### computer news middle east

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# DRIVING THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

AZDAN CEO TARIQ SHAHABEDDEN, OUTLINES HOW HIS COMPANY IS EQUIPPING BUSINESS WITH THE TECHNOLOGIES TO THRIVE IN THE NEW DIGITAL ECONOMY.

TECHNOLOGY MEANS BUSINESS

AVAYA'S VICE PRESIDENT MIDDLE EAST

NETAPP'S CHANNEL DIRECTOR MIDDLE EAST

TATA COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT

## **GOVTECH:** HUB71

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However, some business leaders are still guilty of confusing digitalisation with digital transformation."

## AS EASY AS ABC

he acceleration of Digital Transformation in the Middle East region has been well-documented over the last number of months, and it is a key theme running throughout October's edition of CNME. However, some business leaders are still guilty of

confusing digitalisation with digital transformation. As one industry expert told me during a recent interview

digital transformation is underpinned by ABC, which stands for AI, Big Data and Cloud.

He stressed that enterprises that adopt an ABC approach to digital transformation will achieve their objectives. It's as easy as ABC!

On the front cover of this month's magazine is Azdan CEO, Tariq Shahabedden, who outlined how his dynamic and forward-thinking company helped businesses deal with the acceleration towards e-commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, he talks about the behavioural changes of consumers during the global healthcare crisis, how they have helped keep their clients secure – and of course you guessed it how they are helping their partners on their digital transformation journey!

Our Women in Tech feature makes a welcome return to the magazine after a three-month hiatus, and we spoke to the fabulous Haidi Nossair, Client Solutions Group Lead, MERAT at Dell Technologies to find out more about how the global IT leader maintained business continuity during COVID-19, their 'connected workforce' program, what the future of the workplace will look like and their Social Impact Vision 2030 initiative.

We also have coverage from a number of interactive and engaging virtual webinars with IT powerhouses such as Veritas, Tata Communications, ITQAN and Avaya.

We also spoke to Mary O'Leary from Vizor Software, to learn how they've positioned themselves to become the go-to partner for GCC tax authorities as the tax landscape continues to undergo transformation in this region.

We also have excellent interviews with NetApp, Finastra and Emitac, an op-ed from A10 Networks and much, much more in a bumper edition of CNME.

Enjoy!

Mark Forker Editor

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While the publishers have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of all information in this magazine, they will not be held responsible for any errors therein.

Online Editor

EDITORIAL Editor

## Etisalat elevates 5G capabilities with new Ericsson deal



Ekow Nelson, Ericsson and Ali Khalfan Ali Al Shamsi, Etisalat

#### Etisalat has selected Ericsson's

Charging System and Ericsson's 5G Business Support Systems (BSS) as part of its national 5G network evolution.

The deal is part of a strategic partnership, which will see Ericsson and Etisalat UAE partnering on digital infrastructure to enable 5G use and business cases.

Ali Khalfan Ali Al Shamsi, Vice President, Charging and Fulfillment Operations Etisalat, said, "We are pleased to extend our partnership with Ericsson to provide our charging and 5G Business Support Systems as part of the UAE's evolution to 5G, which is in line with our overall strategy of 'Driving the digital future to empower societies'. The cooperation is the latest example of our commitment to continue investing in the most advanced connectivity infrastructure to meet the demanding digitalisation ambitions of the UAE."

Ekow Nelson, Vice President and Head of Global Customer Unit Etisalat at Ericsson, said, "We are pleased to support Etisalat accelerating the launch of 5G services across the UAE leveraging our innovative 5G products and solutions."

"We are honored to continue our partnership with the Dubai Municipality and support the ambitions of the Smart Dubai initiative."

# Huawei announces new CEO to revamp support for UAE's digital transformation

#### Huawei has announced the

appointment of Jiawei Liu as its new CEO for the UAE, as part of its ongoing commitment to support the nation's digital transformation journey.

Having worked for the tech giant for over a decade, Liu will lend his international leadership experience to the growth and development of Huawei's UAE operations across carrier, enterprise, and consumer segments. Huawei is determined to optimise support to UAE digital transformation, ICT ecosystem, driving verticals business development and local talents nurturing towards sustainable diversified digital economy.

Liu will be responsible for strategy and operations, in addition to providing consultancy and support to customers. He will continue to drive

Huawei's position as a facilitator of digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI) enablement for public and private sector entities in the UAE, through the provision of leading information and communication technologies. In addition, he will also be providing technical support required to help overcome the challenges resulting from the spread of

COVID-19 and support achieving the recovery targets.

"It is a privilege to have the opportunity to head operations in a market as exciting as the UAE," said Liu.

"Known for its progressive approach to technology and innovation adoption, the UAE offers significant opportunity for Huawei technologies, particularly in terms of



Jiawei Liu, Huawei UAE

our 5G, AI, and cloud-based solutions. Enabling digital transformation throughout the emirates by empowering our customers with cutting-edge technology will be my priority."

He further noted

that the UAE was forward thinking years **UAE** is building ago by prioritising its future on digital transformation technology and harnessing new technologies. "That innovations is part of its wider national economic and the power development and of disruptive diversification technologies transformation. The country's leadership in envisioning realised very early on that in order to UAE future as a compete with the best 'digital nation." in the world in the future. UAE is building

> its future on technology innovations and the power of disruptive technologies in envisioning UAE future as a 'digital nation. The UAE National Innovation Strategy, the UAE Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2031, and the UAE Centennial 2071 Plan embody UAE ambitions that Huawei is keen and committed to support." Liu added.

6

## Dubai Municipality receives Huawei data centre solutions

#### **Municipality and support the ambitions of** the Smart Dubai initiative."

Dubai Municipality has successfully received the disaster recovery data centre solutions delivered by Huawei.

The deployment follows the strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing between Dubai Municipality and Huawei last year during GITEX Technology Week 2019. It is also part of Huawei's commitment towards contributing to the development of the smart services and enabling digital transformation of Dubai Municipality through providing the latest innovative ICT solutions and technologies.

To further strengthen this partnership, Dubai Municipality joined Huawei Connect – an annual flagship event hosted by Huawei in Shanghai, China for the global ICT industry – to construct a collaborative partnership to achieve shared success.

Huawei has provided Dubai Municipality with leading data center solutions to streamline and enhance data storage, while also boosting energy efficiency as well as improve operation and maintenance (O&M) processes. Huawei Fusion Module Data Center Solution has helped Dubai Municipality deploy a disaster recovery solution within less than three months from the start of the contract. Dubai Municipality's new Disaster Recovery Data Center is Tier 2 Data Center compliant, following all internal compliances and guidelines. It uses the latest power and cooling technology to provide optimal power usage effectiveness (PUE), while also offering more efficient operations.

Eng. Asmahan Al Zarouni, Director of the Information Technology Department at Dubai Municipality, said, "We, at Dubai Municipality, are always keen to be supportive of digital transformation strategy by adopting, supporting and implementing the digital transformation of the services provided by the Municipality. To implement this approach in line with our promising national visions, Dubai Municipality seeks to develop its plan for digital transformation by examining the best international practices of applications, solutions and infrastructure, which will contribute to the implementation of an integrated digital system."

Jiawei Liu, CEO of Huawei UAE, said, "We are honored to continue our partnership with the Dubai Municipality and support the ambitions of the Smart Dubai initiative as data is the most valuable asset for any institution in our increasingly connected and intelligent society.

# Oracle's second generation cloud region goes live in Dubai

Oracle has announced the availability of the first of two planned second generation

the first of two planned second-generation Cloud regions in the UAE. The addition of the Dubai Cloud region marks the availability of 26 Oracle Cloud Regions worldwide.

"The contribution of digital economy to the UAE's GDP stood at 4.3 percent in 2019, and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, has set a target to double this contribution by enhancing the country's digital readiness. Oracle's second-generation cloud region in Dubai will help accelerate the digital transformation initiatives of organisations across the UAE's government entities, large enterprise and SMEs,



thus directly supporting the country's economic vision," said Abdul Rahman Al Thehaiban, senior vice president – Technology, MEA & CEE, Oracle.

Oracle Cloud is designed to provide enterprise customers with security, rocksolid reliability, and powerful management capabilities for large and complex deployments—all while beating industry performance and pricing standards.

Oracle opened eight Cloud Regions in 2020 and currently operates 26 regions globally.

## Moro Hub, Smart Dubai to empower government entities with seamless network access



Moro Hub, a wholly-owned subsidiary of DEWA, has announced its collaboration with Smart Dubai for the provision of a high-end node at Moro Hub to accelerate the digital transformation initiatives of Dubai Government entities and avail latest digital services.

Eng. Marwan Bin Haider, Vice Chairman of Moro Hub, said, "Our collaboration with Smart Dubai brings value-added offerings to government entities. To this effect, Smart Dubai has hosted a highend node in Moro Hub Data Centre to cater to the GIN connectivity requirements of the government entities. additional investments. Dubai is leading the change in adopting advanced technologies and spearheading innovation. This has fast-tracked its digital goals to embrace the future and emerge as a world-leading city by 2021."

His Excellency Wesam Lootah, CEO of the Smart Dubai Government Establishment, said, "The partnership between Smart Dubai and Moro Hub furthers the vision of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to accelerate the implementation of the Dubai Vision 2021 and transform Dubai into the world's smartest and happiest city."

#### NEWS

### Tokio Marine UAE turns to Alpha Data to accelerate digital transformation with RPA



Murugesan Vaithilingam, Alpha Data and Mohamad Bader Abu Hayah, Tokio Marine UAE

#### Alpha Data has been selected by

Tokio Marine & Nichido Fire Insurance Company, which operates in the UAE through Al Futtaim Development Services, to propel its digital transformation journey through the use of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) technologies.

Mohamad Bader Abu Hayah, Senior IT Manager of Tokio Marine UAE, said, "Digitising and automating key functions were vital for our company to enable us to soar to the next level of operational excellence. Through Alpha Data's expertise, we have embarked on a digital journey to eliminate human interventions in many areas and drive innovation and scalability."

Murugesan Vaithilingam, Service Director, Alpha Data, said: "As a digital innovator, Alpha Data aims to empower regional organisations and help them realise their digital transformation strategies. RPA is increasingly seeing a tremendous adoption rate in the Gulf region as it allows customers to transform their operations, achieve cost efficiencies and become more agile in a competitive business environment. Automating repetitive tasks and those that don't need human intervention allows companies such as Tokio Marine UAE to focus on core business objectives and profitability."

## Dubai joins forces with Microsoft to upskill Emiratis

#### The Dubai Government

Human Resources Department (DGHR) is partnering with Microsoft to broaden efforts to empower Emiratis and drive forward employee skilling in the government and achieve central goals of the Dubai Strategic Plan.

"This partnership with Microsoft is focused on delivering world-class training to enhance the performance of UAE institutions," said Abdulla Ali Bin Zayed Al Falasi, Director General, DGHR. "We are confident that this agreement will serve to further elevate the Emirates as a global innovation center. The training and expertise provided to Emirati talent will enhance the skills of a future generation, cementing the UAE's status as a diverse digital hub of creativity and innovation."



