

cnme

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Technology + Knowledge = **TeKnowledge**

Nidal Abou-Ltaif outlines his mission to make TeKnowledge a catalyst for digital transformation across the Middle East



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EDITORIAL

BE PRACTICAL AND PATIENT

In a world that is becoming increasingly enamoured with artificial intelligence, it's very easy to be captivated and swept up in the sheer hype and excitement presented by AI.

Bold claims about how AI has the power to transform industry norms and revolutionise everything from healthcare to human creativity is discussed on a daily basis, but that is often countered by dystopian predictions of jobs being wiped out, and that our dependence on AI is rewiring the way we think.

The tech and media industry tend to oscillate between extremes, with some claiming that AI will be the saviour of our society, whilst others suggest it is the beginning of the end.

However, amidst all the noise, it's very important to be guided by two principles that rarely garner the headlines and go viral, and that is practicality, and patience.

The message of practicality and patience is a recurring theme in April's edition of CNME.

I sat down with Seelan Nayagam, President, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa, at DXC Technology, to learn more about his perspectives and views on the rise of Agentic AI, and the role his company is playing in terms of enabling their customers to harness the power of AI.

Interestingly, Nayagam preached the importance of patience when businesses embark upon AI strategies.

He stressed the need for enterprises to start small, but think 'big' – when adopting and building AI use-cases.

On the front cover of April's edition of CNME, is an exclusive interview with Nidal Abou-Ltaif.

Nidal is one of the most successful sales leaders in the technology industry across the Middle East, and he has been on the front cover of CNME on multiple occasions in the past.

However, this is the first time he has appeared on the front cover in his new role as Chief Revenue and Transformation Officer at TeKnowledge.

He spent 21 years at CX leader Avaya, but he is now on a mission to drive the growth of US company TeKnowledge across the Middle East region.

In a candid conversation, he stressed the need to invest in local talent in order to really create a lasting impact, whilst he also highlighted how he believes their AI-First Expert Services model can unify the entire lifecycle of business transformation.

In addition to this, he also touched on the significance of their partnership with Genesys, and the measures businesses need to implement to ensure to achieve sustainable growth.

It's a must-read interview, and a great insight into the plans and vision Nidal has for TeKnowledge across the region.

CNME was also on the ground at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona last month – and spoke to Wassim Chourbaji, President, Middle East & Africa at Qualcomm.

The US semiconductor and chip behemoth has changed tact when it comes to the Middle East region, and as Chourbaji pointed out is no longer in the business of selling Snapdragon-powered smartphones.

He likened the transformation underway across the Middle East to Qualcomm's own transformation and evolution as a company.

I always enjoy speaking to Walid Gomaa, CEO of Omnix International, and it's been over a year since we last spoke.

The major change since we last caught up is the fact that Omnix has now combined their engineering offerings with their digital portfolio in an effort to provide 'unique value propositions' to their customers.

Inevitably, we spoke about AI, and Gomaa revealed that the company has launched their own AI Monetisation Consultancy services in an effort to help businesses identify and validate AI use-cases that will ultimately transform their business model.

We also have some brilliant thought leadership articles from Dataiku, Epicor, TeKnowledge, SandboxAQ, JAGGAER, and Iman Ghorayeb writes about her CX nightmare in Cairo International Airport.

Enjoy April's edition of CNME. 😊

Mark Forker
Editor



The tech and media industry tend to oscillate between extremes, with some claiming that AI will be the saviour of our society, whilst others suggest it is the beginning of the end."



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26
TeKnowledge

10
Qualcomm

6 News

CNME rounds up the biggest regional and global developments in enterprise technology, which includes the news that Google Cloud have expanded their partnership with Cohesity, IBM launch the next-generation of their iconic mainframe - and ServiceNow acquires Logik.ai in a bid to enhance its CRM footprint globally.

10

Wassim Chourbaji, President, Middle East & Africa at Qualcomm, highlights how the transformation underway across the region mirrors their own internal evolution as a company.

18

Stefan Leichenauer, VP of Engineering at SandboxAQ, claims businesses need to look beyond LLMs, and focus on LQMs to really gain the benefits of AI.

20

Seelan Nayagam, President, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa at DXC Technology, has urged businesses to start small, but think 'big', when embarking on their AI journeys.

36

Walid Gomaa, CEO of Omnix International, explains how their decision to merge their engineering capabilities with their digital arm has enabled them to deliver 'unique value propositions' to its customers.

40

Hany Mosbeh, Senior Vice President - MEPAC at JAGGAER, has called on the UAE government to make the process of procurement a 'value hub' in order to meet their 2031 objectives.


18
SandboxAQ

20
DXC Technology

36
Omnix International

40
JAGGAER

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Bimser opens UAE office to expand regional operations

Turkish enterprise software company, Bimser, with over 2,500 global customers and more than a quarter of a century of experience, has officially opened its new regional office in Dubai.

This marks a significant step in the company's strategic expansion plan aimed at deepening its presence across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

"Our goal is to become a global company, and establishing a presence in Dubai is a strategic move in that journey", said Murat Atici, CEO of Bimser. "The MENA region represents significant opportunities, and this office allows us to support our customers and partners more effectively with a dedicated local team".

The Dubai office will serve as a marketing and sales hub for the region, managing both partner and customer relationships. Bimser plans to leverage its partner-focused go-to-market model, aiming to triple the number of active partners in the Gulf by the end of the year. The UAE market is the company's initial focus, where it already has three partners, including a strong Dubai-based firm with ties to Saudi Arabia.



Murat Atici, CEO of Bimser.

Google Cloud & Cohesity aim to boost cyber resilience



Johnny Karam, Managing Director and Vice President, International Emerging Markets at Cohesity.

Cohesity, the leader in AI-powered data security, recently announced an expanded partnership with Google Cloud to help organisations combat the rising tide of sophisticated cyber threats.

"In today's rapidly evolving threat landscape, organisations need comprehensive solutions that not only protect their data, but also help them derive value from it", said Stephen Urban, Vice President of Migrations, ISVs, & Marketplace at Google Cloud. "Our collaboration with Cohesity will enable customers to strengthen

their cyber resilience posture while accelerating their digital transformation journeys".

"Our partnership with Google highlights our commitment to building more secure cloud environments for multinational organisations across the MENA region. With Cyber threats increasing in complexity, we are focused on minimising legislative and reputational risk for our customers while limiting the operational and cost impact of the inevitable malicious attempts to compromise both personal and business critical datasets", said Johnny Karam, Managing Director and Vice President, International Emerging Markets at Cohesity. "Our collaboration with Google also helps organisations gain new insights and value from their critical business data, by incorporating AI-enhanced search and advanced reasoning, businesses will find it simpler to uncover new insights and extract value from vital business data, irrespective of its location".

NTT DATA selected by UPS for digital transformation and modernisation

NTT DATA, a leading global business and technology services company, and UPS, the world's largest package delivery company, have announced a 10-year strategic collaboration.

This long-term agreement will help UPS continue to modernize its IT infrastructure and data centres while providing AI and cloud services to drive business innovation. NTT DATA will also continue to help support UPS in the fast-paced world of logistics and delivery.

"We are honoured to be selected by UPS as a strategic partner on their transformation journey as they



Abhijit Dubey, President & CEO, NTT DATA, Inc.

operationalise their 'data centre of the future' vision, deliver the next generation IT infrastructure and accelerate digital product development", said Abhijit Dubey, President & CEO, NTT DATA, Inc. "As the third largest data centre provider in the world, and the only one to offer full-stack transformation services, NTT DATA is well-positioned to

help UPS reduce operational costs and risks, drive innovation and revenue growth and maintain market leadership. This collaboration is a testament to our commitment to helping clients swiftly keep pace with the markets and prepare for the future".

IBM z17 brings AI to the core of the enterprise to enable new workloads

IBM have announced the next

generation of its iconic mainframe following the launch of its IBM z17, which is designed and built for the AI age. The IBM z17 will unlock new innovations within enterprise-scale AI, and deliver reimagined user experiences via new assistants and agents.

Powered by the new IBM Telum® II processor, IBM z17 expands the system's capabilities beyond transactional AI capabilities to enable new workloads.

IBM Z is built to redefine AI at scale, positioning enterprises to score 100% of their transactions in real-time.¹ z17



The new IBM z17, designed to bring AI to the core of the enterprise to enable new workloads.

enables businesses to drive innovation and do more, including the ability to process 50 percent more AI inference operations per day than z16.2.

"The industry is quickly learning that AI will only be as valuable as the infrastructure it runs on," said Ross Mauri, General Manager of IBM Z and LinuxONE, IBM. "With z17, we're bringing AI to the core of the enterprise with the software, processing power, and storage to make AI operational quickly. Additionally, organisations can put their vast, untapped stores of enterprise data to work with AI in a secured, cost-effective way".

20% of security professionals struggle applying security updates in cloud environments

New research commissioned by

Qualys and conducted by Dark Reading shines new light on the various ways information security professionals are coping — or struggling — with the difficulties and nuances of safeguarding cloud and SaaS assets, including measuring, communicating, and eliminating cyber risk in the cloud.

Key findings:

- **Cloud adoption is ubiquitous and complex:** Most organisations polled (57%) use two to three cloud service providers, and 58% have at least five corporatewide SaaS applications deployed. To secure this complex environment, the majority (60%) must manage and reconcile outputs from two or more separate cloud and SaaS security tools.
- **Sleepless nights:** Professional defenders singled out cost (54%), system reliability and performance (36%), and limited cloud-specific security staff skills (27%) as the cloud and SaaS issues that concerned them the most.
- **Attacks are relentless:** Moving data

Shilpa Gite,
Senior Manager,
Cloud Security
Compliance, Qualys.



"The data shows in stark relief the real-world challenges defenders face when it comes to shoehorning traditional security practices and methods — things like managing configs and vulnerabilities, controlling access, and corraling siloed security tools — into the defences of dynamic multi-cloud and multi-SaaS environments."

and applications to the cloud and adopting SaaS come with a whole set of risks. Enterprises are worried about threats such as account hijacking, phishing, ransomware and malware, data exfiltration, advanced persistent threats, and distributed denial-of-service attacks.

"The data shows in stark relief the real-world challenges defenders face when it comes to shoehorning traditional security practices and methods — things like managing configs and vulnerabilities, controlling access, and corraling siloed security tools — into the defences of dynamic multi-cloud and multi-SaaS environments", commented Shilpa Gite, Senior Manager, Cloud Security Compliance, Qualys. "The research underscores the importance of a comprehensive, unified, strategic approach to cloud and SaaS security that brings together continuous scanning and vulnerability assessment, automated remediation efforts, AI-powered threat detection and response capabilities, and cross-platform risk prioritisation features".

ServiceNow acquire Logik.ai in a bid to expand its growing CRM footprint globally

ServiceNow has announced

it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire Logik.ai, an industry leader with a modern, AI powered, and composable Configure, Price, Quote (CPQ) solution. Logik.ai's best in class capabilities for sales and commerce will expand ServiceNow's growing CRM footprint and empower sales organisations to close deals faster, boost



John Ball, EVP and GM of CRM & Industry Workflows at ServiceNow.

productivity levels, and achieve greater efficiency.

The acquisition will accelerate ServiceNow's momentum in Sales and Order Management (SOM), the critical process that governs the commercial lifecycle from opportunity management, quoting, and order placement, through fulfilment and delivery, to renewals and expansions.

