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STRATEGIC VAD PARTNER



## ISSUE 303 // JANUARY 2023







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## WHAT LIES AHEAD

s the world continues its transition into a digital-first economy, the channel ecosystem is rapidly undergoing sudden, monumental shifts. Add to that the current state of the global economy, ongoing geopolitical conflicts, supply chain disruptions and more, and you have a perfect storm for disaster. In the face of such complexities, channel leaders must re-assess and re-structure their channel partner ecosystems. What constituted best practices yesterday may no longer be so today. If you could see the channel

ecosystem of the future, what would it look like? How can you tell if you're headed in the right direction?

In this issue, we take a look at what lies ahead for the channel. By all accounts, the overarching theme will be to do more with less. And in order to achieve this, we will see more companies turning to the channel, as they recognise its cost efficiency as a route-to-market. Then again, with vendors tightening their belts, they will look to be more efficient in how they leverage their channel. The first step will be to ensure that their partner programs are uncluttered, uncomplicated, scalable, and not overly burdened by too many steps or processes. By doing so they will keep costs to a minimum, while at the same time, giving their channel teams the tools, data and insights to ensure they are driving their channel business more efficiently.

Our cover story 'Outlook 2023' takes a look at all these angles from expert points of view. We have a detailed look at what channel leaders of today must focus on, if they are to keep up the growth momentum and ensure a seamless digital journey.

The interviews we've lined up for this month are also eve-openers in that they point to the direction that the channel industry must travel in, to remain future-proof and resilient. Times are uncertain, but strategies needn't be so, and this is more than evident in what these industry veterans have to say. So, make sure you don't miss out on this special outlook issue, the very first of the year. Happy Reading!

## TIMES ARE UNCERTAIN, STRATEGIES AREN'T.

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## NEWSMAKERS

## ASBIS - SEAGATE PARTNER TRAINING EVENT HELD TO EMPOWER NEW AND EXISTING PARTNERS

ASBIS Middle East organised a partner training to drive Seagate's "Enabling the Modern Data Economy". For over 40 years, Seagate has been offering the most innovative and easily integrated data storage services built on trust, affordability, and ease. The partner training's key message was to help customers better understand Seagate's solutions to overcome the data management challenges, while reducing the complexity and expense of managing the infrastructure behind it.

The training session was held together with an Outdoor Karting experience on the state-of-theart facility at the Dubai Motorcity.



Those who were up for the challenge were able to experience the 1.2km International Circuit at the Dubai



Kartdrome that features 17 corners to test the driver's skills, as well as a tunnel and bridge to increase the excitement.

This training was delivered as part of ASBIS Channel Partner Enablement Program and aimed to empower new and existing Seagate Partners, with the objective to improve their sales and presales capabilities and overall business support. Furthermore, this training enabled partners to be more competent on right product positioning, to sharpen their solution selling skills and to offer customers a complete Modern Data Experience.

## PROVEN ARABIA SIGNS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH SA3EE

**PROVEN Arabia, one of the leading** business outsourcing organisations in Saudi Arabia, announced it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sa3ee, a non-profit organisation for rehabilitation and employment for citizens with disabilities.

The objective of the MoU is to enrich



employment opportunities for people with special needs inside Saudi Arabia. The MoU was signed by Zaid Al Mashari, CEO of PROVEN Arabia, and Representatives of Sa3ee at PROVEN Arabia's headquarters in Riyadh.

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Sa3ee seeks to strengthen the community awareness of the functional rights of persons with disabilities by providing rehabilitation, professional services, and job opportunities in various sectors.

"PROVEN Arabia has an inclusive workplace that values all employees for their strengths and advocates equal employment rights. By partnering with Sa3ee, we aim to raise awareness about the rights of persons with functional disabilities by providing training courses and series of special professional workshops," said Zaid Al Mashari, CEO of PROVEN Arabia, during the signing of the MoU.

NEWSMAKERS

## SENTINELONE EXPANDS MEA OPERATIONS WITH NEW DUBAI OFFICE



SentinelOne, an autonomous cybersecurity platform company, announced that it has significantly enhanced its regional commitment, with the inauguration of a new office in Dubai. The new facility serves as the regional hub for SentinelOne's Middle East, Turkey and Africa operations, as it continues expanding into new markets and secures

new and existing customers against constantly evolving cybersecurity threats.

The new office, located in Al Thuraya 1 in Dubai Internet City, serves a number of functions including acting as an environment for the brand to showcase its cutting-edge cybersecurity solutions and technology, while also enabling its regional partners and their customers to directly engage with SentinelOne's cybersecurity experts. The office also houses the brand's regional sales and marketing teams who are tasked with driving consistent engagement with channel partners and customers.

"We are proud and excited to announce the opening of our new SentinelOne Dubai office. Serving as a regional hub for our operations, our global culture will continue to thrive as we carry on our important mission to stop the threats of today, tomorrow and beyond by deploying cutting edge solutions such as our Singularity XDR Platform. By planting our roots in Dubai, we are illustrating our commitment to the UAE, as well as the broader Middle East, Turkey and Africa regions. We look forward to giving back to the community and to building even better relationships with our partners and their customers with regional as well as global activities," said Tamer Odeh, Regional Sales Director, SentinelOne.

## CLOUDFLARE EXPANDS RELATIONSHIP WITH MICROSOFT, MAKES INDUSTRY-LEADING ZERO TRUST SECURITY TOOLS EASIER THAN EVER TO DEPLOY

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**Cloudflare, the security, performance,** and reliability company helping to build a better Internet, today announced an expansion of its relationship with Microsoft to help customers easily deploy, automate, and enhance their organization's Zero Trust security.

Working from anywhere is more common than ever, and critical applications have moved to the cloud-no longer residing inside an office protected by a secure perimeter. This fundamental shift in where and how people work has caused enterprises to rethink legacy tools and abandon the traditional castle-and-moat approach to security, looking towards Zero Trust instead. As CIOs continue to navigate this paradigm shift, Cloudflare has developed a new set of integrations with Microsoft to help organizations on this journey. Now, mutual customers can seamlessly deploy Zero Trust security tools in minutes, with no complex code changes, and add industry-first features, such as Cloudflare's



Remote Browser Isolation technology.

"When I speak with CIOs, I continue to hear that their number one concern remains security, closely followed by adapting to the new hybrid world," said Matthew Prince, CEO and co-founder at Cloudflare. "We want to make it easier than ever for IT leaders to deploy Zero Trust security across the enterprise and keep users safe wherever they are working from. I'm thrilled that we are deepening our integration with Microsoft so we can help our joint customers easily deploy Zero Trust security across some of the most used applications in the workplace."

## NEWSMAKERS

## SAUDI LIME SELECTS INFOR CLOUD TO HELP DRIVE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

Infor, the industry cloud company, announced that Saudi Lime Industries Co (SLIC), a Saudi Arabia-based producer and supplier of limestone products, has selected Infor CloudSuite Industrial Enterprise powered by Amazon Web Services (AWS), to help simplify and automate its business and processes.

Infor CloudSuite Industrial Enterprise, a powerful composable platformbased ERP solution preconfigured for discrete manufacturers, will boost SLIC's ability to optimally meet surging demand for its products from sectors including construction, iron & steel, glass production, mining, and agriculture in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, and support Saudi Arabia's economic diversification in line with the aims of Saudi Vision 2030.

