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HIGHLIGHTS

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ISSUE 307 // MAY 2023



NEWSMAKERS



Channel news roundup from 05 the region and beyond.

HIGHLIGHTS









- Sertan Selcuk, VP of 16 Sales, META at OPSWAT, tells Reseller ME how the company empowers partners and customers seeking secure network access and deep endpoint compliance.
- Laurent Allard, Head of 24 Sovereign Cloud at VMware EMEA, on how to make sure your data strategy doesn't get tripped up by data sovereignty.





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CHANNEL AND THE FUTURE



s we emerge from the pandemic and go back to living 'normal' lives, it is clear that in order to thrive and grow, the channel business must re-orient its priorities and focus on the one thing that matters today: the customer. In fact, all research and expert predictions point to the fact that if the customer is not given the attention they deserve, the business can die a painful death. However, to focus completely on the customer, channel partners must embrace the leading trends of today: the cloud and cloud security.

Our cover story that probes these trends and speaks to experts about the channel and its way forward. It discusses how channel partners will need to offer a diverse range of technological solutions as well as deep experience in the areas most valued by consumers to boost their chances of success in this climate. We're not spoiling the suspense for you: read on to find out what the journey of the channel industry looks like.

Our special interview with Sertan Selcuk, VP of Sales, META at OPSWAT, discusses how the company empowers partners and customers seeking secure network access and deep endpoint compliance. Bahaa Eddine Al Indary, General Manager, Raqmiyat, tells us how the company is well prepared to help customers and enable them to align its offerings and new digital transformation-focused technologies with their digital strategies. Another discussion with Suchit Kumar, CEO, TEXUB tells us why it is important for businesses to keep up with

change.

That's not all. In addition to all of this, we have the regular opinion, perspective and insight columns that offer a wealth of information about the channel industry and the way ahead. So, make sure you don't miss this issue. Happy Reading!

DIGITAL SERVICES

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TOP STORIES

STARLINK COMMENCES MULTI-CITY CYBERSECURITY ROADSHOW

tarlink, an Infinigate Group company, has commenced its 6-city roadshow covering GCC and Levant. It started with Amman on 08th May, the roadshow voyages through Muscat on 10th May, Doha on 15th May, Kuwait City on 17th May, Riyadh on 22nd May, concluding with Bahrain on 24th May.

Today organisations are responsible for protecting their own business as well as their partner and customer ecosystems - ultimately, their communities. Which calls for a robust digital trust strategy that can keep all connected digital environments and processes, safe and secure. This year's roadshow theme 'Securing your World with Digital Trust' aims at equipping



customers to shape up for resilience by embedding best practices within their organisations and networks.

Nidal Othman, MEA CEO – Starlink said, "The 2023 Roadshow was much awaited, and we are excited to be back on the road once again. Every step of this journey is uniquely designed to cater to our vendors, customers, and channel community's requirements. This is a special platform created to engage, discuss prevailing cybersecurity trends and challenges, and help identify bestin-class secure solutions that we can offer from our market leading technologies. In line with our event theme, this is a responsibility that we share with our customers to keep their world secure."

NUTANIX AND ESTARTA SOLUTIONS SIGN STRATEGIC SERVICES AGREEMENT

utanix, Inc., a leader in hybrid multicloud computing, has signed a Master Services Agreement (MSA) with Estarta Solutions, enabling the ICT specialist to offer Professional Services on behalf of the cloud vendor. As part of the partnership, Estarta's engineers will be supporting Nutanix's customers

on sites in the EMEA region, helping enhance customers' hybrid cloud journey experience.

Estarta will help execute on Nutanix Xpert Services organization's mission – to create an undeniable business value for customers by guiding their cloud transformation and helping them solve complex challenges in



Mutaz Nabulsi, CEO at Estarta (L) and Nemanja Damljanovic, Inside Services Sales Manager at Nutanix (R)

their journey to hybrid cloud. The partnership is anticipated to open new business prospects which align with the Nutanix vision to delight customers with a simple, open, hybrid multi-cloud software platform to build, run, and manage any application while focusing on business outcomes.

Nemanja Damljanovic, Inside Services Sales Manager at Nutanix said, "We look forward to teaming up with Estarta to extend our bench of highly skilled consultants and architects who have proven experience in helping customers minimize risks associated with typical hybrid-cloud pain-points, while providing our customers with best-in-class outcomes aimed at addressing real business challenges."

Mutaz Nabulsi, CEO at Estarta said, "We at Estarta are thrilled to collaborate with Nutanix, a vendor renowned for its cutting-edge cloud services and solutions. This relationship is critical for our business, since it will allow for many opportunities to provide our customers with the highest quality cloud solutions and services. We look forward to utilizing Nutanix's innovative technology to deliver world-class solutions to our clientele."

TOP STORIES

MINDWARE EXPANDS DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENT WITH TRELLIX

indware has announced that it has expanded its long-standing distribution agreement with Trellix, the cybersecurity company delivering the future of extended detection and response (XDR), to now include all Trellix branded products and services across United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Pakistan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan.

Speaking about the partnership, Nicholas Argyrides, General Manager - Gulf at Mindware said: "With the increased frequency, sophistication, and dynamism of cyber threats today, the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning into security solutions is of paramount importance to help prevent and mitigate security incidents. It is imperative that cybersecurity evolves at the same pace as threats. Trellix is delivering outstanding protection, resilience, and agility to enterprises through its 'living security' approach that learns, adapts, and grows stronger, smarter, and more agile every day. Expanding our partnership with Trellix is a natural progression. With Mindware's extensive reach in the Middle East market as the leading distributor and Trellix's industry-leading security solutions, the partnership is set to deliver comprehensive cybersecurity solutions that meet the unique needs of businesses in the region.



Trellix's potential in the region, Argyrides explains: "The Middle East cybersecurity market has witnessed significant growth in recent years, and this trend is expected to continue in the near future. According to research from Frost & Sullivan, the cybersecurity market in the region valued at about \$7.5 billion in 2022, will grow at a compound annual growth rate of nearly 20 per cent over the next seven years and is projected to be worth \$31 billion by 2030."

Providing further insight into his optimism relating to

RIVERBED LAUNCHES NEW MANAGED SERVICE PROVIDER PROGRAM



iverbed, the leader in unified observability, has announced the launch of the new Riverbed ACE program, which includes a partner managed SaaS Digital Experience Management (DEM) service focused on expanding opportunities for partners and scaling the Alluvio Aternity DEM business. The ACE program is targeted to managed service provider (MSP) partners that deliver services to small and medium enterprises, and are new customers to Alluvio Aternity DEM, with less than five thousand global users.

The Riverbed ACE program was launched to help small to medium enterprises struggling to measure the impact of the digital employee experience (DEX) and customer experience. Riverbed's market-leading Alluvio Aternity DEM measures what users actually experience to deliver a comprehensive view of digital experience on businesscritical applications. Companies are demanding "experience level agreements" from their network providers and Alluvio Aternity allows for precise understanding of the end-user experience and all of the elements that might be of impact.

"Riverbed is taking its Alluvio Aternity DEM and turning it into a managed service as an expansion of the Riverbed go-to-market strategy as partners look for technology that can keep pace with evolving business and client needs. Riverbed ACE enables partners to provide DEM-as-a-service to small and medium enterprises, as the need for innovation is greater than ever in today's digital workplace," said Alex Thurber, Senior Vice President, Global Partners and Alliances, at Riverbed. "Riverbed is enabling positive change in the IT channel by providing partners with opportunities to expand their business with more flexible and modern licensing models that deliver exceptional digital experiences to customers through our industry leading Alluvio Unified Observability and Riverbed Acceleration portfolios. At the same time, this new program will help to further scale our Alluvio Aternity solution in the market."

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NEWSMAKERS

INFOR PARTNERS WITH PEOPLE365 TO OFFER EXPANDED PAYROLL SOLUTION TAILORED FOR CUSTOMERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Infor, the industry cloud company, has announced it is expanding its offering in the Middle East and Africa with advanced payroll management, time attendance and scheduling solutions, after signing a strategic technology partnership agreement with People365, a UAE-based provider of human capital management (HCM) solutions.

The partnership enables Infor to offer its customers an advanced payroll solution that automates payroll functions in compliance with more than 72 countries' regulations across the MEA region, including all of Infor's key markets. Meanwhile, People365, the sole proprietor of all its intellectual property, will benefit by expanding its reach thanks to Infor's broad customer base and partner network, giving it access to the most capable,



advanced and compliant technologies, while still being able to take its solutions to market directly.

