the curve.

Of course, the UAE market is known for its rapid growth and dynamic nature. Fujifilm stays ahead in this competitive and ever-evolving market by offering solutions perfect for competitive enterprises and supporting hybrid and flexible work arrangements. We offer advanced features, high security levels and easy operability, helping businesses meet the needs of a modern workplace. Through

Fujifilm is well-positioned to lead in this changing landscape through its investment in advanced technologies, commitment to sustainability, focus on personalization and strong regional presence."

our Managed Print Services, we offer customers high value-added services and AI technology to adapt to rapid growth. We dramatically improve productivity by optimizing work styles and create innovative customer experiences by offering sustainability as a service thereby helping customers grow alongside the everevolving market," said Iwai.

Iwai then highlighted the significance of Fujifilm's strategic partnership agreement with MPS Company, trusting they are the perfect partner to help them grow their brand across the UAE.

"MPS has an in-depth understanding of the regional market dynamics, customer preferences and local business culture. This expertise has been invaluable in tailoring our product's positioning and marketing strategy to better align with the unique characteristics of the market. Their insights have allowed us to fine-tune our approach, ensuring that our products resonate well with the local audience. Furthermore, MPS's established relationships with key decision-makers across various industries have been instrumental in facilitating crucial introductions and endorsements. These connections have not only opened doors for us but have also played a significant role in winning critical deals and expanding our customer base in the region," said Iwai.

Iwai also heaped praise on the sales team at MPS

for enabling the company to have had such a positive early reception in the UAE market.

"The strong on-field sales team at MPS has been proactive in reaching out to potential clients, conducting face-to-face meetings, and providing personalized demonstrations of the Apeos Series. Their efforts have significantly contributed to the increasing momentum of our brand visibility. Customers have been able to experience firsthand the advanced technology and modern features of our printing solutions, leading to a positive reception in the market. We have received fantastic feedback from the market, which is a testament to the effectiveness of our collaboration with MPS. Their ability to provide ongoing insights and adapt our strategies has been crucial in establishing our brand as a leading player in the UAE. As we continue to grow, we rely on MPS to help us stay ahead of the curve and maintain our position as one of the winning brands in the region," said Iwai.

The charismatic Iwai concluded a fascinating interview by stressing how he believed Fujifilm were perfectly positioned to capitalize on new opportunities emerging within the printing industry as a result of seismic digital transformation.

"The printing industry in the UAE, like elsewhere, is experiencing a significant shift towards digital transformation, is driven by cutting down repetitive tasks, high-quality outputs and cost effectiveness. With growing awareness of environmental issues, there is an increasing emphasis on sustainability within the printing industry. Businesses and consumers are looking for eco-friendly printing solutions that reduce waste and minimize the environmental footprint. This includes the use of recyclable materials, ecofriendly inks and energyefficient printing processes. Fujifilm is well-positioned to lead in this changing landscape through its investment in advanced technologies, commitment to sustainability, focus on personalization and strong regional presence. By staying at the forefront of innovation and understanding the evolving needs of the market, Fujifilm is poised to drive growth and success in the UAE's printing industry," said Iwai. 🚥

Our primary goal is to optimize customers' business processes across all work environments. By implementing workflows that enable effective information and knowledge sharing, we empower customers to leverage their organizational strengths further."

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## MIDDLE EAST AND **AFRICA'S LARGEST** CYBERSECURITY EVEN

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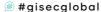
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Sav

# BE'SAV'-VY WHEN IT COMES TO PERSONAL FINANCE

**Mithil Ajmera**, Co-Founder and COO of Sav, has penned a thought-leadership article, which highlights the top 10 ways money-management apps are redefining personal finance goal-setting.

In today's fast-paced world, managing personal finances can be a daunting task. Traditional banking methods often fail to provide the flexibility and real-time insights needed to keep up with modern financial demands.

This is where moneymanagement apps come in, bridging the gap between oldschool banking and the need for instant, efficient financial oversight. They are essential tools that help users track expenses, save money, find deals, and ultimately, achieve their financial goals.

One major reason people are shifting from traditional banking to digital solutions is convenience. Money-management apps offer 24/7 access to financial data, enabling users to make informed decisions anytime, anywhere.

In an age where digital literacy is becoming as crucial as reading and writing, these apps offer easy-to-understand resources that educate users on budgeting, investing, and consolidating debt.

To put this shift into perspective, the mobile



banking market is expected to be worth \$1.82 billion by 2026.

This rapid adoption shows the trust we're placing in digital financial solutions.

Millennials, in particular, are leading the charge, with 97% using mobile banking apps, as these digital solutions fit seamlessly into their tech-savvy lifestyles.

