#### computer news middle e

ISSUE 357 | FEBRUARY 2022 Tahawultech.com WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEANS BUSINESS

#### LENOVO'S GENERAL MANAGER, MEA

HPE ARUBA'S REGIONAL BUSINESS HEAD, MESA

NINTEX'S GENERAL Manager, Emea

# BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

ROB GRYN, CEO & FOUNDER OF EVERDOME AND METAHERO EXPLAINS HOW HIS VERSION OF THE METAVERSE IS DESIGNED TO BRING BRANDS AND PEOPLE TOGETHER.









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#### EDITORIAL



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Saudi Arabia has long made its intentions clear that it wants to reduce its dependency on oil in a bid to diversify its economy."

#### A LEAP OF FAITH

audi Arabia has long made its intentions clear that it wants to reduce its dependency on oil in a bid to diversify its economy. Vision 2030 is an economic transformation program that is designed to do just that in the KSA.

The country under the tutelage of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is expected to invest \$6.4 billion into future technologies to make the Kingdom a hub for innovation, entrepreneurship, and technological advancement over the next decade.

Earlier this month, the inaugural LEAP 2022 was held in Riyadh, and the technology and IT symposium only served to reinforce the country's commitment to becoming a regional and global powerbroker when it comes to innovation and technology.

I was onsite at LEAP, and the 3-day event certainly didn't disappoint as it attracted participation from the world's biggest IT players.

Huawei have been present in the Saudi marketplace since 2004, and they used LEAP to announce their ambitious plans to build a new cloud region in the country. I spoke to Huawei executives Frank Dai and Safder Nazir to find out more about their cloud strategy in the Kingdom – and the opportunities that exist as the nation ramps up its digital transformation efforts.

I also secured an interview with cloud solution provider Nutanix, to learn more about how they plan to leverage their product portfolio to scale their operations in the Kingdom – whilst I also spoke to CommScope, a global leader in home network solutions who believe they are well-positioned to drive and underpin all the connectivity that is required to fuel the digital economy in Saudi Arabia.

On the front cover of February's edition of CNME, we have a terrific interview with Rob Gryn, CEO and Founder of Everdome and Metahero, who provided more details on his new hyper-realistic metaverse, which he believes will have the ability to transport people to the red planet of Mars in the future.

We are hearing more and more about the metaverse, and our interview with Rob sheds even more light on a truly fascinating and futuristic subject that is increasingly gaining column inches and dominating conversations across the global IT ecosystem.

In this month's CNME we also have a couple of excellent Women in Tech features that were conducted by contributing editor to tahawultech Nitya Ravi.

HPE Aruba's Jacob Chacko explained the benefits of adopting a NaaS (network-as-a-service) model for enterprises looking to transform their IT infrastructure.

In addition to this, we have interviews with Axis Communications, Darwinbox, Nintex, Lenovo and some indepth insight op-eds from Kissflow and JP Morgan Private Bank.

At the time of going to print with this edition of CNME, we are putting the final touches on our preparations for the CIO100 Leadership Awards, which are being held on February 28th, at the Ritz-Carlton JBR.

The awards recognise the outstanding leadership being demonstrated by visionary CIOs across the region, who are helping their organisations transform in a bid to achieve their business objectives in the new digital economy.

We will have full coverage from the CIO100 Leadership Awards and much, much more in March's CNME!

Mark Forker Editor



Google play



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ADVERTISING Group Publishing Director Kausar Sved kausar.syed@cpimediagroup.com

Publishing Director Natasha Pendleton natasha.pendleton@cpimediagroup.com

Sales Director Sabita Miranda sabita.miranda@cpimediagroup.com

OnlineEditor Daniel Shepherd daniel.shepherd@cpimediagroup.com

PRODUCTION AND DESIGN Senior Designer Analou Balbero analou.balbero@cpimediagroup.com DIGITAL SERVICES Web Developer Adarsh Snehajan

webmaster@cpimediagroup.com

EDITORIAL

Editor Mark Forker mark.forker@cpimediagroup.com







## Why are 62% of MENA-based digital workers looking for new opportunities?

#### Although unexpected circumstances

have led to economic difficulties over the past two years, digital talent has emerged relatively unscathed, eager to explore their options and ultimately pursue new opportunities. This widespread appetite has emerged as a key takeaway following a global survey of employees in digital roles conducted by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and The Network, a global alliance of recruitment website. The subsequent report, titled 'Decoding the Digital Talent Challenge,' sheds light on the key factors behind people's aspirations to move to pastures new.