"ServiceNow is advancing our

commitment to offer robust, deeply connected CRM tools. The CPQ space is evolving, and Logik.ai is leading the way to a simpler, AI powered selling experience across channels. By adding Logik.ai's industry leading sales and commerce solution to our CRM offering, ServiceNow will further enhance our capability to sell, fulfill, and service on a single platform. It's about delivering a fundamentally different vision and approach to traditional CRM and CPQ offerings — one that addresses the real pain points in connecting end to end customer experiences," said John Ball, EVP and GM of CRM & Industry Workflows at ServiceNow.

AVEVA appoints Sébastien Ory as EMEA VP Partners & Channels

8

AVEVA, a global leader in industrial software driving digital transformation and sustainability in industries, recently announces the appointment of Sébastien Ory, 48, as EMEA VP in charge of the partner and distributor



Sébastien Ory, EMEA VP Partners & Channels, AVEVA.

network.

VP of AVEVA Southern Europe since 2022 and President of AVEVA France since 2023, Sébastien now replaces Karine Calvet

while remaining President of AVEVA France. In this new role, he will oversee the relationships with the various stakeholders involved in the distribution of AVEVA software and will have direct responsibility for more than forty employees spread across the EMEA region. Sébastien Ory will report directly to Jesus Hernandez, the new SVP of the EMEA region, who replaces Evgeny Fedotov, now CCO of RIB.

Cisco Talos Report: The education sector the most targeted industry for cyberattacks in 2024



Fady Younes, Managing Director for Cybersecurity at Cisco Middle East, Africa, Türkiye, Romania and CIS.

exploited valid credentials to gain access.

Commenting on the report's findings, Fady Younes, Managing Director for Cybersecurity at Cisco Middle East, Africa, Türkiye, Romania and CIS, stated: "The findings from Cisco Talos' 2024 Year in Review highlight the critical need for a solid cybersecurity foundation. Cybercriminals are

The annual report from Cisco Talos has shown that the education sector was the most targeted industry for cyberattacks in the last 12 months. Unsurprisingly, identity-based attacks emerged as the most dominant threat, accounting for 60% of Cisco Talos incident response cases in 2024.

The findings reveal that in 2024, threat actors prioritised stealth and efficiency, leveraging simpler techniques rather than custom malware or zero-day vulnerabilities. Notably, identity-based attacks emerged as the dominant threat vector, while ransomware incidents increasingly

continually taking advantage of security gaps, demonstrating the essential nature of a proactive, identity-focused defence strategy. And with the emergence of remote and hybrid working models, implementing a Zero-Trust Network Access (ZTNA) strategy is key to ensure that the correct security controls are in place while enhancing end-user experience. By staying aware of these evolving tactics, organisations can reinforce their security measures and more effectively shield themselves from new and emerging threats".

Vehere establishes Middle East operations



(L-R) Abdul Raheem Shaikh, Regional Director, Sales—KSA and Bahrain, Vehere, Avinash Garg, Vice President—Sales (MEA), Vehere & Gautham Srinivasa, Regional Director, Sales—Middle East, Vehere.

Vehere, a pioneer in cybersecurity solutions, is rapidly expanding in the Middle East region, especially focusing

on the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and Bahrain.

With more locations on the horizon, this initiative is designed to accelerate Vehere's regional expansion, addressing the growing cybersecurity demands of enterprises in an increasingly complex digital landscape.

Responding to the escalating demand for robust cybersecurity infrastructure and cyber resilience, Vehere plans to leverage local talent and increase its staffing. Avinash Garg, Vice President—Sales (MEA), stated, "This period of exponential growth presents the ideal chance to broaden our sectoral footprint and advance our Middle East roadmap. Vehere's strong presence will allow us to deliver tailored cybersecurity solutions, ensuring rapid deployment and faster turnaround times for our customers".

Museum of the Future to host interactive workshops on AI-driven music, future of food, and wellness

The Museum of the Future, a hub for intellectual discussions, a playground for innovators, and a catalyst for change, is set to host a diverse range of talks and interactive sessions during April.

"AI-Powered Music" workshop on Saturday, April 12, will



be led by renowned DJ, headline act at Expo and resident DJ on Ibiza Radio, DJ PINKFISH. This interactive session will demonstrate how to use AI to create unique beats and soundscapes.

The second workshop on Sunday, April 20, will explore jobs in the future revolving around both AR and VR. After discussing related career paths, participants will also immerse themselves in actual simulations, placing them in the POV of a VR/AR designer.

The Museum of the Future will also organise an interactive culinary workshop on the future of food, where expert Chef and Food Innovator Arwa Lootah will introduce sustainable cooking techniques, after delving into the rich history of Emirati cuisine.

As part of an ongoing wellness series at Museum of the Future, "Breathing Techniques for Better Health" workshop will have a transformative two-part session on breathwork. Participants will begin with a theoretical segment, understanding the science behind breathwork and will then, during a practical session, physically work on breathing exercises.

Qualcomm

TRUST BY DESIGN

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with **Wassim Chourbaji**, President for Middle East and Africa at Qualcomm, to find out more about how the rapid digital transformation underway across the Middle East is mirrored by Qualcomm's own transformation as a company.

Wassim Chourbaji has been a permanent fixture at Qualcomm since 2006.

He holds dual roles for the US wireless technology behemoth.

In addition to being Qualcomm President across the MEA region, he is also the Senior Vice President for Government Affairs for Europe, Middle East, and Africa at Qualcomm.

An engineer by trade, over the years Chourbaji has cultivated himself into a leading technology and political strategist, and he oversees Qualcomm's public policy, regulatory strategy, and government relations across the region he serves.

In a candid conversation with CNME during Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Chourbaji outlined how Qualcomm was undergoing its own transformation and how that marries itself well with seismic transformation that is occurring across the entire Middle East region.

He began our discussion by highlighting his role at Qualcomm, and stressing that his mandate is clear, and that is to create partnerships.

"Look, I have two jobs at Qualcomm. I'm the Head of

Government Affairs for the EMEA region, and that role requires me to engage with government stakeholders on regulatory issues, and bring new technologies to Europe. I want to develop partnerships across different regions in an effort to cultivate an ecosystem in which disruptive technologies can be adopted within a regulated environment. I was also recently nominated as the President for the MEA region – and the main mandate that I have been given is to partner with countries pursuing transformation programs all across the region, as they look to harness the capabilities of AI and connectivity with 5G," said Chourbaji.

He signalled the ambitious economic transformation programs being pursued by the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and outlined that he doesn't view countries as markets, but instead views countries like the UAE and others as 'partners'.

"The regional transformation across the Middle East intersects with our own transformation at Qualcomm, which is from being a smartphone-centric company to an entity that does intelligence everywhere, from the edge to the cloud, automotive, XR, smartphone and PCs. All across the board we are infusing intelligence into our products. I view countries as partners, and when two partners are transforming then this creates great opportunities. If you look at the Middle East region for example, you have two countries in Saudi Arabia and the UAE in particular, who both have incredibly ambitious plans to become global leaders in innovation and technology, and that is evidenced by their willingness to invest significantly in new technologies," said Chourbaji.

As referenced above, a key part of Chourbaji's day-to-day role is to develop Qualcomm's public policy and regulatory



We drive and create new markets and ecosystems, and what really differentiates us from others is the fact that we love to work in ecosystems, and we love to have partners."



strategy, and that job sees him work very closely with governments all over the MEA region.

However, when it comes to regulating technology, especially AI, it isn't exactly black and white, and it is a challenge.

Some argue too much regulation will stifle innovation, whilst others are cognisant that we need to have guardrails and frameworks in place to ensure AI is used ethically and responsibly.

Chourbaji outlined how at Qualcomm, when it comes to developing new technologies, they adopt their concept of 'Trust by Design'.

"At Qualcomm, we create foundational technology, so when you do that then you have a responsibility with the technology you are developing. When we started creating 3G, and evolved that to 4G, and 5G, and we went from connecting people to connecting cars, but the surface of cyberattacks were increasing, so connecting cars was viewed by many as dangerous. So, I think that any foundational technology that you are bringing to market and that is fundamentally changing economies and society, then it goes without saying that you need to be very, very careful about how you design it, and develop it. At Qualcomm, we call it 'Trust by Design'. We have a responsibility to ensure that our technologies are used ethically and responsibly. If you don't want your data to be shared, and you want to

be keep it in the palm of your hand in your device, that's what we call on device AI, and we have enabled on device AI, and that's a perfect example of how we deliver privacy and security by design. If you want to share other information back to the cloud then you can do that. That's one element of our trust by design concept from a technology perspective," said Chourbaji.

Qualcomm's President for MEA added that a second layer of their Trust by Design mantra lies in their engagement with governments across the region.

He highlighted how they can leverage their expertise to ensure that governments implement regulations and policies that don't suppress innovation, but at the same time put the protections in place that ensure the technology is being deployed in a safe manner.

"Obviously, governments are in the business of creating policies designed to incentivise innovation, and drive economic growth. In addition to this, they want to promote technology for good, through greater inclusivity and deploying technologies into industries such as healthcare to

transform patient outcomes and experiences. Each region and each country have its own rules, so engaging with governments in a bid to better understand what their concerns and challenges are is important, and they need partners like Qualcomm to explain how certain challenges they face can be addressed in a particular way, we can provide that knowledge and expertise from a technological viewpoint. If governments create a regulation that will harm the development of that innovation then we can highlight that to them, and iron out that friction between regulation and innovation, and our engagement with governments has been very constructive in relation to the balance that needs to be struck between innovation and regulation. We are in a position where they look at us and say that we are an objective partner. It's an ecosystem approach that we adopt, and we want plenty of partners to come in to contribute. We know the technology, and they know what their citizens want. We work well together to achieve the outcomes and objectives that is mutually beneficial to both parties," said Chourbaji.



I think that any foundational technology that you are bringing to market and that is fundamentally changing economies and society, then it goes without saying that you need to be very, very careful about how you design it, and develop it. At Qualcomm, we call it 'Trust by Design'."



Qualcomm opened their regional office in Dubai in 2008, and under the guidance of Jay Srage achieved a lot of success, but as Chourbaji pointed out back then the company was focused on smartphones, now the company has a completely different vision for the region, and cited their partnership with the ALLaM PC in Saudi

Arabia as a shining example of their new approach.

“When Qualcomm was there in 2018, the team, which was led by Jay Srage, and he did a great job, but we were a smartphone company. Our objective was to sell as many Snapdragon smart devices in the UAE, and the KSA. We looked at these countries as markets, but what I

am describing here with Qualcomm’s new vision is a completely different thing. How can we partner to create something new like a world first for example? ALLaM is the large language model of Saudi Arabia, and we worked with them on an ALLaM PC, it doesn’t exist elsewhere, and this LLM is built in offline, and users can use it as an assistant for their daily tasks. It is a truly transformative tool. When you look at this AllaM device by Qualcomm, this is a perfect illustration of co-development and co-innovation, this is not us bringing a product to the market, and saying we want to sell 100 million devices. The UAE and the KSA want to be leaders in the technology and innovation space, and they are investing accordingly. Qualcomm is a global technology leader, and we will continue to be a leader in this space, and there is a good synergy between us and the countries pursuing changes across the Middle East region. We like partners, whether that partner is a country, or a leading automaker like BMW, or a smart glass leading provider like Meta, it is all the same to us,” said Chourbaji.