In terms of user preferences, increased penetration of the internet and larger populations that are majorly young are proving this phenomenon not to be a mere trend but, indeed, a foundational shift in how we operate digital literacy.

These are just some of the many reasons we're seeing these apps rise in popularity. Let's explore the top 10 ways money-management apps are transforming our personal finance.



- 1. Personalized Financial
  Guidance: Financial
  management apps help
  in personalized financial
  advice to reach the
  suitable investment and
  expenditure patterns,
  keeping in mind the
  spending habits, income
  trends, and financial
  goals of an individual.
- 2. **Gamification:** The process of managing money becomes a fun and interactive experience with features like goal setting, progress tracking, and rewards. Users are driven to succeed by earning badges, collecting points, and receiving monetary rewards.
- 3. **Automation:** Features like Salary Sorter, Round-Up rules, and Scheduled Contributions automate the budgeting

- process, ensuring consistent habits without manual effort.
- 4. **Financial Education:**They offer resourceful educative materials on budgeting, investment, and other matters in personal finance to empower the user further to make better decisions.
- 5. **Real-Time Expense Tracking:** Users can track their expenses in real-time, where the expenses are categorized to provide a proper outlook on their spending and cut out unwanted costs.
- 6. Integration with
  Financial Tools: People
  can connect their
  bank accounts, credit
  cards, and investment
  portfolios, having all the
  financial information
  consolidated in one
  place for simplified
  management.
- 7. Community and Social
  Features: Most moneymanagement apps
  include some community
  or social aspect in
  which you interact
  with friends, family, or
  even a larger group of
  fellow savers. Features
  like Sav Squad let users
  save collectively toward
  common goals, fostering
  a sense of community
  and responsibility.

- 8. Accessibility and Convenience: Mobile technology ensures that one can manage their finances from anywhere, at any time—thus keeping abreast with their goals no matter the location.
- Enhanced
   Security: Advanced encryption, biometric authentication, and two-factor authentication protect users' financial data, providing peace of mind.
- 10. Incentives for Good
  Financial Behavior:
  Cashback programs,
  discounts, and exclusive
  deals reward users for
  practicing good financial
  habits and using app
  features, motivating and
  adding value to their
  efforts.

By turning financial management into a rewarding journey, these apps become more than just tools—they're partners in achieving financial stability and smarter money habits. Whether you're setting up your first budgeting goal or optimizing your finances, they make every step forward a celebrated milestone.

If you haven't tried a moneymanagement app yet, now's the perfect time to start and see how they can transform your financial life.

Traditional banking methods often fail to provide the flexibility and real-time insights needed to keep up with modern financial demands."

Aginode

## **OUT OF OFFICE**

**Arafat Yousef**, Managing Director, Middle East & Africa at Aginode, believes that Fibre To The Office (FTTO) is a forward-looking substitute for traditional structured cabling that offers regional enterprises the benefits of Gigabit Ethernet, scalable digital workloads, software defined network management, and sustainable improvements in TCO, energy consumption and carbon footprint.

Digital transformation, cloud and generative AI are driving the usage of highspeed networks, data centres, storage, cloud computing and high-performance compute. The more interconnections there are between cloud regions, Internet exchange points, continental cable landing points, devices and end users, the better, more diverse, and richer is the digital engagement and digital exchange driving the digital economy.

But there is another side to this. Hyper connecting the digital economy also means more consumption of power energy everywhere and power consumption is associated with production of heat and carbon dioxide. Both of these factors need to be considered in view of climate change, global sustainability goals and reducing the runaway carbon footprints.

The digital economy is growing fast. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimates that the digital economy makes up anywhere from 4.5% to 15.5% of global gross domestic product, GDP. In

the US, the digital economy already accounts for more than 7% of GDP. In China, the digital economy accounted for a third of the nation's GDP in 2018.

According to the European Commission, the ICT industry generates up to 2% of all global CO2 emissions. There is a great deal to be gained by simply reducing the amount of power consumed by the devices, cabling and networks that provide the backbone for the digital economy. Furthermore, making sure systems can

remain operational for as long as possible also reduces the burden on the environment.

