computer news middle east

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> **Govtech:** Injazat

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WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEANS BUSINESS

MICROSOFT'S GENERAL MANAGER, UAE

MITEL'S VICE PRESIDENT, CENTRAL EUROPE

HUAWEI: CREATING NEW VALUE TOGETHER

DAVID SHI, PRESIDENT OF ENTERPRISE BUSINESS GROUP, HUAWEI MIDDLE EAST, EXPLORES WHAT THE FUTURE OF THE WORKPLACE WILL LOOK LIKE IN A POST-COVID WORLD



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Microsoft is helping millions of people impacted by COVID-19 to reskill to find new employment opportunities."

A HYBRID WORLD

all know that in the IT industry the creation of new buzzwords is cyclical. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have become familiar with terms such as 'business' continuity' and the 'new normal'.

However, another word that has been used frequently in the IT ecosystem is hybrid. We have all spent the last number of months talking about the demand for hybrid cloud models and the new hybrid workforce.

GITEX Technology Week is the region's flagship IT event, and due to the protocols still in place regarding COVID-19, many Big Tech enterprises are taking a 'hybrid' approach to this year's historic conference.

There will be a fusion of face-to-face networking and interactive virtual webinars throughout what promises to be an extraordinary GITEX Technology Week.

In the final issue of CNME for 2020, we have got a bumper edition for you all to enjoy.

On the front cover of December's magazine is David Shi, President of Huawei Enterprise Business Group, Middle East.

Huawei are one of the world's most innovative companies and have played a key role in helping the UAE become one of the most technologically progressive countries on the planet.

In a candid interview, Shi outlined the importance of digital transformation, what the future of the workplace will look like and the trends and technologies he thinks will continue to reshape the IT ecosystem in 2021.

In this month's edition of GovTech, we spoke to Khaled Al Mazrouei, Acting Chief Commercial Officer at Injazat, who passionately appealed to IT thought leaders and key decisionmakers to stop talking and start listening in order to seize the opportunities that have arisen in the new digital economy we now line in.

I also got the opportunity to speak to Sayed Hashish, General Manager, Microsoft UAE, to find out how the global technology leader has been helping its customers respond to the challenges of the new data-driven digital environment we now operate in.

In addition to this, he disclosed how Microsoft is helping millions of people impacted by COVID-19 to reskill to find new employment opportunities - and highlighted the unique capabilities of its Azure FarmBeats solution tipped to revolutionise the agricultural sector.

We also have interviews with other leading IT companies such as CNS, Equinix, Mitel and Avaya – and op-eds from Publicis Sapient and Baker McKenzie.

Finally, I'd like to take the opportunity to wish you all a very safe and successful GITEX Technology Week – and I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and a very prosperous New Year!

Mark Forker Editor

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Khaled Al Mazrouei, Acting Chief Commercial Officer at Injazat, said it is nigh time for key decision-makers to stop talking and start listening in order to make the most of the opportunities in the current business climate.



Published by

Kamel El-Tawil, Managing Director, Middle East & North Africa at Equinix, highlights the importance of enterprises developing a cloud-first strategy to succeed.

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DIGITAL SERVICES

du to host the third annual GCF Conference



Saleem AlBlooshi, Chief Technology Officer, du

du, from Emirates Integrated

Telecommunications Company, has announced that preparations have been finalised ahead of the third annual GCF 5G Mena Conference in cooperation with the Global Certification Forum (GCF), which is taking place exclusively as an

"At du. our

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create optimal

value for our

shareholders

through business

excellence and

innovation."

invitation-only event will once again serve as a unique platform where attendees will gain fascinating insights from an exceptional range of guest speakers and investigate how 5G, AI, and IoT are shaping the world.

Saleem AlBlooshi, Chief Technology Officer, du, said: "At du, our mission has always been to create optimal value for our shareholders through business excellence and innovation, and proudly contribute to the transformation of our community. The GCF 5G MENA Conference has evolved to play a fundamental role in our efforts in this direction, and we are delighted that our vision to provide a platform through which all telecommunications industry

> stakeholders can excel, has come to fruition. Following the success of this year's third edition, it is our hope that every operator will be even better positioned to succeed in the new digital landscape and deliver new meaningful experiences to partners, customers, and the local community."

Huawei Focuses on Creating New Value Together at GITEX 2020

During this year's GITEX Technology Week 2020, Huawei is collaborating with partners to showcase how governments and organizations in the Middle East can create new value through synergy across five tech domains. Huawei believes that connectivity, cloud, AI, computing, and industry applications are now truly coming together to create unprecedented opportunities for society.

Charles Yang, President of Huawei Middle East, notes: "This year's GITEX Technology Week comes at a time when the true value of ICT has become increasingly clear. Keeping people, businesses, and communities connected even when physically apart is more essential than ever. Through open collaboration, the ICT sector can accelerate the development of the digital economy, in turn contributing to sustainable growth and supporting national transformation agendas in a post-pandemic world."

During GITEX, Huawei's will connect with attendees through participation in many of the individual GITEX conference tracks.

"This year's GITEX Technology Week comes at a time when the true value of ICT has become increasingly clear." During these sessions, the company will share best practices in helping to build smart enterprises, campuses, and cities, leveraging its depth of industry know-how and experience in more than 170 countries worldwide.

In addition, Huawei will host a "Igniting Innovation Through



Charles Yang, President of Huawei Middle East

Education" virtual summit dedicated to the unique requirements of today's education sector, and what the ICT community can do to bolster digital learning, support new academic models, and promote ICT innovation.

GELLIFY scouts startups at **GITEX** 2020



GELLIFY will impart innovation as it scouts for new talents as the Official Innovation Partner of GITEX Future Stars, the biggest startup event in the Middle East, North Africa & South Asia. Taking place on 6–10 December 2020, the sensational tech and networking event will open its doors virtually and in-person. A leader in innovation, GELLIFY is an international B2B platform that supports organizations with advisory services and advanced startup technology.

Its company senior executives will be alongside founders, investors, and leaders of the worldwide startup ecosystem during the event to offer mentorship and demonstrate expertise in the industry.

Michele Giordani, Managing Partner & Founder at GELLIFY, and Massimo Cannizzo, CEO and Co-Founder at GELLIFY Middle East, will join forces to present how to reduce risks and increase company value through a unique 'GELLIFICATION' program, the approach used by them to help "liquid" startups to become "solid technically and commercially. The session will provide startups with the explanation on how GELLIFY scales up and seizes the best exit opportunity.

"More than a winning product that meets clients' needs, every start-up should possess highly professional skills, and this could have significant impact on costs. These skills are key to mitigating risks and growing capabilities that can move businesses to reality, adapting to the new and sustainable economy. We are proud to introduce GELLIFY, the newest start-up hub in the Middle East, that will help tech talents in the region reach to a higher scalable state. As a member of the jury of the pitch competition at Gitex Future Stars, we look forward to meeting the talents and the start-ups the region offers," Massimo Cannizzo, CEO and Co-Founder at GELLIFY Middle East, commented

Vodafone and Block Gemini collaborate on blockchain solution



Tolga Tomruk, Chief Operational Officer at Vodafone Procurement Company

Dubai-based start-up Block Gemini

is collaborating with the Vodafone Procurement Company (VPC) to deliver a blockchain solution that supports Vodafone's transformation into a digital procurement company.

Tolga Tomruk, Chief Operational Officer at Vodafone Procurement Company said, "By introducing hyper automation capabilities enabled by Blockchain technology, we will transform the way we collaborate and agree commercial terms with our suppliers."

Block Gemini is the latest entrant to join Vodafone-backed innovation centre, "Tomorrow Street", as a blockchain solutions provider. Tomorrow Street is a joint venture between Vodafone and Technoport (a Luxembourg government incubator). The award-winning innovation centre is recognised as a pioneering model enabling Vodafone to deliver innovation quickly and effectively for its customers and partners.

"Block Gemini is now a proud member of Tomorrow Street and Vodafone. We look forward to bringing industry-focused and enterprise-centric Blockchain innovations to Europe in partnership with Tomorrow Street" said Chris Fernandez, Chief Executive Officer at Block Gemini.

NEWS

McAfee sees COVID-19-themed threats surge in Q2 2020

McAfee, the device-to-cloud

cybersecurity company, has released its McAfee Labs Threats Report: November 2020, examining cybercriminal activity related to malware and the evolution of cyber threats in Q2 2020.

During this period, McAfee saw an average of 419 new threats per minute as new malware samples grew by 11.5%. A significant proliferation in malicious Donoff Microsoft Office documents attacks propelled new PowerShell



Raj Samani, McAfee fellow and chief scientist

campaigns to lure victims with pandemic themes and exploit the realities of a workforce working from home.

"The second quarter of 2020 saw

malware up 117%, and the global impact of COVID-19 prompted cybercriminals to adjust their cybercrime

"McAfee saw an average of 419 new threats per minute as new malware samples grew by 11.5%." continued developments in innovative threat categories such as PowerShell malware and the quick adaptation by cybercriminals to target organisations through employees working from remote environments," said Raj Samani, McAfee fellow and chief scientist. "What began as a trickle of phishing campaigns and the occasional malicious app quickly turned into a deluge of malicious URLs, attacks on cloud users and capable threat actors leveraging the world's thirst for more information on COVID-19 as an entry mechanism into systems across the globe."

CyberKnight extends distribution partnership with HelpSystems



Avinash Advani, Founder & CEO at CyberKnight

According to Gartner, data classification and protection are placed among the top security projects of 2021, but most data classification implementations continue to be unexpectedly complex and fail to produce practical results.

To address regional customer challenges related to analysing, organising, and protecting structured or unstructured data, CyberKnight has extended its strategic distribution relationship with HelpSystems to

bring the leading data classification platforms to the market: Titus and Boldon James.

The data classification technologies offered by Titus and Boldon James make sure sensitive information is classified properly and secured.