Kerry Koutsikos, Infor VP & GM for EMEA emerging markets, said: "We're excited to offer People365's payroll and time management solutions along with our own cloud-based, industry-specific ERP and HCM offerings, and to bring our customers a unique experience that is tailored both for the MEA region and our target sectors of manufacturing and distribution. Customers increasingly need a payroll solution that brings true automation at scale and can unify their operations across the region's diverse markets. Through this partnership, we can help our customers overcome significant, complex challenges such as how to cope with the diverse payroll regulations across numerous jurisdictions, enabling them to focus their resources on their core business."

JUNIPER NETWORKS EXTENDS AIOPS LEADERSHIP WITH LARGE LANGUAGE MODEL (LLM) CAPABILITIES, ZOOM INTEGRATION AND EXPANDED WI-FI 6E PORTFOLIO

Juniper Networks, a leader in secure, AIdriven networks, has announced several new enhancements that make it even easier to deliver predictable, reliable and measurable user experiences from client to cloud. By integrating ChatGPT with Marvis, the industry's only virtual network assistant (VNA) driven by Mist AI, Juniper customers and partners can now easily access public-facing knowledgebase information using ground-breaking Large Language Models (LLM). In addition, new Marvis integrations with Zoom enable superior video conferencing experiences while significantly reducing troubleshooting costs. With these enhancements, plus a new Wi-Fi 6E access point, Juniper is expanding its leadership in AIOps and building upon a rich history of industry-firsts to drive real business value while minimizing IT costs.

"AI is the next step in automating tasks that typically require a human IT domain expert, improving how IT teams operate the network with AI-driven tools like Marvis and its conversational interface," said Bob Friday, Chief AI Officer at Juniper



Networks. "Juniper Mist has always been a pioneer in utilizing proven AIOps to deliver assured user experiences from client to cloud, and with these latest LLM enhancements, Marvis will provide even more actionable knowledge and be an even more valuable member of the IT team."

With the recent launch of LLM tools like ChatGPT, Juniper has been able to expand the conversational interface (CI) capabilities of Marvis to deliver even more human-like conversational capabilities, particularly with respect to documentation and support issues. Specifically, Marvis now leverages a LLM API to respond to user queries for technical documentation and other publicly available historical knowledge base information. For example, customers can ask Marvis "What do the Access Point LED lights mean?" or "List steps to configure Juniper campus fabric" and receive an accurate and direct response in the typical ChatGPT style in addition to a list of relevant documents.

VENTURES ONSITE ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH SAUDI CONTRACTORS AUTHORITY, DURING MOU SIGNING FOR SCAVO AT FUTURE PROJECTS FORUM IN RIYADH

SCA Contractors Authority (SCA) and Ventures Onsite, a product of Ventures Middle East, have joined forces to launch SCAVO, an innovative and comprehensive Construction Intelligence Platform for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This collaboration marks a pivotal milestone in the Saudi construction industry, signaling a new era of advancement and excellence.

During the Future Projects Forum held in Riyadh, the partnership between SCA and Ventures Onsite was solidified through the official signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), representing a significant step forward in the industry. Abdulmajeed Alrashoudi, Governor of SCA, signed the MoU and stood alongside Ahmad Kabra, CEO of Ventures Middle East, and Mibu John, Partner and



Managing Director of Ventures Onsite, during the signing ceremony.

SCAVO represents a breakthrough in construction intelligence, providing industry professionals with unparalleled insights and real-time project data. Leveraging the combined expertise, resources, and leadership of both entities, this powerful partnership underscores a shared commitment to driving innovation, excellence, and progress within the Saudi construction sector.

Ahmad Kabra, CEO of Ventures Middle East, highlighted the profound impact of this collaboration, stating, "The partnership between Ventures Onsite and SCA signifies our unwavering dedication to the advancing Saudi construction industry."

UAE CYBER SECURITY COUNCIL COLLABORATES WITH MICROSOFT TO ENHANCE CYBERSECURITY CAPABILITIES AND PROMOTE INFORMATION EXCHANGE

The Cyber Security Council United Arab Emirates (CSC UAE) and Microsoft have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation and collaboration in the field of cybersecurity. The MoU outlines a framework for the two parties to work together towards the establishment of a secure global information society.

Commenting on the MoU, H.E. Dr

Mohammed Hamad Al-Kuwaiti, Head of the UAE Cybersecurity Council, expressed his pleasure to have Microsoft joining the Council's efforts to establish a secure and global information community. He said that the MoU is an important step toward building a strong cybersecurity framework that would protect critical infrastructure and prevent cyberthreats.

H.E. Dr Mohammed Al-Kuwaiti



explained that information and communication technologies (ICTs) have opened new windows of opportunities for socioeconomic development, but they have also introduced new types of threats, such as cybercrimes, cyberespionage, and cyberterrorism. He added that these threats are becoming increasingly sophisticates and require a coordinated response from all stakeholders.

"Over the past few years, organizations across the region have made significant changes to their cybersecurity strategy to accommodate the growing number of users needing access to mission critical data and applications," said Naim Yazbeck, General Manager, Microsoft UAE. "This has resulted in a new wave of threats that are targeting organizations across industries. We are committed to working with CSC UAE to enhance cybersecurity capabilities across the UAE and share knowledge to help prevent cyber threats. This MoU is a testament to our commitment to promoting a secure global information society."

SANS INSTITUTE AND KUWAIT INSTITUTE OF BANKING STUDIES FORGE POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP TO FORTIFY CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION IN KUWAIT

SANS Institute, the global leader in cybersecurity training, is thrilled to announce a groundbreaking partnership with the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS), the training arm overseen by the Central Bank of Kuwait. This alliance brings together the expertise of both institutions to deliver an intensive, immersive Cyber Security Leaders Program, designed to create a new front line of cybersecurity professionals in Kuwait's banking and financial sector.

Reflecting on the partnership, Ned Baltagi, Managing Director, Middle East, Africa and Turkey at SANS Institute, stated, "Our alliance with KIBS represents a seminal moment in fortifying the cyber resilience of Kuwait's financial sector. Through this comprehensive program, we're empowering participants with state-of-the-art technical skills, strategic knowledge, and hands-on experience that is crucial for pre-empting and mitigating sophisticated cyber threats. This initiative isn't just about raising the bar - it's about setting a new standard of excellence for cybersecurity readiness in the region."



The curriculum has been tailored in alignment with the requirements of the Central Bank of Kuwait and its partners. Besides intense technical training, the program also features a range of activities designed to cultivate the soft skills necessary for effective leadership in the cybersecurity field. In addition to the SANS e-learning course SEC275: Foundations: Computers, Technology, & Security, SANS will deliver on-site training for SEC401: Security Essentials - Network, Endpoint, and Cloud, and SEC504: Hacker Tools, Techniques, and Incident Handling, solidifying the program's depth and scope.

CENTBEE AND NCHAIN FORM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TO FURTHER GLOBAL BLOCKCHAIN PAYMENT TECHNOLOGY

Blockchain payments company Centbee has announced that it has formed a strategic partnership with nChain, a world leader in Web3 and Blockchain technologies to strengthen its blockchain payments technology offerings.

The partnership will supplement Centbee's technical team with nChain's specialist software development team who are experts in the BSV blockchain and other services. The agreement will significantly strengthen Centbee's technical skills, leveraging its deep experience in BSV blockchain technology.

Lorien Gamaroff, CEO of Centbee remarked, "We are very pleased to be collaborating with another leading BSV company to build the future of digital payments. The software development



team will focus on building blockchain technical integrations for remittance, fiat-to-digital currency on-ramps and offramps and offering loyalty rewards as a service on the BSV blockchain."

The BSV blockchain is the fastest public

ledger with the capability to support over 50 000 transactions per second. Each transaction can facilitate smart contracts, transfer a secure token or create an immutable record. BSV is a digital asset that allows users to send and receive money instantly, anywhere in the world.

Centbee provides an easy-to-use consumer digital wallet (downloaded more than 100,000 times from the app stores) that leverages this technology to make sending and receiving money easy, fast and low-cost. In addition, Centbee is one of the few services that enables consumers to easily spend the BSV in their wallet, by making thousands of digital vouchers available to purchase in over 100 countries. Centbee recently launched the ability to send remittances from anywhere in the world to West and East Africa.





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INTERVIEW // RAQMIYAT

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TODAY'S SYSTEM INTEGRATORS SHOULD EMBRACE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND ENHANCE THEIR IN-HOUSE CAPABILITIES TO STAY RELEVANT TO THE INDUSTRY.

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ACHIEVING RESULTS

Bahaa Eddine Al Indary, General Manager, Raqmiyat, on how the company is well prepared to help customers and enable them to align its offerings and new digital transformation-focused technologies with their digital strategies.

ow has the first quarter of the year been for Raqmiyat? What were the highlights?