Chourbaji said the Qualcomm is enabling AI PCs right across the board, and sees the ALLaM PC as more than just a PC, describing it as a platform.

He highlighted the importance of Qualcomm’s AI Hub, and the partnership it has cultivated with Aramco, and Saudi Arabia’s Research, Development, and



Innovation Authority (RDIA) to launched their Design in Saudi Arabia (DISA), an incubator program to support start-ups adopting AI.

“When it comes to the ALLaM PC, it is much more than just a PC, it is a platform. We went further and put ALLaM on our AI hub, which allows app developers to select ALLaM and make applications and create services that are useful for the KSA marketplace. In addition to this, in partnership with Aramco, we have created an ecosystem called the

Design in Saudi Arabia (DISA) program, which allows start-ups to come in and use the AI Hub. When you’re in the business of large-scale transformation it is simply not enough to leave it to 1, or 2 large organisations to drive that growth and foster that change, you need to build an ecosystem, and you need to enable the ecosystem to exist, and the ecosystem needs to be comprised of big, and small companies. You need new ideas coming from the small players, and you need investment from the large

entities, which ultimately creates new opportunities for others. In order to do all of this at scale then you need an open platform that enables everyone to plug-in, innovate on top of each other. This is real transformation,” said Chourbaji.

Chourbaji concluded a wonderful exchange by highlighting how its engineering background, which is embedded in its DNA, and its desire to create new partnership and ecosystems ultimately differentiates the US semiconductor giant to other market rivals.

“I’ve spent 20 years at Qualcomm, it is an engineering company first and foremost, but innovation is in our DNA. We drive and create new markets and ecosystems, and what really differentiates us from others is the fact that we love to work in ecosystems, and we love to have partners. We strive for others to thrive. We help create ecosystems, and as long as the ecosystems grow, then we grow, so it’s a win-win. By 2029, 50% of Qualcomm’s revenue will be generated by smartphones, and the rest will be generated by XR, automotive and Industrial IoT, so the company has set a plan to transform. When you look at all these other verticals, there are so many new opportunities to create new ecosystems, and develop new partnerships to innovate on new concepts and ideas. It truly is an exciting time for the region, and for Qualcomm,” said Chourbaji. **enme**



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TERMINAL FAILURE

Iman Ghorayeb, is a seasoned communications professional, perhaps best-known around these parts in her previous role as the Director of Marketing and Communications at Avaya. With that in mind, Iman knows a thing or two about customer experiences, and in this compelling op-ed below, she documents her nightmare experience at Cairo Airport earlier this month.

With years spent working in the Customer Experience (CX) industry, the complexity of delivering seamless service is well understood. Orchestrating emotionally resonant journeys—especially in high-pressure environments like air travel—requires robust systems, empowered employees, and well-designed processes.

In recent years, brands have heavily promoted the idea of connecting **Employee Experience (EX)** with CX to create more consistent, human-centric service. It's a compelling narrative—and one that many companies are still far from realizing in practice.

A recent **personal travel disruption** with a global airline made that gap painfully clear. Over the course of 24 hours, I encountered **eight separate service touchpoints**—from



frontline staff and the contact center to the mobile app, live chat, and email support. On paper, all the right tools were there. But none of them worked together.

Each interaction felt like starting over. There was no continuity, no escalation, and no resolution. The result

wasn't just inconvenience—it was a **real-world lesson in how even well-resourced brands can fail when orchestration is missing.**

1. The Frontline Disconnect: Limited Empathy, No Empowerment

The journey began at the departure airport, where check-in was denied due to a situation that could have been resolved with minimal support. A frontline supervisor was approached for help, but quickly dismissed the issue.

She explained she had:

- No access to internet-based tools.
- No way to call HQ or operations.
- No authority to override or adjust travel.

Her demeanor was equally detached—perhaps due to working the first day of Eid while others were heading off to celebrate with family. That frustration came through clearly. Whatever the reason, the service response set the tone for everything that followed.

What it revealed: When frontline employees are emotionally disconnected and operationally unsupported, the brand's promise is instantly compromised.

2. Contact Center Fatigue: Multiple Interactions, Inconsistent Outcomes

With no support on the ground, the only option was to escalate through the airline's contact center. This resulted in **eight separate interactions**: three phone calls and five live chats.

- The first two agents passed the issue on without engagement.
- The third call dropped mid-conversation.
- Each live chat restarted from zero—no shared history, no case reference.
- One agent finally attempted to help, but the issue remained unresolved.

What it revealed: Without a unified customer profile or case tracking, every interaction becomes a new problem, regardless of how many times it's already been explained.

Even as a CX practitioner, navigating this process was draining. For customers without the same level of knowledge or patience, it would be enough to walk away for good.

3. Digital Frustrations: Disconnected Systems, Poor App Experience

The airline's mobile app looked promising. Travel history and account details were accessible—but once support was needed, the gaps became clear.

- Live chats dropped with no option to resume.
- Conversations didn't carry over to new agents.
- A customer satisfaction survey appeared **before** the chat had ended.

What it revealed: A digital interface doesn't equal a digital experience. Without continuity, even well-designed tools can become a source of friction.

This is a classic case of **digital investment without experience orchestration**—where the tech is present, but not designed to support real service needs.

4. Email Support: A Silent Channel

In a final attempt, multiple emails were sent to the airline's customer service team. They were marked urgent, detailed the issue, and even warned of potential escalation.

- The only replies received were automated acknowledgments.
- No human response came within the 24-hour window.
- No action was taken to resolve the issue.

What it revealed: A channel that isn't monitored or supported is worse than no channel at all. It creates false hope and deepens frustration.

This was a reminder



When EX is ignored, AI becomes just another disconnected layer.”

that **offering multiple support channels is meaningless without proper orchestration, ownership, and follow-through.**

AI Is Not the Fix—Unless EX Is Part of the Strategy

There's no doubt that **AI is reshaping the customer experience landscape.**

It brings promise: faster resolutions, predictive support, personalization, and 24/7 service. But this experience underscored something important.


What this journey revealed—through eight disconnected touchpoints—is that the real challenge lies not in customer-facing technology, but in how teams, systems, and decisions are connected behind the scenes—**what the industry calls orchestration.**

AI can route tickets, generate replies, and even analyze tone. But it can't compensate for a frontline employee with no tools or authority, a contact center with no visibility into prior conversations, a digital platform with no continuity across sessions and a team culture that's reactive, not empowered. **When EX is ignored, AI becomes just another disconnected layer.**

This wasn't just a travel disruption—it was a **personal, frustrating experience** that unfolded in real time. And as someone who helps brands design better customer experiences, it became a painfully clear reminder that even the best intentions—and the best tools—can fail without orchestration and empowered employees.

The airline had the infrastructure: a mobile app, a contact center, live chat, email support. But none of it worked in sync. And none of it worked for me.

From a professional standpoint, it became a real-time case study in how **customer experience breaks not at a single point of contact—but across the invisible seams between them.**

What matters is not the number of channels a brand offers, but well those channels work together—and how well the people behind them are supported. Because sometimes, it only takes **eight disconnected moments and zero resolution** to turn even a loyal customer into someone who chooses not to return. 

MAKE IT QUANTITATIVE

Stefan Leichenauer, VP of Engineering at SandboxAQ, has penned an exclusive op-ed for April's edition of CNME, where he makes the case that businesses seeking success on AI, need to look beyond LLMs, and instead focus on LQMs.

The Middle East has for a while now signaled its intentions of being a leading player in the AI revolution. And while the United Arab Emirates (UAE) became the first nation globally to appoint a Minister of Artificial Intelligence back in 2017, it was the advent of generative AI that has truly accelerated the region's ambitions. In a study of 63 use cases, McKinsey estimated the economic potential for GenAI in the GCC: it could be responsible for between US\$21 billion and US\$35 billion of annual value, to accompany a projected US\$150 billion generated by other AI technologies in the region.

But the large-language models (LLMs) that form the foundation of many, if not most, regional GenAI solutions are just the start of the story. Already another form of machine learning is getting onto the radar of forward-focused decision makers around the globe — large quantitative models (LQMs).

While LLMs work with and generate language content,



LQMs do the same with quantitative data that is ordinarily handled through purely numerical methods.

The challenges we face in areas such as finance, healthcare, and sustainability are not fundamentally language-based challenges,

and so the most effective and natural tools are not language-based tools. For a region that has shown laudable ambition in these areas, LQMs will be transformative.

On the back of the UAE's recent hosting of COP28, LQMs could help with net-zero initiatives by optimizing renewable energy integration and improving climate modelling to guide sustainable policies. And as Gulf nations ramp up their manufacturing sector to boost non-oil GDP, they can ensure businesses have access to the best material science through LQMs' ability to accelerate R&D. We're already seeing industry leaders taking action, with Aramco recently revealing its strategy for leveraging quantitative AI models for increasing value of downstream products.

The right tool for the job

To be clear, LQMs are not here to replace LLMs. In fact, in many cases the tools are complementary. While LLMs are fantastic for human-machine-interaction, the

imprecise nature of language means that when acting alone, they will not solve quantitative problems. For example, while a user-facing LLM may work well for basic software development, additional heuristic layers may be required to align with best practices and compliance obligations. Also, an LLM may be great for customer service, but it would be an inappropriate tool for, say, pharmaceutical drug discovery.

Where precision is paramount, LQMs are indispensable. Let's say you are trying to predict the weather. You have data from the past three days, and you want to predict the weather for the next three days. Imagine putting an LLM to work on the task. It acts as a sophisticated almanac, and having trawled through thousands of weather reports will extrapolate patterns, potentially delivering a result that's accurate most of the time. However, if billions of dollars or thousands of lives are on the line, "most of the time" simply isn't enough. In predicting the next hurricane, the next wildfire, or the next sandstorm, LQMs would include physics-based models, AI models, and data from past events — any relevant technique to encode the underlying phenomena of the weather, leading to reliable and trustworthy predictions. This approach is a far cry from the simple LLM-based approach, and clearly more aligned with the task.

LLMs consume the data they're served. LQMs create their own meals. The capabilities of an LLM are determined by the data it was trained on, which in most cases is just everything on the open web. There is no great store of data beyond that, and that is a limitation that LLMs have to deal with. With an LQM, we can always generate trustworthy data because we understand the fundamental principles underlying the data. We have the equations, and we can solve them in a new domain to give our models something

new to train on. This infinite extensibility is special

prototyping. Such models can also be of great help in pharmaceutical development, where traditional approaches are beset with the high failure rates of clinical trials. LQMs can analyze molecular structures and interactions at the electron level, drastically reducing the costs of trial phases.

Arts versus science

Drug discovery, materials science, healthcare diagnostics, financial modelling, and industrial optimization — these are all growth areas in the GCC. Since the region's governments launched their national AI strategies, the field has



While LLMs work with and generate language content, LQMs do the same with quantitative data that is ordinarily handled through purely numerical methods."

to LQMs, and is part of why they have the ability to go well beyond what LLMs alone can do.

Yes, LLMs are excellent at conversation and search and can even take bold initiatives in certain controlled circumstances where they have been optimized for a specific task. But they cannot match LQMs for their ability to optimize for case-specific objectives and parameters. For example, in battery development, where lithium-ion technology has dominated for 45 years, LQMs can correct the stall in progress by simulating millions of possible chemical combinations without the need for physical

expanded rapidly, culminating in the rise of GenAI. But the challenges of the day will call for decision makers to dig deeper into the AI toolbox. The precision and data-driven insights provided by LQMs are just such a tool.

