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AWS' Enterprise Strategist

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# ON THE FRONTLINE

MUBARAKA MUBARAK ALI IBRAHIM, DIRECTOR OF IT DEPARTMENT AT THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND PROTECTION (MOHAP), OUTLINES HOW **CNS MIDDLE EAST** EQUIPPED THEM WITH THE IT INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRED TO REACT TO COVID-19

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# ДД

Also check out the fabulous feature by Giorgia Guantario who takes a much closer look at popular video conferencing application Zoom."

### EDITORIAL

# FIGHTING BACK

e're living in unprecedented times as governments across the world continue to try and find a resolution for the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The UAE government has implemented a series of strict regulations as part of their effort to curb the spread of the virus, and on April 4th initiated the start of a 24-hour sterilisation programme.

It was initially indicated that the initiative would last for a fortnight, but that has since been extended by another week.

In terms of cases and deaths the UAE numbers remain relatively low, which would indicate that the measures we're taking are beginning to pay off as the government continues its effort to flatten the curve.

One organisation leading the fightback against COVID-19 has been the Ministry of Health & Prevention (MOHAP) and they rather aptly are on the front cover of our magazine for April's issue.

We spoke to Mubaraka Mubarak Ali Ibrahim, Director of the IT Department at MOHAP, to find out how CNS Middle East has helped them to completely revamp their entire IT infrastructure so they could effectively respond to the ongoing outbreak.

Ibrahim also highlighted how emerging technologies has allowed its workforce to remain connected from any location – and said that in the future they will deepen their application of AI and wearable devices.

Remaining on the topic of COVID-19, Giorgia Guantario spoke to Karen Dixit, VP, MEA at UiPath to find out how the RPA leader is helping enterprises to fight back against the challenges presented to their business models by COVID-19.

In this month's GovTech, we spoke to former du executive and CEO of EVOTEQ, Jihad Tayara to learn more about how the company has positioned itself as a real agent for 'smart transformation'.

In this month's bumper magazine, we also have interviews with AWS, Microsoft, Huawei and a brilliant Women in Tech feature with HPE's Kinda Baydoun.

Also check out the fabulous feature by Giorgia Guantario who takes a much closer look at popular video conferencing application Zoom.

Let me also take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and peaceful Ramadan.

Mark Forker Editor



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\*Based on IDC WW Quarterly Converged Systems Tracker, 2019 Q1, Vendor Revenue.

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### NEWS

# stc Saudi Arabia digitises over 7 million contracts



Olyan Al Wetaid, stc

stc has revealed that the number of paper contracts that the company dispensed with due to digitisation amounted to 7 million annual contracts.

The organisation has also noted that the company's outlets has already received the last customer who concluded a paper contract as part of its journey for digital transformation and enriching customer life with innovative digital solutions and services.

Eng. Olyan bin Mohammed Al Wetaid, senior vice president, Consumer Business Unit, said, "The full adoption of digital contracts is part of the company's commitment to reinventing the customer experience, digitising its services, implementing a business model that preserves the environment, and promoting sustainability, in accordance with the company's strategy and the digital transformation goals of the Saudi Vision 2030."

He indicated that this step, which came with the support of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and the Authority, would contribute to save the customers 200,000 annual waiting hours, in addition to increasing reliability and facilitating maintenance.

# This step will contribute to saving the customers 200,000 annual waiting hours

# UiPath extends its online RPA academy and certification

### UiPath, the leader in enterprise Robotic

Process Automation (RPA), introduced an expansion to its RPA Certification and Academy program and a more comprehensive training platform, both designed to prepare people with the automation knowledge and tools required to accelerate workforce readiness and excel in the future of work.

Despite the growing need for reskilling and job training, educational opportunities and training are not easily available or accessible for most people. UiPath is committed to investing in the workforce of the future through its UiPath Academy, which is focused on training and reskilling for the jobs of today and the jobs of tomorrow. UiPath launched its Academy to empower workers to master the fundamentals of RPA, gaining the knowledge and handson experience to successfully navigate the future of work.uipath academy

Tom Clancy, SVP, UiPath Learning said, "AI and automation will create more than 100 million new jobs in the near future. Anybody should be able to do this and step into these jobs. It's also a great way to remain employable in an era where remote work is the new norm. We built UiPath on the promise to democratise RPA and train a global community of practitioners. These enhancements to our training and certification programs further our commitment to empowering people with the in-demand automation skills to succeed in newly emerging careers and remain competitive in their current roles."

# OKI Europe launches new smart MFP with advanced authentication



OKI Europe has launched the MC883, a user-friendly A3 colour smart multifunction printer (MFP) for the professional services sector where fast, accurate and secure document management is essential to meeting client needs.

Ideally suited to organisations where handling sensitive documents requires high levels of security, the MC883 offers PIN and ID authentication, so confidential documents, such as legal files, contracts, financial records and invoices are kept secure at all times with full traceability. Documents can also be securely scanned, stored or sent to required destinations for simple document management. And thanks to easy maintenance, the MC883 can always be relied on even in the most high-pressure environments, without the need for specialist engineers.

"For busy professional services businesses, the requirement to manage often complex document workflows securely under the pressure of looming deadlines can be challenging, especially when information needs to be protected for compliance and client confidentiality," said Javier Lopez, general manager, Vertical Solutions, OKI Europe Ltd.

"The MC883 is designed for easy self-maintenance. It is equipped with powerful solutions that deliver efficient and secure document capture, storage, management and output – leading to smarter, more secure processes and maximum device availability for timepressed organisations."

# Apple introduces full third-party cookie blocking on Safari

### Apple has released an update to

**Intelligent** Tracking Prevention (ITP) in iOS and iPadOS 13.4 and Safari 13.1 on macOS to fully block third-party cookie.

John Wilander, Apple's WebKit engineer behind Safari's ITP, published a blog post on Tuesday that outlined the enhancements.

The post reads, "Cookies for cross-site resources are now blocked by default across the board. This is a significant improvement for privacy since it removes any sense of exceptions or 'a little bit of cross-site tracking is allowed.'"

Wilander also added on Twitter that this update marks a significant step "to fight cross-site tracking and make it more safe to browse the web."

Wilander reassured that the change it's not as big as it seems, as Apple has added so many restrictions to ITP since its initial release in 2017 that they "are now at a place where most third-party cookies are already blocked in Safari."

This update is a huge move for Apple, as Google will only start fully blocking third-party cookies at some point in 2022.

Wilander continued by explaining this update removes statefulness from cookie blocking to make sure there's no ITP state that can be detected through cookie blocking behaviour, and thanked Google for initiating this analysis through their report.

# Avaya Spaces gets UAE TRA approval



### Avaya has commended the approach

to public-private partnerships being taken by the UAE's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), following the confirmation that the cloud-based Avaya Spaces collaboration app has been approved for use in the country.

Avaya Spaces provides a cloud meeting and team collaboration solution that enables people and organisations to connect and collaborate remotely – and goes beyond integrating chat, voice, video, online meetings and content sharing. It gives users an extensive set of meeting and team collaboration features, including voice and video conferencing for up to 200 participants.

"We commend the leadership of

the UAE and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority for enabling the country's citizens and residents to address the challenges we all currently face with apps such as Avaya Spaces. We applaud their approach to

public-private partnerships, and will continue working with the relevant authorities to support them wherever we can," said Nidal Abou-Ltaif, President, Avaya International.

Earlier this month, Avaya announced that it will provide its Avaya Spaces collaboration software for free to education institutions, including colleges and universities, along with qualified non-profit organisations worldwide. Avaya Spaces is recognised for its ease of implementation and the significant impact it can have on organisational resilience and continuity. Since January, Avaya has seen a 700 percent increase in video collaboration traffic on this platform.

# Al helps organisations grow profits faster: study

### Organisations that are adopting Artificial

Intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies in finance and operations are growing their annual profits 80 percent faster, according to a new study from Enterprise Strategy Group and Oracle. The global study, Emerging Technologies: The competitive edge for finance and operations, surveyed 700 finance and operations leaders across 13 countries and found that emerging technologies – AI, Internet of Things(IoT), blockchain, digital assistants – have passed the adoption tipping point, exceed expectations, and create significant competitive advantage for organisations.

"AI, IoT, blockchain and digital assistant capabilities enable organizations to innovate faster, creating significant competitive advantage and driving increased profit for companies embracing those technologies more decisively than their competitors," said Juergen Lindner, senior vice president, SaaS product marketing, Oracle. "The research finds that these technologies have become mainstream and organizations that sit on the sidelines risk their business relevance. To help our customers outpace change and consequently the competition, we continuously infuse emerging technologies directly into the business processes to ensure they can harness these business-changing technologies."

Organisations adopting AI grown their annual profits **800%** faster

# UAE telecom subscribers hit 23.67M in 2019

### **Telecommunication Regulatory**

Authority (TRA) has recently released a report stating that the number of telecommunications subscribers in UAE mobile, fixed-line and data services amounted to around 23.67 million in December 2019, 120,000 up from the preceding month.

According to the report, the number of mobile phone subscribers increased to around 18.278 million in December from 18.178 million in November, which equals to 203.3 – 204.3 lines per 100 inhabitants last year, according to TRA's figures.

Prepaid-service subscribers numbered 14.655 million in the reference year, while post-paid service mobile subscribers reached 3,623,000.

Up to 3.046 million people subscribed in Internet services until December, while fixed-line subscribers hit 2.345 million, according to the TRA's figures.



The number of telecommunications subscribers in UAE mobile, fixed-line and data services went up by 120,000 in December.

# PayBy launches mobile payment services in the UAE



**PayBy, an innovative fintech company,** has officially launched its fast and secure mobile payment services in the UAE.

In partnership with the worldleading financial institution FAB, PayBy offers a highly efficient and secure payment solution that is superior to cash and payment cards. With PayBy, consumers will be able to use their smartphones to make contactless and cashless payments in physical stores. The new payment solution will also enable its users to pay for deliveries on arrival, order goods and services online, transfer and receive money instantly, and even share cash gifts with family and friends, all via smartphone.

PayBy also offers point of sale (POS) solutions for every type of business in the UAE, from small merchants to large stores that serve thousands of customers daily. These cost-effective solutions will support local businesses and help them reach a wider consumer base immediately.

All financial transactions on PayBy are well protected by leading and proven technologies, including an AI-based fraud management system to detect unauthorised activities, in strict accordance to PCI-DSS standards.

PayBy's launch partners include the Lulu Hypermarket and Express, Baqalas (grocery stores), and such popular instant messaging platforms as BOTIM and ToTok. PayBy services will be made available through all these partners, and consumers will also be able to download the PayBy app directly onto their smartphones in April 2020.

# Facebook to launch Arabic third-party fact-checking

#### Facebook announced that it will be

launching third-party fact-checking in Arabic across the MENA region in partnership with Fatabyyano, an independent platform that specialises in news verification. The partnership works to support Fatabyyano's efforts to combat false news by reducing the spread of misinformation on the platform. In its approach, Fatabyyano aims to improve the quality of news on Facebook by implementing steps to review and rate the accuracy of stories, including photos and videos, that appear in users' News Feed.

The initiative will be spearheaded by Arabic-speaking Fatabyyano factcheckers who will rely on a standard set of criteria to determine the authenticity of content. In line with all of Facebook's partnerships globally, Fatabyyano is certified by the non-partisan International Fact-Checking Networking.

Mohamed Omar, News Partnerships Manager, Middle East and North Africa at Facebook, said, "At Facebook, we are making significant investments to promote high-quality journalism and news literacy. In collaborating with news organisations to prevent the spread of false news, our aim is to dramatically decrease the reach of stories used for economic and political gains. Across the MENA region, people access our platforms every day and we recognise the responsibility we have in ensuring they are given the tools to make informed decisions about the content they see. Our partnership with Fatabyyano underlines this commitment as we look to expand our third-party fact-checking program in the fight against misinformation."

# UAE ministry turns to blockchain, smart tech for seamless processes

#### The Ministry of Community Development

has introduced new procedure to allow seamless processes across all its customer happiness centres for the benefit of the general public across the UAE.

"This step confirms the ministry's commitment to ensure the continuity and flexibility of all government services in light of the directives of the smart government to reduce the spread of COVID-19," said Minister Hessa Essa Buhumaid in a statement.

She noted that these services allow customers to stay at home and reach out with their requirements and demands through different ways such as phone communications and various applications, the

# WhatsApp introduces WHO chatbot to answer COVID-19 queries

### Facebook-owned instant messaging platform

WhatsApp announced the launch of the World Health Organisation's Health Alert. The new service, which is free to use, has been designed to answer questions from the public about Coronavirus, and to give prompt, reliable and official information 24 hours a day, worldwide. This will also serve government decisionmakers by providing the latest numbers and situation reports.