Abdulla Ali Bin Zayed Al Falasi, DGHR and Sayed Hashish, Microsoft UAE

supporting the UAE future vision of a digital nation. The Tomoh programme will equip Emirati youth with globally recognized skills – a key pillar of the National Agenda and aligned to Vision 2021, thereby driving the nation's digital transformation and global competitiveness," said Sayed Hashish, General Manager, Microsoft UAE.

"Our organisation is committed to

## Automation Anywhere unveils AARI – the first digital assistant at work

#### Automation Anywhere has

announced AARI (Automation Anywhere Robotic Interface) – a smart digital assistant designed for a new era of work that brings consumer experiences to the enterprise.

Available via Automation Anywhere's award-winning, cloudnative RPA platform, Enterprise A2019, AARI makes it easy for anyone to participate in the automation of day-to-day business tasks, through business friendly user interfaces.

As a visionary leader in RPA and artificial intelligence (AI), Automation Anywhere continues to introduce new innovations that address the evolving needs of organisations in a shifting landscape  as well as bring enterprise automation closer than ever to consumer-grade experiences.

"AARI completes our vision to 'automate automations' by creating a digital assistant for the new era of work – enabling anyone to automate from anywhere at any time with a simple interface that can manage automations," said Mihir Shukla, CEO and Co-founder, Automation Anywhere. "This technology democratises RPA so that anyone in an organisation can participate in the automation process, moving humanity closer to the full promise of a digital workforce where enabled by bots, we can achieve more than it was ever possible before."

## Virgin Hyperloop unveils location for Hyperloop certification centre



#### After years of testing and developing

hyperloop technology at their fullscale test site, DP World-backed Virgin Hyperloop unveiled that the Hyperloop Certification Center (HCC) will be located in the US state of West Virginia.

"Establishing the Hyperloop Certification Centre is the next milestone on our journey to making hyperloop a reality," said Sultan bin Sulayem, Chairman of Virgin Hyperloop and Group Chairman and CEO of DP World. "This announcement brings hyperloop technology one step closer to commercialisation, poised to transform the Gulf region with the rapid, sustainable, and on-demand transport of passengers and cargo."

"This milestone is a testament to our technology advancement," said Jay Walder, CEO of Virgin Hyperloop. "The establishment of the HCC enables us to work with the US federal authorities to establish and set global safety and industry standards for the new hyperloop category, which can subsequently be adopted and re-applied in international markets."

Virgin Hyperloop continues to be active in the Gulf region. Saudi Arabia is leading the world with a firstofits-kind national hyperloop study to evaluate how a hyperloop carrying both passenger and cargo could spark economic benefits, create jobs and develop high-tech skills.

currently face ranging

"Today, modern

organisations need to

and a critical aspect of

resources to make them

more readily available,"

said Aaron White,

this is decentralising

lead with flexibility,

staffing shortages.

from operational silos to

# New report highlights key challenges and opportunities with hybrid cloud adoption

#### While many organisations

view hybrid cloud as the ideal IT model, many are still struggling to adopt it — with 70 percent of organisations believing that their transformation is taking longer than expected, according to the latest report by Nutanix.



Aaron White, Nutanix

Regional Sales Director – Middle East at Nutanix. "By using multiple clouds, whether public, private or at the edge, businesses can simply bring their IT infrastructure where it is most needed. But, as we saw in the research, this flexibility is only possible with consistent constructs, operations and tooling across multiple clouds, making a hybrid cloud environment ideal."

## Avaya enables digital classrooms across the globe



Avaya is enabling educational

institutions worldwide to adapt to new ways to educate and engage with students with cloudbased meeting and collaboration capabilities that are keeping students learning and curriculums on track with Avaya Spaces.

Avaya Spaces brings together distributed groups of people instantly with immersive work spaces where they can message, meet, share content and manage tasks from a browser or mobile device, and provides an easy, secure and effective way to collaborate in the cloud.

"The global adoption of distance learning represents a paradigm shift from traditional educational models and has introduced a steep learning curve for both teachers and students. The flexibility and ease of use of Avaya Spaces flattens that curve, and supports those who need communication and collaboration when it matters most," said Simon Harrison, SVP and Chief Marketing Officer, Avaya. "As a world leader in collaboration solutions, we continue to accelerate our work with educators across the globe to enable distance learning powered by cloud innovation and an easy-to-use app that combines the best of video conferencing with true, immersive collaboration and 24-7 engagement and communication."

The new report analysed *Aaron* 

key challenges and opportunities with hybrid cloud adoption.

It also further noted that for enterprise the goal is clear: nearly all respondents (95 percent) think their organisation would benefit from an optimal hybrid implementation providing consistent IT constructs and operations across multiple clouds, eliminating many of the challenges they

#### **FINASTRA**

# **STATE OF PLAY**

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Wissam Khoury**, Head of International, at Finastra, to learn what the findings of its 'State of the Nation' report means for the future of banking, the impact Open Banking has had on the industry - and what differentiates the global FinTech leader from its rivals.



he State of the Nation report, compiled by Finastra pre-COVID-19, surveyed over 770 respondents, which was comprised of key decision-makers from across leading financial and banking institutions in the UK, US, France, Germany, Singapore, Hong Kong and the UAE.

According to Khoury, the primary objective of the report was to examine the impact emerging new technologies such as Open Banking and collaboration was having on the banking and financial services industry.

"There has been a lot of focus and attention on Open Banking, and there appears to be a growing appetite to find out what value this new technology brings to both the banks and the market. 86% of respondents said that the use of Open APIs was extremely important and indicated they will begin to integrate Open Banking over the next 12 months," said Khoury.

The dynamic and charismatic Finastra executive disclosed that 61% of banks in the UAE declared that better customer experience motivates them to collaborate more with other financial institutions.

But what is Open Banking? "Open Banking is essentially having the ability to share financial data with third parties. That is the simplest way to explain what it is. It was initially designed for the consumer, but banks now believe that its greatest impact will be on corporate banking, followed by retail. The statistics of this

OCTOBER 2020

report really illustrate how banks are evolving and changing and gives us an indication of what the banks of the future will look like, and Open Banking is very much at the heart of this," said Khoury.

Khoury said that in terms of what the main challenges were for Open Banking, those surveyed said complex regulations and legacy systems were the main obstacles, but added that Open Banking increased competitiveness between the banks, which subsequently led to greater transparency that ultimately empowered end-users.

"Open Banking forced banks to become more transparent and enabled customers to compare what each bank was offering, whether it was for a mortgage application or a loan. It also created transparency between transactions and payments. When banks can share all the transactional payments between themselves with retail then that gives transparency in the market of how the money is flowing, and where is it going. Open APIs not only created better user experiences, but it also created a new model for banking, and this was the evolution of FinTech's," said Khoury.

The Head of International at Finastra, said that regulatory authorities across the Middle East region are beginning to robustly encourage Open Banking, and he cited the Kingdom of Bahrain as an example of this, and stated there was no resistance to Open Banking from the banks when it became mandatory.

## The statistics of this report really illustrate how banks are evolving and changing and gives us an indication of what the banks of the future will look like."

"The evolution of Open Banking gets its own power from that fact that it has the ability to merge technology with regulation. Regulators are advocating it and you see this through the emergence of sandboxes all over the region, such as the DIFC FinTech hub, and in Bahrain they made Open Banking mandatory, by creating frameworks and programs that banks had to abide by. There was no resistance towards this from the banks, because it increased their competitive advantage, made them more efficient and ultimately added value for them," said Khoury.

As aforementioned one of the major challenges cited in the State of the Nation report for banks in terms of Open Banking is their existing legacy systems. However, Finastra doesn't believe banks have to rip and replace, and instead has the perfect remedy for this issue in the form of its FusionFabric. cloud platform.

"Rip and replace core systems is not an option for banks, as it leads to significant service outages. Our suggestion to banks is to collaborate with the wider financial ecosystem to help retain clients by providing them with better experiences and offering them third-party solutions. To achieve that, we took our existing core systems and connected their APIs to a platform layer, called FusionFabric.cloud. It's an open development platform that enables innovation in the industry. There are three phases to it, the first part is the development phase, which equips developers with tools to create an app in days, not weeks. The second phase is then the management of that application and that is why we partner with Microsoft, and the third element is the store, where banks can come and purchase apps," said Khoury.

Finastra has established itself as a global leader in the FinTech space and continues to go from strength-tostrength, but when asked what differentiates the company from its market rivals, Khoury suggested the sheer diversity of its portfolio of solutions.

"At Finastra we compete with everyone, but nobody competes with us. We have solutions across every vertical of the banking and financial services industry. Our breadth of solutions is wide, and our depth is very deep, and we have very specialised solutions. However, what I think truly makes us unique in the market is the investment that we've made in new technologies and innovations, which we've done to ensure we can facilitate banks to accelerate transformation and innovation by utilising the latest technologies available through Open Banking, Open APIs and our FusionFabric.cloud platform," concluded Khoury. Come

#### AIO NETWORKS

## MANAGING MULTI-CLOUD CHAOS

**Paul Nicholson,** Sr. Director of Product Marketing at A10 Networks, penned an exclusive op-ed for October's edition of CNME, in which he examines and explores both the benefits and challenges of multi-cloud environments.

s the race to the cloud accelerates, both the benefits and the challenges of multi-cloud environments are becoming ever clearer. There is no question that multicloud deployments now play a foundational role in everything from internal business needs to digital transformation initiatives — but it's also essential for IT to ensure effective visibility, governance, security, and control across both public and private clouds as multi-cloud deployments mature into standard IT and operational realms. Strategies are desperately needed to address these challenges.

Adoption of a Polynimbus Secure Application Services blueprint can mitigate multicloud risk and operational challenges, including improving compliance, accuracy, and DevOps and SecOps needs, with reduced stress on IT personnel.

To gain insights into current state and future direction of multi-cloud deployments, A10 Networks partnered with the Business Performance Innovation (BPI) Network



for a global survey of IT and business executives. The findings offer a revealing look at the fast-evolving state of multicloud adoption, management practices, and platforms that will shape IT over the coming years. Some findings are in-line with what you may guess, but others are revealing at the true state of multi-cloud deployments, and a paradox.

#### The multi-cloud consensus:

Multi-cloud has quickly become the standard for modern IT,

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with 65 percent of survey respondents already using two or more public cloud platforms. And these aren't just pilot projects or niche use cases; half of the companies in the report have moved at least 30 percent of their enterprise applications to the cloud, and 35 percent have migrated more than half.

This mass migration is understandable. Today's public cloud platforms and private cloud technologies offer a rich array of options for organizations seeking to supplement or move beyond the constraints of traditional infrastructure.

Survey respondents report the desire to leverage this flexibility to address an equally broad range of priorities and use cases, including accelerating digital transformation, improving compute and cost efficiencies, meeting regulatory requirements, and increasing performance, scalability, and reliability.

Taking a multi-cloud approach can multiply the effectiveness of this strategy. By distributing their cloud assets, software, applications, and data across multiple cloud environments and providers, organizations can provide the best fit for each use case and workload—a benefit reported by more than a third of respondents.

## Meeting the challenges of multi-cloud environments:

Recognizing the potential benefits of multi-cloud environments is the easy part; realizing them is another story. Most organizations surveyed

report major challenges in

managing cost and complexity, improving visibility and integration, ensuring flexibility, and enforcing best practices across the cloud environments they use.