SLIC selected Infor CloudSuite Industrial Enterprise as its ERP solution because it met these needs and more. The solution is preconfigured for SLIC's industry-specific needs and will help it achieve a shorter



implementation and therefore faster time to value by gaining visibility of its business and transform the processes required to quickly respond to customer, supplier and regulatory needs — with no software customizations required. It also will allow SLIC to integrate with its suppliers, partners and customers, helping it anticipate issues such as supply chain bottlenecks or upcoming changes in demand. These capabilities made it easy for SLIC to select Infor's ERP solution, which the management team said was a clear choice over the rival solutions they assessed.

## AVEVA ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF ITS ACQUISITION BY SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC

**AVEVA, a global leader in** industrial software, has announced the completion of its acquisition by Schneider Electric, a leading global industrial company specialising in digital automation and energy management.

Since its foundation, AVEVA has grown from a niche design software developer to a leading global industrial software company with a value of more than £10bn. Today, AVEVA's software drives efficiency and reduces costs for over 20,000 customers worldwide, offering a Digital Twin for the whole asset lifecycle from Engineering through to Operations and Maintenance across diverse industries worldwide.

Schneider Electric and AVEVA together, enable a holistic approach to digital transformation across a



customer's operations. They drive step-change improvements through a reduction in energy, carbon and resource intensity, accelerating customer journeys of efficiency and sustainability.

Peter Herweck, CEO of AVEVA, said: "The needs of the industrial world are becoming ever more complex. But the opportunities to create competitive advantage, value and sustainability through digital transformation have never been more compelling. AVEVA is now optimally placed, with the collaboration not just of Schneider Electric but all its partners, to drive innovation, change and value for its customers. The last 50 years for AVEVA have been incredibly exciting. Thank you to all of the stakeholders who have been part of the journey so far in creating a global leader

in industrial software and data. I'm convinced that through continued investment and transformation, the best is yet to come."

## KODAK ALARIS WINS BLI 2023 SCANNER LINE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Keypoint Intelligence has presented Kodak Alaris with the Buyers Lab (BLI) 2023 Scanner Line of the Year Award. This is the seventh time in eight years that Kodak Alaris has earned this coveted accolade. Each year, the award recognises the product line deemed best overall, based on rigorous lab evaluations of several vendors.

"When it comes to document scanning, Kodak Alaris is king," said Lee Davis, Senior Analyst in Keypoint Intelligence's Office Group. "Our testing revealed that scanners from Kodak Alaris provide superior media handling, image quality, OCR accuracy, file compression, and workflow automation capabilities compared to the competition."

"We're extremely proud to once again have our comprehensive product portfolio recognised by Keypoint Intelligence. This award endorses our expertise for image quality, highly accurate data extraction, and successful process automation," said Don Lofstrom,



## Kodak Alaris BLI 2023 Scanner Line of the Year

President & General Manager at Kodak Alaris. "Investment in R&D and a commitment to innovation are high on our list of priorities so that we can deliver on our promise to provide solutions that help businesses turn paper-based information into actionable digital data, quickly and efficiently."

## MICROSOFT AND DARWINBOX COLLABORATE TO REDEFINE FUTURE OF WORK IN MENA

Microsoft has made an equity

investment in Darwinbox, the fastestgrowing HR tech unicorn, to accelerate its mission of empowering organisations to unify their entire employee lifecycle. Darwinbox also announced a collaboration with Microsoft to empower organisations globally and across the MENA with the right tools to succeed in the evolving world of work. The collaboration will include deep integrations between Darwinbox and the Microsoft product ecosystem, and co-innovation on solutions to enhance employee experience.

The relationship will accelerate joint go-to-market motions in all markets that the leading Human Capital Management (HCM) player operates in. It will also fuel the global HR tech leader's growth further while enabling organisations to unlock their workforce's highest potential.

Commenting on the collaboration, Jayant Paleti, Co-founder, Darwinbox,



said, "We've always had the highest regard for the Microsoft brand and ethos. As we align on the joint vision of helping our customers unlock new levels of employee experience and productivity, we're excited to co-innovate on multiple lines of IP development and take these solutions to our customers globally".

## NEWSMAKERS

## SERVICENOW ANNOUNCES PARTNER PROGRAM TRANSFORMATION TO BUILD EXPONENTIAL ECOSYSTEM GROWTH



ServiceNow has announced a major partner program transformation to further partner growth and customer success. The multi-year vision is designed to support the \$500 billion market opportunity for the Now Platform and associated partner services with a redesign of the company's partner program that includes a new Partner Development Fund among other incentives and benefits.

ServiceNow's expansive partner ecosystem is critical to helping joint customers realize the full value of the Now Platform. To help partners meet this demand, ServiceNow is investing in new initiatives to facilitate and expand partners' expertise, differentiate their skills, and maximize their unique contributions.

"The vision for ServiceNow partners is that they should be treated as cocreators of value, and as co-pilots on our journey to becoming the platform for digital business," said Erica Volini, senior vice president of alliances and channel ecosystem at ServiceNow. "Our reimagined Partner Program creates unbounded opportunity for partners to expand and collaborate with ServiceNow well beyond where we can go alone. We are investing in partner success, championing their expertise, and giving them flexibility to drive exponential value with our platform." TECHNOLOGY // CLOUDFLARE

## WHAT WILL TECHNOLOGY Look Like in 2023?

John Engates, Field CTO, Cloudflare

### he Rise of Chief Zero **Trust Officer** Over the last several years, ransomware, data breaches, and other cyber campaigns have been hugely disruptive and cost organisations and governments millions. In response, the Biden administration issued an executive order in May of 2021 to implement a Zero Trust security architecture across the federal government. While recent reports from the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) show some agencies are on track, others appear to be falling behind. When governments need to move quickly and cut across organisational boundaries, they often appoint a czar to take charge of a particular program and see it through to implementation or execution.

As private sector organisations embrace digital transformation and move their operations to the cloud, they too are looking to zero trust to help provide a robust and secure network infrastructure. Secure Access Service Edge (SASE) has emerged as a clouddelivered convergence of network access and security services and is a common approach for enterprise zero trust adoption. The challenge however is that in many organisations, responsibility for networking and security live in different parts of the organisation and these groups often rely on different vendors in their respective areas. Breaking down the silos between security and networking teams and choosing the right tools, products, and vendors to align with desired business outcomes is critical to implement zero trust in larger enterprises.

As pressure to implement zero trust intensifies, I predict that a role



analogous to a "Chief Zero Trust Officer" will emerge within some large organisations. This person will be the zero trust czar for the enterprise and will be the individual responsible for driving a company on its zero trust journey. Their job will be to bring together siloed organisations and vendors and ensure that all teams and departments are aligned and working toward the same goal. If resistance is encountered, the zero trust czar should have the backing of senior leadership (CIO, CISO, CEO, Board of Directors) to make decisions quickly and cut across organisational boundaries to keep

the process moving ahead. Whether the very bold title of Chief Zero Trust Officer becomes reality or not, an empowered individual with a clear mandate and a singular focus may just be the key to getting zero trust across the finish line in 2023.

## 2023 Sees the Death of "The Password"

Phishing attacks continue to be a significant problem for companies around the world. Even with regular security awareness training, users will eventually click a wrong link and fall victim to an attack. Unfortunately, most cyber-attacks begin with a phishing email.

Cloudflare itself was attacked this year by a sophisticated, targeted SMS-based phishing attack. A total of 76 Cloudflare employees received the phishing link in text messages on their phones. Three employees fell for the attack and clicked the link and entered their credentials. But unphishable, multi-factor authentication in the form of FIDO2-compliant security keys in conjunction with zero trust access prevented the attacker from breaching our systems. Other companies that used less secure time-based one-time passwords (TOTP) weren't as lucky, and many were breached by the same attackers.