Users will only have to click WHO Health Alert and send the word 'Hi' in a WhatsApp message to get started. The service responds to a series of prompts and will be updated daily with the latest information.

Users can also visit the WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Hub at whatsapp. com/coronavirus, and click on the WHO link on the homepage to open up a chat with the WHO Health Alert if you have WhatsApp installed.

The World Health Organisation's Health Alert will provide official information on topics blockchain system and instant chat systems.

According to the minister, the services focus on enhancing the use of digital identity for customers by activating requests remotely and reducing the receipt of required documents, while fully adhering to flexibility in updating regular data and renewal services for various categories.

These include senior citizens, People of Determination, productive families, nonprofit public associations and young people who are about to get married.

Nasser Ismail, assistant undersecretary, Social Welfare at the Ministry of Community Development, said that in the current situation, they have stopped receiving paper documents across all customer happiness centres, and have approved digital documents instead.

He pointed out that this step comes as part of the ministry's efforts to regulate the flow of customers, especially senior Emiratis, People of Determination and other categories.

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such as how to protect oneself from infection, travel advice, and debunking Coronavirus myths. The service is initially launching in English but will be available in all six United Nations languages within the coming weeks (English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.)

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO said, "Digital technology gives us an unprecedented opportunity for vital health information to go viral and spread faster than the pandemic, helping us save lives and protect the vulnerable. We are proud to have partners like Facebook and WhatsApp, that are supporting us in reaching billions of people with important health information."

# Huawei releases its 2019 Annual Report



Eric Xu, Huawei's Rotating Chairman

#### Huawei released its 2019 Annual

Report, detailing a solid business performance. The company's global sales revenue in 2019 rounded off at USD\$123 billion, up 19.1% year-on-year; its net profit reached USD\$9 billion; and its cash flow from operating activities topped USD\$13.1 billion, up 22.4% year-on-year. As part of a long-term, ongoing investment in technological innovation and research, Huawei invested 15.3% of its 2019 revenue - or approximately USD\$18.8 billion – back into R&D. Its total R&D spend over the past decade now exceeds USD\$85.9 billion.

"2019 was an extraordinary year for Huawei," said Eric Xu, Huawei's Rotating Chairman. "Despite enormous outside pressure, our team forged ahead with a singular focus on creating value for our customers. We worked hard to earn their respect and trust, as well as that of our partners around the globe. Business remains solid."

In 2019, Huawei's carrier business led the commercial rollout of 5G networks. To further commercial adoption and promote new innovation in 5G applications, the company established 5G joint innovation centres together with carriers worldwide.



# UAE'S READINESS FOR REMOTE WORKING

CPI Media Group has announced the launch of DigiTalks, a new series of virtual discussions to address the challenges organisations are facing during this pandemic and beyond. The first virtual discussion focused on the UAE's readiness for remote working and saw Dr Erdal Ozkaya, Head of Information & Cybersecurity, Standard Chartered and Tatiana Labaki, Senior Manager – Revenue & Analytics, Emaar, give their take on the issue.

NME's editorial team Mark Forker and Giorgia Guantario spoke to Dr Erdal Ozkaya, Head of Information & Cybersecurity, Standard Chartered and Tatiana Labaki, Senior Manager – Revenue & Analytics, Emaar in the first edition of our new series of virtual discussions called DigiTalks.

While the COVID-19 outbreak has had severe impacts on all industries, with the UAE government calling for many businesses to temporarily close, many others have had to adapt to remote working to continue their operations.

In light of this, it is fundamental to understand how to successfully equip employees to face this necessity.

Tech giants, the likes of Microsoft, Avaya and Google, are offering some of their solutions for free for the time being, but the current emergency situation raises the question, "Is remote working the future of work in the UAE?"

Modern workplaces have been adopting new technologies to improve productivity and streamline processes, so it doesn't come as a surprise that the same technology can help organisations change the way they work altogether.

Tahawultech.com's first virtual conversation focused on the UAE's readiness for remote working and explored the challenges facing enterprises in relation to remaining secure as they move their operations to a virtual workplace.

In addition to this, the conversation also examined the challenges facing telecoms operators in terms of keeping us all 'connected' as demands on networks have grown exponentially since the outbreak of COVID-19.

To start off, we asked Dr Ozkaya and Labaki how COVID-19 has affected their day-to-day operations as they continue to adapt to working remotely.

As the Head of Information & Cybersecurity at Standard Chartered, Dr Ozkaya praised its robust business continuity plan for helping make their transition relatively seamless. However, he believes the world is not fully ready to move to a fully virtual workplace, as we've seen with the many issues arising with our technology.

He said, "We always talk about digitalisation, but I think this is an early wake up call for humanity, where we need to think about our readiness for remote working. We need to think about how we can go to the next step without compromising."

Labaki revealed that the fact she is afforded greater flexibility than some of her colleagues due to the flexibility of her role has been counter-intuitive.

She said, "Not everyone in the company is given the liberty to work from home, and I believe that in times of crisis we need to show solidarity. I personally can work from home, but it was counterintuitive for the company to allow some people to do it and some people not to, just because their role wouldn't allow them to."

However, due to the ongoing crisis both acknowledged that there is no other option other than to embrace the concept of remote working – but conceded that due to the resources at their disposal they are in a better position to adapt than some SME's.

The conversation continued by examining whether the ongoing situation will lead to a cultural paradigm shift in relation to the way we view working here in the UAE. If employees can work just as effectively from home will this result in more flexibility for employees, and lead to the decline of the traditional office environment?

Dr Ozkaya said that the wonders of modern technology mean he no longer has to conduct several meetings across different continents in a period of just six days, but conceded that there are some jobs in which you simply can't work remotely.

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Labaki said the move to remote working has eliminated the culture of mundane meetings at Emaar, but did state working remotely could lead to some teams to become less efficient.

She continued, "This situation is eye opening and it's completely changing how we work. The real concern is that maybe we're not ready as a company to move fully digital, especially because of the nature of some our roles. Even if we were to have the technological capabilities to make it happen, there's an issue of trust with the employees to do their job and to avoid security breaches."

Finally, we focused on the topic of security and examined

how companies transitioning to a virtual workplace can remain protected.

For example, the highly praised video conferencing software, Zoom has been facing an increasing number of cybersecurity concerns. The company has had to deal with one controversy after another – from the Zoom app on iOS sending analytics data to Facebook, to addresses and photos of users leaking, or strangers hijacking third-party calls.

Dr Ozkaya himself wasn't very keen on using Zoom while working from home, and explained that businesses need to 'expect the unexpected' in these difficult times.

Dr Ozkaya said, "As a cybersecurity expert, I live always thinking that a breach is going to happen. My job is to forsee possible attacks and to put the right measures in place to avoid it from happening. In a sense, securing organisations is like protecting against the coronavirus – you must take the proper precautions to prevent the problem from spreading."

Labaki revealed that Emaar have adopted an approach of being 'positively paranoid', always second guessing their security strategy in order to improve it and be prepared if the worse were to happen.

She explained, "Security breaches are inevitable. Organisations need to make sure employees are aware about the correct cybersecurity measures. Companies should also establish a level of trust within the workplace through communication and transparency."



# **TAKING THE RISK**

For this month's Women in Tech feature, CNME sat down with **Kinda Baydoun**, Pointnext Services Leader – UAE at HPE, who reflected on her career journey and how HPE is supporting its female employees.

> anded in Dubai in 2005, Baydoun enjoys one of the most prolific and successful careers in the ICT industry in the region. She started her career in the Gulf working for Sun Microsystems, the company behind Java and Solaris, as a Services Partner Representative for the Gulf and Pakistan, before becoming the Territory Sales Manager for Bahrain. Fifteen years later, Baydoun is now the Pointnext Services

Leader for the UAE at Hewlett Packard Enterprise – one of the company's most important and ambitious roles.

The journey to success wasn't the easiest though, as it happens with many women in the industry.

Baydoun said, "My first experience with Sun Microsystems was very positive – it was a very diverse and multicultural environment, but as it often was the case at the time, there weren't many women in client or partnersfacing positions, especially in sales. I started out in a telesales role, but I knew that wasn't where I envisioned myself.

"Becoming an account manager wasn't without challenges though. I had to learn how to deal with conflicts and confrontation with partners – many of whom weren't used to interacting with women on business matters. I remember going to many meetings and receiving no eye contact from the men in the room, just because it wasn't part of

the culture at the time." Baydoun explained that adapting and embracing the Gulf's culture was key to attack those first hurdles at the beginning of her career – but more than anything, she believes that challenging herself has taught her the most over the course of the years in the region.

In her new role as Pointnext Services Leader, Baydoun supports customers throughout their journey with HPE, from designing a strategy, to implementing solutions and supporting it afterwards.

Specifically, HPE Pointnext Services advises clients on IT strategy to transform hybrid cloud environments, take advantage of AI and innovate at the edge.

Baydoun explained that she has been learning a lot since undertaking the role and pushing herself has helped accelerate her career journey.

"I believe that when I push myself, I learn a lot more than I would by remaining in my comfort zone – I took on the Pointnext Services Leader position because I wanted to 'strengthen my muscles' and expose myself to new challenges," she said.

The ICT executive continued by discussing that unfortunately very often women think too much before taking chances when it comes to their careers. A 2014 internal report by Hewlett Packard proves her point – according to the report, women tend to apply for a new job only

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Kinda Baydoun Pointnext Services Leader - UAE, HPE

APRIL 2020



when they meet 100 percent of the listed criteria, compared to men who usually apply when they meet about 60 percent.

Baydoun continued, "As women, we think twice and thrice before applying for a position or asking for a raise, whereas men usually just go for it. It is true that in most case you should apply for a job even if you only fulfil 60 percent of the job's requirements – you will be able to learn the rest on the job. Women need to be encouraged to take more risks and stop doubting themselves in order to succeed."

A lack of role models also plays a big part in a woman's career path, explained Baydoun, who was proud to tell CNME about HPE's female fast-track program – the program, to which Baydoun participated, aims to prepare 25 talented women within the organisation to become future directors. "HPE recognised that it needed to have better female representation within their cohort of worldwide managing directors, especially as very often managing directors' successors tend to also be men. This is why we started this female fast-track program, to support the women in the company to take over those roles in the future," she explained.

HPE has been at the forefront of reaching gender equality in the workplace, and was recently recognised by The Women's Forum of New York for having



Women need to be encouraged to take more risks and stop doubting themselves in order to succeed." 40 percent female representation on its Board of Directors.

Baydoun told CNME she feels very lucky to work for the company, as it's been supporting women through different projects, including the creation of a women empowerment group based in its Dubai office.

"The group consists of seven women within the company, plus two sponsors. The reason we decided to create this group is that we wanted to create a space to empower women in their workspace," continued Baydoun.

"The malefactor in the industry is obviously very dominant, and although the women who started this group, including myself, have strong personalities and feel very empowered already, we understand that it might not be the case for other women, and we want to give those women a stronger voice inside the company and in the industry."

### UIPATH

# ENABLING FAST CHANGE

Deputy Editor Giorgia Guantario talked with **Karan Dixit**, VP - MEA, at UiPath, to understand how the RPA leader has been supporting organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

he rapid spread of COVID-19 has disrupted industries all over the world, with organisations having to frantically adapt to remote working and the challenges that come with this new working style.

Facing such disruption, organisations have turned to technology to meet a new set of requirements imposed by the pandemic. Major among them is Robotic Process Automation (RPA), a technology that allows for quick automation of manual tasks and creation of digital assistants.

The current situation is proof that organisations need to accelerate digital transformation in order to stay afloat, and RPA is the technology that could help them achieve this goal and answer their growing digital demands.

Karan Dixit, VP – MEA, at UiPath, the global leader in RPA, told CNME how UiPath's team has been responding to the emergency and how RPA has been helping different industries cope with the challenges they're facing and accelerating their digital transformation journey.

Karan, who joined UiPath in 2018, believes that the main issue organisations are facing due to the pandemic has to do with capacity – many industries, including insurance, retail, and banking, have in fact had to deal with an increasing number of customers requests.

"Just because planes are not flying, or stores are not open, it doesn't mean that the airline or retail industries have stopped their operations. Organisations have had to deal with an increasing number of back and front-office administration processes to meet the demands of their customers," continued Karan.

"RPA as a technology allows organisations to scale up those processes and provide digital capacity at a moment's notice. The ease of use and extremely fast deployment of UiPath's RPA technology is helping businesses across all industries to quickly and efficiently cope with these new requirements."

In fact, the very nature of RPA, which is to transform the way people work and operate, has put this technology in the perfect position to help organisations that are trying to adapt to remote working and to accelerate digital transformation.

Karan continued, "The level of disruption we have seen due to this pandemic is something that industries were not prepared for and could not expect. At UiPath, we are used to working in a disruptive environment because that's one of the characteristics of our technology – RPA is fundamentally changing the way people work.