"Titus and Boldon James are trusted by thousands of "The data classification technologies offered by Titus and Boldon James make sure sensitive information is classified properly and secured."

organisations around the world including those in financial services, manufacturing, military, and government. Adding these renowned technologies to our portfolio will help companies in the Middle East with their DLP projects since data classification is fundamental to

reducing false positives and ensuring a successful deployment. We are excited to enhance our strategic relationship with HelpSystems to improve the security posture and meet the intensifying regulatory requirements of customers in the region," said Avinash Advani, Founder & CEO at CyberKnight.

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Kodak Alaris named in KMWorld's trend-setting products list for fourth consecutive year



Tom Hogan, Group Publisher at KMWorld

KMWorld, a popular business and

technology publication focused on document, content, and knowledge management, has recognized the INfuse Smart Connected Scanning Solution from Kodak Alaris on its list of Trend-Setting Products of 2020.

The cloud-based solution offers network-connected document capture that integrates with line-of-business systems so content can be onboarded

"By transforming data into information and then getting it to the people who need it, the resulting knowledge can be used for decisions that can make a significant impact." directly into business processes. Realtime acknowledgment received at the point of scanning allows missing forms, signatures, and other issues to be resolved immediately.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the way organizations and individuals work, as well as how they support and communicate with customers and partners—making it clear that knowledge management is essential, now more than ever. By transforming data into information and then getting it to the people who need it, the resulting knowledge can be used for decisions that can make a significant impact," said Tom Hogan, Group Publisher at KMWorld. "To help spread the word about noteworthy products that are helping to improve organizational systems, KMWorld created the Trend-Setting Products list."

Qualys partners with Google Cloud

Qualys has announced it has worked

with Google Cloud to provide outof-the-box support for Google Cloud Artifact Registry for its Container Security solution.

The new integration allows security and DevOps teams to set up automated security scans of container artifacts in Artifact

"It's important that DevOps and IT teams are able to deliver software quickly and securely." Registry. Qualys Container Security scanning will assess all images for software inventory, vulnerabilities and misconfigurations, and provide a unified view across multiple Google Cloud regions. Customers can then leverage the Qualys security posture API of these container images for automation of security workflows like container deployments in Google Cloud Build or integrating with DevOps ticketing systems.

"Google Cloud's Artifact Registry provides a convenient fully-managed service that allows customers to have a central repository for all their software artifacts," said Philippe Courtot, chairman and CEO of Qualys. "Now, with our new integration, customers can quickly adopt this artifact management offering from



Philippe Courtot, chairman and CEO of Qualys

Google Cloud in their DevOps pipeline with seamless container security built-in from Qualys."

"It's important that DevOps and IT teams are able to deliver software quickly and securely, and we're excited that Qualys is integrating its container security capabilities with Google Cloud's Artifact Registry," said Juan Sebastian Oviedo, Product Manager at Google Cloud. 9

INTERVIEW

Hatem Hariri Managing Director at CNS



CNS

PERFORM AND TRANSFORM

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Hatem Hariri**, Managing Director at CNS, to learn how the company enabled its customers to maintain operations during the current climate, the transformation the IT leader has undergone itself – and how its broad portfolio of solutions are empowering customers to do more with less.

NS have been in the IT market for the last 33 years, but under the visionary direction of Hariri and the leadership team the company has evolved and continues to go from strengthto-strength, and the dynamic figurehead CNS is extremely proud of his team and the critical role they played in helping its customers to maintain business continuity during the global COVID-19 crisis.

A titan of the IT ecosystem in the Middle East region for over 3 decades, CNS works across a vast range of key

We used to talk about digital transformation as a concept, because it is not a product, or a solution, it is an end-to-end system." industry verticals, all of whom are undergoing their own transformation in this datadriven digital economy.

"We work across all verticals, but our focused and traditional customer verticals are mainly Government, Banking and Oil & Gas, but lately as we continue to evolve as an entity we have ventured into Digital Healthcare and Education. When we examine our traditional verticals' we have large customers that have most of their assets on-premises, but being on-prem doesn't make it easy to deploy the latest technologies to enable to cope with the evolving demands of the marketplace - and It is also very important to highlight that in our verticals, data sovereignty is a very sensitive topic these businesses," said Hariri.

However, customers were forced to adapt and respond to the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic in a bid to maintain their business running – and be able to remotely and digitally continue their operations.

UAE customers were very fast in adopting or upgrading the technology to respond to the demand, and that helped CNS to accelerate their transformation strategy and serve their customer into their migration journey.

Also despite the lockdown, and the challenges during that period, CNS were forced to adapt and respond to the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic in a bid to maintain their 99.5% SLA rate, especially in the critical sectors we operate in.

"We needed our teams in the field, and what we did was distribute key team members across the UAE in different areas, so they were close to where our customers are located. We also rolled out similar contingency plans in Kuwait and Oman. It was extremely tough to try and maintain the safety of our teams and at the same time maintain our operations 24/7. However, we established a Corona Committee taskforce, which was essentially a group of people comprising of team leaders, who were focused on ensuring that our key members were taking all the protective measures required to keep them safe," said Hariri.

CNS has the managed services contract with the Ministry of Health and Prevention, and Hariri stressed how they at the outset of the pandemic they really needed technology in all their locations to be able to effectively communicate between locations and keep all their systems up and running 24/7. One other industry vertical that was heavily dependent on technology was the banking sector.

"The banking sector was given a clear directive from the Central Bank that all ATMs had to have money in them all the time. We obviously don't deal with the money aspect, but instead the technology behind it, so we had to have this available all the time for our customers in the banking industry. Thankfully, we succeeded in delivering on this and as a result we received a lot of recognition from our customers on a job well done. We were able to provide continuous service on a 24/7 basis, and we didn't break any SLA in the process," said Hariri.

There have been consequences of COVID-19, but one of the most tangible has been the phenomenal growth in digital transformation across multiple industries all over the Gulf region.



According to the Managing Director at CNS, DX has moved from being a concept to a reality.

"We used to talk about digital transformation as a concept, because it is not a product, or a solution, it is an end-to-end system. Digital transformation is about changing culture, changing technologies, changing processes, and changing business models, this is what digital transformation at its core is all about. There has been a huge cultural shift and people accepted the move to working anywhere at anytime on any device, which previously didn't exist, especially in some of the industry verticals that we work in," said Hariri.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic one of the biggest barriers to digital transformation was resistance, he cited the baking industry as an example of the seismic shift that has taken place. "There has been astronomical acceleration in digital transformation in relation to the banking sector. 12 months ago, digital signatures would never be authorized, but now it is widely accepted. There is no longer any resistance to digital transformation anymore," said Hariri.

One other trend that Hariri pointed out was that customers now wanted to do much more with less, due to a reduction in budgets and the desire to shift from a CAPEX model to an OPEX one.

"Enterprises in sectors such as hospitality and aviation, which were severely impacted by COVID-19, don't want to spend money on new technologies, they want to spend it in an area that can quickly give them a return on investment. People now do see that technology can

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be an enabler for revenue generation. IT for our customers is no longer a cost center, is becoming a new revenue stream. Customers want to transition to a OPEX model rather than a CAPEX one and move to a more revenue sharing model, which allows them to access the best technologies, but at the same time the costs are managed and they spend less," said Hariri.

As aforementioned above CNS has been in the market since 1987, and one of the reasons it has enjoyed such sustained success is the company's ability to evolve and adapt to new technologies and changes in the market.

Hariri disclosed how CNS is now embarking upon a transformation journey of its own.

"We operate of a strategy entitled perform and transform. In terms of the perform side, we are doing very well in relation to gaining more market share and securing the trust of new customers with our longstanding experience. However, now I am focusing more on the transform side and as part of that transformation we're doing what we call evolution and revolution," said Hariri.

The charismatic Managing Director at CNS revealed that its evolution comes in many different forms.

"When we are talking about evolution - I am essentially trying to evolve from what we have. If you're on-premises, then we are evolving and we're taking you to the cloud. This is evolution and we are also evolving with our vendors. In relation to Cybersecurity we used to be on network security but now we're going into application and forensic security. These are just some examples of the evolution being undertaken by us," said Hariri. However, one area that will

remain a key focus for CNS in

Customers want to transition to a OPEX model rather than a CAPEX one and move to a more revenue sharing

model."

2021 is in Managed Services, and Hariri revealed the company's ambitious plans to be able to compete with global players in this space.

"Managed Services is an umbrella for everything, and this is an area we're really focused on and we really want to help our customers better manage their overall operations. We're also upgrading all of our tools and processes to do the managed services at all levels of our customers, technology and applications environment in a bid to position ourselves as the 'go-to' player for managed services in the region and serve our customer to help them focus on what they know best, their core business while we take care of the technology aspect competing with the global players. The difference between us and the global players is we are local. We provide our services onsite and we are only a few minutes away from our customers who have been trusting us for 33 years and this is a huge differentiator for us. On the revolution side, we are going aggressively into digital transformation, with our automation, artificial intelligence and software services that are the complementing pillars for a customer to achieve his desire to have a digitally enabled platform for his business across all operations - and from the back office to front office services. CNS is proud of being part of the trusted Ghobash group of companies, and to have a wonderful and experienced team," concluded Hariri.

MICROSOFT

REIMAGINING THE FUTURE

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Sayed Hashish**, General Manager, Microsoft UAE, to find out how the global IT behemoth helped the country respond to the challenges presented by COVID-19, how it has leveraged its technological expertise to lead the recovery - and how Microsoft is helping to reshape and reimagine the IT ecosystem moving forward.

> n a brilliant interview, the visionary figurehead of Microsoft's UAE operations also spoke about the expected impact of its new solution Azure FarmBeats on the agricultural sector, which will be showcased at GITEX Technology Week.

