# computer news middle SSUE 353 | OCTOBER 2021

ISSUE 353 | OCTOBER 2021 Tahawultech.com



**RAQMIYAT'S VP OF TSS** 

PRESIDENT OF MIDIS SYSTEM INTEGRATION

LOGITECH'S HEAD OF VIDEO COLLABORATION, AMECA

HUAWEI'S PRESIDENT OF ENTERPRISE BUSINESS GROUP

### EMPOWERING A SUSTAINABLE

SAYED HASHISH, GENERAL MANAGER OF MICROSOFT UAE, BELIEVES THAT TECHNOLOGY IS THE KEY TO DELIVERING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.







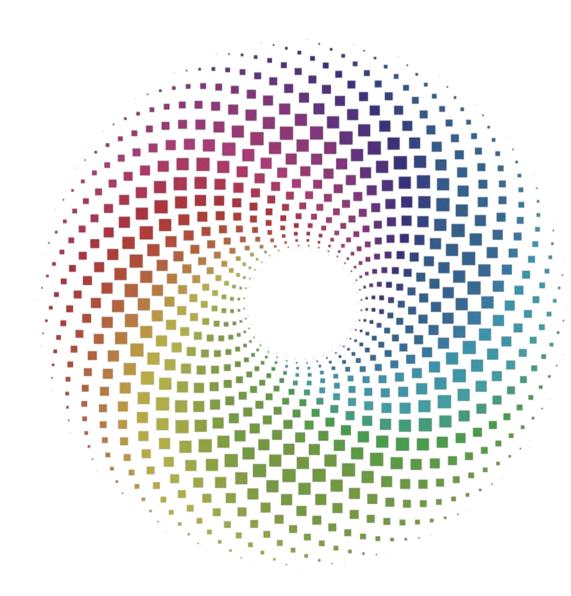




## DIVE into DIGITAL GITEX Technology Week 2021

October 17-21

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The UAE has made no secret of its ambitions to become a leader in sustainability, and one company that is really driving this message globally is Microsoft."

### THE WORLD'S GREATEST CHALLENGE

XPO 2020, billed as the 'world's biggest show' has attracted much fanfare and global media attention since it opened its doors, and there is no disputing the fact that the UAE has once again pulled off a spectacular feat in the form of EXPO 2020.

A beacon of technological progression, the site is now the most connected place on earth – and serves as yet another reminder of how the incredible UAE leadership is able to establish the frameworks to allow innovation to flourish and deliver another project that will dazzle the world.

However, the theme and message of my editorial letter this month is not about the world's greatest show, but instead focused on the world's greatest challenge, which is of course climate change.

The UAE has made no secret of its ambitions to become a leader in sustainability, and one company that is really driving this message globally is Microsoft.

Microsoft as we know are one of the most innovative enterprises in the world, but they are also conscious of the role it must play in terms of empowering a sustainable future for all.

The front cover story of this month's edition of CNME is with Sayed Hashish, General Manager of Microsoft UAE, and he outlined the ambitious sustainability aspirations of the US technology giant, who are aiming to become carbon negative by 2030.

In an excellent interview, he stressed that the biggest challenge in terms of executing meaningful sustainability worldwide is being able to help others who do not have the same resources as Microsoft to become sustainable.

He beleives that technology can play a key role in bridging the gap.

In this month's edition of CNME, I also spoke to Miguel Rio-Tinto, CIO at Emirates NBD, who documented in detail the journey of transformation the banking provider has undergone and how his role as a CIO has changed in the new digital economy.

We also have in-depth interviews with Logitech, SolarWinds, Raqmiyat and Midis System Integration.

In addition to this, we have a superb range of op-eds that tackle many of the pressing issues that are fueling debate in the IT ecosystem, with experts from Huawei, Cisco and Cloud Box Technologies offering their takes on digital transformation, hybrid working and the new trends in fueling cloud growth.

This magazine will be distributed during GITEX Global 2021, which promises to be a fantastic week of announcements, product launches and the deployment of new cutting-edge technologies and innovations.

GITEX Global is the region's flagship technology and IT symposium.

On behalf of all the team at CPI Media Group, we would like to extend our best wishes to all our partners and customers that are participating at GITEX this year.

We will have comprehensive coverage from GITEX in November's edition of CNME and we will also highlight all the winners from our Future Enterprise Awards, which will be held on October 17th.

Have a wonderful GITEX!

Mark Forker Editor





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6 News

> CNME rounds up the biggest regional and global developments in enterprise technology, which includes the announcement that Micro Focus has been named as a global leader in hybrid cloud management. AVEVA will showcases its smart city solutions at GITEX Global - and a comprehensive new cybersecurity report from HP reveals that IT teams feel under pressure to compromise security.

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David Shi, President Enterprise Business Group, Huawei Middle East. discusses Huawei's 'dive into digital' and explained how disruptive technologies are enabling industrial DX.

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FOUNDER, CPI Dominic De Sousa (1959-2015)

SOLARWINDS

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#### Micro Focus recognised as a global leader in hybrid cloud management

#### Micro Focus has further solidified its

position as a global leader in hybrid cloud management following their recognition by Research in Action (RIA).

The company's Hybrid Cloud Management X (HCMX) solution, which is part of their Micro Focus Enterprise Service Management Platform was ranked No.1 in the entire world following the comprehensive report independently compiled by the fabled Research in Action group.

Micro Focus's broad and diverse portfolio of solutions have helped companies move their IT operations to the cloud seamlessly, and the hybrid approach gives them the flexibility, autonomy, and scalability they need to grow and expand.

Micro Focus' Hybrid Cloud Management X provides comprehensive fulfilment orchestration for organisations that want to speed-up application delivery, improve operational efficiency,



Toufic Derbass, Managing Director, MEA, Micro Focus

and streamline service delivery and consumption across a broad set of new and traditional, private and public cloudbased deployment platforms.

Built on a flexible, containerised architecture, HCMX provides multi-cloud service consumption in a single view with analytics-based recommendations for discount management, enabling customers to easily achieve the benefits of speed, scale, agility and cost reduction

while leveraging existing on-premises investments.

Toufic Derbass, Managing Director

– MEA, Micro Focus outlined how its
Hybrid Cloud Management X platform
enabled enterprises to build the IT
environments that are tailored and
specific to their needs and requirements.

"We have seen a huge surge in the adoption of cloud technologies across the Middle East region. However, what we have also witnessed is that many businesses have struggled to meet the demands of cloud transformation, simply because they are not sure of what cloud model to choose. Our Hybrid Cloud Management X platform empowers enterprises to build and deliver custom environments from a simple VM to complex multi-tier application stacks. It also provides complete transparency to cloud utilisation and spending via detailed multi-cloud spend reports", said Derbass.

### AVEVA to Showcase World-leading Smart City Solutions at GITEX Technology Week 2021



Dr Tariq Aslam, Head of MEA, AVEVA

#### AVEVA, a global leader in

industrial software, driving digital transformation and sustainability, today announced that it is participating in GITEX Technology Week 2021 to be held from 17–21 October. Together with its strategic partner, Schneider Electric, AVEVA will demonstrate its AVEVA Unified Operations Centre for Smart Cities, which seamlessly integrates systems, sites, people and assets for cities of the future, at the Middle East's largest technology exhibition.

With increasing urbanisation, mounting cost pressures, and demand for improved quality of life, there is now a global move towards infrastructure consolidation, upgrade, and continuous improvement of cities. AVEVA's Unified Operations Centre for Smart Cities drives streamlined operational efficiency and reduced energy costs, while promoting adherence to cybersecurity, safety, and regulatory compliance.

"Our Unified Operations Centre is the command-and-control solution for infrastructure and smart city operators based on an integrative 'System of Systems' approach. It can be used to collate information from various data sources to anticipate and resolve problems even before they are presented, coordinate various resources and processes for seamless operation, and generally make more strategic decisions. It converges OT and IT technology into a single paneof-glass solution, where the operator can effectively monitor and control entire city operations through a 'City in a Box' approach as we like to call it", says Dr Tariq Aslam, Head of MEA, AVEVA.

### New Cybersecurity Report from HP Reveals 91% of IT Teams Feel Pressure to Compromise Security



#### HP Inc. released its HP Wolf Security

Rebellions & Rejections report, a comprehensive global study highlighting the tension between IT teams and employees working from home (WFH) that security leaders must resolve in order to secure the future of work.

The findings show that IT teams have been forced into compromising security for business continuity at a time of rising threats. Making matters worse, their attempts to increase or update security measures for remote workers have often been rejected. This is particularly true for the future workforce of 18-24-year-olds – digital natives who feel increasingly frustrated with security getting in the way of deadlines, leading many to circumvent controls. Key findings include:

- 76% of IT teams admit security took a backseat to business continuity during the pandemic, while 91% felt pressure to compromise security for business continuity.
- Almost half (48%) of younger office workers (18-24 years old) surveyed viewed security tools as a hindrance, leading to nearly a third (31%) trying to bypass corporate security policies to get their work done.
- 48% of office workers surveyed agreed that seemingly essential security measures result in a lot of wasted time

   this rises to 64% among those ages

   18-24.
- Over half (54%) of 18-24-year-olds were more worried about meeting deadlines than exposing their organisation to a data breach; 39% were unsure what their security policies say, or are unaware if their company even has them – suggesting a growing level of apathy among younger workers.
- As a result, 83% of IT teams believe the increase in home workers has created a "ticking time bomb" for a corporate network breach.

### Exclusive Networks begins process of going public



Jesper Trolle, CEO, Exclusive Networks

#### **Exclusive Networks S.A. announces**

today the filing of its registration document with the AMF under the number I. 21–044. The filing of the registration document is the first step in Exclusive Networks' initial public offering on the regulated market of Euronext Paris, subject to market conditions and the approval by the AMF of the prospectus for the offering.

#### Jesper Trolle, Chief Executive Officer, said:

"Exclusive Networks is a global cyber security specialist, with a strong track record of profitable growth. Our proposed IPO on Euronext is a natural next step for us, and recognises three vital pillars of our success - our people, partners, and growth strategy. First, without the know-how and talent of our people, our growth would simply not be possible. Second, we have built our success on strong, enduring relationships within the complex cyber ecosystem, with vendors and channel partners. Exclusive Networks is the partner of choice for more than 240 leading vendors. Exclusive Networks supports the growth and expansion plans of vendors, offering local support to enable them to reach more than 18,000 resellers around the world. Third, we have a clear strategy in place to continue to deliver growth, and an IPO will support our mission to help drive the transition to a totally trusted digital world.

### Oracle Offers Free Training and Certification for Oracle Cloud Infrastructure



#### Oracle announced it will offer Oracle

Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) training and OCI certification testing for free worldwide. The new program includes Oracle's entire expert-created OCI learning curriculum for all skill levels and various IT roles. Through this program, learners have access to all OCI courses, delivered digitally, on-demand, and available in 13 languages. Oracle is also offering Oracle Autonomous Database and other certification exams free for a limited time.

Oracle's new training program enables people to gain valuable cloud expertise that can be applied to any industry, enabling them to enhance their value and grow their careers. The free training and certification also helps to expand the IT talent pool, making it easier for businesses to acquire or develop the skilled professionals they need to grow and innovate quickly.

## Axis to host a dedicated smart cities technology conference at Expo 2020



Ettiene van der Watt, Regional Director, Middle East & Africa at Axis.

#### As part of its participation in Expo

2020, global security and surveillance leader Axis Communications is proud to be hosting six high-impact technology conferences from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. Covering topics that range from artificial intelligence for a smarter, safer tomorrow to securing the 5G era, the Axis team will be presenting these dynamic events at the Sweden Pavilion in the event's Sustainability District in Dubai. Participants can expect to be inspired and engaged as Axis experts discuss key industry trends that are shaping our world and showcase powerful solutions for smarter, safer, and more sustainable cities. "The decisions we make today can either help or hinder our future generations, so we need to be more proactive and strategic in our actions if we are to create better cities to live in and a better future of our planet. With that in mind, we planned our technology conferences to align with likeminded partners and align on government visions to build a smarter, safer world. Axis is proud to be part of the solution, and we hope you'll join us at Expo 2020 to explore opportunities for positive change and growth", commented Ettiene van der Watt, Regional Director, MEA, Axis.