"In the past few weeks, we have actually seen an increasing demand from our customers and partners, and our team is very focused to help any industry overcome this new challenge. We've always believed RPA could make a big difference for businesses, but we are now seeing a true validation of the technology from the global marketplace. The engagement has been incredible and it's the best motivation we could ask for in these difficult times."

Specifically, UiPath has been playing a key role in helping the healthcare industry deal with the huge influx of patients and data, which has massively increased due to COVID-19.

At the end of March, the RPA leader launched a pro bono automation project with the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital in Dublin, Ireland. The initiative assigns software robots to the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Department in order to reduce the administrative strain placed upon the department by multidrug-resistant organisms or viruses such as COVID-19, enabling IPC nurses to spend more time with patients.

Karan was however keen to explain that the healthcare industry has many facets, and UiPath has been helping with each and every one of them.

He said, "The healthcare industry spreads across different aspects - while frontline medical staff has been under a lot of strain, there has also been an increase in capacity for testing and appointments, and on the insurance and government side in order to deal with claims, or the medical supply chain. RPA is essentially trying to 'flatten the curve' across all these divisions by providing the capacity necessary to deal with the greater influx generated by this pandemic."

Karan also explained that

social distancing and the necessary closure of physical offices and stores created the perfect environment to encourage learning and upskilling within organisations.

He said, "A lot of customers who cannot continue certain projects because they'd require office presence have been engaging with us to train their teams on RPA. It's important for them to upskill and rethink about how they work in order to bring immediate business value to the organisation once this emergency is over – UiPath has been helping customers achieve this by offering our first-of-itskind, online RPA training and certification curriculum for free."

Uipath's Academy program, which has seen over 550,000 enrolled individuals since its launch in 2017, has recently been extended to include new learning paths, functionalities and certifications.

The company has also launched a "Reboot Your Skills Program," a four-week learning sprint for professionals that want to develop in-demand RPA skills.

Karan continued, "At UiPath, we are committed to training workers in RPA across all the innovative functionalities we are offering across our portfolio. In today's time of emergency,

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RPA as a technology allows organisations to scale up those processes and provide digital capacity at a moment's notice."



these same functionalities and technologies have become the most relevant and valuable to deal with processes and keep businesses going."

Karan concluded by expressing UiPath's desire to help organisations and partners face this emergency with RPA technology.

"UiPath is very keen on helping during this difficult time by leveraging our technologies and knowledge. Our vast partner ecosystem has also demonstrated an eagerness to help and we've been able to reach many organisations thanks to their help. Moreover, as more and more use cases come up, such as the one with Mater Misericordiae University Hospital in Ireland, we would like to share these experiences in order to spark new ideas that could help others during this pandemic." **cnme** 

#### DUBAI INTERNET CITY

# THE GATEWAY TO THE FUTURE

In an exclusive interview with CNME, **Ammar Al Malik**, Managing Director of Dubai Internet City, outlines how the tech hub is planning on reaching 40 thousand talented ICT professionals in the next five years.

htering its third decade of life, Dubai Internet City, founded in 1999 by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, is continuing to strive as the centre of innovation and entrepreneurship in Dubai.

Over the years, the technology hub has grown exponentially, currently vaunting over 1600 partners, the likes of global ICT giants Facebook, Oracle and Microsoft, as well as many small and medium enterprises.

In October 2018, Dubai Internet City consolidated its support for startups SMEs with the opening of the its first Innovation Hub. The Hub has played a major role in fostering talent and creativity in the community, which in turn is driving innovation throughout the city.

Ammar Al Malik, Managing Director of Dubai Internet City, told CNME that developing and nurturing talent is just the first step of a greater plan.

Al Malik said, "The Innovation Hub has become the ideal place to drive innovation through knowledge. The hub sees a good mix of bigger and smaller tech companies, as well as consultants and training facilities within the hub itself, or in close proximity, like in the case of The University of Wollongong.

"We are fundamentally transforming knowledge through the Innovation Hub – phase one of the project has enabled us to transfer and acknowledge talent and skillsets between private organisations and academia."

The 1.8 million square feet hub consist of ten buildings, integrating offices and retail, with a mix of large corporates, SMEs and startups.

Al Malik continued by candidly outlining the future of the Innovation Hub, which he believes will add thousands of people to the technological landscape of Dubai Internet City.

"Developing talent is just the first phase of the project – we expect to add about 15 thousand IT professionals to our jurisdiction thanks to the Innovation Hub. With the 25 thousand we already have in Dubai Internet City, we will reach 40 thousand talented professionals in the next five years," he explained. "That amount of talent, in collaboration with universities and programs such as Dubai Future Foundation, and successful startups and enterprises, will allow us to achieve significant results for Dubai Internet City and the rest of the Emirate – talent and knowledge are key to reach that goal."

This year will also see Dubai hosting the much-anticipated Expo 2020, deemed to become the world's greatest show. Discussing the event with CNME, Al Malik explained that although Dubai Internet City won't have a direct presence at Expo, many of the companies that reside within the technology park will play a key role during the six-months long event.

"Expo 2020 is a great opportunity for the organisations based in Dubai Internet City. These companies will provide their solutions and products to the event in order to make it a success – take as an example Cisco or Mastercard, Dubai Internet City-based companies that are greatly supporting Expo 2020. As Dubai Internet City, we keep We are fundamentally transforming knowledge through the Innovation Hub"

on supporting these companies to be based in Dubai and to be able to leverage opportunities such as this event," Al Malik continued.

The charismatic Managing Director also believes Expo 2020, and its legacy project District 2020, will solve one of the greatest challenges the region is facing – fragmentation.

"We are in strong need of innovation and platforms to provide a bridge within the region and break the fragmentation we are facing. Expo 2020 will be the platform to present the Middle East, and Dubai specifically, as a gateway to the future – the theme of the Expo, "Connecting Minds, Creating Future", is a reflection of this goal we want to achieve and the story we want to tell."

Al Malik concluded by reiterating the importance of digital transformation to achieve H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum's objective of improving citizens' quality of life through technology. **cnme**  Ammar Al Malik Managing Director of Dubai Internet City 17

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### SUSE

# FULFILLING **CUSTOMERS' NEEDS**

CNME secured an interview with Sandiip Chhabra, Sales Director for MENA at SUSE, who outlined the organisation is helping its customers to simplify, modernise and accelerate their digital transformation journey.



Sales Director for MENA, SUSE

ast year, SUSE broke away from Micro Focus following its acquisition by Swedish private equity firm EQT. Can you outline to us what the vision and mission statement of SUSE is?

In March, we are celebrating one year of independence

for SUSE, and we are all very excited to have the backing of EQT as a growth investor who supports our ambitious growth plans. We are today the largest independent open source software vendor. Key to all of our plans and strategy is that we are defining ourselves on what our customer's needs are

and completely base our future on our customers' requirements. Talking about open source: for SUSE open means more than software. It is our business model and our culture. We deliver truly open source solutions without any enforced vendor lock-in, combined with exceptional service and support for our customers. For us, our commitment to open source also means adapting it and making it dependable, with highly flexible solutions that are hardened and secured for the most demanding IT environments.

SUSE has been a pioneer in open-source software for more than 25 years, and has established itself as a global leader in delivering solutions that give enterprises greater flexibility. How has the company adapted and evolved over the years as market demands and expectations continue to shift?

SUSE is a company that defines itself and its future based on scouting industry and open source trends, enabling SUSE's engineers to think big, think outside the day-to-day, and try,

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fail, learn and try new ideas as a result. SUSE is more than just a Linux distributor and serves as a transformational and strategic partner for customers which allows the team to develop and deliver innovation solutions based on outcomes needed by customers. Alongside our customers, our employees are on an IT transformation journey which encompasses breaking down silos, embracing DevOps models, developing the right cloud strategy for our business, container-based computing and new ways of application delivery to name a few. All of this with the goal to have the best flexible and open IT-infrastructure in place to support customer needs. It's been a long journey from the first ever enterprise Linux distribution developed by SUSE to edge computing or high-performance computing. Today open source is powering IT transformation and, with this, enabling our customers to develop new business models. While SUSE has been a productoriented company in the past, the new SUSE evolves to a solution company - a strategic partner for our customers that enables business outcomes for them.

Emerging and disruptive technologies has forced companies to embrace 'digital transformation'. How is SUSE helping its customers to simplify, modernise and accelerate their digital transformation objectives? A survey of our customer base - including lapsed customers and prospects - shows that businesses want to invest in open source, but the landscape is complicated, and this is

where we can help them to simplify. Specifically, to simplify and optimise their apps and data in their existing IT environments. About 80 percent of SUSE's customer base have to contend with complex legacy infrastructure environments and are looking to vendors like SUSE and SUSE's channel partners to help them modernise. This means modernising their business by bringing their applications and data into the modern computing world. Lastly, businesses need to deliver updates to their customers as required. Together with our partners, we have the technology, services and expertise to enable businesses to accelerate this process. Business leaders know they need to accelerate and scale their business to enable the full potential of their applications and data.

In 2018, you disclosed that a skills shortage in many companies in relation to emerging technologies was seriously hampering implementation and delaying at least 50% of customerprojects. Has the situation improved, or is talent acquisition still a very real problem in the IT industry here in the Middle East?

Skills shortage for DevOpsbased application modernisation is still a challenge for most customers in all industries, worldwide and not limited to the Gulf states or the wider region. Application delivery solutions, such as SUSE CaaS Platform or SUSE Cloud Application Platform The new SUSE evolves to a solution company – a strategic partner for our customers that enables business outcomes for them."

are helping customers significantly to benefit from running Kubernetes and Cloud Foundry without having to deep-dive into complex technologies. Together with our partner ecosystem we have been intensifying our efforts for a knowledge-transfer to customers and partners. But there is still a significant skills-gap. Closing this skillsgap is a joint effort of many stakeholders, from governments to the education systems, schools, universities and new offerings for life-long learning. Today, businesses - and in consequence countries - will only succeed if they can actively partake in modern technologies.

### Can you give us an insight into which markets SUSE is present in across the Middle East, and how did the company perform financially in 2019?

Recently disclosed financial results for Q1 FY20 show a 12 percent revenue increase year over year and a 67 percent surge in cloud revenue on a global basis. This follows on the back of more than nine years of continuous revenue growth. Talking of the region, we have a focus on UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar where we see strong growth momentum. In addition, we see exceptional growth in Pakistan, Egypt and Bahrain. For SUSE Middle East FY19 was a very strong year with a 129 percent achievement of our financial goal and high triple digit growth in our business with cloud services partners. Five of our SUSE employees in Middle East were amongst the global top-100 achievers within SUSE. This makes me very proud. cnme



LENOVO

# **THE ANSWER TO SMART CITIES**

Deputy Editor Giorgia Guantario talked with **Richard Wilcox**, Regional Director Middle East at Lenovo DCG, to discuss the organisation's O3 results and how they're supporting the region's smart city initiatives.

> enovo Data Centre Group (DCG) has enjoyed significant breakthroughs in the region and globally in the past year. At the beginning of 2019, the unit launched the new ThinkSystem SE350 edge server – slightly larger than a ThinkPad laptop, the SE350 is a purpose-built server designed to be deployed on small spaces, such as walls, poles or racks.

Winner of the IoT Edge Product of the Year at the IoT Breakthrough Awards, Lenovo's SE350 could be the

answer to the huge amount of data that will be generated as governments deploy their fastgrowing smart city initiatives.

Government entities and enterprise businesses have in fact been spearheading smart city projects by heavily investing in Internet of Things (IoT), 5G and Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, which in turn will create an explosion of data from the edge to the core. Research by KPMG indicates that the Middle East and Africa's Smart Cities market will double from \$1.3

billion in 2018 to \$2.7 billion by 2022.

Richard Wilcox, Regional Director – Middle East at Lenovo DCG believes the ThinkSystem SE350 is perfectly positioned to meet the requirements of these projects and answer customers' growing needs.

He said, "Especially in this region, governments understand the importance of data to drive smart city initiatives which will enhance the lives of their citizens. Our ThinkSystem SE350, with its phenomenal processing power, storage and

network all in one box, allows for this data to be processed and analysed more quickly. It's also 5G enabled, which allowed us to work closely with telcos and enterprise businesses in the region to really develop their edge and IoT capabilities in smart city initiatives."

Wilcox, who joined Lenovo DCG in 2018 and enjoys almost two decades of experience in the enterprise technology and data centre industry, continued by discussing the organisation's successes in the region over the past year.

"2019 for Lenovo was an excellent year – in the Middle East we've seen outstanding developments with regional telcos and governments. Coupled with that, we've also maintained and won back a lot of businesses in the financial sector. I believe this success has been achieved thanks to our solid strategy and execution, as well as our operational excellence."

