### computer news

ISSUE 340 | JULY 2020 Tahawultech.com

# LEADERSHIP DURING CRISIS

WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEANS BUSINESS

ALPHA DATA CEO, FAYEZ IBBINI ARTICULATES HOW THE COMPANY HAS NAVIGATED ITS WAY THROUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

> VIRGIN MOBILE'S KSA CEO

ACCENTURE'S ME STRATEGY AND CONSULTING LEAD

> ADNOC'S SVP DIGITAL



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We take a closer look at the recent announcement made by District 2020, who are positioning themselves to play a key role in driving the UAE startup ecosystem."

### **LEADING BY EXAMPLE**

t's fair to say that life is slowly starting to get back to normal here in the UAE as hotels, restaurants and gyms begin to re-open.

The UAE government has displayed remarkable leadership to keep the virus under control, and leadership is very much the prevalent theme of July's edition of CNME.

We spoke to Alpha Data CEO, Fayez Ibbini, who was quick to postpone a staff party in February, when he recognised the dangers of COVID-19.

In a compelling interview, the charismatic figurehead of Alpha Data, who are one of the region's leading systems integrators discloses how the company has adapted to the pandemic, the economic impact of the situation – and his predictions for the future post COVID–19.

Later this month, we will also host the virtual Tahawultech Transformational Leadership Awards 2020, which aims to celebrate those within the IT ecosystem that have helped us all maintain business continuity over the last number of months.

In this month's magazine we talk to the new CEO of Virgin Mobile, Saudi Arabia, Eng. Yaarob Al-Sayegh, who outlined his plans and ambitions for the MNO, who has enjoyed great success here in the UAE, especially with the millennial demographic of the market.

We spoke to Taj El-Khayat, Regional Director, MENA, Citrix to hear how the software company has helped companies transition from the office to remote working, NXN's Ghazi Atallah talks digital transformation during COVID-19, and Dell Technologies SVP, Mohammed Amin examines the impact of edge computing.

On the front cover of GovTech, we take a closer look at the recent announcement made by District 2020, who are positioning themselves to play a key role in driving the UAE startup ecosystem.

In addition to this, we also have coverage from a virtual panel discussion we conducted with CADD Emirates and HPE, and we find out how ADNOC has leveraged the capabilities of its Panorama Digital Command Centre to maintain operational efficiency during COVID-19.

Enjoy!

Mark Forker Editor

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CONTENTS

cnme

### **Cover feature: Alpha Data**







#### 6 News

CNME rounds up the biggest regional and global developments in enterprise technology, which includes Etisalat Misr partnering with IBM for its first AI virtual assistant and NetApps recent acquisition of Spot.

#### 10 Citrix

Taj El-Khayat, Regional Director, MENA, Citrix explains how its cutting-edge technologies are keeping businesses secure.

#### 18 NXN

NXN CEO, Ghazi Atallah explains how the digital transformation provider has assisted companies to cope with the challenges they faced during COVID-19.

### **22** Virgin Mobile

The newly appointed CEO of Virgin Mobile Saudi Arabia, Yaarob Al-Sayegh, talks about his plans to replicate the success the MNO has had in the UAE. in the KSA.



### **32** Dell Technologies

Mohammed Amin, SVP, MERAT, Dell Technologies talks about the impact of edge computing.

**36** ServiceNow

Published by

Pat Wadors, CHRO, ServiceNow, outlines the steps you need to take in order to ensure a smooth transition back to the workplace.

FOUNDER, CPI MEDIA GROUP Dominic De Sousa (1959-2015)

Publishing Director Natasha Pendleton natasha.pendleton@cpimediagroup.com +971 4 440 9139

ADVERTISING Group Sales Director Kausar Syed kausar.syed@cpimediagroup.com

+971 4 440 9138 Senior Sales Manager

Sabita Miranda sabita.miranda@cpimediagroup.com +971 4 440 9128

EDITORIAL Editor Mark Forker mark.forker@cpimediagroup.com +971 4440 9153

Online Editor Adelle Geronimo adelle.geronimo@cpimediagroup.com +9714 440 9135

PRODUCTION AND DESIGN Senior Designer Analou Balbero analou.balbero@cpimediagroup.com +971 4 375 5680

Jefferson de Joya Abbas Madh

webmaster@cpimediagroup.com +971 4 440 9100

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Dubai Production City, DCCA PO Box 13700

Dubai, UAE

Tel: +971 4 440 9100 Fax: +971 4 447 2409

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DIGITAL SERVICES Web Developer



#### NEWS

### Egypt turns to AI to deliver COVID-19 diagnosis service to People of Determination

#### Egypt's Ministry of Communications

& Information Technology (MCIT) has joined forces with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Avaya to extend the capabilities of WASEL — its dedicated contact centre service for people of determination — with the addition of automated testing for COVID-19 symptoms for the deaf and hard of hearing.

A world first, this chatbot utilises AI to enable sign-language based interaction, providing users intuitive access to critical COVID-19 related information and support. The service is conveniently available via the Tamkeen website or WASEL smartphone application. This initiative aligns with the efforts of the MCIT to support the Egyptian government's plan to effectively mitigate COVID-19 challenges, and the State's vision of deepening social integration by utilising smart technologies that foster inclusivity through all segments of society.

Amr Talaat, The Minister of Communications and Information Technology in Egypt explained that this first of its kind service in the Arab World and Africa represents the Ministry's latest effort to "reach all segments of society, provide technical support to face the current crisis and keep citizens safe."

### 75%

of UAE employees believe their employers can help them better manage their physical health through technology Source: Aetna International

### Extreme Networks helps businesses transition to the 'new normal'

Extreme Networks has launched a #NewNormal initiative to help all of its customers adapt to the transition. The #NewNormal initiative is a comprehensive program that provides information and industry insights to help companies survive and thrive leveraging the industry's only 4th generation cloud management platform.

ExtremeCloud IQ is a machine learning and AI- driven cloud management solution, built on a 4th generation cloud platform. Integrated with Extreme's end-to-end enterprise networking technology, it assists in collecting data to build, secure, and maintain agile and distributed work environments.

Norman Rice, Chief Operating Officer,

Norman Rice, Extreme Networks

Extreme Networks, said, "As we grapple with more data, coming from more places, more connected devices, and more SaaSbased applications, the cloud is becoming fundamental to establishing a new normal. This means organisations need an even better cloud – one that delivers infinite 9s of uptime, dependable and uncorrupted data over an unlimited time span, and the industry's best security. That comes with a 4th generation cloud and Extreme is the only company that has one with its ExtremeCloud IQ platform."

## Virgin Mobile names new CEO for Saudi Arabia

**"Virgin Mobile" Saudi Consortium has** announced the appointment of Eng. Yaarob Al-Sayegh as the company's first Saudi CEO.

According to Virgin Mobile, the appointment of Al-Sayegh underscores its commitment to communities and businesses across Saudi Arabia. Creating jobs for Saudi citizens – and improving upon Virgin Mobile's impressive track record of female empowerment, are central to the new CEO's plans, alongside providing opportunities for internal and external Saudi Digital Talent to flourish.

The former Mobily senior executive also seeks to strengthen Virgin Mobile's unique portfolio of digital services with further product developments centred on customers' individual demands, and in particular, the needs of the local youth.

"These are exciting times for the kingdom and I am honoured to be stepping into this role during the same,"

Saleem AlBlooshi, du

said Yaarob Al Sayegh, CEO of Virgin Mobile Saudi Arabia.

"I look forward to continuing Virgin Mobile's achievements in support of Saudi Vision 2030, reinforcing our commitment to growing our presence and partnerships in the market, and continuing to drive innovation in the telecom sector. As the world continues to fight the coronavirus, Virgin Mobile's broad digital offering and experience are more relevant than ever to our customers, partners, and government. My priority is to see this offering continue to grow as we help lead the kingdom's telco market forward."

# Etisalat Misr taps IBM to enhance customer experience with AI

#### Egypt telco Etisalat Misr has turned

to IBM to introduce its first AI virtual assistant to transform its customers' experience. The new virtual agent is powered by IBM Watson Assistant, IBM's conversation AI platform delivered on IBM public cloud, and will help Etisalat meet the evolving expectations of its customers for more personalised experiences.

Through collaborating with IBM, the new virtual assistant will enable Etisalat customers to subscribe in variety of services that include; renewing their bundle, transferring & distributing their family monthly quota, checking their balance, paying their bills and many other services.

The new virtual assistant is able to ingest and comprehend massive amounts of data and learn from previous interactions to provide realtime responses to customer inquiries and requests in both English and Arabic. Etisalat customers will be able to access the virtual agent on their preferred channels 24 hours a day, allowing the company's resources to focus on more complex issues that require staff intervention.

"As telecom companies look to optimise their operations and provide their clients with seamless experiences, technology becomes their key ally to deliver unprecedented services. Our collaboration with IBM, offered us in Etisalat new operational directions by transforming our processes and the way we serve our clients through introducing an AI based chatbot, showing our unique capabilities" said Amr Fathy, Vice President, IT, Etisalat Misr.

# NetApp to bolster cloud services with latest acquisition

**NetApp has entered into a definitive** agreement to acquire Spot, a compute management and cost optimisation firm focused on public clouds, to establish leadership in Application Driven Infrastructure.

Together, NetApp and Spot's Application Driven Infrastructure for continuous optimisation will help customers save up to 90 percent of their compute and storage cloud expenses, which typically make up 70 percent of total cloud spending, and will help accelerate public cloud adoption.

"In today's public clouds, speed is the new scale. However, waste in the public clouds driven by idle resources and overprovisioned resources is a significant and a growing customer problem slowing down more public cloud adoption," said Anthony Lye, senior vice president and general



Anthony Lye, NetApp

manager, Public Cloud Services, NetApp.

"The combination of NetApp's leading shared storage platform for block, file and object and Spot's compute platform will deliver a leading solution for the continuous optimisation of cost for all workloads, both cloud native and legacy. Optimised customers are happy customers and happy customers deploy more to the public clouds."

### AGC Networks to acquire Fujisoft in Middle East

#### AGC Networks has announced plans

**to** acquire acquiring Fujisoft (along with its associated companies in UAE) through its indirect subsidiary – Black Box Holdings Limited Cayman Islands.

Fujisoft is a technology company committed to bringing the best possible technology solutions to customers in the region.

The proposed acquisition is subject to approval from the Department of Economic Development in Dubai and from Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development for the company in Abu Dhabi.

According to AGC Networks, the acquisition of Fujisoft will substantially increase and strengthen its presence and offerings in the MEA region. This will also enhance the current solution portfolio of AGC and Black Box across cloud computing and virtualisation, cybersecurity, managed SoC and NoC, managed services, data centre and collaboration solutions.