We kickstarted our discussion by focusing on the role the company played in the early days of the global health crisis, and Hashish was quick to point out the importance of the strategic investment made by Microsoft in terms of establishing data centers in the region, which would prove

The reimagine phase is designed to capitalise on the opportunities and positive learnings that have come out of the COVID-19 crisis." to be absolutely critical in terms of overcoming the obstacles associated with maintaining business continuity.

"It's been quite a unique experience that we've all lived through, and I think at the turn of the new decade we were all very optimistic, but nobody could've foreseen and predicted what we were going to go through on a global scale. However, from a Microsoft perspective once the COVID-19 pandemic struck, we were very well positioned to step up and support the UAE. Microsoft has been in the UAE for almost 30 years, and we have very strong partnerships with most of the government agencies, telecommunication providers and other large multinationals. We also made a strategic decision to invest in the UAE through the creation of data centers in 2019, which has turned out to be a huge benefit for the country," said Hashish.

Hashish highlighted how a number of initiatives moved from concepts to reality during COVID-19, citing examples such as the transition towards remote education, remote telehealth, and remote working, which were suddenly scaled up at breakneck speeds – and reinforced the point that Microsoft's cloud data centers in the country were pivotal in providing these services at scale coupled with good performance.

He added that Microsoft's approach to the issues across all industry verticals were divided into three areas – and praised out how the UAE's education sector was able to adapt and evolve to the 'new normal'.

"The first phase of our approach was called the response phase, which attempted to determine how we would ensure that the technology we have, and the people and partners that we have were able to maintain business continuity by utilising the capabilities of that technology. The move from traditional education to remote learning was a monumental shift, with over 600,000 students embracing





remote education in just a matter of weeks. The example of this transition in the education sector is one that we are using as an example of best practice that is being taught in other countries due to the phenomenal success of the transformation of the education sector here in the UAE," said Hashish.

The dynamic and charismatic Microsoft executive added that another challenge in the response phase was ensuring the government could operate effectively, and to deal with the complete shutdown of global supply chains.

"We had to leverage our technology and expertise to enable business continuity of our customers including sectors like retail, where they ensured goods and supplies continued to flow in the market. This was all part of our response phase," said Hashish.

Hashish declared that we are currently in the second phase, which is known by Microsoft as the recovery phase.

"The recovery phase is essentially when you try to help rebuild economies and help customers reopen traditional businesses now that lockdown restrictions have eased significantly. There is now also a real focus on the economic activity of the country – and a desire to regain momentum to ensure that businesses that were impacted are now being helped by technology to optimise their cost structures using cloud technology to reflect the current realties," said Hashish.

Hashish also stressed the importance of reskilling during the recovery phase and spoke of a new global program spearheaded by Microsoft that is designed to help those that lost their jobs during the pandemic find new employment.

"The stark reality is that a lot of people have lost their jobs, and we launched a massive reskilling initiative on a global scale, and our aim is to reskill 25 million people, especially those who have become unemployed and impacted by COVID-19. The primary objective of this program is to improve their chances of finding new roles by building relevant skills. We have capitalised on our assets with LinkedIn and Microsoft Learning, so that we can identify what are the sectors that are hiring and then we share that knowledge in an aggregated way with potential jobseekers. We support them with subsidised certifications, so that they can be in a position to be hired for vacant jobs - and we then connect them to those employers through our platform," said Hashish.

There is a lot of optimism following the announcement of a vaccine by US pharmaceutical company Pfizer, and the General Manager of Microsoft UAE believes that we will soon be in a position to embark upon the third phase, which has been called reimagine.

"The reimagine phase is designed to capitalise on the opportunities and positive learnings that have come out of the COVID-19 crisis. There are so many positives, such as the concepts that we talked about from a technology perspective that were deemed far-fetched, and things we thought were not possible have all been realised over the last 9 months. There was skepticism when it was suggested that it would be possible to operate remotely and still remain efficient and productive, but that has been proven to be true and this hybrid workplace is here to stay," said Hashish.

The Microsoft thought leader added that many people could not see the advantages of the hybrid workplace – and revealed that based on a recent Microsoft UAE based survey, 97% of the business leaders that they speak to now firmly believe this new model will be the norm.

"There is no doubt that there will be a continuation of this type of workplace flexibility because of the benefits of it. There has also been a huge acceptance of the fact that technology derives real value – and all these components comprise what



we call the reimagine phase, designed to capitalise on this new momentum and the acceptance of people towards technology, which we didn't have in the past," said Hashish.

One area very much under the spotlight since the outset of the pandemic is the resilience in food supply, and the measures we need to take to ensure that we can grow food locally and sustainably and protect global supply chains.

According to Hashish, this is an area that Microsoft has been focusing on for years.

"This is a very important topic for us and the need for it has been amplified during the crisis because all of a sudden there was big question marks on supply chains, and countries that are net importers of food started to get worried, because it's wasn't an economic problem of not being able to afford to import food, the supply chains just stopped overnight and their dependency on exported good was exacerbated. We have quite a number programs and one of them is entitled AI for Earth, and we are focusing on using AI technology combined with Internet of Things to support agriculture," said Hashish.

Hashish also highlighted that is projected that by 2050, we will need to feed between 9 and 10 billion people, which is going to be a daunting task.

"We know that arable land is not increasing, on the contrary

Our aim is to equip 25 million people worldwide with digital skills needed in a CO-VID-19 economy." it's getting less and less and water scarcity is also a huge problem, so we've been focusing on this long before the pandemic hastened it into the public domain. One of the challenges in farming from a cost and infrastructure perspective is that most of those farmlands find it difficult to know what is the right amount of electricity and connectivity to use, and a severe lack of manpower is also hampering operations. The children of farmers are deciding against becoming farmers, so it's an industry that has been losing a lot of people, so in fact any sort of automation is welcomed," said Hashish.

However, Hashish believes that Microsoft's new solution Azure FarmBeats can fundamentally revolutionise the agricultural sector and empower farmers to do more with less.

We have developed a program called Azure FarmBeats, which is built on the Microsoft Azure cloud. Basically, what it does is combine AI and Internet of Things with low-cost sensors and drones that are all connected through satellite imagery and weather information, which gives farmers a full view to make data-driven decisions. They can also predict weather conditions and respond accordingly to help them manage their crops and improve their management of irrigation. This solution changes the way farmers operate - and gives them much more insight to make better informed datadriven decisions that reduces costs, improves efficiency and enhances productivity to create a more sustainable industry," concluded Hashish. cnme

BAKER MCKENZIE

LAW AND ORDER

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Kellie Blyth**, Counsel and Head of Data and Technology and Joanna Matthews-Taylor, Partner and Head of Employment at Baker McKenzie Habib Al Mulla – Dubai, to find out more about the new DIFC Data Protection Law, the complexities of the compliance required – and the penalties of failing to adhere to the regulations.

> prevalent term in the IT ecosystem is that data is the new oil. Any enterprise that wants to be successful in this new on-demand digital economy needs to be a data-driven business. However, managing your data can be complex, so what do businesses need to do in a bid to be compliant with the new **DIFC Data Protection Law?** Kellie Blyth: We couldn't agree more. In the Middle East, businesses have often been free

that identifies a natural person) without having to worry about too many specific legal restraints.

However, laws, such as the DIFC Data Protection Law (based on its European counterpart, the General Data Protection Regulation) turn that theory on its head.

Unless the law allows you to use data for a particular purpose, the default position is that processing of the personal data isn't allowed. An easy way to think of it is that data protection law generally, including the new DIFC law, requires businesses to treat personal data like any other

to use personal data (i.e., data

Kellie Blyth Counsel and Head of Data and Technology, Baker McKenzie Habib Al Mulla – Dubai

Joanna Matthews-Taylor Partner and Head of Employment at

Baker McKenzie Habib Al Mulla – Dubai

valuable asset.

They should put in place measures to keep it secure at all time and they should also know where it is stored, what it's being used for, who has access to it and who it has been shared with.

This mapping exercise sounds straightforward but is becoming increasingly complex, particularly as many organisations move to hybrid cloud environments and engage in an increasingly diverse array of third-party service providers.

As well as conducting the above data mapping exercise, businesses need to put in place processes and procedures to demonstrate compliance with the law.

Data controllers should also ensure that contractual arrangements with all third parties with whom they share personal data comply with the law's mandatory requirements. They also need to conduct risk impact assessments before they implement new technologies or begin any new processing activity that is high risk.

In reality, the requirements are considerably more complex, but this captures some of the law's key features. In addition, companies must also file a notification with the DIFC Commissioner of Data Protection, which outlines their data processing activities.

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We've seen robust legislation in the form of the introduction of GDPR in Europe, which certainly packs a punch in terms of fines if you don't meet the requirements. Does the new legislation from DIFC in relation to its data rules and regulations carry the same weight? Kellie Blyth: Not quite, but we are likely to see the DIFC Commissioner impose more fines in the future, particularly for routine breaches of the law.

There are a range of fixed administrative fines set out in Schedule 2 of the new DIFC law that make it easy for the Commissioner to levy fines for specific breaches. The Commissioner also has the right to issue general fines in amounts he considers appropriate, by reference to the seriousness of the breach and the risk of harm to the data subject.

In making this assessment, the Commissioner is likely to consider a number of criteria including the scale of the breach, how many people were affected and size of the organization in question.

In your expert opinion, what are the best practices and processes that business can adopt to ensure they meet the expected requirements of the new DIFC Data Protection Law?

Kellie Blyth: The law regulates a range of aspects of a business' activities, from how the business engages with customers and employees to the contractual arrangements it puts in place with service providers.

As a result, it's difficult to summarise all of the requirements in a succinct way for your readers but we can offer a few 'top tips'.

The first would be to get into the mindset that personal data

is a 'toxic liability'. If you don't need it, don't collect it and securely destroy it or purge it from your IT systems once the underlying purpose you originally collected it for has been fulfilled.

For businesses grappling to reflect the requirements of the DIFC law in their processes and procedures, it's important to bear in mind that compliance is not solely responsibility of the legal and/or compliance team.