Every year at Raqmiyat, we set different kinds of targets, new goals, to achieve our objectives. We've been consistently achieving our numbers and this year's Q1 was also one of the strongest quarters for us, because a lot of projects from Q4 were closed in Q1. So Q1 has always been strong for Raqmiyat, and we've been overachieving numbers, both topline and bottom-line.

The key highlight is that our teams are complete, we hired more people to cover the UAE & Saudi markets. We're putting a lot of investments in Saudi in terms of business development and project delivery. I believe the rest of the year will be great for Raqmiyatwe have huge potential, and we're achieving results.

Digital Transformation is well underway. How is Raqmiyat equipped to help businesses transition smoothly into the digital/virtual space?

Nowadays, enterprises are less worried about disruptive technologiesthey are more concerned about how to implement those disruptive technologies. Raqmiyat is really well prepared to help customers and enable them to align its offerings and new digital transformationfocused technologies with their digital strategies. From project management capabilities to skill sets that we have in place, the competencies that we have invested in in the past few years have helped customers seamlessly achieve their business goals.

What are some of the digital transformation trends we're seeing in the market today?

Most of the leading digital transformation trends we're observing in the market today are centered around cloud computing, which plays an essential role in any digital transformation process. AI is a trendsetter for sure, particularly with ChatGPT making waves in the global market. Everybody has now begun to recognise what AI can do for them.

As far as cybersecurity is concerned, Zero Trust and IoT analytics are leading the way now, as data assumes more and more significance. So, without getting insights from data, companies cannot move forward. Therefore, organisations must be equipped with advanced data analytics skills to understand and predict their business trajectory. These are some of the leading trends.

What are some of the challenges when it comes to cloud migration?

Cloud migration is critical for every organisation that wishes to migrate its workload to the cloud. However, cloud migration comes with its own set of challenges. One of them is the lack of expertise-the required skill to lead a cloud migration project, which might be complicated. Legacy infrastructure and applications also need to be overhauled because some applications may be designed to work specifically on-prem, and so it may not work on the Cloud. These kind of infrastructure needs a lot of workaround, a lot of customization and restructuring. So, be it Oracle, be it SAP or any other ERP system, moving it to the cloud brings with it its own set of challenges.

Cost management is another risk, because if businesses don't have a full, holistic view of the whole migration process, they may face challenges when it comes to managing costs and end up spending way beyond their allocated budgets. So, this is an important aspect to keep in mind during cloud migration.

How do you think traditional System Integrators should evolve their businesses to ensure that they stay relevant in today's digital-first era? Today's System Integrators should embrace digital transformation and enhance their in-house capabilities to stay relevant to the industry. They must also focus on building specific domain expertise around key technologies and sectors, to be compatible with the market.

It is also important for System Integrators to have project management capabilities in place. There are a multitude of technologies in the market, what is lacking is the service. Raqmiyat is investing significantly on building its expertise, back in India and in the UAE, particularly in project management, to be able to deliver critical projects successfully. So, System Integrators, in order to be relevant, must be up-to-the market, up-to-speed, flexible, agile and be aware of all the changes taking place around them, in the market.

E& INTERNATIONAL AND CIRCLES FORM JOINT VENTURE TO PROVIDE BEST-IN-CLASS DIGITAL TELCO EXPERIENCES

& international has announced it has entered into a strategic partnership with Circles, a global technology company, to bring best-in-class digital experiences to customers across its operating markets and beyond.

e& International, part of e&, that is responsible for growing the international portfolio of world-class modern digital telcos, has formed a joint venture with Circles to empower its network of Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and other operators based in the region to launch digital telco brands that deliver delightful digital experiences for the digitally savvy generation.

The agreement will enhance e& international's position as a pioneer in bringing broad-spectrum technologies to the region, as it will benefit from Circles' digital expertise and global operations across 13 Asia Pacific and bring the best in digital solutions to e&'s footprint across 16 markets and beyond. It will also leverage Circles' cloud-native, digital SaaS platform called Circles X, which allows MNOs to deploy digital telco brands from anywhere in the world and unlocks an agile digital-first revenue growth engine, at a fraction of the operating cost by a traditional telco. Built for operators by an operator, Circles X empowers MNOs to drive seamless and personalized digital experiences, thus achieving a net-promoter-score (NPS) that is higher than industry standards.

This partnership is in line with e&'s transformation journey into a global technology group as announced last year, which is backed by its ambitious strategy to accelerate growth through its specialist business verticals. It



provides e& with the world-class digital capabilities to grow the telco business as well as adjacent digital businesses with cutting edge customer experience.

Mikhail Gerchuk, CEO, e& international said: "As the world becomes increasingly digital, it's more important than ever for telcos to innovate and deliver next-generation services to meet the demands of digital native subscribers. At e&, we have doubled down on our efforts to surpass customer expectations by ensuring we make our services accessible anywhere, at any time, and from any device. To make this possible, we have worked tirelessly on enhancing the digital journey of our customers. Through our transformation from a reputed telco giant to a global technology and investment group, we are confident that we will continue to enhance our customers' digital journey according to their needs. Our partnership with Circles is solid proof of our commitment to heralding a new digital era, one that is filled with limitless possibilities where we can collaborate and accomplish more for a brighter, digital future."

"We are delighted to embark on this journey with a partner like e&, who shares our common vision of an empowered digital future. Our Circles X technology demonstrates our continuous commitment to help the MNOs connect with the digitally savvy generation and deliver the delightful digital experiences that they want and need. Our operator and digital expertise from powering successful digital telcos allows us to transfer our knowledge and experience to our partnership with e&. We look forward to deepening our partnership with e& to accelerate digital transformation across their markets," said Rameez Ansar, CEO & Co-Founder of Circles. 🥯

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cyber & information security exhibition & conference



BUILDING TRUST

Sertan Selcuk, VP of Sales, META at OPSWAT, tells Reseller ME how the company empowers partners and customers seeking secure network access and deep endpoint compliance.



IT, OT and ICS critical infrastructure cybersecurity solutions and Deep Content Disarm and Reconstruction (CDR), protecting the world's critical infrastructure from malware and zeroday attacks. We protect organizations in the manufacturing, nuclear, energy, oil and gas, government and defense sectors, among others, and offer over 20 zero-trust solutions that are tailored to protect critical infrastructure environments.

Our MetaDefender platform leverages Deep CDR, Proactive DLP, and country of origin technology to provide OT threat prevention, industrial network security and visibility, secure IT/OT data sharing, zero-trust network segmentation, file scanning, and threat intelligence.



Who are your key clients / partners in the region?

Our key partners in the region include HelpAG, Securetech, Mannai, GBM, Forcespot, EMT, MIS, SBM, Dimension Data and Innovative Solutions.

Given OT and IT security is critical in today's time for enterprises, what are some key approaches used by OPSWAT to help public and private enterprises?

Every business depends on critical infrastructure in some way, as it encompasses systems and assets that are essential for the functioning of various sectors, including finance, energy, transportation, and communication. OPSWAT works with public and private/government organizations by offering purpose-built and effective solutions tailored for both IT and OT environments and helps them comply with industry standards and regulations.

What's your take on Zero-Trust Access?

We believe that every file and every device poses a potential threat and must be addressed at all locations, at all times, which is why OPSWAT advocates for Zero-Trust Network Access (ZTNA). This provides secure access to remote users based on an adaptive trust model. The key concept of ZTNA is that trust is never implicit, and access is granted only on a need-to-know and least-privileged basis. This approach reduces the risk of data leakage and other security breaches caused by unnecessary access to resources. One of the significant advantages of ZTNA solutions is the ability to offer universal policies anywhere, whether on-premises or cloud-based. This capability vastly improves the user experience and ensures consistent security policies across all locations.

OPSWAT's MetaAccess platform provides a comprehensive solution for organizations seeking secure network access and deep endpoint compliance. Our solution delivers granular controls over devices that access corporate networks, including enforcing policies, checking device compliance, and ensuring secure access. With its deep endpoint compliance capabilities, MetaAccess can also identify and mitigate risks that traditional security solutions might miss, making it an essential tool for protecting critical infrastructure networks.

Tell us about your plans for the region in the coming months?

Over the past two years, our business has grown 2.5x, and we're projecting that it will double again in 2023 alone. To support our continued expansion, we're planning to open a new office in Dubai very soon. This investment builds on the foundation we've been laying in the region for years, and we're excited to have a strong presence in this key market.

Under my leadership, we've assembled a high-performing sales and technical team in Dubai. Our new office will provide an end-toend CIP lab for demos and training, giving our partners and customers a hands-on experience with our solutions.