LQMs also operate by reaching for the most appropriate tool (be it GenAI, non-GenAI, or even non-AI) or data to solve the problem at hand. This flexibility makes LQMs an ideal investment for regional enterprises that have sought to solve their complex problems with LLMs alone, only to be disappointed. That's why forward-thinking leaders are exploring LQMs as a critical tool for tackling complex, quantitative challenges. **enme**

DXC Technology

START SMALL, BUT THINK 'BIG'

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Seelan Nayagam**, President, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa at DXC Technology, to learn more about how Agentic AI can streamline complex processes, the need for businesses to start small, but think 'big' when it comes to validating their AI use-cases, the need for robust AI governance - and why the company is ultra-committed to hiring local talent following the opening of their new office in Riyadh.

20

Seelan Nayagam is a seasoned technology executive and business leader with a strong reputation for transforming large multinational organisations.

He spent 10 years at US technology behemoth IBM, before joining DXC Technology in 2017.

Over the last 8 years he has helped expand the presence of DXC Technology across multiple regions, and in 2023, Nayagam was appointed President, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa.

In a candid conversation with CNME Editor Mark Forker, the pair explored a range of topics, and began the conversation by focusing on the rise of Agentic AI.

LLMs represent the foundational elements of Gen AI, but the general consensus amongst tech analysts and experts is that Agentic AI can really unleash the power of Gen AI to transform



traditional business processes.

Nayagam said he sees a lot of similarities with Agentic AI and cloud technology when it first started to take off.



It's still very early days, but I see a lot of similarity around the excitement and potential of Agentic AI, and that of cloud technology back in the day."

"Agentic AI is essentially multiple AI agents working together to solve complex problems. They work off massive data sets, but are able to follow a structured path without any human intervention in order to find the answer to those complex problems, and if you can extrapolate all of that then that will inevitably lead to greater efficiency, and a drastic reduction in operating costs. It's still very early days, but I see a lot of similarity around the excitement and potential of Agentic AI, and that of cloud technology back in the day," said Nayagam.

Whilst he admitted that Agentic AI is very much in its nascent stages, the DXC

Technology executive has seen the power of it.

He highlighted how a financial agency operating under government auspices in the Middle East region transformed a process that traditionally took 12 weeks, to less than a week.

"I know of a financial government agency in the Middle East region. Now, they faced challenges when it came to users applying for grants, in terms of how they processed it in relation to validation, and identifying that the individual is who he says he is. Now, that process traditionally took 12 weeks. However, thanks to the implementation of Agentic AI the process has

been completely turned on its head, and through a POC, that protracted and clunky process that took 3 months, can now be done within a week. It's quite difficult to quantify just how much business value that process transformation through Agentic AI yielded for the entity in question, but the productivity, time saved, and efficiency is incredible. So, even though I said Agentic AI is in its early stages, it is definitely real," said Nayagam.

The example provided by Nayagam is a powerful one, and that moved the dial of the conversation towards the topic of validation around AI use-cases.

Business leaders are facing huge pressure to adopt an AI strategy, or launch an AI service, or product that is designed to help them transform a specific pain point in their organisation.

Again, Nayagam drew similarities between the pressure to adopt an AI strategy, with the pressure executives where on to embark on a cloud journey.

"If you look back to when cloud started off, then it was pretty evident that boards were putting enormous pressure on the executive team to create a cloud strategy. Everybody had to commit to some sort of cloud journey. I remember reading press releases at the time





that made statements such as 100% of our workload is going to be in to be in cloud. Some said that 90% of all their production was going to be in the cloud, and look, all of those companies had to walk those statements back. It's not that cloud was bad in any way, shape, or form, but a hybrid option emerged, so you didn't have to go one specific direction. At the end of the day, the question will always come back to how do you get the best value out of a business case. When it comes to Gen AI and Agentic AI, I see a very similar trend to when cloud was gaining traction, the same pressure

is being applied, and that pressure can lead to costly mistakes. If you're an CEO, or a C-Level executive, and you can't talk about AI then there will be immediate question marks raised. Undoubtedly many business leaders are under huge pressure when it comes to AI, but there also needs to be a realisation that AI is not going to solve every problem," said Nayagam.

Nayagam warned against

businesses becoming burdened by monolithic AI projects, and encouraged them to 'think big', but start small.

"Look, you've got to start somewhere, and the business case is critical. You have to determine what is the problem you are looking to solve as a business. There are 1000's of use cases, and we have implemented well over 2,500 different use cases that



We want to bring the local talent into our workforce, and we want to give them a clear pathway to succeed in the technology sector."



we have in multiple client sets, and each problem is slightly different. So, you go into it with your eyes open, but you need to start small. You can definitely think big, but you have to start small. If you start small and you build a business case and there's failure, well that's fine, if you have started small then you have scope for failure. You can change quickly, but if you become embroiled in a monolithic project then you're invested in it, and some tasks may take forever, and you don't have that safety net when it comes to failure. My advice to businesses is very clear, start small, think big,

but prove the POC and get the AI use-cases to work," said Nayagam.

At the recent AI Action Summit in Paris, the decision by both the US and UK governments to refuse to sign up to a framework that was designed to promote the ethical and responsible use of AI was seen as a real blow, considering 60 other nations had signed the document.

Whilst there are many differing viewpoints on AI in terms of the technology itself, generally, there is an acceptance from the technology community that there needs to be strong guardrails and governance around AI, to ensure the technology is used ethically and responsibly.

Nayagam outlined the approach adopted by DXC Technology when it comes to their own AI frameworks and governance, highlighting the role played by their AI Office.

"There's no doubt that it is a major challenge. I mean, right now, there is no global framework, or a globally agreed standard that exists. Then you come back to each country, they all have their own unique view around what they want to do, and so forth. And again, even at the country level, you don't really have a fully-fledged framework, yet everybody is learning this as they go along. What we have done at DXC Technology is applicable to any other organization. There are a number of factors at play, such as the ethical side of things, bias, security, so with that in mind you need to come

up with the framework that works for your organization within those boundaries that are important for leveraging this technology. We created an office called AI Office. Their number one objective is to define the policies and the framework that the whole organization can employ as a whole. Having a framework is one thing, and the policies and everything else around it, but you have to embed that back into the business in order for it to be fully operational, because that's where the real use happens, of course, and that's where these mistakes and so forth, could potentially happen. So operationally, embedding it into your operation is absolutely critical. In summary, we have the AI office, and then the AI governance, and that governance board verifies every solution that we create in a bid to make sure it falls within the framework that was accepted by DXC Technology as an organization, which has ethics, security and everything else embedded into it," said Nayagam.

DXC Technology operates in an ultra-competitive environment, but when pressed on what he believed fundamentally differentiated the company from its market rivals, Nagagam highlighted the fact the engineering was intrinsic in their DNA, and that they have a proven track record of solving complex problems.

"We've been in the technology services business in different forms over last



60 years. In terms of what differentiates us, I think it's two-fold. We are known as an engineering company, and as a technology organisation that can solve complex problems. We manage complex systems around the world for large airlines, making sure that the airlines are flying, and the crews are getting to the right place at the right time. We run the production systems for automotive companies such as BMW and Mercedes. They have AI technologies infused in them and are intelligent systems, and all the technology and software in those vehicles are developed by DXC Technology, so that gives you a flavour of the

engineering depth that we have, and those are the types of experiences and solutions that we provide for our customers. I do think that what makes us really unique is our engineering DNA," said Nayagam.

Nayagam concluded an excellent conversation by highlighting the significance of its decision to open new offices in Riyadh, and reiterated that DXC Technology was committed to hiring local talent in the UAE and the KSA, and cited their

graduate programs as a way to bridge the skills gap that currently exists in the market.

"It's such an exciting time to be in the region. I spend 50% of my time in Dubai, and the other 50% in Riyadh, due to the opportunities emerging there. It's such a unique region, and it is driven by the leadership at the very top, and that filters down and touches everything, they know what their vision is and where they want to go. You can feel the technology adoption here, and it's amazing. Obviously, there is huge opportunities in both the UAE and the KSA, but we're also looking at the role DXC Technology can play in helping these ambitious countries achieve their aspirations. We are playing a huge role in terms of contributing locally and building that tech community and ecosystem. We have a massive Graduate program in both the UAE and Saudi Arabia. We want to bring the local talent into our workforce, and we want to give them a clear pathway to succeed in the technology sector. At the end of the day, this industry is driven by skill, and we need to build up that skill set and create opportunities for the next-generation of talent here in the region, and we are committed to playing a huge role in making that a reality," said Nayagam. enme



My advice to businesses is very clear, start small, think big, but prove the POC and get the AI use-cases to work."



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AI FIRST EXPERT SERVICES

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Nidal Abou-Ltaif**, Chief Revenue and Transformation Officer at TeKnowledge, to find out more about how their AI-First Expert Services model can unify the entire lifecycle of business transformation

Nidal Abou-Ltaif is one of the most respected and revered business and technology leaders in the Middle East.

Abou-Ltaif is perhaps best known for his long association with global CX company Avaya, but he is now forging a new path, and hoping to help US tech company TeKnowledge scale new heights across the region.

As organizations race to operationalize AI at scale, many are hitting familiar roadblocks: vendor fragmentation, siloed service models, and costly integration gaps.

According to IDC, 70% of CIOs cite vendor sprawl as a barrier to progress, while Gartner reports that 77% struggle to deliver AI value due to disconnected systems.

TeKnowledge believe the answer lies in a new kind of partnership—one that unifies the entire lifecycle of transformation through an AI-First Expert Technology Services model.

On April 15th, the company

unveiled a refreshed brand identity and a service framework designed to close these gaps by embedding AI from strategy through delivery and continuous improvement.

At the core is a continuum of integrated solutions and services spanning AI, Customer Experience (CX), Cybersecurity, Digital Skilling, Professional and Managed Services.

This connected model is built to make transformation more accessible and impactful—through long-term thinking, deep partnerships, and expert-led execution.

CNME sat down with Abou-Ltaif for a deep dive on all things TeKnowledge.

You joined TeKnowledge in October 2024. Almost six months in, how would you reflect on your experience so far? What does your strategy look like for the remainder of 2025?

It's been an energizing and deeply meaningful six months. I joined at a time of

momentum and change, and what stood out immediately was the strength of connection—between our people, our customers, and our purpose.

Across our global hubs, I've seen real depth in both technical capability and local insight, which is increasingly important as we support clients in more complex, fast-moving environments.

This month marked an important milestone for us, with the launch of our AI-First model and new brand identity. But more importantly, it reinforced our focus—making transformation both accessible and sustainable.

We're moving away from episodic change and toward continuous innovation. That shift calls for clarity, discipline, and focus—and that's where our efforts are concentrated. The path forward is about scaling what works, building on strong foundations, and forming partnerships that deliver long-term value.





28

Tell us more about the AI-First Expert Technology Services model you introduced. Why is it relevant now?

There's been no shortage of excitement around AI—but what many organizations need is a way to move from idea to impact. That's what this model is designed to support.