"We are excited to welcome Fujisoft team members as part of the AGC family," said Sanjeev Verma, Executive Director and CEO of AGC Networks and President and CEO of Black Box Corporation. "This acquisition accelerates our expansion in MEA region. In our pursuit to remain the customer's trusted partner in providing technology solutions and services, the combination of Fujisoft and AGC will strengthen our relationship and relevance with our combined customers in the region."

Albert Raj, managing director, Fujisoft, said "This acquisition is a logical next step that creates substantial value for customers and stakeholders of both AGC and Fujisoft. It will truly benefit customers and business partners through expanded product portfolio and service excellence in the Middle East region and beyond."

### Ingram Micro adds IBM Cloud to its Middle East Marketplace



Ali Baghdadi, Ingram Micro

#### **Ingram Micro and IBM have announced** a new collaboration to help businesses build, scale and monetise cloud and

digital services. Under the new agreement, Ingram Micro now offers key products and services from IBM Cloud portfolio via its Ingram Micro Cloud Marketplace providing the channel community in the Middle East direct access to IBM MaaS360, IBM public Cloud and IBM Cloud services.

IBM MaaS360 is a comprehensive, cognitive enterprise mobility management (EMM) platform that seamlessly deploys devices, delivers productivity apps and enables content collaboration across endpoints, users, apps, docs and data. With the power of augmented intelligence and contextual analytics from IBM Watson, the IBM MaaS360 Advisor feature helps organisations identify risks, opportunities and efficiencies to make more informed decisions for their endpoint and mobile strategies. Supported platforms include iOS, Android, Windows and macOS. With IBM public cloud and IBM Cloud services now available on the Ingram Micro Cloud Marketplace, companies can modernise their business scale for the future.

"We're delighted to be among the first to offer the IBM Cloud's products and services directly to the Middle East channel community via Marketplace," said Dr. Ali Baghdadi, SVP and chief executive META, Ingram Micro.

David La Rose, General Manager, IBM Partner Ecosystem, said, "As clients move to cloud, we recognise the integral role Value Added Distributors like Ingram Micro play in that journey. IBM public cloud on Ingram Micro Marketplace will help expedite the access clients have to IBM innovations which allow them to modernise their enterprise operations with cloud."

### American Hospital Dubai accelerates digital journey with Oracle

American Hospital Dubai, part of Mohamed & Obaid Al Mulla Group, has selected Oracle Cloud Applications and Cerner, a Gold Level member of Oracle Partner Network (OPN), for a major digital transformation.

The initiative is aimed at reducing cost, optimising physician performance, driving better inventory management, avoiding losses to over or understocking, and hiring and retaining the best talent.

As per the agreement, Cerner will deliver a new health IT platform – an electronic health record (EHR) to improve the safety, quality, and healthcare experience for patients and caregivers. In addition, Oracle will provide the digital business platform and Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Cloud to enhance productivity, reduce costs, and improve controls. Both solutions will integrate hospital business and clinical operations to improve efficiency and business decision– making based on real-time data.



The new EHR and ERP platforms will provide American Hospital Dubai with the ability to truly automate its end-to-end clinical and business processes. The implementation of these industry-leading solutions will enable the hospital to deliver a seamless patient journey, drive efficiency, and provide high quality, affordable care. In addition, the wealth of data collected will be used to report and improve patient outcomes, which ultimately will help optimise clinical and business performance across the entire organisation. "The Oracle Cloud Applications implementation is aimed at automating American Hospital's core processes to provide a single source of truth with better budgeting and planning tools for the hospital's leadership – as well as increasing employee satisfaction and reducing turnover," said Rahul Misra, vice president – business applications, Lower Gulf, Oracle. "American Hospital is a true pioneer and with this transformation, the healthcare provider is preparing for its next growth phase and continued delivery of excellent patient care."

### Dawex named as 'Technology Pioneer' by World Economic Forum



Laurent Lafaye and Fabrice Tocco, Dawex

Dawex has announced that it has been awarded as "Technology Pioneer" by the World Economic Forum and joining the World Economic Forum Global Innovators Community.

Dawex will contribute to the Data Policy platform, a work group leading the Forum's approach to data policy and data governance. The aim is to help define and implement forward-looking, interoperable, and trustworthy data policies to fuel innovation and accelerate responsible use of data in the new globally integrated data economy

Onboarded on a two-year programme, Tech Pioneers are involved in the design, development and deployment of new technologies and innovations, and are poised to have a significant impact on business and society. With this nomination, Dawex joins policymakers and private sector leaders to help define the global agenda on key issues.

"We are very honoured to be named Technology Pioneer by the World Economic Forum. It confirms data exchanges are playing a central role in today's global economy," said Laurent Lafaye, co-CEO, Dawex. "Being invited to join the Data Policy work group is an acknowledgement of the importance of Dawex mission to create the conditions for the smooth development of the data economy by facilitating the exchange of data between companies and organisations."

of companies state that they will increase their spending on digital transformation

Source: IFS

### Mastercard powers faster and seamless online shopping experiences

#### Mastercard has announced the

tokenisation of consumer card credentials on file for Amazon customers in 12 countries across North America, Latin America, Middle East and Europe.

Tokenisation replaces a consumer's primary account number (PAN) with an alternate card number – or token – that can be used for online payments but only by the merchant that requested it. Amazon will begin using Mastercard tokens for transactions through 2020 to provide a seamless online shopping experience for consumers.

Tokenisation enables a best-in-class user experience by creating visual cues, displaying familiar card art that instills trust in a consumer's preferred payment method.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift to digital payments, making it more important than ever for e-commerce platforms to make the checkout experience simple and convenient. Mastercard Digital Enablement Service (MDES) provides the foundation for a frictionless experience, eliminating the frustration of managing card information and reducing shopping cart abandonment.

"Mastercard's work with Amazon and others is a testament to the strength of our well-established digital product suite – we create consumer journeys that improve the shopping experience and boosts approval rates," said Jorn Lambert, executive vice president, Digital Solutions, Mastercard. "The behavioural shift that we are seeing has been accelerated by the COVID pandemic, but it's a product of our work to create the infrastructure and partner ecosystem, for the digitallysavvy consumer and the forwardthinking businesses like Amazon."

#### CITRIX

# CITRIX HELPS BUSINESSES GO TO THE 'NEXT PHASE'

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Taj El-Khayat**, Regional Director, MENA, Citrix, to find out how the global software leader is helping its customers overcome the challenges presented by the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, and how its cutting-edge technologies are keeping businesses 'secure' as they transition from a traditional office environment to a virtual one.

n a fascinating interview, the charismatic El-Khayat outlined how Citrix, which is fabled for its ability to provide solutions that enhance the way people work, positioned itself as the 'go-to' player for enterprises looking to enable their employees to work remotely.

However, as El-Khayat pointed out, before they could start helping their clients – they needed to get their own house in order first.

"The first thing we had to do in order for us to be a position to help our customers was to take care of our own employees. We needed to make sure that our employees were safe, and that they were able to react to the demands that we foresaw happening as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was a desire from enterprises to quickly accelerate their working from home strategies," said El-Khayat.

As a company that provides technology that enables remote

**Taj El-Khayat** Regional Director, MENA, <u>Citrix</u> working, it was rather inevitable that Citrix would be inundated with requests for help. El-Khayat disclosed that the first action they took was to establish an emergency customer outreach in which they proactively reached out to their customers by providing them with two specifics.

"We're a leader in this space, and our install base is quite large, so what we've done is we've gone to our key customers and we've provided them with the ability to accelerate and fast-track business continuity planning in order for us to enable organisations to enact their remote working strategies very quickly," said El-Khayat.

The dynamic Regional Director of Citrix's operations in MENA added that they also catered for those they could not reach due to scale by providing them with a BCP resource page on their public website, which included blogs written by their global CEO – and multiple contributions from their partner ecosystem in an effort to give organisations an easy, quick and rapid way to initiate their remote working plans.

El-Khayat then explained that we're now entering a phase they labelled the 'fixed phase' and articulated the nuances between each phase since lockdown began - and stressed how enterprises needed to make the right decisions to move onto what he called the 'preparation phase'.

"Everything that I've discussed in terms of the outreach initiative, and our ability to create our BCP Everything that I've discussed in terms of the outreach initiative, and our ability to create our BCP resource and programs was categorised as the enabling phase".

resource and programs was categorised as the 'enabling phase'. The next phase, which is the phase were in now is what we call the 'fixed phase'. Obviously a lot of enterprises are having to do a lot of shortcuts in order for them to get their remote working programs up and running, and we're working with customers to assess their current state and desired state. We're also working with our partners and our professional services arm to essentially go and stabilise the written investments that have been made by those organisations to get them to start building on solid foundations in order to get them to the third phase, which is what we call the 'preparation phase'," said El-Khayat.

It's one thing to work remotely, but one of the biggest challenges for many enterprises is making sure their employees and their assets are protected, which is easier said than done, especially when you consider that the current climate provides cyber hackers with ample opportunities to exploit vulnerabilities in many businesses.

El-Khayat highlighted that security was another critical

factor in businesses reaching out to Citrix to ensure they were secure when working remotely.

"If you think about Citrix in the context of security, the way we enable users to access their virtual machines and their applications is secured and hosted in their data centres by using our virtualisation technology. We're essentially taking the strict corporate policies to the edge of the user, so they can access their data and their applications from the resources and the security policies of their corporate network. The ability to do this enabled us to tick a very important box for organisations, which means that Citrix is a platform that enables them to move from the edge to the home whilst maintaining optimum security," said El-Khayat.

El-Khayat concluded a brilliant interview by discussing the capabilities of the suite of security products they have at their disposal.

"Citrix deploys their technologies based on a secure digital perimeter, which basically talks about apps and data that is hosted in data centres. We leverage cloud security that is managed for optimum application delivery by dispensing our line of security products around our load balancing technology and web application firewall, that is then complimented by our own security policies that secure access to applications and data protection, and this ultimately at the very core of what we do," said El-Khayat. Come



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#### CADD EMIRATES

# CADD EMIRATES TALK DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND HPE GREENLAKE

CADD Emirates, one of the region's leading systems integrators, in conjunction with CPI Media Group, held a panel discussion with HPE to discuss the acceleration of digital transformation across the region - and the benefits its new consumption model provides for customers during the COVID-19 crisis.

tanley Harish, Enterprise Solutions Architect and Noel Aloysious, Solutions Architect at CADD Emirates, were joined by Kshitij Saxena, GreenLake Channel Sales for Middle East, Saudi and South Africa, and Morad Qutqut, Chief Customer Innovation Officer at HPE, for an indepth discussion, which was moderated by CNME Editor Mark Forker.

The panel discussion examined a whole range of different issues currently afflicting the IT ecosystem, but Stanley Harish kickstarted the conversation by examining how enterprises need to understand what the defining characteristics of digital transformation actually entails, pointing out that many simply update an application and then label it as digital transformation.