As per the survey, part of BCG's Decoding Global Talent series, as many as 62% of MENA employees working in digital fields are actively job hunting, with better career opportunities in other roles (72%), looking for a new challenge (66%), feeling undervalued in current positions (40%), and searching for a company more aligned with personal beliefs (32%) the main motivations behind people looking for a new role. For digital employees, good relationships with colleagues and learning and skills training are among the most valued aspects of their jobs, while diversity, inclusion, and environmental issues have also increased in importance over the latest year.

Of the digital employees surveyed across the region, 78% revealed that diversity and inclusion have become more important to them in the last 12 months, and 55% added they would not consider potential employers that did not share the same views in this area. Moreover, 66% revealed that employers' environmental responsibility has become more important to them since the same period a year ago, with 47% unwilling to consider companies that do not share their environmental views.

"Much like other markets around the world, the MENA region boasts a vibrant and opportunistic landscape for digital employees. The pandemic has accelerated digital transformation and increased



Leila Hoteit, Managing Director and Partner, BCG Middle East

reliance on related technologies, creating supplementary positions", said Leila Hoteit, Managing Director and Partner, BCG Middle East. "However, the evolving digital climate has also seen employee preferences and perspectives manifest and multiply. Rather than money being the primary influencer behind personal motivation and professional decisions, other factors including diversity, inclusion, and the environment have become key forces for work-related happiness or dissatisfaction, as have options to work abroad and remote working".

#### Microsoft celebrates GrowthX Accelerator's first graduates from across the region

Microsoft, in partnership with the Abu Dhabi Investment Office (ADIO), concluded the first cohort of its GrowthX Accelerator program in the UAE with a virtual graduation event.

A key component of a larger strategic partnership between ADIO and Microsoft to empower entrepreneurs, the GrowthX Accelerator first cohort celebrated its completion in December 2021 with 105 attendees which included founding partners, corporates, investors, and government officials. Additionally, a panel of 22 VC and 26 corporate representatives shared their insights and feedback on the select



startups who were showcasing at the graduation day. The cohort featured startups who worked directly with corporate engagement partners over the course of the 3-month accelerator to co-create technology solutions in efforts to address the corporates' challenges.

"ADIO has partnered with Microsoft

on the GrowthX Accelerator to give innovators a boost, helping their ideas find a launchpad to get off the ground. The solutions and technology created by the first cohort will accelerate innovation and drive greater impact", said H.E. Mohammed Ali Al Shorafa, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development.

#### GoDaddy Joins Forces with MyFatoorah



Selina Bieber, General Manager, MENA, GoDaddy

**GoDaddy LLC., the company that** empowers everyday entrepreneurs announced today it is working in partnership with MyFatoorah in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, to offer new payment solutions to GoDaddy's e-commerce solution. MyFatoorah, a local UAE payments provider, specialises in secure, swift payment solutions across the GCC Region.

The new addition to the GoDaddy E-store offering in the Region, allows customers to sell online and accept, track and process payments easily. By linking their e-commerce websites and platforms, merchants can conduct online sales, refunds and other transactions.

Selina Bieber, General Manager, MENA, GoDaddy said, "We are excited to partner with MyFatoorah and integrate GoDaddy's E-store, to offer entrepreneurs and small businesses, smart, smooth and seamless payment options and tools. GoDaddy hopes this partnership will help simplify business transactions and help small business owners with e-commerce payment solutions".

## Axon Technologies' David Brown to Turn the Spotlight on Cyber Hygiene at Intersec 2022



David Brown, Security Operations Director, Axon Technologies

#### Axon Technologies, the UAE-

headquartered leading information security solutions provider, announced that its Security Operations Director David Brown will be speaking on 'Cyber Hygiene: Beyond the Common Talk' at Intersec 2022 – The Cyber Security Lab, one of the six conferences at the event. Brown will examine the importance of cyber hygiene, discuss what is currently lacking in the industry and how organisations can implement effective best practices for a safe and secure digital future.