Our AI-First Expert Technology Services model brings together five

essential elements: AI, Customer Experience (CX), Cybersecurity, Professional Services, and Managed Services. These aren't siloed offerings—they're intentionally integrated to support the transformation continuum of enterprises, enabling continuous progress from strategy through delivery, adoption, and ongoing optimization.

We built the model in response to three persistent

challenges we kept seeing in the market.

First, the pace of AI advancement is outpacing most organizations' ability to integrate it. There's pressure to adopt quickly, but the complexity beneath the surface—data readiness, operating models, governance—is often underestimated.

Second, many enterprises are working with too many vendors, especially in areas



like customer engagement and operations. That fragmentation creates disjointed experiences and slows down innovation.

Third, even when the technology is in place, adoption and internal capability-building often lag behind. And that's where momentum gets lost.

This model addresses all of that. It embeds AI from the ground up and provides continuity across the

transformation journey—helping clients move faster, scale smarter, and unlock measurable outcomes across AI, CX, and Cybersecurity.

What brings it to life is the capability behind it—the people who deliver with clarity, consistency, and care. Over 70% of our workforce is trained on Microsoft technologies, with deep certifications across Azure, Dynamics, and Copilot.

AI is no longer a standalone solution—it's becoming a horizontal capability that sits across the enterprise. And that shift calls for more than a new toolset. It calls for a new kind of service partner—one that's technically grounded, operationally ready, and aligned to outcomes from day one. It also requires continuous investment in learning and internal skilling—because the ability to lead in AI starts with the ability to learn, adapt, and evolve from within.

How important is hiring local talent to your growth strategy, particularly in regions with strong nationalization agendas?

It's a core principle. You can't deliver relevant solutions without local context—and you can't create lasting impact without investing in local talent.

Across markets, we're

seeing growing emphasis on national workforce development. That aligns with how we operate. We approach it with intent—because building local capability is both a strategic advantage and a long-term commitment to the communities we serve.

It's also a differentiator. People who understand the regulatory, cultural, and operational nuances of a market are often the ones who unlock the most value. By focusing on local skilling and long-term employability, we're able to serve clients in ways that are both technically excellent and contextually aware.

In January 2025, you made several leadership appointments. How do these help advance your strategy?

Leadership is one of the most powerful accelerators of change. The right people bring alignment, clarity, and momentum—and that's exactly what we've aimed to strengthen.

The new leadership team reflects diverse global experience across transformation, delivery, and customer engagement. But beyond expertise, they bring a shared mindset: that impact is earned through trust, operational excellence, and consistent execution.



AI is no longer a standalone solution—it's becoming a horizontal capability that sits across the enterprise. And that shift calls for more than a new toolset.”



We've also worked hard to create an environment where talent can thrive. A strong culture, supported by clarity and high standards, allows people to lead with confidence—and deliver with purpose.

You recently announced a partnership with Genesys. What makes this collaboration significant?

It's a great example of alignment between platform strength and delivery readiness.

Genesys brings a powerful set of capabilities in customer experience. Our role is to help operationalize those capabilities in large-scale, real-world environments—through process expertise, managed services, and integration that's designed for complexity.

We've seen growing

demand for solutions that not only modernize engagement but also build long-term capability—from automation to analytics to skilling. This collaboration enables us to bring modern customer engagement solutions to market faster—with the delivery scale, security, and integration our clients require.



You can't deliver relevant solutions without local context—and you can't create lasting impact without investing in local talent."

you—and stay focused on delivering it, consistently and intentionally.

For us, that means simplifying complexity. Many clients are navigating disjointed systems and competing priorities. What they value most is coherence: partners who can connect insight to execution, and strategy to measurable outcomes.

It also means investing in culture. Scale only works when people grow with it. That's why we've prioritized leadership development, skilling, and environments where trust drives performance.

Technology should enable progress, not overwhelm it. Growth becomes sustainable when it's built on capability, not just ambition.

AI is moving fast—especially in CX. What trends do you see, and how is TeKnowledge positioned to lead?

The conversation around AI is evolving—from curiosity to capability, from potential to performance. We've entered a moment where the real challenge isn't the technology itself, but how to harness it with intention and clarity.

In customer experience, we often talk about personalization, speed, and scale. But behind every great customer interaction is an

empowered employee. CX and EX are deeply connected, and organizations that invest in both are creating the most meaningful change.

What's emerging is a new definition of progress. Innovation is no longer defined by breakthroughs alone—it's a continuum. A consistent rhythm of improvement, learning, and adaptation. And that requires more than platforms—it calls for expertise, precision, and a commitment to long-term value.

That's the foundation of our AI-First Expert Technology Services model. We bring intelligence into every layer of the enterprise—how services are delivered, how decisions are made, and how outcomes are achieved. This approach enables clients to scale confidently, with built-in clarity and control.

What excites me most is seeing how AI is reshaping how businesses think about value—how they design experiences, empower people, and make decisions. Intelligence is no longer confined to a system or a function; it's becoming part of how organizations operate at every level. That shift opens the door to entirely new possibilities—ones we're actively exploring alongside our clients. ctm

It also complements our long-standing work with Microsoft, particularly in areas like AI, security, and productivity. Together, these partnerships allow us to deliver more connected, scalable outcomes—and meet clients where they are in their transformation journey.

What lessons guide your approach to sustainable growth?

Sustainable growth starts with clarity. You need to know what differentiates



Technology should enable progress, not overwhelm it. Growth becomes sustainable when it's built on capability, not just ambition."

Dataiku

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

Sid Bhatia, Area VP & General Manager, Middle East, Turkey & Africa at Dataiku, has penned an op-ed for April's edition of CNME, in which he argues that one of the lessons that can be learned from DeepSeek, is the fact that 'AI Optionality' is going to be key.

Do you remember ChatGPT? Do you remember when it was the new kid on the block? How times have changed in the world of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI).

DeepSeek has been around for some 18 months, but the echoes of New Year celebrations could still be heard as the Chinese startup hit the headlines this month. It released its GenAI assistant as a free app, claimed a development cost of less than US\$6 million, and wiped hundreds of billions of dollars in market capitalization from companies like NVIDIA and Microsoft.

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), private enterprises face a future that will be dominated by AI, with GenAI alone projected to be a US\$2-billion segment by 2030.

When trying to grab a share of that value, UAE enterprises must be mindful of the user data hoarded by AI vendors like DeepSeek — ranging from prompts to uploaded files



— and the implications for compliance with regulators inside and outside UAE borders.

The nation's AI innovators must therefore develop flexibility in their own infrastructure that will allow

them to avoid vendor lock-in and innovate freely, on their own terms, while meeting their compliance obligations.

DeepSeek's rocket-like rise illustrates just how much GenAI — itself a disrupter of the larger AI industry — has changed in the two years since OpenAI's ChatGPT captured our imaginations. We continue to see leaps forward in the quality of models.

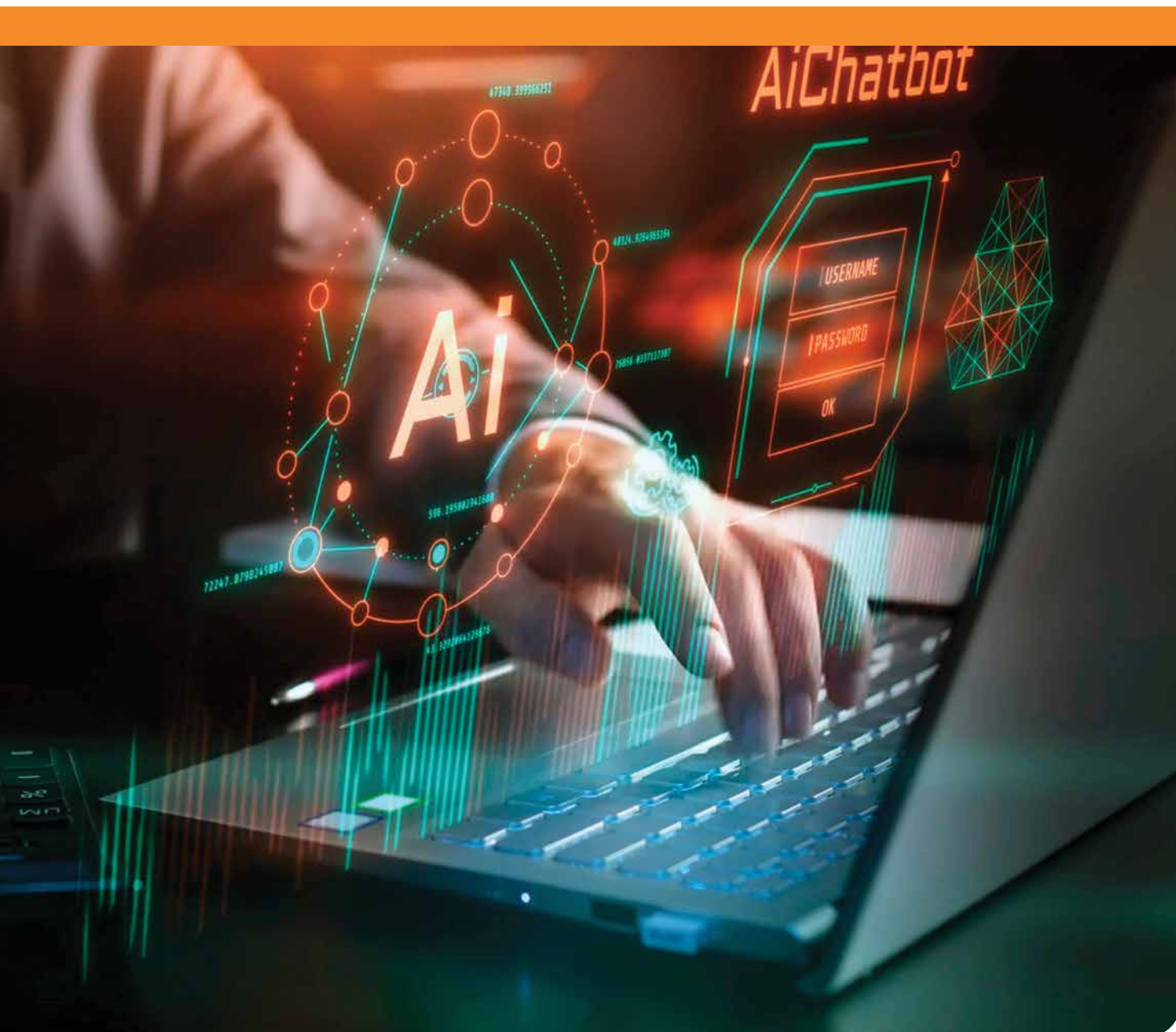
Capabilities are becoming progressively more advanced and features that were turning heads just six months previously are standard fare today.

COST AND VALUE

As boundaries are pushed, the costs of building a production-ready model are plummeting. It is this very selling point, remember, that made DeepSeek so impactful. Cost-effectiveness also allows AI to be democratized more readily, leading to faster time-to-value for AI investments.

Throughout these developments, open-source AI has been building momentum and producing admirable results that are made available to a global community of innovators. The geography of that community is diverse, again leading to more opportunities in more markets.

If the adage, "the only constant is change" is true of life, it is doubly true of technology and even more so of AI. But stakeholders in the field of GenAI must check the bulletin boards hourly for the latest breakthrough.