"The entire world is talking about digital transformation, but not everybody is adaptable to digital transformation. Digital transformation is a process of integrating digital technologies into the whole aspect of the business, whether that be the culture, operations, value or delivery. The overall objective is leverage technology to both to improve customer experience, to create new ways for customers to engage with the business. However, a lot of businesses are guilty of making changes to their website, or their application and then claiming that they've achieved digital transformation, but that is not digital transformation," said Harish.

Harish pointed out that many enterprises need to shed that legacy technology, because the cost of maintaining that legacy technology is excessive. However, he stressed that it was critically important for businesses to determine why they need digital transformation, before they embark on that journey and devise a robust strategy in order to achieve success.

"You need a proper roadmap to achieve the digital transformation that you want, and businesses have to move away from their normal way of thinking to more innovative ways in order to digitise their business. There is lack of confidence for many businesses undertaking digital transformation, and this stems from the fact that they don't have a proper strategy. The problem is that many try to get everything into one, but digital transformation doesn't work like that, you need to strategise, and have a solid game plan to succeed," said Harish.

Noel Aloysious highlighted

how everybody was caught off guard by the COIVD-19 pandemic, and that when businesses transitioned to remote working, only some employees were given the adequate access needed for security reasons, but that this created huge problems.

"Many organisations were using a very traditional type of system, so the VPN remote connectivity was only given to certain IT support users - but leveraging VPN connectivity for the entire organisation created a bottleneck situation. That's where IT has to evolve, or IT has to look for a different work culture in a collaborative way. I think a number of factors have emerged within the IT industry since this global health crisis, and I think availability, uptime - and how to give remote access to users has really come to prominence," said Aloysious.

The solutions architect at CADD Emirates also highlighted the security factor.

"We can see all over the

world that bad actors are launching cyberattacks via ransomware and other methods on organisations in an effort to capitalise on the current uncertainty and vulnerability that the pandemic has caused, so businesses need to stay alert," said Aloysious.

Aloysious believes that the new IT consumption model introduced by HPE, in the form of its GreenLake solution is going to assist a lot of businesses who are seeking to reduce their costs.

"HPE have introduced a consumption model where customers can select an OPEX model. HPE has provided businesses with a lot of breathing space by coming up with GreenLake, but it has also provided a financial services model for customers looking for to access a CAPEX model for their business," said Aloysious.

The conversation then moved away from the topic of digital transformation, and HPE's Chief Innovation Officer, Morad







Qutqut spoke of the importance of AI in this data-driven digital era we now live in.

According to Qutqut, whilst it is great that AI technology can help us gain the results we desire in a much quicker way, he cautioned that there remains a diverse range of challenges facing enterprises looking to integrate AI and Machine Learning into their operations.

"AI technology is allowing the machine the possibility to digest information by itself, analyse certain data and conclude a new style of operations that can be done in a much more efficient way. This takes automation to the next level, and can provide us with the results we're expecting, but in a much faster way. That is great, but at the same time we must understand that there are multiple challenges for organisations to fulfill in order to adapt to these new solutions," said Qutqut.

The Chief Innovation Officer at the IT leader stressed that

one of the major obstacles facing enterprises is skillset, claiming that many don't know what type of knowledge they need to successfully integrate AI into their organisation.

"AI relies a lot on data, without providing the proper information to the machine, it can't learn. Most of the data that is available now is very fragmented and scattered. It's also available in different silos, so we need to aggregate all of this data to create a link between these different sources of data to make sure that the machine can learn in a comprehensive way," said Qutqut.

HPE executive Kshitij Saxena articulated why its HPE GreenLake solution has become so popular with so many users - and explained the evolution businesses have undergone in terms of their own cloud journey over the last 10 years.

"A decade ago, nearly every single customer was on a cloud journey, and we found that a lot of customers loved their public cloud experience, but over a period of time the popularity of that model began to decline. The cost savings that was expected from the cloud didn't materialise, and then second aspect of it was around control. Most customers today, and even back then were asking this question of who controls my data, and who has access to my data," said Saxena.

He also reinforced the message of HPE in terms of what direction it is going - and be entire world is t

The entire world is talking about digital transformation, but not everybody is adaptable to digital transformation."

highlighted the statement from its CEO regarding its ambition to exclusively become an as-aservice business.

"Our CEO announced that by 2022, we will provide everything we have, and will transition completely into an as-a-service organisation. What that means for our customers is that HPE is already transitioning to be that edge to the core to the cloud platform as-a-service provider to our customers, and that's what we've been working towards over the last few years," said Saxena.

He concluded by emphasising the phenomenal success of HPE GreenLake on a global scale over the past 4 years.

"The GreenLake model has grown consistently year-onyear on a global scale for the last four years, and we're also seeing some of the highest customer satisfaction rates. It has a lot to offer and ultimately gives the customer the ability to scale-up in minutes because they have the capacity under their control inside its data center, but they only pay for it when the capacity is used," said Saxena.

#### ADNOC

# PANORAMA FUELS ADNOC'S RESPONSE DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

CNME Editor Mark Forker interviewed **Abdul Nasser Al Mughairbi**, Senior Vice President, Digital at ADNOC, to find out how the company has leveraged the capabilities of its Panorama Digital Command Center to respond to complex market dynamics in light of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic.

<image>

JULY 2020

n a candid discussion, the charismatic and dynamic Al Mughairbi articulated how Panorama was able to play a business continuity role during the crisis – and added that its ability to relay realtime information helped it to optimise production and negate potential impact on national and customer demand.

Panorama was established in 2017 - and has been a phenomenal success driving \$1 billion in value since that time, but its speed and agility following the outbreak of COVID-19, has garnered attention and brought its unique digital capabilities to prominence in the public domain across the UAE.

"The way that Panorama has always worked within our organisation is that we've been the center of information and technology. We've always been an enabler to the organisation. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and we were forced into complete lockdown, it inevitably meant that all employees in our HQ buildings were forced to work remotely, but the value of real-time information availability at our fingertips was crucial. The ability of Panorama to provide live information for real-time decision making helped us to maintain business continuity," said Al Mughairbi.

The SVP of ADNOC's digital operations explained that a business continuity team was formed within the organisation in response to the pandemic – and they immediately established a business–driven dashboard that tracked and monitored all of its activities. He added that Panorama started conducting simulations and potential scenarios related to its production.

"We had to start asking the question that if there was an outbreak at a certain location then how can we contain it? How can we optimise that production, and move it to another location without impacting the national demand, our customers, and allow us to continue to be a reliable operator and supplier," said Al Mughairbi.

Al Mughairbi disclosed that it was important for ADNOC to maintain their reputation for reliability, especially during times of crisis, but in order to do so successfully they relied on Panorama to make informed decisions in real-time.

The visionary SVP proceeded to explain the nuances of the oil and gas industry, the complexity of its supply chain, and in general how ADNOC operates, which once again illustrated the importance of its Panorama Digital Command center which serves as a nerve centre for all its operations.

"National oil companies in general are lucky in the fact that we operate in one single location. Our oilfields, our gas production processing facilities, refineries and our petrochemical utilities are all in the same location within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Everything is connected in a continuous production chain. It's a very complex value chain with pipelines of products that are worth millions and billions of dollars going through it. Optimisation and efficiency are critical in order to be able to generate savings and add value. ADNOC has 14 operating companies, and 65 operating sites with data that



is being relayed and piped into Panorama every second. One of our companies alone produces almost 1.8 million barrels of oil every day, which is equivalent to the size of an entire oil company globally," said Al Mughairbi.

ADNOC's overall digital transformation journey and continued commitment to embed cutting-edge technology across its value chain is designed to enable smart growth. He pointed to its subsurface Thamama center as another key component in its transition to digitalisation.

"We have a sub-surface center called Thamama that focuses on field development and geology – that is really the bread and butter and heart of ADNOC – which deploys a lot of AI technology. In addition, everything that we do in terms of data is enabled by IT. The whole organisation has to work together like a welloiled machine for this to come together and to gain value from it," said Al Mughairbi.

When pressed on what ultimately had made Panorama such a success and differentiated it from other digital centers, Al Mughairbi stressed the commitment and The ability of Panorama to provide live information for real-time decision making helped us to maintain business continuity." leadership of the management at ADNOC for helping to fuel and drive its digital transformation objectives.

"I think the success of this initiative has been driven by the commitment of the leadership at ADNOC. They recognised that we needed to drive digital transformation across the organisation. We built on equipment that already existed at ADNOC. Digitalisation is built on data, and data comes from Internet of Things (IoT), and from automation of systems that we already had. Every plant has a distributed control system (DCS) that is of cutting-edge technology – and on that front we partnered with some of the biggest companies in the world such as Honeywell, who work on very specific industry control systems that support IoT, sensors and data. We built on top of all this existing infrastructure to gather all the data we have and to bring it into Panorama. The success doesn't just come from monetary investment, it comes from the people, knowledge, expertise, leadership and commitment of all at ADNOC," concluded Al Mughairbi.

# NXN CEO HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL AGILITY AND RESILIENCE

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to NXN CEO **Ghazi Atallah**, to find out how the digital services provider has empowered businesses to accelerate their digital transformation objectives in light of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, what the future of the workplace looks like - and the importance of digital agility and resilience.



what NXN been leveraging its knowledge and expertise as an enabler of digital transformation to help their customers cope with the challenges presented by COVID-19?

A lot of focus has been on remote working, which is part of digital transformation, but it is a smaller element in terms of total transformation of companies. Our emphasis has been within the verticals that we operate in, and the overall business process. Our expertise comes from a planning point of view, and we've been directly asking enterprises the question of what is it that you need to digitise?

The transition to remote working has driven the requirement to digitise the business process in a much faster way – and I think COVID-19 has made many companies understand the importance of digitisation. When we talk about digitising, we're talking about digitising the entire business process and workflow.

In addition to this, the integration of digital and physical is becoming much more important, and the whole business process needs to be looked at in terms of digitisation. There is amalgamation of the online digital world and the physical world, and these things have to be smooth, and they have to interact throughout, so that you eventually get to a point where you have a fully digitised business process and that's what we're focused on with our customers.

#### In terms of remote working, what where the main pain points that customers were coming to you to help them address?

In terms of remote working the key aspect was the sheer scale and speed of it. It wasn't a case of let's do this over several months in order to move our employees online, and be more collaborative, it was very sudden and very quick.

For us internally we were quite used to remote working as we're a very digitally-native company, so it made it easier for us to make the transition, but I think for some larger organisations it was definitely a little bit more distressing to move their entire workforce online.

You have to identify the right tools and you also need to create an online culture in order to ensure that everyone knows how to effectively collaborate and work together efficiently whilst working remotely. You need the right tools and solutions, and it goes without saying that they need to be secure, but it's not always easy to find the right tools and get the adequate security you need.