We see Saudi Arabia and the UAE as critical markets for cybersecurity awareness, and we have many clients in the region, including government agencies, manufacturing companies, and financial institutions. Our growth in the region will continue through our channel partners, and we look forward to working with them to bring our solutions to more customers in the months ahead.

With AI, ML and other technology trends redefining business

With AI, ML and other technology trends redefining business models, what does the future of the channel look like?

023 calls for a reassessment of your channel partner ecosystem and understanding what and who is included in your strategy. Today, the ecosystem is no longer good enough to sign up anyone who says they will sell your productor even to put every partner into the program you've got in place today. The partner landscape in any industry is just too small to offer a one-sizefits-all strategy to partners because they are a finite resource, always being approached by competitors and

impacting your buyer journey at every stage.

The first thing to note is that there is no need to reinvent the wheel, all it needs is a reassessment and revision. What does this mean? Look at it this way: you've got programs in place that have a wealth of partners in them. You also know that only a fraction of those partners are bringing revenue to the table and of those a mere handful are collaborating with you at a level that accounts for a significant portion of your channel revenue. These are what we call your transactional partners. Your classic partner program with traditional tiering-based on performance plays here. And it's not a bad model! It also will never go away.

So, what about the major chunk of your current partners who aren't exactly who you thought you'd signed up? And what about the technology implications?

If experts are to be believed, going forward, partner retention will be key to a successful partner program. It's good for revenue, customer growth, and your brand. However, this also calls for recognising that building a vibrant community of partners requires nurturing and ongoing



evolution. There might be partners you've got in your program who may be high in engagement but just don't seem to bring dollars to the table in the traditional sense. Clearly, they're probably contributing to your bottom line in some way, it's just that it's not transactional. Some of these partners could be helping you build your pipeline through referrals, lead generation, word of mouth influence or the occasional recommendation.

Here is where the ecosystem mentality really comes into play. You have to start thinking about these types of partners differently. So, basically, the partner ecosystem mentality also means welcoming more of those new influencer and retention partner types into your programs.

That said, let's briefly look at the rapidly evolving technology landscape today. 2023 started with a bang and as always, technology continues its unabashed run, overwhelming everything we see and do. Like 2022, this year also promises to be techsavvy, with rapid and unexpected developments taking the world by storm. The channel world, which drives much of the business in this region, will not be immune to the vagaries of technology and its applications and will have to keep up with speed and agility if business outcomes are to be met and growth sustained.

There seems to be consensus about the fact that digital transformation will continue at an accelerated pace. The 'connected' ecosystem will expand and take on new forms. This will, of course, expose organizations to greater security threats and vulnerabilities, which will have to be patched swiftly and prudently. Transactional business models will change and comprehensive solutions will come to the fore, which

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will then drive profitable business outcomes.

One thing is clear: devices will continue to outnumber people: Today, connected devices outnumber people 5:1. Over the next three years, there will be 10x more connected devices as compared to people, making automated secure connectivity of IoT of paramount importance.

Also, without an automated way to onboard, provision and secure these devices, organizations will be left vulnerable to security breaches, which are continually growing in sophistication."

Another trend to be aware of is that supply chain disruptions will accelerate cloud adoption. "The global supply chain has been brought close to its braking point by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on air, sea, and land travel," says Fadi Kanafani, Managing Director – Middle East at NetApp. "We predict that cloud

adoption will accelerate faster as the supply chain constraints drive buyers to find alternatives to purchasing traditional on-premise infrastructure to meet demands. At the same time, optimization of production lines and business processes can help the system to become more robust in the future. Marrying IT and Operational Technology (OT), for example through digital twin concepts and technology such as IIoT and analytics, has virtually limitless potential. Companies that have done their homework in the past, e.g. by building out flexible Industry 4.0 production facilities, will

AS SASE DEPLOYMENTS ENTER THE EARLY MAJORITY STAGE OF THE ADOPTION LIFECYCLE, THE MARKET WILL SEE A CLEAR SPLIT IN APPROACHES.

<image>

be able to stay healthy much more easily," he adds.

Amel Gardner, Vice-President, Infor Middle East & Africa adds another angle. "The reality remains that a lot of the transport issues manufacturers are facing in 2021 are not going away. Be ready for plenty of supply chain news in 2022 including these important trends."

"Supply shortages will continue to keep ocean container rates high, sustainability initiatives will not be equal across the board, organizations will bring their supply chains closer to destination, safety stock levels will rise to avoid backlogs and shutdowns, companies will continue to invest in new technologies to streamline processes," she adds.

What this means is that companies will continue to invest in new technologies to streamline processes. "Organizations are going to have to do more with less as talent shortages impacting global supply chains continue to compound. Companies will need to adopt existing and emerging technologies that allow for cleaner data, stronger collaboration, and the automation of mundane processes so team members can focus on supply



AS FAR AS DATA TRENDS ARE CONCERNED, ANALYTICS & OPTIMIZATION OF DIGITAL SERVICES WILL DRIVE CHANGE AND INNOVATION.

chain process improvement. This will mean expediting digital transformation already in process and moving entire systems to the cloud for better, yet secure access to critical data needed to implement decisions quickly and effectively," Gardner opines.

Meg Brennan, Vice-President Global Channel Operations, at Riverbed Aternity, prefers to focus on the customers demand outcomes and ROI angle. "Over the last couple of vears customers have been faced with unpredictable supply chain constraints and product availability causing them to re-evaluate their IT investments across all areas of their organization. In 2022, customers will require a clearer connection between the ROI and the considerable impact on their business. Partners will need to evolve from transactional business models to selling holistic solutions that drive measurable outcomes. To put it simply, partners must adopt outcome-based selling of end-to-end solutions, while implementing lifecycle services to improve long-term adoption of the technology," she says.

Brennan also says that with fluctuations in the market, coupled by varying buying cycles, organizations have consolidated their buying process to include more involvement at the C-level. "Selling features and functions to IT buyers will not be enough, partners must learn to sell to the entire organization all the way

COVER STORY

up to the C suite. Partners must focus their attention on demonstrating value and optimizing the employee and user experience."

For Patrick Smith, Field CTO, Pure Storage EMEA, the last two years were all about survival and tentative exploration. "The need to accommodate remote work drove regional businesses to the cloud in unheard-of volumes. But the requirement for business continuity was soon followed by the evaluation of other technologies that would allow greater innovation both during the crisis and as/when it passes. Now that regional enterprises realize that operations are still ongoing, we expect to see innovation resume with greater confidence than ever."

He also points out that while cloud computing has proved itself an effective springboard for innovation, a rift will emerge in organizations between realists and idealists.

"Amid the regional economic recovery, the attraction of the cloud is clear — it is a great place to stage proofs of concept safely and cheaply and become an early adopter. But it is also a source of friction within organizations as the keen adopters and the cloud realists butt heads."

This is not to say that the challenges of remote work will go unnoticed. Rajesh Ganesan, Vice-President, ManageEngine, is of the opinion that following the pandemic, hybrid work will be an expectation if not the norm at most organizations across the world. "That means cybersecurity, AI, automation, and analytics will

AMID THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY, THE ATTRACTION OF THE CLOUD IS CLEAR — IT IS A GREAT PLACE TO STAGE PROOFS OF CONCEPT SAFELY AND CHEAPLY AND BECOME AN EARLY ADOPTER.

play increasingly significant roles in organizational efforts to support this way of working."

ManageEngine predicts that the following 5 trends will rule the IT management space for 2022: Organizational insights will become immediately actionable with the rise of contextual analytics, the cybersecurity mesh model will offer better protection in the hybrid workforce era, IT operating models will continue to evolve to support the hybrid workforce, AIOps and IT automation will be critical building blocks of enterprise technology architectures and the cybersecurity skill crunch might force organizations to turn to service providers.

Perhaps the one technology that will envelope all these trends is that of the cloud. As Patrick Smith points out, "amid the regional economic recovery, the attraction of the cloud is clear it is a great place to stage proofs of concept safely and cheaply and become an early adopter," Smith said. "But it is also a source of friction within organizations as the keen adopters and the cloud realists butt heads."

OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS, THERE WILL BE 10X MORE CONNECTED DEVICES AS COMPARED TO PEOPLE, MAKING AUTOMATED SECURE CONNECTIVITY OF IOT OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE.

As far as data trends are concerned, the analytics & optimization of digital services will drive change and innovation. In Fadi Kanafani's words, and example of this will be that Finops results are much easier to come by as more automation and smarter applications take hold. "This results in increases ROI from cloud investments throughout the public and private sector. Another trend concerns production environments. There is a clear move away from applications as companies deliver their services through containerized solutions and microservices."