The DIFC Data Protection Law and similar regulatory frameworks demand companies to abandon the idea that compliance is a paper-based exercise.

A successful compliance strategy is just as dependent on the contribution of IT and security, human resources and product and service teams, not to mention the data protection officer or DPO (under the DIFC Data Protection Law, you'll need to appoint a DPO if you're conducting high risk processing activities).

Can you tell us about any upcoming new legislation that may be in the pipeline, especially from an employment law perspective in the DIFC?

Joanna Matthews-Taylor: Over the course of 2019 and 2020, significant changes have been made to employment related laws in the DIFC – including the introduction of a new workplace saving scheme.

We are not aware of any new employment laws in the pipeline (and given the raft of changes introduced relatively recently we are not anticipating more substantive changes in the near future).

It has been said that in the UAE, with the absence of trade unions and other similar bodies, that

The court system in the DIFC is extremely userfriendly. operatingin English and accepting online submissions."

those in employment have little or no power when it comes to employment protection. Do you think this is a misconception? Joanna Matthews-Taylor: Yes - it is a misconception that employees have no recourse against their employer and/or no employment rights in the DIFC.

Despite the absence of trade unions and works councils, there are easily accessible, low cost dispute resolution mechanisms available to employees.

The court system in the DIFC is extremely user-friendly, operating in English and accepting online submissions. Most employment claims are heard in the small claims tribunal where parties represent themselves, although lawyers may assist with the process, such as by drafting the relevant submissions. There is also an opportunity for the parties to resolve matters by agreement prior to the first hearing.

With regards to employment regulation, while there is no concept of unfair dismissal, the DIFC employment law (which was updated in 2019) nevertheless sets out minimum standards and protections with which employers must comply with, including, for example, prohibition against discriminatory treatment, penalties for late payment of dues on termination of employment and various leave entitlements.

Employees should, therefore, not consider themselves powerless when it comes to enforcing employment rights, in the DIFC.

Furthermore, given that DIFC is an international hub hosting companies from around the world, many employers will opt to align their practices in DIFC with best international practice. EVENT REPORT



EMBRACING CHANGE

CNME Editor Mark Forker attended the StarLink 2020 Digital Summit, to find out how the Oil & Gas industry in the Middle East region has embraced digital transformation to fundamental reshape how it conducts its operations in this data-driven new age digital economy.

he theme of the online mini-series was innovate, inform and inspire - and it certainly delivered on those lofty aspirations with an action packed webinar that unearthed some fascinating insights on the digitalisation of the energy sector in both the Gulf region and on a global scale.

The webinar was hosted by StarLink, Nutanix and Citrix

and was entitled 'Accelerate your Digital Transformation' and featured prominent figures from the IT ecosystem including Michael O'Sullivan, Oil & Gas expert at Nutanix, Mohammed Abulhouf, Sales Director, KSA & Bahrain at Nutanix, and Irfan Ali Gazi, Regional Manager Gulf, Citrix.

O'Sullivan kickstarted the session by delivering a detailed presentation which examined some of the changes that have occurred in the hydrocarbon world over the last few years.

"In 2012, the O&G business was booming and there was a lot of conversation around some exciting new technologies that had emerged, most notably cloud. However, then in 2014, the market fell off a cliff and the tech projects that had been in the pipeline suddenly came to a screeching halt. This

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is an industry that is made up of people who have been doing what they have been doing for a very long time and it takes a long time to implement change, but there is a good reason for that because the sector is high risk and there is a lot of moving pieces and its complex," said O'Sullivan.

O'Sullivan added that those in the industry went back to traditional methods to ride out the economic storm that was afflicting the sector, and claimed that the strategy paid off when the market was in a much healthier place in 2017, and the topic of investments in new tech projects resurfaced.

"In 2017, the investment community was not happy with the value that the industry was providing and that was when people I believe really started to get serious about digital transformation. There was still an attitude from those within the industry that believed digital transformation was trick by IT to get them to spend more money. By 2019, we started to see digital roadmaps and it was going reasonably well and you could see there were some making a lot of progress and then 2020 happens. You would be forgiven for thinking it's like 2014 all-over again, but there is a difference and that is that there general consensus in the industry is that we need to keep these digital initiatives moving forward," said O'Sullivan.

The Nutanix executive then highlighted that there are some obstacles to digital transformation, especially in the Middle East, when it comes In 2017, the investment community was not happy with the value that the industry was providing and that's when people got serious about digital transformation."

to regional constraints.

"There is a problem of realworld deployment and scaling, so essentially what was working out really well in the lab as a proof of concept, but when it was taken into the real world the scaling would stall. There is also this question of culture, which has to change and ownership in relation to who is really running these programs," said O'Sullivan.

O'Sullivan then moderated a panel discussion with Mohammed Abulhouf, Sales Director, KSA & Bahrain at Nutanix, and Irfan Ali Gazi, Regional Manager Gulf, Citrix, to discuss some of the obstacles associated with the digital transformation.

Abulhouf conceded that the industry needed to embrace new technologies and requires a robust IT ecosystem to support it – but said moving to the cloud was not an option for the sector.

"O&G is one of the most important industries in the region and everything is dependent on O&G. It is not an agile sector and it isn't

transformational like IT and other industry verticals. However, it still requires a lot of IT capabilities to be able to run efficiently and effectively. Traditional methods are obsolete, you can't run the operation like that anymore and you need to embrace change. Digital transformation is all about moving to the cloud, but migrating to the cloud is not a solution for the O&G industry, there not going to move to public cloud, and there are two reasons for that, one of which is data sovereignty and data gravity where the data has to be close to the computer and the user," said Abulhouf.

Irfan Ali Gazi claimed that the new generation of employees in the O&G industry, was no longer willing to accept how to be told to consume IT.

"Digital transformation has many rewards, and we've been listening to it a lot since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it can mean millions of different things, but the conversations we're having with our customers and partners focus on the way people consume services within their business. The entire industry has shifted away from this very regimented top down approach. People coming into the workforce nowadays has grown up with an access to a vast amount of technology, and they no longer accept being told how to consume IT. The basic idea is to give people more flexibility in relation to how they work and where they work and basically equip them with the tools to succeed." said Gazi. Come

KEEPING BUSINESSES CONNECTED

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Thomas Veit**, Vice President, Central Europe at Mitel, to learn more about the role the communications leader played in maintaining business continuity during the COVID-19 crisis, the impact of its Mi-Team collaboration tool in keeping people connected - and what differentiates Mitel from its market rivals.



eit is a veteran of the unified communications industry, having previously worked with Avaya and Unify and has enjoyed a decorated and distinguished career. He disclosed during our discussion that one of the reasons that he was attracted to Mitel was the vision of the company, which he claims has never wavered since its inception.

"When you examine the history of Mitel, it was established to focus totally on communication and nothing else, no switching, no routing, just a total focus on making the best collaboration communication solutions that are available on the market for the entire world. We never lost sight of our focus as we grew as a company, and we remain fully committed to providing the best in quality technology that is the most reliable in the telecommunications space," said Veit.

To support this reliability claim, Veit points to the

fact that many government institutions globally deploy Mitel technology.

"There are a number of Ministry of Defenses and many other governmental institutions that have all built their platforms on Mitel. Our equipment is used by these companies because our technology is known to be very secure and reliable. That is a clear USP, and the other USP we have is the available potential of our technology," said Veit.

The Vice President of Mitel's operations in Central Europe, added that as a result of its acquisitions the company has a solution in pretty much every area of the telecommunications industry, whether it's a large enterprise, mid-sized company, or even an SMB.

"We do have a platform, in fact, we maybe have too many platforms, but it is good for the customers because they have the choice to select what best fits for them. In the Middle East, we were predominantly selling the one solution, but we changed that over the last 18 months, and we now have more solutions that we didn't have available in the past, and that opens up other channels and customers for us," said Veit.

The charismatic IT thoughtleader added that many of Mitel's broad portfolio of technologies are also available on-prem, private and hybrid,



Our equipment is used by these companies because our technology is known to be very secure and reliable."

which only serves to reinforce their main objective, which is to give their customers greater choice and flexibility, and that same approach applies as to whether or not its customers' want to embark upon a CAPEX or an OPEX model.

He also highlighted the incredible success of its Mi-Team cloud video collaboration and conferencing tool, which empowered businesses to remain connected and adapt to the challenges of remote working during the global health crisis.

"Mi-Teams has been a very important collaboration tool for us, although I know the name is very similar to Microsoft Teams. It became quite clear very early on that we were dealing with a truly unprecedented situation with regards to COVID-19, and in an effort to allow businesses to maintain their operations their employees would have to work remotely, but they also needed a solution that could allow them to remain productive and efficient," said Veit. Mitel demonstrated its

commitment to helping its customers during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing the solution free of charge.

"Many of these businesses had previously been resistant to the prospect of employees having flexibility in terms of when they worked and where they worked, but it was important for Mitel to help them - and it was our responsibility to keep businesses running. Our attitude was that if business stops, then it stops for us as well. We offered our Mi-Teams platform to customers for free to help them cope with the challenges of transitioning from the compounds of their physical office space to a virtual connected one," said Veit.

The initiative was a huge success and Mitel is now beginning to see that bear fruit with the economy beginning to make a recovery in parts of Europe.

"Mi-Team enabled people to be able to communicate effectively, and even 9 months on we still don't charge for it. We do plan to commercialise the platform in 2021 – but it's been a huge success and we can start to see the benefits of that from an economic perspective. Our aim was to keep businesses running regardless of the circumstances and we achieved that. We are part of the economy, so if we allow it to function then it helps us too," concluded Veit. cnme

David Shi President of Enterprise Business Group, Huawei Middle East

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HUAWEI: CREATING NEW VALUE TOGETHER

HUAWEI

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **David Shi**, President of Enterprise Business Group, Huawei Middle East, to find out what the future of the workplace will look like in a post-COVID world, the trends and technologies that have emerged in the ICT ecosystem - and the central role that the global ICT pioneer is playing in driving innovation across the region.

e began the conversation by examining and exploring the seismic impact the ongoing

COVID-19 pandemic has had on every industry on a global scale, and how it irreversibly reshaped when we work, how we work and where we work.