The key component for companies was to strike the right balance between culture and collaboration to ultimately ensure that when working online they were able to do their job as effectively as before.

Do you think COVID-19 is going to spark a cultural change here in the UAE in terms of the way organisations view the way we work, where we work and when we work? I think it has already changed dramatically and that will continue to take place in the post-COVID workplace. Companies didn't have any choice and they had to let their employees work remotely. It has in many ways been a forced cultural shift, but I think it's going to continue and be maintained, and there has been a shift not only within a company, but in terms of how companies interact.

There is also a cultural shift in terms of how we interact with our customers, the idea was always physical, it was a case of let's get together and let's meet face-to-face, but now as I mentioned before the amalgamation of physical and digital again has paved a new path. In terms of remote working the key aspect was the sheer scale and speed of it." In the past everybody had to meet physically for a meeting, or for a collaboration to take place, not just internally, but between company and customer, but there has definitely been a cultural shift, and it's going to remain like this in the future.

#### NXN have spoken a lot about the importance of building digital agility and resilience. What are the defining characteristics of that?

As an organisation you want to be as agile as you can be in terms of facing certain situations, problems and issues, some internal and some external. Essentially, resiliency means you have to have the fallback capabilities and stay up and running no matter what the circumstances are. You need to look at your digital resiliency from both a technology and a business process standpoint. What happens of this particular business process can't be done? How do I fallback to a resilient scenario?

Agility is somewhat linked - but is also more related to how you quickly adapt and utilise technology to get you to work through, either business challenges as the pandemic was, or business opportunities as they arise now from the change of state in the market. You need to take to have the technology to be able to do that, and that is exactly what digital is supposed to be.

# BANKING ON CHANGE

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **David Murphy**, Managing Partner, Financial Services EMEA & APAC at Consultancy Publicis Sapient, to find out what impact COVID-19 has played in terms of accelerating digital transformation across the global banking ecosystem.

> n a wide-ranging interview, Murphy said that COVID-19 served as a catalyst for a change amongst banking institutions - and paved the way for the implementation of projects that were previously described as 'impossible'.

Murphy also pointed out that the ongoing pandemic really illustrated that many banks hadn't really undergone digitisation on the scale some had claimed.

"I think the COVID-19 situation has really highlighted that digitisation has not been as deep as maybe what has been communicated externally to investors. There remains a lot of holes in existing processes, where say it was OK to have 80% of the service digitised, but the other 20% still required you

20

**David Murphy** Managing Partner, Financial Services EMEA & APAC at Consultancy Publicis Sapient to call a contact center, or visit a branch," said Murphy.

Murphy added that one other issue that has arisen during COVID-19 has been the fact that the business continuity plans were simply 'insufficient'.

"The business continuity plans were just not sufficient, and it really showed how ineffective some organisations were from a digital perspective. When you decide to shut down a channel, that is essentially your back-up channel if something goes wrong digitally, like a call center - and you make it impossible to get into contact with anybody at the call center, then it just exacerbates all your issues," said Murphy.

In a perfect illustration of how digital transformation has been fast-tracked and accelerated during COVID-19, Murphy provided an example based on the experience of a client of his in the UK.

"A client of mine at one of the banks in the UK, has been keeping a list of all the things that he was told were impossible over the last 3 years. For many years he had been requesting that when contact centers get overloaded with demand, that the bank moves some of that demand to their branches, as less people show up at branches, and the personnel in the branches are well-equipped to deal with the calls. However, he was told bluntly that it wasn't possible and can't be done, yet within two weeks of the COVID-19 crisis it had been executed and implemented," said Murphy.

The Managing Partner at Publicis Sapient stressed that he didn't believe COVID-19 has created a paradigm shift, and that instead it just really created an impetus for businesses to initiate change.

"What we've seen across the board with COVID-19 is that it has really accelerated digital plans. I don't feel that it has created a new paradigm, or a new normal or what not, it simply accelerated what everybody knew should happen, but they didn't have the impetus to really get it over the line. I do think this transition and shift has been a very positive aspect of COVID-19, and I believe it has also caused people to really re-think what their future plans are for their business and again has really accelerated conversations," said Murphy.

Murphy disclosed that before COVID-19, he had engaged with a number of banking institutions regarding capital expenditures on technologies such as software creation and software procurement, and he quickly discovered it was quite a significant percentage of the banks budget.

"What we found was that it can range anywhere from 5, 7 or 10% of their total cost space on an annual basis. The big number that is always quoted is that JP Morgan spends \$10 billion on IT every year. Those numbers are equally as sizeable and proportioned for any of the banks in the UK or Middle East. The challenge is when you actually get into that number, you find that very little is allocated, or

### I think the COVID-19 situation has really highlighted that digitisation has not been as deep as maybe what has been communicated externally to investors."

less than you would expect is allocated to discretionary spending, meaning strategic programs like a digitisation program," said Murphy.

According to the charismatic financial expert the reason for this is banks have got regulatory and mandatory programs that they have to implement – and said that the banks are starting to realise that they are spending 30–40% of their budget on just maintaining their legacy solution.

"Banks started to ask themselves, do I need to do something different? This is where these type of jump and attack conversations come into play. The banks can continue to try and evolve what they have which involves applying digitisation techniques, and they will see incremental improvements step-by-step, and will allow them to tackle all the low-hanging fruit. What the COVID-19 crisis really highlighted, which is the lowhanging fruit is solved, but the problem is that the medium and high complexity solutions never got addressed, and those medium and high complexity solutions during COVID-19 became the norm," said Murphy.

#### VIRGIN MOBILE

# "WE WANT TO EMPOWER OUR USERS" – CEO, VIRGIN MOBILE KSA

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Eng. Yaarob Al-Sayegh**, the newly appointed CEO of Virgin Mobile, Saudi Arabia.

> l-Sayegh has been tasked with the responsibility of driving the digital transformation strategy of the mobile network operator in support of the ambitious Saudi Vision 2030 plan.

> The former Mobily senior executive is one of the most distinguished and decorated figures within the telecommunications ecosystem across the Middle East, and his appointment as CEO of Virgin Mobile KSA, is seen as a major coup by many industry experts.

Virgin Mobile has enjoyed a lot of success in the UAE market, and has narrowed in on the millennial demographic of the market, and Virgin Mobile are confident they can replicate that success in Saudi Arabia, which boats a burgeoning young tech-savvy population.

"We have a great opportunity to grow our customer base, especially amongst the millennial demographic in the country. The beauty with these customer segments is that they are one of the fastest growing in Saudi Arabia. This is where our focus will be and our strategy is set on, and we feel that there will be excellent potential for growth for us in the Saudi market, despite the current challenges presented by ongoing COVID-19 situation," said Al-Sayegh.

In this digital era, where the main currency is 'experiences', it's critical for businesses to ensure they deliver seamless experiences in order to meet the demands of their users, which are constantly evolving. Al-Sayegh highlighted their SIM delivery service as an example of this.

"We want to deploy digital technologies that not only makes sense to our customers, but ultimately enhances their experiences. During COVID-19, we launched a SIM delivery services that promised to deliver that SIM within two hours of you placing that order. This was positively received by users in Saudi Arabia. In addition to this, we also gave users the opportunity to collect the SIM from our stores, as our main objective is to empower our users and give them flexibility and full autonomy with their choices," said Al-Sayegh.

The new Virgin Mobile KSA CEO added that they had launched another solution called the Family Tag, which is ultimately designed to allow parents to know where their child is at all times.

"One other product we've launched that has really resonated with the Saudi marketplace is our Virgin Mobile Family Tag solution, which is basically a small device that you can give your children, and acts as a tracking device in order to allow you to know where your loved ones are at all times. We believe such products and services fit well into our philosophy, which is to simplify all our services for our customers to ensure we provide them with good digital experiences. We want to allow them to have visibility on what they're spending on a monthly



We want to deploy digital technologies that not only makes sense to our customers, but ultimately enhances their experiences,"

> them manage the traffic on their networks," said Al-Sayegh.

In terms of what impact COVID-19 will have on the rollout and commercial deployment of 5G networks in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Al-Sayegh believes that it does make it more difficult - but expects operators to continue with their strategies.

"If you look at the deployment of 5G in the Saudi market, then you can see that we are one of the few countries across the region that is really leading the way in 5G. COVID-19 has obviously made the continued deployment of 5G more difficult, but we have the technology, and operators are pressing ahead with their deployment plans. Our host operator STC has already launched 5G, and with 5G you have different products coming out of it, and one of them is mobile broadband. We're working closely with STC to avail of, and launch 5G in the Saudi market very soon," said Al-Sayegh. Come

basis, and the flexibility to select a package tailored to their needs," said Al-Sayegh.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced businesses to allow their employees to work remotely, but this has inevitably placed a huge strain on network capacity, latency and bandwidth. Al-Sayegh praised the role of their host operator STC, and the Saudi government in terms of their response to the increased demand that was placed on networks.

"We're partners with STC, and they've done a truly terrific job in terms of optimizing the network during the recent COVID-19 crisis. They also received a lot of support from the government, who increased the location of frequency for

telecommunications providers, which enabled STC, and other operators to absorb the high demand in residential areas for increased network capacity," said Al-Sayegh.

When asked what role Virgin Mobile KSA played in assisting STC, the telecommunications veteran said they offered specific packages on mobile data plans.

"Virgin launched several packages and promotions to our customers in order to support them during these difficult and unprecedented times. We launched promotions on data bundles, because we felt that this was the perfect time for people to use more of their mobile data, and we worked in co-ordination with STC to help

23



#### ALPHA DATA

# **"DURING COVID-19 THE IMPOSSIBLE BECAME POSSIBLE" -ALPHA DATA CEO**

CNME Editor Mark Forker interviewed Alpha Data CEO, **Fayez Ibbini**, to find out how the IT company has coped and adapted to the industry challenges presented by the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, the wide-ranging economic impact the crisis has had, how it has changed the way we work – and what the future will look like.

nder the dynamic tutelage of Ibbini, Alpha Data have firmly established themselves as one of the region's leading systems integrators and are one of the most trusted and reputable channel partners in the IT ecosystem.

Much of its success in the market has been down to the innovative thinking and vision of its CEO, who has earned a reputation for always looking for ways to better improve the services they offer their customers and partners.

His foresight and outstanding leadership were illustrated by his early and proactive response to the COVID-19 crisis, with business going ahead as normal in the UAE, Ibbini took the decision to postpone their staff party in February, based on the information he was reading relating the virus.

"From the outset we have approached the pandemic from the perspective of ensuring that all are employees are safe. We had a staff party scheduled in February, but with over 400 people being in the one confined space, it just didn't add up for me, and I wasn't comfortable with the idea, so I took the decision to cancel the party. The hotel expressed their disappointment that we postponed, but as I said the safety of our employees are paramount to me, so it was the right decision to take," said Ibbini.