He adds that data sharing regimes are important prerequisite for building a workable data economy on the international stage. "GAIA-X sparked an important discussion about digital sovereignty and the contributions needed to establish a secure data exchange infrastructure. In the near-term, I don't think this results in a sovereign "EU Cloud." However, we will see more unity about European norms, and more adherence to them from outside Europe. Lastly, specifically in data storage, NAS and SAN continue to be the technologies of choice to underpin digital innovation. Writeable storage media can still be made more efficient."

Lior Div, Co-founder & CEO at Cybereason, predicts that standardization of XDR is a trend that will have significant impact. "Hybrid work models, 5G rollouts and the increased experimentation with the Internet of Things will lead to a connected world that will be difficult



to protect. However, the productivity and convenience benefits of the technologies it provides will ensure its prevalence and therefore demand measures such as Extended Detection and Response (XDR)."

However, he notes that while the cybersecurity industry is in broad agreement on its importance, there is not a uniform definition on what XDR does or should do. "In 2023, when clear leaders in the XDR field have been established, the role AI should play in cybersecurity will become more defined," he observes.

"Everybody today needs to be thinking about cybersecurity," Div says. "While the CISO and their team will undoubtedly bear the brunt of responsibility and accountability, we all have a part to play. We can educate ourselves. We can be suspicious. We can change our relationships with devices and ecosystems to ones of 'verification first' rather than 'trust by default'. As the new year rolls in, we should remember that we live digitally more than we ever have, so we should all pull together to make ourselves safer."

Brennan sums it up best when she says that the future of the technology market and customer experience will go hand-in-hand. "This means organizations will need visibility into what is happening on in their network, applications and end-user devices, and being able to turn these into actionable insights. With massive volumes of data and alerts coming across numerous monitoring tools, IT teams will need to leverage Artificial Intelligence for more effective decision-making and faster time to resolution. It will be the partners who can adopt this new ethos to help reduce the noise around observability solutions and present the right platforms into the decision makers hands, which will ultimately drive value and revenue in 2023."

It's obvious that as new trends come up and the old ones accelerate to keep pace, tensions will increase throughout 2023 as companies rush to move everything to the cloud in an attempt not to be left behind. Those with a more balanced view on the cloud will find themselves at odds with the 'move everything to the cloud' mentality of the CIO and CEO. On the other hand, cloud realists, who tend to be those lower down the food chain, risk being labelled nonbelievers and may be marginalized if they do not conform to the cloud enthusiasts' way of thinking. 📟

HOW TO MAKE SURE YOUR DATA STRATEGY DOESN'T GET TRIPPED UP BY DATA SOVEREIGNTY

Laurent Allard, Head of Sovereign Cloud, VMware EMEA

he challenges of managing and storing sensitive and critical data are growing. The volume of highly sensitive data now hosted in the cloud is on an upward trajectory. Sixty four percent of EMEA organisations have actually increased their volume of sensitive data, and 63% have already stored confidential and secret data in the public cloud, according to IDC.

Managing this exposure of highly sensitive data, which could be financial, personal, national or critical information, is driving the need for data sovereignty – where this intelligence is bound by the privacy laws and governance structures within a nation, industry sector or organisation.

This exposure of such data in the public cloud should be influencing every organisation's future cloud strategy and the imperative of sovereign clouds.

Yet challenges exist. To date, there is no standard definition to assess a cloud as 'sovereign cloud', and not even common terminology 'sovereign cloud vs. trusted cloud'. But what is crystal clear is the set of key requirements associated with confidential and sensitive data, such as data and metadata control, residency and exposure to external jurisdiction. Agreements on data sovereignty must come first, so organisations understand how to keep control of their data and to choose the appropriate platform to host their data and innovate in a secured way.

However, this is not always understood outside of technical teams. If your organisation's management has its head in the clouds when it comes to data sovereignty, here are five key messages to help you demonstrate the value of a secure data strategy, and explain why there is no data sovereignty without cloud sovereignty:

Data classification determines choice of cloud

The days of customer information sitting in a single, monolithic database are well and truly dead. It is now essential for organisations to manage their data and applications in a multi-cloud environment, with the application, workload and data type determining the cloud used. Our research shows that nearly half (47%) of organisations understand that using multiple clouds will help them address security and privacy concerns, while better enabling them to monetise their data. And ultimately, organisations that fail to embrace this will inevitably get left behind.

So, while it is now common for organisations to use several clouds to secure and manage their data and applications, with the drive for sovereignty, we're seeing a review of usage to allow a mix of clouds with different levels of control and certification. This boils down to the type of data, for example its volume, sensitivity, criticality and exploitability; the data owner's priorities in regard to it, such as its privacy or economic advantage; and regulations.

Data sovereignty therefore needs to start with the classification of data, to ensure specific assurances and capabilities on data residency, data protection, interoperability and portability. Organisations can then choose the best clouds for the job, from sovereign private clouds to sovereign public clouds to trusted public clouds ensuring they comply with sovereignty and jurisdictional rules.

Until now much of this has been conducted with the confidence that cloud providers are upholding their promises of data sovereignty.



Unfortunately, recent closer scrutiny by regulators suggests that not all providers are equal, with some being very publicly examined to ensure they're not missing the mark. One provider is under investigation in Germany to ensure it's meeting GDPR compliance, while another has just launched a new digital sovereignty pledge, leaving some customers questioning their track record up until now.

It's therefore also essential that decision makers aren't tripping themselves up by automatically assuming all global hyperscale cloud providers will support data sovereignty because the portfolio, data and applications will be limited to only what can be run in a region. The physical location of data isn't enough to give the sovereignty stamp of approval. Almost all require jurisdictional control, which cannot be assumed to be met with a data resident cloud, particularly for U.S. or global cloud providers subject to the CLOUD Act and FISA ruling. The flow and management of the data is also crucially important, as are the consumer rights within the country you're collecting that data from. It can be an incredibly confusing web to unweave and make sense of.

Secure data drives success

Data is undoubtably the driver of success and decision makers know this. A shining example is McDonald's, where the company successfully used visitor data to assess the effectiveness of its iconic Piccadilly Circus billboards, and redirected marketing spend towards smaller, personalised adverts instead. This increased footfall to desired locations, and ultimately, drove up sales.

Research we conducted earlier this year shows that by 2024, 95% of organisations across EMEA will be looking to their data as a key revenue driver, with 46% recognising it as a significant source of revenue – up from 29% today. And with the data monetisation market already at \$2.9 billion, and another \$4+ billion to be captured by 2027, it's no wonder that more business leaders want to tap in. According to the European Commission, the data economy in Europe is expected to grow GDP from 2.6% to 4.2% by 2025.

At the same time, companies are highly aware that their data strategies must be handled with care to ensure customer privacy. Concerns amongst consumers are increasing and getting louder in this growing discussion. There are plenty of fresh rules and regulations on the way, like DORA, which will help harmonise hard-to-reconcile regulations and reporting standards in banking across EMEA. Even with simplification like this on the horizon, meeting these regulations can be a complex journey for companies that operate across international borders.

Local laws don't need to be a minefield

Whilst the value of data is clear to see, there are often understandable reservations about regulations. Data sovereignty laws differ from one country to the next, with over 100 countries having their own standards on how data should be treated and stored within their sovereign borders. They also rarely stand still and change constantly. Organisations that fall foul of these can end up paying fines of hundreds of millions of dollars and be seen as unreliable and untrustworthy in the eyes of the consumer. Meta, for instance, is currently facing a €390 million fine from The Irish Data Protection Commission, after its Facebook and Instagram privacy breaches.

Most people (87%) are willing to walk away from a company if some kind of data breach happens. Their trust is just as valuable as hard currency. So, how can organisations perform this delicate dance in a way that allows them to mine customer data without betraying their customers' trust? The answer lies in the ability to share, monetise and protect data that resides across multiple clouds.

AGREEMENTS ON DATA SOVEREIGNTY MUST COME FIRST, SO ORGANISATIONS UNDERSTAND HOW TO KEEP CONTROL OF THEIR DATA AND TO CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE PLATFORM TO HOST THEIR DATA.

Forge relationships with a network

Those looking to run without being tripped up should form relationships with one of the newly formed global networks of sovereign cloud providers who have specifically joined forces to ensure that data is protected, compliant and resident within a national territory. Working with an entity that has both national and local partners guarantees an organisation will be meeting niche requirements across the board. It also gives decision makers the ability to choose the right cloud for a specific data classification, with better governance around data mobility. By definition, these specialised clouds are operated by a sovereign entity, so they're exempt from foreign jurisdictional control. With a sovereign cloud, data is managed by national citizens with the relevant national security clearances.