Shi highlighted how the pandemic had triggered an avalanche of digital transformation across the region which has also forced enterprises to completely transform the way they work.

"The pandemic has been a massive driver of digital transformation. However,

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with the conditions of the pandemic, there has been an increased realisation of how important connectivity and computing are to our society, especially to enhance productivity and to ensure business continuity as many employees have had to work remotely. This has led both governments and enterprises to accelerate their digital transformation journey. The adoption of advanced technologies and associated ways of working will continue to influence the post-pandemic workplace. The future workplace will be a digital workplace in the post-COVID world, one that enables employees to work more seamlessly both offline and online, enables crossenterprise collaboration and improves teams' efficiency, productivity and overall performance," said Shi.

Shi also declared that one other direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic is our total dependence on connectivity to maintain continuity and business operations.

"Connectivity is more important than ever before. Organisations are also upgrading their networks and shifting to high-capacity alternatives in order to accommodate new applications and rising bandwidth demands. As we see more 5G networks rolled out, this is influencing tomorrow's workplace, with Wi-Fi 6 and other advanced connectivity solutions driven by artificial intelligence



becoming more commonplace in every industry," said Shi.

Shi is recognised as being a thought leader in the IT industry here in the Middle East, and he also pointed out the prevalence of cloud in the workplace and described it as a necessity in today's datadriven digital world.

He then touched on how major industries such as Healthcare, Education, Energy, Finance and Transportation had been revolutionised by the onset of digital transformation, which of course has been accelerated by the COVID-19 situation, and the pivotal role Huawei is playing in terms of leveraging their expertise and technologies to enable these industries to embrace change.

"The pandemic has highlighted just how essential it is for societies to embrace digital transformation. It has also prompted a rapid increase in the adoption of technology solutions across every industry vertical, particularly in scenario-specific applications across fields like healthcare, education, energy, transportation and finance. In the field of healthcare, for

example, doctors are using robots to keep a safe distance while helping patients. Educational institutes are turning to trusted ICT experts like Huawei to amplify their digital facilities and enhance the virtual classroom experience," said Shi.

He added that Huawei provides a wide range of solutions that connect and foster collaboration between teachers, students, parents, and school administrators, regardless of their time zone or physical location. He then spoke of the changes

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We believe in looking to the future and predicting what society's needs may be tomorrow, next year, or even into the next decade."

in the energy, finance and transportation industries.

"In today's environment, there is an enormous opportunity for oil and gas companies to revitalise themselves and to push for real gains as the economy recovers from the effects of COVID-19. In relation to finance, it is forecasted that COVID-19 will change user behavior forever, and that the increased use of digital banking will become an irreversible requirement, making banks move faster than ever to launch an advanced portfolio of online services. Finally, smart technology is essential in order to keep cities moving well into the future. Digital transformation of the transportation sector, via robust communications solutions and solid networks, will enable the sector to evolve in sync with the city around it. After all, a smart city cannot fully thrive or realise its true potential if its transportation network remains unevolved," said Shi.



Huawei has developed a reputation for being a real trailblazer in the technology world, and today is an entity that has innovation at the core of every decision it makes. However, Shi was quick to highlight the importance of collaboration in relation to the digital transformation that has occurred across the Gulf region.

"While no-one could have predicted the scale or impact of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the region, Huawei has always been very forward-thinking as a company. We believe in looking to the future and predicting what society's needs may be tomorrow, next year, or

even into the next decade. As countries across the Middle East have battled the COVID-19 pandemic, collaboration has been key to achieving results, and technology plays a fundamental role at the center of collaboration. Our end-toend ICT solutions provide a means for people, wherever they may be in the world, to connect and resolve their most pressing challenges. Taking the learnings from early COVID-19 response scenarios, we have already identified some of the most valued technologies for organisations today. Those include connectivity, cloud, artificial intelligence (AI), computing and industry

applications," said Shi.

In terms of the technologies and trends that will fuel further innovation in the ICT sector in 2021, Shi focused on five key tech domains that he feels will take center stage over the next 12 months.

"Going forward, we anticipate a massive convergence of opportunities across five tech domains, which are connectivity, cloud, AI, computing, and industry applications. This will be propelled forward by the continued roll-out of 5G networks. These five tech domains will create unprecedented opportunities for the ICT sector as well

The pandemic has highlighted just how essential it is for societies to embrace digital transformation."

Huawei has established globally - and he also focused on the impact the deployment of AI technologies will have in transforming major business systems and processes.

"In the cloud service domain, Huawei has already established 23 regions worldwide, attracting over 1.5 million developers. We will continue to build on that momentum with our partners. In the AI domain, we must also strive to better integrate AI into the major business systems of governments and enterprises. This requires using global know-how and shared data to build the core competency of AI systems. The coming year will see technology – and the five domains mentioned above essential to fuel growth and development," said Shi.

EXPO 2020 was another victim of COVID-19, and I asked Shi how significant of an event it is for the UAE and the Middle East region in terms of showcasing its capabilities as a bastion of technological progress and innovation, and what role will Huawei be playing to support major GCC events and conferences in the future.

"The EXPO is a phenomenal endeavor and a fantastic opportunity for Dubai – and the UAE as a whole - to demonstrate its commitment to innovation. We are eagerly awaiting the event next October. In the meantime, there are many other significant platforms that demonstrate the region's innovation capabilities to the world. For our part, Huawei has been a close partner to numerous conferences and exhibitions this yearwhether virtual or in-person. Conferences such as the Global Cybersecurity Forum, the Global AI Summit, and most recently GITEX Technology Week, are all a testament to the region's great ambitions to build a more connected, intelligent future. They have also been landmark opportunities for Huawei to help develop a thriving ICT ecosystem within the Middle East."

"Taking GITEX Technology Week as the most recent example, we are leveraging this event as a platform to discuss with our customers and partners how we can navigate industry changes, share experiences, and work together to create new value. At this year's event, we are exploring trends and opportunities in industry digitalisation by showcasing advanced ICT technologies, products, and solutions, all while giving visitors an insider's look at the fruits of joint innovation and sharing best practices in digital transformation," concluded Shi. cnme

as for our customers. In the network domain, Huawei has proposed the concept of intelligent connectivity, aiming to deliver a hyperautomated network that offers ubiquitous gigabit access and a deterministic experience, and to enable intelligent upgrades of major business systems of governments and enterprises. In the computing domain, Huawei is committed to providing diverse computing power to customers, decoupling software from hardware to adapt its compute to different processing needs," said Shi.

Shi then spoke of the enormous cloud presence

AVAYA

WORK FROM ANYWHERE

Avaya is a company that has innovation interwoven into its culture and ahead of GITEX Technology Week, the region's flagship IT event, it will once again demonstrate its commitment to developing solutions that empower its customers.

> ITEX Technology Week is an exceptional event and Avaya are always eager to participate in it. But this year they have a surprise for their customers and partners.

Avaya will broadcast their activities directly to almost 150 cities around the world, so that those who cannot attend are able to experience their

Avaya OneCloud is a comprehensive multi-cloud portfolio and open application ecosystem." presence virtually. It's the perfect opportunity to find out about the latest technical solutions Avaya have developed to enable business sustainability and the globalisation of work.

The president of Avaya in its international markets EMEA and APAC, Nidal Abou-Ltaif said that Avaya is stronger than ever and is ready to deal with the challenges the future holds, based on its growing capacity for cloud-based innovation and the confidence that its customers have shown in the company.

Earlier this month, Avaya posted its financial results for its fiscal fourth quarter and full financial year. Revenue for the quarter was \$755 million, \$35 million up from the previous quarter, and \$31 million up from the year-ago period.

This is the second quarter in row in which the company has

posted year-over-year growth. Cloud, Alliance Partners and Subscription (what the company calls CAPS) revenue for the full year amounted to 26% of total earnings, compared to 15% in the previous fiscal year.

And despite the pandemic, Avaya won over 1,500 new customers globally in its last quarter alone, recording a 50% increase from Q3.

The company's revenue from Software and Services was 88%, while recurring revenue was 63% - both solid indicators of the company's success in transforming its business, Abou-Ltaif says. These metrics only serve to represent and further illustrate how far



their business has come as a cloud and SaaS company, and is indicative of their transformation.

To find out more about Avaya's impressive fiscal year, and what visitors to GITEX can expect to see from the company, CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to Abou-Ltaif to find out his thoughts.

You are taking part in GITEX this year amid great global challenges. What is the purpose of your participation and how do you evaluate the decision to hold this event? And what is its impact on your business relationships?

It goes without saying that difficulties may sometimes impose new patterns and models of business and marketing on companies. And that includes the way we as an industry participate in exhibitions, conferences and other events.

But the important thing is that, just as our partners and customers are always present, we will also be there to provide support and achieve success.

We have full confidence in the decision of the Dubai World Trade Center to organise GITEX this year through a set of policies that allows social distancing while still enabling the success of the event. We have complete faith that the public safety policies being undertaken by the exhibition management this year allow for the safe participation of our employees, partners, customers and visitors.

GITEX for Avaya is a strategic platform for kick starting its strategy and, therefore, its goto-market for the year. What are you doing to overcome the travel restrictions that, otherwise, would have seen hundreds of your customers from around the world visit your stand?

Year on year, we've hosted customers and partners at GITEX, from Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Asia Pacific region.

Early on, we recognised that this will be a challenge this year, so we got ready to take Avaya at GITEX live to more than 150 cities and hundreds of our customers around the world, through a daily live broadcast. I am excited to have been able to mobilise my team and our partners to deliver on this mammoth initiative. It's going to be our greatest show. What will some of Avaya's highlights be at the show?