Many attribute this to the shortcomings of the vendors they're working with. Only 9 percent of respondents are extremely satisfied with their current security solutions for multi-cloud deployments—while four times as many see a need for significant improvements. What kind of improvements? Top requirements cited include centralized visibility and analytics into security and performance (56 percent), automated tools to speed response times and reduce costs (54 percent), and centralized management (50 percent). These considerations should figure prominently in the development of a Polynimbus operational model for successful multi-cloud strategies.

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#### The multi-cloud paradox - strong results, continued investment and lack of perceived success?

While most organizations have yet to see the full benefits of using multiple clouds, they're already seeing promise for their multi-cloud strategy. Nearly two-thirds of respondents pointed to the redundancy and disaster recovery advantages of a multi-vendor approach, while roughly half called out cost optimization and performance optimization.

Results like these are giving organizations cause to continue

and extend their multi-cloud strategy. A full 85 percent of respondents have advanced their company's cloud commitment over the past two years, including more than half reporting significant progress, and nearly one-fifth moving aggressively to a cloud-first strategy.

And this will only increase. A full 84 percent of the IT and business leaders surveyed plan to increase their use of public and private clouds in the coming two years, with most either expecting to add more clouds, or open to the possibility of doing so.

So, what is the paradox? While spending and multicloud adoption increase, only 11 percent of respondents believe they have been highly successful in realizing the benefits of multi-cloud computing.

This figure is way too low. While multi-cloud strategies are new, they are not that new. This demonstrates a clear need to drive cloud operational efficiency to mainstream, and the way to this is operationalizing clouds as we did data centers. In fact, this is needed for cloud environments more than ever.

The Polynimbus Secure Application Service blueprint outlines the security, availability, standardization and automation benefits for IT operations and the business to ensure we meet digital transformation roadmaps and to have the agility and alignment to business outcomes that help regain control and reduce complexity in a more complex world.

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**Haidi Nossair** Client Solutions Group lead for the MERAT region, at Dell Technologies

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#### DELL TECHNOLOGIES

# TRANSFORMING THE WORKFORCE

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Haidi Nossair**, Client Solutions Group lead for the MERAT region, at Dell Technologies, to find out how the IT leader has helped their customers maintain business continuity during the COVID-19 crisis - and how the company is fully committed to driving greater diversity and inclusion in its workforce.

> a decorated and distinguished career in the IT industry, and her recent appointment as Client Solutions Group, in the MERAT region, only serves to further illustrate her standing within the organisation.

> COVID-19 has impacted the way we work, when we work, and where we work and we began our conversation by discussing how Dell Technologies coped when lockdown commenced in March, and how they helped their customers remain operational.

 $\square$ 

We believe that work is simply not just a place to go, but that it is an outcome that you deliver."

"We were able to maintain business continuity across our entire organisation by utilising what we call 'Dell Digital', which is our IT department. We were able to leverage Dell Digital to enable 90% of our global workforce to be able to effectively work remotely in less than two weeks. The reason we were able to do that so quickly and efficiently was before the pandemic we had already launched the first version of our 'connected workplace' program," said Nossair.

Nossair also pointed out that company's ability to adapt to the unprecedented circumstances so quickly, ultimately enabled the technology leader to be on hand to help their customers be able to transition their workforce to a virtual environment.

"During the initial stages of the crisis we also ensured that our supply chain remained operational from the beginning,

and all these factors allowed us to serve our customers and help them to convert their workforce from the compounds of a traditional office environment into a virtual remote one. We were able to share with them our experiences about how to create an effective, productive and efficient remote working environment. This provided the customer with the feeling that we weren't simply there to provide specific products, but instead knew that we were there for them as a trusted partner in good days and in bad," said Nossair.

Dell Technologies are known globally for its ability to see trends ahead of the curve, and the charismatic Client Solutions Group Lead disclosed that part of their long-term strategy was workforce transformation.

"We have spent the last number of years talking about workforce transformation. Essentially, what workforce transformation is about is

identifying the right personas of your employees within your organisation and determining what their requirements are when it comes to systems, applications and basically making sure that you provide them with the right set of tools and devices to enhance their productivity and make them efficient. We believe that work is simply not just a place to go, but that it is an outcome that you deliver, so with that in mind it doesn't matter where you conduct your work from as long as you're productive, connected and have the right applications to do your job effectively," said Nossair.

Nossair claimed that the transition to a remote workforce not only enhances employee satisfaction but enables a wider diverse and inclusive workforce that's not just limited to women.

"I'm talking about real diversity, whether it is related to your gender, ethnic orientation or people with disabilities, this move towards a remote workforce will deliver greater inclusion in the work environment. If you're delivering results and being productive then it is irrelevant where your work location is. Since the beginning of the pandemic organisations have also seen that not only is remote working a success, but in fact it also has a positive impact on their OPEX," said Nossair.

COVID-19 has created many new trends and changed consumer behavior and spending habits, but one other direct consequence of the pandemic I believe that the pandemic pressed the fast-forward button on digital transformation, which in turn also accelerated workforce transformation and IT transformation."

has been the huge acceleration in digital transformation across the Gulf region.

Nossair highlighted how Dell Technologies has been talking about digital transformation for years, but the results of two surveys it carried out in 2016 and 2018 stunned the global IT leader.

In 2016, we conducted 'The Digital Transformation Index' survey and then refreshed it again in 2018. Shockingly, in both surveys we conducted we discovered that only 5% of organisations were leading digital transformation. It didn't change at all from the first survey to the second survey, in fact there was only a 9% increase in adopters. However, if we ran the survey now, you'll find a totally different set of results. I believe that the pandemic pressed the fast-forward button on digital transformation, which in turn also accelerated workforce transformation and IT transformation," said Nossair.

The Client Solutions Group lead for the MERAT region at Dell Technologies also illustrated how the transformation that they've witnessed has been supported by a strong layer of innovative technologies such as the rollout of 5G in some countries and how AR and VR are much more familiar to the mainstream public than they were 12 months ago.

"These factors are underpinning the ability of organisations to adopt and embrace digital transformation



much faster. When the pandemic hit this rather inevitably provoked a reaction from enterprises to create a remote workforce environment, but at Dell we call this a 'do it light' approach. The primary objective at the start was to maintain business continuity by ensuring the infrastructure is supported, which in turn enables productivity. However, the situation has now become normal and much more stable, so there is now an opportunity for organisations to 'do it right'. A flexible work environment today is the 'new normal'. The remote workforce is here to stay. We tried it, we know it works and this is what believe people mean when they say the 'new normal'," said Nossair.

Traditionally, the IT industry has been a male-dominated sector, but trailblazers like Nossair and others of her ilk are beginning to buck the trend and are paving a new way for the next-generation of female IT leaders.

She believes the industry has made great strides over the years to level the playing field, but there is still a lot of work to do.

"Over the last few decades more women have earned Bachelor' degrees than their male counterparts, but despite this they are still less likely to be hired at entry level. If you look at management then the disparity widens even further and that increases even more the higher up the chain that you go. I believe that we still have a lot to do. That being said I do feel that there has been a concerted effort by organisations in the last few years to overhaul this, and I think there has been a realisation from major organisations and governments that diversity and inclusion is power and is something essential to have as oppose to being nice to have. Organisations that have more diversity and inclusion have a higher level of productivity, are more profitable and fosters a culture of innovation. These results are why on a global scale we're seeing more companies invest in programs designed to cultivate more inclusion and diversity within their organisation," said Nossair.

Dell Technologies have really led the way and shown tremendous leadership in terms of their commitment to increasing diversity, inclusion and sustainability across their entire organisation.

Nossair illustrated how it has a desire to create a longlasting positive impact on the environment and societies that they operate in, citing the launch of their Social Impact Vision 2030: Progress Made Real program last year.

"Our Social Impact Vision 2030: Progress Made Real program is based on really advancing sustainability, driving inclusion and diversity and transforming lives through technology, and all three are underpinned with a commitment to withholding ethics not only across our organisation but with all the partners that we work with and that extends to our supply chain. Our aim by 2030, is to have 50% of our global workforce to be comprised of women, and 40% of our management to be women and they are our moonshot goals. We believe what you don't measure then you can't advance or improve, so that is why we have our strategic KPIs in order to achieve these goals. We're currently at 31% when it comes to the inclusion of women in our global workforce, and we're at 24% when it comes to management, so we still have a lot to do to meet our targets, but we're focused on leveraging our technology to make this world a better place for all in society," said Nossair.

# NEW WORLD OF WORK

CPI Media Group held a virtual webinar with Avaya to examine what technologies and tools businesses needed to adopt in order to succeed in this new world of work

NME Editor Mark Forker moderated the session that contained a powerhouse panel of industry experts, which included Fadi Hani, Vice President, Middle East, Africa & Turkey at Avaya, Krishna Baidya, Head of Customer Contact & Connected Work Research, at Frost & Sullivan and Sajjad Hamid, Group Head, Sales & Marketing, Cupola.

The nature of work is ever changing. Right now, it's more fast-paced, and less predictable, and organisations need their IT investments to give them the capabilities to operate in this new reality.

AVAYA

The first presentation of this session was conducted by Avaya's Fadi Hani, who delivered a forensic and detailed account in terms of what is going to power the digital workplace of the future.

Before he started his presentation, Hani highlighted how Avaya has leveraged its technology expertise to assist more than 2.5 million people to work remotely across a whole range of different industry verticals including education and healthcare. The dynamic Avaya executive disclosed some findings of what the IT leader had learned regarding customer demands before the global COVID-19 health crisis.

"In our comprehensive survey we found that 73% of consumers said they expected better customer experiences. It was evident from the findings that respondents wanted more digital interactions and be served through their social media channels. If they encounter any issues with a specific product or solution they want to be able to

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communicate with a customer service representative through WhatsApp, Twitter or Facebook, instead of the traditional methods of calling a contact center to speak to an agent," said Hani.

Hani then highlighted some trends that have emerged since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic back in March.

"In order to be able to empower this concept of 'Work from Anywhere' you need to equip your employees with the right tools to do their job effectively and efficiently. People also need the social element that comes from working in the office environment. At Avaya, we developed a 'water cooler' room which is a virtual environment that allows our employees to socialise with their fellow employees in order to maintain the culture of the company and the connection," said Hani.

He also spoke about the huge acceleration towards the cloud from enterprises across the Middle East region.

"Cloud is not the solution to all problems. There are huge advantages to the cloud especially in its ability to let you scale up and down accordingly, but what businesses need to focus on when embarking on their cloud journey is security. If you go with a public service provider, you need to know what your rights are to access your data. What is your ability to monitor the security level implemented? These are critically important questions you need answers to before you begin your cloud journey," said Hani.

The next speaker was Krishna Baidya, from Frost & Sullivan, who delivered a presentation entitled 'Exploring the Future of Work'.

Fadi Hani

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Vice President - Middle East,

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Baidya said that an everevolving global economy requires new economy and stressed how businesses need to embrace new technologies to remain competitive and relevant.

"When you talk about the future of work you need to think about it from three different aspects, and they are the nature of work, the workplace and the workforce. In recent years, there has been an ongoing transformation due to increased globalisation, automation and digitalisation. The emergence of borderless organisations has led to a huge diversity amongst employees. Work is not a job that has a physical location anymore. Workers demand employers to give them the right tools and technologies for their job functions to increase their productivity. COVID-19 has really influenced the way we are doing things and the way the world of work will look in the future," said Baidya.