The Alpha Data CEO pointed out that before lockdown commenced, there wasn't a lot of guidelines on what to do, because

In many ways it has been a new learning experience for us, and in terms of the 'new norm' most of our people actually welcome it and have been receptive towards it." not much had happened in the UAE. When the time did come to embrace the concept of working remotely, Ibbini explained the difficulties they encountered.

"When you are an IT company, every employee is crucial in terms of supporting the customer, so instructing them to isolate, or to work remotely was crippling in the earliest stages of the lockdown, but over time we adapted and learned how to go about it effectively, and we were also very fortunate that in the industry we operate in we have all the tools at our disposal to enable us to work remotely - and crucially to remain 'connected' with our customers," said Ibbini.

The charismatic figurehead of Alpha Data explained that many employees initially struggled with the transition from the compounds of their traditional office environment to a virtual one – but stressed that it had been a huge learning curve for the company and that he had been fascinated by how some had adapted.

"In many ways it has been a new learning experience for us, and in terms of the 'new norm' most of our people actually welcome it and have been receptive towards it. However, initially our employees were restless when we told them to work remotely, so many of our them were telling us they can't stand it and were finding it very difficult. However, after two months, we now have to try and persuade them to come back into the office. It's very interesting to see how we can adapt to things very quickly – and the other aspect that I found extremely interesting is just how effectively people worked from home, sometimes they were working until 10 or 11 at night, so instead of working less, they were working more," said Ibbini.

According to Ibbini one other fascinating aspect of the COVID-19 situation, was that in many instances it served as a catalyst for change. He pointed to transformation involved in the process of signing important documentations like Power of Attorneys.

"During COVID-19 we've seen that what we once thought was impossible, suddenly became possible. For example, my partner and I had six Power of Attorneys that we had to sign, and this is typically a very stringent and robust process that is time consuming. However, during lockdown they deployed technology in order to move the process online. It only took us 6-8 minutes to complete all the documentation and the time it saved us both was incredible. It really was fantastic, and I hope it continues to be a digital service, as it is much more convenient," said Ibbini.

When asked did he see a paradigm shift occurring in terms of how organizations view when we work, where we work and how we work in the post-COVID world, Ibbini was measured in response and said that his on opinion of working remotely has changed several times since lockdown began in March, primarily due to the success of the transition from office to home.

"My response to this question has shifted over the last two months. In the early days, I felt OK, we have to do it, but it probably won't work. Then I started to see results coming through that equaled, and in many cases was actually better than before, so then the question became do we really need to go back to the office," said Ibbini.

Ibbini pointed to the fact that many employees had benefited from no longer having to undergo lengthy commutes – but stressed that despite the many positives in working remotely, it was impossible to both build a culture in this type of environment and form relationships amongst colleagues.

"In the last few weeks, I've noticed another trend from the staff and that is that working remotely is effective and practical, but it doesn't work in terms of creating a culture and connectivity between staff. It's hard to become friends over a Zoom call. When I was holding meetings online, afterwards I felt exhausted and I couldn't understand why, but then I realized that I was trying to fill in gaps that a Zoom call doesn't solve. I was trying to read body language and the eye movement



and general interaction to see what the other person is signaling to me. When I sit with them face-to-face it's much easier to read these things. I'm now of the mindset that it has to be a combination of both, and we need a blended hybrid model in terms of how we work in the future," said Ibbini.

In another illustration of strong leadership, Alpha Data's CEO has empowered his managers to decide which employees work best from home and which ones need to be in an office environment to derive the best results.

"I've told the managers that I'll leave it up to them to decide which employees can deliver the best results from home, and which ones that work as part of a team need to be in the office to sit with their colleagues. They are better placed to make the decision and manage their teams. There is no final answer, but there is definitely a need for

26

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a physical contact in addition to the productivity aspect from working remotely. In my opinion, you need to try and find a happy medium between both worlds, so you can maintain a culture," said Ibbini.

Attempting to predict the future in the unprecedented world we now find ourselves in is almost impossible, but there is extra pressure on Ibbini, who is responsible for over 1600 employees. The CEO of the IT leader claimed that there is simply 'no truth' right now.

"I have to be very careful that I don't misguide them in one way or the other, but I also have to inform them that there is no truth out there. Medical professionals the world over and are constantly arguing with each other in relation to the situation. In the end there is only one truth, and that is that we don't have an answer, and we don't have a vaccine, so we're going to have to live with it for months and just continue to adapt the situation as it evolves in the best way we can," said Ibbini.

In relation to the economic uncertainty that has been caused by COVID-19, Ibbini disclosed that his concerns were two-fold – and warned against the potential damage a secondary lockdown could have both economically and in terms of morale.

"I do believe that a secondary lockdown would cause despair. I think with the first one people were very co-operative, but whether it's in the US, UK or here in the UAE, I don't think people will tolerate it. If that was to happen then it would obviously be detrimental and damaging to the economy," said Ibbini.

One other trend that Ibbini has observed is that people are not shopping, and that another thing we've learned from the crisis is that the dopamine hit we get from buying something is not all that necessary, and in truth is something we can do without.

"I'm concerned about the changes in spending behaviors and what that will do to places like Abu Dhabi and Dubai if people stop spending on consumer products? This would have a devastating impact on an economy such as Dubai, that is dependent on consumer spending. As a company it would be a huge concern for us, simply because it will change the whole landscape of the economy," said Ibbini.

Interestingly, he also warned against the dangers of companies who stop paying – and added that if the money dries up then it has knock–on effect on everyone.

"One other huge problem here is once there is a crisis, people stop paying. They think it's the 2008 financial crisis all over again and it's not, and they think that if they pay me and then they don't get paid they seem to think they'll have a cashflow problem, so they stop paying. However, we all know that fundamentally money is the grease of the engine and if you stop it everything will seize up. I have done everything I can to convince people to keep paying, and we pay as fast as we can because money doesn't add any value in the bank, so why hold the money? We need to let it flow, we've talked with banks, government entities and others in the private sector, and it is happening, but not at the speed at which I'd like," concluded Ibbini.

Whatever the future holds, Alpha Data under the guidance and management of Ibbini, are in safe hands and will continue to be both a leader and a major player in the IT industry here in the Middle East.

#### ITQAN

# HPE SYNERGY PROVIDES PATHWAY TO A TRULY HYBRID IT MODEL

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Dimitris Kourlas**, Channel & Ecosystem, HPE, and **Walid El Saikali**, General Manager & VP at ITQAN Al Khaleej Computers, to find out more about the partnership between the two companies, and what the unique capabilities of both the HPE SimpliVity 380 and HPE Synergy solutions are?





General Manager & VP at ITQAN Al Khaleej Computers

he ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the need for businesses to really optimise and maximise the investments they've made on cloud services. However, many in the IT ecosystem are struggling to find a model that gives them the

#### right scalability, agility and flexibility. How can the HPE SimpliVity 380 solution empower enterprises to transform their IT operations?

In today's world most of the VM admins are struggling to keep up with the demands of the digital business. They are constantly dealing with the complexity of infrastructure that slows down time-tomarket, fighting fires that ties up their time, and supporting new app demands with more cost pressures.

All this can be overcome by HPE Simplivity, which is a powerful and intelligent HCI. HPE HCI gives software-define, which has driven tremendous IT productivity and efficiency gains over hardware-confined infrastructure. It's taken complex, manual silos into automated and on-demand resources. It's moved wasteful, over-provisioning into efficient, fluid pools of virtual compute and storage.

Not only that, HPE's Simplivity solution is autonomous, it predicts and prevents disruptions and selfheals, moves IT from being reactive to predictive and has the ability for infrastructure to optimise itself across distributed environments.

#### The HPE SimpliVity 380 boasts many unique capabilities such as centralised data management and built-in AI to name a few, but can the solution eliminate the complexities that are typically involved in this type of transformation?

As we mentioned earlier now the HCI demands not only a software defined datacenter, but more than that, such as AI driven capabilities. HPE SimpliVity is an AI-driven intelligent HCI solution.

HPE Infosight global intelligence engine is one simple, familiar interface, or experience to manage everything that includes AIdriven intelligence.

### HPE Simplivity can give below benefits to customers:

 All in one system collapse the stack, removing silos with built-in resiliency, backup and disaster recovery. This will also give customers 91% more time for you to work on innovation and new projects.

- Global Unified Management Centrally manage everything including data protection, One-Click Upgrades, Simple lifecycle management across firmware, hypervisor, OS Zero-Downtime refresh cycles – and the flexibility to add or remove modular systems non-disruptively to meet business needs.
- Automated Tuning Always optimal performance, efficiency, resiliency without knobs or tradeoffs.
- Global Intelligence Predictive analytics and support automation.
- Ability to recover Terabyte sized VMs in 60 seconds.

The role of IT has evolved over the years, and one of the key components for any business is their ability to be agile in order to be able to respond to changing market dynamics and customer requirements. Can you tell us how HPE Synergy can automate everyday operations and develop apps faster and smarter?

Synergy is part of Composable Infrastructure Architecture which is the foundation for a Digital Transformation. It is a building block to transition to a truly Hybrid IT model. With HPE Synergy, customers can run both mode 1 and 2 applications from a single and flexible platform.

Our clients can save both on hardware footprint and software licensing, while at the same time reducing complexity in the data center from installation through the entire lifecycle management.

Synergy can help develop apps faster and smarter because it is the ultimate platform for agile DevOps. Enabling DevOps like never before, and by setting on-prem infrastructure in the hands of developers with a single Unified API.

Through an extensive partner ecosystem like Docker, Ansible, and Mesosphere, developers can provision HPE Synergy for testing in minutes through just a single line of code!

#### What sort of market response has there been to both HPE Synergy and HPE SimpliVity?

Hyper-convergence and composable infrastructure continue to be markets of growth for HPE. Customers aiming to consolidate operations and maintenance, appreciate the integrated and scalable approach of HPE Synergy and HPE SimpliVity.

Choosing between a hyperconverged or composable architecture may not necessarily be an either-or selection. In many scenarios, they can be complementary and provide the right mix of features and flexibility.

This is one of the reasons HPE is experiencing strong acceptance from organisations around the world and especially in the region of Middle East. For the third year in a row, Gartner has recognised HPE as a Leader in the Magic Quadrant for Hyper-converged Infrastructure. 29





Xavier Anglada Strategy and Consulting Lead, Accenture, Middle East

#### ACCENTURE

# THE NEVER NORMAL

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Xavier Anglada**, Strategy and Consulting Lead, Accenture, Middle East, to learn how the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a huge acceleration towards cloud adoption, and that businesses need to use the crisis as an opportunity to reinvent themselves in this new 'never normal' environment.

n a compelling interview, Anglada said that initial research has indicated that the way we work has been forever altered by COVID-19, and that many workplaces won't return to normal. "We've been working very closely with enterprises and government entities in an effort to help them navigate their way through all the economic uncertainty that has been created by the global health crisis. We're seeing that whilst 50% of our clients believe they'll return to their levels of activity pre-COVID, the other 50% don't share the same optimism and have a very different projection," said Anglada. He added that 20-30% of

those clients have said that they

are no longer ever going to be working fully from the office, stressing that there are other clients in which remote working isn't really feasible, and that they need to return to the office.