Username and password authentication even when combined with common forms of multi-factor authentication is just not enough anymore. Enterprises can enable stronger FIDO2-compliant security keys along with zero trust access today if they're using a system like Cloudflare's to make it much tougher on attackers.

But the best way to protect most users and their credentials may be to remove the burden on the end user altogether. The FIDO alliance envisions passwordless sign-in everywhere. Logins will use your face or fingerprint instead of the old username-password combo. A FIDO sign-in credential, sometimes called a "passkey", will make it easier on users and harder on the attackers. If there's no password to steal, hackers won't be able to harvest credentials to carry out their attacks. We predict many websites and applications will adopt passwordless login using the FIDO Alliance passkey standard beginning in 2023.

The Cloud Takes on Compliance

Governments around the world are rolling out new privacy regulations. In Europe, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which became enforceable in 2018 gives individuals more control over their personal data and how it's used. Other countries worldwide are following suit and using GDPR as a model. In the US, there are five states with new consumer privacy laws that take effect in 2023 and more states are considering legislation. And at the federal level, lawmakers are slowly putting forward their own privacy regulations with the American Data and Privacy Protection Act ("ADPPA") which is an online privacy bill that aims to regulate the gathering and storing of consumer data.

Companies must now understand and comply with this patchwork of regulations as they do business globally. How can organisations hope to stay current and build compliance into their applications and IT systems?

We believe the majority of cloud services will soon come with compliance features built in. The cloud itself should take the compliance burden off companies. Developers shouldn't be required to know exactly how and where their data can be legally stored or processed. The burden of compliance should largely be handled by the cloud services and tools developers are building with. Networking services should route traffic efficiently and securely while complying with all data sovereignty laws. Storage services should inherently comply with data residency regulations. And processing should adhere to relevant data localisation standards.

### Remote Browsers Resolve Device Complaints

Security policies, privacy laws, and regulations require all companies to protect their sensitive data; from where it's stored and processed, to where it's consumed in end-user

A ROLE ANALOGOUS TO A CHIEF ZERO TRUST OFFICER WILL EMERGE WITHIN SOME LARGE ORGANISATIONS. applications. In the past, it was relatively straightforward to fully control end-user devices because they were often issued by and dedicated to company use only. But with the increasing use of personal smartphones and tablets, the bringyour-own-device (BYOD) trend has been picking up steam for several years and was even more readily embraced during the various stages of the global pandemic.

Looking ahead, it's our belief that this pendulum of BYOD will swing back toward tighter security and more control by the IT organisation. The need to consistently enforce security policies and privacy controls will begin to outweigh the sense of urgency and demand for convenience we encountered during the last few years. But because so much of our digital lives live in a web browser, this control may take a different form than in the past. This new form will mean more control for IT administrators AND a better user experience for employees.

Browser Isolation is a clever piece of technology that essentially provides security through physical isolation. This technique creates a "gap" between a user's web browser and the endpoint device thereby protecting the device (and the enterprise network) from exploits and attacks. Remote browser isolation (RBI) takes this a step further by moving the browser to a remote service in the cloud. Cloud-based remote browsing isolates the end-user device from the enterprise's network while fully enabling IT control and compliance solutions.

Some say in this remote browsing model that "the browser is the device." Instead of BYOD, it might be appropriate to call this "BYOB" or Bring Your Own Browser. Most companies are looking to better balance the security and privacy needs of the company with the user experience and convenience for employees. At Cloudflare, we use our remote browser isolation in conjunction with zero trust access to protect our users and devices. It's completely transparent to users and strikes a perfect balance between security and user experience. We believe remote browser isolation will be embraced broadly as IT leaders become more aware of the benefit and iust how well it works. 📟

## DRIVING CLOUD TRANSFORMATION

Anita Joseph caught up with Ahmed El Sayed Channel lead – Middle East, Saudi and South Africa at Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, to learn more about how the company is redefining the cloud experience for its customers.

> hat are the main challenges faced by companies when it

comes to cloud adoption? The increasing cloud adoption and the IoT era has presented several challenges to our customers, so much so that they are struggling in their digital transformation journey. In this context, I'd say agility is the biggest obstacle for our customers who are aiming to transform their cloud management solutions. Also, IT managers are under tremendous pressure with the growing number. of connected apps and devices, and the popularity of the hybrid workplace. We know by now that the network in these cases must support more distributed users over multiple remote locations without compromising on security, at the same time. Automation also remains a constant challenge and we're

trying to help our customers with the way data is being consumed, analysed and built.

### Aruba has just won the Cloud Vendor the Year Award. Tell us about Aruba's cloud services, particularly Aruba Central, and how it's redefining cloud networking.

Aruba Central is an integral part of our Edge services platform and it's a frame to our end-to end Edge-to-Cloud networking solution. And it's a unified platform that can manage wired, wireless and SD WAN networking solution, but then it gets even more interesting. Aruba Central is also powered by machine learning and AI, which means that it's 100% automated, and can cater to all types and sizes of customers' demands. This means that it can be deployed on-prem and on public cloud as well. Aruba Central can also be deployed over a managed services platform.October last year saw the launch of the company's

Enterprise Cloud instance in UAE. The new deployment is in response to the increasing appetite of enterprises in the country for cloud-based networking that provides resilience, efficiency, automation and flexibility of business. The Cloud instance will provide incountry data residency and enable local enterprises to maintain proximity to their data. Aruba Central will be hosted on the local Cloud instance.

### How does Aruba step in to help companies or businesses that are taking their first steps in the cloud or planning to migrate to the cloud?

Our core value of customer-first, customer-last, is the main driver for all our innovations in Aruba, and is powered by the three pillars of security, connectivity and analytics. Our ultimate objective is to allow our customers a seamless user experience that can be managed independently, without a manual intervention or compromise on security.Aruba is also committed



EXCLUSIVE // ARUBA



to helping advance our enterprise customers' cloud transformation journey with a comprehensive Edgeto-Cloud networking solution through a single pane of glass. In addition, the agility and flexibility of implementation and the means of delivering this to our customers also can be provided as a managed services where our channel partners play an integral role in helping driving that customer experience.It was exciting to launch the first local Aruba central cloud instance in UAE at GITEX 2022, which created a tremendous buzz in the industry and excitement among our customers. This will certainly boost cloud transformation within the UAE and I'm proud to be part of that journey and the new rollout.

## oud transformation within the UAE Id I'm proud to be part of that journ Id the new rollout.

## How can Aruba's channel partners benefit from its extra cloud initiatives?

Our partners play an integral role in in growing and driving the cloud transformation journey of our customers. All our partner programs have been formed to help our partners drive that business transformation and benefit most while playing an integral role in the equation. Therefore, our compensation schemes for our partners are significantly bigger than any traditional kind of compensation so they can benefit the most and contribute directly to their revenue stream. It also allows them to have access to customers across all verticals and multi-million Dollar opportunities where they can play that role. Cloud transformation is a fast-growing market and represents a tremendous opportunity in the Middle East region for our partners as they can have the dedicated support of the Aruba field

ALL OUR PARTNER PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN FORMED TO HELP OUR PARTNERS DRIVE BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND BENEFIT MOST WHILE PLAYING AN INTEGRAL ROLE IN THE EQUATION. team, be it sales or pre-sales, where they can help them and work with them shoulder- to-shoulder to drive such conversations with our customers. Last but not least, Aruba has also created a platform where our partners can deliver the best cloud experience to their customers and create annual recurrent revenues, so that these partners can grow and expand beyond just offering a networking as a service.