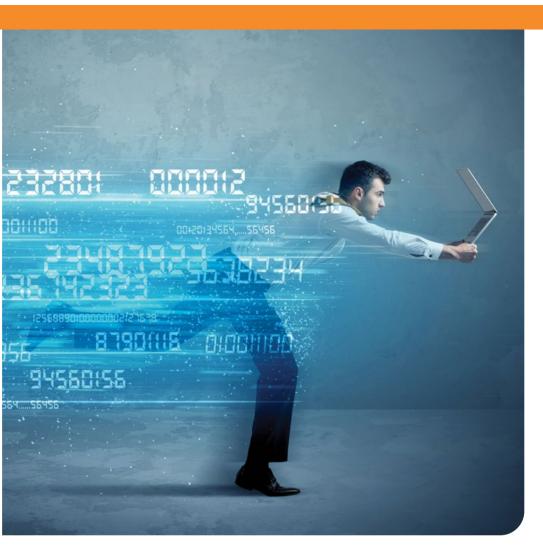
#### SWITCH TO FTTO NETWORKS

In an FTTO environment, fibre is laid from the central distribution switch right to the office, where it runs horizontally to active FTTO switches at the users' workplaces. The final distance of 3–5 metres to the end user desk is bridged using standard RJ45 twisted pair patch cords. The FTTO switch provides a connection between optical uplinks and electrical downlinks.

#### OPERATIONAL BENEFITS OF FTTO

With FTTO, the aim has been to provide an Ethernet based network; long life cycle; scalability, flexibility, sustainability; high reliability and robustness; redundancy; security; low maintenance cost, simple administration; quick and simple realization; improved energy efficiency; and less network hierarchy.

Due to the signal transfer qualities of fibre and its electromagnetic interference



resilience, signals can be transferred over distances longer than 100 metre. With traditional structured cabling networks, 100 metre is the transmission limit. FTTO is also characterized by absence of network hierarchy which makes it easier to deploy.

Fibre infrastructures need less cabling than traditional copper twisted pair networks. The volume of fibre optics cabling is considerably reduced due to the smaller diameter of fibre optic cables.

Fibre is a very safe medium for regional enterprises. There are no problems with frayed or damaged insulation, incorrect or insufficient circuit protection, short circuits and overvoltage.

#### **FUTURE PROOFING**

FTTO infrastructures can accommodate future applications and changing network needs, allowing for regional enterprises to scale up their networks easily. A fast, low latency, responsive FTTO network with Power over Ethernet (PoE) capacity also supports the introduction of smart building management systems, helping reduce energy consumption by optimizing lighting,

air conditioning and heating usage for regional enterprises.

FTTO's compact design is ideal for older regional buildings with limited space for technical rooms or large cable bundles. It frees up valuable space and improves fire safety.

The added flexibility means networks can accommodate changes in regional building layouts and support consecutive generations of equipment. It is not necessary to dispose of large volumes of cabling and equipment every few years.

by up to 75%, resulting in lower installation costs and improved cable management. FTTO's centralized structure and possibility of ring topologies ensure maximum network availability, minimizing downtime risks. With FTTO, a single employee can manage thousands of switches using the LANactive Manager software.

FTTO infrastructures can last up to 25 years, offering a cost-effective and sustainable investment for regional enterprises.

#### SUSTAINABILITY BENEFITS OF FTTO

Energy consumption in traditional network designs can be significantly reduced with FTTO. By using

FTTO infrastructures can accommodate future applications and changing network needs, allowing for regional enterprises to scale up their networks easily."



fewer active and passive components, FTTO networks consume less power and generate less heat, resulting in reduced CO2 emissions. As PoE is provided locally, then transmission losses are also reduced.

FTTO switches consume minimal power, around 5–6 Watts per switch, and with the use of intelligent features such as Energy Efficient Ethernet, EEE power consumption can be further optimized for regional enterprises, based on actual user needs.

The use of fibre also allows compliance with 802.3az EEE standard. This allows each port on the switch to power down into a standby mode when no connected devices are active. EEE ports consume power only when data is transferred.

FTTO networks require significantly less equipment, consume less energy and require less cooling. In a traditional copper-based Ethernet network with 1,000 ports, the annual electricity consumption is estimated to be 82k kWh. However, using an FTTO architecture, the same network would consume some 30k kWh per year.

FTTO architecture can reduce energy consumption by as much as 70% lower, cut total cost of ownership by 40%, and reduce installation time by 60%. Reduced energy costs and TCO directly contribute to both financial and environmental sustainability for regional enterprises.

#### **FUTURE ALIGNMENT**

FTTO offers a future–proof solution that not only reduces energy consumption but also supports high bandwidth requirements. By adopting FTTO, for regional enterprises can reduce their carbon footprint, extend the operational lifetime of their network infrastructure, and minimize the need for frequent equipment replacements.

By implementing FTTO solutions, regional enterprises can optimize their networks for tomorrow's applications, reduce energy consumption, and significantly lower their TCO.

With the benefits of scalability, the space-saving design, and simplified network management, FTTO is a sustainable solution for regional enterprises, which aligns with today and tomorrow's sustainability goals while ensuring high network performance and reliability.

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