As more organisations focus on monetising their data to capture revenue, sovereign clouds are becoming an integral part of a "cloud-smart" strategy, enabling organisations to run their business operations across multiple clouds to better serve their end customers and to gain strategic advantage. If management doesn't have a clue about data sovereignty, make it your new year's resolution to ensure these five key messages are understood by all. In a world where trust is everything, both between B2C and B2B, don't let your data strategy get tripped up by misplaced assumptions about data sovereignty.

Data sovereignty drives innovation

Ultimately, the reason why sovereignty is so important, is that it enables organisations to be innovative with their data and deliver new digital services. Historically, there has been a distinct lack of trust in the cloud, leading to a lack of innovation. Some of the biggest and most important creators of data, such as finance and healthcare, continue to avoid use of public cloud because of privacy fears. This significantly handicaps their ability to innovate, and means they are losing out on other benefits of cloud technology, such as cost-reduction, agility and scalability. It is therefore paramount that moving forward we avoid the mistakes of the past and ensure sovereign data from the start. Today, sovereign cloud is more and more perceived as a key enabler for a 'data-driven' innovation. 📟

THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS

Suchit Kumar, CEO, TEXUB tells Anita Joseph why it is important for businesses to keep up with change.

EXUB is a global B2B marketplace that offers a safe, stable and seamless trade ecosystem for global IT trade in the B2B space. It allows IT businesses to trade by connecting with verified buyers and verified sellers anonymously. TEXUB also reduces routine work by taking care of end-to-end business requirements. It expands the scope of business for both buyers and seller. We are here to discuss how TEXUB is leveraging the power of AI to drive growth and support product diversification.

How does TEXUB leverage the power of AI to improve operations and enhance overall customer experience?

We just launched our company a year ago, and we keep enhancing our technology, the user interface or the user experience, and even the AI technology as we go forward.

We are the first company to go into a B2B online business on a global basis. If you look at this industry, especially the trade industry, it is a generation behind in terms of adapting to technology, so we must move slowly. We can't immediately use all kinds of new technology that people are unfamiliar with. We go by steps. The first step that we wanted to take is to ensure that people move from legacy systems to online systems because this is a futuristic business. We started training people by introducing DigiNOMICS where we inform people about the growth and the scope of the B2B industry. By doing this, we reached stage one.

B2C took about 14 years to reach 25% of the trade happening on a B2C end-user level especially because the new generation are the ones who are using it. Whereas, if you look at the people who are there, they're a generation behind, but that doesn't mean they will not adapt to the technology. However, we have taken this into consideration, whether it is machine learning, whether it is the predictive analysis that we will be doing on product search, etc. as well as how to use AI in marketing, where we can inform people about several things in terms of the features that exist and how they can use them.

For example, search analysis. if somebody is searching for certain products, the machine/technology records it and informs the user that these are the searches they've done, these are the interests shown, and how we can then improvise on it by giving them any prices that come in the future, or any special offers out there. Hence, we are completely adapting the technology but in a step-by-step plan.

What did you view are some of the AI tools and technologies that are gaining traction in the B2B e-commerce market?

One of the features is, as I mentioned earlier, predictive analysis or behaviour analysis, where we can understand the buyer and the seller's pattern whether it's a product search, etc.

Another tool that is gaining traction is the use of chatbots. We had implemented it earlier – however, we had recently withdrawn it because we are upgrading our system, and we are doing a new UI and UX. So once that is done, we will be adapting the chatbot as well.

One of the other technologies, and I think we are a little bit too early, is augmented reality (AR) which will also help. For example, if you go to our website, we don't have any product pictures because it is B2B and not B2C. Augmented reality will help us in terms of giving a feel of the products, feel of all the stocks, etc. which is required on a B2B segment so we can take that into the next stage. I think we're too early for VR right now, but eventually, we will reach a stage where we can use VR as well.





Even with the growth of technology, it is expected that businesses must maintain the balance between human and technical resources if they are to achieve their intended goals. How do you view this statement, particularly in the context of rising AI and other trends in the market?

The balance is important but with all these trends continually changing, the market will also have no choice but to adapt to the trend of online business. AI is the kind of technology which will improve their buying and selling patterns, and they are going to make a profit out of it as well. As I said earlier, we, as a portal, are using it. For example, on the security system, we have an AI-based API security system that is adapted through our vendor known as L7 Defense, which we are able to curtail fraud and hacking - all of this is internally based technology which we are adapting. As for external-based, where it benefits the buyer and seller, we are not using all the technology as there is plenty of technology available, but we will use those of which are of immediate importance like chatbots or predictive analysis or machine learning. These are the things we will adapt step by step.

What is TEXUB's growth trajectory been like since its

inception in May last year, and how is AI actually expected to support your diversified product offerings and product additions?

We used some of the technology for marketing purposes, because we were new and had just launched and we had to move forward. It took us a long time in terms of getting traction, getting the buyer in, getting the seller in, and trying to understand the pattern of the sellers. We had to do seller mapping and buyer mapping. Our marketing team used technology to the best of its ability to understand the kind of patterns for each buyer and each country that has come to us. We have also done our communications based on that by analyzing the sellers.

We predominantly used it because we were new in the market. It took us about eight to nine months since inception to only get buyers and sellers on board, get their product registrations done, etc. As I mentioned earlier for the security platform, we have used it, but for the portal itself, we will be using it slowly. We will adapt it in the next six months to a year, you will see that TEXUB will be using a lot of other technologies that are available.

Is there anything you would like to inform our readers or viewers or let them know about TEXUB or its activities?

I would like to give a message to all

the buyers and sellers, people who are in the trade, that they need to start adapting to online business, that is the future. They need to understand that technology is very fast. Technology is changing. And one of the things which people are always trying, which I refer to as an inertia of change, is that people don't change fast and they need to change. If not, they will get lost. People have to move fast, move with speed.

Moreover, where TEXUB is concerned, it is long innings. The B2B marketplace business is not something where we cook a story today and tomorrow the food is ready. It took us two years before we could launch. It has taken us another year before we could actually start doing business and growing. I'm very glad to say that as of today, we have about six selling hubs and we have a presence in about fifty countries in terms of buyer reach. And I think that's a phenomenal story for TEXUB.

We have more than 20,000 products registered, and more than 3500 products assigned as of today. We have also used technology to ensure that products which are assigned but have aged out will be automatically deleted from the site. We don't have old data, it is always refreshed in terms of price and stocking, and we have used AI technology there, and we try to always get it in a mode that is new for people.



ISACA UAE & tahawultech.com, in partnership with the UAE Cyber Security Council host the 1st Edition of "Infosec & Cybersecurity Congress 2023" on 22nd June at The Westin Abu Dhabi Golf Resort & Spa.

The event brings together security decision makers, IT professionals and other security industry stakeholders to debate trends and examine the way forward amidst changing threat-security dynamics and increasingly complex and complicated attack patterns.

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PIONEERING DATA MANAGEMENT

Samer Semaan, Channel Manager, Middle East and Emerging Africa, Pure Storage on how the company is disrupting data protection and storage with its cutting-edge technology.

ell us about **Pure Storage's** expansion plans Pure Storage is redefining the storage experience and empowering innovators by simplifying how people consume and interact with data. One major area that Pure Storage is focusing on today, is expansion and growth, especially the emerging region where the Middle East is a big part, brings a lot of value and we have a good market share compared to year-on-year. We are fast growing in the regional market. Then again, when you grow, your team also has to grow. It is critical to have a 'parallel' growth to sustain momentum. This is where we're growing in 4 major countries: UAE, KSA, Qatar and Egypt as a major pillar for us to focus on. These are countries that we have a local presence with a full-fledged team based there.

With enterprise data storage and digital transformation in the spotlight now, how is Pure Storage helping to disrupt the market?

Pure is a pioneer, from the all-flash data center to the most modern

data-protection solutions and the Evergreen subscription models. When it comes to data storage, as they always have been, all our solutions are based on All-Flash technology. This simplifies things. Flash technology is fast, seamless and effective. An all-flash array (AFA), also known as a solid-state storage disk system or a solid-state array, is an external storage array that uses only flash media. Flash memory is used in place of the spinning hard disk drives (HDDs) that have long been associated with legacy networked storage systems.

This technology is what's disrupting the market. We make customers see the value in what they're doing and be rest assured that Pure Storage will ensure customers have the most up to date solutions through the regular updates provided with Evergreen. Our aim is to make data management easier, simpler, reliable and secure for our customers. A lot of computing has been made very automatic, but data storage is s still very physical. We're trying to bring storage up to the same level of modernization as network or computing. What we're showing by consistently outperforming the market is that storage is high technology and customers care about advancements. At the end of the day, the right strategy matters.

Tell us about Pure Storage's channel partner program

Pure Storage has been completely channel centric and providing a world class partner program has been critical to its success. In order to deliver continuous improvements to the program, Pure Storage aligns partner feedback, customer needs, and its company strategy to advance its program in ways that help partners drive faster, smarter, and more innovative business.