## What are Aruba's plans for the Middle East region in 2023?

We've always had an extremely solid strategy for the channel community. For 2023, our biggest objective is to make sure we truly implement the customer-first, customer-last principle and enhance our customers' experiences. We also strive to empower our channel partners through programs solutions, constant innovations and team engagements, to be able to scale on enterprise. There has also been significant investment within the region on scaling on the SMB space right through the Aruba portfolio, which is constantly growing and expanding. Right. We are a very fast-growing company right and while we're steadily gaining market share, we're also increasing our customer portfolio and working closely with our partners to deepen their footprint. We're looking forward to an exciting year and looking forward to helping our customers across all verticals.



## True Value-Added Distributor



E WITH AN INSPIRING CULTURE E



s the world continues its transition into a digitalfirst economy, the channel ecosystem is rapidly undergoing sudden, monumental shifts. Add to that the current state of the global economy, ongoing geopolitical conflicts, supply chain disruptions and more, and you have a perfect storm for disaster. In the face of

such complexities, channel leaders must re-assess and re-structure their channel partner ecosystems. What was best practices yesterday may no longer be valid today. If you could see the channel ecosystem of the future, what would it look like? How can you tell if you're headed in the right direction?

We take a look at what lies ahead.

## OUTLOOK 2023 // EPICOR

## MANAGING RISK, BUSINESS PLANNING OFFERING & Green Positioning Key for Channel Growth

Paul Flannery VP of International Channel Sales at Epicor

s the channel looks ahead to 2023, here are the three areas Paul Flannery, VP of International Channel Sales at Epicor elieves resellers, VARs, integrators, MSPs and consultants should focus on to continue to grow.

### Channel experts' value lies in derisking technology purchases

The current economic climate means that appetite for risk is extremely low. Despite this, businesses know they need to continue to innovate and digitise if they are to survive, and this involves staying at the forefront of technology. In fact, 95% of businesses we spoke to told us that right-fit technology will accelerate growth for their business.

The role of channel businesses is to position themselves as consultants, as buyers look for experts to provide validation and confirmation, which derisks their technology purchases.

For business technology purchases that will become the core of a business — such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES), Warehouse Management Systems (WES) and equivalent software services — buyers want to speak to an expert to understand what digital transformation actually looks like in their industry, including best practice, process, and what success looks like.

Buyers are also likely to want strong project management alongside implementation support, to ensure that the customer isn't left with an expensive piece of complex technology that they must figure out for themselves.

While the rise of self-service options, such as e-procurement, means some customers are bypassing the channel and even vendor salespeople when making technology purchases, this is not a trend we expect to significantly impact the channel's opportunity for growth, particularly in more complex sectors, such as aerospace, automotive and manufacturing.

## Predictable business planning tools with interoperability

Business planning technology solutions have never been more vital. Channel partners that can offer solutions that include forward planning, financial planning and simulations that give buyers the data to make the right decisions in a volatile environment should be well placed in the next 12 months.

Customers need one source of truth for all their data points, with a digital core that runs through their businesses. Other apps which monitor disparate parts of the businesses should be able to integrate with this digital core, so interoperability of all software solutions will be a key selling point. For example, if unpredictable energy prices, stock costings or the wage bill data is in silos, any financial and business planning tools will be of limited use.

Although there is a lot of hype about the potential of predictive analytics, machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI), these solutions can't offer full value to customers if that one source of truth isn't already in place.

## Getting green positioning right

In our hyperconnected business environment, many people realise that the only way whole industries are going to significantly reduce emissions

THE ROLE OF CHANNEL BUSINESSES IS TO POSITION THEMSELVES AS CONSULTANTS, AS BUYERS LOOK FOR EXPERTS TO PROVIDE VALIDATION AND CONFIRMATION.



is by managing the sustainability of their connected supply and value chains. Otherwise, it's too easy to claim one company is 'green' without acknowledging that the companies its buys from aren't.

However, due to rising interest rates, energy costs, and many other factors, survival over the next 6 months and beyond is the most pressing issue for most businesses. This is particularly true in the energy-intensive sectors we serve, such as automotive, construction, distribution, and manufacturing.

Channel partners and vendors need to strike the right balance in their own marketing and sales pitches to technology buyers; first and foremost, the technology solutions they are recommending will help customers improve their businesses resilience and increase profit margins, and therefore justify the investment when spend is under increasing scrutiny.

However, new technology must help buyers achieve their business goals without rolling back any progress that's already been made on decarbonisation or emissions reduction, as the C-Suite needs to report to stakeholders (including investors, media and end consumers), that their operations and the vendors they work with are taking steps to become greener.

Today, pleading ignorance down your supply chain isn't good enough. This positioning challenge is where channel partners can provide trusted guidance on the right technology buying decisions, which will give the C-suite the confidence it needs to proceed.

## **STAYING AHEAD OF CHANGE**

*Geoff Greenlaw, Vice President for EMEA & LATAM Channel at Pure Storage* 

he regional channel has gone through some change in recent years. As the pandemic swirled around us, destabilising margins and sowing uncertainty, we had to come up with new ways to add value and be partners in our customers' journeys. I think we emerged stronger, having learned some valuable lessons. The Middle Eastern business landscape looks very different after lockdowns, a recession, supply-chain collapses and inflation. But change brings opportunities for the channel if we know where to look.

As 2023 begins, our customers' customers want different things, which means their priorities have changed. We must ensure that across the channel ecosystem, people are up to date with the latest industry needs and requirements. They must understand the pull and push of forces like cost-efficiency, data centre power consumption, ESG (environment, social, and governance), OpEx, and CapEx. So armed, the channel can ensure it is adding value, delighting customers, and becoming true partners in change. Here are three developments we think will shape the regional market in 2023.

OVER THE NEXT YEAR, DATA CENTRE POWER CONSUMPTION WILL CONTINUE TO BE A MAJOR CHALLENGE.

### Controlling costs and climate change challenges will dominate the storage market in 2023

Over the next year, data centre power consumption will continue to be a major challenge. The focus will be primarily on costs, given the current economic situation and the fact that IT budgets are growing in single digits. However, pressure from climate change is also driving unprecedented upheaval.

The key to success in 2023 is for channel partners to educate themselves on sustainability to ensure they are helping customers make informed decisions. Channel partners are ideally placed to advise on power savings and consumption, cooling, space savings — anything that can drive data centre costs down. Those that don't adopt this approach risk being left behind in an increasingly competitive, changing, and tightening market. Going forward, channel partners will need to communicate with customers in a different language that goes beyond tech and encompasses financial and ESG literacy. This will necessitate training.

## 2023 will see a strong adoption of flexible consumption models

The current economic climate has created conditions for a solid increase in subscription model adoption in 2023. This is driven by strong customer demand for more OpEx options in storage hardware and software purchasing to avoid large CapEx outlays. The channel needs to recognise that subscription transition is an attractive proposition to customers, offering them new recurring revenue streams.

Transition to subscription solutions creates new possibilities for partners to build peripheral services around a customer solution. However, there needs to be an evolution of the compensation model for those selling subscription services. Vendors and



partners will need to work closely together to make subscription an attractive and profitable model for customers, and for partner sales teams as well. In 2023, partner programmes will play a critical role in incentivising and motivating the channel.