If an organization is in the process of adopting GenAI, its decision-makers must obtain, maintain, and retain the flexibility in their infrastructure to accommodate the dizzying pace of change. The benefits of a flexible AI infrastructure include allowing an organization to address the speed of change, as today's breakthrough becomes tomorrow's baseline.

While due diligence must, of course, be baked in, plug-

n'-play adoption should be the goal. When a new model or capability becomes available, the Everyday-AI enterprise should be able to embrace it without having to rebuild its AI infrastructure. Organizations must be able to protect their investments

so that value is created today, tomorrow, and next year.

Training and inference costs continue to evolve. More flexible architecture means more cost-effective solutions. Pivoting from one model to another or switching providers in an instant are



The benefits of a flexible AI infrastructure include allowing an organization to address the speed of change, as today's breakthrough becomes tomorrow's baseline."

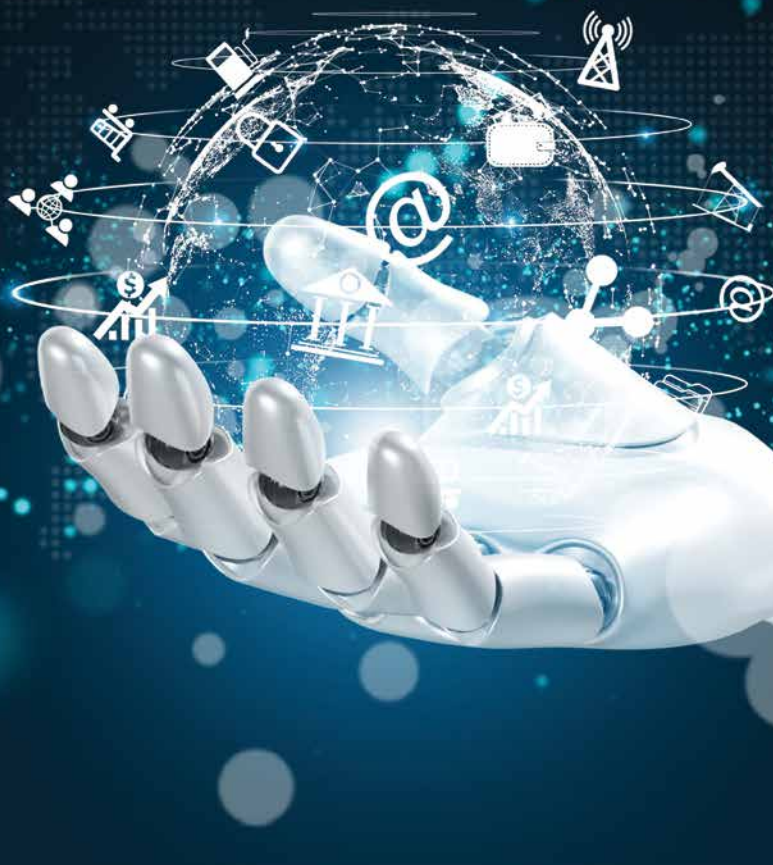
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other benefits of a flexible infrastructure.

Organizations can optimize AI investments as they optimize performance. And when tweaking the AI stable, businesses will find that each AI solution is at home in its own unique infrastructure. Legacy hardware may be sufficient for some; others may need specialized equipment and resources.

Flexible architecture allows the organization to take full advantage of its existing infrastructure while procuring new tools as needed, assured by the knowledge that they will be compatible with existing systems.

THE POWER TO PIVOT

Because change is the only

constant, uncertainty reigns. Risk is everywhere and must be managed. In GenAI, risk takes the shape of changes in model availability, performance, and cost, or in new regulatory requirements.

A flexible platform is capable of maintaining multiple model options, allowing Everyday AI organizations to quickly turn the key on new models when previous ones become inviable.

With the right flexibility, enterprises can innovate more quickly because their environment is built for experimentation. New models can be prototyped, tested, and released with relative ease. What I am describing is a futureproof foundation for

core AI abilities that allows addition and subtraction without the need for a fundamental rebuilding of underlying elements.

Tool agnosticism is a critical component of effective AI-driven organizations. Such enterprises keep using the same storage and processing systems, so their previous investments continue to add value. They then integrate emerging AI models (open-source or proprietary) and adjust resources to fit.

We sometimes refer to this flexibility as “optionality”. It is our ticket to the AI future we will all share. Optionality will decide our place in that future. Are we set to be a spectator or a player? **cmms**

Omnix International

UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITIONS

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Walid Gomaa**, Chief Executive Officer at Omnix International, in an effort to learn more about their decision to integrate their engineering and digital solutions in a bid to drive unique value propositions for their customers, the unique capabilities of its Omnix Metaverse, the impact of their AI monetization consultancy services - and how their HOT Systems are completely optimising software performance.

Walid Gomaa has cultivated a reputation for himself for his ability to leading organisational reform and change during a decorated career in the technology industry across the Middle East.

Gomaa has worked for some of the world's biggest technology companies such as IBM, Dell, HPE, and Huawei - and he was officially appointed as the CEO of Omnix International, in January 2024, after joining the digital solutions services provider in 2021.

It could be argued that despite the fact he has an incredibly impressive CV, and that he has been in the industry for almost 40 years, that he has never been more enthused, or driven to succeed now, than at any other point in his career.

The last time CNME caught up with Omnix International, was during LEAP 2024 in Riyadh, so there is plenty



to catch-up on, and Gomaa began the conversation by highlighting how the company has decided to take a more unified approach when

it comes to their engineering and digital solutions portfolio.

"Since we last spoke, Omnix International has embarked upon a lot of transformation



internally as a company. We recognised that as a digital services provider we need to streamline our current product offerings to make sure that they are able to support the current initiatives that are happening in the marketplace. Traditionally, Omnix has two different DNAs as a company. We have an engineering DNA and a digital DNA, but what I started to see over the last 2-3 years was more of a link between the two. Ultimately, what that enabled me to do was to take some of the engineering solution offerings and some of the digital solution offerings and bundle them together to make sure that we are providing a unique value proposition to our customers that nobody else in the marketplace can do," said Gomaa.

Gomaa highlighted the creation of their Omnix



Metaverse Platform, as an example of the new value proposition they are delivering since infusing their engineering and digital DNAs.

"We decided to create our own Omnix Metaverse Platform, and if you recall, initially when it came to the Metaverse space everybody was talking about wearable technology. However, what



Traditionally, Omnix has two different DNAs as a company. We have an engineering DNA, and a digital DNA, but what I started to see over the last 2-3 years was more of a link between the two."

we quickly realised following consultations with our customers and partners is that you need lots of other things in addition to just wearables. You need networks, back-end integration, and ultimately you need to provide a whole host of different services, it's not enough to be focused solely on wearables. We decided to line up our offerings in a way that we don't say engineering, and digital anymore, we're now providing specific solutions that are tailored to meet the unique needs and challenges of customers, and we leverage our technology to help them address those obstacles. That's where we introduce and start to talk about the Digital Twin Metaverse, which is essentially the way in which we can integrate the virtual world with the physical world," said Gomaa.

Gomaa added how part of their own transformation and restructuring of their product and solution offerings, saw the company create solutions that helped customers with their data domain, and he also highlighted how that approach has now put them in contention to land large-scale smart infrastructure projects in both the UAE and KSA.

"We are helping customers in relation to their data domain. Data is becoming a big, big issue for a lot of



customers, and naturally we decided to focus on the data domain space. As a result of that pivot, we have landed a number of sizeable projects in terms of data visualisation and data management, and this allows us to diversify our business model, and from a forward-looking perspective this also positions us differently in the market. We are competing for the big smart infrastructure projects in the marketplace now, whether that be in Saudi Arabia, or the UAE, we are putting ourselves in the frame. We want to demonstrate the unique value propositions that we can provide when it comes to smart infrastructure," said Gomaa.

AI is everywhere, and unsurprisingly Omnix have invested heavily into AI, but as Gomaa pointed out they have decided to approach it from a different angle in terms of its implementation.

He highlighted the growing

impact of its AI Monetisation Service.

"Look everyone is talking about AI. We are approaching it two-fold, both from a knowledge perspective, and from the fact that we have started to implement AI in different ways. Firstly, we looked at AI from a use-case based approach, which I believe is fundamental. Essentially, when we say use-case based AI approach, it means we have done this, and we know how to do it pretty well in fact. However, now we're going to implement it and scale it from a customer perspective. Now to do that, we recognised a gap, a big gap actually in relation to business users and technical users. What we started to do was create a specific service to address the issues that exist around POC and validation, and we have called it our AI Monetisation Service. It's basically a consultancy service with customers, we engage

with them directly, and create ideation workshops. We identify the use-cases, we map out how we ensure that these use-cases yield a positive ROI. We want to help customers develop AI use-cases that deliver tangible business outcomes for them, and that is what the AI Monetisation Service provides," said Gomaa.

Omnix International has drawn acclaim for the performance of its HOT Systems.

According to Gomaa, the HOT System has been purpose-built for industries like AEC, Media, and Manufacturing — which is driving higher productivity and lower operational costs.

"The inception of our HOT System was driven by a customer requirement. We are dealing with engineers across every domain, but these engineers are using very heavy software on their machines, and we witnessed

first-hand the struggles they were encountering when they were trying to open a model. I mean in many cases it was taking them 2 hours to open a specific model. Now if we can reduce this process from 2 hours, to say around 15 minutes, then I can give these engineers back 75% of their time. This was the starting point for us, but we decided to do a lot of R&D around it, and we quickly discovered that it was not going to be enough to bring CPUs and GPUs and bundle them together in the hope that the system will perform better. We realised that we needed to understand the path of the software within the machine, so with that in mind, it became evident that the software needs to be optimised. The O in the word HOT, stands for optimisation. We are optimising the path of the software in the machine to make sure the performance is where it should be," said Gomaa.

Gomaa stressed that HOT is a breakthrough solution that incredibly delivers up to 30% better performance for 3D designers, CAD/BIM engineers, simulation developers, and content creators.

"We want to optimise performance. We've done the benchmarks for the customers, and they can see the value we are delivering in terms of performance. We are partnered with a major player from the construction industry, who has over 500 machines in operation. Now the unique selling point we have is the fact that other vendors like Dell and HP


will have machines that are optimised, and they are extremely powerful in terms of CPU and TPU, but they're not optimised when you run the software and set the benchmarks. We deliver a 30% result in terms of higher performance," said Gomaa.

The dial of the conversation turned back to the data pipeline that is needed for digital transformation, and as Gomaa pointed out if the data is incorrect then the AI business use-case being pushed forward is going to be completely redundant.

"The entire technology landscape is fixated on AI, and rightly so, and a huge element within the AI conversation is the role of data analytics. However, when it comes to AI, if the data is either incorrect, or inconsistent, then it is going to be useless. So, businesses need to go back to the drawing board to ensure that their data is correct. And this is why at Omnix, we talk so much about the concept of the data pipeline and the need for it, any engagement we have with customers we advocate for the data pipeline approach. You have to understand the data in the various different stages in that data pipeline, and you need to have the right tools

and solutions to help you on that data pipeline journey. The first part of the process is to have the right data framework, data management and data governance models in place, because you have to understand who is using the data, and who is actually authorised to change the data," said Gomaa.

Gomaa concluded a superb discussion that highlighting the key role the start-up ecosystem will play in terms of helping businesses with their data pipeline.