### Videonetics Joins Red Hat Partner Connect Program as Independent Software Vendor

#### Videonetics, the world's first AI &

DL powered Unified Video Computing Platform (UVCP) development company, announced that it has joined the Red Hat Partner Connect Program as an Independent Software Vendor (ISV) for Red Hat Enterprise Linux and Red Hat OpenShift in India and South Asia.

Avinash Trivedi, VP, Business
Development, Videonetics expressed,
"We are delighted to be recognised as
a Red Hat ISV Partner. By collaborating
with Red Hat, we can provide truly
unified solutions based on opensource technologies and practices, with
an added layer of security features
and easier maintenance, that helps
ensure greater confidence and stability



Avinash Trivedi, VP, Business Development, Videonetics

for customers. We intend to deploy advanced container native technologies across cities, municipalities, industries, aviation & mass transportation, education, and healthcare for a well-connected infrastructure".

### Microsoft unveils Windows II to collaborate, connect, and celebrate



#### Microsoft today announced that

Windows 11, an operating system designed for the world of hybrid work, is now available to businesses and consumers across the region.

"Hybrid work may be the future, but it brings its own challenges", said Mohammed Arif, Business Group Director, Modern Work and Security for Microsoft UAE. "Windows 11 has now arrived to bring an inclusive, easy, inspirational experience to everyone and help them achieve more than ever before. Tools that allow you to work from anywhere as if you were in a room with your collaborators; tools that allow you to work, rest, and play effortlessly while remaining productive — Windows 11 is the ultimate partner for the new normal".

Windows 11 was built for the hybrid future, with experiences that work how people work. It is the operating system of the new normal, secure by design and simple for IT professionals to deploy

and manage. The new OS is a powerhouse of speed, efficiency, and optimised experiences, be they through touch, digital pen, or voice input. Microsoft has included new accessibility options designed by and for people of determination, and a new design and new sounds provide a work environment of calm and ease. Snap Layouts, Snap Groups, and Desktops provide more powerful ways to multitask and optimise screen real estate.

### Logicom expands portfolio in UAE, signs strategic agreement with leading technology vendor ahead of GITEX 2021



Spiros Rafailovits, GM, UAE & Gulf at Logicom Distribution

#### Logicom Distribution, the leading regional distributor of technology solutions and services in Europe, Middle East and Africa announced it has signed a strategic agreement with Dell Technologies, ahead of its forthcoming participation in the 2021 edition of GITEX Technology Week. Following a successful collaboration in the GCC and the positive impact of Logicom's marketing of Dell Technologies' commercial desktops, notebooks, workstations, thin clients, servers and storage solutions in these markets, the two companies have agreed to extend their partnership in the UAE. The new agreement will allow Logicom to make available

industry leading solutions in the server and storage space. "Logicom has maintained a strong and sustainable presence in the region for over two decades through strategic partnerships and by building a strong partner network", said Spiros Rafailovits, General Manager for UAE & Gulf at Logicom Distribution. "Our core capabilities revolve around creating value for our vendors and creating and maximising reach and awareness. We are looking forward to delivering the same high standards this year and beyond, providing our partners with the solutions and services required across all market segments in the MENA region".

#### Russian Cybersecurity company Aktiv to partner at GITEX for the first time

to its channel Dell Technologies'

This year, Aktiv, a Russian company representing a cohort of leaders in the information security market, will come to Gitex for the first time.

Russia has one of the world's strongest information security industries. It occupies a leading position in the field of IT system and critical infrastructure protection, as well as in many others, in both public and private sectors.

In addition, Russia can boast a rare highly competent workforce, a developed IT market and a whole range of strong private companies with their own unique technologies and products that surpass world analogues.

The company leaders adhere to the position of technological openness. They are ready to share technologies, competencies and expertise with their partners, and create joint solutions taking into account local specifics and requirements of a particular market. This is why they are coming to GITEX!

In the H2-E24 booth, visitors will be greeted by Vladimir Ivanov, the Head of Business Development, and Timofey Matrenitsky, the Head of Guardant Division.

The experts are open to communication and ready to demonstrate the Rutoken and Guardant information protection products and solutions, which provide identification and authentication to users of IT systems, protect software from illegal copying, and ensure the security of cyber-physical systems in the IoT sphere.



#### **CLOUD BOX TECHNOLOGIES**

## THINK OUTSIDE THE 'BOX'

While the pandemic has brought cloud into the focus of top executives, there is still more to do before cloud is mainstream for business heads, according to **Ranjith Kaippada**, Managing Director at Cloud Box Technologies.



distributed teams, the only way forward is to use cloud-based collaboration and communication.

Consultants at global research company Gartner, refer to cloud as the bright spot coming out of the pandemic. But they also point out that the usage of cloud, has not yet reached its strategic potential. The role of the CIO and specialised cloud partners are critical to help scale the usage of cloud through business generating innovation opportunities for the organisation.

Here are some initiatives that CIOs can lead, with the guidance of specialised cloud partners, to help generate scale and innovation with the opportunity to launch new business models.

#### Make cloud a strategic benefit and not cost alternative

The first misconception to be cleared up inside the organisation is that cloud is cheaper. For the senior management, the total costs associated with any cloud platform and the risks involved

are paramount. According to Gartner, the current outlook of global and regional CEOs is to leverage technology to gain a competitive edge in the market place and to avoid being disrupted by being a laggard in technology adoption.

Adopting and staying up to date with cloud computing technologies, allows CIOs working alongside specialised cloud partners, to provide service platforms for their organisation to drive innovation. Cloud enabled service platforms allow front office, back office, middle office to be agile and deliver high value customer engagements and customer experiences.

In order to deliver this, adopting and implementing cloud needs to be a strategic initiative mapped to business objectives and transforming business processes. Hence investment can be mapped to business returns and gains. Easy access to data by all business units across geographies, networks and platforms is one of the early benefits of adopting cloud platforms.

#### Accelerating roll out of cloud across the organisation

The benefit of cloud platforms come when there is scale out adoption. Cloud helps to reduce the cost of digital operations wherever there is scale of adoption, and this soon leads to adopting additional platforms of cloud or multi-cloud adoption. Gartner points out that in its 2020 Cloud Behavior Study, 76% of end users were using more than one cloud provider.

A multi-cloud strategy

## $\sqrt{1}$

A multi-cloud strategy allows business to use the best platforms suitable for their requirements and their practices.

allows business to use the best platforms suitable for their requirements and their practices. But it also adds to complexity for CIOs and may require partnering with specialised cloud service partners.

While adding additional cloud platforms to an organisation's technology stack helps to build a cloud centre of excellence, CIOs need to work closely with their business partners to buy-in their adoption and align closely with their current and future objectives.

Lack of alignment with business will create lack of end user adoption, leading to low scales of operation, high costs and failure to transform the business. Increasing cloud complexity builds security risks and this can be outsourced to specialised cloud partners.

#### Controlling and directing innovation through tools

A key benefit of cloud is the ability to be agile and work in real time. This helps business to move to the next level of performance and customer experience. Automating processes, data training, and anticipating market behavior, are the next logical areas of innovation for CIOs while working closely with business.

CIOs can work with specialised partners to bring in infrastructure automation tools, multi-cloud and hybrid cloud orchestration, self-service and on-demand environment creation, resource provisioning and configuration management, DevOps, amongst others.

With its digital platform capabilities, cloud offers the opportunity to develop new revenue streams, that were not feasible previously. Hence it is imperative for CIOs to facilitate the building of new business frameworks leveraging newly adopted cloud platforms across the organisation.

Building a cloud centre of excellence allow success stories to be repeated across various businesses and various operations of the organisation. A critical part of gaining scale in cloud adoption is to minimise the challenges of migration, by repeating success stories and planning for adoption and migration obstacles.

Traditional IT solutions are unable to meet the challenges of the post pandemic recovery phase including remote teams and business continuity in a cost-effective manner. Cloud on the other hand does, and CIOs with the help of specialised channel partners can take organisations and its business to the next level of excellence.

**EMIRATES NBD** 

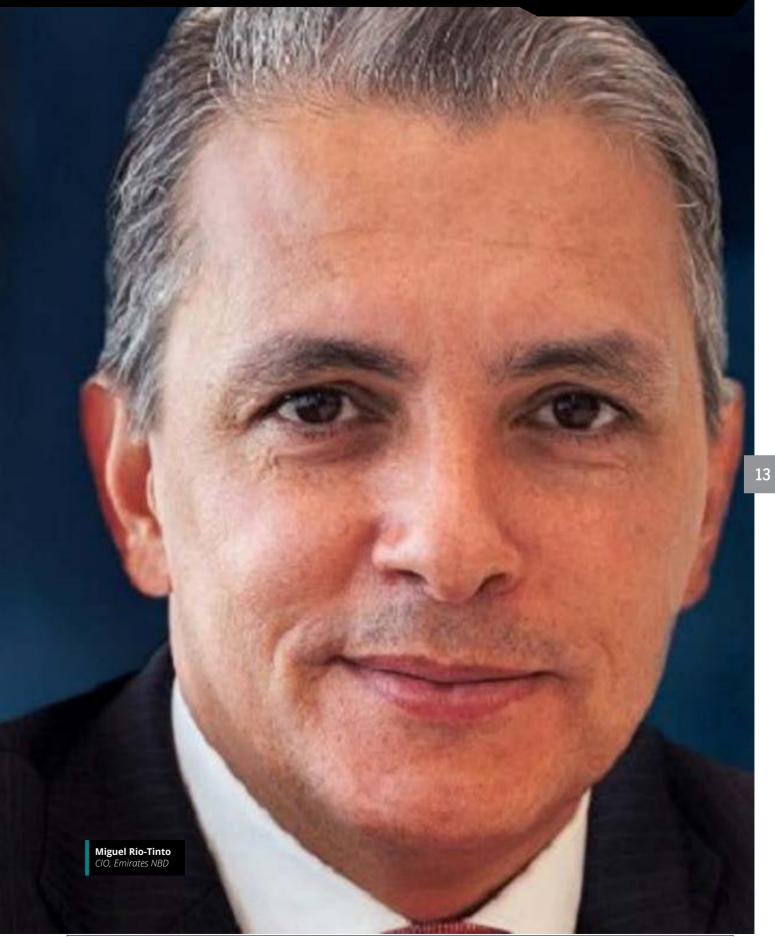
## YOU CAN 'BANK' ON SEAMLESS DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with Emirates NBD CIO, **Miguel Rio-Tinto**, to find out how the company has positioned itself as a transformative pioneer in the banking ecosystem across the Middle East, powered by Dell Technologies, how the role of the CIO has changed in the new digital economy – and what differentiates Emirates NBD from other traditional banks.

mirates NBD is seen by many across the region for being a pioneer in terms of adopting emerging and disruptive new technologies that are designed to enhance the services they provide and transform their day-to-day operations.

According to Rio-Tinto, that desire to continually innovate is embedded into the culture of Emirates NBD and added that there was a general acceptance from the hierarchy that they needed to take it to a new level.

"Emirates NBD has always had a reputation for



being innovative from the standpoint of the products and services that it makes available to its customers both in the UAE and abroad, because we have a large presence in Egypt, KSA and now Turkey. However, there was an acknowledgement from the bank that as part of our efforts to accelerate digitalisation, we really had to take it to a different level," said Rio-Tinto.

The dynamic CIO joined Emirates NBD in 2017 and has been a major catalyst in spearheading the technological transformation that the bank has undergone in that time. He highlighted how significant investments into new technologies equipped Emirates NBD with the tools and solutions required to overhaul their existing infrastructure and embrace digitalisation.