## ESG is now a top three issue for customers

It's clear that ESG is a high priority for the channel and customers. Many partners are creating mini boards or steering committees to address the issue, and sustainability is now a top three criteria in all RFPs we receive. Customers are demanding that ESG be addressed, and partners need to be able to respond accordingly.

From a storage perspective, this trend will accelerate in 2023, regardless of the economic downturn. A key reason for this is that if a storage vendor can demonstrate an 80% reduction in power and cooling costs, this will become very compelling to customers both in terms of ESG commitments and the desire to reduce costs.

### Sustainability champions

Customers are crying out for sustainability champions who can help them differentiate in their markets and futureproof business models. The channel can fulfil that role. With the right preparation, the partner ecosystem can show customers how to undergo the changes they need with minimal pain. If we get this right, we will jointly become long-term partners in their growth journeys.

## OUTLOOK 2023 // BEYONDTRUST

SHIFTING PRIORITIES

Rob Spee, Senior Vice President, Global Channel and Alliances at BeyondTrust

th the global economy shifting to self-service, a growing demand for instant purchase and delivery, and everything moving to the cloud, there are some big shifts happening in the world of sales. But where do these changes leave the channel? Forrester has observed channel sales as representing more than 75% of world trade, and in a lot of cases, the channel makes up a significant portion of an organisation's sales strategy. So, what strategies will the channel have to adopt to succeed in this changing economy?

I've developed a few channel predictions that can help us better understand the new channel requirements. Here are the top things I see coming that will force us to adjust our channel strategy.

### Partner Discounts Lose Steam in Favor of Stronger Enablement Programs

Until recently, partner discounts have been the most important element of a partner program. In the next year or two, the priority of partners and vendors will shift to partner enablement.

In the SaaS world, the initial transaction is becoming less and less important to the partner. Clients are engaging partners further down the funnel during the sales cycle. Post sales, the adoption of the product is paramount to avoiding customer churn. This means technical training and enablement of partners will be more important than the discount itself. Partners will need to be enabled with the information that is most important to the customer, not just to land the deal, but also to be successful post-sale with the implementation to drive adoption.

Partners will need, want, and ask for a lot more help on the technical side, as their business models shift to a services-oriented model. Their business will depend on their ability to provide high-value services that drive customer success. That means rethinking our enablement programs and increasing our investments in enablement so we can deliver better training not just to our customers, but also to our partners.

## New Success Metrics Shred Metallic Tiers

In our partner programs today, the top metric for measuring partner success and partner rewards is sales revenue. Partners move into different tiers, often called metallic tiers, based primarily on how much volume they are selling. As transactions become less important, however, customer success will become the top metric for measuring and rewarding partners, over and above sales revenue.

We're already seeing companies that are moving away from the classic metallic tiers. Microsoft just announced they are shifting to a point-based system based on competencies, certifications, and partner success. While certifications and competencies are important, and will still be counted and tracked, the really important part of that equation is final customer success and a high customer satisfaction (CSAT) score.

### CAMs Displaced in the Partner Ecosystem

Over the next year or so, Channel Account Managers will be replaced by Partner Ecosystem Managers. Accenture sites partner ecosystems as being the cornerstone of business growth. Accenture and other large consulting firms now offer ecosystem consulting services to help companies adopt this business model. This creates a new business reality. Channel managers will have to expand their thinking and their ability to work with different partner types.

Today, the most popular position in the channel is the Channel Account Manager (CAM). The classic CAM role involves managing Value-Added Resellers (VARs) and Value-Added Distributors (VAD) and driving transactions to achieve sales targets. Companies, however, are already in the process of expanding their partner ecosystems to include regional and global system integrators, managed service providers, cloud hyperscalers, and a variety of referral and influence partners.

## 10 Years Out – The Future of the Channel

Imagine ten years from now, when all



products and services are purchased on a marketplace without any vendor sales rep intervention. That means the end of the classic reseller. Partners will have to drive business outcomes to survive. That's going to be the business model, and as a result, we are going to see a number of significant transformations:

## The Death of the Classic VAD

With the demise of the classic reseller, the classic distributor that is serving the VARs today will have to become more of a partner services and enablement hub. Vendors will be challenged to deliver the services training that is needed by partners to drive customer success, which often depends on the integration of multiple solutions.

Distributors have an opportunity to build centers of excellence around their vendors' SaaS offerings. Since they're good at bringing in multiple vendors, and offering those up to partners, these will become hubs where they can support and train partners on multiple products and services. They help ramp up partners' delivery capabilities through co-delivery and bench support.

To accomplish this, they're going to have to shift their business model more to a services mindset than their current transactional model. We could even see distributors' value-add and margins increase as they move to this services model.

**The Rise of the Influencer Channel** Another big change will be driven by the shift to marketplace purchasing: as more buyers switch to self-service, the channel influencer will become paramount.

There will be a heightened need to think about who is planting the seeds of our solutions in the minds of the customers. This is where the influencer channel becomes so important. Our service partners are influencers, but there are other influencers in the chain that we may not even be talking to today. Companies will need to strategise how to get in front of influencers.

## RIVERBED // OUTLOOK 2023

## **COLLABORATION IS KEY**

## Meg Brennan, Vice President, Global Channels at Riverbed

pportunities in **Ecosystems** As enterprises advance in their digital transformation journeys, the functionalities they require from their IT systems grow rapidly. Consequently, vendors have recognised the need to augment their offerings with complimentary technologies. To deliver on the comprehensive solutions that enterprises now require, vendors have begun to collaborate more closely developing deep, native integrations between best-of-breed products and creating compelling solution ecosystems.

This presents a significant opportunity for the channel. Such ecosystems enable partners to 'hit the ground running,' as they can shift focus from managing the complexities of integration to instead developing value-add services around these ecosystems. Partners who have invested to develop their skill sets around a particular vendor's solutions will be presented with opportunities to up-sell and cross-sell other solutions within the ecosystem which can greatly increase the deal-size, and the value they deliver to customers.

### **Shift to Selling Proven Outcomes**

Over the decades, channel models have evolved from moving 'boxes,' to now being value-addition and servicesoriented. However, there is still a gap that exists in this value chain. While professional services ensure the implementation of turn-key solutions that best fit customers' needs, and support services ensure these solutions meet the performance and availability criteria, from a channel perspective, the onus of ensuring IT investments actually drive business outcomes is still notably placed on customers. Whilst some vendors have established customer success teams, it's now time for the channel to follow suit.

It is no longer sufficient for technology providers to implement a solution and then leave all aspects of its utilisation up to customers alone. They need to champion the success of transformation initiatives by focusing on their customer success teams – similar to professional and support services arms – who continue to work closely with customers post-deployment to ensure user acceptance, enterprise-wide adoption, and the solution's measurable contribution to business objectives.

The benefits for channel partners here are twofold – the new service can be monetised, thus creating new additional revenue streams; and these proven outcomes serve as one of the most effective sales tools in driving new business.

### **Mounting Pressure to 'Shift Left'**

Through 2022, and especially in recent months, companies have been under increasing pressure to 'do more with less.' Of course, while constraints are being imposed on IT headcount, expectations around technology advancement for business enablement continue to grow. Consequently, organisations are turning to their technology partners for solutions that empower even the most modestly-sized IT departments to drive innovation through the organisation.

In 2023, the channel will see increasing demand for technologies such as Unified Observability that democratise IT team's knowledge and enable organisations to 'shift left,' enabling Level 1-2 staff to solve more problems without escalations. By reducing mean time to resolution, precious resources can redirect their efforts on high-value initiatives that drive business outcomes.