We're highlighting a cloudbased framework to deliver incredible customer and employee experiences in the 'work-from-anywhere' world."



Over the past two decades, we've used GITEX as a platform to demonstrate our commitment to addressing the economic, technological and social challenges of the day with solutions that meet the vast ambitions of our global customer base.

This year, we composed solutions that help our customers achieve business sustainability, meet the challenges of the shift to work



from anywhere, and more importantly, deliver on the overarching demand of an accelerated path to digital transformation.

We're highlighting a cloudbased framework to deliver incredible customer and employee experiences in the 'work-from-anywhere' world, which has emerged over the course of the year.

Our solutions support the creation of the digital workplace

and future customer experience center through core capabilities combined with one of the industry's richest ecosystems.

Based on Avaya OneCloud, these technologies enable organisations to 'compose' solutions – using different elements to deliver desired outcomes – to create multiexperiences for employees and customers that are just as meaningful in the digital realm as they are in person. Avaya OneCloud is a comprehensive multi-cloud portfolio and open application ecosystem, through which organisations can make every experience matter for the digital worker and customer.

UAE Only – What role does Avaya play in the ambitions of Dubai and the United Arab Emirates? How is this going to come to life at GITEX? Along with having developed itself into a global business, technology, educational and research hub at an accelerated pace, Dubai is also set to be the remote working capital of the world through its newly launched Virtual Working Program.

This is already garnering a fantastic response from workers around the world; a recent global poll run by Avaya showed that, for almost 22% of workers, Dubai would be the first choice if they could work from anywhere.

At GITEX, and with our Avaya OneCloud framework, we're orchestrating collaboration and customer experience technologies that meets these ambitions, enabling a new world of healthcare, education, commerce and government services. Supported by artificial intelligence and advanced machine learning and analytics, the world of work of every student, patient, doctor and customer service agent is becoming more intuitive, more personalised and more secure than ever before. cnme



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ENTRUST

RETHINKING SECURITY

CNME Editor Mark Forker caught up with **Hamid Qureshi**, Regional Sales Manager, at Entrust Data Protection Solution, to find out why the accelerated demands for digital transformation has forced the security industry to rethink authentication systems so they meet the challenges of the current digital economy.

here is a lot of distrust in terms of the key core technologies required for digital transformation. How can you secure their trust to ensure they embark upon a successful digital transformation journey?

We need to think of identity as the new security perimeter. As perimeter-based security models give way to digital workforce identities – accelerated by the increased demands for digital transformation – now is the time to make sure authentication systems are up to the challenge.

In this context, "identity" reflects the shift from outdated perimeter security concepts to secure distributed identities and Zero Trust. Fuelled by mobile and cloud adoption, the traditional security perimeter is gone, replaced by distributed decentralised identities and requirements to support Zero Trust environments.

This combination of consolidation and transparency helps protect the identities of workers, consumers, and citizens. This is key to preventing uncontrolled access, data breaches, and fraudulent transactions, thereby rebuilding trust in the security of the communications.

As a prime example, we see credential-based passwordless authentication as a vital component, provisioning a digital certificate onto the worker's phone, transforming it into their trusted workplace identity.

When the phone is unlocked via biometrics, the worker is logged into their workstation and applications when in close proximity and logged out when not. This ensures a secure, frictionless experience for all, and no more password resets.



We need to think of identity as the new security perimeter."

The transition from a physical office environment to a virtual one has left many enterprises vulnerable, and we know that cyberhackers thrive on vulnerability. Why is data encryption a 'must have' for companies who have employees working remotely, and what are the best practices and policies they need to adopt to ensure their data is protected? A period of uncertainty such as this one has left many companies scrambling to make unprecedented business decisions to ensure both their customers and employees are best prepared to move forward.

When thinking about how to best push through times like this, security should be a top priority for IT teams, here are some of our suggestions:

Enforce security hygiene to avoid Shadow IT incidents:

Security hygiene is critical when your employees move to working from home. While some employees are seasoned remote workers, many are not. Unfortunately, many of these security vulnerabilities may be unintentionally driven by Shadow IT.

To avoid a Shadow IT violation opening the door to hackers, implement internal messaging and training to ensure employees know that while you want them to be productive by using what they prefer, they must follow protocol.

Educate them on the consequences of Shadow IT and outline how they can onboard their preferred tools without putting the company at risk.

Deploy high-assurance authentication:

Security that relies on a single authenticator like a password is easily compromised, especially by those with poor security hygiene operating in an insecure home office. All industries can expect hackers to take note and advantage of this global uptick in remote work.

So, IT departments should deploy high-assurance cloudbased authentication, which uses multiple authenticators like one-time passwords, phone biometrics, and smart cards, to ensure corporate assets and the digital identities of remote workers are protected during this unprecedented time.

After all, working from home is supposed to be about ensuring business continuity, not compromising it.

Encrypt everything and then protect your encryption keys: Cyberattacks have become increasingly common and



increasingly sophisticated and targeted, with the pandemic amplifying this trend.

Every organisation has sensitive data it needs to protect, whether it be an enterprise, retailer, bank or a government department. Identify, locate and encrypt the data you care most about and protect and manage the encryption keys like your data depends on it – because it does. Properly encrypted data is worthless to a cyber-criminal and dramatically reduces the impact of any breach

As a direct consequence of the global health crisis there has been an exponential increase in cyberattacks. Is this a trend that we are likely to see continue in 2021 – and what does the cybersecurity landscape look like over the next twelve months?

Hackers always seek to exploit weaknesses, and this global pandemic is a perfect example. The way we deal with the virus will certainly change over the course of next year, but the acceleration of the digital transformation for many organisations is here to stay.

To this end, IT departments should deploy high-assurance

The challenge is balancing that frictionless user experience with security through the implementation of pass-

wordless

security."

cloud-based authentication and data protection to ensure corporate assets and the digital identities of remote workers are protected to ensure that those who continue to work from home and/or more flexibly can still deliver business continuity without compromising it.

The challenge (and trend we see for 2021) is balancing that frictionless user experience with security through the implementation of passwordless security.

For enterprises that want to create a frictionless employee experience while increasing security, the best practice solution is to create conditions where you can eliminate passwords. Entrust offers a credential-based passwordless solution coupled with SSO for hybrid cloud and on-premises environments – replacing passwords with biometrics or tokens for fast, frictionless access.

For additional security, enterprises can add authentication options like FIDO keys or use PKI-based high assurance credentials, while ensuring compliance with regional regulations like GDPR, HIPAA, and CCPA.

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LISTENING: THE KEY TO DRIVING IMPACTFUL DIGITAL INOVATION

In this month's edition of GovTech, we managed to secure an exclusive op-ed from Khaled Al Mazrouei, Acting Chief Commercial Officer. at Injazat, who has appealed to decision-makers and thought leaders to start listening and stop talking in a bid to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the on-demand digital economy.

> or most, it is no big news: digital is now default. What is new, however, is that COVID-19 has changed everything and if we want to continue seizing the many opportunities the digital economy offers, then we need to first start listening, instead of talking.

Accelerated by COVID-19, most members of the C-suite find themselves being forced to rethink their digital transformation (DX) strategies. From remote working to supply chains, customer service and measuring productivity, traditional ways of operating are no longer viable. A recent study by McKinsey, has found that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital technologies by several years, with many of these changes having a serious and long-term impact on any organisations' future.

Unsurprisingly then, those that were early adopters in emerging technologies have emerged much stronger and more resilient than before the onset of the pandemic.

The numbers say it all. According to the latest IDC findings, the value of DX has swollen to over US\$20 trillion, which is the equivalent to 20 per cent of global GDP – and with direct investments of over US\$8.2 trillion organisations, governments and entire industries and ecosystems are gearing up to take advantage of the digital economy.

These are astronomical figures, but whenever we witness this kind of capital flow, we experience the emergence of various bad actors, so who has your best interests in mind, and who is only after your company's money?

A key learning for myself in my role as the chief commercial officer of one of the leading firms in digital transformation, cloud, and cybersecurity in the UAE, is that we cannot innovate without working closely with our customers.

As advisors, we need to understand our customer's pain points and need to appreciate the experience of the end-user."

> Khaled Al Mazrouei Acting Chief Commercial Officer at Injazat

As advisors, we need to understand our customer's pain points and we need to appreciate the experiences of the end-user.

Each customer, and even each project, is unique, and as such, requires a tailored approach. A one-size-fitsall approach will only cause disappointment further down the line and result in customers changing service providers and starting all over again, unwillingly adding to the intrinsic complexities of their own digital transformation journeys.

With an understanding that our customers are our partners, we have created our DX Division to

provide the innovation incubation needed on the digital journey.

Combining design thinking, lean start-up and agile principles, the team brings together our own leading product experts together with a global ecosystem of partners to lead innovations and create digital platforms for our clients.

Together, we conceptualise, test, and eventually commercialise digital solutions that are tailored to our customers' needs – an approach that has proven to be very successful over the years.

It is also an approach that has informed our very own transformation strategy. A strategy that is all about providing for our customers, their end-users, and the communities they serve with the scale and speed that the new digital economy demands.

By listening to our customers, we can confidently say that we have reached a stage where we have become a trusted advisor to both the UAE's leading public and private sector organisations and have pivoted from being an IT service provider to a digital transformation leader, and an orchestrator of change.

Khaled Al Mazrouei is the Acting Chief Commercial Officer. of Injazat, an Abu Dhabi based market leader in Digital Transformation, Cloud, and Cyber Security. كجهة استشارية، نحتاج إلى إستيعاب العقبات التي يواجهها عملائنا وتقدير قيمة تجربة المستخدم قبل تقديم الحلول ".

> خالد المزروعي هو رئيس الشؤون التجارية بالإنابة لدى "إنجازات"، وهي شركة رائدة في مجال التحول الرقمي والسحابة الإلكترونية والأمن السيبراني، مقرها أبوظبي.