"We started looking at new disruptive technologies that were being deployed in the IT ecosystem, and started to ask ourselves how do we align our strategy with the best practices that are out there? In relation to our technology transformation Emirates NBD decided to invest 1 billion dirhams into new technologies to really allow ourselves to collaborate with the best-in-breed cloud natives that are out there," said Rio-Tinto.

We know that cloud is the future, and that is the underlying platform that will fuel innovation in the digital economy, but as the Emirates NBD CIO points out they wanted to be cloud-native to be enable them to automate their services and this is where the collaboration with Dell Technologies was critical to realise success.

"The best-in-breed enterprises use a cloudnative stack, they don't use a traditional monolithic, or legacy type of infrastructure. They are completely cloudnative, which essentially means that managing things like infrastructure and physical resources that are de-coupled from the logical resources enables the automated deployment of software and that's what we wanted to achieve," said Rio-Tinto.

Also, in relation to technology transformation Rio-Tinto highlighted that it is not all about infrastructure, and that application architecture is critical.

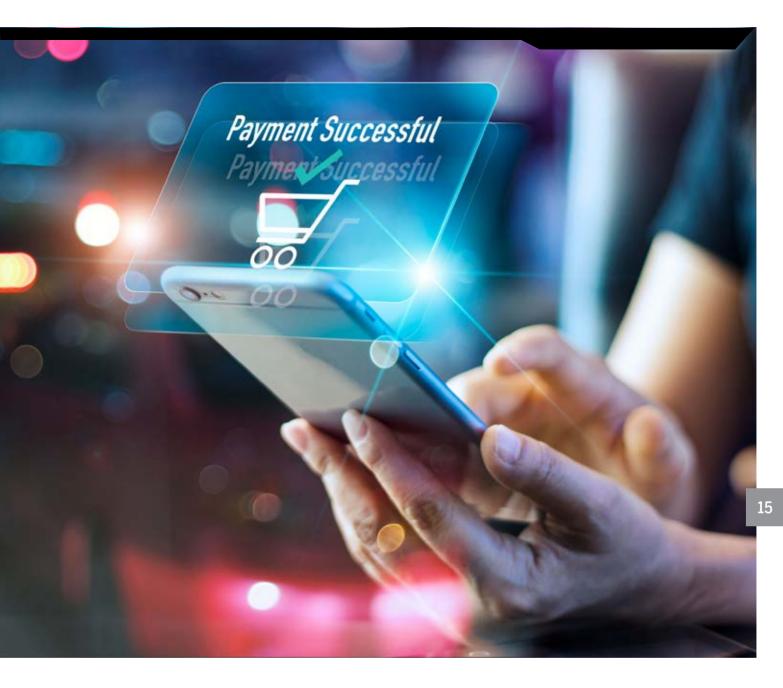
"This was also an area that we significantly invested in to extend APIs and allow them to be integrated with partners and ecosystems. We wanted to become agile and bring in a different way of working and change the business interface, so we had IT embedded into our teams," said Rio-Tinto.

Emirates NBD reinforced its standing as being a pioneer by becoming the first bank in the UAE to have a lifestyle



'digital-only' bank in the form of Liv., which was targeted specifically for millennials, and said its success prompted the bank to create something similar for SMEs.

"Liv. is a mobile only value proposition. We have been able to onboard customers at anytime in two minutes without ever speaking to the customer and it was all done exclusively via the mobile. We were inspired by the success of Liv. and that triggered us to replicate this type of



banking experience for SMEs in the region. We know that one of the key pain points for SMEs has been opening an account with a bank, so we asked ourselves how can we bring that onboarding experience provided for millennials to our SME community? We launched E20. and that has allowed SMEs to onboard in just ten minutes, which again is another wonderful illustration of our innovation," said Rio Tinto.

Over the last few years

major industry verticals have undergone seismic change, but so too has the role of the CIO in the new digital economy, and Rio-Tinto explains that whilst many aspects of his job are the same as they were a decade ago.

"That element of being technology-focused and having the ability to take the right decisions regarding the technology strategies you implement are still important, and that was at the core of what we were doing 10-15

years ago. However, you do have to be very focused in relation to following where the technology is going, so you can steer a bank like Emirates NBD in the right direction because it needs to be running efficiently every day, but at the same time you need to explore new technologies that are designed to help us enhance the products and services we provide," said Rio-Tinto.

However, he did concede that the role of the CIO has

evolved, and there are many new facets of the job that he has had to grapple with, and one of them has been acquiring and retaining IT talent.

"I have been in this business for a very long time, but my role has changed digital transformation and they need talent. 60% of my role is now devoted to managing people and teams to attract, retain and motivate them," said Rio-Tinto.

Rio-Tinto also highlighted the key role played in

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#### Dell Technologies solutions enables Emirates NBD to drive operational efficiencies through advanced digital infrastructure to meet evolving customer and market needs."

substantially. In the past you had the business functions and then the IT delivery. The speed at which you must innovate with technologies now is so fast that you really need to blend business and IT together. One other aspect of my job, which has evolved massively is in the fight for talent in IT. IT is a core competence, and previously we didn't have the engineering functions inhouse, it was outsourced. We onboarded a lot of talent recently, but the fight for talent is huge right now, so my people are continually being poached every single day, because so many industries are undergoing

its transformation by its technology partner Dell Technologies, who he believes has equipped them with the solutions and infrastructure they needed to drive their digital agenda to the next level and address their customer needs.

"Dell Technologies solutions enables Emirates NBD to drive operational efficiencies through advanced digital infrastructure to meet evolving customer and market needs. With these solutions, Emirates NBD is modernising its legacy infrastructure and resetting the bar for driving new levels of performance, efficiency, security and consolidation. This digital

foundation delivers bestin-class digital banking services, while also providing a more agile, secure and scalable infrastructure that will allow Emirates NBD to bring products and services to market faster," said Rio-Tinto.

In terms of what differentiates Emirates NBD from its rivals, Rio-Tinto has already highlighted the innovation that is embedded in the fabric of the company, but he knows that a critical component is customer experience and that the digital experiences they are now offering to their customers is distinguishing themselves from other traditional banks.

"For you to provide the ultimate digital experience for your customers you need to have several ingredients. If you have implemented cloud-native technology then that's great, but it's not enough. It must be straightthrough-processing, nobody wants to receive their IBAN in 48 hours, they want it now, so everything must be STP. We are continuing on this journey of success enabled by technology innovation and everybody at the company understands that the experience for the customer has to be seamless and immediate. That is what we are striving to achieve, and we believe that this approach is what differentiates us from other traditional players," concluded Rio-Tinto. Come

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Visit the Infor® booth at Gitex® from 17-21st October in Hall 7, H7-E50 and let's talk



#### LOGITECH

## HARD TO DE-SCRIBE

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Loubna Imenchal**, Head of Video Collaboration, AMECA region, at Logitech to learn more about the evolution of video collaboration in segments like education and healthcare, what the future of video collaboration looks like in a post-COVID world – and the impact its 'Scribe' solution has had in education.

hen global industries were forced to cease the way they conduct their day-to-day operations overnight, video collaboration tools and solutions formed the backbone of the response in terms of enabling business continuity across all major industry verticals.

However, as we emerge from the pandemic, video collaboration is now a fundamental component in the way we live, work, and learn. The hybrid 'work from anywhere' world is here to stay, and it is underpinned by video collaboration.

Logitech has become a global leader in this space, and its broad portfolio of solutions has empowered critical industry verticals like education and healthcare to be able to overcome the challenges they faced.

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to Logitech's Loubna Imenchal to find out more about the company, and learn more  $\sqrt{1}$ 

Our mission at Logitech was to leverage our video collaboration products and solutions to ultimately make life easier for our customers and partners."

about the solutions that have empowered so many industries in the new normal environment we find ourselves immersed in.

#### **New Normal**

Imenchal conceded that nobody was prepared for the challenges encountered during the pandemic – but highlighted how video collaboration helped bridge

that 'social gap' when employees were moved from the traditional compounds of their office and into a virtual work environment.

"We are human by nature and as social beings we want faceto-face interactions with our colleagues and peers, so during the pandemic it was difficult. Nobody was prepared for this, so it was important that we adapted quickly to the new environment that we were thrust into. Our mission at Logitech was to leverage our video collaboration products and solutions to ultimately make life easier for our customers and partners. It was important for us to help our customers feel less distant when they were engaging with their customers and colleagues through our professional video grade solutions, which enabled them to enhance both the quality of their camera and sound - and that created this feeling of OK, we are still distant, but due to the professional quality of the video tools we are using it is making us feel closer," said Imenchal.

Imenchal also stressed how it was extremely important to reduce stress placed on IT teams during the pandemic and having solutions that were easy to deploy and accessible was critical.

"Our products are plug and play, and with this approach there is no headaches. We were acutely aware that it was very important for us to make it easier for IT teams. We did this by providing solutions that secured our customers environment, and allowed them to safely share their data, knowing nobody can come and hack it. Essentially, we need to have these video collaboration



conversations in a way that it is easy to setup, held in a secure environment, which ultimately makes the lives of those using the technology much, much easier, which in turn will help drive productivity and efficiency," said Imenchal.

#### **Education**

The education sector was one of the industries really impacted by the pandemic, whilst many of us were able to work effectively using video collaboration, trying to teach students in a remote environment was an alien task for many educators.

However, as Imenchal

highlights, the 'Logitech Scribe' solution really helped educators deliver a remote learning experience for their students that helped them feel like they were back in a classroom setting.

"At Logitech, we adapted our products, so there were tailored for specific industry verticals. In education, children stopped going to school overnight, but they still had to have access to education. However, that was a real challenge for the education industry. At Logitech, we launched an incredibly unique product in the form of Scribe. The added value of a solution like Scribe is the fact that it

can make a teacher invisible. and all the students can see is what they have written on the board. This empowers teachers and enables them to do their job effectively. In addition to this, Scribe is a plug and play solution, which again like I said earlier is easy to apply and is cost effective, allowing educational institutions to avoid the risk of investing heavily in IT to maintain business continuity in their sector. Logitech is the only company that is providing this type of solution to the education sector, and we're extremely proud to be playing such a key role in education," said Imenchal.

#### Healthcare

The healthcare industry was another sector forced to transform during the pandemic, and once again Logitech was able to help them to react and respond to the new market demands.

"The healthcare sector moved from an attitude of having what they would describe as a 'desired product' in the form of telehealth solutions, which were sort of seen as futuristic prior to the pandemic, to the realisation that they need these solutions now to reduce the risk of infection, so healthcare moved from desired products to mandatory products. Our clients' end-users are doctors, so they need a plug and play solution, that is fixed and seamless, but the most important aspect of all is the protection of data. They need a secure, resilient solution that is not vulnerable to a cyberattack, and once again we were able to provide these solutions," said Imenchal.



#### **Future of Video Collaboration**

The work from anywhere model is here to stay, and companies are enabling their employees to have greater flexibility in how they work, because they can see that productivity and efficiency has increased.

Imenchal believes the hybrid world of work is the future, but that means that more solutions will be needed in relation to video collaboration.

"The world of work was already changing in my opinion, we were always going to get to this point that we find ourselves in today, but the pandemic definitely served as an accelerator there is no doubt about that. We have moved to a hybrid world when it comes to work, so ultimately that means we need more solutions and innovations when it comes to video collaboration to ensure employees can work in a secure environment and enable them to be efficient and productive.

It has been proved that we can do our jobs just as effectively in this new normal, and in many cases, it has been shown that productivity has increased tenfold due to video collaboration. Productivity is very high with video collaboration and companies are happy with this. This is the future," said Imenchal.

#### **Market Differentiator**

Logitech has become the 'goto' player for most industry
verticals when it comes
to video collaboration and
Imenchal believes that its
ability to specifically tailor
their products that address
the very niche needs and
requirements of each customer
from multiple industries is
what differentiates them from
their market rivals.