## Expect Channel Programs to Evolve

Partner programs remain fundamental to the success of channel players. In recent years, we have seen these evolve as vendors have looked to support new routes to market, and reward partners who focus on value addition.

In the coming year, we can expect these programs to shift away from traditional volume-based tiering of



partners, to instead prioritising and rewarding partners based on customer success. So, while traditional metrics such as deal-size and deal-volume will remain important, we will see an increased emphasis on metrics such as CSAT scores. This means partners that focus on driving tangible business outcomes for their customers will become as valued (if not more) by their vendor partners as those that simply drive revenues through a high volume of transactional business.

### Move on to Marketplaces

With the appetite for cloud adoption having scaled exponentially in recent years, hyperscalers have grown by leaps and bounds. Today, their marketplaces have become the preferred procurement model for customers. Channel partners that discount the significance of this trend will find themselves at a disadvantage as the market continues to mature.

Instead of being intimidated by the shift, partners that are pioneering the very nature and role of the channel are beginning to build their own service offerings on these cloud marketplaces. They are combining cloud solutions from multiple vendors and packaging their value-add services around these to create compelling offerings that can be easily consumed by end customers. Of course, for those channel players that are yet to embrace this shift - a key consideration pertains to which marketplace to build such a listing on. Here, my advice would be to consider where your customers are. After all, if your biggest customers already have commitment with a particular hyperscaler, it makes it simpler for all parties to transact business on the same platform. 👳

EXCLUSIVE // RAQMIYAT



# FOCUSED ON Sustainability

Israr Ashfaque, Vice President – Smart Business Solutions, Raqmiyat LLC tells Anita Joseph in an exclusive interview, how sustainability and a customer-first approach have helped the company grow and capitalise on market opportunities.

## ow has Raqmiyat been helping enterprises drive digital transformation in the region?

The post-Covid boost in the economy has kept customers busy with new initiatives and expansions, Raqmiyat's consulting teams have been working hand in hand with CDO's / CXO's to identify use cases and apply the right technology to overcome business and technology challenges. With the disruptive technology trends and numerous options available, it has really become a challenge for C-levels to select the right technology. With our consultative approach we help our customers in selecting the right but not the best technology, it is of utmost importance to select the right product based on the needs not the features.

### Can you tell us more about Raqmiyat's Smart Business Solutions?

Smart Business Solutions is all about helping its customers across the board with various technology needs to overcome business and IT challenges, we cover an array of technologies involving Business Automation, Digital Transformation, Security, and Data Analytics. We have partnered with best-of-breed technology providers across domains, like Cloud ERPs, LCNC (Low Code No Code), IT Orchestration, Zero Trust, Performance Monitoring, Quality Assurance, Data & Advanced Analytics.

## What are some of the new trends in digital transformation? How are you capitalising on opportunities which have come up with this changing market?

Digital Transformation is continuously evolving, and so are businesses, we believe the market share for DT will continue to grow like this. We are seeing more traction in Low Code No Code, with customers moving from native development to platforms to save maintenance



costs and improve Time to Market. Omnichannel Apps and CX Phygital will contribute to the growth of DT players.

Cloud Adoption continues to be a key trend and customers are evaluating whether are they cloud ready, technologies involved in cloud monitoring will continue to see growth. Regulatory agencies will play a big role in the area of Advanced Analytics, AML & Fraud Detection. Organisations will continue to invest in decision support systems, equipping them with the right information at the right time.

## What are your main growth drivers?

Putting the customer first has always been our philosophy to do business, we need to continuously align our offerings with customer needs, remain integrated within partner ecosystem, and foresight technology within the growing markets.



PUTTING THE CUSTOMER FIRST HAS ALWAYS BEEN OUR PHILOSOPHY, WE NEED TO CONTINUOUSLY ALIGN OUR OFFERINGS WITH CUSTOMER NEEDS.

## What are some of Raqmiyat's plans and initiatives for this year?

With the growth which we have seen in the last couple of years, our strategy is sustainability. We need to sustain what we have achieved by maintaining resilience in our business model. We will continue to invest in our people and their development to cater to rapidly changing needs of doing business.





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EXPERT SPEAK // CLOUD BOX TECHNOLOGIES

TECHNOLOGY HEADS MUST CONTINUE TO EVALUATE ALTERNATIVE VENDORS IN TERMS OF OFFERINGS AND PRICE TO BOOST THEIR ABILITY TO NEGOTIATE WITH EXISTING VENDOR SUPPLIERS.

660

## MANAGING STRATEGIC VENDOR RELATIONSHIPS

Businesses are committed to spending on digital transformation in 2023 and ahead, but must review and negotiate commercial terms with vendors to be successful, writes Ranjith Kaippada, Managing Director, Cloud Box Technologies.

s we move into 2023, digital transformation leads need to anticipate the possibility of market and revenue slowdown impacting their annual purchase decisions and ahead. A Gartner survey in July 2022, found that 69% plan to increase their spend on digital technologies, while the 2023 Gartner CIO and Technology Executive Survey found that CIOs are being tasked with accelerating time to value on digital investments.

While Gartner's 2023 forecast indicates IT decision makers pressing ahead with digital transformation and IT spending, budgets will still need to be released internally. And that means reviews and replanning with finance.

Moreover, digital transformation leads must anticipate these pressures extending for a period of six months to 24 months. By doing this proactively, technology leads are protecting ongoing digital transformation projects, investments into future innovation and continuing to build resiliency for the future organisation.

Here are some measures forward looking organisations and their technology leads can initiate internally. It is also recommended to bring in their trusted digital transformation partners into these cost management exercises at an early stage of the upcoming financial cycles.

Here are some steps that technology heads need to initiate in conjunction with finance and business heads.

### #1 Art of negotiation

In order to sit with leading vendor suppliers at the table, technology heads must have a list of tactics and concessions to keep these important vendor relationships in play throughout this period and avoid confrontation. Vendor suppliers will not yield easily to requests for renegotiation and yielding to concessions from customers unless they see immediate and longer-term benefits in their relationship.

Technology decision makers must detail the reasons for requesting concessions from vendor suppliers; they must be able to convince them that short term cooperation will yield longer term benefits. They can also explore benefits other than immediate pay-outs.

Technology heads can also invite vendor suppliers to advise on how to boost the organisation's productivity to reach well defined and challenging improvement metrics.

During the above negotiations, technology heads must continue to evaluate alternative vendors in terms of offerings and price to boost their ability to negotiate with existing vendor suppliers. They must also have completed an exercise of internal rationalisation of major vendor suppliers.

### **#2 Reworking vendor** relationships

Major vendor suppliers need to be informed about the ongoing internal initiatives being taken by technology heads. Public statements by vendor suppliers can be reviewed on how they plan to support customers in the time of market contraction.

In order to make progress with leading vendor suppliers it is important to have a list of expectations being considered as part of the negotiations. These initiatives could include moving away from annual payments into more frequent periodic payments; setting maximum payment ceilings for a specified period of time; extending service contracts to include additional technology infrastructure not covered rather than initiating fresh contracts with new and higher price terms.

They should also highlight longer term business benefits with major vendor suppliers to avoid breakdown in the working relationship of any sort.

### #3 Schedule of payments

To make meaningful changes to the organisation's finance department, technology heads must review and reduce the schedule of upcoming payments. To achieve this technology heads can initiate and review a number of activities. This could include moving to the lower slabs of a SaaS subscription; selecting a product option with fewer features and hence lower slab rate; initiating consumption-based pricing wherever it has not been selected as yet.