While Lenovo's 2019 Q3 results showed the Data Centre Group revenue remained flat year-onyear due to sharp component price reductions, Wilcox believes 2020 has already started off better than the previous year – despite the threat of COVID-19 looming over the organisation's supply chain capacity.

Wilcox continued, "Whilst our revenue remained flat in 2019, we've actually seen significant growth in the Non-hyperscale, which grew 16 percent globally last year. Similarly, our Software Defined Infrastructure (SDI) and Storage saw solid growth year on year of more than 40 percent across the business. This year we're working on a lot of projects on a global and local basis which I believe will really have a positive effect on our future results.

"Obviously the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on our production – that's inevitable. However, our priority has been to look at returning to normal capacity as soon as possible by remaining dynamic and flexible. Our supply chain and operational facilities spread across 30 countries globally, and whilst the majority are in China, we are leveraging all of our locations to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on our business and on our customers"

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt businesses and communities, and talks of recession are again in the limelight, Wilcox also discussed how the new Lenovo Financial Services solutions can help ease the financial concerns of its customers.

Wilcox said, "We're seeing a huge drive from organisations in the region to get into the data centre market, but one of the main concerns we face is over cost and CapEx/OpEx expenditures. With Lenovo Financial Services, we can



With Lenovo Financial Services, we can offer a range of commercial payment solutions for the sale, procurement and consumption of any IT-related products and services."



offer a range of commercial payment solutions for the sale, procurement and consumption of any IT-related products and services. On top of that, we also offer the option to support a circular economy by disposing of any IT equipment to an environmental standard. These solutions allow our customers to develop their business and grow more easily with our support."

The Regional Director concluded by expressing his plans for the upcoming year, which will see them focusing on their key strengths to grow the business locally and globally.

"Obviously given the COVID-19 outbreak, we need to be extremely adaptable and dynamic with our plans for the year. Nonetheless, I believe focusing on our strengths, including our High Performance Computing (HPC) and IoT businesses, will be the key to achieve growth in 2020."

### RIVERBED

# CUTTING THROUGH THE NOISE

CNME secured an exclusive interview with **Dante Malagrinò**, Chief Development Officer at Riverbed, to discuss the organisation's new SD-WAN solution, SteelConnect EX and their partnership with Versa Networks.



**Dante Malagrinò** Chief Development Officer, Riverbed

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iverbed enjoyed an eventful year in 2019, confirming its position as the market incumbent for network and applications performance.

In July, the US-based organisation announced the formation of a separate division, Aternity, that would solely focus on Digital Experience Management (DEM), which includes Riverbed's End User Experience Monitoring (EUEM) and Application Performance Management (APM) solutions.

This decision allowed Riverbed to focus on its flagship Digital Networking business, which saw two major announcements in the partnership with SD-WAN vendor Versa Networks, and the subsequent launch of a new SD-WAN solution, SteelConnect EX.

Dante Malagrinò, Riverbed's Chief Development Officer, has been one of the leaders behind the changes that have raised the company's success to new highs.

The charismatic Chief Development Officer, who boasts a venerable career in the IT industry, joined Riverbed in April 2018 as the engineering leader of the Cloud Infrastructure Business Unit (CIBU), and was promoted to his current role earlier last year – since then, he's been spearheading innovation within the company by focusing on its four core solutions areas.

"Riverbed currently focuses only on network and applications performance across four key areas: WAN Optimisation, which is essentially the ability to compress data and reduce data utilisation of a wide area link, primarily MPLS; Application Acceleration, focusing on providing acceleration services to deploy Softwareas-a-Service (SaaS) apps, particularly Office 365; Visibility and Network Performance Management; and finally SD-WAN," he explained.

Although SD-WAN has been a main focus for Riverbed, Malagrinò was keen to explain that this technology is not the answer to all problems, as many organisations tend to believe.

He continued, "Most organisations start their journeys from SD-WAN, without asking themselves what challenges they're actually facing. However, CIOs who choose to focus on supporting their applications by hoping to maximise their performance, need to understand that SD-WAN is only one of the components to achieve that – in order to succeed, they need to factor in all of the key areas Riverbed has to offer."

SteelConnect EX, Riverbed's latest addition to their SD-WAN portfolio, has been a true reflection of Malagrinò's innovative ideas.

The enterprise-class and carrier-grade WAN Edge Infrastructure solution was introduced to provide a firstclass SD-WAN with security and app acceleration, within the same physical footprint.

"Simplifying networking at the branch is one of the main reasons our customers are choosing SD-WAN. Over the years, branch offices have added more functionalities and devices, such as routers, app acceleration and security devices – having all these separate devices is operationally very expensive and complicated, especially without the necessary IT skillset.

"SteelConnect EX allows customers to deploy one device to run any functionality they need – this could be just SD-WAN; SD-WAN and security; SD-WAN and app acceleration; or all three, depending on the use case they have in mind," Malagrinò explained.

Moreover, SteelConnect EX vaunts an enterprise-class and carrier-grade routing stack that ensures the solution can seamlessly co-exist and interoperate with legacy networks, while also allowing for the scalability and performance necessary to meet the requirements of complex networks.

The innovative solution was launched shortly after Riverbed announced a Strategic Global OEM Agreement with Versa Networks, a leading vendor in the software-defined networking market.

The partnership, which sees Riverbed leveraging Versa Networks' enterprise-class secure SD-WAN technology, was "very important" for the organisation, Malagrinò explained.

"Riverbed has had an SD-WAN offering for about four years, our SteelConnect CX – this solution works very well in smaller environments with simpler requirements. However, as we started working with enterprise and government organisations, which usually have more complicated requirements and a legacy installed base of routing that you have to interoperate for a long period of time, we needed a much stronger set of routing features.

"The partnership with Versa Networks allowed us to get that full routing stack, among other things, to become fully interoperable with anything customers already have in place. We are thus able to support customers' routing legacy and enable them to transition to a next-generation future-state in networking at their own pace."

Discussing future trends in the market, Malagrinò believes the mobile workforce will soon start posing many challenges, as well as opportunities, across all industries. Many businesses have in fact turned to a mobile workforce model to address real estate and flexibility requirements, which in turn

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SteelConnect EX allows customers to deploy one device to run any functionality they need" has prompted IT organisations, including Riverbed, to come up with new solutions to achieve the same level of security and performance without relying on a physical footprint.

Malagrinò said, "At Riverbed, we have come up with a product called 'Client Accelerator', a software-only form factor running on users' mobile device to provide accelerated access to on-prem, IaaS, or SaaS-based applications anywhere they are.

"Adopting a mobile workforce model is not just a tactical need of today, it will be a strategic direction of the future – this trend will increase and the capabilities of technologies such as 5G and Wi-Fi 6 will only enhance it. Eventually, I expect we won't need physical networks anymore. If that were to happen, we will have to shift our intelligence from the network to the client, as they will play a much more significant role, with their laptops or mobile phones acting as end-point networking devices."

Malagrinò concluded by discussing Riverbed's plans for the year, which will see the organisation continuing to advocate its four core solutions areas to its customers, as part of a unified platform approach to bring networking and applications together.

"In 2020, we will continue to help customers navigate through all the noise surrounding SD-WAN, as well as continuing to work with companies to deploy SaaS. With our 15 years' experience in networking, we are able to maximise performance and deal with complexity better than any other organisation in the market."



# CNS MIDDLE EAST EMPOWER MOHAP TO RESPOND TO COVID-19 CRISIS

CNME Editor Mark Forker speaks to **Mubaraka Mubarak Ali Ibrahim**, Director, IT Department at the Ministry of Health and Protection (MOHAP) to find out how technology specialist Computer Networks Systems revamped their entire IT infrastructure in preparation to effectively respond to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

an you outline to us in detail what role Computer Network Systems played in terms of helping the Ministry of Health & Prevention completely restructure its IT operations?

The United Arab Emirates Ministry of Health and Prevention had a vision to enhance community health by providing comprehensive, innovative, and fair healthcare services to international standards, and perform its role as a regulator and supervisor of the healthcare sector through a modern and integrated legislative health system.

We did this by outsourcing

best-in-class technical expertise in service of our ongoing transformation story; adopting the latest technological developments – which in this case was the infrastructure and provision of 24x7 services and operations that are critical to be able provide modern health services.

MOHAP selected CNS Middle East to be our key technology partner in a bid to revamp the ministry's entire IT infrastructure, including our 24x7 IT service desk, and IT operations. They played a critical role in enabling MOHAP to provide modern health services that meet the UAE government's high expectations and are aligned with the country's vision of the future.

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MOHAP selected CNS Middle East to be our principal technology partner in a bid to revamp the ministry's entire IT infrastructure, including our 24x7 IT service desk, and IT operations.

CNS Middle East has announced that the project was executed successfully and highlighted the role its technology partners Cisco and HP took in the delivery of the project. What was the most significant outcome of this program in terms of enhancing the IT infrastructure at the Ministry of Health & Prevention?

Our priority and scope, particularly for this project, which was to build a highly robust IT foundation to support all health services provided to UAE citizens and residents, was backed by a support level that guarantees service continuity toward patient satisfaction.

We thereby anticipate that this technology investment will improve public health outcomes for our constituents, which is interoperable with wider a government strategy and upholds the nation's vision of the future.

We acknowledge the increased value of a central contractor's integration of diverse partners. Cisco, Fortinet, HPE, BMC, VMWare, and ManageEngine were the main technology partners CNS Middle East brought together to provide the hardware and software solution MOHAP needed.

CNS Middle East delivered on the main objectives of this project by building an IT foundation that is backed up by 24x7 service delivery and technical support to guarantee service continuity and customer satisfaction.

Following the successful completion of this project, which has allowed you to establish a contact center and unify services. What will be the next step for the **Ministry of Health** & Prevention in terms of its IT strategy going forward? With a stronger backbone, more reliable connectivity, and refreshed outside interfaces, MOHAP intends to deliver comprehensive and integrated health care that exceeds expectations for a happy

> **Mubaraka Mubarak Ali Ibrahim** Director, IT Department at the Ministry of Health and Protection

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CNS Middle East delivered on the main mandate of this project, which was to build a highly robust IT foundation to support all health services provided to UAE patients.

> community. By building further on our journey to convert 100% of our interactions to electronic touch-points, we'll make public health governance accessible to anyone online, from anywhere, any time. Next on the horizon is leveraging this newly revamped infrastructure to deepen our application of artificial intelligence, telemedicine, wearable devices, and homebased care.

### The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected supply chains, grounded flights, and severely disrupted the global economy. How are the Ministry of Health & Prevention using technology and IT to help curb the spread of the virus in the UAE to help protect its residents and citizens?

Having long been preparing for crisis response, our health workers on the frontlines and core administrative units were able to rapidly mobilize and efficiently scale up to deal with the surging demand for the broad care triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having had the latest technologies already deployed,

which included but was not limited to SDWAN, teleconferencing, VPN, IP telephony; and remote collaboration services that enabled all our personnel to work seamlessly from any location, including their homes, during and outside of work hours.

Beyond continuing to provide services from all our existing points of care, new hyperlocal operations can be quickly activated based on emergent need, and all our administrative staff are able to work seamlessly from any location including home 24x7.

Our medical staff are providing services from all our existing locations, plus we were able to create new service locations anywhere in UAE based on need within days.

### Can you outline your primary roles and responsibilities as Director of Information Technology Department at Ministry of Health & Prevention?

My primary mandate is to set the pace and direction of our technology-driven management capabilities to be in line with the demanding expectations of our government and to embrace creative thinking as a lifestyle to ensure readiness in an increasingly integrated health ecosystem.

Coordination and orchestration of talent and resources, championing the internal technological agenda, and extending our mission to external stakeholders from diverse sectors are all fundamental to the fulfillment of our promise.

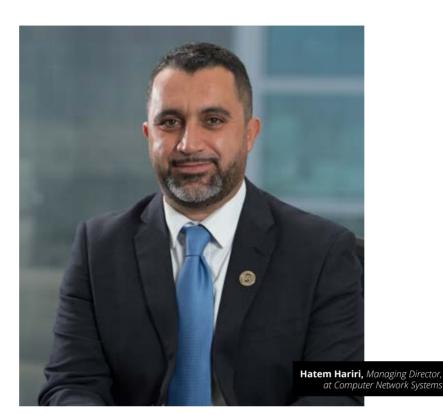
# What are your main goals for the remainder of 2020?

This year's events to date have changed many plans, but our main drive remains resolute: We shall continue to accelerate our journey of digital readiness to serve our public need at a pace that exceeds the expectations of our leadership. We will ensure MOHAP's vision for an effective and sustainable Healthcare System for a happy society is realized to make us the premier smart e-government in every facet.

CNME Editor Mark Forker also spoke to Hatem Hariri, Managing Director at Computer Network Systems (CNS Middle East), to find out his perspective on the project and learn how they leveraged their expertise and industry knowhow to empower MOHAP to have the IT infrastructure that was capable of responding to a major emergency such as COVID-19.