"Logitech wants to make solutions that are accessible for everyone. They are championing and pioneering this movement from desired products to

mandatory products. Logitech is present in all segments of the market, and deals with startups, SMEs, and large multinational corporations. When the pandemic happened, we were in a position to help companies regardless of size to leverage our video collaboration tools and solutions to maintain business continuity and adapt to the current market environment which were transformed overnight. That is why Logitech became No.1 worldwide during this period. We had solutions in every vertical, but then we spoke to each vertical to gain a better understanding of their problems and then tailored our solution specifically to help them overcome their issues, and a perfect example of this was with Scribe in the education sector. We have an amazing team that really understand the issue in every industry vertical and speaks their language - and nobody else can do this in video collaboration," said Imenchal. **cnme** 

## CONTINUOUS PEN TESTING FOR ACTIVE DIRECTORY



#### Is Your Active Directory Prepared for a Ransomware Attack?

Active Directory is the prime target for ransomware attackers. However, it is woefully unprotected. Attivo Networks disrupts these attacks with unprecedented visibility to exposures, vulnerabilities, and live attacks.

Over 200 Active Directory security checks show risks and detect attacks that lead to domain control for downloading malware, changing security settings, and establishing backdoors. Over 75% of assessments show multiple high-risk exposures. Are you ready? Get a free health check to see.





UC

## TRANSFORMING THE UNIFIED COLLABORATION EXPERIENCE THROUGH AI

**Jamshed Khan,** is a unified collaboration professional that has been a prominent figure in the UC ecosystem for more than 5 years. In an exclusive op-ed for October's edition of CNME, he discloses how he believes that AI will transform the unified collaboration experience.



iscussions lead to ideas and ideas lead to innovation and innovation leads to transformation. So, communication will always be key to successfully running businesses and improving solutions.

Recent pandemic completely changed the way we live work and communicate. It forced us to rethink and find ways to enable work force to communicate and collaborate from any device and any location.

Many businesses struggled to cope with pressure as they didn't have required infrastructure to support demanding and never experienced before situation. This has opened new doors and altered thinking of decision makers. All businesses today are looking to deploy efficient and easy to use collaboration tools not only to increase productivity but to enable their teams and make them ready to face any new future challenge similar to what we faced in the form of Covid-19 pandemic.

Lot of highly skilled and super specialists in their own field don't have permanent employment rather they work on projects with different businesses. Imagine you working with a business using a completely different communication and collaboration tools, using different processes then your previous contractor.

Neither you are expected to invest crucial days on learning new technology, nor does anyone expect the business to put their valuable time in training you on their processes and solution used at corporate level. AI will come to rescue because this will enable to streamline processes and help users in challenging times to pull through such situation.

It will make the whole environment so easy to use that you won't have to learn or need help from others to use technology, no matter where you work or with whom you collaborate.

When we talk about simplicity, ease of use & better user experience AI role can't be denied. Due to its processing power bots can process and analyse huge amount of data, reduce chances of error and provide accurate action plans for decision makers.

Self-learning as a result of processing billions of processes every day makes the tech smarter by the day. Through AI technology, solution can be made simple to use through features like voice commands & interactivity.

A recent survey revealed that 50% younger generation preferred to leave their work if it doesn't provide them with a flexible work environment. Another survey conducted post pandemic suggest that 30% employees, that use to work from office, will permanently work remotely and between 40% to 70% work force will sometime or one way or other will work remotely. Therefore hybrid work environment will stay and is poised to increase in work place of future.

Deep language learning & wider speech recognition will change not only the way we communicate & collaborate with each other but will enable us to communicate with machines as well. Tech giants like Google are investing lot of resources and research into this field.

A very interesting project, LaMDA, initiated by Google will completely transform language processing and I see huge potential and integration of such AI tech integrated within UC solutions that will bring in unique & amazing experience to users.

Practically we will be able to communicate and interact with machines, just like human beings, in future, as a result of such tech integration within UC. Imagine going to meeting room and start the call through voice command. The system asks you if you want to use your credentials (BYOM) or dedicated room credentials to make the call and based on your choice the system makes a call and bring everything relevant (Data) for the meeting to the room. Automation of processes, speech recognition & deep machine learning combined with AI will enable such user experience and ease of use.

Zoom recently announced and

integrated live speech transcript & interpretation to their meeting platform removing language barriers. This will enable businesses to hire talent without facing language challenges and their diverse teams will be able to communicate without language barriers. Such developments and features are made possible with the use of AI and deep machine learning. There are more surprises waiting ahead that will be made possible using and integrating AI in the processes and technologies.

AI will make UC fully interactive enabling voice commands thereby providing personalised user experience. Major such example of AI in language processing is SIRI & Alexa that are getting smarter by the day.

We can already witness AI role in camera technology of room video systems. Speaker tracking, group framing & participant stitching is already making collaboration more productive and effective.

In future AI enabled cameras will be able to profile users and provide analytics on the age, ethnicity, sex and several other details based on facial recognition (Biometrics) and speech accent. With the help of AI systems, one day technology will be able to advise attendees if the room lighting condition, acoustics etc. are favorable or any mismatch need to be addressed.

Similarly, bots will analyse data, profile attendees (customers/partners/suppliers) and provide insight into their preferences, behaviors & expectations in advance so that businesses can prepare themselves in advance to get desired outcomes from meetings. Similarly, noise block features are already in place, but lot of improvement can be achieved in audio field using AI.

As the workplace of future is changing and more open plans are preferred, managing audio distraction during collaboration is very critical part. UC solution providers like Poly provide acoustic fence feature for users of open space work environment. AI is pretty much new when it comes to changing audio experience during collaboration, but it has huge potential of enabling improvements in audio field.

Today, most of UC platforms are providing analytics to some extent but there is a huge potential for future as a result of AI integration within UC tech. systems are providing usage data as of today but in future, we will be able to understand how many persons participated in the meeting, who was involved the most in discussions & who provided most relevant inputs during the meeting.

As the workplace of future keeps changing and new dynamics come into play more and more sophisticated UC solutions will be required.

AI will play major role in achieving user expectations and ease of use for non-technical users, especially those who will work remotely as access to IT resources will be limited to such users. AI tech in UC has already made numerous improvements to UC solution and more interesting developments are in line to surprise us in future.

MICROSOFT UAE

## EMPOWERING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

**Sayed Hashish** tells CNME Editor Mark Forker the details of Microsoft's sustainability mission, outlining that the US tech leader wants to be carbon negative by 2030, but added that the biggest challenge is helping other businesses become more sustainable.

he IT industry is one of the most energy intensive industries in the world, so there has been an emphasis placed on them to become more sustainable as fears over the impact climate change will have on future generations becomes more acute.

Microsoft is one of the most innovative technology companies in the world, and one of the best-known brands, and its solutions allowed us to overcome many of the challenges we faced during the pandemic, especially in terms of enabling business continuity.

So, it should come as no surprise that they are leading the way when it comes to developing a cohesive and robust strategy that is designed to have a profound impact in terms of tackling sustainability issues head on.

In a candid interview with CNME Editor Mark Forker,

Sayed Hashish, General Manager of Microsoft UAE, disclosed their sustainability vision, which he conceded himself is very ambitious.

"Sustainability is a very important topic, not just in the UAE, but across the entire world. As a company we have been very focused over the last few years on driving sustainability, and we have been carbon neutral since 2012. However, what we did beyond that was to announce that we plan to be carbon negative by 2030, and by 2050 we want to remove from the environment all the carbon the company has emitted from the day the company was created in 1975. This is a very ambitious goal that the company has set, but we see ourselves progressing well in terms of achieving our sustainability goals and objectives," said Hashish.

Hashish acknowledged that one of the biggest issues in

terms of addressing wholesale sustainability was helping other companies become sustainable, which isn't as easy if you don't have the adequate resources to transform.

However, he said that technology is the key to bridging this divide – and stressed that it was buildings that generated the most waste and claimed that if we really want to drive societal change around sustainability then we need to make buildings 'smarter'.

"Most waste is driven by buildings, so there is a growing clamor for the development of 'smart buildings' globally. 40% of our energy is consumed by buildings and when you're in a country that has a warm climate for most of the year then it becomes even more important to manage energy consumption within buildings and you need technology to address that. We have partnered



with many leading companies such as Schneider Electric, JCI and Siemens to try and drive the development of these smart buildings, because we want homes and buildings of the future to be energy efficient, which in turn reduces waste. We have two fantastic examples of smart sustainable building projects in the UAE, in the form of Bee'ah and DEWA, so that gives us hope that we are on the right path.

At last year's GITEX, Microsoft showcased sustainable farming and food security and demonstrated how the deployment of technologies like AI enable them to help the agricultural sector to decrease the need for irrigation by 40%.

Hashish also highlighted how Microsoft has built what they call the Microsoft Energy Core in the UAE, which is essentially a center dedicated to digital transformation in the energy sector, to share best practices and showcase innovations to run more efficient and sustainable operations. He also pointed to Microsoft's 'Microsoft Emissions Impact Dashboard' as being a key tool for helping companies manage and measure their carbon footprint.

"We have witnessed a demand from our customers to reduce their carbon footprint, but many were unable to measure it and if you can't measure then how can you measure your progress and determine what impact your sustainability initiatives are having? We created what we call the Microsoft Emissions Impact Dashboard, formerly known as the Microsoft Sustainability Calculator, and this helps our



Our mission as a company is to empower every organization and individual on the planet to achieve more."

customers to basically measure their carbon footprint and relays to them how much they are contributing in terms of carbon, and ultimately informs them on their progress and serves as an indicator as to whether, or not their sustainable strategy is working. Our mission as a company is to empower every organization and individual on the planet to achieve more," said Hashish.

#### The Hybrid Paradox:

The COVID-19 pandemic has

OCTOBER 2021



fundamentally reshaped the way we live, learn and work, and no one could ever have predicted or imagined how seismic the changes to our lives would be, not even a company like Microsoft, who are typically ahead of the curve when it comes to new trends that will drive societal change.

We now live in a hybrid world in terms of the way we view work, and the autonomy given to employees has empowered them.

Hashish believes that the world has changed and will not return

to the way it was, and quoted Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella in saying that we now find ourselves in a 'hybrid paradox'.

"We have seen a desire from people to reinstate human interactions. We know that technology has been great in terms of enabling business continuity, but one area that we were all missing was those human interactions because we are social beings. We closed our office for well over a year, and in a lot of the staff meetings we would have online,

I would regularly be asked when will the office re-open? We decided to re-open on July 1st, and when I went into the office nobody was there! I think what that illustrates is that whilst many miss those human interactions, people also appreciate the flexibility they have in terms of working remotely, and we know that it has driven efficiency and productivity," said Hashish.

The General Manager at Microsoft UAE believes that flexibility is now a key issue for employees in terms of deciding to remain on with their existing employers or in their pursuit of new opportunities, citing the data from their recent Work Trend Index Study as an example of that new trend.

"The hybrid paradox means that it doesn't have to be one or the other. I think there is an acknowledgement that people appreciate the level of flexibility with remote working and gives them the empowerment to choose what is the best way for them to manage their worklife balance. We conducted a work trend index study and that really analyzed the shift in employee expectations and established what the drivers are either in leaning people towards staying with their company or looking for another job. This trend of flexibility in the workplace environment is now featuring prominently amongst employees and is a high priority, and in many cases the topic of flexibility is coming even before salary, and other areas you thought would've been more important," said Hashish.

#### **UAE Golden Jubilee**

The UAE celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, and what it has achieved in half a century is in many ways beyond comprehension. In the latest illustration of its technological prowess EXPO 2020 will be the most connected place on earth.

The country's ascent as a beacon of technological progress and futuristic vision has been driven by progressive leadership that implemented the right infrastructure, processes, and ecosystems in place to drive innovation.