The executive at Frost & Sullivan also highlighted how there had been a huge growth in remote working since COVID-19 - and insisted that it won't change in a post-COVID world.

"The post-pandemic organisation is going to be one that is 'connected' with agility and continuity underpinning all of it. The key characteristics of any workplace will be crossfunctional teamwork, hybrid teams and agile processes. These practices will make the organisations stronger and increase productivity and efficiency," said Baidya.

#### NETAPP

# DRIVING YOUR CLOUD TRANSFORMATION

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Maya Zakhour**, Channel Director, Middle East, Africa, Italy and Spain at NetApp, and **Sam Johny**, Business Unit Manager at Ingram Micro, to discuss the nuances involved with digital transformation and the growing demand for hybrid cloud and data services.

OVID-19 has disrupted and fundamentally reshaped how we work, when we work, where we work and everything else in between. However, one direct consequence of the global pandemic has been the exponential growth and acceleration in digital transformation across the Middle East.

Enterprises quickly recognised that they needed to adopt and integrate new technologies in order to keep the show on the road. However, digital transformation, despite its huge benefits, isn't without complexity, but the biggest problem appears to be when it comes to strategy, and as Maya Zakhour points out there isn't a one size fits all solution when it comes to digital transformation.

"I think it has become very evident that many businesses have taken the wrong approach when it comes to digital transformation. Digital transformation is going to look

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At NetApp, we characterise digital transformation (DX) as a strategy of enabling business innovation based on the incorporation of digital technologies into operational process, products, solutions, and customer interactions."

Maya Zakhour Channel Director, Middle East, Africa, Italy and Spain at NetApp

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differently for every company, and there is no one approach that works universally. At NetApp, we characterise digital transformation (DX) as a strategy of enabling business innovation based on the incorporation of digital technologies into operational process, products, solutions, and customer interactions. This strategy is focused on leveraging the opportunities of new technologies and their impact to the business by focusing on the creation and monetisation of digital assets," said Zakhour.

The dynamic Channel Director at NetApp added that digital transformation also represents huge cultural change as it requires the organisation to really challenge their current status quo.

"The current pandemic has forced businesses to think more about digital transformation than they did before and is why approaches differ from one enterprise to another, but what really matters today is data. A business that doesn't have data at the core of its decisionmaking process will not survive in this on-demand data driven economy," said Zakhour.

Sam Johny echoed the sentiments expressed by Zakhour and added that one of the biggest issues within the IT ecosystem was the misconception as to what is digitalisation and what is digital transformation.

Digital transformation is an absolute must for businesses as everything in the future is going to be 'connected'."

> Sam Johny Business Unit Manager at Ingram Micro

"People generally use the terms digitalisation and digital transformation, but they are both very different terminologies and have two very different meanings. In my opinion, digital transformation is predominantly about how the people, the process and the technology within an organisation needs to be changed. The moment the three of these components are combined then that's digital transformation. However, some people have mischaracterised small software updates and labelled it digital transformation, but that isn't digital transformation, that is digitalisation," said Johny.

Johny also pointed to a recent study that was conducted by Gartner that projected there will be 25 billion connected things by 2025 - and claimed that businesses had no other choice but to embrace change.

"These trends are why all organisations need to embrace digital transformation, but if they want to be successful then they need a mindset to change, but that's an easy term to say, but applying this within an organisation is a huge challenge. Collaboration and data are key in order to ensure that your digital transformation is a success. Data-driven action plans need to be defined in a digital transformation journey. In my opinion, digital transformation is an absolute must for businesses as everything in the future is going to be connected," said Johny.

Data is growing exponentially as we become more connected and the traditional methods of storing data is now archaic. In the Middle East, we've seen a huge move towards cloud and businesses need to be more agile to deliver better customer experiences and outcomes, but as Maya and Sam illustrate digital transformation is not easy.

According to Zakhour, NetApp is committed to helping their customers achieve digital transformation but conceded that transitioning to the cloud is not without its challenges.

"Enterprises are looking for any edge they can find to compete in today's digital world. They want help and need a new approach to remain relevant, but digital transformation is difficult. Cloud is the future and the conversations in the IT ecosystem are around whether to adopt a hybrid cloud, multi-cloud, public cloud, or private cloud model to manage their applications and data. Traditionally, we stored all our data in one place, but that model is now obsolete because of the connected nature of today's data-driven economy. This is a challenge as all businesses want is simplicity. We try to help our customers transition to digital transformation in a simple way - but migrating to the cloud is

Enterprises are looking for any edge they can find to compete in today's digital world."

causing a lot of complexity," said Zakhour.

She added that there are three fundamental questions that every NetApp partner needs to ask their customers if they are to help them successfully execute their digital transformation objectives.

"At NetApp we remove the complexity for our customers by leveraging our technology and expertise to deliver their digital transformation. But to do this we follow a direct set of questions. There are three questions I'd like every NetApp partner to ask their customers and that is, 'What does your hybrid or multi-cloud strategy look like? How can we simplify your transformation? How are you utilising your data? Once you establish the answer to all three of these questions then you can help deliver digital transformation for your customers in a much more, effective, efficient and faster way," said Zakhour.

According to Johny one of the key components of digital transformation is keeping up with the pace of change, as there are so many innovative changes occurring at a rapid pace.

"Organisations need to possess the ability to adapt to change in order to remain competitive. Now, that is something that is easy to say, but difficult to implement. There is a great resilience from IT departments to drive more value to their business, because IT has now become an integral part of organisations. Digital transformation is

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predominantly about changing the behaviors of the IT department, but it does make it more complex when they have diversification. When you talk about advanced technologies like Cloud, Big Data, IoT, AI and mobility it all leads to IT complexity. Most enterprises don't have a strong IT network to develop their digital transformation and that is a big challenge," said Johny.

NetApp has firmly established itself as a leading global player in hybrid cloud services, and the Business Unit Manager at Ingram Micro said it is a huge opportunity for NetApp and their partners to promote the success of its hybrid cloud product.

"We have a longstanding relationship with NetApp and

worked together successfully in tandem for years. We have a huge install base of customers where we can educate and help them to transform their digital journey through a hybrid cloud model. NetApp has a fantastic hybrid cloud product that allows customers to have an independent scaling of compute and storage, the ability to adapt to workloads, whilst also guaranteeing phenomenal performance," said Johny.

Zakhour illustrated how the absence of an obvious cloud strategy for enterprises to adopt and implement has caused confusion in the IT industry, but that in turn has led to a surge in demand for hybrid cloud services.

"It is very evident in the

current climate that there is no multi-cloud roadmap that enterprises can follow to reach their transformation goals. Customers are asking questions like, 'Do I put all my data and workloads on the cloud? My applications come in different forms, should I put some on-prem and a few on the cloud? In the past it was easier because everybody stored their data in one location. Some applications need to access data from multiple clouds, so that is why we're starting to see this demand for a hybrid cloud model," said Zakhour.

Zakhour added that many organisations are still struggling to find the ultimate strategy that works for them - but stressed that its NetApp Data Fabric is helping their customers and partners to develop the right strategy.

"Your cloud strategy at the end of the day is all about how you manage your data. Cloud is an unstoppable force and it enables innovation that drives scale, speed and execution. But sometimes you need to do cloud your own way, regardless if it is public, Microsoft Azure, or AWS, you want to do cloud your own way by leveraging the resources that are perfect for your business, and this is what differentiates NetApp from the rest and is why we've become the go-to' partner for hybrid cloud," said Zakhour.

#### AZDAN

# DRIVING THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Tariq Shahabedden**, CEO at Azdan, to learn how the IT leader is leveraging its technological expertise to help businesses optimise their efficiency, performance and costs during the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic.



the 'go-to' player for digital transformation by utilising its RPA, EPM and business management solutions across the Middle East region tailored to facilitate the growth of the 'on-demand' digital economy.

COVID-19 has impacted the way we work, when we work and where we work. However, it has also significantly altered consumer behaviors and spending habits. Can you tell us about the 'Azdan Distribution and Logistics Management System' that was developed in response to this trend, and

#### outline to our readers how it is helping organisations increase productivity and efficiency?

The shift towards e-commerce was happening even before COVID-19, but the pandemic accelerated a spike in consumer's behavior towards e-commerce. Dubai, for instance, recorded an 83% year-on-year surge in the number of e-commerce business licenses issued in the first half of 2020 as consumer demand for online shopping grew.

Azdan was quick to recognise a gap in the retail sector particularly where data was not available online at the supplier end and as an industry it has a highly mobile workforce. There appeared to be a growing mismatch in the industry size and demand equation combined with an increased difficulty of monitoring provision and quality of third-party services.

Azdan responded by developing a cloud based

'Distribution and Logistics Management System' which helps businesses manage delivery fleets for optimal performance, efficiency and cost.

We understand every business is different in its make-up of fleets and may require different capabilities from its fleet management software. Some businesses may need to manage a single large internal fleet, while other businesses may manage multiple third-party contractors, or crowd sourced fleets as well.

Our industry users are particularly able to benefit from real time visibility as they can now scale their delivery and cater to increasing demands. They're able to take advantage of the extra functionality (aggregator), connectivity and integration for improved logistics in a cost-efficient manner. Through the data prediction dashboard, the decision makers can define their KPI's for efficiency, power up their distribution process and reduce the risk associated with costing.

Can you also tell us about the role Azdan played in terms of how it helped its customers at the outset of the global COVID-19 pandemic as enterprises were forced to embrace remote working? Many businesses weren't equipped with the right tools or infrastructure to make this transition to operate seamless and secure. How did Azdan leverage its technologies to help its customers?

Cloud technology facilitated remote working in unprecedented ways – it became a lifeline for governments needing to provide vital services from emergency hotlines to online education – paving the way for people to access critical resources. As the reliance on technology services deepened it magnified the importance of cloud transition as a vital asset to business operations.

Azdan is a recognised market leader in providing scalable, secure, reliable cloudbased technology; services and intelligence supporting enhanced security, optimal performance and compelling growth opportunities for many businesses and industries.

Azdan facilitated its small and medium sized businesses to rethink their IT infrastructure and suggested alternative business models backed by fast implementation of cloud solutions. We helped our clients with on premises solution to move to cloud which hugely impacted coping with remote working environment without compromising their operational efficiency and customer engagement.

Azdan has established itself as the 'go-to' partner for digital transformation, but can you elaborate in detail on the unique capabilities of each of the 3 main solutions that you provide for your clients, which are Robotic Process Automation, Enterprise Performance Management, and Business

#### Management Solution? Robotic Process Automation:

The global pandemic has shifted all industries to remote-first, with business continuity becoming the most important priority. Many organisations are highlighting major gaps in existing processes, creating a greater need to optimise resources.

Many organisations are turning to software robots for help. Robotic Process Automation streamlines internal processes, reduces costs, provides better customer experience, lowers operational risks and provides better insight into trends and opportunities for businesses.