"What was true 3 months ago has now completely evolved, and we need to help businesses who had to dramatically shut down their operations in order to protect their staff. The first priority for them was of course let's protect our team, but now the dial has shifted because of business continuity, and employers in many cases need them back, but how do you do that and ensure they remain safe," said Anglada.

The Strategy and Consulting lead at Accenture said they have created a blueprint for businesses in order for them to commit to a proper reinvention and to ensure that their new business model is effective in this new 'never normal' climate.

"The future outlook has different scenarios that are not really set in stone as of yet, so it makes it almost impossible to make business projections with such a variety of potential scenarios in a climate that really is unprecedented. Our message is very clear and simple, and it is that this situation needs to unleash new opportunities," said Anglada.

He highlighted how some sectors were more affected short-term by the COVID-19 pandemic, than others, pointing to retail, aviation and hospitality, as examples of that. However, he stressed that cloud is the 'go-to' solution for a lot of businesses in terms of enhancing their scalability, agility and flexibility.

"The Middle East is a region that has joined the cloud journey late, but I think this is an opportunity to really accelerate that move towards the cloud. The cloud allows you to work remotely, but also to scale up and down in terms of your capacity, capability and agility much better than if you have a full-fledged in-house IT solution. The COVID-19 situation really needs to be used as an opportunity to take the step forward and relocate your key services in the cloud with the right security solutions," said Anglada.

He also pointed out that the view held by some that if you're in the cloud then you're not secure, does not hold true, because of the billions that is being invested into security by hyper-scalers such as AWS and Microsoft every single year.

When asked if whether or not a resistance still existed in relation to cloud here in the Middle East, the dynamic Accenture executive believes there has been a paradigm shift which has been driven by CIOs in the region.

"Our conversations with CIOs have been very interesting, because there was an initial resistance, which I



Our message is very clear and simple, and it is that this situation needs to unleash new opportunities."

> believe stemmed from a lack of awareness regarding the pros and cons of moving to the cloud. Today, we have two paradigms, this health crisis is coming after an economic and financial crisis, which pushes all governments and corporate entities to really start thinking about their cost to serve and their agility to scale up and down," said Anglada.

> He added that CIOs are being pressured to do more with less, and they recognise that there is no solution beyond cloud that can help them deliver the results they need.

"Instead of a CAPEX or OPEX driven business, you can scale based on demand that is secure, protected and innovative because of the services that you can leverage on it. What we're seeing now is that in the past there was a culture of misinformation, or an insufficient understanding of the benefits of cloud, but its ability to improve cost to serve and enable higher agility, has helped all these CIOs to make a stronger case to their boards as to why they need to join the cloud," said Anglada.

#### DELL TECHNOLOGIES

# WHAT'S YOUR EDGE?

**Mohammed Amin**, Senior Vice President - MERAT, at Dell Technologies has penned an exclusive oped for Computer News Middle East in which he examines the impact of edge computing.



dge computing has been gamering significant attention and has already started making an impact on how organisations think about working with data, defying boundaries beyond the use of data centers. With the recent shifts to virtual operations and remote working, organisations are being challenged to think of innovative models and infrastructure to cater to these rising needs.

Concurrently, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and digital transformation are taking place, and waves of technology have been shaping and changing the IT world and challenging how organisations do business. The influx of data is soaring due to the vast adoption and proliferation of smart devices and growing connectivity.

With 30 billion end points predicated by 2023, edge infrastructure modernisation, demands platforms that can address the stringent services, environmental, power and physical footprint requirements that IoT solutions demand. Devices such as phones, drones, automobiles, smart watches, utility grids and industrial sensors and machines are churning out large amounts of data, making it increasingly urgent for IT leaders to determine how and where this data will be processed. Accessing and analyzing of distributed real-time data is becoming more important to businesses and is driving the need for different computing strategies and processing

systems that complement larger data centers located far away.

Gartner predicts that by 2022, as a result of digital business projects, 75% of enterprisegenerated data will be created and processed outside the traditional, centralised data center or cloud – an increase from the less than 10% generated today.

Businesses need to have consistent, flexible infrastructure to quickly adapt to these shifts. With the ability of edge computing to capture data created near the source and the advancement of analytics applications, new business models are emerging altering the way organisations think about their technology assets. The edge computing industry itself is predicted to be worth \$28.8 billion by 2025, according to a report by Grand View Research released this month.

Alongside this, the parallel advent of emerging technologies is driving the adoption of edge computing, enabling a transition from data centers to smaller distributed centers at the edge. 5G, IoT, and AI are converging and creating new paradigms about data on the edge that will influence both the public and private sectors. The vast adoption of IoT and 5G is expected to grow significantly in the region, and edge computing can be an asset by reducing latency and enabling real-time analytics, fully utilising the potential of these technologies. Additionally, the combination of AI and edge computing can help foster innovation, improve operations, and enhance

# The influx of data is soaring due to the vast adoption and proliferation of smart devices and growing connectivity."

customer experiences with close to real-time automation.

At its core, edge computing processes data close to the source of where it is generated, proving valuable for increasing use cases of analytics and machine learning. What makes this exciting is seeing how businesses will be leveraging these converging technologies, as they have transformative potential for many industries and areas.

For instance, in retail the benefits could range from facial recognition for personalised advertising, to AI-powered surveillance for security and retail shrinkage prevention. In the manufacturing industry, it can boost production by speeding up automated quality assurance checks, and addressing limitations across areas such as predictive maintenance, automated process management and supply chain visibility. Looking at healthcare, remote surgeries and telemedicine could be facilitated more seamlessly and for smart cities, there can numerous benefits from faster autonomous vehicle support to smart traffic management.

Additionally, the benefits of reduced latency, improved throughput, better security, and isolation, coupled with data reduction and context and location awareness make edge computing a compelling area of infrastructure investment for communication service providers (CSPs).

Businesses need to start planning on incorporating edge computing into their roadmaps to be ready for this coming wave. The role of the CIO is constantly evolving to match the fast pace of change in the IT industry, and CIOs should acknowledge that there should be room for learning and risk involved. While edge computing has the potential to transform enterprises, CIOs should examine the particular business needs and goals it can help them achieve. When to invest in edge and where it fits in the larger data management and cloud strategies are common questions.

Rather than seeing edge computing as an ultimate choice, a mixed or hybrid approach could work better, by incorporating the different emerging technologies in innovative ways. Identifying where localised computing power is necessary for real-time insights, rapid data processing and reduced latency, is valuable for businesses to recognise. Investment in the right areas will allow for increased efficiencies, reduced costs in moving around data, and flexibility to handle future AI demands and latencysensitive applications. It is certain that edge computing will have an increasing role to play as more things in the world are digitised and could be actually be the key to maximising the success of intelligent connectivity. cnme

#### MASHREQ BANK

## "WE WANTED TO AVOID INTERRUPTION, DISRUPTION AND SURPRISE" – ELLIS WANG, MASHREQ BANK

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Ellis Wang**, Group Head of Technology, at Mashreq Bank, in an effort to find out how the banking institution has coped with COVID-19, maintained business continuity – and what the future of the financial ecosystem will look like.

ashreq Bank has positioned itself as a real leader in the banking sector terms of embracing new technologies in an effort to enhance the services it provides to its customers. Wang was appointed as Group Head of Technology in 2019 – and was tasked with the responsibility of driving its digital transformation objectives.

COVID-19 has disrupted every industry on a global scale, and the banking and financial services sector hasn't been immune to the disruption. However, as Wang points out, those that had resisted digital transformation faced huge challenges once lockdown came into effect.

"The COVID-19 outbreak came as a big surprise to everyone, but those who hadn't transitioned towards the cloud, or embraced digitalisation faced gigantic challenges. The first task for every enterprise was of course 'business continuity' – and we witnessed this scramble from enterprises in a bid to keep the lights on," said Wang.

Wang emphasised the importance of banks maintaining its operations during lockdown - and outlined the measures they took to ensure their customers avoided any disruption.

"It was absolutely critical that banks continued their operations, as people obviously need access to their money, so we had to ensure our ATMs were operating, and our mobile applications and online banking systems were working. Our primary objective and goal during the crisis was to avoid any interruption, disruption or surprise to the range of services we provide our customers," said Wang.

Banks faced the same challenges as other industries across the board, which was ultimately trying to establish how they could allow their employees to work remotely in an effective, efficient and secure way.

"The challenge for us was the same for other businesses in different sectors, and that was of course ensuring that our employees could work effectively from home. For security reasons banks obviously centralise their operations. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employees had to work remotely, but how can you support this centralised working model in an efficient and secure way? In this sort of scenario, how can you ensure end-to-end security can be operated efficiently without any delays? This was without doubt the most difficult challenge all banks faced due to the security complexities involved," said Wang.

Wang has enjoyed a distinguished career in the financial services industry – and

34

has worked for some major corporations in both China and the US, before moving to the Middle East. He said that there has been a completely overhaul in how the banking sector functions due to advancements in technologies like AI and Big Data.

"There has been an upsidedown change in terms of the way the banking industry operates. We have driven digital transformation at Mashreq Bank, but the question we asked ourselves was, how do vou ensure vour client receives the same financial service when they stop coming to physical branches? We believe that our customers get the same service they got when they visited counters in the bank, or an even enhanced more seamless one by using their mobile application, or internet banking on their PC, but this transition represents an upsidedown change for the banking sector," said Wang. In terms of the technologies

> Ellis Wang Group Head of Technology, at Mashreq Bank

that have driven this seismic shift in the financial services and banking industry, Wang pointed to its partnership with Avaya and Koopid, which brought AI to the heart of their customer experience offering. The partnership brings Artificial Intelligence to the heart of the bank's self-service capabilities with the region's first digital engagement banking bot.

"The new system, which acts as a visual and conversational virtual assistant, enables Mashreq customers to access banking services and complete service requests almost entirely through an AI-powered 'agent'. The 'chatbot agent' can verify customers, complete transactions, and sign up for new services on the customer's behalf – from anywhere and through any device," said Wang.

The dynamic Mashreq Bank executive stressed that the reason they embraced AI technology was borne out of a desire to increase productivity in the bank.