A major cog in that meteoric rise, which has also seen the UAE emerge as a major player in the space race, has been Microsoft, who has been present in the country for 30 years.

However, Hashish stated that Microsoft has always felt part of the 'fabric' in the UAE, and that has enabled them to carry out its mission, which as we have already established is to empower people to achieve more.

"We have never regarded ourselves as a US company operating in the UAE, we think of ourselves as part of the fabric of this society. Many of us have spent quite a long time here, so you have that sense of loyalty and belonging, and we feel that we can use Microsoft as a platform to help the country, which is exactly what the company wants us to do, as it reinforces our mission statement which is to empower people to achieve more through the deployment of technology," said Hashish.

Hashish also pointed out that one of the most appealing aspects that attracted Microsoft to establish a base in the UAE over 30 years ago, was the ambition demonstrated by the UAE leadership, which really resonated with tech luminaries like Microsoft.

"What Microsoft has always appreciated about the UAE is the country's ambitious vision. It's one thing to have an ambitious vision, but it's another thing to have the ability to execute that vision. The UAE is celebrating 50 years, and Microsoft has been here for 30 of those, and we have witnessed the incredible transformation, and we have played a big part in it," said Hashish.

He also stated that Microsoft's commitment to invest in the UAE, was a big factor in attracting other large enterprises and tech entities to invest, which inevitably boosted the country's economy and GDP significantly and paved the way for it to become a nation of innovation.

"As one of the big tech players our presence encouraged others to invest in the region and contributed to laying the foundations for making Dubai a hub of technological innovation. More recently, our

We have never regarded ourselves as a US company operating in the UAE, we think of ourselves as part of the fabric of this society." datacenters which were the first in the UAE sparked a huge move towards cloud, and we believe that move by us will entice other tech players to make similar investments. We are fully committed to the country because we genuinely feel part of the fabric," said Hashish.

GITEX Global 2021
Microsoft have been a
permanent fixture at GITEX
for decades, but their decision
to overhaul their stand last
year paid dividends according
to Hashish, as the company
created a hub that was bustling
with energy, and he is hoping to
replicate that this year.

"GITEX is the region's flagship IT and tech conference, and we were delighted to be there last year. I know many companies opted out, but we were always going to be there, as you see so many new technologies being demonstrated and solutions that can address real problems for businesses in many industry verticals. What we did last year, and I believe we really benefited from it, was our decision to move away from our traditional stand. We increased the size of our stand to allow for social distancing, but we also did it to introduce different experiences, and it very quickly became the Microsoft Hub. This year, it will be very similar, but I'm very excited at the introduction of workshops and panel sessions on all the pressing topics that are top of the agenda in the minds of our customers and partners – and it should be another fantastic GITEX," concluded Hashish. come

**APPSFLYER** 

## **SOCIAL GRACE**

**Samer Saad,** Regional Manager, Middle East at AppsFlyer has penned an exclusive op-ed for October's edition of CNME, in which he outlines how many of the region's FinTech innovators can appeal to digital natives in the new digital economy.

hile many sectors were undeniably hit hard by the pandemic, others adapted quickly. Among these was the financial services industry, which recognised that the digital-native mindset is now more relevant than it has ever been. Indeed, many brands recognised that to prove value and stay competitive, being able to offer exceptional digital experiences is key.

The region's fintech sector is as vibrant as ever, with Saudi fintech firm Tweeq closing a seven-figure funding deal in June this year, and Dubai International Financial Center's FinTech Hive named in Global Finance's "World's Best Innovation Labs 2021" list in the same month.

A Deloitte study from June last year showed 82% of Middle East banking customers to be

Perhaps the greatest advantage of social marketing is that feedback and measurement are built in."

ready and willing to use fintech solutions. This willingness was especially prominent in Saudi Arabia, and customers showed particular interest in peer-to-peer money transfers, account aggregation and automated investment advice. But the report also found that regional banks were "not leveraging the full suite of fintech solutions/ features to enhance the banking journey and experience".

#### A connected consumer base

Financial institutions must see the "new normal" reality in the context of their customers' connectivity. The Arab Gulf region, for example, has some famously high smartphone penetration rates, with recent estimates ranging from a current rate of 88% in Saudi Arabia to a projected figure of more than 97% in the UAE by 2025.

The GSMA's Mobile Economy 2020 report for the Middle East and North Africa estimates that around 45% of the regional population, or 280 million people, are now connected to mobile Internet.

Fintech firms must also take into account the reach and targeting power of social media. According to GMI, almost 99% of the UAE population is now active on social platforms.

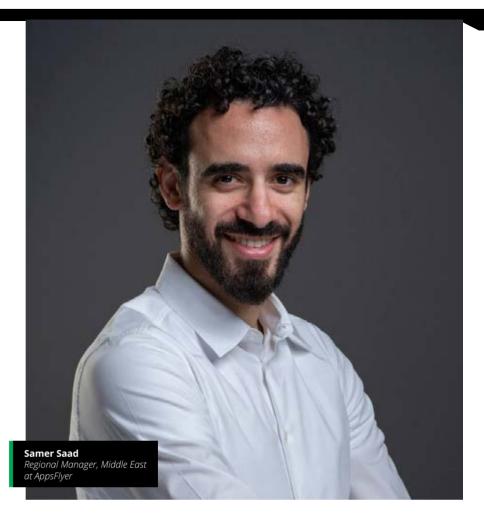
And in Saudi Arabia, social penetration stands at just over 79%. If FSI organisations can segment and individualise these social audiences, they can create superior user experiences and optimise the returns on their investments.

Social media strategy must be thought of as a lifecycle strategy — a means to fine-tune the fintech app experience before, during and after launch. Creating excitement around an indevelopment experience can be as important as a smooth launch.

Hype, done effectively, boosts downloads and elevates the public profile of the digital offering. If social communities are built around the app before it becomes available, then the likelihood increases that positive post-launch experiences will translate to user-generated conversations and ambassadorship on social channels.

#### Retention vs acquisition

Across the region, social marketing's CPM cost model is cheaper than traditional channels and the reach and effectiveness of this approach is also demonstrably superior. Cost-per-action (CPA) campaigns can drastically ease the risk burden on



marketers and reduce the cost of acquisition, because only desirable actions and positive engagement from consumers lead to a campaign cost.

Because of the strong ties consumers have to their social media communities, marketing through this channel can be a more effective route to customer retention. Reengaging existing customers is now famously cheaper than acquiring new ones.

A fifth of the cost, a seventh of the cost — estimates vary, but trying to get users that have already downloaded the app to start using it again is many orders of magnitude easier than convincing a non-user to try it for the first time.

This is especially true when seen in the context of historical usage statistics, which are not encouraging. Some apps are downloaded and never used or used only once. But the same studies show impressive traction from remarketing (also known as retargeting) campaigns. In other words, downloads are not the ultimate goal; engagement is.

Social media platforms are designed to place users in a more receptive mental state where they absorb continuous streams of information very quickly. When crafting a re-engagement campaign, FSI firms and their fintech partners should think about mutual communication rather than broadcast-style brand messaging. Building rapport is the first step to a trust relationship, which can lead to more consistent engagement and app usage.

#### The power of measurement

Perhaps the greatest advantage of social marketing is that feedback and measurement are built in. The right digital attribution platform will allow fintech developers to tie sales and other desirable customer engagement to specific actions taken during the development or marketing processes.

Whether a customer conversion was caused by an app feature or an ad on a social platform, business stakeholders will know what works and will have the opportunity to duplicate it in future offerings and campaigns.

Once a fintech organisation can target its actions along the go-to-market lifecycle, it will immediately reap rewards — cost-effective operations, increased engagement, soaring revenues, and healthier bottom lines.

The right attribution platform will allow decision-makers to see customer journeys that were cut short before desirable actions occurred and discover why. They will know whether a download was initiated and if any app usage followed. This is actionable information with great potential value behind it.

The region's FSI industry is a competitive zone that must satisfy a digitally entrenched user base day to day, year to year. When looking for inroads that will penetrate the mindset of such consumers and build meaningful, lasting relationships with them, social channels are the answer. With the right attribution tools, enterprises will be able to build those roads quickly and keep them free of potholes.



#### SOLARWINDS

## JUST DO 'IT'

**Sascha Giese,** Head Geek at SolarWinds, spoke to CNME Editor Mark Forker ahead of the IT software leaders' participation at GITEX Global 2021.

n a wide-ranging interview, Giese highlighted the plethora of products that SolarWinds will be showcasing during the region's leading IT and technology symposium, spoke of what he believes distinguishes the company in terms of its ITOM offering from other market rivals, the importance of their channel ecosystem, particularly in the Middle East - and how all problems in IT are the same regardless of your geographic location.

#### **GITEX Global 2021**

GITEX is the flagship IT and technology conference in the Middle East, and this year's edition, which has been named GITEX Global is one of the most highly anticipated in recent memory.

GITEX, which was held in December last year served as a symbol of hope as one of the first physical events since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Granted, it was a much leaner version of GITEX that we are all normally accustomed to, but it provided us with a sense of normality after a year unlike any we had ever experienced, so with that mind there is much fervor and vigor for this year's conference.

SolarWinds have also faced challenges in 2020, the well-documented attacks on its Orion Platform in 2020 sent shockwaves through the IT industry, but it has rebounded well and is looking ahead to 2022 with a renewed sense of optimism.

Giese said that GITEX represented a great opportunity to meet people face-to-face – but he conceded that ultimately the conference is designed to showcase the products that you believe can really impact the marketplace

"The ability to meet face-toface at GITEX Global provides a fantastic opportunity for us to network and engage with our partners and customers. It's great to meet with existing customers and instead of asking them what's new, we are determining how a certain solution from us that has been deployed by them and has helped them overcome their challenges. However, the primary objective of attending a conference like GITEX Global is to showcase and demonstrate new solutions and technologies that you believe are going to positively impact the market," said Giese.

Giese was coy in terms of what specific products and solutions SolarWinds will be promoting at GITEX Global, as he attempts to try and keep the element of surprise at bay until the event. However, he did acknowledge that they have a very broad range of products

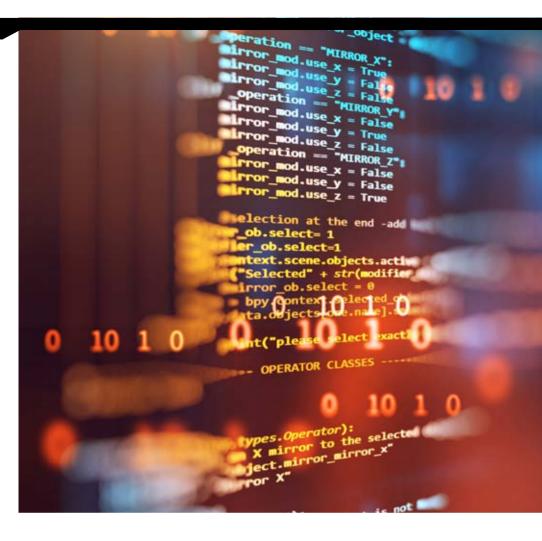
and that there will be plenty to see from the company at GITEX.

"We're very lucky based on our timeframes that we had a series of updates published just a few weeks ago, so we will showcase those updates and highlight the key features in each. In terms of our products, we do have a very broad portfolio with a lot of diversity in terms of the challenges they solve for our customers. Some of these products include UI interfaces and API's that were specifically designed for more complicated devices. In addition to this, there was a customer feature request for Google cloud sequel databases, so in summary there really is a lot for us to showcase at this year's GITEX Global," said Giese.

#### Just do 'IT'

ITOM is the provisioning of IT infrastructure, capacity management, cost-control activities, performance and security management and availability management for all IT infrastructure and assets. SolarWinds is regarded as a global leader when it comes to its ITOM offering, but when asked what he believes it is that differentiates SolarWinds from other ITOM providers, Giese believes there are a wide number of factors at play.