Robotic Process Automation in the back office and virtual workforce at employee desks are helping companies keep up with growing service demands, provide support to working colleagues from home and ensure business continuity during these challenging times. Enterprise Performance Management:

Enterprise Performance Management is the process of monitoring performance across the enterprise with the goal of improving business performance. Our EPM solution integrates and analyses data from many sources, including, but not limited to, finance, sales, supply chain and back-office applications, data warehouses and external data sources.

Azdan's Planning and Budgeting Solution reduces the budget cycle time and allows a company to make effective and efficient business decisions. The solution provides an



organisation with an ability to quickly model complex business scenarios, such as, 'slice & dice data', and perform 'what if' analyses.

#### **Business Management:**

Successful modern organisations must be data-driven, innovative and able to scale and respond to market dynamics rapidly. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) at Azdan helps our customers become more selfaware by linking information about production, finance, distribution, and human resources together.

Because it connects different technologies used by each individual part of a business, an ERP application can eliminate costly duplicate and incompatible technology. Can you tell our readers about your 'self-service application' and what impact the deployment of your solution had in relation to keeping employees connected when working remotely?

The concept of 'self-service' is not really new. It is very common to see self-checkout booths at supermarkets – where rather than waiting to be served we choose to transact ourselves. We can also see self-ordering becoming a norm these days in coffee shops and in restaurants. It is no different in the corporate environment.

Many executives need to check and approve a transaction while in a remote location. Sometimes employees want to know about their payout check



while on the go. Other times employees wish to read about a company announcement. Remote working has led to using mobile devices to communicate with employer, manager, and cross-functional team.

Azdan offers end-to-end self-service application that condenses multiple HR functions into a single place. It is allinclusive, cloud-based, unites all aspects of HR, payroll process and talent management.

Azdan application lets employees create and modify their personal profiles, monitor their individual benefits and payroll information, and contact specific departments if they have questions.

This solution helps increase HR and payroll related transparency and can lead to better overall communication between employees and the departments designed to support them, facilitating a more integrated, knowledgeable, and engaged organisation.

Azdan application helped companies to transform the employee experience, streamline recruitment and onboarding, control human resource costs, anticipate workforce needs and measure employee performance. Azdan designs are device and

technology independent, so

Azdan facilitated its small and medium sized businesses to rethink their IT infrastructure and suggested alternative business models backed by fast implementation of cloud solutions."

> employees stay connected on any device. We empower the employees working remotely to access information and records at any time and at any place.

Azdan is one of the leading management consulting firms in the Middle East. However, in your opinion, what is it about Azdan that ultimately differentiates the company from its other market rivals? Developing a technology solution is not the same as addressing a business need with technology – these two things are quite different. The key thing is that many entities develop technology solutions, but that doesn't mean that all solutions solve a real business need.

We assess the business situations by reviewing indepth business processes before making any recommendations. We tailor the solution that fits best with our client's business requirements.

We provide alternative paths for bringing functionality into a business clearly stating the impact to the timeline and cost for different variations in scope, phasing and architecture.

Our professional services offer viable strategies to build new capabilities ensuring system evolves with business growth and optimises our client's business processes for value proposition.

Before starting the deployment process, we do change management, proof of concept, and if needed, recommend introducing policies.

#### What are your primary goals and objectives for the remainder of 2020?

In the current environment, cloud computing is firmly established as the new normal for enterprise IT and is perhaps the fastest growing segments of IT spend.

At Azdan, we will continue to support business communities to be operationally safe and secure by using the right technology solutions. We will diligently work to increase our overall market share while building inhouse employee capabilities for continuous innovation.

#### EMITAC

# UNDERSTANDING CLOUD CONSUMERS

**Jobey Thomas**, Practice Manager at Microsoft, has penned an exclusive op-ed for October's edition of CNME which takes a deeper look at the trends emerging from enterprises migrating to the cloud.



eaders in IT Infrastructure and Operations learn each day. What we have learned from our experience with cloud adopters to mitigate cloud risks, speed up adoption and reduce costs to obtain better ROI.

The cloud has reached majority adoption. However, many infrastructure and operations leaders are still asking questions as they pilot their cloud journey such as:

- What are the advantages and risks of utilising the cloud?
- What are best practices for managing and governing cloud resources?
- How to organise your IT team to embrace the cloud? These are significant

questions pondering not only for the enterprises, but also those who are working to modernise and optimise their cloud deployments.

IT Leaders responsible for cloud infrastructure can take advantage from the matured cloud by implementing lessons learned from our previous adopters to ease risks, speed adoption, reduce cost and enhance ROI.

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## Planning for a Cloud Strategy across the organisation

Each department has its own way of initiating Cloud Strategies, leading the organisation to have a multi-cloud environment. The challenge comes when the initiated cloud strategies are not aligned with the enterprise business goals. This also prevents cloud computing from impacting the overall business strategy positively.

Business needs to start with a cloud strategy document that defines a guideline for the entire organisation, aligning the business objectives, advantages, risks and key adoption criteria. Bringing in this document in place many delays are prevented that are caused by misaligned priorities. The document will be updated as organisations' goals evolve, marketing by vendors, business factors.

#### Identifying the right cloud service provider and the right cloud aspirant workloads

Two key areas of focus ae:

- Identifying the best aspirant workload to migrate to the cloud
- Selection of the right Cloud Service Provider (CSP) for these workloads

IT Leaders must go through a complete assessment that evaluates both technical feasibility and business value for the application that are ready for the cloud.

Since most organisations migrate applications and workloads to cloud based entirely on a short set of technical criteria, this needs to be thoroughly evaluated and actioned.

Likewise, the selection of a Public Cloud Provider must not be based solely on technical capabilities, but leaders must consider the location and business factors.

The best example is how many are relying on local Cloud Service Providers – CSP's (Emitac Cloud) when Public Cloud regions don't deliver the appropriate level of cloud performance, service and even cost! Similarly, vice-versa in Public CSP, the price and quality of cloud services differ across locations.

#### A Cloud Center of Excellence and a Cloud Architect

Cloud Center of Excellence – CCOE is a function that creates a balance between stability and speed. This function governs and manages different stages of cloud adoption roadmap.

One of the mistakes that commonly made by organisations is the delay in establishing CCOE. The model requires collaboration between each of the below:

- Cloud Governance: Selecting the right governance tools and creating cloud computing policies.
- Cloud Adoption: A Strategic move by organisations of reducing cost and easing risks and achieving scalability of data.
- Cloud Platform: Help users select the right cloud providers as a platform.

#### Cloud Strategy/Cloud Automation

Each member of the CCOE is equipped with understanding the necessary constraints, risks, and protections that led to the current set of IT controls. The CCOE must include a



Our report studies how COVID-19 has affected economies, businesses and consumers in the Middle East region, and will lead to new, digital-driven use cases emerging in an ICT-led economic recovery."

> cloud solution architect, who is responsible for defining the cloud strategy and interacting with key stakeholders. The ideal candidate for this role is a well-respected individual from within the organisation who has access to the business leaders, takes initiatives and mandatorily a "cloud believer."

> This person must also have technical cloud skills and experience in cloud adoption projects.

#### Enterprise Cloud Managed Services Provider

A common drawback by most organisations initiating their cloud journey is that they believe their current on-premises management and governance are also valid for cloud resources! CSP's, like Emitac, provide integration with new resources and tools that are fundamental and required to manage a multicloud environment for enterprise organisations.

This enables customers to wisely choose services, optimise costs and reduce risks. Most companies ignore these tasks and fall in such mistakes, which lead to spend more by 30% to 50% of their cloud cost!

#### TATA COMMUNICATIONS

## TATA COMMUNICATIONS: A GLOBAL DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM ENABLER

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Vaneet Mehta**, Associate Vice President and Region Head, Middle East, Central Asia & Africa, at Tata Communications, to find out how the global telco provider has responded to an increase in demand for network capacity and bandwidth, what the future of the workplace will look like and what can be done to make enterprise IT infrastructure more resilient.

> an you outline to our readers how Tata Communications leveraged its technological expertise to help its customers maintain 'business continuity' during the COVID-19 pandemic? With COVID-19, remote working has become the new norm for employees across the globe.

As customers implemented their own work from home measures and looked to shift workloads seamlessly across borders as part of their own business continuity plans, a much higher amount of IT and network resources started being consumed, due to employees video-conferencing customers and colleagues, and accessing large data files stored on the cloud.

The IT infrastructures across most organisations globally were not designed for this level of usage. Enterprise platforms and collaboration applications were overburdened.

They made urgent upgrade requests to service providers, cloud/content service providers and OTTs to cope with the usage spikes. Some content providers and ISPs even tried to intentionally adjust HQ multimedia content to a lower quality to meet the demand.

Tata Communications witnessed an increased demand for network capacity, together with requirements for bespoke solutions that enabled efficient and secure remote working.

Right from the start of the lockdown, Tata Communications was able to augment its network capacity and provide integrated, scalable remote working solutions with in-built secure access to a company's corporate applications wherever they are hosted, to customers across the world.

By March 2020, we delivered over 650 customers orders, and 1.35 TBPS of additionally provisioned bandwidth – signifying a higher demand for data bandwidth. We also saw a 30% growth in internet traffic on our network in March compared to January 2020.

Tata Communications has been supporting tens of thousands of users across more than 150 organisations, to work from home, collaborate seamlessly, improve employee productivity, and maintain business continuity during this time – truly enabling borderless collaboration.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted how we work, when we work, and where we work. However, in your expert opinion what does the future of the workplace look like? The global pandemic has



Associate Vice President and Region Head, Middle East, Central Asia & Africa, Tata Communications.

introduced radical changes on both professional and personal fronts and has forced tens of millions of people to adopt remote working almost overnight. As the world bounces back, it is unlikely to go back to the way it functioned pre-COVID. In the post-COVID era, digital transformation will not be an option, but a mode of survival for most organisations globally. As enterprises are resuming operations, investments in digital platforms will no longer be defined by IT teams but demanded by business teams that need to drive employee, customer, and partner experiences.

### Tata Communications has been supporting tens of thousands of users across more than 150 organisations, to work from home."

Enterprise leaders will actively migrate to new work models that require less face to face interactions. Through this new approach, they will also look to deliver exceptional and innovative customer experiences, enhance operational productivity and efficiency, manage risks, build agility, and drive business growth.

In this new normal, more than 50-60% of employees across various enterprise segments are likely to continue to work from home. And hence, enterprises need a more robust, secure, and scalable work-from-home solution to be able to support this shift.

To help enterprises adapt to this new normal, and future-proof themselves, Tata Communications launched its Secure Connected Digital Experience (SCDx) proposition to enable enterprises to harness the power of digital technologies and drive seamless experience for employees, customers, and partners. There has been a huge acceleration in digital transformation. How has COVID-19 impacted your business. Are you seeing a growing demand for a 'contactless customer service' model?

While COVID-19 has disrupted businesses, customers reliance on our services have only increased. During times of crises, customers seek guidance and support from their trusted brands more than ever.

At Tata Communications our SCDx proposition meets this growing, worldwide demand for new ways of operating, which includes, far higher levels of working from home, rising security risks, a shift to video commerce and more contactless experiences for employees, customers and supply chain partners.

Our Digital Customer Experience Platform is helping recreate the in-store experience online for B2C companies, with the next generation of enterprise commerce and video collaboration solutions for superior digital customer engagement.