How significant for CNS Middle East was being chosen as the principal technology partner to revamp the entire IT infrastructure at MOHAP? Two of the values that drive MOHAP most are Innovation and Community Happiness. Since this is also in line with the UAE government strategy of digital innovation and readiness for the future, CNS Middle East already shares those same values.

CNS Middle East is backed by the Ghobash Group of Companies and over 33 years of history working with the government sector and health care providers in the region. We have long been trusted by our customers for delivering cutting edge



technology that better serves their end-users to increase team productivity.

For this particular initiative, when we first engaged MOHAP, we based our conversations on a long history of enabling other significant enterprise customers to achieve their business objectives. We also decided the best approach to work with a government body with a function as important as providing healthcare service to the UAE public was as strategic partner.

This helped us define our engagement model with a proper strategy, not only to meet the basic requirements for this project, but also to join MOHAP along their digital transformation journey. Our approach was successful, and we were immensely proud to have been finally chosen by the ministry to take on their digital transformation journey and create a unified environment for their patients and facilities across multiple emirates.

This five-year contract scope with MOHAP is to have CNS Middle East their key technology partner and to revamp the ministry's entire IT infrastructure, including 24x7 IT service desk, and IT managed services. CNS Middle East was able to provide MOHAP with the right technology solution to enable modern health services that meet the UAE government's high expectations and are aligned with the country's vision of the future.

Our ongoing task is also to maintain our global leadership in healthcare-related technology by supporting this infrastructure over five years with a full managed-services contract. We're amid an unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic. How important was it for CNS Middle East to deliver this IT overhaul in time for MOHAP to respond to this crisis effectively?

After being awarded the project we considered ourselves a partner to the Ministry and took great pride in being a part of their team, so naturally we took it personally. The COVID situation drove us to amend our project delivery strategy to ensure we complete the project on time. Also, to prepare for these new conditions. We have engaged all our teams, expertise, and capacity to put them at the disposal of the Ministry and its leadership.

To support their strategy and tactics in responding to COVID we have 130 people working around the clock for MOHAP and on the ground to support every possible initiative or request that might be asked for. CNS Middle East will always put the customer first, and to further support MOHAP and our existing and new customers, our teams are trained to remain updated with the latest in technology to be able to provide that to our customers and partners.

partner **cnme** 



### MICROSOFT

# BANKING ON TECHNOLOGY

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with **Patrice Amann**, Regional Leader – EMEA Financial Services at Microsoft, to discuss how emerging technologies such as AI and Blockchain are fundamentally reshaping the financial services landscape.

n an interview which covered a whole range of topics, Amann disclosed his definition of digital transformation and highlighted Microsoft's investment in cybersecurity.

Amann has enjoyed a decorated and distinguished career in the IT industry and has been tasked with the responsibility of driving Microsoft's financial services operations across the EMEA region.

The dynamic Frenchman articulated how banks were moving away from their traditional business model of being focused on their own products in a bid to become more predictive and prescriptive.

"Banks are embracing what we call 'intelligent banking'. They're implementing technologies like AI, Machine Learning and Big Data & Analytics to ensure that they provide the best advice to its customers. This drives engagement between the banks and its customers and allows them to become part of their journey. By becoming more predictive and prescriptive this ultimately enables banks to be less reactive and can know exactly what customers want before they even ask for it. They're leveraging technology to drive better value and outcomes for its customers," said Amann.

In addition to this, Amman highlighted how the financial services industry is acutely aware that they need to adopt new technologies to meet the consumer demands that are evolving all the time.

"In this digital era, it's all about the best last experience. The young generation drives the game. Banks know that intelligent banking needs to become more predictive and prescriptive to deliver the best offerings in advance. Financial institutions need to better understand their customer needs. And this is also what drives us to embrace this notion of an ecosystem, because a bank by itself would probably not deliver the best value at all, yet banks augmented by technology and augmented by a

FinTech ecosystem can together become smarter and faster to the market to deliver a very different value proposition for customers," said Amann.

Many prominent commentators within the IT industry have tipped blockchain technology to completely transform financial services, and Amann said that Microsoft's ambitions in relation to the technology was to provide it as-a-service.

"I think what was missing so far was probably the enterprise grade of blockchain. And this is what we're starting to provide with our blockchain as a service model. So again, we as a technology provider are attempting to support the right technology to enhance others to build on that. One of the capabilities of Azure is bringing a blockchain as-a-service model that can be consumed by our partners to deliver this type of enterprise grade solution," said the Microsoft regional leader.

Digital transformation has been one of the most used terminologies in the

# In this digital era, it's all about the best

all about the best last experience. The young generation drives the game." IT ecosystem over the last number of years, but many enterprises are still resistant to change. Amann details his own definition of what transformation entails and documents Microsoft's approach to digital transformation.

"In my opinion, transformation has many different angles. Transformation is fueled by digital and enabled by culture. And this is not only our learning as we are going through a cultural transformation, it could potentially become part of the equation that discounts the whole value. If a company doesn't understand the kind of cultural transformation they have to implement, in a way it reduces, slows down or kills the opportunity itself. We at Microsoft are trying to implement technology all over the place, and specifically AI to just enhance and augment our employees. For example, from modern workplace, to operations, to treasury. We have optimised, transformed and used technologies to be smarter and be more reactive internally, and to offer better solutions. And these kinds of solutions are shared with our customers as well to enable them to tackle complex issues across their business functions," said Amman.

Microsoft has invested significantly in cybersecurity, as more and more technologies continue to emerge the sophistication of cyberattacks increase, and as data has now become the most valuable commodity of every business it has never been more important for enterprises to be protected.



"Microsoft invested a billion dollars last year on cyber security alone. We're very serious about it and are building on cultural transformation in the way of developing software. We have dedicated teams that play the role of hackers that try to attack our own capabilities. It is important to stay current as it is a continuous journey. Whatever we learn from security graphs we understand it and then we share those insights with our customers to help them to better understand the threats. Specifically, for financial services, we have a compliance program that helps these customers to be more proactive in terms of understanding certain patterns," said Amman.

Banks are sitting on oceans of data, but Amman stressed that if financial institutions don't properly structure that data then it won't be able to extract the value from it to enhance its operations.

"The discussion on AI continues to shift and grow daily. You can integrate AI solutions across departments which enables them to streamline and optimise internal processes. For instance, when you do treasury forecasts, or sales forecasts in a way to better predict the future – and apply algorithms to derive on logic. We are currently conversing with banks and other financial institutions to better structure data estates, regulation and compliance. If you don't structure data and have a clear understanding of it then it becomes a real challenge. It's imperative to manage your data effectively so you can then extract, predict and be prescriptive about your data management," concluded Amman. cnme

AI SOCIETY BAHRAIN

# DR. JASSIM HAJI: "WE'VE NOT USED AI GLOBALLY IN FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19"

In an exclusive interview with Editor Mark Forker, **Dr Jassim Haji**, President of the AI Society Bahrain, charges the US and China with 'neglect' in terms of how they have pursued the development of AI amidst the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic.

r. Haji is one of the most respected business leaders in the Middle East IT ecosystem and has been very vocal in his support for the continued development of AI in order to improve the lives of all in society.

The current outbreak which has affected global supply chains, grounded flights and disrupted the world's economy has resulted in the current system of capitalism being called into question.

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It has become evidently clear amidst this current global crisis that AI has been misused." The many flaws of the capitalist system have been exposed during this crisis, and never has the societal divide between those at the top and those at the bottom rung of the ladder been so acute.

According to Dr Haji economic superpowers such as China and the US who have positioned themselves as leaders in the development of AI have overlooked utilising the capabilities of the technology for the good of society, and instead have focused on how they can capitalise on AI for economic dividends.

"There have been numerous warnings over the last number of years in relation to a global pandemic, and we've been highlighting how AI technology can be dispensed to help prevent a possible outbreak. Unfortunately, those warnings have fallen on deaf ears, and it is my opinion that many leaders have rather regretfully pursued the development of AI for solely commercial reasons," said Haji.

Haji pointed out that AI technologies have been deployed by businesses in order to allow them to automate operations and reduce staff in a bid to save capital and generate new revenue streams, but that approach has backfired.

"It has become evidently clear amidst this current global crisis that AI has been misused. AI should've been implemented in service industries such as in the healthcare industry to better protect citizens. That didn't happen, and I now I believe we're paying the real price for not seizing on the opportunities presented by AI as our world continues to become overwhelmed by COVID-19," said Haji. According to Haji, both the US and China recognised that the costs of R&D around AI was high, and that in order to attract venture capitalists to make investments in the technology, they had to focus on the potential commercialisation of the technology.

"China and the US are real leaders when it comes to AI, and both are trying to now properly deploy the technology in the middle of this global pandemic to try and curb the spread of the deadly virus. Investment in R&D is expensive, but I think it's obvious that both countries looked beyond the capabilities of AI for the greater good of society in order to focus on the economic impact it could have on industry and the global markets," said Haji.

The President of the Bahrain AI Society is not one to mince his words, but he believes that when this storm finally does pass it will lead to a cultural change in terms of how we view emerging technologies.

"I believe that post COVID-19 the situation will be entirely different, and the entire world will acknowledge that we can't just go back to normal and think everything is going to be the same as before. We need to rethink how we structure our societies and I think people will 'demand' that we seize on the benefits of new technologies to improve society first and foremost, before we attempt to commercialise them," said Haji.

Haji, a recent recipient of our CIO100 leadership awards believes that in the future AI will be really focused on improving areas such as



healthcare and education. He illustrated how the use of robotics could've been deployed to protect frontline staff such as doctors and nurses who have put their own lives at risk to save others.

"We really should've better developed robotics through Machine Learning in relation to the healthcare industry over the last number of years, as it could've prevented many nurses and doctors from sadly losing their lives during this pandemic. Simple tasks such as taking swabs and temperatures to determine whether or not somebody had the Coronavirus would've protected so many frontline workers," said Haji.

The predictive nature of AI represents another missed opportunity when examining

how the technology could've been utilised to help combat the spread of this deadly strain of influenza.

"One of the greatest strengths of AI is in the forecasting and predictive capabilities of the technology which is based on the data at its disposal. You could've predicted which areas were going to be worse affected and enabled medical professionals to focus on where the next challenge would arise. The predictive capabilities of AI have been used on the New York Stock Exchange to see how markets will fluctuate and basically determine how people can make money. However, this doesn't exist in the healthcare industry, and it should've been implemented to help both predict and prevent this outbreak," said Haji.

One of the positives Dr Haji can take from this current situation is that he firmly believes that when this pandemic reaches its conclusion it will change the perception of AI on a global scale and reduce the levels of skepticism that have been directed towards the technology in the last number of years.

"The mindset towards AI will change fundamentally. There was a lot of resistance towards AI on a global scale, as it was claimed by many commentators that automation would result in the loss of millions of jobs and it would pave the way for some sort of dystopian world. It is in the human nature to resist change. However, AI is a powerful technology that if used properly can help make the world a better and safer place for us all to live in," concluded Dr Haji. Come

### AMAZON WEB SERVICES

# CUSTOMER OBSESSED

**Miriam McLemore,** Enterprise Strategist at Amazon Web Services, talks digital transformation, data and diversity in a wide-ranging interview with CNME Editor Mark Forker.

igital transformation is one of the most frequently coined terms in the IT ecosystem, but what is your definition of digital transformation? The definition of digital

transformation is a large-scale change in how an organisation delivers value to its customers through the application of digital technologies. While the definition itself is relatively clear, we find the confusion comes in subsequent questions:

What constitutes a largescale change? Where do we get started? How will the organisation improve, change, and transform in delivering value to customers? What are the relevant digital technologies and how do we apply them to business processes? How does the general business engagement with technology change and vice versa? The risk is often that companies race into finding a solution to a poorly

defined problem. It's not uncommon to launch into a transformation effort without fully understanding, or agreeing on, what success looks like.

Working with customers around the world, a key problem that they are struggling with today is that customers' expectations for value and experience has risen dramatically. What legacy companies are finding is that they do not have the structure -culture, organisation, people, process, and technology - to meet these rising customer expectations, and that this lack of agility is impeding their ability to innovate.

The role of the CIO has fundamentally changed and evolved as more and more emerging technologies disrupt major industries. In your expert opinion, what makes an effective CIO in this new era entitled The Fourth Industrial Revolution? Over time, the CIO's role had become oriented around providing a service to the company and delivering projects based on business needs. This business-IT relationship precludes IT from fully participating in direction-setting. This made it hard for IT to maintain a consistent technology strategy at a time when company strategy had moved largely into the digital world, where IT should be the expert.