Cyber hygiene refers to habitual practices and steps to ensure the safe and secure management of missioncritical data and networks. These actions help identify potential risks and vulnerabilities and implement strategies to address them.

"Intersec 2022 is a valuable platform for all stakeholders to come together and discuss emerging trends and key issues. The high-profile event sets the tone for the security industry for the year", explains Brown. "The threat landscape is ever-changing, and therefore it is vital that organisations set up routine checks to stop cybercriminals. Deploying robust cyber hygiene habits allow organisations to have enhanced situational awareness, enabling early mitigation of threats in the attack lifecycle. We look forward to educating customers on how to implement healthy cyber hygiene practices to strengthen their digital security postures".

#### Proven Robotics Opens First Robotics Technical Services and Training Centre in Saudi Arabia



Zaid Al Mashari, Principal, Proven Robotics

#### Proven Robotics, a state-of-the-

art venture by Proven Solution, has announced the launch of its first robotics and technical service centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The new service centre will help customers to enhance strategic sales and achieve their technical goals, while benefiting from end-to-end local support and expertise in robotics and advanced technologies.

The new facility builds on Proven Robotics' reputation of delivering efficient and innovative robotics solutions. It will offer a wide range of services including providing customers with original spare parts, onsite troubleshooting, inhouse maintenance from qualified and technically certified teams, as well as the installation and configuration of robots.

"The GCC has made considerable strides in adapting and deploying robotics solutions in line with government blueprints such as Saudi Vision 2030. However, aftersales maintenance has remained a challenge in the region and most robotics hardware is currently being shipped back to its country of origin for servicing", said Zaid Al Mashari, Principal, Proven Robotics.

#### Study Shows Multicloud is Here to Stay, but Challenges Remain



Rajiv Ramaswami, President and CEO, Nutanix

#### Nutanix, a leader in hybrid multi-cloud

computing, announced the findings of its fourth global Enterprise Cloud Index (ECI) survey and research report, which measures enterprise progress with cloud adoption. The research showed that multicloud is currently the most commonly used deployment model and adoption will jump to 64% in the next three years. But the complexity of managing across cloud borders remains a major challenge for enterprises, with



Anand Eswaran, Chief Executive Officer at Veeam

#### The Veeam Data Protection Trends

Report 2022 surveyed more than 3,000 IT decision makers and global enterprises to understand their data protection strategies for the next 12 months and beyond. The largest of its kind, this study examines how organizations are preparing for the IT challenges they face, including huge growth in use of cloud services and cloud-native infrastructure, as well as the expanding cyber-attack landscape and the steps they are taking to implement a Modern Data 87% agreeing that multicloud success requires simpler management across mixed-cloud infrastructures. To address top challenges related to interoperability, security, cost and data integration, 83% of respondents agree that a hybrid multicloud model is ideal.

"While businesses are now viewing and using IT more strategically than ever before, the complexity of multicloud is creating challenges that are standing in the way of cloud success", said Rajiv Ramaswami, President and CEO at Nutanix. "Solving for these complexities is giving way to a new hybrid multicloud model that makes cloud an operating model rather than a destination".

Key findings from this year's report include: 1. Top multicloud challenges include managing security (49%), data integration (49%), and cost (43%) across cloud borders. While multicloud is the most commonly used operating model, and the only one expected to grow, most enterprises are struggling with the reality of operating across multiple clouds, private and public.

2. The pandemic has changed how nearly all organisations operate, and multicloud supports this new way of working. Well over half of respondents (61%) say they're focused on offering more flexible work setups because of the pandemic.

3. Application mobility is top of mind. Nearly all organisations (91%) have moved one or more applications to a new IT environment over the last 12 months. However, 80% of respondents agree that moving a workload to a new cloud environment can be costly and time-consuming.

4. Enterprises are growing more strategic in their use of IT infrastructure. Nearly three-fourths of respondents (72%) say they believe that the IT function in their organisations is perceived as more strategic than it was a year ago.