It integrates different technologies such as cloud, artificial intelligence (AI), video streaming and hosting to create a secure and stable experience. The platform combines the intelligence of software, application, and telecom connectivity to provide a near-real experience



Our Digital Customer Experience Platform is helping recreate the in-store experience online for B2C companies."

to customers right from browsing to the end purchase.

What can be done to make enterprise IT infrastructure more resilient, and what would be your recommendation for enterprise security in the present context?

Digitisation has become crucial for businesses in 2020 and beyond. Understanding, adopting, and fast-tracking digital transformation is extremely crucial for enterprises today.

This transformation could be around cloud adoption, work-from-home solution implementations, managing cyber threats, and/or optimising cost of operations, as all of these ensure business continuity and help enterprises remain relevant, agile and profitable in this dynamically changing market scenario.

As work from home becomes the global norm, cybersecurity has become critically important. To support corporate agility,



Tata Communications is working with their customers to deploy simple but effective security strategies that can be implemented seamlessly and quickly within days.

Our zero-trust network access (ZTNA) partnership with NetFoundry (a subsidiary of Tata Communications) ensures that employees enjoy secure access to applications and data in the cloud, regardless of location, device or broadband connectivity, with 3-10X performance acceleration.

On sensitive and critical business applications that cannot be hosted on Cloud, but are homed in enterprise Data



Centres, Tata Communications' Global Secure Internet Gateway Service (GSIGS), Managed Authentication (mAuth), Secure Web Gateway (SWG) and Privilege Access Management solutions enable end user with access, control and policy compliance, along with seamless user experience to manage and deliver work as usual.

Finally, Tata Communications is a global leader in communications, but what differentiates the company from its rivals and how has it managed to sustain its phenomenal success over such a long period of time? What sets Tata Communications apart is its ability to continuously transform itself and innovate to stay ahead of customer and market requirements.

Whether it was the decision to move from a Indian voice monopoly to a global communications service provider or making the right business decisions to invest and grow - owning and operating the largest wholly owned and advanced subsea fibre network, carrying around 30% of the world's internet routes or innovating to offer customised solutions for a post-COVID world even before most organisations had thought about their move to

tackle the disruptions brought on by the pandemic.

From its inception to now, Tata Communications has evolved significantly and has supported its customers through their digital requirements for almost two decades.

Today, Tata Communications is a global digital ecosystem enabler, bringing together for its customers, the entire technology ecosystem that plays a role in digital transformation.

We work alongside our customers to re-imagine their business strategy and technology landscape to adapt to the emerging challenges and scenarios by adopting a digital first model to provide a seamless experience for their employees, customers, and partners.

Our lineage of the old telco world, coupled with our knowledge of the new digital world, sets us apart from other players in this digital ecosystem.

We understand the nuances of connectivity and networking, combined with our expertise in cloud, UCC, mobility, IoT and security, and extensive partnerships means that we are a long-term partner in our customers' digital transformation journey as an enabler of this ecosystem.

We've had an incredible journey for the past two decades and I am very excited to continue to be part of the next phase of our growth – both in the region and globally.

#### **VERITAS & FUTURE TEC**

# RANSOMWARE RESILIENCY IN THE "NEW NORMAL"

Data management and protection leader Veritas and leading Information Technology solutions provider Future TEC collaborated in partnership with CPI Media Group this month to host a virtual webinar which aimed to unpack recent developments in ransomware, shed light on the dangers of "dark data", and outline how organisations can best prepare for inevitable attacks.

> he virtual session and panel discussion drew key decision makers from across the IT ecosystem keen to discuss the latest in cyber security threats, most notably the exponential rise in ransomware by cybercriminals intent on holding valuable data hostage for profit.

> Raed Abedalkarim, Technology Expert, FutureTEC joined from the company's Amman offices to open the session with a detailed overview of the company's partner ecosystem and projects that have underpinned their success since its founding in 2005.

Future TEC's own cloud, called JOUD, is the foundation of the company's offerings with data centres located in Kuwait, Bahrain, and the UAE. JOUD Cloud Services from Future TEC include information security, disaster recovery, and JOUD Drive, a proprietary enterprise file sharing platform.

Amr Hussein, Regional Channel Sales Manager, Veritas Technologies then took the screen to deliver the session's feature presentation, Ransomware Resiliency with Veritas: Protect, Detect, Recover.

Hussein opened the presentation with a statement that resonates with IT professionals worldwide. "Some of the facts of life you cannot control, some of the facts of life you have to react to," he said. "Ransomware has become a security problem in software operating systems as well as network structures and architectures and it is a problem that is here to stay," he explained.

Ransomware attacks are on the rise for a number of reasons, Hussain outlined. Traditionally, data has lived in one specific location and access was easily limited. As organisations move more data and services to the cloud, threat surfaces are expanding. Falling per-terabyte storage costs are driving many organisations to store collected data for future analysis or delay the clearing of old or unnecessary data from the cloud. This results in pools of unstructured, unknown, or "dark" data.



"On average you only know about 40 percent of the data that you have," explained Hussein. Research and analysis group Gartner estimates that more than 80 percent of enterprise data is unstructured, and likely to contain personally identifiable information, he noted.

Dark and unstructured data present clear vulnerabilities to enterprises, and a failure to address these issues can be costly. "Ransomware caused over USD\$11.5B in damages to businesses in 2019," Hussein said, quoting statistics from the latest Symantec Information Security Report, "and it is expected to cost the global economy USD\$ Trillion by 2021."

Adding to this increasingly complex threat landscape, cyber criminals are escalating their methods with phishing emails, texts and advertisements designed to play on the fears of an uncertain workforce unaccustomed to accessing data remotely.

Ransomware has become a security problem in software operating systems as well as network structures and architectures and it is a problem that is here to stay." To protect organisations as they adapt to the "new normal", Veritas offers its Enterprise Data Services Platform, a comprehensive set of technologies supporting IT system protection, ransomware detection and recovery in the face of ransomware.

In the event of a ransomware attack, data recovery needs to be rapid to avoid costly downtime. To that end, Veritas' Backup Exec grounds its backup and recovery framework on the "3-2-1" rule, an approach to safeguarding data in almost any failure scenario. To be fully prepared for strategic recovery, organisations should have three (3) copies of data on two (2) different types of media plus at least one (1) off-site copy.

"One of the major differences between Veritas and other solutions is the holistic approach that we take," said Hussein. "We are not only protecting the client, we are protecting the credentials that we use to do the backup and the recovery, the storage of the backup, the replication of the backup, the communication between the backup clients, the backup server, and the back up media or the actual production data as well as the the capability to recover."

To illustrate the importance of multiple backups with robust security, Hussein recounted a client scenario that had happened that very week. A Veritas client, using Backup Exec, suffered a ransomware attack underpinned by the Phobos virus. "In the morning, they saw that all of their local network shared folders were encrypted and the network was completely down," recalled Hussein. "The only thing that remained protected was the storage of the write-protected Backup Exec." The client was able to restore the entire network from a backup Veritas had created, avoiding downtime and data loss.

"However, we would like it if you didn't have to recover at all," the executive went on to cite the importance of prevention. "We would rather you detect and respond."

To that end, Veritas offers a full suite of products designed for data analytics and visualisation. APTARE IT Analytics from Veritas is the only IT analytics platform to offer unified insights for all major storage, backup and virtual infrastructures through a portal for both on-premises and multicloud environments. Veritas' Data Insight is designed to reveal any anomalies across backups and offers custom reporting that can help reveal key trends.

For organisations that increasingly house data across multiple locations, it's crucial to have a unified solution that protects all their data across physical, virtual and cloud environments. Vertias' end-to-end security identifies data, protects it throughout the lifecycle, and restores ransomed data when attacks do occur.

#### **CONDO PROTEGO**

# COMPLEXITY IN THE CLOUD: STREAMLINING THE MIGRATION ROADMAP

International data management company Veritas and leading consultative solutions provider Condo Protego in partnership with CPI Media Group hosted a virtual discussion this month to unpack the challenges of managing a hybrid multi-cloud environment, and outline the solutions for analysing and protecting data, supporting resiliency, and reducing complexity.

> he virtual webinar and panel discussion invited IT decision makers from across the UAE to explore the latest solutions in data visibility, integrated technology and operations, workload portability, consolidated backup strategies and emphasise the importance of a unified approach to resiliency.

Savitha Bhaskar, COO and co-founder of Condo Protego, opened the webinar by briefly describing the company's role as a consultative solutions provider. Bhaskar went on to provide timely insights into cloud adoption in the MENA region.

Bhaskar highlighted some recent statistics released by analytics firm IDC that predict that public cloud expenditure will reach AED 1.5 billion in the UAE by 2022 and will result in the creation of some 50 thousand jobs.

Bhaskar went on to outline some of the challenges faced

by customers looking to move data between public and private clouds. "Irrespective of where we are all moving, all of this requires complex, careful, and meticulous handling of this data movement, and it needs to be done with proper tools," she cautioned. Condo Protego focuses on the data stack from the time it is created to the time it is destroyed, protecting data throughout its journey, the executive went on.

Senior Solutions Sales Executive, Tarek El-Reidy from Veritas Technologies then took the screen for the day's main presentation Cloud Journey with Veritas - See, Move, Protect. El-Reidy highlighted some common challenges and pitfalls in hybrid multi-cloud data management.

"There is a common misconception that if a company is using cloud, they don't need backup," said El-Reidy. The reality is, he went on, is that organizations are actually responsible for their own data, not cloud providers. "The data inside the virtual machines – all of this data, this is your responsibility. If anything happens, you are responsible for restoring that data," he explained.

Taking responsibility for data starts with knowing what data is actually there. With pools of dark data rapidly expanding, Veritas provides solutions that allow customers to look into their infrastructure and know more about the data housed across their environments.

Veritas' APTARE is an agentless tool that collects data across environments from any cloud, any storage and any backup and starts generating reports. It scans any private or public cloud, storage, file systems and applications, operating systems, virtual environments and more to give
IT professionals greater insight into their business.

Data Insight from Veritas helps reduce risk and improve accountability by analysing and classifying data. The tool integrates with archiving and security solutions to prevent data loss and ensure policybased data retention.

Once data professionals gain insight into their data, the second challenge is the ability to move that data into the appropriate environment, said El-Reidy. For this, Veritas offers InfoScale, a softwaredefined bridge between tier-one applications and infrastructure. "It is flexible enough to move VMWare to HyperV. It is flexible enough to fail over to different infrastructures. It is totally agnostic, it is only focused on your application," El-Reidy told the attendees.

Security is one of the top concerns for IT professionals, and Veritas' suite of solutions supports data resilience and accelerates the time to recovery in the event of data loss. Veritas' NetBackup provides a unified solution to protect data, protecting data across multiple cloud environments.

El-Reidy closed his presentation with a review of Veritas' 360 approach to data management for multicloud environments covering data visibility, protection and portability as well as digital compliance, business continuity, and storage optimisation.

El-Reidy was then joined by Bhaskar and Brett Samuel, Head of Technology, Middle East and South Africa as well as Amr Hussein, Regional Channel Sales Manager for an engaging panel discussion.