In contrast, a strategic CIO's role focuses on guiding the enterprise through the digital world: formulating company strategy based on a deep understanding of digital technology and its possibilities and driving innovation.

The CIO's role—as implied in the title Chief Information Officer—includes the identification, collection, storage, and extraction of value from the company's data. The CIO must help the company maximise the data's value for driving performance.

At AWS, we believe that the one thing that will set



companies apart is the data that they collect and the way that they analyse that data and use it to make decisions. Through the tools that we offer across machine learning and data analytics services, we give CIOs the ability to democratise access to datadriven insights and enable real-time impact.

Aramex, for example, turned to AWS to increase

agility and speed of innovation through the power of data. The company built a data lake, which is hosting a big data infrastructure that leverages machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities, to further enhance the customer experience by transforming the last mile delivery. Taking advantage of Amazon SageMaker, a fully

managed machine learning service for building, training, and deploying machine learning models, Aramex's inhouse data science team built a data analytics and machine

Utilising this platform, Aramex is improving delivery accuracy and solving for the lack of proper physical addresses in the region by developing intelligent address prediction models that convert descriptive addresses into geo locations.

The ML-based platform is also providing the company the ability to have accurate and instant delivery time predictions, using calculations based on seasonality and capacity constraints. As a result of this adoption, Aramex has increased accuracy in shipping-date predictions by 74 percent, and lowered its average processing time for a prediction from 2.5 seconds to under 200 milliseconds.

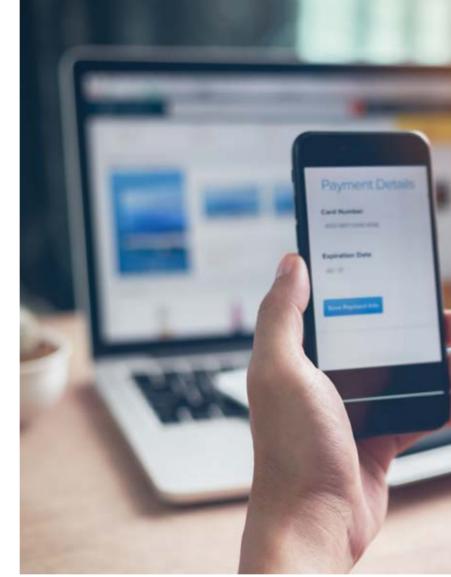
As we know the IT industry has been a traditionally maledominated environment, and to a large extent still is today, although there have been significant improvements. How important is it to promote gender diversity within the IT sector, and can you outline to us some of the inclusion programs that AWS is supporting?

My experiences as a CIO taught me that cultivating diversity is a powerful strategy for the digital age. As many studies have shown, diverse and inclusive organizational cultures do much better at innovation and innovation, as we know, is the centerpiece of digital transformations.

According to a Bersin/ Deloitte talent management study, the companies highest on their diversity and inclusion maturity scale—"companies that look at leadership and inclusion as a hallmark of their talent strategy"—are 1.8 times more likely to be change-ready and 1.7 times more likely to be innovation leaders in their markets."



My experiences as a CIO taught me that cultivating diversity is a powerful strategy for the digital age."



For us at AWS, the commitment to increasing underrepresented groups in technology not only makes a stronger workforce, but helps AWS remain customer obsessed for an increasingly diverse group of AWS customers. In 2017, we launched We Power Tech, the diversity and inclusion outreach program. The program serves as a platform to foster a diverse and inclusive culture in the technology industry, which we have extended to the Middle East, providing events and free training courses to support technology skills development for women across the region.

Data sovereignty is very important in this region and the establishment of



data centres has seen an acceleration of entities migrate to the cloud. Can you tell us about the success of your data centre in Bahrain and do you plan on opening datacenters in the UAE in the future?

We see strong demand in the Middle East for AWS technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning, data analytics, IoT, and much more. The launch of the AWS Middle East Region brings the most advanced and secure technology infrastructure, which matches the scale of our other AWS Regions around the world, closer to Middle East customers so they can innovate at a faster rate and benefit from even lower latency. For example, AXA in the AWS Direct Connect makes it easy for customers to establish a dedicated private network connection between AWS and their data centre.

Gulf will be leveraging the AWS Middle East Region in Bahrain as it undergoes an IT revamp and digital transformation in order to better serve customers. The proximity of AWS's Middle East data centres helps them remain close to regional customers in their cloud transition.

We also continue to invest in further infrastructure across the region, including adding two Amazon Edge locations in the United Arab Emirates in Dubai and Fujairah, giving customers in the region access to key services to improve end user experience, including faster content delivery and cybersecurity protection solutions. We also launched AWS Direct Connect in Dubai and Fujairah. AWS Direct Connect makes it easy for customers to establish a dedicated private network connection between AWS and their data centre, office, or colocation environment. Come



HUAWEI

# SMART CITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

**Alaa Elshimy**, MD & SVP, Huawei Enterprise Business Group, Middle East, reflects on the role of technology to build a smart and sustainable smart city.

he smart city concept remains at the forefront of national agendas across the region, and rightly so. According to the United Nations, an estimated 68 percent of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2050. That is a considerable number of people, and implementing technologies into today's cities will contribute significantly towards ensuring urban environments remain practical, convenient, and comfortable for growing populations.

There are myriad benefits to living in a smart, technologydriven and empowered environment, in which convenience and connectivity are undoubtedly key and king alike. From 5G to artificial intelligence (AI), sensors to security, the technology that will propel cities across the Middle East to continue on their journey towards becoming more digitally-enabled is continuously evolving, making the transition ever more easy.

Technology is at the heart of a smart city – quite literally. It becomes a point of integration between the physical and digital worlds, serving as the beating pulse of the city, powering connectivity, keeping everyone and everything connected in the Internet of Things (IoT). It senses and adapts to the needs of the environment, gathering and analysing big data in order to deliver informed decisions that can be used to improve the city for all of the people who live within it.

5G will have a substantial role to play in the development of smart city environments. Currently in the process of being rolled out across the Middle East - with several markets, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain having already launched 5G networks and services - 5G will open up new possibilities that will enhance not only connectivity, but the economy as well, by creating new avenues of exploration that were previously inaccessible on earlier network generations.

But while 5G will be important in smart city development, it is by far the be-all and endall of the ongoing technology evolution. The entire information and communications technology (ICT) sector will have a role to play in building a connected nervous system that brings every aspect of a city, including its residents, together under one connectivity umbrella. An intricate balance is required between leading technologies such as cuttingedge cloud computing, big data analytics, AI, and many other developments, both currently existing and yet to be launched.

How these technologies can be applied to benefit citizens is practically limitless. Take smart government initiatives, for example. The intention is to streamline critical processes for citizens, making government services more accessible to anyone from anywhere. Using Dubai, and Smart Dubai in particular, as an example, this could mean something as basic as going paperless to reduce the impact on the environment,

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or as ambitious as using smart technology to realise the emirate's Happiness Agenda by creating online processes that reduce frustration, and make something as simple as paying a bill possible through your smartphone. Of course, it can be considerably more complex than this – Dubai is implementing blockchain, launch AI labs, and many more initiatives that contribute to the development of a smart city ecosystem.

Ecosystem is perhaps the most important concept when considering smart city development. The IoT is growing at an incredibly fast rate, creating a connected ecosystem that is all around us, whether we see it or not. With this in mind, it is important to think beyond silos by considering how one technology will integrate and communicate with the next, thereby generating seamless connectivity that spans the entirety of the city. From connected streetlights to autonomous transport, smart watches to smartphones, a smart city should, in theory

> Implementing technologies into today's cities will contribute significantly towards ensuring urban environments remain practical, convenient, and comfortable for growing populations."

> > Alaa Elshimy MD & SVP, Huawei Enterprise Business Group, Middle East

– and in an ideal scenario – enable every element to provide information in a ubiquitous environment that will empower citizens with the ability to make informed and intelligent decisions, enabled by the data gathered and analysed by the technology around them.

This is, of course, thinking somewhat into the future. While elements of the above are being implemented in cities today across the world, as well as throughout the region, we are in reality some way away from realising the archetypical smart city model envisioned in futuristic sci-fi movies. Technology is, however, moving in that direction, and every day we are achieving new breakthroughs that bring us closer to that 'ideal' smart city environment. It may seem like science fiction, but the truth is that a technologyenabled environment will bring unlimited benefits to the people who live within it.

Pursuing the immense potential of technology in building smart city environments now will help to create more sustainable, scalable environments that are better capable of accommodating today's population, as well as whatever growth may occur in the next 10, 30, perhaps even 100 years. Intelligent urban management, that enables cities to serve the needs of our generation and the generations to come, is what Huawei envisions through our ambition to bring digital to every person, home, and organisation for a fully connected, digital world. Come

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#### EVOTEQ

### LEADERS IN 'SMART' TRANSFORMATION

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Jihad Tayara**, CEO of EVOTEQ, to find out how the company has positioned itself as a catalyst for digital transformation.



ayara is one of the region's most respected technology thought-leaders in the ICT industry and was appointed CEO of EVOTEQ in May 2019.

Since assuming responsibilities as CEO, Tayara has quickly positioned EVOTEQ as a real leader in digital transformation and is working very closely with Sharjah to help them achieve their aspirations of becoming a 'smart city'.

The vertical of enabling digital transformation is a saturated market with dozens of companies operating in that space, but according to Tayara, EVOTEQ differentiates itself by adopting a consultative approach with its customers. EVOTEQ at its core wants to solve the problems that are affecting its customers and works with them to overcome it.

"EVOTEQ is a digital transformation company. However, in my opinion the term 'digital transformation' has been overused. Our objective is to provide solutions that really make a difference to the customer. We believe that technology is an enabler, and it's our responsibility to consult and advise our

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customers to help them transform their business. We differentiate ourselves by developing solutions that are impactful and address real pain points for our clients," said Tayara.

EVOTEQ has been working closely with Sharjah to help it become 'smart'. However, Tayara quickly identified that the projects they were engaged in would need an adequate and robust infrastructure in the Emirate.

"When I took over as CEO, I could see that the current and future projects we were working on in Sharjah needed to have the infrastructure in terms of connectivity, datacenters and IoT networks. To address this, we decided to partner with Khazna, a Mubadala company, to establish a professional scalable Tier 3 datacenter in Sharjah," said Tayara.

The dynamic CEO of EVOTEQ pointed out that Khazna has established itself as a real leader in the datacenter space across the region and was the perfect partner for this initiative, which he believes will play a key role in helping Sharjah execute its longterm goals.

"We made this announcement with Khazna during GITEX last year, and we've made a lot of progress in the months that have since passed. It is a largescale project which requires a significant amount of investment and consulting, but this datacenter will allow us to help position Sharjah on the right map as part of its efforts to become a fully-fledged 'smart city'.

In addition to establishing the datacenter to help accelerate Sharjah's smart city journey, Tayara also added that it wanted to attract international companies to avail of the new hosting capabilities in the Emirate.

"We want to create an ecosystem that attracts international companies to host in Sharjah. The datacenter is designed to help transform Sharjah into a smart city, and to also bring external players to host their services in Sharjah. It's going to be an international standard datacenter and we believe we can foster an environment that is attractive for multinational entities," said Tayara.

When pressed on what trends and technologies he feels will take center stage within the ICT industry in 2020, Tayara said AI will be a key focus for enterprises and highlighted the role it will play in its new project with Bee'ah.

"AI is going to be a major focus for all in the ICT sector in 2020 and beyond. We're working on a very exciting project with one of our shareholders Bee'ah, which is called 'The Office of the Future'. It is going to be one of the 'smartest' buildings in the world and AI is going to be a key component in ensuring the project is a success," said Tayara.

EVOTEQ has partnered with Microsoft and Johnsons Control on the 'Office of the Future' which will be the new HQ for Bee'ah.

"Our objective with the new HQ for Bee'ah is to transform the entire experience for employees and visitors. The three central pillars we're focusing on is efficiency, productivity and delivering the 'wow' factor. In terms of achieving the 'wow' factor this is where AI will be integrated and has the capabilities to completely transform the whole experience for everyone in the building, which will officially open in October of this year," said Tayara.

One other significant initiative that EVOTEQ is spearheading is its smart parking solution which was launched in partnership with Sharjah City Municipality. The AI-powered solution is designed to alleviate the issue of urban congestion which has been a major problem for residents in the Emirate.

"Our smart parking solution is a hugely iconic project for us. We've collaborated with Sharjah City Municipality as part of our collective effort to transform the transportation ecosystem in Sharjah. However, we believe we can deploy the smart parking solution in different emirates across the UAE," said Tayara.

Our

objective

with the

new HQ for

Bee'ah is to

transform

the entire

experience

employees

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for

As Tayara pointed out smart parking solutions have been available for some time, but new technologies can be implemented to enhance the experience in the region.