"When we were looking at the marketplace, we weren't just looking at the major vendors, we scanned the start-up ecosystem because there are some brilliant start-ups producing some great output when it comes to the data pipeline space. When you look at solutions, I'd advise businesses to not only look at the large vendors, because some of the start-ups have the solutions that are a perfect fit for many enterprises about to start on their data pipeline. The data pipeline starts with data collection, so you need comprehensive data collection engines, and again, that's where AI enters the game, because these collection engines are now becoming powered by AI," said Gomaa. 



The inception of our HOT System was driven by a customer requirement. We are dealing with engineers across every domain, but these engineers are using very heavy software on their machines, and we witnessed first-hand the struggles they were encountering when they were trying to open a model."

JAGGAER

VALUE HUB

Hany Mosbeh, Senior Vice President – MEPAC at JAGGAER, has claimed that the UAE government can benefit from making procurement a ‘value hub’ as the ‘We the UAE 2031’ vision comes into the view.

When the United Arab Emirates’ success story is brought under the microscope, everything from its dramatic skylines and pristine malls to its agile infrastructure and safe public spaces comes down to one thing — attentive government. The nation’s leaders have taken bold steps to build a futureproof society.

The UAE federal budget for 2025 sits at around US\$19.5 billion as the government continues on its ambitious path. Economic success did not happen overnight.

It occurred through a steady, determined march in which talent and capital merged to create something that is the envy of the world. Through it all, the procurement process played a seminal role. Governments function, as do other entities, on having the right solutions at hand when needed.

In 2025, as the UAE refocuses on its ‘We the UAE 2031’ vision, government agencies will be more eager than ever to turn procurement into a value-adding force.

With new technologies like AI at their fingertips, ministries will be served by advanced source-to-pay



(S2P) solutions and supplier-collaboration platforms that leave nothing to chance as budgets are applied to turn the nation’s ambitions into reality.

THE PITTED ROAD

For any organisation, procurement is a pitted road. First, one must find eligible suppliers. Then comes the assessment of products and whether they are compatible with business models and regulatory obligations. Next

comes negotiation, then contract drafting, followed by receipt and payment.

There are many opportunities for disruption in the S2P process. In the digital age, public sector entities are looking to build workflows in which human employees are no longer required to spend wasteful hours on phones talking to vendors and tracking down orders. To streamline productivity in the procurement universe requires a digital solution that brings transparency (a prerequisite of compliance) and flexibility to each link of the supply chain.

When the government is able to onboard suppliers at the click of a button and effortlessly analyse procurement data through custom-made KPIs, it ensures a more robust supply chain and hence more reliable public services.

In this digital transformation, procurement has become more than a mere purchasing process. It is now a hub for value-creation. This is a substantial departure from the more traditional view of the process as a mere cost-cutting opportunity. The Chief Procurement Officer’s domain has now expanded (CPOs) to that of an enterprise strategist who looks at the broader impact each purchase can have on the citizen experience and the future of government itself.

It will be no great revelation that the key to unlocking this value comes from having the right digital tools in place. In 2025, UAE government



entities will increasingly place their trust in advanced source-to-pay platforms to realise the potential of procurement and to optimise supply-chain performance.

Assuming governments find the right technology partner, the digital transformation of procurement can sweep the GEM (Government Excellence Model, which is used by the UAE government) KPI board. Successes will rapidly be recorded in metrics across service delivery and

project implementation, the end result being a happier citizenry.

EARLY ENGAGEMENT DRIVES EFFECTIVENESS

Each government department is different. The Ministry of Health and Prevention will

have different goals than Defence, Education, Aviation or Finance.

But each will benefit from involving procurement at the design phase of a service rollout. While a central bank project may be entirely digital, procurement will still



In 2025, as the UAE refocuses on its 'We the UAE 2031' vision, government agencies will be more eager than ever to turn procurement into a value-adding force."



play a pivotal role.

More equipment-heavy agencies, such as utilities, may have to coordinate procurement with engineering. MoHAP may need to orchestrate it alongside R&D or logistics.

Including procurement in the design phase can greatly improve outcomes because the process itself can be a source of actionable business intelligence gleaned from markets and suppliers. Ministers and other decision-makers may be able to identify risks earlier and avoid costly delays.

Private-industry sectors have learned that early integration of trusted suppliers can shorten development cycles while shaving costs and mitigating risks.

Innovative suppliers even help private enterprises create new efficiencies and business opportunities. In the government sector, robust private-enterprise partners are a time-honoured tradition.

Outside views can enhance the machinery of government in unexpected ways. In procurement, more eyes mean more chances for innovation.

While for private enterprises that comes down to greater profits, governments will have the chance to cut costs and deliver faster turnarounds to the benefit of private citizens.

The right S2P platform will empower procurement teams to make knowledge-based decisions. They will find themselves going beyond standard metrics. Entire public-sector supply chains can be united through single cloud-based solutions.

Now, when government agencies go on the hunt for a supplier, their sourcing and onboarding process will be simplified by many orders of magnitude.

A recent COP host, the UAE is laser-focused on ethical and transparent sourcing. Digitalising procurement delivers this and promotes collaboration among private and public entities on the quality, sustainability, and reliability of government services.




The procurement process benefits from AI via intelligent search and a range of virtual assistants all taking the sting of tedium away from procurement teams and allowing them to focus on more strategic activities.”

THE CENTRAL COLUMN

When teams can perform multidimensional analyses of metrics such as costs, risks, timescales, and ESG, life improves both inside and outside the corridors of power. In the past, such detailed oversight would have been difficult to achieve.

But in 2025, we have access to AI-powered technologies that can assist with everything from quick and accurate documentation to the automation of workflows and monitoring of physical equipment. The procurement process benefits from AI via intelligent search and a range of virtual assistants all taking the sting of tedium away from procurement teams and allowing them to focus on more strategic activities.

In 2025, UAE citizens will see a government doing what it has always done — pursuing change as a constant. In equipping itself for greater efficiency and more sustainable delivery of public services, I believe the government will revisit its procurement process to mine it for as yet untapped potential. And with 2031 in their sights, leaders will reinvent projects and services with procurement as the central column. 

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BRIDGING THE AI GAP

Mahmood Lockhat, Chief Technology Officer at TeKnowledge, outlines the best practices and measures that enterprises need to adopt in order to bridge the AI Gap, and turn the hype into tangible transformation in an exclusive op-ed for April's edition of CNME.

BRIDGING THE AI GAP: FROM HYPE TO ENTERPRISE TRANSFORMATION:

Over the past few months, I've had the privilege of engaging with industry leaders, analysts, and C-level executives from global organizations. One recurring theme has emerged: AI is at the centre of innovation, yet there's a significant gap between its potential and its current enterprise adoption.

This article explores four critical themes shaping AI adoption today:

1. The gap between AI expectations and reality
2. Steps for integrating AI into organizations
3. Measuring success in AI initiatives
4. Emerging trends that will shape the future of AI

THE REALITY BEHIND AI'S HYPE CYCLE

Let's start by putting the current landscape into context.

Over the past few decades, we've witnessed transformative platform shifts in computing:



the Internet gave us universal access to knowledge, smartphones placed that knowledge in our hands 24/7, and cloud computing made digital resources globally accessible, revolutionizing business operations.



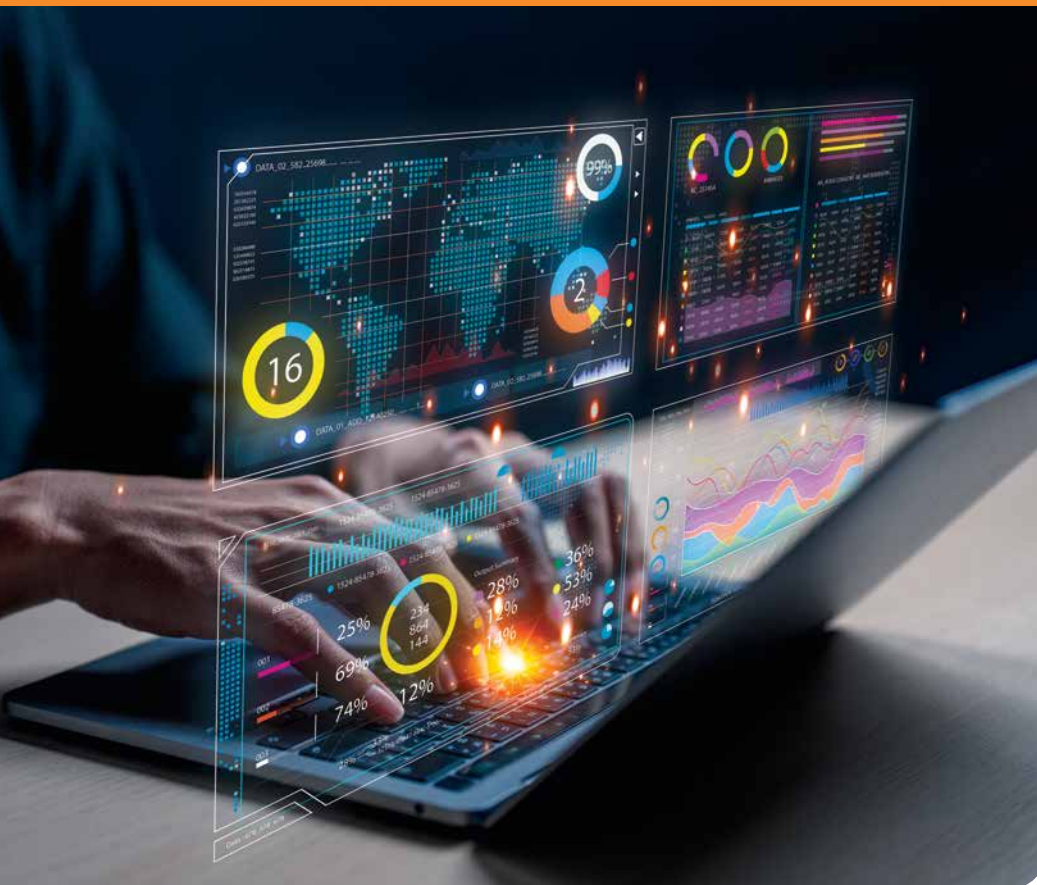
AI is at the centre of innovation, yet there's a significant gap between its potential and its current enterprise adoption."

Now, AI is giving us tools to unleash intelligent productivity in unprecedented ways. According to McKinsey, generative AI could add the equivalent of \$2.6 trillion to \$4.4 trillion annually to the global economy across various use cases.

What makes AI unique is its status as a general-purpose technology, accessible to all, regardless of age, location, or profession. From farmers in India increasing crop yields in challenging agricultural areas to specialized oncologists in the US and UK being able to identify cancer early, allowing focused treatment plans; AI's reach is extensive. Gartner predicts that by 2026, enterprises that implemented AI will see a 25% improvement in customer satisfaction, employee productivity, and operational efficiency compared to those that don't.

In our personal lives, AI has become an on-demand assistant providing information, advice, and recommendations. Five years ago, having instant access to expertise in law, medicine, education, travel, and cooking would have seemed impossible. Yet, here we are, leveraging AI assistants.

However, this creates a challenge: while we expect enterprise AI to be as seamless as consumer AI, the reality is highly nuanced, due to security, governance, ethics,



data sovereignty, uptime, and ROI considerations. Enterprise AI must focus on targeted use cases that deliver measurable business outcomes.