Bhaskar took the first question, commenting on changing data protection policies and outlining how Condo Protego can help businesses stay compliant. "Though many of our customers are homegrown in the UAE, they also have multinational operations," she explained. "These organisations need to be compliant with global regulations based on their industry." Condo Protego works with domain expert consultants to deliver solutions that will help them remain compliant across industries and operational locations, said Bhaskar.

As organisations are faced with unprecedented business continuity challenges this year, Samuel commented on Vertias' ability to help maintain business operations in the long-term. "We have always remained completely vendor and platform agnostic," noted Samuel. "We can provide that layer of glue that can adapt over change to whatever your environment might look like in a few years."

Over half of Veritas' customers are working with hybrid-cloud environments, and that figure is growing rapidly. Hussein addressed the regional shift to hybrid-cloud environments. "There are some processes



We have always remained completely vendor and platform agnostic."



and some data that need to be maintained on-premise," he said, also noting organisations can do well to move some data and services to the cloud. These parallel needs have resulted in widespread adoption of a hybrid model in the region. Organisations need to identify what can and should be moved to the cloud, and what should remain on premise, he noted, emphasising the need for expert consultation.

Bhaskar underscored the need for expert consultation, noting that cloud computing as a "frontier" process requires careful planning and execution as well as a roadmap that allows customers to assess their migration efforts throughout the transformation journey.

The message throughout the panel was consistent – for the most effective hybrid multi-cloud setup, businesses need full visibility into data, integrated technology and operations, easy workload portability, a consolidated backup strategy and a unified approach to resiliency.



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#### HUB71, A TECHNOLOGY ECOSYSTEM NAMED AFTER THE UAE'S FORMATION IN 1971 HAS ANNOUNCED A KEY PARTNERSHIP DESIGNED TO NURTURE AND DRIVE LOCAL INNOVATION AND EDUCATION.

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GOVTECH

HUB7I AND THALES EMARAT TECHNOLOGIES

# HUB71: FOSTERING INIOVATION AND EDICATION

In this month's edition of GovTech, we take a closer look at the strategic partnership that has been agreed between Hub71 and Thales Emarat Technologies and explore what impact that will have in terms of helping the UAE technology ecosystem to flourish.

hales Emarat Technologies and Hub71 have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to support the development of the UAE's innovation and education ecosystem.

The reputable entities aim to bring together expertise from the industrial world, with the dynamism of Abu Dhabi's global technology ecosystem, Hub71, and local knowledge from universities to develop new technologies, leading to disruptive products and systems.

As part of the agreement, Thales Emarat Technologies will work closely with Hub71 start-ups and other ecosystem members over the coming years to discuss and identify various collaboration opportunities. Hub71 members will have access to Thales Emarat Technologies events and workshops each year led by experts from Thales.

In addition, Thales staff will join the Hub71 mentorship programme. These initiatives will provide local entrepreneurs and start-ups with access to some of the most experienced engineers and developers from Thales's international network.

In alignment with its strategy centred around industry, innovation and education, Thales Emarat



been playing an integral role in our economy by combining vast developments in disruptive technologies with physical production and operations."

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Technologies is launching an annual challenge to engage entrepreneurs and students from local universities. The first Thales Hackathon is taking place on 23 October 2020 and is now open for registration. Through the innovative use of digital technologies, participants will leverage the power of maintenance 4.0 to bring a high scale complex system to ultimate availability. Thales Emarat Technologies is a UAE company, fully owned by Thales. Hub71 is a global tech ecosystem located in the heart of Abu Dhabi, supporting the growth of start-ups in the region through incentives, access to market opportunities and funding.

Hub71, is named after the UAE's formation in 1971 - and is a tech ecosystem located in the heart of Abu Dhabi that brings together several key elements for startup success: access to capital, access to market opportunities, and a favorable business environment. Backed by Mubadala Investment Company – its growing international tech community of tech giants, venture capitalists, tech ecosystem players, and global startups can expect to benefit from an interconnected global network.

Alongside strategic partners Microsoft, SoftBank Vision Fund, and Abu Dhabi Global Market; Hub71 is creating the optimal environment for transformative tech companies looking to maximise success, produce outstanding tech innovations, and scale globally.

For the greater social and economic good of Abu Dhabi, Hub71 is a flagship initiative of the Dh50 billion economic accelerator program 'Ghadan 21', which means 'tomorrow' in Arabic

"Industry 4.0 has been playing an integral role in our economy by combining vast developments in disruptive technologies with physical production and operations. It is vital that the local youth is empowered to develop technologies that can be integrated into the industrial ecosystem, creating value and economic impact. Innovation, education, and industrialisation are shared values between Thales and Hub71, and we are certain that our combined expertise will be beneficial to the local vision of sovereignty and autonomy." Bernard Roux, CEO of Thales in the UAE.

"Our partnership with Thales supports our mission to connect our partners with innovation and empower the youth to develop ideas that harness technology and solve real-life challenges. We're going through a nationwide digital transformation in Abu Dhabi and technology is at the heart of that. It's important that we engage and inspire future generations to become tomorrow's tech entrepreneurs and pioneers and sustain our future economy." Nader Museitif, Head of Partnerships and Business Development, Hub71.

The strategic partnership aims to bring together expertise from the industrial world, with the dynamism of Abu Dhabi's global technology ecosystem, and local knowledge from universities to develop new technologies, as well as disruptive products and systems.

Thales Emarat Technologies will also launch an annual challenge to engage entrepreneurs and students from local universities, with the first 'Thales Challenge' taking place on 23 October 2020.

The first event is a Hackathon focused on Maintenance 4.0

# TRANSFORMING NODERNIT

CPI Media Group held a virtual webinar with ITQAN and global IT leader HPE to examine how modern IT departments not only need to deliver stability, but also possess the ability to meet new business demands and deliver new products and services into the market.

NME Editor Mark Forker moderated the discussion that contained a powerhouse panel of industry experts, which included Bassem Moustafa, Business Unit Manager at IIS, Mohannad Daradkeh, Hybrid IT Solution Architect at HPE and Kshitij Saxena, Green Lake Channel Sales - Middle East, Saudi, South Africa to discussed how HPE's Hyperconverged and Composable Infrastructure can really optimize enterprise IT environments.

The opening presentation of the session was delivered by ITQAN's Bassem Moustafa, who provided a brief overview of ITQAN's business model, the key partnerships it has forged in the ICT ecosystem in the Middle East and its diverse portfolio of solutions.

"We provide solutions that are related to CCTV, access control and essentially anything that is associated with physical security. We also have IT services that take care of all the outsourcing and managed services - and ITQAN has a major outsourcing contract with key customers in the UAE, such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance. We also have an install base and references in most of the key industry verticals and markets from education, healthcare, oil & gas and transportation," said Moustafa.

The next speaker was HPE's Mohannad Daradkeh, who highlighted the unique capabilities of its Synergy and SimpliVity solutions. He began his presentation by discussing the concept and elements of composability.

"Composability is an industry-wide term that is not specific to HPE, but HPE is the only company that has a portfolio built for composability. We started building our composable portfolio in 2003, to embed the tools and develop the capabilities of all our products to be able to integrate with the software-defined market of today. In terms of its elements, composability created a fluid pool of resources and workloads, whether it be virtual, physical or containerized. It also provided a software-defined intelligence which allowed users to scale - and finally it offered a unified API to control the integration of resources

and provide openness," said Daradkeh.

The HPE executive then disclosed findings from research conducted by both IDC and Gartner which examine the market analysis between composability versus hyperconverged and converged architecture.

"IDC has stated that composability is suited to today's climate and nextgeneration applications and your mission-critical workload. Gartner also clearly illustrated that in the future with the software-defined data center is going with the composability fabric-based solutions," said Daradkeh.

The final presentation was delivered by HPE's Kshitij Saxena, who demonstrated the benefits of HPE GreenLake.

He began by focusing on the challenges facing enterprises who are embarking upon their digital transformation journeys.

"Our HPE GreenLake model was built around the challenges and obstacle presented by digital transformation. If you speak to a CIO today then he will tell you that he wants to have

Our HPE GreenLake model was built around the challenges and obstacle presented by digital transformation."



the ability to move a lot quicker, he does not want to wait 6-9 months before the capacity is installed in his data center. He also wants to free up his resources so they can get off the mundane IT tasks of forecasting and dealing with outages and focus more on innovation. However, if you have the same conversation with a CFO, his primary objective will be to lower IT costs," said Saxena.

He further pointed out that the challenges facing a CTO in his journey towards digital transformation is to have proper control. He would want the control over performance, security, compliance and data.

The engaging and informative HPE executive then illustrated

some of the compelling trends that have emerged over the last few years and what the mission vision of HPE GreenLake is.

"The world we now live in is hybrid. It is built on the right mix of private and public clouds. More and more businesses started looking for a workload-based approach. What has become extremely prevalent is the fact that consumption-based models are emerging as a preferred option. At HPE, we know that if you look at cloud or a traditional way of purchasing, you bring that cloud experience to your data center or your co-located site. At HPE, we want to be the platformas-a-service, edge to the core to the cloud provider to our customers," said Saxena.



Mary O'Leary AEOI, Business Development Manager, at Vizor Software

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#### VIZOR SOFTWARE

## EMPOWERING TAX TRANSFORMATION IN THE GCC

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Mary O'Leary**, AEOI, Business Development Manager, at Vizor Software, to find out how the company has become the 'go-to' partner for tax authorities in the GCC region, the role its playing in enabling countries in the Middle East to become compliant with international tax standards - and the success of its recent Oman AEOI project, which was delivered 100% remotely.

> he Middle East is home to some of the world's fastest growing economies in the world, but the region has undergone a huge tax transformation of late and the landscape is quickly changing. However, O'Leary believes that there has been a shift globally in terms of the way we think about tax.

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We are the global leader in tax information exchange software and currently have 19 tax authorities worldwide using the Vizor platform, representing almost 30% of the reporting Financial Industry globally." "I think there has been a real rethink and reshuffle in the tax system generally, and I think this was largely triggered by the events of the global financial crisis in 2008. Most of the tax systems and legislations that we were using had been implemented in the 1920's and 1930's, and were just no longer fit for purpose in the interconnected, global and increasingly digital economy that we now live in," said O'Leary.

One of the major incentives that is used by countries in the GCC in order to attract the best talent is the fact that there is no income tax, and despite the tax system being subject to a radical overhaul in the Middle East, according to O'Leary that is unlikely to change.

"Countries in the Middle East are able to attract a very talented expatriate workforce largely attributable to how the tax system is structured. When you're building a worldclass economy like the UAE is, you're not going to get rid of that tax-free system anytime soon as there is too strong a policy in favor of keeping it. However, in terms of corporate tax I wouldn't be surprised to see a change in policy in some countries over the next few years," said O'Leary.

Vizor were well-positioned to capitalise when the tax exchange landscape began to change in the Middle East, as they were already quite active in the region as a provider of supervisory software solutions for monetary authorities, financial regulators and insurance regulators.

"When this whole international tax exchange landscape started to change with FATCA in 2011, and CRS a year or two later and then BEPS in 2014, we were already very established in the market and had the Saudi Arabia Monetary Authority (SAMA) as one of our clients. by serv and perhaps the success we have had to date with partnering with SAMA was influential in GAZT the tax authority of Saudi Arabia in choosing our platform also. Partnering with GAZT gave us a lot of weight in the region everyone knows it has a stellar reputation and in fact was very active in hosting of the G20 Finance Ministers meeting held just last week," said O'Leary.