"It has the capabilities to make a huge difference to people's lives and that's why we're so passionate about this initiative. The AI engine of the smart parking solution can recommend to users where to park which ultimately saves them time when looking for vacant parking spaces. We're really excited at the implementation of this project, and the impact it's going to have on the lives of citizens both in Sharjah and across the UAE as a whole," concluded Tayara Come

مؤثرة ومعالجة نقاط الألم الحقيقية لعملائنا".

تعمل EVOTEQ بشكل وثيق مع الشارقة لمساعدتها على أن تصبح ذكية. ومع ذلك، أكد طيارة أن الشاريع التى شاركوا فيها ستحتاج إلى بنية تحتية كافية وقوية في

"عندما توليت منصب الرئيس التنفيذي، كنت أرى أن المشاريع الحالية والمستقبلية التى كنا نعمل عليها في الشارقة بحاجة إلى البنية التحتية من حيث الاتصال ومراكز البيانات وشبكات إنترنت الأشياء. ولمعالجة هذا الأمر، قررنا الدخول في شراكة مع شركة "خزنة"، تابعة لشركة "مبادلة"، لإنشاء مركز بيانات محترف من المستوى 3 قابل للتطوير في الشارقة.

وأشار الرئيس التنفيذي الديناميكي لشركة EVOTEQ إلى أن شركة "خزنة" قد أثبتت نفسها كرائد حقيقي في توفير مساحة مركز البيانات في جميع أنحاء المنطقة، وكانت الشريك المثالى لهذه المبادرة، والتى يعتقد أنها ستلعب دورًا رئيسيًا في مساعدة الشارقة على تنفيذ أهدافها طويلة الدي.

"لقد قمنا بهذا الإعلان عن التعاون مع شركة "خزنة" خلال جيتكس العام الماضي، وحقق الكثير من التقدم في الأشهر التي مرت منذ ذلك الحين. إنه مشروع ضخم يتطلب قدرا كبيرا من الاستثمار والاستشارات، لكن مركز البيانات هذا سيسمح لنا بالمساعدة في وضع الشارقة على الخريطة الصحيحة كجزء من جهودها لتصبح "مدينة ذكىة" كاملة.

بالإضافة إلى إنشاء مركز البيانات للمساعدة في تسريع رحلة المدينة الذكية في الشارقة، أكد طيارة أيضًا

على هدف جذب الشركات العالمة للاستفادة من إمكانات الاستضافة الجديدة في الإمارة.

"نريد إنشاء بيئة قادرة على جذب الشركات العالمية وستضافتها في الشارقة. حيث تم تصميم مركز البيانات للمساعدة في تحويل الشارقة إلى مدينة ذكية، وكذلك جلب لاعبين خارجيين لاستضافة خدماتهم في الشارقة. سوف نكون مركز بيانات دوليًا ونعتقد أنه يمكننا تعزيز بيئة جذابة للكيانات متعددة الجنسيات ".

وقال طيارة: "عند الضغط على الاتجاهات والتقنيات التي من المكن أن تحتل مركز الصدارة في صناعة تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات في عام 2020، حيث أن الذكاء الاصطناعي سيكون محور التركيز الرئيسي للشركات، كما سلط طيارة الضوء على الدور الذي ستلعبه في مشروعها الجديد مع بيئة."

تعد أفاىا

من المقر

الرئيسي

للشركة، هو

الجديد

الكاملة

والزوار."

للموظفين

هدفنا

وقال طيارة: "سيكون الذكاء الاصطناعى محور تركيز كبير للجميع في قطاع تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات في عام 2020 وما بعده. كما سيكون العمل في مشروع مثير للغاية مع أحد المساهمين في بيئة، تسمى "مكتب المستقبل". "واحدا من أذكى المبانى في العالم، وسيكون الذكاء الاصطناعي مكونا رئيسيًا لضمان نجاح المشروع".

دخلت EVOTEQ فی شراکة مع مایکروسوفت و Johnson's Control في "مكتب المستقبل" الذي سيكون المقر الرئيسي الجديد لشركة "ىىئة".

"إن هدفنا من المقر الرئيسي الجديد لشركة "بيئة" هو تحويل التجربة الكاملة للموظفين والزوار. حيث أن الركائز الأساسية الثلاث التى تركز على الكفاءة والإنتاجية وتقديم

عامل "نجاح باهر". ومن حيث تحقيق عامل "نجاح باهر" هذا هو الكان الذى سيتم فيه دمج الذكاء الاصطناعى ولديه القدرات على تحويل التجربة الكاملة تمامًا لكل شخص في البني، والذي سيتم افتتاحه رسميًا في أكتوبر من هذا العام ".

ومن إحدى المبادرات الهامة الأخرى التي تقودها EVOTEQ هي حل مواقف السيارات الذكي الذي تم إطلاقه بالشراكة مع بلدية مدينة الشارقة. تم تصميم الحل المدعوم بالذكاء الاصطناعى للتخفيف من مشكلة الازدحام الحضرى الذى كان يمثل مشكلة كبيرة للسكان الإماراتيين.

"يعد حل موقف السيارات الذكى الخاص بنا مشروعًا رائعًا. والذي تحويل التجربة كان ثمرة التعاون مع بلدية مدينة الشارقة كجزء من جهودنا الجماعية لتغيير نظام النقل في الشارقة. ومع ذلك، نعتقد أنه يمكننا نشر حل موقف السيارات الذكي في إمارات مختلفة في جميع أنحاء الإمارات

العربية المتحدة.

وكما أشار طيارة، فإن حلول مواقف السيارات الذكية كانت متاحة لبعض الوقت، ولكن يمكن تطبيق تقنيات جديدة لتعزيز التجربة في المنطقة.

واختتم طيارة: "لهذا المشروع القدرة على إحداث فرق كبير في حياة الناس، لذلك نحن متحمسون للغاية لهذه المبادرة. يمكن لمحرك الذكاء الاصطناعي الخاص بحل موقف السيارة الذكى أن يوصى المستخدمين بمكان الركن الذى يوفر لهم الوقت في نهاية المطاف عند البحث عن مواقف السيارات الشاغرة. "نحن متحمسون حقا لتنفيذ هذا المشروع، وتأثيره على حياة المواطنين في الشارقة وعبر الإمارات ككل".

### <sub>لموته</sub> قادة في التحول "الذكي"

تحدث "مارك فوركر" محرر مجلة CNME إلى "جهاد طيارة"، الرئيس التنفيذي لشركة EVOTEQ، لمعرفة كيف جعلت الشركة من نفسها محفزا للتحول الرقمي.



يعتبر "جهاد طيارة" واحداً من رواد الفكر التكنولوجي الأكثر احترامًا في النطقة في صناعة تكنولوجيا العلومات والاتصالات، وقد تم تعيينه الرئيس التنفيذي لشركة EVOTEQ في مايو 2019.

منذ توليه مهامه كرئيس تنفيذي، جعل طيارة من EVOTEQ شركة رائدة حقيقية في التحول الرقمي ويعمل عن كثب مع إمارة الشارقة لماعدتهم على تحقيق تطلعاتهم ليصبحوا "مدينة ذكية".

من العروف أن قطاع تمكين التحول الرقمي هو سوق مشبع بعشرات ولكن وفقًا لجهاد طيارة، فإن شركة ولكن تفقًا لجهاد طيارة، فإن شركة EVOTEQ تميز نفسها من خلال اعتماد نهج استشاري مع عملائها. تريد EVOTEQ في جوهرها حل الشاكل التي تؤثر على عملائها والعمل معهم للتغلب عليها.

وقال طيارة: "تعتبر EVOTEQ شركة للتحول الرقمي. ومع ذلك، في رأيي، تم الإفراط في استخدام مصطلح "التحول الرقمي". هدفنا هو توفير الحلول التي تحدث فرقا حقيقيا للعملاء. نحن نؤمن أن التكنولوجيا هي عامل تمكين، ومن مسؤوليتنا استشارة عملائنا وتقديم للشورة لهم لماعدتهم على تحويل أعمالهم. "نميز أنفسنا من خلال تطوير حلول COLUMN

MARK FORKER

# COVID, CONSPIRACIES AND CAPITALISM

CNME Editor **Mark Forker** examines the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, its apparent links to 5G networks and why capitalism needs to be revamped.

e're living in strange and unprecedented times, the likes of which we've never seen before. In the UAE, a 24-hour lockdown has meant that we now need to apply for a permit just to go to the shop. All forms of exercise are no longer permitted.

The World Health Organization has described the current COVID-19 pandemic as the biggest crisis since World War 2. Europe, which has become the epicenter of the outbreak has seen its health services become completely overwhelmed.

The daily mortality rates coming out of European countries such as Spain and Italy make for extremely grim reading as governments and medical experts desperately try to get the virus under control. At the time of writing this column, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was heavily criticised by many for his initial response to the pandemic is now in intensive care after contracting COVID-19.

This crisis has grounded flights, disrupted global markets, but most of all it has stopped us firmly in our tracks and allowed us to reflect. For many of us it has put things into perspective, and has forced us to ask ourselves what really is important in life?

The financial uncertainty this has caused is of course extremely worrying and traumatic for so many people. Millions have lost their jobs. Last week, the Financial Times reported that the US Labour department recorded a surge of 3.3m unemployment claims in just one week.

Can I afford my rent next month, meet mortgage repayments, or ensure I keep food on the table are very real questions people are now asking themselves? However, when you take a step back from your own financial worries or job fears, and just watch the sheer horror that is unfolding all over the world on the news every night, then it certainly does put things into stark perspective.

It doesn't diminish the very real and understandable financial concerns we all may have, but personally I can be thankful that as of now none of my family has been directly affected by COVID-19. The added tragedy of people dying alone due to the contagious nature of the disease is very difficult to comprehend and process. This ghastly virus has even denied family members the opportunity to say goodbye to their loved ones.

During times of crisis it's natural for us all to want to blame somebody for the current situation that has befallen us. In 2008, when the global economy collapsed, it was evidently clear that fiscal irresponsibility by bankers, financiers and governments had ultimately caused the crash.

A global pandemic is much more complex in terms of being able to lay the blame or point the finger at a particular group or country, but as I said these are bizarre times we now live in, and some people have claimed that 5G, yes next-generation networks have caused the outbreak of COVID-19!

In the UK, vandals set fire to 5G masts and caused severe damage to a lot of 5G infrastructure in the Midlands and North-West of England, following false and completely unfounded reports online that 5G signals were directly related to the spread of COVID-19.

In Ireland, former awardwinning journalist Gemma O'Doherty has used her platform to warn of the 'apparent' dangers caused by 5G over the last number of years, and amidst the current global pandemic has now suggested that 5G is linked to Coronavirus, claiming that 5G signals has a debilitating effect on our immune systems.

The 5G claims that are being peddled by conspiracy theorists such as O'Doherty and others of her ilk across the UK and Ireland have been rubbished by scientists. GSMA Director General, Mats Granryd blasted those responsible for the vandalism of 5G towers in the UK.

He said, "It is deplorable that critical communications infrastructure is being attacked based on outright mistruths. We urge everyone to trust health authorities and rest assured communications technology is safe. There is no link between 5G and Covid-19."

Unfortunately, the trend of conspiracy theories is a common theme in the aftermath of a tragedy or seismic global events such as COVID-19 or the 9/11 terror attacks in the US. However, the claim

It's quite clear that the current system of capitalism is only working for a certain group of people in our society, and the divide between those at the top and the rest is widening every year."

that 5G networks are a direct consequence of kickstarting this outbreak is beyond bizarre to say the least, perhaps the faculties of those responsible have been affected by self-isolation!

In my opinion the global crisis has really magnified the glaring gap that does exist in our society on a global scale.

It's quite clear that the current system of capitalism is only working for a certain group of people in our society, and the divide between those at the top and the rest is widening every year.

The deal is supposed to be if you work hard then you'll be rewarded and can enjoy a comfortable life, but it doesn't work like that anymore. The Middle Classes have been basically eroded in the US, and our millennial generation is on course to be the first generation that will be poorer than their parents.

It has been abhorrent to see how in some countries such as India that those unable to access the most basic of human rights such as clean water have been unable to properly protect themselves and their loved ones from contracting the deadly virus. They have been simply disregarded, and those who can't afford to buy food face the very real prospect of starvation.

In a world in which we're constantly amazed by the wonders of modern technology, it's difficult to grasp how in 2020, we can still live in a world that is so unjust. It has always been like this of course, but this pandemic has shone light on the fact that is getting worse.

One of the few positive outcomes of this crisis is that there has been a lot of solidarity being shown all over the world, so maybe the only chink of light from all of this is that we may rethink how we structure our societies.

I'm not calling for an end to capitalism, nor am I advocating for socialism, as that system has also failed. But maybe we can fuse and weave the best elements of both into a new system that works for everyone. What is obvious to me anyway is that it's time that we stop putting profits before people!