FOUR KEY FACTORS CREATING THE EXPECTATION GAP:

Unrealistic Expectations: The "hype cycle" of impressive demos and bold predictions naturally elevates expectations. BCG reports that 70% of digital transformations fall short of their objectives, often due to inflated expectations and underestimated complexity.

Despite remarkable progress, AI isn't magic. People expect fully autonomous solutions without appreciating the necessary data, infrastructure, and expertise requirements.

1. **Data Quality & Implementation Challenges:** AI

effectiveness depends on good data, yet many organizations struggle with fragmented, messy data. According to PwC, 86% of executives report their organizations struggle with data quality issues when implementing AI. Integrating AI into existing systems is rarely plug-and-play.

2. **Lack of Clear Business Objectives:** Companies often implement AI without defining the problem they're aiming to solve or how they'll measure success. AI must integrate into the overall business strategy with monitored, measured outcomes.
3. **Skilling and Adoption:** Perhaps, most critical is the people component. Technology deployment alone isn't enough:

employees need appropriate training to use AI effectively. Digital skilling ensures your workforce can maximize the impact of AI tools like Microsoft Copilot. IDC predicts that the shortage of skilled AI professionals will be cited as the number one barrier to AI adoption in 60% of organizations.

Takeaway:

To close this gap, enterprises must focus on targeted use cases that deliver measurable business outcomes while addressing challenges like data quality, governance, and workforce readiness.

DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE AI INTEGRATION PLAN

Having led major AI-driven transformations across industries like telecoms, aviation, financial services, and government, I've seen firsthand what works—and what doesn't—when integrating AI into organizations.

I've learned that a strategic approach is essential:

1. **Start with Clear Goals:** Identify specific business problems where AI can add value. Where are processes slow or inefficient? Where can customer experiences be improved? Target real issues, not technology for its own sake. PwC's 2025 AI Business Predictions report emphasizes that nearly half (49%) of technology leaders have already fully integrated AI into their companies' core business strategies. This is echoed by Accenture, who report

that companies with a clear AI strategy tied to business objectives, achieve 3-4x the ROI compared to those without.

2. Assess Your Data

Foundation: AI needs quality data. Evaluate your data's quantity, accuracy, and accessibility. Data organization and cleanliness are crucial preliminary steps. A study by MIT and Databricks found that companies that excel at data management see 3x better results from their AI investments.

3. Begin with Pilot Projects:

Avoid attempting comprehensive transformation at once. Start with small, focused pilots that demonstrate clear results to build confidence and organizational learning.

4. Focus on People:

Invest in the right talent, including emerging roles like Chief AI Officer, Prompt Engineer, Data Scientist, and AI Architect. Equally important is ensuring attention to data privacy, security, compliance, and ethical considerations. BCG's research underscores this point, noting that "companies need to focus two-thirds of their effort and resources on people-related capabilities" when undertaking AI transformations.

Success comes when:

- Clear objectives make AI purposeful
- High-quality data makes AI reliable

- Successful Training makes AI an integral part of the organisation

MEASURING AI SUCCESS

How do you know if your AI initiatives are successful? The answer lies in building a clear scorecard and ROI model before starting any project.

Key metrics to consider include:

Efficiency and Productivity Gains.

As a "Customer Zero" organization actively using AI tools like Microsoft Copilot, we measure daily time savings per employee. With comprehensive training and adoption, we're seeing approximately 30-45 minutes saved per employee per day. This aligns with Microsoft's own research, which found Copilot users completed tasks 29% faster and were 37% more productive.

Other efficiency metrics include :

- reduced processing times,
- increased output,
- lower error rates.

Customer Experience Improvements.

Track improvements in CX through, measuring metrics such as:

- Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) and Net Promoter Scores (NPS),
- Increased wallet share per customer,

- First Contact Resolution (FCR) rates,
- Interactions completed with zero human touch through Automation,
- Reduced Average Handling Time, and decreased employee attrition.

Accenture's research shows that companies implementing AI-powered customer experience solutions see up to a 15% increase in customer satisfaction and a 40% reduction in service costs.

Financial Impact.

Being able to measure the ROI is essential. In order to see the value that the investment in AI is yielding, tracking financial KPI's such as the ones below is required:

- Reduced operating costs,
- increased revenue, sales, profitability
- human time/costs saved through automation

These are all fundamental to your ROI calculation.

BCG found that companies that successfully implemented AI saw a 10-15% increase in revenue and a 10-20% reduction in costs across operations where AI was deployed.

Takeaway:

By tracking these metrics against baseline measurements, organizations can clearly demonstrate the value that AI brings to their operations. According to Accenture, 74%



Despite remarkable progress, AI isn't magic. People expect fully autonomous solutions without appreciating the necessary data, infrastructure, and expertise requirements."



of organizations have seen investments in generative AI and automation meet or exceed expectations, with 63% planning to increase their efforts by 2026.

THE NEXT 12 MONTHS, AI WITHIN DIGITAL INDUSTRIES.

While predicting more than 12 months ahead is challenging, I'm most excited about AI projects moving from pilot phases to enterprise-scale production environments, driven by autonomous agents and agentic AI.

The industry needs to progress beyond one-off technology showcases to deliver tangible business outcomes – improved efficiency, lower costs, and better service.

Autonomous agents and agentic AI will enable this shift. Imagine having 10 new team members who; are highly qualified, work independently to resolve issues, streamline

processes, and complete transactions – without requiring sleep, sick days, or time off. McKinsey estimates that about 30% of hours currently worked in the US economy could be automated by 2030, and agentic AI will accelerate this trend globally.

We'll likely see the emergence of "superagents" – AI systems orchestrating multiple specialized AI agents, enabling more complex problem-solving and independent decision-making.

This trend will transform every industry – optimizing networks, improving fraud detection, streamlining patient care, and enhancing both customer and employee experiences. Most importantly, it will free human employees to focus on more complex, valuable tasks.

THE FUTURE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The future is AI-First

Customer Experience – using AI to improve customer lives through end-to-end experience orchestration that provides a personalised, human-like personal concierge available 24/7 across any channel – so seamless that customers won't know they're interacting with a machine. According to PwC, 75% of business leaders believe that AI will deliver better customer experiences in the near future.

CONCLUSION: UNLOCKING AI'S TRUE POTENTIAL

AI is no longer a futuristic concept—it's here now, reshaping industries and redefining how we work and live. However, realizing its full potential requires more than just deploying technology; it demands clear goals, robust data strategies, skilled people, and measurable outcomes.

PwC's analysis is clear: "Businesses that fail to integrate artificial intelligence into their operations will fall behind". Companies must move beyond viewing AI as experimental technology and instead position it as a core business driver.

At TeKnowledge, we're committed to helping organizations bridge the gap between hype, and reality, through advisory services, digital skilling programs, and innovative CX and AI solutions. Through our strategic partnerships with Microsoft, Genesys, and other technology providers, we can help our customers with their AI strategy and transformation journey. [GTM](#)

Epicor

DON'T TAKE THE GAMBLE

Vibhu Kapoor, Regional VP for Middle East, Africa & India at Epicor, has warned business that adopting AI without ERP is a huge gamble, and he outlines why he is advocating for them to be paired together, in an exclusive op-ed for April's edition of CNME.

The ERP market is expected to top US\$150 million in the United Arab Emirates this year, and US\$111 million in Saudi Arabia.

CAGRs of 4.24% for the UAE and 2.05% for Saudi Arabia paint a picture of GCC CXOs who consider ERP as, if not the beating heart of business, then certainly a vital organ. Now more than ever, these same CXOs are under pressure to implement impactful AI use cases.

The good news is that they need not make a hand-wringing choice between ERP and AI because ERP itself is fast becoming a critical component in the AI stack.

With data defining AI success, executives must answer key data-related questions. Where will it come from?

How will it be shaped? Who will be allowed access? If the data is not clean, the models will not give the desired results. And if it is mishandled, regulators will be at the door. ERP was taking care of many of these concerns when AI was still considered sci-fi gimmickry.



BENEATH THE LAKE

ERP is built on a repository of the enterprise's cleanest data. AI is famously reliant on data, and models are incredibly sensitive to the quality of that data. Data management and governance are built into ERP.

Modern ERP platforms can gracefully integrate AI, giving it instant access to the standard of

data it needs to glean accurate and actionable insights.

Normally concerns such as cybersecurity would accompany AI's consumption of data. These are greatly diminished because the fundamentals have not been compromised — the ERP system already has the means to implement sound governance and cloud offerings even have robust cybersecurity measures in place.

One way ERP platforms implement an accessible-yet-secure ecosystem is through the data lake — a centralized store that can be either raw or clean, structured or semi-structured.

Data lakes are made for AI, but they also come with a range of tools that allow organizations to define how and by whom data is accessed and what shape the data is in when it reaches the user.

AI modelling algorithms can thereby be guaranteed only to work on data that is clean and appropriate. With a data lake, all the boxes on the AI wish-list are ticked, the main ones being:

QUICK TO DEPLOY

Once a data lake is in place, the organization will have enabled rapid consolidation of information that was previously the guarded jewels of different business units.

These data silos would otherwise stand in the way of enterprise-wide collaboration on AI. Traditional data-warehousing can be a months-long project.

The data lake approach takes weeks and gives way to a speedier time to value for the AI tools that will trawl its depths. This time to value emerges from



an underlying competitiveness that is sustainable because of the organization's attentiveness to the fundamentals of governance, security, and accessibility.

SCALABLE

The start of the year is a time to think of growth. For regional businesses with ambitions

of international forays, the scalability of its technology infrastructure is critical. One of the great attractions of the data



Modern ERP platforms can gracefully integrate AI, giving it instant access to the standard of data it needs to glean accurate and actionable insights.”

lake is that it offers a low-cost storage solution.

High-quality data cannot be of high value if does not come in large volumes. Storage solutions therefore must be capable of growing cheaply.

ALL THE TOOLS YOU NEED

As soon as all its tributaries have flowed in, the data lake is ready to be tapped by thirsty machine-learning algorithms.

The variety of the pool's data makes it ideal for predictive analytics and other flavours of AI that thrive on access to many different types of information. Many of the best decisions an enterprise makes will come from the insights dredged from its diverse data lake.

SECURE AND COMPLIANT

The data lake stands among the best approaches for data security and governance, granting complete control to the organization over everything it stores and how and when to make it available.

Regional companies must comply with many different regulations (such as the need for data residency) established by national agencies, but also with global regulations such as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and with industry regulations like the Payment Card Industry's Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).

Through the data lake,



businesses can ensure trust in their brand continues throughout their onboarding of AI.

NO MOONSHOTS

A private data lake gives an enterprise control over its future, which is why data lakes are the future of ERP and of AI.

In short, the fastest route to AI value is through an ERP-resident AI suite that feeds on a well-designed data lake. Such a setup not only provides the speed, efficiency, and security needed to reap ongoing value from AI; it also provides the flexibility to integrate with

other systems.

When AI has made its home in an ERP suite fed by a data lake, everything changes. The organization will have delivered more visibility to decision makers. It will have enabled unprecedented collaboration.

It will have boosted efficiency and bolstered its supply chain. The ERP-resident approach to

AI adoption is a departure from the risky, moonshot missions of those who expect overnight success.

AI is not a cure-all; nor is it a sole serum for competitiveness. It is a tool that, if used strategically in cooperation with the right partners, can transform the business over time into a market leader. **CRM**



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