Our partners are essential to achieving our mission of meeting global business and technology needs, which is why our partner program is evolving in step with Pure Storage's move as a services-led company. We're proud of our partner programs, delivering unmatched simplicity, flexibility, and value to our partners so we can continue growing together.

Sustainability is the buzzword now. How is Pure Storage integrating sustainability into its identity and operations?

Sustainability has been a part of Pure Storage's DNA from its inception as a disruptive innovator in the storage industry. As sustainability and energy savings become increasingly critical to organizations around the globe, Pure Storage continues to invest OUR AIM IS TO MAKE DATA MANAGEMENT EASIER, SIMPLER, RELIABLE AND SECURE FOR OUR CUSTOMERS.



in helping customers achieve their environmental and energy reduction goals.

With the launch of the FlashBlade//S family of products, Pure is delivering more than double the power efficiency of previous versions. Because of unique design decisions – including Pure's DirectFlash technology, built-for-flash software, always-on deep compression, and Evergreen architecture which can achieve energy savings unlike any competitive storage systems on the market.

FIVE TIPS FOR FIGHTING FRAUD IN 2023

Angel Grant, Vice President for Security at F5

erchants and financial services organizations must achieve better collaboration among their security, customer identity and access management (CIAM), fraud detection, and authentication teams across the organization.

In an increasingly digital world, fraud trends are constantly changing and evolving, with threats to consumers, e-commerce vendors,



and financial services organizations on the rise, both in number and sophistication. The total cost of e-commerce fraud is forecast to exceed \$48 billion globally in 2023, up from just over \$41 billion in 2022. Reasons for this include the surge of online payments and shopping due to the pandemic, omnipresence of malware and bots that extract user information from the web, and social engineering scams that prey on human vulnerabilities.

In the pre-digital world, fraud required careful planning and stealth, while the tools needed to defraud people and businesses today are easily available online, lowering the barrier to entry. With virtual marketplaces, digital wallets, and the ongoing automation of everything, criminals not only have an ever-larger target, they also have sophisticated tools and technologies to help infiltrate businesses and attack the accounts of individuals.

Here are five tips for fighting fraud in 2023 and keeping ahead of the latest threats and exploits that cybercriminals will be using to attack e-commerce and financial services organizations this year.

Align and converge multiple security strategies to more effectively fight fraud, without compromising the customer experience.

Merchants and financial services organizations must achieve better collaboration among their security, customer identity and access management (CIAM), fraud detection, and authentication teams across the organization. Criminals can exploit the vulnerabilities that have been introduced by teams working in silos and security strategies that leaned too heavily into CAPTCHA and multi-factor authentication (MFA) techniques. These mechanisms continuously interrupt the user experience, often without regard to the level of risk presented by the login attempt.

A transparent and continuous risk-based authentication approach allows merchants and financial services firms to better collaborate across multiple teams within their organization, and implement an agile, reliable, low-noise fraud detection strategy without impacting the user experience.

Expand traditional omnitouchpoint strategies for fraud prevention to include visibility and insights across the entire customer journey.

This strategy should focus on three often overlooked key areas:

- Begin with initial channel engagement: Focus on customers' activities from the moment they enter a channel or create an account. This should improve visibility into client-side attacks like digital skimming or formjacking, which are often used to harvest credentials and card information during new account origination, leading to account takeover and fraud.
- **Examine third-party API integrations:** In addition to web and mobile apps, merchants and financial services firms must also include API protection in their security strategies. APIs are subject to the same attacks that target web apps, namely exploits and abuse that lead to data breaches and fraud and introduce unintended risk from third-party integrations and ecosystems.
- Review fraud potential from Card not Present (CNP)

transactions: Merchants

that offer new services such as proximity-based checkout, buy online and pickup in store (BOPIS), and buy now, pay later (BNPL) must understand and address the risks that these transactions entail and share these insights across all channels.

Be alert for new friendly fraud challenges in a recessionary environment.

A major new type of 'fake-friendly fraud' that merchants should expect to see ramp up during a recession, occurs when criminals create synthetic identities that look like real customers and transact with no intention of paying for the merchandise they purchase. Fake friendly fraud practitioners can bypass prevention efforts by recycling stolen identity info and creating new synthetic identities to open new accounts and avoid being blocked by a deny list. These friendly fraud activities can include BNPL program abuse, loyalty point and refund fraud scams, and bust out fraud.

Protect against this by leveraging insights from behavioral biometric patterns augmented with machine learning to give security and fraud teams insights into compromised accounts.

Be prepared for the EU's Payment Services Directive 3 (PSD3) with new regulations for digital payments.

The threat, payment, and regulatory landscape for merchants and banks has dramatically changed since the Payment Services Directive's initial 2018 rollout. To prepare for the enhanced regulations of PSD3, merchants and banks should take inventory of any recently adopted services, channels, and payment options, such as digital wallets and crypto payments.

Merchants and financial services organizations should also proactively anticipate and manage the full scope of security and fraud risks that the modern API environment brings.

2. Get ready for Shadow API

and JavaScript supply chain attacks and the upcoming Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) 4.0

As organizations expand their thirdparty ecosystem and the number of scripts on their site rise, they introduce new potential points of vulnerability that can lead to clientside attacks such as digital skimming, formjacking, and Magecart attacks. A digital skimming attack occurs when a criminal either injects one or many malicious script(s) or manipulates an existing script on a legitimate page or application to create a software supply chain man-in-the-browser attack. These attacks are difficult to detect since these scripts are updated frequently by third parties, often without a process for your organization to perform security reviews.

In addition, new PCI DSS 4.0 requirements will focus on the need to monitor and manage browserbased, third-party JavaScript libraries that are incorporated into e-commerce websites to enable functionality such as payment processing iFrames, chatbots, advertising, social sharing buttons, and tracking scripts. Although PCI DSS 4.0 is currently considered best practice, it isn't mandated until 2025. Criminals won't wait around to act, and neither should you!

Organizations need visibility into the JavaScript libraries running in their web applications, and they need to know what data the scripts are collecting to prevent violating data privacy regulations like GDPR and CCPA and maintain compliance with the new PCI DSS 4.0 requirement 6.4.3 and 11.6.1.

Most organizations do not have centralized control and governance over script management. If a third-party script on your site has a vulnerability and you are not aware of it, you are unable to patch it. Criminals know that many organizations struggle to manage, track, and secure the volume, scope, and scale of scripts now embedded into websites, and they know how to exploit these scripts for their own gain.

SPECIAL REPORT // FRESHWORKS

UAE EMPLOYEES DEMAND BETTER Support from it teams despite Service levels beating global Benchmarks: Freshworks

new report by Freshworks Inc. has revealed a surprising juxtaposition for IT teams in the UAE. While on average, IT service requests from employees in the country are resolved 20% faster than the global average, when it came to the employee satisfaction, the nation placed in the bottom 4 of the 25 countries in which the research was conducted.

Freshworks' report also found that while First Contact Resolution for IT service tickets in the country (80.8%) is also impressively higher than the global average (72%), the ability of IT teams in the UAE to meet resolution SLAs (90.8%) is still lower than the global average (95%).

"As IT continues to permeate every aspect of the modern business, employees become increasingly reliant on tech support teams to provide more efficiency. Having become accustomed to exceptional service as consumers, they as professionals now demand similarly high quality of support from their company's IT service organisations," said Prasad Ramakrishnan, Chief Information Officer at Freshworks.

"UAE is a global leader in digital transformation and Freshworks' data indicates that they are indeed delivering a level of service that in many ways exceeds that of their global counterparts.," said Sandie Overtveld, SVP of Freshworks APJ



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and MEA. "To continue going above and beyond employee expectations, IT teams need software that goes beyond speed of response to resolution and also enables features that make it easier to provide a great experience. Giving employees self-service support resources, the ability to make requests on the channel of their choice and bots to answer questions in real time is better for everyone."

Fortunately for UAE IT teams struggling to meet lofty expectations, Freshworks' report provides insight into the most effective ways to enhance their efficiency and quality of service. Unsurprisingly, AI, which has dominated headlines in recent months, emerged as a key solution. The report found that organisations using AI-powered virtual agent(s) experience ticket deflection rates as high as \sim 46%, which means that nearly half of the employee or enduser interactions have been handled solely by virtual agent(s). Intelligent suggestions by AI/bots also help simplify incident management for agents with Freshworks' report showing that this enabled them to respond to issues and resolve them faster by 23%.