#### GIORGIA GUANTARIO

# ZOOMING IN ON THE PROBLEM

Deputy Editor **Giorgia Guantario** takes a look at Zoom's bumpy road to popularity.

oom quickly became everyone's favourite pandemic video meeting software. As of the beginning of April, Zoom had a market cap of US \$31.73 billion, which made it worth more than American Airlines (\$7.91B), Expedia (\$4.35B) and Hilton (\$18.26B) combined.

Zoom massively grew in popularity due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessity to adopt remote working to mitigate the spreading of the virus. Its use, however, goes beyond professional or educational meetings - people have been using the teleconference solution for all kinds of reasons: from group quizzes and yoga sessions, to weddings ceremonies. Back in December Zoom had about 10 million participants, while that number rose to 200 million participants daily by March. The numbers are staggering - and so are its many issues.

It's safe to safe that the rise to success wasn't without bumps,

so brace yourself because there is a lot to talk about.

Zoom's problems started about a year ago, way before the pandemic hit most countries across the globe. In July 2019, security researcher Jonathan Leitschuh disclosed a pretty serious vulnerability for the Zoom app on Apple Macs. Basically, this vulnerability would have allowed any website to "forcibly join a user to a Zoom call, with their video camera activated, without the user's permission."

This vulnerability was partly due to a Zoom's setting that would install a web server on Macs, and that would not be removed once the app was uninstalled – the web server would then be running on the background and would be able to re-install Zoom for users without requiring any user interaction besides visiting a webpage. In a statement to The Verge, Zoom said at the time that it developed the web server to "save the user some clicks" to improve user experience (we'll get back to that later).

To confirm the severity of the issue, a few days after Leitschuh's post, TechCrunch reported that Apple stepped in to issue a silent update to remove Zoom's web server from any Mac with Zoom's software installed. While no one likes Apple getting into our Macs deleting stuff, it seemed necessary to avoid any further issues.

At the time, Zoom's problems seemed to have ended there, and the web seemed to have forgotten about the issue for months – at least until COVID-19 started spreading around the world and the videoconferencing app's success rose to new highs.

A few weeks ago, users started to report that uninvited guests were disrupting private online meetings. The phenomenon, called "Zoombombing or "Zoom raiding", was unveiled by a New York Times' analysis which found hundreds of social media accounts and private chats, as well as several active message boards on Reddit and 4Chan, where users got together to organise Zoom harassment campaigns by sharing meeting passwords and IDs.

On top of that, Zoom's meeting IDs, a number between 9 to 11 digits long used to identify a meeting, are very easy to guess thanks to an automated tool called "war-dialing" – this tool would allow anyone to access any meeting by just continuously guessing numbers until finding a correct one.

If Zoombombings sound disturbing, they were just the tip of the iceberg.

Is con-

really

venience

more im-

portant

than our

privacy?"

At the beginning of April, Vice reported that thousands of users' personal information, including email addresses and photos, were being leaked to strangers on Zoom. The issue stems from Zoom's "Company Directory" setting, which helps users find specific colleagues on the platform by automatically adding other people using the same email address domain to a user's contact list. Although this might sound like a nice little feature to have, according to Vice many users who signed up with personal emails from non-standard providers (i.e. not Gmail, Hotmail or Yahoo) found their contact details pooled together with thousands of other strangers - strangers who could video call whoever on that "company directory" and access their full name, email address, profile picture and status.

Vice was also behind another Zoom issue that sparked controversy over the internet in the past few weeks. According to Vice's Joseph Cox, Zoom and its privacy policy don't make clear that the iOS version of the Zoom app is sending some analytics data to Facebook – even if Zoom users don't have a Facebook account.

While data transfer to Facebook is quite common, as many apps use Facebook's software development kits (SDK) to implement features, Zoom did not make clear to its users this was happening. Fortunately, on March 27th Zoom CEO and Founder, Eric S. Yuan, said the company removed the code that sent data to Facebook and updated its privacy policy two days later.

The last issue I want to address (even though there are a few more concerning ones, like the LinkedIn Sales Navigator datamining feature, or evading MacOS administrator controls) is Zoom's claim of end-to-end encryption. End-to-end encryption means messages are encrypted by the sender until they reach the receiver, and the third-party platform does not have the means to decrypt them, and only stores encrypted files. While Zoom marketed its solution as protected by end-to-end encryption, the company actually uses "transport encryption". As reported by the Intercept, transport encryption differs from end-to-end encryption because "the Zoom service itself can access the unencrypted video and audio content of Zoom meetings. So when you have a Zoom meeting, the video and audio content will stay private from anyone spying on your Wi-Fi, but it won't stay private from the company." While Zoom is not the only solution that doesn't support end-to-end encryption (Skype calls don't

either), it's safe to say you might want to use a different solution to discuss classified information.

I won't go on listing Zoom's numerous other issues, especially as its CEO, Eric S. Yuan, recently took a step back and said the company would pause the development of new features to focus on fixing privacy and security issues. In the ICT industry, the word "sorry" isn't used very often, and that is to be appreciated coming from such a popular organisation.

I believe the real issue behind Zoom, and many other organisations and solutions, is choosing user experience over user privacy. Besides the end-toend encryption debacle, the rest of Zoom's issues seem to stem from the company's desire to attract as many users as possible. I must admit that was also the reason I found Zoom to be my favourite amongst other video conferencing solutions - login in takes a couple of minutes, joining a call only requires clicking on a link, all my colleagues are automatically added to my contact list, etc. Any marketeer will tell you that the least number of steps you have for a user to complete, the higher the chances they will turn into a lead. Zoom adopted that same mentality – the easier to use, the more people will use it. And they're probably right, since despite all these issues, Zoom is still one of the most used apps during this pandemic. Is convenience really more important than our privacy? Zoom has given itself 90 days to solve all its issues, and I would be willing to bet its number of users will still increase during this time – which I guess answers the question. Come

#### GARTNER

# THRIVING IN THE CLOUD-FIRST WORLD

As cloud computing rapidly proliferates enterprise IT, CIOs must pay attention to four aspects of cloud computing that will affect their adoption of services in 2020, explains Gartner Vice President Analyst, **Gregor Petri.** 



loud computing is firmly established as the new normal for enterprise IT. Across industries, cloud continues to be one of the fastest-growing segments of IT spend. With greater spend, however, comes greater responsibility for CIOs to invest budgets wisely, and a bigger impact if things go wrong.

CIOs looking to prepare their organisation to thrive in the upcoming turns must take a differentiated approach to cloud computing. It will be essential for CIOs to develop a formal strategy that helps to put individual cloud decisions in the context of the enterprise's strategic goals.

In the new era of cloud, cost optimisation will be crucial. Multicloud strategies will warrant provider independence and address concentration risk. The presence of in-house cloud skills will be a key indicator of enterprise agility, including the ability to distribute cloud services where customers want to consume them, on-premises and on the edge. These four factors will impact cloud adoption in 2020 and the steps that CIOs can take to thrive in a cloud-first world.

### Cost optimisation will drive cloud adoption

Through 2024, nearly all legacy applications migrated to public cloud infrastructure as a service (IaaS) will require optimisation to become more cost-effective. Cloud providers will continue to strengthen their native optimisation capabilities to help organisations select the most cost-effective architecture that can deliver the required performance.

The market for third-party cost optimisation tools will also expand, particularly in multicloud environments. Their value will concentrate on higher-quality analytics that can maximise savings without compromising performance, provide independence from cloud providers and offer multicloud management consistency.

Recognise the need for optimisation as an integral part of cloud migration projects. Develop skills and processes early, and use tools to analyse operational data and find cost optimisation opportunities. Leverage what cloud providers offer natively and augment it with third-party solutions to maximise savings.

### Multicloud will reduce vendor lock-in

Multicloud strategies will reduce vendor dependency for two-thirds of organisations through 2024. However, this will primarily happen in ways other than application portability.

Application portability is the ability to migrate an application across platforms without change, and it is seen as benefit of a multicloud strategy. The reality of business practices, though, is that few applications ever move once they have been deployed in production and adopted by the business. The majority of multicloud strategies are more focused on procurement, functionality and risk mitigation than on portability.

CIOs looking to adopt a multicloud strategy should determine the specific issues that they want it to address, such as reducing vendor lock-in or mitigating service disruption risks. Understand that a multicloud strategy will not automatically solve application portability.

### Insufficient cloud IaaS skills will delay migrations

Through 2022, insufficient cloud IaaS skills will delay half of enterprise IT organisations' migration to the cloud by two

### By 2023, the leading cloud service providers will have a distributed ATMlike presence to serve a subset of their services"

years or more. Today's cloud migration strategies tend more toward "lift-and-shift" than toward modernisation or refactoring. However, lift-andshift projects do not develop native-cloud skills. This is creating a market where service providers cannot train and certify people quickly enough to satisfy the need for skilled cloud professionals.

As consulting companies struggle to find a bench of talented people with relevant cloud skills, clients are falling short of their cloud adoption objectives. System integrators (SIs) are the fallback, but clients often do not trust them because many SIs are also still learning and struggle to scale their operations to meet demand.

To overcome the challenges of this workforce shortage, enterprises looking to migrate workloads to the cloud should work with managed service providers and SIs that have a proven track record of successful migrations within the target industry. These partners must also be willing to quantify and commit to expected costs and potential savings.

### Distributed cloud will support expanded service availability

By 2023, the leading cloud service providers will have a distributed ATM-like presence to serve a subset of their services for low-latency application requirements. Many cloud service providers are already investing in ways to make their services available closer to the users that need to access them.

This trend will continue as the granularity of the regions covered by these cloud service providers increases. "Micro data centres" will be located in areas where a high population of users congregates, while "pop-up" cloud service points will support temporary requirements like sporting events and concerts.

Equipment supporting an appropriate subset of public cloud services will be housed in locations close enough to the point of need to support the low-latency requirements of the applications that use them. This will enable applications with such requirements to run directly from the cloud providers' native services without having to build infrastructure. The introduction and spread of ATM-like cloud service points can be thought of as a specific implementation of edge computing, which continues to grow rapidly.

As the new decade begins, CIOs should consider how these trends will influence their cloud adoption and migration plans for years to come, taking steps now to prepare their IT infrastructure for the future of cloud.



have two big dogs that have gotten used to having me home. Sometimes they even block the exit from my home office! And, from what I've seen on social media over the past week, but plenty of cats are also more than willing to warm up their humans' keyboards.

But what about the human element? How are we all doing in these times of uncertainty, and how can we be sure to care for ourselves, our families, and our communities? (While practicing all the safe social distancing and other health guidelines, of course.)

I encourage fellow leaders to lead with empathy, solidarity, kindness, and courtesy as we work together through these uncertain times. Let's be flexible with colleagues who may be working alternate schedules or need a different kind of partnership than usual. Let's also normalize working from home and acknowledge that it can be messy. In many ways, it's a glimpse into the personal side of our co-workers. Laugh when the cat jumps into the frame during your call with C-staff, and wave when someone's child does the

#### SERVICENOW

# **KEEPING THE** HUMANITY IN #WFH

Pat Wadors, Chief Talent Officer at ServiceNow, explains how to take care of yourself and others while working from home and practicing social distancing.

same. Or politely ignore my dogs barking in the background!

Empathy means being kind to ourselves, as well. For those on us on work-from-home duty, that means: hydrate; fuel up and make sure you eat; move and stay active; make time to connect with your colleagues; and embrace technology.

Those are the relatively easy things to help manage the day to day. I know there are biggerpicture challenges we also need to navigate. So, what can we all do to show our appreciation for each other, even when we're not face to face?

#### Communicate early and often

If you're facing any kind of obstacle, if you need to adjust your working approach, no matter what's coming up for you, keep an open line of communication with your manager and your colleagues. Communication is a two-way street.

#### Get creative: Assume everyone is in the same boat... because we are

People managers model the behaviors they want their teams to live, too. They can encourage

team members to take mental wellness time, particularly for those juggling caregiver responsibilities or lessthan-ideal work-from-home infrastructure. Share your own struggles – be vulnerable. We are all learning and adapting.

#### Empower your team to flex their leadership muscles

I think this pandemic will shape our lives, our work, how we travel, and more for years to come. In times like these, leaders will emerge in unlikely ways. Be brave. Encourage everyone to think a little differently. This helps develop everyone's leadership capabilities, even in challenging times.

#### Re-up on your appreciation for a stellar talent pool

Uncertain, anxious times aren't often a "buyers' market" when it comes to talent acquisition. Far from putting talent appreciation efforts on the back burner, however, it is even more essential to engage employees in the values that define great companies. Find new ways to encourage and inspire your workforce as a whole. cnme

l encourage fellow leaders to lead with empathy, solidarity, kindness. and courtesy as we work together through these uncertain times."





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