"We moved to becoming a digital bank in an effort to increase the productivity and streamline the processes in the bank to deliver a better service to our customers. We leveraged the digital insights of the AI platform to do this. We use AI technology and the data to build the digital process to help the whole bank increase productivity, and we call that a digital insight. Digital insights and outsights are a must in order to support your business and help it become digitised," said Wang. come

SERVICENOW

# RETURNING SAFELY TO THE WORKPLACE

**Pat Wadors,** CHRO, ServiceNow, has penned an op-ed which outlines how employers can successfully coordinate a smooth and safe return to the workplace by following her checklist.



s the UAE eases COVID-19 restrictions, most of us are talking about a "return to work." But that's too simple of a statement to define every situation. Work is not one-size-fits-all. Industries vary and workplaces have diverse footprints — hotels, retail locations, call centres, and yes, traditional office spaces.

This operational diversity increases the complexity of a return. That's echoed in the conversations I'm having with other CHROs. Our dialogue is evolving from pure crisis management to how to manage the new ways we work.

### A new era of employee and customer experiences:

Return to workplace requires careful planning and execution, along with organisational agility. Business functions have to work together to create a safe and productive employee experience. Systems and access have to be easy, seamless, and available across devices.

Those aren't options with yesterday's software and slow, outdated manual processes. They can't be solved with spreadsheets. The workplace of the future (or shall we say, the workplace of now?) needs to digitally manage complex workflows to provide employees the services and experiences they need to do their jobs seamlessly and efficiently.

Digital workflows and keeping compassion in our approaches
are critical as we adapt and design for "the next normal." Around the world, what we see is that companies further along with this type of digital transformation are much better equipped to manage through this time. They'll emerge from this crisis with a productive and engaged workforce, and more operationally ready for their employees to return to work or workplace or to stay working at home if they choose.

There will still be challenges as we move along the roadmap to reopen businesses across the globe. We will learn as we go, adapt, and change as needed. That's why I anticipate a phased approach. We all want to carefully manage the health and safety of employees. Not everyone will re-enter the workplace at once, and when they do, we believe for many that they will have specific schedules, assigned spaces and resources, and limited physical collaboration. They may need to wear masks or take their temperature.

## Technology-enabled, digitally transformed:

So how do you make all of that happen? Above all, never lose sight of employee health and safety—and that of their families. Lead with compassion and take a people-first approach.

## Beyond that, here's the checklist I recommend:

1. Engage with employees to inform

### Business functions have to work together to create a safe and productive employee experience."

your plans; listen to feedback. Adapt as needed.

Determine who needs to know what and communicate in a targeted way. Start with company leadership. Provide them with materials to cascade through their organisations.

You might also want to survey employees — maybe do multiple survey pulse checks along the way. Measure their sentiment about your communications, your empathy, your IT support, whether they feel safe, and their productivity. Where needed, take action based on their feedback.

Finally, make it easy for employees to find up-to-date information. It doesn't have to be a one-stop-shop. But make sure the most important information about return to workplace is clear to employees wherever they search.

2. Automate your steps to return. Bring together a crossfunctional team that meets regularly to evaluate progress, make decisions, and communicate to leadership and employees. At a minimum, include facilities, IT, legal, and HR. Make sure you have a clear decision matrix. Together we're all better, but someone will need to make a final call.

Digitise processes for employee and workplace readiness. This is likely all new, but it's also all a workflow opportunity. Health monitoring, PPE management, smart badging, janitorial notifications, guest registration, to name a few.

Use digital onboarding and ramp up guidance for new hires. Get them up to speed quickly in a mobile-friendly way.

## 3. Ensure a safe working environment.

This may be obvious, but clean, disinfect, and sanitise offices and other workplaces. Go a step further — digitise janitorial requests and reporting so employees can quickly (on mobile, even) notify facilities when they've finished with a desk, a conference room, a register, a piece of equipment, etc., so it can be cleaned.

Remember the phasing? Manage planned and ad-hoc work arrangements. Make it easy to schedule when employees and guests will be on site.

Depending on your industry, create a compliance checklist and update it regularly to ensure the workplace and facilities managers are adhering to guidelines.

The roadmap to reopen and the new ways to work, as well as where we work, are part of a journey. One we're on together. One of the certainties is that companies have to transform how they operate as we return to workplace. The office environment when I started my career gave way to laptops, Wi-Fi, mobile devices, and voice assistants. For employees today and in the future, the traditional workplace is already a pre-COVID artefact.

# SECURING SOCIETIES

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DISTRICT 2020

## DISTRICT 2020 TO DRIVE GROWTH OF UAE START-UP ECOSYSTEM

District 2020, the innovation ecosystem and future of Expo 2020 Dubai, has signed strategic partnerships with Dubai SME and the Mohammed Bin Rashid Innovation Fund (MBRIF) to support its global entrepreneur programme, Scale2Dubai.

n line with Dubai and the UAE's proactive approach to supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the important role they play in bolstering the country's resilient economy, both organisations will provide District 2020 with a pipeline of high-potential start-ups and small businesses by helping eligible companies join Scale2Dubai.

They will also provide the start-ups and small businesses with the guidance, connections and funding they need to continue their growth as part of the Scale2Dubai programme. Marjan Faraidooni, Chief Pavilions and Exhibitions Officer, Expo 2020 Dubai, expressed her belief that these milestone agreements with Dubai SME and MBRIF will further bolster the continued growth of the UAE's startup ecosystem and contribute to a stronger and resurgent economic environment.

"The advance towards a more connected future continues to gain pace, and new opportunities will emerge from the current set of global challenges that SMEs and start-ups currently face. Through the combined efforts of partnerships with both these organisations, Scale2Dubai and our wider District 2020 ecosystem support a crucial sector of the UAE economy and complement other accelerators and incubators around the country," said Faraidooni.

Expo 2020, which will run from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022, will showcase the best examples of collaboration, innovation and cooperation from around the world and help reinvigorate the global economy as it gathers some of the greatest minds from around the world to seek solutions to the most pressing challenges of our time.

District 2020, with a mandate to support industry growth,



will evolve over a nine-month transition period after the event ends, during which more than 80 per cent of Expo's built environment will be repurposed.

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It will transition into a mixed-use community and innovation ecosystem that will contribute to Dubai's position as a leading innovation hub. It will also carry forward Expo 2020's mission of stimulating business opportunities and continue to support start-ups and SMEs that are integral to the UAE economy.

The new agreements mark an important step towards District 2020's vision for a curated innovation ecosystem.

The partnerships will enable

start-ups and small businesses to be part of the Scale2Dubai programme and access the District 2020 platform from which they can expand locally and internationally, while also offering them the opportunity to connect with large enterprises and receive access to funding and other growth enablers.

HE Abdul Baset Al-Janahi, CEO of Dubai SME, said that since its launch in 2002, Dubai SME has launched several programmes and initiatives to support entrepreneurs and promote the innovation ecosystem in the UAE, and stressed that the institution is dedicated to supporting the establishment and development of innovative start-ups, and its vision closely aligns with that of District 2020.

"We will work on qualifying innovative national projects from the members of our Hamdan Innovation Incubator as well as from the different countries participating in our 'Innovation Attraction Programme,' to strengthen District 2020 as a platform for start-ups to grow regionally and access international markets," said Al-Janahi.

Launched in 2016 by the UAE Ministry of Finance, the MBRIF initiative was designed to support innovation in the UAE while elevating the growth potential of inventive start-ups already shaping the future of the UAE's economy.

Fatima Yousif Al Naqbi, Chief Innovation Officer at the Ministry of Finance, added, "We recognise just how influential start-ups and small businesses are in sparking innovation among an economy. Fledgling businesses with an eagerness to scale up are also a key source of job creation. That's why we're determined to provide financing solutions supporting local and international start-ups and small businesses looking to grow in a challenging and competitive environment. Joining an innovation ecosystem such as District 2020 will expedite the progress of these businesses, encourage collaborative innovation across industries, and drive up competition in the wider economy."

Successful applicants to the Scale2Dubai programme can expect benefits such as two years' free working space, support in visa and business set-up, two years' subsidised urban living and access to funding. Additionally, District 2020 will also offer an unrivalled physical and digital infrastructure, a strategic geographic location, and a unique work and living ecosystem.

The programme builds on Expo 2020 Dubai's aim to support the SME and startup sector, a vital sector of the UAE's economy. As of the end of March 2020, Expo 2020 had awarded more than AED 4.6 billion to SMEs. SMEs account for nearly 50 per cent of all businesses registered with Expo 2020, and 56 per cent of all Expo contracts have been awarded to the sector. **CITTE** 





### WEBNMS

## UNLOCKING THE **POWER OF IOT TECHNOLOGY FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT**, **ANYWHERE, ANYTIME.**

Karen Ravindranath, Director, WebNMS - IoT division of Zoho Corp discusses in detail the power of IoT technology in terms of dealing with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

OVID -19 has led us all to humanity's biggest crisis. Although the viral threat has posed several impediments, the world is combating with courage and practical approach towards weeding out the infection.

Similarly, the businesses around the world are feeling the pinch due to the current situation. They are finding ways to combat the temporary slowdown and new ways to handle the crisis.

According to PwC, about 80% of manufacturers expect that the pandemic will have a financial impact on their business. The study was done



Karen Ravindranath Director, WebNMS - IoT division of Zoho Corp.

by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) recently. That is significantly higher than the 48% of cross-industry companies that are concerned about the same impact, which is based on CFO responses to a study by PwC.

During such sudden and unforeseen crisis when people's safety is a priority, its technology that comes to aid and ensures 'Total Business Continuity'. According to PwC, manufacturers are now reconsidering their automation and contingency plans to face business during such times of adversity.

#### The Internet of Things technology can help build powerful tools that can empower automation and remote management using the internet to stay connected to the IT, non-IT assets and business operations which are of critical importance than ever now.

In the current scenario of restricted people's movements, supply chain encumbrances, and transportation disruptions, businesses are challenged with operations crisis, especially those that require humans to be on-site.

The data from IoT solutions can play a huge role in holding together the business and managing the situation proactively for the operations and business leaders. It can also help to minimise losses that could be incurred due to unnecessary operations of assets and greatly empower the staff to stay updated on the operational whereabouts without having to be on-site.

### Envisioning Remote Site/ Asset Management to handle crisis: Why does a business need it?

Today, the word 'remote' has far more impetus on it than any time in the past. With social distancing and travel restrictions in place, how can the managers, administration heads and business leaders have access to their sites operating at multiple locations?

The question that has been on everyone's mind ever since things started getting crucial. It is also highly critical for day to day technicians to stay updated on the remote sites they have been assigned to and be able to access data despite the physical distancing.

Again, fragmented communication could pose a huge hassle during such a crisis. According to Darron Gifford - An automotive industry consultant, 'An automaker may know who's producing its electronic assemblies and circuit boards - and have little knowledge about second-tier suppliers manufacturing their ingredients'. This is due to fragmented communication and lack of transparency in the supply chain.

IoT powered remote management help connect these dots and keep the businesses updated for crisis planning and management.