### Veeam Data Protection Trends Report finds that businesses are turning to cloud-based solutions to protect their data

Protection strategy that ensures business continuity.

"Data growth over the past two years [since the pandemic] has more than doubled, in no small part to how we have embraced remote working and cloud-based services and so forth," said Anand Eswaran, Chief Executive Officer at Veeam. "As data volumes have exploded, so too have the risks associated with data protection; ransomware being a prime example. This research shows that organizations recognize these challenges and are investing heavily, often due to having fallen short in delivering the protection users need. Businesses are losing ground as modernization of 'production' platforms is outpacing their modernization of 'protection' methods and strategies. Data volumes and platform diversity will continue to rise, and the cyber-threat landscape

will expand. So, CXOs must invest in a strategy that plugs the gaps they already have and keeps pace with rising data protection demands."

"As cyberattacks become increasingly sophisticated and even more difficult to prevent, backup and recovery solutions are essential foundations of any organization's Modern Data Protection strategy," said Danny Allan, CTO at Veeam. "For peace of mind, organizations need 100% certainty that backups are being completed within the allocated window and restorations deliver within required SLAs. The best way to ensure data is protected and recoverable in the event of a ransomware attack is to partner with a third-party specialist and invest in an automated and orchestrated solution that protects the myriad data center and cloud-based production platforms that organizations of all sizes rely on today."

#### Solutions by stc becomes the first VMware Sovereign Cloud provider in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



(L) Fahad AlHajeri, VP of Digital Solutions, solutions by stc, and Saif Mashat, country director, KSA, VMware (R).

#### VMware has announced at LEAP that

solutions by stc, the kingdom's leading digital transformation enabler, is now a VMware Sovereign Cloud Provider.

As a participant in the VMware Sovereign Cloud initiative, solutions by stc will enable customers to run their sensitive and regulated workloads on a more secure and compliant national cloud that meets Saudi Arabia's data residency and data sovereignty requirements.

The service will further expand solutions by stc's offerings to provide their customers various services, including control over the access of their data, transparency, visibility into the provider's operations. This will empower organisations to move to the cloud, increase their agility, and launch modern applications, accelerating digital transformation across sectors including healthcare and education, in line with Saudi Vision 2030.

Saif Mashat, Country Director, Saudi Arabia, VMware, said: "We're excited to help bring sovereign cloud services to Saudi Arabia and to work with solutions by stc, which is already helping its enterprise customers in the public and private sector transform with more safe, secure, and trusted cloud services".

# ThycoticCentrify is now Delinea, a Privileged Access Management Leader



a combined company and renewed commitment to providing comprehensive, cloud-ready solutions that put privileged access

Leveraging its presence at LEAP, Saudi Arabia's largest-ever technology industry event, to emphasise its commitment to the Middle East region, Delinea today announced its debut as a leading provider of privileged access management (PAM) solutions for seamless security. The launch was held at the company's stand, hosted by the local Middle East Delinea team.

Backed by TPG Capital, Delinea was formed in April 2021 through the merger of established PAM leaders Thycotic and Centrify. Delinea's new brand identity underscores its significant progress as at the centre of cybersecurity. For small businesses and global enterprises alike, Delinea delivers the digital freedom that everyone deserves by seamlessly defining the boundaries of access.

As organisations continue their digital transformations, they are faced with increasingly sophisticated environments and more challenging requirements for securing an expanded threatscape. Legacy PAM solutions are not designed for today's hybrid environments, are too complex, and cannot solve current privilege management challenges.

#### SolarWinds Onboards CyberKnight as a Middle East Distributor



Avinash Advani, Founder and CEO at CyberKnight

#### In today's hybrid IT environments,

organisations are accelerating digital transformation for long-term growth and profitability. This transformation, however, comes at a cost for enterprises. According to Gartner, this journey is taking twice as long and costing twice as much than initially anticipated. To address this challenge, organisations must be able to understand their potential weaknesses and vulnerable entry points and better manage their IT environments by ensuring they have comprehensive visibility into their systems.