The dynamic and charismatic **AEOI Business Development** Manager at Vizor Software, also highlighted how Saudi Arabia is seen as an example to other countries in the region in terms of their implementation processes. Vizor has since acquired 5 out of the 6 GCC tax authorities as clients, stressing not only the strategic importance of the Middle Eastern region but also how much she and the team enjoy working in such a fast paced and evolving tax landscape.

"We are the global leader in this type of tax software and have 19 tax authorities worldwide using the Vizor platform which accounts to almost 30% of the global reportable Financial Institutions (FIs). However, we also pride ourselves on not just being a software company. We have a lot of specialists and tax expertise in the area of international tax exchange, and we also have a lot of technical



expertise inhouse as well. We see ourselves more as a strategic partner rather than just simply a software provider, and that enables us to strengthen and grow relationships, so for every other tax exchange obligation that comes along we'd like to think that we're naturally the first choice," said, O'Leary.

Countries in the Middle East have stated its desire to become more transparent in order to get in line with the OECD and EU in terms of its tax systems and structures by committing themselves to international standards such as CRS and BEPS.

O'Leary points out that whilst intentions have been genuine, many have committed to CRS without knowing how to successfully execute it, but that's where Vizor come into the picture.

"I think our knowledge of the technical aspect of this process has been a big help for us because it involves a huge complex legal network. There is domestic and international legislation and double-tax conventions, and when you try and put them all together that can be very complex. Now that is the theoretical aspect of it, but a lot of it is process and many countries think exchanging tax information is a great idea, as it is a very strong statement politically, but in cases they may make the commitment first before actually formulating a plan to implement CRS," said O'Leary.

O'Leary says that in many cases the technical aspect is almost the final stage, and added that whilst technology is a great enabler, you need to

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know where you want to go with it in order to ensure your journey is a successful one.

"The first step if needs be is to correct your domestic legislation, and then you enact regulations and educate your banking community, but really the technical part is almost the last step. For me the most interesting part of the entire exercise is enabling governments to see the whole process holistically. Technology is seen as a silver bullet, but it's only as good as the people and processes around it. You need to know what you want to get out of the technology and want you want to feed into it," said O'Leary.

COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of our daily lives and has changed how we work, where we work and when we work. It has brought many

I think our tax and technical expertise gives us a huge market advantage given that tax exchange commitments involve not just a technological solution but also a highly complex legal framework."

challenges, but it also presented new opportunities and allowed many organisations to explore and discover new ways of conducting business.

Vizor's recent project with the tax authority in Oman is a perfect illustration of how a company has adapted and embraced new methods of working in order to get the same result.

"We got the contract with Oman in a pre-COVID world and everything was going to plan in relation to us being on the ground at the beginning of March, but that timeframe obviously coincided with the global pandemic, which practically shutdown global travel. The ability to react quickly to change was very important, and not just from us at Vizor, but also from within the tax authority," said O'Leary.

O'Leary paid tribute to its local partner SSL Oman, whom she said did a brilliant job in terms of managing the whole project on the ground – and added that it was a whole new experience for both Vizor and the tax authority in Oman.

"Generally, with our software implementations we will always be on site. Now when I say we, I'm referring to the project manager, a DevOps engineer and maybe a trainer, so typically we'd normally have a fairly strong team on the ground. However, this was our very first 100% fully remote delivery, and Oman had never done any form of tax information exchange, so it wasn't like they had a system before and then transitioned to Vizor. It was completely from scratch, which in a way from a technical perspective a green field site implementation can be a little bit more straightforward," said O'Leary.

There were bumps and challenges during the project, such as issues with their supply chain, but O'Leary expressed her delight at how they were able to successfully deliver such a largescale project 100% remotely.

"You need to think ahead a little bit more in this environment and you need to foresee possible risks and obstacles before they arise because the controls and the things you can do are limited. Thankfully, we were able to successfully deliver the Oman project in time for FI filing deadlines. This has been a real success story for us in the region in what has been an unprecedented time for everybody as we continue to adapt to what has been described as the 'new normal'," concluded O'Leary.

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EVENT REPORT

#### TATA COMMUNICATIONS

# **CREATING A SECURE DIGITAL WORKSPACE**

Tata Communications, a leading global digital infrastructure provider, in partnership with CPI Media Group, hosted a virtual roundtable to discuss the rapidly changing world of work, and unpack the future of the digitally connected workplace.

his year has seen a seismic shift in the way we work. Workforces across the globe adapted, seemingly overnight, from on-premise to remote working models in order to meet COVID-19 safety regulations. Tata Communications' virtual webinar invited IT leaders from around the region to reimagine the future of work as the role of the office continues to adapt to what has been termed the "new normal".

The day's discussion was opened with an eye-opening presentation from Sandeep Sachdeva, Associate Director, Middle East & Africa at Tata Communications, who expertly outlined the importance of secure, digital connection in remote, and hybrid-remote work environments.

"As organisations are crawling back to normal, businesses are looking to stabilise their operations, reach to a steady state, and focus on recovery and accelerate their growth," explained Sachdeva, going on to note some revealing statistics that could provide a glimpse into the future of work.

Some 26 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs expect that a substantial part of their workforce will never return to their usual workplace, said Sachdeva, and 60 percent feel that once the pandemic is over, business travel will become less frequent, replaced by video conferencing. This hybridremote working model puts additional pressure on the IT department to implement best practices that support business continuity in the office, and in working from home environments.

The executive went on to highlight some of the challenges that organisations face as employees move off-site, including providing secure access to core applications, addressing employee unfamiliarity with virtual interactions, and maintaining proper regulatory compliance.

"Tata Communications is the number one wholesale voice carrier in the world, and we own the world's largest subsea cable network," Sachdeva outlined the company's

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extensive communications network. On the back of that network, he continued, Tata Communications is able to offer a suite of solutions to support digital connectivity through a Secure Connected Digital Experience (SCDx) proposition.

The SCDx suite of solutions offers end-to-end support for digital connectivity including NetFoundry, VDI for Microsoft and Azure, 2-factor authentication, secure internet gateway solutions, collaboration solutions such as UCaaS Cisco Webex and UCaaS Microsoft Teams, and tools to monitor employee health and safety such as IoT Connected Worker, geofencing and connected wearables to help maintain social distancing regulations.

"We take pride in the fact that Tata Communications today delivers a secure connected digital workplace which enables our customers to overcome the new challenges. We have enabled more than 150 organisations worldwide with our SEDX platform," Sandeep told the webinar attendees.

Rajarshi Purkayastha, Head- Pre Sales, India | MECAA, Tata Communications then joined Sachdeva on screen for an interactive discussion on the topic.

"When you work from the office, you don't have to think about your network, you don't have to think about your power. When you work from your home, the first issue that emerges is 'I hope my Tata Communications is the number one wholesale voice carrier in the world, and we own the world's largest subsea cable network."

> broadband is going to work today'. That is the way the world is changing. That is the way that the thought process is changing, and that impacts productivity," Purkayastha highlighted additional stressors put on employees in a workfrom-home environment.

In spite of connectivity issues that arise in remote working environments, Sachdeva pointed out the recent "exponential growth" of unified communication platforms like Webex, Zoom, and Microsoft. Further, he noted a 20 percent increase in investments in cloud based services overall in the MENA region, owing to the need to connect employees, as well as customers in a contactless environment.

As unified communications platforms become a necessity, users need stable and secure connectivity. Businesses require a networking platform to securely, agilely and reliably manage edge and cloud distributed applications.

NetFoundry, a key solution within the Tata Communications SCDx suite, enables customers to embed private networking into their applications and solutions. The result is that application providers, cloud and system integrators, and managed service providers can deliver applications across working environments with zero trust security while lowering costs and optimising performance.

However, securing networks is only part of the equation. As some employees move back to on-premise working, organisations are looking for ways to protect their health and wellbeing. To that end, Tata Communications' SCDx offering includes solutions for monitoring the health of individual employees and trend tracking that may reveal health and safety issues across workforces.

Highlighting the capabilities of Tata Communications' IoT connected worker offering, Purkayastha mentioned roster and alert based operations, as well as wearables for employees that tracks their location to ensure social distancing measures are adhered to.

While the future of work remains unclear, as employees either move back to the office or settle down into a remote working environment, IT leaders need to rethink their cybersecurity strategies and leverage technology like that offered in Tata Communications SCDx suite to ensure the safety of their networks as well as their employees.

#### KINGSTON

## EMPOWERING REMOTE WORKING

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Antoine Harb**, Team Leader, Middle East & Africa at Kingston to find out how its KC2500 solution is enabling users to handle intensive workloads as they move to remote working.



Antoine Harb, Team Leader, Middle East & Africa at Kingston

> e've seen an exponential demand for VDI technology during COVID-19, and highperformance PC usage. However, can you outline to us how your KC2500 solution is equipping users with the tools to handle intensive workloads on desktops, workstations and for HPC applications?

By offering an exceptional high throughput and bandwidth, the KC2500 is designed to actively help handle intensive workloads on desktops.

Users generally see an improvement in booting, shutdown and loading times. Apart from reducing the loading times of Content Creator Application's Projects, Project files and libraries, the KC2500 also shortens rendering times which keeps the productivity level at its highest.

Further still, the KC2500 can help to accelerate local simulations, calculations, or analysis by providing necessary high-performance storage to keep up with the GPU processing and offloading the CPU to allocate more processing power to other critical tasks.

#### What are the capabilities of the KC2500 in terms of speed and capacity? In addition to this, can it support a full security suite for end-to-end data protection?

The KC2500 produces Read and Write speeds up to 3500/2900MB/s and can be purchased in capacities from 250GB to 2TB. It is a selfencrypting SSD that offers TCG Opal – Security Management Solutions such as Symantec<sup>™</sup>, McAfee<sup>™</sup>, WinMagic<sup>®</sup> and any other security solution, using build-in encryption.

Another option would be the Microsoft drive eDrive support (IEEE-1667) security storage specification for use with Bitlocker Hardware Encryption. Both of those options make use of the build-in XTS-AES 256-bit Hardware-based Encryption.

#### In relation to the KC600, in your opinion what are the best functions of this solution, is it the outstanding performance and reliability it delivers, or is it the robust security offering it provides?

It is the balance between performance, reliability, and security suite. The KC2500 is the fastest 2.5" SATA SSD in the Kingston range.

It's speed, is equalled by its provision of security solutions, as it offers TRG Opal and Microsoft eDrive support (IEEE-1667) using build-in XTS-AES 256-bit Hardware-based Encryption.

How has COVID-19 affected or impacted your business, and what are your primary objectives and goals for the remainder of 2020? During the pandemic we have experienced an increase in the demand for Laptop DRAM and SSD's, as both adults and children had to adapt to the new normal of working from home and home schooling.

We further noticed a higher E-tailer demand, due to the movement restrictions and lockdown.

As a result of larger numbers of people spending most of their time at home, we also saw an increased demand for our gaming products, such as the HyperX DRAM and NVMe SSD's.

Our goals for the rest of 2020 are to maintain our focus, build product awareness use sales momentum and to support and stay close to our strategic customers.



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