"I think what really distinguishes SolarWinds from other market rivals is our story, nobody can tell a story like we do. We have a huge portfolio with more than 50 products, and it



is very well-rounded and built to work together. We create our products with the IT professional in mind, so effectively the guys that will be using these products on a day-to-day basis. They need valuable solutions in their toolkit that can drastically lower the stress that is

77

I think what really distinguishes SolarWinds from other market rivals is our story, nobody can tell a story like we do." being placed on them, which inevitably allows them to get more work done, and that in turn will have a positive impact on the whole IT department, which will drive more productivity, efficiency, and innovation," said Giese.

One other key differentiator for SolarWinds is their pricing and the fact that they enable the companies that they work with to significantly reduce their costs, whilst he also pointed out that prior to the pandemic many key decision makers did not fully appreciate the importance of IT.

"We also provide an ITOM offering that reduces costs substantially, but essentially the day-to-day work of the IT professional is where we start. If we look back to before the onset of the COVID-19



pandemic, we had already heard murmurings of significant budget cuts because many leaders and decision-makers quite simply did not fully understand the power of IT for the company. This situation obviously deteriorated for many companies during the pandemic as a direct result of this attitude and stance. We are still living in very uncertain times, so it is very important that we have tools that are robust, resilient and that we can rely on to make your life easier," said Giese.

The channel industry in the Middle East is in many ways the backbone of the IT infrastructure of the region, and Giese highlighted just how important the channel is for SolarWinds business model in the Middle East.

#### Finding the Right Channel

"The channel ecosystem is so important for us. We rely on our partner networks to build the relationships onsite. This is particularly very important in the Middle East and our partners know our customers, and have relationships with them that spans decades, and that acute understanding of the culture in the market is also critically important to nurturing and managing relationships. Obviously, we don't possess that ability, so we are dependent on our partners, and in fact, the Middle East region is very similar to Germany, which is also extremely channel focused," said Giese.

The Middle East is a hive of activity and there are huge opportunities due to the progressive agendas being pursued by countries in the GCC region, most notably the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and Giese

confirmed they will continue to invest in the region.

"For SolarWinds, the Middle East is a big target market for us because there is so much happening across the region, and so much has already happened, so we are aiming to leverage our expertise and knowledge to capitalise on the burgeoning opportunities that exist in the market. However, for us to do that then we need to build a channel and partner ecosystem that can help us achieve our goals and objectives," said Giese.

#### Back to the Future

In terms of what the future holds and what challenges he expects to encounter coming down the track, Giese said that regardless of being based in Europe, or the Middle East, all IT are the same wherever you are in the world.

"Problems in IT are always the same and it doesn't matter where you are and where you are located. We solve those problems and that is what we do. For example, you might be in a part of the world where cloud adoption is slower, or you might be based in a location where internet connectivity to enterprises is slower and a lot less reliable. There are of course minor differences and nuances, but if we speak to someone from Saudi Arabia or Switzerland, or likewise the financial sector or the energy industry, the challenges and problems in relation to IT are the same everywhere," concluded Giese.



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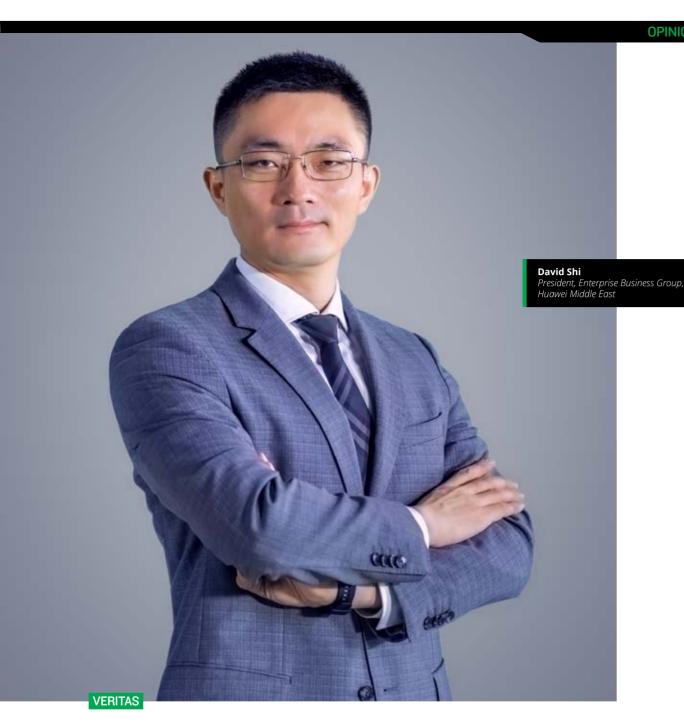
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## **DIVE INTO DIGITAL**

David Shi, President, Enterprise Business Group, Huawei Middle East, outlines how the global ICT vendor is planning on using disruptive technologies to fuel industrial digital transformation.

n recent years, countries around the world have witnessed seismic shifts in their economies, societies, and environment. With disruptions in every major economic sector ranging from ecommerce in retail, ondemand entertainment, travel and hospitality, to the advent of FinTech in banking and insurance, digital transformation across all industries is redefining

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#### Digital transformation is creating an opportunity for innovation across all industries."

the world we live in. The public sector is also now at the helm of a major digital transformation—enhancing healthcare delivery, providing more inclusive education access, and creating more intelligent grids for smarter cities.

At the same time, we have seen various technological innovations across industries. Deeper connectivity, intelligence, cloud and big data have now become a reality, unlocking new possibilities to key national challenges. Such advanced technologies have completely altered the way we interact, learn, and work.

According to Huawei's Global Industry Vision (GIV) 2025 predictions, it is estimated that 97% of global enterprises will have implemented digital transformation through intelligent upgrades by 2025.

Meanwhile, a report from Kenneth Research notes that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) digital transformation market, valued at USD 1.12 billion in 2015, is forecasted to reach at USD 2.79 billion by 2025, garnering a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.4%. As early as next year, IDC has forecasted that 60% of global gross domestic product will be digitised by 2022.

#### A value-driven model for industrial digitalisation

At Huawei, we believe that all ideas must be tested in reallife situations. After years of practice, Huawei has proposed a value-driven model for industrial digitalisation. Huawei also maintains that digital transformation should be focused on actual business use scenarios, which can then be used to create value for customers through continuous improvement.

Huawei is thus committed to working with customers and partners to integrate core business scenarios with ICT technologies, and accelerate industrial digitalisation through scenariospecific, innovative solutions.

During this journey, we believe that three basic principles must be followed. First, companies must continue to be customercentric. This is the starting point of digital transformation. Secondly, they must seize two key factors: the convergence of technologies and scenarios is the key to digitalisation, while cloud is critical to continuous optimisation and value creation in the digital era.

Thirdly, businesses should focus on customer requirements to build a symbiotic and shared digital ecosystem from three dimensions: scenario exploration, capacity building, and a cooperation model to jointly create new value for industries.

#### Cooperating with customers and partners to create new value in the industry

Going digital is no longer just for internet companies. It's expanding to traditional industries, and from the office to the production floor. We will keep innovating in technology and scenario-based solutions to help all industries take advantage of this opportunity.

In this context, so far, Huawei has built 13 Open Labs around the world to support joint innovation. Specifically in Dubai, we are working with ecosystem partners to incubate different solutions for industrial scenarios. To date, Huawei has successfully verified more than 60 solutions in areas ranging from smart retail to smart manufacturing.

On the technology side, Huawei is innovating in areas like smart campuses, deterministic networks, hyper-integrated data centers, smart clouds, and green energy to lay the foundation for an intelligent future.

#### Diving into digital for a brighter future

Digital transformation is creating an opportunity for innovation across all industries. Today, we are seeing a complete reinvention of products, services and experiences being delivered to the market.

During GITEX Technology
Week 2021, we will be hosting the
Huawei MENA Industrial Digital
Transformation Summit on
October 19. In the summit, Huawei
will share insights on digital
transformation, with a focus on
digitalisation in the government
sector and cloud for enterprises.

We will also dive into details of successful digital transformation practices and explore how we can jointly build a dynamic ecosystem for collaboration and shared success.

By doing so, we can help organisations across the Middle East to rethink every aspect of their business in order to succeed in this digital era.



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CLOUD COMPUTING

# CLOUD IS THE 'FUTURE' OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

CNME Editor Mark Forker takes a closer look at the role cloud computing is going to play in terms of being the main fulcrum for businesses to grow and expand in the new and at times complex digital economy we find ourselves immersed in.



t has been well-documented by now that the global COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for digital transformation en-masse, especially here in the Middle East, and enterprises strategy for migrating to the cloud was accelerated well ahead of schedule to meet and cope with the new market demands being placed upon their traditional business models.

There are many technologies that fuel our digital ecosystem, but the impact of cloud computing on the Middle East GDP cannot be understated, and it has positioned itself to be the critical technology that underpins everything from security to data management and everything else in between.

What cloud computing is going to create an environment that will allow our society to become more intelligent, but whilst the phenomenal capabilities presented by the cloud is unparalleled and undisputed, what has also become evident over the last 18 months is that many enterprises and organisations have struggled to adapt to the demands of cloud transformation.

Recent research conducted by IDC unearthed that 92% of CEOs in the Middle East are under pressure to deliver digital transformation via the cloud.

Taher Haj-Yousef, Regional Manager for Rimini Street Middle East reinforced the viewpoint that cloud computing is among the most dramatic recent developments in the world of IT – but stressed the need for careful planning when it comes to executing their digital transformation strategy for the cloud.

"Organisations starting out on their digital transformation journey usually choose a "small-steps" approach and adopt the pragmatic approach of a hybrid cloud model. This is because different workloads require different cloud strategies and there are many best-of-breed alternatives to moving to the vendor's SaaS version. There is no "one size fits all" approach to cloud and there are alternatives to moving lock-stock to vendor offerings. Organisations need to make a call based on business case, business need, and technical and regulatory compliance.

It has become clear that from compute power to

77

It is estimated that by 2025, 100% of enterprises will connect in some form to cloud services, and 85% of enterprise applications will be deployed in the cloud, according to forecasts from Huawei.

business applications and programming tools, the cloud connects organisations to a global ecosystem of technological progress – and many IT analysts believe these computing power and applications will be as easily accessible as water and electricity and will become largely invisible in terms of its impact in our day-to-day lives.

We know that as consumers our expectations have become heightened due to the role that technology plays in our lives, and that every company is now glamouring to deliver first-class 'digital experiences' that their end-users demand, and innovative combinations of cloud, connectivity, AI, and computing with industry applications are making it possible to inject intelligence into all scenarios. That means new experiences for consumers, new applications for individual

industries, and a reshuffle of entire industries.

So much so that it is estimated that by 2025, 100% of enterprises will connect in some form to cloud services, and 85% of enterprise applications will be deployed in the cloud, according to forecasts from Huawei.

Research by Accenture further suggests that many businesses have already recognised becoming "cloud first" as the key enabler for their digital transformation, with over 90% of enterprises having adopted cloud in some form or another.

The investments being made in this space are even more striking. Spending on public cloud services is expected to grow approximately 26% this year in the Middle East, Turkey & Africa (META) region to USD3.7 billion, according to IDC. This contrasts with just a 2.8% expansion in spending in the broader IT market, according to the research firm.

This has in turn led to a surge of innovation within the cloud computing market.

In particular, many hightech companies in China are now doubling down on software-driven solutions, notably in the area of cloud computing. Entities like Alibaba, Tencent, and Huawei are all increasing their investments in the cloud market, delivering new platforms and applications to a global customer base.

In the case of Huawei, for example, the company's

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founder recently called on the company's staff to "dare to lead the world" in software. The HUAWEI CLOUD is already one of the world's fastestgrowing major cloud service providers, with over 220 cloud services and 210 solutions. Just this month, it also launched its self-developed HarmonyOS operating system across a slew of devices, part of an effort along with an increasing focus on cloud computing to bring novel services to international customers. This is all part of a strategy to use the cloud to create "fertile soil" for the intelligent world to flourish by enabling applications and data.