In the area of services, technology heads can reduce service levels or terminate service contracts for older and commoditised product versions; for other products they can terminate the service contracts with vendors and negotiate lower and more competitive rates with third party service suppliers; they should initiate DevOps to manage high technology infrastructure costs and usage for IaaS and PaaS.

It is imperative that technology heads and their trusted channel partners work proactively on these measures. It is only with tangible results such as reduced cyclic spending and improved cash flow for the finance department can they ensure that longer term investments in digital transformation initiatives are sustained and maintained. EXCLUSIVE // ASUS

# LEADING BY INNOVATION

Anita Joseph caught up with Sukiran Mehta, Key Account Manager UAE & GCC at ASUS, to find out what makes their products stand out from the rest.

hat is ASUS's vision for growth and success in a crowded, competitive commercial market?

Our vision at ASUS Business is to excel in computing products, solutions and cutting-edge innovations that can empower businesses to reach their full potentials. Our mission is to be the most reliable Commercial PC brand in Middle East offering wide range of premium products, reliable sales support & trusted service catering to B2B channel and end-users with focus on business with SMB, Government, Education and Corporate sectors.

### Tell us about ASUS's Systems Business Division. Tell us about some of its products and what the primary focus of its product series is.

ASUS Business primarily serves enduser computing needs by offering a diverse range of laptops, All-in-One PCs, desktops, monitors, servers,





networking, and storage solutions. Each product is tailored to meet the needs of specific user segments to grow with business and fit their lifestyle. We concentrate our efforts in education on products that are specifically designed for students and teachers, such as our ASUS Chromebooks series. We also have a wide range of ExpertBook laptops, ExpertCenter AiO and Desktops to meet the needs

of SMB, government, and corporate customers.

## After Sales Service is vital to the success of any business. How does ASUS distinguish itself in this space?

We at ASUS Business believe that after-sales service is one of the most important components of industry success and business longevity. ASUS provides the best possible experience for its customers, which helps to ensure brand loyalty, foster word-of-mouth referrals, and maintain a positive brand image. Our standard warranty policy is "Pick and return" by default. We also

ASUS PROVIDES THE BEST POSSIBLE EXPERIENCE FOR ITS CUSTOMERS, WHICH HELPS TO ENSURE BRAND LOYALTY, FOSTER WORD-OF-MOUTH REFERRALS, AND MAINTAIN A POSITIVE BRAND IMAGE. provide a variety of after-sales services such as on-site service, HDD retention, Accidental Damage Protection, Multiple Claims, battery pack support, and so on, with durations ranging from 1 year to 5 years depending on the customer's needs. ASUS Business offers global warranties on all of its products and serves customers in over 80 countries. ASUS Business is heavily investing in its people and technology in order to provide a fantastic overall experience to its customers.

## What is ASUS's plan for the region's vibrant and fastgrowing market in 2023?

ASUS Business intends to concentrate primarily on end-user account development. Through various marketing activities and events, we provide customers with information about the ASUS Business product portfolio which caters to specific needs. To achieve mutual success, ASUS Business will collaborate closely with its distributors, system integrators, and other channel partners throughout the Middle East. ASUS's goal is to establish a strong network of channel partners and has developed an industry-specific go-to-market strategy.



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## UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING WITHIN THE CHANNEL INDUSTRY

Niranjan Gidwani, Consultant Director – Texub member UAE superbrands council charter member tie Dubai HBR Advisory Council

he fourth industrial revolution has already begun. Businesses that are not agile and those that are not operating on modern technology platforms are quickly becoming obsolete. The new business landscape requires immense skills in cloud computing, artificial intelligence, data science, connectivity and a vast amount of other technical capabilities.

Data is indicating that as jobs are transformed by technologies in the fourth industrial revolution, we'll need to reskill more than one billion people by 2030.

The faster the work changes, the more important it becomes to build a team of lifelong learners and give them the resources they need to learn.

According to the World Economic Forum's recent research, it has been predicted that, by 2025, several million jobs are likely to experience a major shift in terms of allocation of functions between man and machine.

With a rapidly changing job landscape and accelerated pace of technology innovation and automation, leaders and HR heads have to place a high premium on upskilling and reskilling to understand the critical needs of the workforce.

### Nowhere is this need felt more than in the industry which actually sells products and services that drive technology innovation. Upskilling is the process of onbane amplement' dealer

enhancing employees' skills, enabling them to acquire new



skills within their current job function that will help them perform to the best of their ability. The constant emergence of new technologies and changing face of the workplace have accelerated the need for upskilling.

Upskilling helps owners and employees in the channel trade to bridge the skills gaps through continuous professional development. The entire channel trade would need to quickly upskill their people with courses which assist them to become **digital specialists**.

**Reskilling** is the process of acquiring new skills required to perform a completely different role. It focuses on the employee's need to learn an entirely new skill set. The entire gamut of organizations in the channel trade need to move fast. They can do so by retraining their existing employees to take on those roles, which will keep companies functioning well even during



times of change. These costs will be much lower than hiring fresh expertise and taking time to evaluate them.

As economic changes concerning innovation, inflation, funding winters and hiring winters occur, workforces will have to adapt and respond accordingly. The most significant outcome of this challenge will be an enhanced emphasis on employee skill development. And the most feasible way to go about it would be to work jointly with brands, distributors, the channel and employees toward their professional development. The traditionalists and the new age technologists will have to find ways to create better outcomes. Most companies were forced to move all or parts of their processes online during the pandemic. However, the sudden transition made many owners, leaders and professionals aware of the huge skills gaps in their employees.

Learning isn't just about helping employees move up in their careers anymore; it's about making their careers more durable. If organizations and the channel trade does not provide employees with a way to keep up with the merciless pace of professional technology, the good employees will start looking for other alternatives.

Either we keep investing in retraining and upskilling our current workforce... or we will keep spending more in hiring and onboarding.

Gen Z has already started entering the formal and informal workforce. They grew up with technology. They understand technology's continuous impact on how business is done

THE FASTER THE WORK CHANGES, THE MORE IMPORTANT IT BECOMES TO BUILD A TEAM OF LIFELONG LEARNERS AND GIVE THEM THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO LEARN. better than anyone else. They know they need to keep learning to stay relevant and keep advancing. They are tomorrow's talent. If the entire channel wishes to leave a better legacy, and if the trade wants to keep tomorrow's top talent, the onus falls on the current owners and decision makers to show them that we know it as well.

TEXUB is a newly born global B2B marketplace that is paving the way for the future of IT and Mobility trade, with the UAE as its home base. TEXUB has launched DigiNOMICS, a unique training program to assist B2B IT and mobility buyers, sellers and traders in their digital transformation journeys. Its goal is to educate people about the economics of digitalization and trade as they evolve around the world. The program focuses on how businesses can increase their revenue by transitioning from traditional legacy systems to smart digital systems.

In an era of multiple and serious disruptions to the labour market -the pandemic, supply chain changes, the green transition, technological transformation, ageing, geopolitical tensions -- the best investment is in education, reskilling and upskilling.

Let the channel trade which helps in supplying technology hardware and software to fuel the world's needs also pioneer and show the way in reskilling and upskilling. ASUS // PRODUCT REVIEW

## ASUS EXPERTCENTER D500SC: EXCEPTIONAL VALUE, EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCE



f you're looking for durability & flexibility together in one computer, the ASUS ExpertCenter D500SC is the answer. It features powerful, dependable and expandable performance, while its ultracompact, flexible and sleek small form factor allows business users to enjoy a flexible and neat workspace. It is a commercial small-form-factor (SFF) desktop you want for your business, small, versatile, capable, and packed with all the ports you might need from day to day.