> > ومن الدروس الأساسية التي تعلمتها كمسؤول أول للشؤون التجارية لدى إحدى أهم الشركات العاملة في مجال التحول الرقمي والسحابة الإلكترونية والأمن السيبراني، هو أن التعاون الوثيق مع العملاء أمر لابد منه لتحفيز الابتكار.

وكجهة استشارية ، نحتاج إلى فهم العقبات التي يواجهها عملائنا وتقدير قيمة تجربة الستخدم. ولا شك أن كل عميل – إن لم يكن كل مشروع - يحظى بطبيعة فريدة من نوعها ؛ وبالتالي يتطلب نهجاً محصصاً. ولن يؤدي اتباع نهج موحد مع الجميع إلا للمزيد من الإحباط ، وبالتالي شروع العملاء في والبدء من جديد، مما يزيد من

تعقيدات رحلة التحول الرقمي الخاصة بهم.

نؤمن بأن عملاءنا هم شركاء لنا، لذا قمنا بتطوير قسم التحول الرقمي وتوفير حاضنة للابتكار خلال للزج بين التفكير التصميمي، والانطلاقة السلسة، والبادئ الرنة؛ يجمع فريق العمل مجموعة من أبرز خبراء النتجات لدينا مع منظومة عالية من الشركاء لقيادة الابتكارات وإنشاء منصات رقمية لعملائنا.

معاً، يمكننا إبداع واختبار ومن ثم تسويق الحلول الرقمية المخصصة لتلبية احتياجات عملائنا - وهو نهج أثبت كفاءته الكبيرة على مر السنين. كما أنه نهج دعم

استراتيجية التحول الخاصة بنا.

هذه الاستراتيجية التي تتمحور حول تلبية احتياجات عملائنا ومستخدميهم النهائيين والجتمعات التي يخدمونها بالحجم والسرعة اللازمين لمواكبة متطلبات العصر الرقمي.

ومن خلال الإصغاء لاحتياجات عملائنا، يمكننا أن نقول وبكل ثقة إننا وصلنا إلى مرحلة أصبحنا فيها جهة استشارية موثوقة لعدد من مؤسسات القطاعين العام والخاص الرائدة على مستوى دولة الإمارات العربية التحدة، واستطعنا التحول من مجرد مزود لخدمات تكنولوجيا العلومات إلى قائد لمسيرة التحول الرقمي قادر على إحداث التغيير في هذا القطاع.

الإصغاء لمتطلبات العملاء: الحل الأمثل لتحفيز إبتكار رقمي فعّال

في عدد هذا الشهر من مجلة GovTech؛ يشرفنا أن نحظى بمقالة افتتاحية حصرية بقلم السيد خالد الزروعي، رئيس الشؤون التجارية بالإنابة لدى شركة "إنجازات"؛ حيث يناشد الزروعي صناع القرار وقادة الفكر أن يباشروا في الإصغاء لاحتياجات العملاء بدل التسرّع في تقديم الحلول, وذلك من أجل اغتنام الفرص الثمينة التي يوفرها الاقتصاد الرقمي.

> لل قبق حياتنا اليوم التكنولوجيا التكنولوجيا بالأمر الجديد بالنسبة لمعظمنا. ولكن الجديد هو أن "كوفيد - 19" غيّر كل المفاهيم، وإذا أردنا مواصلة اغتنام الفرص العديدة التي يوفرها الاقتصاد الرقمي، فنحن بحاجة إلى عدم التسرّع في تقديم الحلول والبدء بالإصغاء إلى متطلبات العملاء قبل كل شيء.

> وبسبب "كوفيد – 19"، يجد معظم السؤولين التنفيذيين أنفسهم مضطرين لإعادة التفكير باستراتيجيات التحول الرقمي الخاصة بهم. فلم تعد طرق العمل التقليدية مجدية، بدءاً من العمل عن بُعد ووصولاً إلى سلاسل

التوريد وخدمة العملاء وقياس الإنتاجية.

وبحسب دراسة حديثة أجرتها شركة "ماكينزي"، فإن الجائحة قد اختصرت عدة سنوات من عملية تسريع اعتماد التقنيات الرقمية، حيث كان للعديد من هذه التغييرات تأثير حاد وطويل الأمد على مستقبل الؤسسات.

وعليه، لا عجب أن أولئك الذين كانوا في طليعة من يتبنون التقنيات الناشئة هم اليوم أصحاب الفرص الأكبر لتصدّر مكانة أقوى وأكثر مرونة بالقارنة مع فترة ما قبل الجائحة.

ولعل الأرقام السجلة خير دليل على ذلك. ووفقاً لأحدث النتائج التى توصلت إليها لجنة تطوير

القطاع، فقد تضاعفت قيمة التحول الرقمي لتفوق 20 تريليون دولار أمريكي، أي ما يعادل %20 من الناتج الحلي الإجمالي العالي. كما تجاوزت قيمة الاستثمارات الباشرة 8,2 تريليون دولار أمريكي، والحكومات و جميع القطاعات ومنظومات العمل للاستفادة من فرص الاقتصاد الرقمي.

وهذا ما يجسد مبالغ مالية مذهلة. وكلما شهدنا هذا النوع من تدفق رأس المال، نشهد ظهور العديد من الجهات الدخيلة. وثمة سؤال يطرح نفسه هنا: من يسعى إلى تحقيق مصلحتك بالدرجة الأولى؟ ومن فعلا يكرس جهوده لمضاعفة أموال شركتك؟

CINE Editor Mark Forker managed to socure an evolutive intension with Kamel Al-Tawil

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Kamel Al-Tawil**, the newly appointed Managing Director, Middle East and North Africa at Equinix, to find out about his new role - and how the global data center leader is planning to utilise its expertise to capitalise on the recent surge in cloud adoption across the Gulf region.

l-Tawil might be new to Equinix, but he certainly isn't new to the IT industry here in the Middle East, where he is regarded as a key decision-maker and influence in the development of the IT ecosystem over the last 25 years.

He has enjoyed a career with great distinction and prior to his appointment at Equinix, Al Tawil was responsible for leading Oracle's business applications and cloud strategy in his capacity as Vice President, before joining Oracle he also

The Equinix Cloud Exchange is our enterprise cloud connectivity solution that enables enterprises and service providers to connect to a multi-cloud environment." had leadership roles with NCR and EMC.

Al-Tawil expressed his delight at joining Equinix, and praised its data center capabilities, which have recently been expanded to Oman.

"I joined Equinix in September of this year, but we have been an extremely busy over the last 3 months. We have 3 data centers in the UAE, and our flagship hub in Dubai is the most connected facility in the entire Middle East region. In addition to this, we also recently expanded our data center operations to Oman, where we opened our latest data center in Muscat, to cater to the needs of the region and build on the submarine cable density that exists in the Oman," said Al-Tawil.

The new Managing Director at Equinix also highlighted its aspirations to drive cloudfirst digital transformation in the MENA region following the announcement with its alliance partner datamena of the ECX fabric.

"We made a number of very exciting announcements of late and the major one has been the launch of the Equinix Cloud Exchange in association with our partners datamena. The Equinix Cloud Exchange is our enterprise cloud connectivity solution that enables enterprises and service providers to connect to a multi-cloud environment. We have started to see a huge uptake on these solutions and we're also witnessing aggressive expansion plans in the region," said Al-Tawil.

We then spoke about the impact COVID-19 has had on so many industries not just in the Middle East, but on a global scale. However, he stressed how many businesses that adopted a progressive mindset to emerging and disrupting technologies before the pandemic were in a much better position to be able to adapt, evolve and cope with the new demands of the market.

ΔΔ



Kamel Al-Tawil Managing Director, Middle East and North Africa at Equinix

"There is no doubting that COVID-19 has disrupted many businesses and many industries have been impacted hugely by the pandemic. You can see clearly though in businesses that operate in the same industry vertical the differences between those that were early adopters in technologies, versus those who were resistant to change. The most prominent example of this is in the retail sector. The retailers that really embraced e-commerce and digital

infrastructure prior to the outbreak are really thriving, whilst the retailers that didn't have a digital strategy are really, really suffering," said Al-Tawil.

One of the other direct consequences of COVID-19 has been the fact there has been an accelerated demand of all things digital - and how it has fundamentally changed the way many businesses function.

"The whole consumption of digital grew exponentially. It also irreversibly changed

the way we interact and the way we do business. People are consuming content in unprecedented ways, and this has placed huge pressure on enterprises, IT service providers and network operators because businesses need to cater for work from home policies. It really is imperative that companies have their applications at the edge, where customers, businesses, partners and the markets can interconnect to provide the required digital acceleration," said Al-Tawil.

In addition to the phenomenal surge in digital transformation there has also been a huge shift towards public cloud, as more and more enterprises pursue the unique and transformative capabilities of the cloud. According to Al-Tawil, Equinix is positioning itself as the go-to partner for enterprises seeking cloud-first digital transformation.

"This whole situation has really pushed enterprises to look for a cloud-first and digital-first strategy. Equinix has seen a huge surge in cloud adoption and a real demand from people looking to transform their architecture into digitally-enabled architecture - and it is strikingly obvious that they are not looking for one cloud policy, and are instead looking for a multicloud/hybrid option. Our role at Equinix is to really help our customers accelerate their digital transformation by enabling them to have the digital architecture of the future, which can allow them to deliver better services and experiences for their customers," said Al-Tawil. come

PUBLICIS SAPIENT

CHANGING MINDSETS

Joseph Tabita, Group Vice President, Energy & Commodities, Publicis Sapient, has penned a superb op-ed, which has called on those in the energy sector in the MENA region to change their mindsets and begin to start thinking like digital natives to seize on the capabilities of the cloud era.

Joseph Tabita Group Vice President, Energy & Commodities, Publicis Sapient

> he cloud as a strategy and an enabler of digital change is omni-present in industries including technology, banking and retail.