Moreover, companies like Huawei are now enhancing the synergy between cloud, AI, and connectivity to provide public cloud services and hybrid cloud solutions that deliver several layers of added value—especially in terms of stability, reliability, security, trustworthiness, and sustainability.

According to the Gartner report Market Share: IT
Services, Worldwide 2020,
HUAWEI's 2020 IaaS market share ranks No.2 in China, No.
3 in Thailand market, No.4 in the emerging Asia Pacific market, and No. 5 in the global market.

HUAWEI's IaaS revenue grew fastest in the global market between 2019 and 2020, compared to the other vendors included for analysis.

During their recent

Huawei CLOUD Summit 2021 conference in Singapore, Mr Zeng Xingyun, President of Huawei CLOUD APAC, said, "As we celebrate our 20th anniversary in Singapore, Huawei is committed to providing reliable, secure, and cost-effective cloud services to empower applications, harness the power of data, and help organisations of all sizes grow and we aim to be the mainstream cloud vendor and digital transformation leader in the region."

Ultimately, a deep-seated desire for cloud services from local governments and enterprises has led to a more open, globalised, and competitive cloud marketplace. It is an ecosystem that bodes well for the Gulf's business community.

There is ample space for both traditional service providers and relatively newer cloud entrants—such as those from China. In both cases, these companies are increasingly differentiating themselves based on inventive solutions customised for local market needs. Businesses are in turn benefitting from access to new applications from all over the world in areas like AI, blockchain, and others.

At a time when entire industries are be being disrupted, this diversification of the cloud services market is a significant trend that offers organisations powerful tools to be more innovative in creating value and serving their customers.





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CISCO

## THE GREAT HYBRID EXPERIMENT

**Francine Katsoudas.** Executive Vice President and Chief People, Policy & Purpose Officer of Cisco outlines Cisco's views the new world of work in an exclusive op-ed for October's GITEX edition of CNME.

n this role, Fran oversees critical functions that instill Cisco's conscious culture, contribute to the company's overall performance, and advance Cisco's purpose to Power an Inclusive Future for All.

The great hybrid work experiment is about to begin. For Cisco, the task is clear – how to make the World's Best Workplace the World's Best Hybrid Workplace. We know there is much trial and error ahead and a lot for us to learn, but here are some of the things we do know.

Remote is nothing new for Cisco. In early 2020, when our entire company went remote, the transition was actually not as hard as it may have seemed. There are employees at Cisco who have worked here for over a decade and have been "remote" the entire time. This is made possible via investments in digitisation, and particularly, the use of collaboration solutions.

But we know that the office has changed forever, and we won't be returning to the office or using physical space in the same way as before. While about half of our employees were in the office four to five days a week prepandemic, less than a quarter want to be in an office three or more days a week when offices re-open.

This data mirrors an earlier Workforce of the Future survey we conducted with 10,000 respondents across 12 markets in Europe, the Middle East and Russia. Findings revealed that office employees want to keep hold of many positives that

emerged in our new way of working. Even though only 5% of those surveyed worked from home most of the time before the lockdown, now, the majority hope to keep this autonomy. 87% of respondents want greater ownership in defining how and when they use office spaces – showing that a blended approach, and ongoing digital workplace transformation is the best way forward.

And as the world has changed, so too has the importance of empathy and well-being. We put mental health front and center at Cisco three years ago, which served us well as our people navigated the challenges and concerns produced by the pandemic. This focus will remain for us in the new world of work, requiring leaders who have empathy,

flexibility, and proximity top of mind. Globally and here in the Middle East and Africa, governments are undertaking new measures to address mental health and reduce stigma. Initiatives designed for both locals and expatriates are crucial, at both an institutional and company level — especially in today's climate.

So what will this new world of work be? Hybrid. Whether that means you work five days a week at home and gather with your team inperson for social activities, or that you are in the office five days a week, leveraging the collaborative office configuration and technology to connect to your colleagues around the world – every Cisco employee will be hybrid.

#### Work is not where you go, it's what you do

Our people have adapted incredibly well to changing workstyles, demonstrating resilience and productivity 77

Our people have adapted incredibly well to changing workstyles, demonstrating resilience and productivity during a challenging and uncertain period."

during a challenging and uncertain period. But we've also learned that workstyles and work preferences are different for everyone. There is no one-size-fits-all. To best play to our employees' strengths, we have to be flexible, adaptable, and open to what works best for each individual and team.

Because we know that when we get teams right, we win. So we are going to leave it up to teams themselves to determine how they'll work best in this new hybrid world. That means no set mandate from the top on numbers of days in – or out – of the office.

We know this will be a learn-as-we-go process and a challenge for our leaders. So we will check in with our leaders and teams every few months to determine what is working and what is not, making the necessary adjustments. We will also continue to listen and use our peoples' direct feedback to determine the future direction of how we work as a company.

#### New Commitments for a New World of Work

For us to succeed, we have to establish new and elevated levels of trust and transparency within our teams and our company as a whole. To do this, we are championing what we are calling Our Collaboration Commitments — a set of expectations and beliefs laid





out for individuals, leaders, and teams around topics including accountability, inclusion, and well-being. A leader commitment around well-being, for example, states, "I understand how my team members work and what they achieve matters more than where and when they work." These commitments will help set the tone for the culture we will need for our people and teams to succeed.

We know that leaders will have a central role to play in creating and maintaining this conscious culture. It will be our team leaders who will model our hybrid work philosophy, leading with empathy and proximity to their teams. We are experimenting with new methods of team and leader learning to support the transition into this new way of working. If we can get it right, we know that a spirit of adaptability will allow us

to meet our business needs, while playing to the strengths of our people and their preferred workstyles.

#### **Powering Hybrid Work**

Any approach to hybrid work requires being able to connect using seamless and secure infrastructure, at the heart of which is collaboration technology. At Cisco, we think about powering hybrid work in two distinct ways: enabling a Hybrid Workforce and transforming Hybrid

77

Any approach to hybrid work requires being able to connect using seamless and secure infrastructure, at the heart of which is collaboration technology."

Workspaces. Enabling a
Hybrid Workforce means
providing secure access and
collaboration technology
to utilise from anywhere,
anytime. Transforming your
Hybrid Workspace must bring
together networking, security,
and collaboration tools to
enhance health and wellbeing, safety, and efficiencies.

Take Webex as an example. We have the unique opportunity to embed inclusion into our collaboration platform, marked by wellbeing and ensuring every voice is heard and valued. Our new People Insights feature aligns with the goals people set personally for their meetings, work-life integration, connections, and focus time, helping people work smarter and combat burnout. And we now have innovations that include real-time translations and meeting transcriptions from English into 108 languages and counting

(including Arabic), and gesture recognition allows users to communicate non-verbally without having to tap icons. Such innovations will help us ensure that we are powering a hybrid world that levels the playing field and works for everyone, everywhere.

#### Real Estate for a Purpose

As we begin to open our offices around the world, we have to ensure that our people aren't returning to the same offices that they left. Much like how work has fundamentally changed, the purpose of our physical space must fundamentally change too. Instead of a focus on the where, the focus is on the work.

Before the pandemic, 95% of our space was allocated

to individuals. That needs to change. We must transform the purpose of our offices to be centers of collaboration places that people can come together for rituals, collective work, and connection. For some teams that will happen a couple days a week, while for others it could be coming together once a month. But the purpose of coming into the office should be exactly that – purposeful. In the hybrid world we will better utilise our offices by transforming them into spaces optimised for teams to innovate, collaborate, and connect.

#### A Sustainable Future (of Work)

Right now, we have the opportunity to impact not only what the future of work will

be, but what the future of our planet will be. By bridging our hybrid work approach with our commitment to sustainability, we can ensure that when Cisco has a significant presence in a community our impact on that community is positive. This spirit of community enrichment is already part of our ethos at Cisco – we've reached over 75% community impact participation by our employees, and we know we can go even further.

Rethinking space utilisation, developing sustainable and regenerative products, designing energy efficient and carbon-reducing buildings these are all on the table as we transform how we work and the impact we have on the world around us. We know that Cisco's products and platforms can – and must power a hybrid world that has sustainability at its core, because an inclusive future of work must be a sustainable future of work.

#### The Great Hybrid Experiment

We know that the move to a hybrid world is not going to be easy. There will be growing uncertainties and concerns. But the challenges of hybrid work are our opportunities for innovation. The opportunity to create a future of work that is more inclusive, more connected, and more collaborative than the one that came before. If we do this right, we can usher in a better future for our people, our communities, and our world. Let the experiment begin.



**RAQMIYAT** 

## RAQMIYAT: A MANAGED SERVICES PROVIDER YOU CAN TRUST

In a superb interview with CNME, **Abhijeet Sanyal,** Vice President – Technology Staffing Services at Raqmiyat, talks about how the company is helping its customers address their talent acquisition problems, what differentiates them as a managed services provider – and tells us more about their Microsoft Services portfolio.

an you outline to our readers in detail how Raqmiyat TSS (Technology Staffing Services) is helping businesses address their talent acquisition and retention issues?

Raqmiyat with its TSS business has been at the forefront of talent acquisition and contingency workforce management for many years. Over the years as the industry has evolved so has the talent acquisition strategies.

Since Raqmiyat is not just a staffing company (we are a Digital Transformation enabler) we have the knowhow as to what is required by the business/governments to achieve their digital transformation objectives.

Our talent acquisition teams engage with the business owners (not just HR/ recruitment functions) and formulate hiring plans that are robust/dynamic and align with the overall strategy and vision of the organisation.

Coming to the next pain point of retention of good talent, we at Raqmiyat pay a lot of attention to this aspect as the cost of hiring a new competent resource is much more than the cost of losing a good resource.

To overcome this, we have an efficient Employee Relations team at all locations who connect with our associates periodically and also on a need basis / understand their pain points and resolve them through comprehensive dialogues.

Sometimes, there are issues where we need to involve the customers as well. I can proudly say that the attrition levels at Raqmiyat are way lower than the industry average and multiple factors are attributing for the same.

Raqmiyat has provided TSS for







#### Services that differentiates you from your market rivals? Is it your experience and trust that distinguishes you?

I agree with you that IT Managed Services is a crowded marketplace. However, it is not saturated and there is ample scope to penetrate and create your own niche. Raqmiyat brings a value not many can as we can proudly say that we are a 100% Emirati company which is owned by Al Ghurair Group. We come in with our range of services that complement the IT Managed Services which the customers typically need.

Though we started this practice only couple of years back we have seen a tremendous positive trend and have executed large government projects with aplomb.

The trust with the brand Raqmiyat brings to the table is something that is unmissable and of course, the team we have is well experienced in managing such projects effortlessly.

Can you give us more information on your Microsoft Services Portfolio and explain how your customers can enhance their business

#### operations from these services?

Raqmiyat has restarted its Microsoft Practice. I will be leading this challenge in the coming years. There are three broad areas we will be focusing on for the short term before we establish ourselves in this space and then grow further.

Microsoft Modern
Workplace solutions (O365,
Teams, Sharepoint, Endpoint
Management, Security
solutions, etc ) are meant
for customers to improve
employee productivity and
satisfaction, and create more
seamless communication
and collaboration across
locations and platforms while
maintaining the security and
integrity of systems and data.

Microsoft Azure - - It is the Microsoft Cloud Platform.

The trust with the brand Raqmiyat brings to the table is something that is unmissable and of course, the team we have is well experienced in managing such projects effortlessly."

Advanced digital capabilities to cater to real-time decision making and situation handling is the USP of cloud Infrastructure. Customers are gaining agility and efficiency, driving innovation through new data-driven insights, and capturing new advantages through cloud-based advances. From infrastructure and data management to industryleading AI and Internet of Things (IoT) capabilities, your customers need a cloud platform that's ready for their most ambitious goals to outperform their competitors on their terms.