Automation of workflows is another area which delivers outsized

FRESHWORKS FOUND THAT OVER 88% OF ORGANISATIONS HAVE STREAMLINED BUSINESS PROCESSES USING WORKFLOW AUTOMATIONS. positive impact. Freshworks found that over 88% of organisations have streamlined business processes using workflow automations. The benefits of this approach are especially pronounced for enterprises (500 to 1000 employees) wherein its utilisation helps resolution time drop by 36%.

Choice of service channels can also influence resolution times as according to Freshworks, tickets recorded via chat were resolved 52% faster compared to the benchmark. Redirecting users to this channel could however require some ingenuity on the part of organisations as currently, well over half (57%) of IT tickets are still received via email.

"In times of economic challenges, IT plays a critical role in optimising processes and the use of resources across all functions. My team uses Freshservice and having tools that allow rapid deployment of process changes is equally important for IT and the business to realise value faster from their technology spend," said Prasad Ramakrishnan, CIO of Freshworks. PRODUCT // ACER



ACER INTRODUCES PREDATOR TRITON 17 X AND PREDATOR HELIOS NEO 16 GAMING LAPTOPS

Acer has also announced new Predator Triton 14 and Predator Helios 3D 15 SpatialLabs Edition laptops with 13th Gen Intel Core processors and NVIDIA GeForce RTX 40 Series GPUs.

cer has announced major updates to its gaming laptop line-up, with new designs and support for industryleading technology: 13th Gen Intel Core processors and NVIDIA GeForce RTX 40 Series GPUs. The new Predator Triton 17 X and Predator Helios Neo 16 are made for gamers and creators alike, due to their powerful components and premium display options. The thin and powerful Predator Triton 14 is designed for work or play, while its sleek, understated design makes it ideal for any environment. Lastly, the Predator Helios 3D 15 SpatialLabs Edition brings glasses-free, stereoscopic 3D to the world of gaming, infusing new life into more than 70 modern and classic titles, with more being continually added.

Predator Triton 17 X: Acer's most powerful gaming laptop to date The all-new sleek and powerful

Predator Triton 17 X (PTX17-71) pairs a sophisticated minimalist design with game-ready hardware. It appeals to gamers and professionals who want a thin mobile workhorse that can handle graphic-intensive AAA games and resource-intensive work apps, all while having enough battery life to use throughout the day. Less than an inch in height, the slim Triton 17 X is meticulously crafted and highly portable. It includes a polished, sandblasted texture on the solid metal CNC unibody chassis, a delicate microetched RGB Predator logo, stainlesssteel speaker mesh, diamond-cut highlights, and strategically placed vents. The artistic yet minimalist design makes it a subtle standout in any environment.

Predator Helios Neo 16: Top-line Capabilities with a Mid-range Price

The all-new Predator Helios Neo 16 (PHN16-71) includes the powerful components the Helios line is known for but offers a more affordable price point. In addition to the latest top-line components, the Predator Helios Neo 16 adds some fun as it features laseretched encrypted codes on its abyssalblack anodized cover, inviting gamers to take on the challenge of deciphering the message.

Predator Triton 14: Thin Laptop for Gaming and Work

Acer Predator's small but powerful Triton 14 includes up to a 13th Gen Intel Core i7-13700H Processor and an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 4070 or 4050 Laptop GPU. In addition, gamers and creators alike will appreciate the new panel option that delivers vivid levels of contrast and a wide range of colors.



The brilliant 14-inch (16:10 aspect ratio) with up to a WQXGA (2560 x 1600) Mini LED display also includes a blazing fast 250 Hz refresh rate, is DisplayHDR 600 certified and covers 100% of the DCI-P3 color range.

Predator Helios 3D 15 SpatialLabs Edition – Now More Powerful Than Ever

The next-generation Predator Helios 3D 15 gaming laptop now supports the powerful 13th Gen Intel Core i9-13900HX Processor and NVIDIA GeForce RTX 4080 Laptop GPU. It also includes up to 32 GB of faster DDR5-5600 MHz memory. A discrete GPU only option, enabled in PredatorSense 4.0, allows gamers to maximize performance. The back vents have also been streamlined and include subtle RGB lighting along the back edge for a soft, ambient glow of lights.

Pricing and Availability

The Predator Triton 17 X (PTX17-71) will be available in EMEA in June, starting at USD 4,499.

The Predator Helios Neo 16 (PHN16-71) will be available in EMEA in May, starting at USD 2,199.

The Predator Triton 14 (PT14-51) will be available in EMEA in May, starting at USD 2,399.

The Predator Helios 3D 15 SpatialLabs Edition will be available and in EMEA in June starting at USD 3,999. ⁽¹⁾





FOCUS // STARLINK



STARLINK PARTNER SUMMIT 2023 CELEBRATES CHANNEL SUCCESS

The event recognised MEA partners for their expertise, leadership and strategic business collaborations.

ONE OF THE EVENT HIGHLIGHTS WAS THE PARTNER AWARDS WHERE STRATEGIC AND EMERGING PARTNERS WERE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT TO STARLINK.



tarlink, an Infinigate Group Company celebrated MEA channel achievements on the 02nd May at the Annual Starlink Partner Summit

2023 held at the Armani Hotel, Burj Khalifa Dubai - echoing the message of collaborative innovation and advancement as a community, now and in the future.

The gathering witnessed an audience of more than 400 cybersecurity experts – Executive. Management, Sales, Technical and other business associates from the Starlink partner and vendor ecosystem, across MEA. This was a true testament to the solidarity shared by Starlink with their channel across the region.

Expressing gratitude over the overwhelming response, Nidal Othman, MEA CEO – Starlink, commented, "It was incredible to see a powerful representation from across the region which reflects the mutual fondness and unity that we share with our channel network. Together, we have come a long way and Starlink is committed to enhancing this partnership, now and beyond. We look forward to standing together as 'One Team' and focus on our customer success."

One of the event highlights was the partner awards where strategic and emerging partners were recognized for their outstanding performance and support to Starlink in FY'2022. Mahmoud Nimer, MEA President – Starlink commented, "Each partner that we have recognized, for their exemplary achievements across distinct categories have been unique in their own way – be it an established or a rising partner. They have been true to their commitment and have continued to deliver on their promises."

The 2023 edition of the Starlink Partner Summit had representation from market-leading technologies – Palo Alto Networks, Rapid7, Trellix, Ivanti, Forcepoint, Trend Micro, Nutanix, Lenovo and Infoblox who shared high level insights on their latest technology advancements in correlation with the most recent cybersecurity trends and practices, revisited their partner programs and initiatives to provide an understanding of their Go-to-Market and Channel strategies that can propel the partnership with renewed focus for 2023. FINAL WORD // SPRINKLR

SPRINKLR AI+ SUPERCHARGES CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DATA FOR DEEPER INSIGHTS, BETTER DECISIONS AND FASTER ACTIONS * Sprinklr AI+

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prinklr, the unified customer experience management (Unified-CXM) platform for modern enterprises, has announced the launch of Sprinklr AI+. A new AI-everywhere offering that unifies proprietary AI from Sprinklr with OpenAI's generative AI, Sprinklr AI+ brings generative AI to customer experience with a commitment to enterprise-level governance, security, and data privacy.

Sprinklr AI+ allows enterprises to combine unstructured, CX data from 30+ digital channels – including social platforms, messaging platforms, and millions of publicly available news, blog, and review sites – with generative AI to create content, improve feedback and assistance, and more quickly identify insights and subsequent actions. Sprinklr AI+ incorporates generative AI powered by an integration with the OpenAI enterprise API. This bespoke arrangement includes robust security and privacy terms and demonstrates Sprinklr's commitment to safeguarding our customer's data.

"We have seen massive demand for generative AI capabilities to improve customer service and employee efficiency. Sprinklr AI+ brings this transformational technology to customer experience at the enterprise level and has the potential to revolutionize the front office for our global customers," said Sprinklr Chief Technology Officer, Pavitar Singh. "For us, this is the next evolution of our AI journey to help our customers work better, faster, and more costeffectively, while preserving the level of governance, compliance, and data privacy that the most iconic brands in the world require."

Sprinklr is built from the ground

up to unify and centralize CX data on one platform. The flexible and modular architecture allows Sprinklr to quickly integrate with the latest and best technology. Sprinklr AI+ is the next evolution of Sprinklr's AI that leverages more than 1,250 industry-specific AI models, spanning 100+ languages and 150 countries, to process petabytes of unstructured text, audio, video, images, metrics, and time series data and enables our customers to extract structured insights. With generative AI capabilities powered by an enterprise API integration with OpenAI, Sprinklr customers can tap into new features across all four Sprinklr product suites.

Sprinklr AI+ gives brands a unified generative AI capability for social media management, customer service, and marketing that is built with enterprise-level governance, security, and data privacy in the design.



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