The chassis of this model is available in 9L and can be placed either horizontally or vertically, making it highly flexible and capable of fitting in anywhere. Not just that: this powerpacked machine has been subject to stringent military-grade durability tests and has been specially designed for increased energy efficiency, stable performance and cost-effectiveness.

To ensure stable performance in the compact chassis, the ExpertCenter D500SC uses an innovative multichannel cooling system. This consists of dedicated, isolated air chambers that allow independent heat-venting channels for the PC's main thermal generators — the CPU, GPU and power supply. It also includes the exclusive MyASUS app to optimise the operation of the CPU and system fans, automatically moderating the speeds and switching them off completely when possible, striking the perfect balance between maximum performance and minimum noise.

Perhaps the best feature of the ASUS ExpertCenter D500SC is its ability to let the user customise specs according to their requirements.



This helps reduce overhead costs and improve work efficiency. Moreover, IT administrators can use the ASUS Control Center to diagnose problems remotely, saving further cost and labour resource escalation.

Also, the custom-designed motherboards come equipped with ASUS 5X Protection III which incorporates high quality DIGI+VRM digital power supply for stable output power. Moreover, it is powered by a cutting-edge 11th Gen Intel Core processor with the latest DDR4 RAM. An NVIDIA discrete GPU is an option for those requiring advanced graphics performance for demanding visual tasks.

To take professional conferencing to the next level, the ExpertCenter



D500SC features AI-powered noisecancelling technology that employs sophisticated machine-learning techniques. The technology includes both an upstream function to filter noise around the speaker, and a downstream function to eliminate noise from the person at the other end of the conversation. That's not all: An entire array of I/O ports is ready to connect to a wide range of business peripherals. Flexible serial and parallel ports on chassis leave more PCI slots available for additional upgrades. An SD card reader is optional for an easy transaction, data transfer, or other business-related tasks.

Its clever internal layout gives maximum space for expansion in a compact form factor. The internal steel case allows the ExpertCenter D500SC to accommodate two storage devices, while PCIe slots enable the easy addition of graphics cards, Wi-Fi connectivity and extra I/O ports.

Packed with features, sturdy and flexible, the ExpertCenter D500SC is easy to configure and ready for whatever you might need.

## ACER BOOSTS GAMING PORTFOLIO WITH NEW PREDATOR LAPTOPS & MONITORS

cer announced two powerful Predator Helios gaming laptops and a pair of Predator gaming monitors. The laptops feature an allnew design with 16-inch and 18-inch display sizes, the latest 13th Gen Intel Core mobile processors and NVIDIA® GeForce RTX 40 Series GPUs, making them Acer's most powerful gaming laptops to date. The Predator X45 showcases a massive 800R curved monitor and has earned a CES Innovation Award in the "Computer Peripherals & Accessories" category. Along with the Predator X27U, both monitors include OLED technology with fast 240 Hz refresh rates.

The all-new Predator Helios 16 (PH16-71) and Predator Helios 18 (PH18-71) bring the latest and greatest tech to Acer's most powerful gaming laptop series. Sporting a completely new design and upgraded thermals, they both offer models that include 13th Gen Intel Core i9 or i7 HX processors paired with up to NVIDIA GeForce RTX 4080 Laptop GPU (MGP up to 165W) and a plethora of musthave top-of-the-line gaming features.

Acer's newest Predator-branded





detailed images, while its UGR<22 rating allows for glare-free gaming in bright conditions. An adjustable metal stand with a sleek, yet sturdy metal base keeps the large monitor stable throughout gameplay.

The Predator X27U's flat 27-inch WQHD (2560x1440) panel with 98.5% DCI-P3 coverage is ideal for professional gamers looking for a reliable and powerful machine for daily use. The TÜV Rheinland EyeSafecertified monitor also leverages a peak brightness of 1000 nits and HDR10 capabilities to deliver astounding and life-like visuals.

The Predator Helios 16 (PH16-71) will be available in EMEA in February, starting at USD 2,559.99. The Predator Helios 18 (PH18-71) will be available in EMEA in March, starting at USD 2,699. The Predator X45 will be available in EMEA in Q2, starting at USD 1,919.99. The Predator X27U will be available in EMEA in Q2, starting at USD 1,169.99.

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## VEEAM RESEARCH IN MEA Region shows gap between Expectations and it delivery In data protection

Protection Trends Report to better understand how data protection is evolving in a digital world. The survey found that companies are challenged with more complex hybrid IT environments and are raising budgets to fend off cyberattacks as well as keep up as production environments continue to diversify across various clouds. The result is that IT leaders feel they aren't sufficiently protected. A top priority of organisations this year is improving reliability and success of backups, followed by ensuring that Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) and Software as a Service (SaaS) protection is equitable to the protection they rely on for datacenter-centric workloads.

In late 2022, an independent research firm completed their survey of 4,200 unbiased IT leaders and implementers on a variety of data protection drivers, challenges, and strategies – including 368 in Middle East & Africa (MEA). Below are interesting findings from the region:

## Protection and Availability Gap in the MEA region

- 78% have an "Availability Gap" between how quickly they need systems to be recoverable and how quickly IT can bring them back
- 79% have a "Protection Gap" between how much data they









can lose and how frequently IT protects their data

Commenting on the regional findings, Mohamad Rizk, Regional Director, Middle East & CIS at Veeam said, "The MEA findings of the Veeam Data Protection Trends Report 2023 largely mimics the global results, which find that there is a big chasm between business expectations and IT delivery, when it comes to data protection. In an era of hybrid cloud, it is important to recognise that some cloud-hosted offerings are natively durable; implying that in certain circumstances, the availability gap might be closing. Meanwhile, the protection gap still exists as much, if not more in cloud services as it does within the data center because most cloud providers do not back up their 'subscribers' data."

"To be fully transformative, enterprises in Middle East & Africa need to optimise every dollar of their IT budgets and make sure the right workloads and applications are prioritised and protected, and a simple, flexible, reliable and powerful modern data protection solution is in place – one that protects all environments - Cloud, Virtual, Physical, SaaS and Kubernetes. Only then can enterprises ensure they're sufficiently protected and ready for turbulent times ahead."

## Key insights from the report include:

- Reliability and consistency (of protecting IaaS and SaaS alongside datacenter servers) are the key drivers for improving data protection in 2023. For organisations that are struggling to protect cloudhosted data with legacy backup solutions, it is likely they will supplement their data center backup solution with IaaS/PaaS and/or SaaS capabilities.
- Ransomware is both the most common and most impactful cause of outages, alongside natural disasters (fire, flood, etc.) and user errors (overwrites, deletion, etc.). Organisations should implement backup and recovery solutions that support a holistic approach to data protection, and that can integrate with other cyber detection and remediation technologies to ensure comprehensive cyber resilience.
- Cloud-based services seem nearly inevitable for organisations of all sizes. But similar to how there isn't just one type of production cloud, there isn't just one protection cloud scenario. Organisations should consider cloud tiers for retention, Backup as a Service (BaaS) and ultimately, Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS).



## **DISPLAY & CONTROL SOLUTIONS** WITH PRESENTATION MATRIX & SCALER











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## Cyber and ransomware attacks are the enemy of today's data-driven business



Immutability

Preserve data integrity and confidentiality with layers of security and controls

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Isolation Physical and logical separation of data within a vault



Intelligence

Machine learning and analytics help ensure recoverability

# Cyber Recovery