Microsoft Business Application ( on Cloud ERP - Microsoft D 365) - Controlling business activity through seamless integration of business departments and activities which allows top management to take decision based on real-time scenarios. With Advancement in technologies, real-time decision making and insights into the current business and market situation to decide the growth path has become the need of the hour. Microsoft D 365 is amongst the top cloud-based ERP available in the market. cnme









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KISSFLOW

## FINDING THE RIGHT CODE

**Rahul Bhageeradhan,** Global Director – Digital Architecture at Kissflow has offered his take on the lucrative low-code market and documented 4 key clear metrics that businesses can use to measure the ROI of low-code.



he worldwide
Low-code market
is projected to total
\$13.8 billion in 2021,
an increase of 22.6% from 2020
. With massively accelerated
application development
lifecycles, this comes as little
surprise. However, given the
pressure businesses are under to
justify every investment, CIOs
must look to answer whether

there are specific ways to measure if Low-code platforms are living up to their cost.

So how can CIOs and IT leaders do so? Here are four options that you are probably already tracking that can help you show whether or not you are getting your money's worth from a low-code platform.

#### ROI Metric #1: Reduced IT Backlog

As the demand for more custom applications mounts, most IT teams don't have an effective way to handle it. One area where a Low-code platform should have a significant effect is on reducing the number of IT application requests and/ or allowing developers to work through them faster.

A Low-code platform geared toward citizen developers lets you offload the responsibility for creation of these applications from the IT team onto the business leaders themselves. Recent reports indicate that 71% of organisations that leverage citizen development have sped up application development by at least 50%, and 29% of companies have seen a 2X or more jump in delivery time.

#### **How to Measure**

Track the number of requests you currently have for custom applications. Invite business leaders to submit their wish list for new tools. Make an assessment of how long it would take your IT team to clear off all the requests without a Lowcode platform.

Compare the complete list with the capabilities of the Low-code platform. Which apps could be made by the requester, and which ones are complex enough that they require IT to be involved? How quickly could the request queue be reduced?

#### ROI Metric #2: Digital Transformation Progress

Every CIO's biggest priority is digital transformation. After the main systems of an organization are digitised, IT teams are often faced with a never-ending list of

### $\sqrt{1}$

## Implementing a low-code platform should greatly advance IT leaders march towards a complete digital takeover."

processes and systems that need to be brought into the digital fold. The task is overwhelming, and most solutions don't scale. Implementing a Low-code platform should greatly advance the IT leader's march towards a complete digital takeover.

#### How to Measure

Use your current digital transformation roadmap. What realistic benchmarks have you currently set? After implementing a Low-code platform, how would your roadmap change? What requirements are simple enough that a business user could bring his or her own department into a fully digital space? How much time could you eliminate from the entire transformation roadmap? How much more complete of a transformation would be possible?

#### ROI Metric #3: Reduced IT Spend

While IT budgets are not extremely tight right now, technology development has always had a scaling problem.

This can be eliminated by choosing a Low-code platform with the right pricing model. A Low-code tool priced per user often allows you to create an unlimited number of apps on the platform, with the cost of each app going down the more apps you create. Platforms that are priced on a per-app basis will offer more firmly correlated cost savings based on how many apps you create.

#### How to Measure

One metric you will use: what would it cost me to build the same number of apps with and without the Low-code platform?

Given the current demand for custom apps, how many additional staff would you require to complete all the work in a desired time frame? What would be the complete cost to the company for these additional resources?

Another part of the equation is the current cost of all the single-point solutions used across the organisation. What solutions have been rejected/delayed due to no additional budget? Could all of these needs be created with custom apps from a Low-code platform? What would the current/potential savings be?

#### **ROI Metric #4: Reduced Stress**

One of the most common, but least discussed, reasons for turning to a Low-code solution is simply the level of chaos that most IT teams are constantly facing. When deadlines aren't met, tensions rise. Studies show that among IT teams that used

Low-code solutions, business units are 21% happier with lead times than among those without Low-code. While potentially the hardest to quantify, this return might be the most valuable.

#### How to Measure

How much time does your IT team currently spend on support tickets, feature enhancements, and escalations around existing applications? Shifting to a Low-code platform should greatly reduce these.

What projects have you said "no" to recently? When the IT team is swamped with existing tasks, there is a lot of opportunity lost and added stress by turning down and diverting high-impact projects.

How do other business units feel towards IT? Take a survey of other business leaders to ask how they feel about IT. Are they satisfied by the response time, development time, and other metrics? A Low-code development platform can go a long way to improve these relationships as IT becomes an enabler rather than a stopgap.

Whether you are a large enterprise or an emerging SMB, a Low-code platform can provide lots of dividends. Identifying your primary success metrics is the best place to start. Are you primarily looking for a tool for decreasing the IT backlog? Reducing stress? Advancing digital transformation? Having a clear picture in mind will help you extract the greatest value from your Low-code investment.



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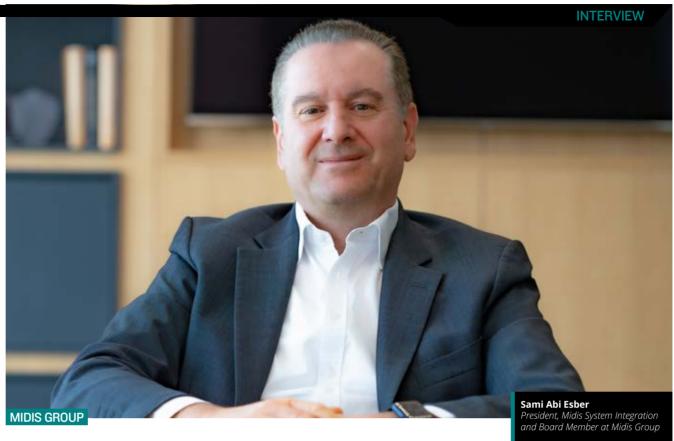
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## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION

**Sami Abi Esber,** President, Midis System Integration and Board Member at Midis Group, explains how they have helped their customers overcome the challenges they faced with cloud transformation, the core components of what he defines as digital transformation – and its participation at this year's GITEX Global 2021.

any businesses are struggling to adapt to the demands of cloud transformation. In your expert opinion, why do you think enterprises are

struggling, and how are Midis Group leveraging their expertise to help companies cope with the challenges they are facing? The Middle East is witnessing multiple tailwinds for cloud transformation. By one estimate(1), the MEA cloud computing market size is expected to grow from \$14.2 billion to \$31.4 billion by 2026. While this is an incredibly healthy growth rate, it comes with its own challenges.

Let me here differentiate

between two types of challenges facing such increased adoption, the first type has to do with the decision to adopt cloud as a platform. The second type of challenges is about truly realising the benefit of "cloud transformation", simply said, not every cloud migration is a cloud transformation.

For the first type, some customers are apprehensive about cybersecurity, while many others are wary of real cost, vendor lock-ins and skill gaps Some also don't know how to handle the complexities involved in the assessment of cloud migration, the planning and smooth execution. For this type of challenges, we offer customers a suite of comprehensive services in the assessment, planning and migration services to help customers throughout the process.

Such services address their concern about vendor-lock ins, security and smooth migration. The other type of challenges relates to cloud transformation. Once you embark on the cloud journey, you realise that the cloud really shines if you know how to take full advantage of it, by that we mean how you can optimise your cost on the cloud, how you can have an architecture that scales based on microservices and serverless architecture and how can you effectively manage, operate and secure the new environment.

For this type of challenges,



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We believe that there are many elements to sustaining a successful operation. At Midis, we adopt certain values and operating principles that help us navigate our journey."

and through our unparalleled eco-system of technology partners, we offer customers the expertise and insights on how to achieve true cloud transformation competitively.

Digital transformation is everywhere, and every major industry vertical has been forced to embrace it in some shape or form over the last 18 months. However, what do you believe are the key principles that must be embedded in every digital transformation strategy?



To begin with, there is no cookie-cutter approach to digital transformation. Businesses must have clear vision, outlining expected outcomes and preparedness for future eventualities. Successful digital transformation is purposedriven, and firmly oriented towards outcomes.

For instance, if the intended outcome is superior customer experience (CX); businesses must obsess about optimising customer journeys. If, it is about creating net new revenue streams by

monetising some data, then challenging the assumptions behind the new revenue streams has to be thorough.

It is very easy to fall in love with your own ideas, so you need to validate your assumptions on the expected value creation from digital transformation.

From an internal perspective, leaders have a key role to play in generating consensus across departments and creating a company culture that is receptive to transformation and change. Company cohesiveness

guarantees the success of digital transformation strategies. And even if it fails, it will "fail fast" - without draining more resources for a lost cause, and you move on to the next thing.

Finally, we must understand that digital transformation is a journey; not a destination. So, businesses must stay technologically agile; through continuous improvements, timely upskilling, and constant course corrections. Such proactiveness will help benchmark optimal outcomes, set effective KPIs, lead to insight-led decision making, and eliminate guesswork.

GITEX is the region's flagship IT and Technology event. Can you tell our readers more about your participation at this year's event – and how important is the conference for Midis in terms of being able to meet and network with your partners and customers in a face-to-face environment?

The Midis' Group is no stranger to GITEX, as our contribution to this event was acknowledged through an award by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in the year 2000.

This year, we are the exclusive sponsor the VIP Majlis Club for the 12th year in a row, including GITEX Technology Week 2021. This association will continue, since we see GITEX as the

Middle East's largest tech event. This year, over 3,000 tech companies will leverage the GITEX platform; to launch innovative products and services in 5G, AI, Cloud & Edge, Cybersecurity, Future Mobility, Fintech, Healthtech, and more.

GITEX serves as the bedrock for breakthroughs and technological innovations in the region. Moreover, it brings stakeholders across the tech value chain under one roof; offering a platform for networking, collaborations, partnerships, and synergies.

The need for such platforms has only amplified following the extended downtime due to the pandemic; in facilitating the return to in-person interactions and building trust in the tech ecosystem.

Midis Group has 50 years of experience and is one of the most trusted names and brands in the Middle East. How have you been able to maintain that success

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#### over such a long period of time, and what ultimately differentiates you from other market rivals?

We believe that there are many elements to sustaining a successful operation. At Midis, we adopt certain values and operating principles that help us navigate our journey. Customer centricity is of paramount importance, we take our customers' success and satisfaction to heart. Another is trust and longterm relationships.

Our relationships with our business partners and customers are that of mutual trust, respect and taking the long-term view. Agility is very important at Midis, and although we are a fairly large organisation, we are very aware of the need to remain agile, empowering our management teams and employees. We encourage innovation at all fronts, whether it is process innovation or technology innovation or any innovation that adds value to our customers.

We also believe in the importance of maintaining a solid balance sheet and financial strength which help us navigate the turbulent times. Our customers remain assured that they are backed by a solid organisation.

Accountability and strong corporate governance run deep in the organisation, and it certainly help us maintain the reputation that we enjoy today.

But what truly differentiates us from the crowd is our eco-system, our eco-system of technology partners, expertise, talent, market coverage and business partners, enable us to be customer centric and to put together solutions and teams that address customer needs. We are constantly working on enhancing such eco-system and making sure that it presents unmatched value to our customers.

## What are your primary objectives and goals for the remainder of 2021, and looking ahead to 2022?

We have designated a task force to accelerate investments into emerging technologies and breakthroughs in existing ones. Going forward, we will double down on Digital Technology capabilities; in cloud, Big Data, Analytics, AI, and Cybersecurity.

We are also pretty focused on strengthening our "solutions capabilities" and making it well known to our customers. Many of our customers today may not see the breadth of solutions that can be offered by working with their Midis affiliate, and in 2022 you will see that changing.

I know it may sound as a cliché, but we are truly living in an exciting time when it comes to information and communication technology, and it is up to us to harness the technological advancement we have today to the benefit of our communities, and we are absolutely committed and passionate about that!

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