The energy industry is now seeing the wisdom too, with many companies, including national oil organisations here in the Middle East, now adopting cloud as part of their objectives.

These companies are characterised by complex supply chains, abundant and silo-ed data assets, strong regulatory and compliance requirements and, importantly, the need to modernise and alter their traditional mindset.

Oil companies are experts at building and managing large physical assets such as refineries, but frequently operate as if the cloud is a data center run by a third party. This kind of outsourced thinking misses the fact that "infrastructure as code" provides the ability to materialise an enterprise-class data center simply by running a script.

In order to change this mindset and make the most of cloud capabilities, MENA oil organisations must start thinking like digital natives.

'Moving to the cloud' essentially means a company replacing their on-premise or homegrown data center solutions with other, better data centers that belong to Microsoft, Amazon Web Services or Google – who all have fullycompliant centers in the region.

The move toward cloud isn't as simple as unplugging from old processes and plugging into the new, but when the ecosystem is navigated well, the shift results in exceptional performance gains. The oil industry has already recognised that cloud infrastructure enables faster and cheaper ways to manage and analyse large amounts of data from field instrumentation, contractors, regulators and other stakeholders in real-time, lowering the cost to create and integrate software solutions.

It also allows for rapid adoption and implementation of digital change and far greater security and operational resiliency. Plus, the cloud enables a more powerful toolset for building software – and at a fraction of the cost.

In particular, technologies like Azure Cognitive Services bring AI within reach of developers without requiring machine-learning expertise, which is invaluable when trying to deal with huge quantities of seismic data. The cloud will not solve your business problems in isolation (unless your data centers are terribly unreliable), but as part of a digital strategy that will allow you to unlock a healthy stream of value. Here are some specific examples of how value can be added by combining cloud infrastructure with other digital investments:

Supply chain:

An oil company can build on technologies such as blockchain to create solutions for faster, more accurate real-time tracking of quantities and financial values of each bilateral transaction between operating companies, automating the accounting process.

Deploying to the Cloud means teams can quickly change and evolve these solutions and provides connective tissue for integration with partners, suppliers and customers.

Marketing:

Marketing SaaS providers make it easier to send programmatic targeted marketing using data analytics, and to improve non-fuel business by growing advertising across multiple digital platforms.

Operations:

Energy companies use Cloud solutions to more easily aggregate and analyse realtime information across their value chain, and then to use smart analytical models, AI, and big data to generate

The question that needs answering next, is how can oil companies effectively move to the cloud?"

operational insights which drive efficiencies, optimise performance, and enable rapid response to complex market dynamics.

Sustainability, safety and regulation:

In an area where there is a lack of transparency – for example in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and energy consumption data – and a risk of data reporting issues and missed targets, Cloud infrastructure enables a reliable and systematic approach for complex organisations.

Cost reduction:

Cost savings can be found at least two places. The lower cost of the cloud when your digital solutions are designed to elastically scale on cloud infrastructure. And also from the increase in productivity that your digital teams achieve.

The question that needs answering next, is how can oil companies effectively move to the cloud?

There are many moving parts and decision points, but here are some questions that companies could use to analyse their business and choose the best strategy on an application by application basis:

- Are there any applications worth retaining on a cost or functionality basis?
- Can you phase out some applications that are rarely being used?
- Could you rehost via Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)?

There is also the potential of re-platforming existing backend components and employing DevOps, providing cost savings in terms of system runtime and maintenance, or replacing applications by licensing a new product or cloud hosted, multi-tenanted version to do the same job.

This is a prime time for oil companies to get on board and start using cloud technologies to improve business process, increase people productivity, maximise production, develop new products and services, and achieve business excellence.

The cloud is part of a new way of working and is having a profound impact on traditional operating processes and company culture. It enables progress from idea to production in days rather than months. It enables working in small, autonomous multi-disciplinary teams. And having a good Cloud technology strategy will also help attract top tech talent – which is what will, ultimately, enable your digital transformation to be a success.

EMITAC ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Ugresh Kumar**, Practice Manager – Managed Services at Emitac Enterprise Solutions, to find out how the company is trying to differentiate itself in the managed services market - and the vast array of new opportunities that have arisen from the massive migration to public cloud across the region.

umar is an experienced figure in the IT landscape in the UAE, but he is new to Emitac having joined the company from Raqmiyat in recent months.

In a compelling interview he spoke of his desire to help Emitac seize on the new opportunities in the managed services space – and how he plans to differentiate the company from its market rivals.

He expressed his delight at joining Emitac and descried the company as an 'institution'.

If you don't manage the cloud in a smart way then costs will become excessive and create huge problems for enterprises." "It is a privilege to be part of an institution like Emitac, who have been in the IT industry in this region for over 40 years. I came to this region 16 years ago, and at that time every IT professional wanted to be part of this company, so I am absolutely delighted to now be part of this great organisation," said Kumar.

He added that Emitac had made positive investments of late in a bid to adapt to the volatile nature of the current business environment in the IT ecosystem.

"Emitac has made some shrewd investments in relation to their managed services portfolio and offerings, such as establishing their own network operations center. We are acutely aware of the fact that the needs of the market are evolving every single day, so we need to look at new investments. I believe that we are making the right investments in new technologies, and in the reskilling and retraining of our people to enhance the services we provide to our customers," said Kumar.

Kumar also highlighted how there had been a huge shift in terms of mindset in the UAE when it comes to public cloud.

COVID-19 has triggered huge digital transformation and we have seen many concepts turn into realities, but he points to the establishment of data centers in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, by Microsoft, as a truly seismic moment and turning point in the makeup of the IT industry.

"In the past when I was engaging in discussions with CIO's and IT leaders they were reluctant to use third-party services in relation to the cloud, and the main reason for this resistance was the fact that the data was being taken outside of the country. However, since Microsoft established data centers here in Dubai and Abu Dhabi in 2019, the attitude has totally changed, and you can see local companies and the



government adopting a different mindset and are pursuing strategies and plans to move to the public cloud," said Kumar.

The charismatic Practice Manager of Managed Services at Emitac then stressed how there had been a plethora of new opportunities created in the managed services domain as a result of this new surge towards the adoption of public cloud in the UAE.

"This change in attitudes and mindsets has undoubtedly opened up a different type of managed services market for us, and one of the opportunities we see for us from a managed services perspective is being able to leverage our expertise to help businesses effectively manage the cloud, because if you don't manage the cloud in a smart way then costs will become excessive and create huge problems for enterprises," said Kumar.

Kumar said that one of his key objectives in his new role was differentiating Emitac from its market rivals by trying to better understand how they can deliver real value to them.

"The conversations that I'm now having with IT heads and CIOs are about how we can bring value to them, because as a customer what is important to them is the availability of applications, e-mails and internet connectivity 24/7 across all their platforms. Every customer in today's environment is looking at how they can move from a CAPEX to an OPEX model, which is another major shift that has happened," said Kumar.

The IT executive at Emitac then spoke of his desire to better understand the challenges facing his individual customers, citing that a one size fits all approach doesn't work in this new data-driven cloud-first digital economy.

"When I speak to customers now, I want to determine how we can bring value to them in terms of the consumption of IT. I don't want to talk to customers and approach them in the traditional way of doing business like my competitors do, which is to tell them we can offer them managed services. Managed services is very vague and has broad meaning. I want to sit with my customers and really understand the pain points of their business because we know there is no one size fits all, so it's critical you take this approach to deliver the results that not only does you customer want, but that it needs," concluded Kumar.

SOLARWINDS

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Sascha Giese**, SolarWinds Head Geek, to find out how the company is removing the complexities involved in IT, what differentiates the company from its market rivals and the unique capabilities of its THWACK platform.



pote monitoring tools from

he expectations of customers in the IT ecosystem are always evolving, especially in the "on-demand" digital economy we now live in. SolarWinds has positioned itself as a leader in terms of removing the complexity involved in IT. What ultimately differentiates SolarWinds from other IT Infrastructure Management companies? SolarWinds is one of the only vendors in the world with such a vast portfolio for monitoring and managing IT.

Our solutions see through all layers and deployments including hybrid and multicloud deployments—and help IT professionals simultaneously make sense of data coming from the network, infrastructure, and applications.

There has been a huge surge toward public cloud in the Gulf region, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and there has also been an increase in demand for a hybrid cloud model. Can you outline to our readers how you help your customers manage the performance of their IT environments, whether they are on-premises, in the cloud, or in hybrid models?

We allow companies to use the same tools for all possible deployment models. The same trusted tools they use for a more traditional on-prem model will help them on their cloud journey, so there able to see charts with similar information and can compare key performance indicators from various sources.

Out of the box, we connect with AWS[®] and Azure[®] within just a few mouse clicks, and other cloud providers can be attached with active API polling.

How did the global COVID-19 pandemic affect your day-to-day operations, and can you highlight to us how you assisted your Partners to remain operational and maintain business continuity during the health crisis?

Between March and May, as most offices around the globe switched to a work from home model without time for advance planning, our products designed to monitor and control VPN connections were much sought after and were a relief for administrators.

We also extended the evaluation period of one of our

remote monitoring tools from 14 days to three months to help the IT community.

Here at SolarWinds, we already have expertise with work from home situations, so we provided our Partners and customers with best practices, which was also well received.

Can you tell us more about THWACK[®], which is an online community that has over 150,000 registered members? What are the primary objectives of this program? THWACK is an important part of the SolarWinds® story. It's a place where SolarWinds customers—and IT professionals in general-meet and exchange ideas. If you work in IT, the problems you're facing are always the same and it doesn't matter whether you work in the U.S., the United Arab Emirates, or Japan.

We like to share our knowledge, and this is what makes THWACK such a great place. But we also use it as a platform to get our customers involved in the development process, which differentiates us from most other solution providers.

Solar-Winds is one of the only vendors in the world with such a vast portfolio for monitoring and managing IT."







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