There are large corporations and facilities which have a million dollars' worth assets located at multiple sites and might need them to be up and running despite such challenges posed by a pandemic. For instance, let's take huge telecom companies which require their cell towers to be operational at 100% uptime and efficiency now.

IoT powered solutions can help centralize these operations, access the remote

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According to PwC, about 80% of manufacturers expect that the pandemic will have a financial impact on their business."

> sites through continuous and proactive monitoring, helping teams schedule maintenance on demand and keep the managers on vigil from the comfort of their homes.

Similarly, there is a considerably different load patter on the grid with commercial establishments shut down however the domestic load is higher than ever, because of the people staying at home. IoT remote power grid monitoring applications help in proactive monitoring, instant anomaly reporting and keeping teams prepared in case of some discrepancy.

Furthermore, ensuring safety and security of staff, it can also prove to be cost effective because periodic maintenance drill can now become maintenance ondemand. Similarly, proactive monitoring can help identify breakage or shutdown, this can help avoid unnecessary downtime and losses due to it.

For field service personnel who are operating on thin teams, knowing which assets



need proactive attention and which assets don't, can mean the difference between maintaining optimal SLAs to having a crisis on their hands at this critical time as this.

### Business Continuity and Digital Transformation:

Businesses need to stay sustainable; despite the health crisis, organisations are finding ways to empower their staff through applications that can help them work from the comfort of their homes, and also caters to customers' demands even when the operations have gotten a bit challenging.

As far as traditional Business Continuity is concerned most organisations have their IT operations in place and are often equipped for remote support/ working. All the staff are given essentials like e-mail ids, laptops and they use cloud business suites to stay connected to their colleagues as well as customers.

The question arises for non- IT operations teams; how are they able to manage operations that need humans to be present on-site? How are they combating the challenge of restricted movements? How is the team staying updated on asset health that is located miles away?

Purpose built IoT Remote Management solutions can be of great help to business continuity needs of operations teams. Industries such as logistics for FMCG and essential goods during



this period are challenged with limited manpower as well as lack of supply chain cohesiveness.

Fortunately, these industries can leverage connected data and insights coming in from the various IoT data points.

With connected data, the supervisors and managers in charge can proactively plan their operations with limited resources, to be prepared for supply chain contingencies. In the case of limited movements and cut of supply from any specific region, the data connected applications can help with managers stay proactive, procure goods from other sources - and stay informed in case of sudden discrepancies during the movement of supplies from

Today, the word 'remote' has far more impetus on it than any time in the past."

> one region to another. All this and more due to staying connected using continuous data monitoring.

In the case of maintaining large immovable assets such as HVAC, DGs and other high capital machinery, how can facilities and admin teams stay proactive in maintaining asset life cycle and also engage in proactive maintenance activities while keeping the health and safety of their staff as a priority?

This is where data intelligence can have a powerful impact on human intelligence! Remote site applications driven by the Internet of Things can help teams scrap off the guesswork and move their operations to digital and advanced formats so that technicians can automate the usual operations and step out only when it is absolutely required.

This can prove to be a huge backbone for business continuity and crisis management for the organisation at large and help make strategic moves that could benefit the business, later.

This applies to operations managers at manufacturing units, facility managers at large buildings like airports and hospitals and can stay updated on their remote operations even during this lock down period, because of the leverage IoT has got to offer from remote sites.

As white collared workers stay connected to work and customers from the comfort of their homes, IoT data and applications can empower field staff and blue collared technicians to also leverage data to stay connected and informed without having to step out. IoT along with AI, automation and remote management can be a great tool to empower human intelligence and business operations with or without crisis!



Jacques Najjar, General Manager for MDS Computers Technical Systems

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JULY 2020

#### MDS

# "HPE GREENLAKE THE KEY TO 'BUSINESS CONTINUITY" - MDS COMPUTERS GM

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Jacques Najjar**, General Manager for MDS Computers Technical Systems, to find out more about their channel partnership with global IT leader HPE, and how its new consumption-based solution HPE GreenLake can help enterprises maximise efficiency, reduce their overall costs and maintain business continuity during COVID-19.

> n a fascinating and in-depth interview, the dynamic Najjar, who is a prominent figure in the IT ecosystem here in the Middle East, also documented how MDS has managed to sustain its success as one of the region's leading system integrators.

The Forrester report indicated that enterprises on average overprovision by 59% on compute and 48% on storage. What are the unique capabilities of HPE GreenLake that enables businesses to maximise their efficiency and reduce their overall spend?

There is no doubt about it, the current pandemic caused by the coronavirus has impacted our economy and especially our customers in an unprecedented way. From projects to cash flows, to budgeting - several decisions need to be reconsidered.

The difficulty lies in maintaining financial stability while revitalising productivity and growth – both are difficult to match at the same level. Cutting costs and budget disallows organisations to invest in technology that can revolutionise the way they do business.

The idea of being able to invest in such technology, while also saving on costs compared to previous methods of procurement – it is unheard of; and this is where HPE Greenlake's consumption model is the answer.

It will enable them to reduce their capex spending considerably and pay on an Opex model for the actual usage of each service, per gigabyte of storage or the number of virtual machines.

Making sure they do not acquire more Capacity than they need, and growing instantly as the business require, or shrinking the capacity should they need to, reducing immediately the Opex cost on monthly or quarterly basis. GreenLake will also simplify IT and free up resources to focus more on business outcome rather than supporting the infrastructure.

In your expert opinion, what are the key benefits of HPE GreenLake in addition to its ability to allow businesses to avoid overprovisioning and reducing costs?

Agility is the most important feature; it will shorten the time to market for deploying global IT projects by 65%. This will have major effect on the profitability of the company by being more competitive in the market.

Besides, as soon as GreenLake has been adopted, customers will be able to address business requirements in no time. Thanks to the capacity on demand enabled by additional resources on site.

- Additionally, GreenLake improves business productivity due to fewer system outages and faster application performance.
- Customers will also have the access to the latest technology.
- Address the growing demand for workloads
- And improve security utilising HPE expertise to proactively manage and support on premises servers, storage, and networking

Can you outline the details of your partnership with HPE, and how you will leverage your industry knowhow

#### and expertise to help them rollout the GreenLake solution to customers across the UAE?

MDS Computers is one of the biggest HPE Platinum partners in the country. We have held this partnership for many decades and been at the forefront of implementing technology for key customers like Government, Large enterprises and aspiring smaller businesses.

At the MIDIS level, we represent HPE in all major cities across the middle east, North Africa, and eastern Europe.

MDS has experience of more than 40 years, in all fields of data centers,

48





We are the ideal partner to align with HPE strategy to have everything as a service under the consumption model of GreenLake by 2021."

## differentiates MDS from its market competitors?

What differentiates MDS in the market, is the adoption of business model focused on the major partnerships which we have maintained for many years. That is why we have a group of companies rather than all partnerships under one management.

This has strengthened the trust of our vendors in MDS. And enabled our staff to adopt the change aligned with HPE's priorities to address the customer evolving business requirements. This has been visible over the years being always the first partner to implement the new HPE solutions to our customers.

Through collaboration with our affiliates, the exchange of knowledge and best practices, backed by the Group's mission and vision – we're able to stand out not only in the UAE but in the Global Arena of IT solutions. This is one of the reasons why IDC has ranked us as the #1 IT Service provider in the UAE for 14 consecutive years.

colocation, hardware, software, Cloud services, and most recently Artificial Intelligence, IoT and all associates services.

We are the ideal partner to align with HPE strategy to have everything as a service under the consumption model of GreenLake by 2021.

To top all that, MDS has the financial strength being a 5-billion-dollar company, capable of handling any size of business requirements of our customers.

In summary, it's our inhouse expertise, through our large team of Pre-sales, Engineers, Solution Architects that make the difference in combination with our colleagues from the HPE
Team. Combine that with our Group's financial strength, a Global partnership and mutual understanding with
HPE – our entire approach is driven to be customer centric.
To top it off, we implemented the first GreenLake project here in the UAE as well.

MDS Computers has established itself as one of the leading system integrators in the Middle East. In what is an ultracompetitive environment how have you managed to sustain your success, and what ultimately 49

### THALES

# BECOMING CYBER RESILIENT

CPI Media Group in conjunction with Exclusive Networks, One Identity and Thales Group hosted a virtual webinar discussion which examined the importance of becoming cyber resilient during critical times.



he global COVID-19 pandemic has seen an exponential rise in cyberattacks as many hackers attempt to capitalise on the vulnerabilities of many businesses at this time.

Ahmad Abdulfattah, Pre-Sales Manager, TEEAM Region, One Identity delivered a keynote presentation on the IGA-PAM journey - and said that its Identity Manager platform was designed to mitigate risk and secure data.

"Risk is everywhere, and when users have the ability to login to multiple applications from anywhere, then it rather inevitably can become very complex to manage all those identities. What businesses need is one consistent platform to manage all of this and Identity Manager enables them to do this effectively," said Abdullfattah.

He added that the most important asset for any

organization is their data – and stressed that businesses need to have identity at the very heart of their security strategy.

"You achieve security only when you ensure the right people get the right access to the right resources at the right time, in the right way, and you can prove it. You can do this only when identity is at the core of your security strategy. Our integrated security portfolio enables this like no other solution on the market," said Abdullfattah.

Danna Bethlehem Coronel, Director, Product Marketing, Identity and Access Management (IAM), Thales was next to deliver her comprehensive presentation which examined the importance of harnessing the power of access management and authentication to secure your on-prem and cloud applications.

In a brilliant presentation, one of the statistics that jumped out was a recent report surveyed by Gartner in which they found that 74% of companies claimed that they plan on moving their employees to a work from home model following COVID-19.

Bethlehem also said that there had been a huge increase in demand for remote access during the COVID-19 crisis – and said its SafeNet Trusted Access solution could help businesses overcome challenges they face in relation to remote access.

"There are a lot of limitations when it comes to perimeter security and legacy IAM, and during the global health crisis VPN and on-prem infrastructure became completely overloaded. The challenge becomes how do they secure remote access for their entire workforce and manage their costs. SafeNet Trusted Access optimizes convenience and access security for all apps and services, prevents data breaches by applying the right level of security for your on-prem and cloud applications," said Bethlehem.

Thales Group has firmly established itself as a global security leader and is a pioneer in cloud-bases authentication. Bethlehem concluded her presentation by highlighting its investments in new technologies and the customers it works with.

"We have 30 years of experience in Identity and Access Management and have 25,000 IAM customers and more than 30 million users. We managed to sustain our success over the decades due to our heavy investments in innovation every year to develop state-of-the-art technologies. We have a presence in 68 countries globally and have 83,000 employees, and last year had sales of \$19 billion," concluded Bethlehem.

We have 30 years of experience in Identity and Access Management and have 25,000 IAM customers and more than 30 million users."





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