CyberKnight has signed a distribution agreement with SolarWinds, a leading provider of simple, powerful, and secure IT operations management software, including network management, security, IT service management, and application performance management solutions.

"A holistic approach is essential to simplify IT operations management complexities, address business priorities, and remain competitive in today's constantly shifting environment. In addition, organisations need comprehensive visibility and control over their IT systems through continuous monitoring of on-premises and cloud environments to help prevent security vulnerabilities and performance issues. As a new SolarWinds distributor, our goal is to help regional organisations solve their IT management challenges while ensuring their IT operations run smoothly", commented Avinash Advani, Founder and CEO at CyberKnight.

# PART OF THE PROCESS

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Florian Haarhaus**, VP EMEA at Nintex, to learn more about its market presence across the Middle East, the role it is playing in terms of enabling and empowering companies to transform their process automation – and the unique capabilities of its product 'Promapp'.

NINTEX



intex has established itself as the global leader when it comes to process intelligence and automation – and the products provided by the company are equipping enterprises with the tools and solutions needed to succeed in the new and ever-complex digital economy.

Florian Haarhaus has enjoyed a distinguished career in the IT ecosystem and is regarded by many of his peers to be one of the industry's leading thought-leaders. In an excellent and candid interview, we began our conversation by examining just what Nintex provides for its partners and customers.

According to Haarhaus, Nintex are involved in the currency of empowerment.

"We are very much in the business of empowering companies to improve the way people work through process automation, management, and excellence. However, the first question we ask customers that are looking to automate, or create workflows is have you articulated your processes in a clearly defined way, so that everybody who needs to understand those processes has access to them? You'd be surprised by just how many companies do not do that, so the first step for us is to provide them with structure and a roadmap of where they want to go," said Haarhaus.

#### We provide high value in terms of low cost of ownership, quick returns, and give endusers the ability to create their own processes."

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it many challenges, but out of every challenge comes opportunity, and Haarhaus used the onboarding of an employee as an example of how you can transform a business process to make it much more effective.

"For example, you might start off with a process to requisition PCs for new employees being onboarded, and during the pandemic you had to get the right PCs to the right people, but with nobody coming into the office it was a challenge. Then once that was completed people thought wouldn't it be a good idea to automate a bigger piece of the employee onboarding process that also factored in getting an offer, getting your equipment, access to training materials, and access to team

group meetings on Zoom or MS Teams," said Haarhaus.

In addition to this, the VP of EMEA at Nintex also said this could be extended to the offboarding process as well to achieve a full end-to-end digital process.

"In term of offboarding an employee, if you are a banking provider then you have lots and lots of compliance requirements to ensure when people leave they no longer have access to the systems, so they need to be decommissioned and all that needs to be audited and recorded, so what started out as an equipment requisition process results in an endto-end employee onboarding change and offboarding process and we can help companies do that in a very agile, quick and easy way," said Haarhaus.

Haarhaus also outlined how Nintex provides 'great value' for its customers and believes that its ability to provide such value for money is one of its key market differentiators.

"We provide high value in terms of low cost of ownership, quick returns, and give endusers the ability to create their own processes. It is all about empowering those people who are closest to those processes to be able to design and automate those processes," said Haarhaus.

Haarhaus also disclosed how one of their customers told them that they were democratizing digital transformation within organizations because they are putting the control into the hands of the people that are working with these processes on a day-to-day basis, which only serves to reinforce the viewpoint that Nintex is in the business of empowerment.

Haarhaus also illustrated the importance of not breaking the 'digital chain' and said another key factor in its success was its compatibility with existing architecture and infrastructure.

"Our workflow engines will be connected with most, if not all systems that have open APIs, and that is one of the reasons why we are very scalable and affordable is because we use all the



#### The value of a digital process is only as strong as the weakest link."

infrastructure that is already there, we don't add another huge system. We work with all those systems, and we orchestrate the workflows across those different systems. The value of a digital process is only as strong as the weakest link, if you are forced to drop out of the digital flow to do something physical like update an old SAP system, or print something off, sign it and



scan it back into the system then that is a disaster. That's why we have modules like e-signature and document generation. All our products are there to ultimately maintain and make sure that people can really go end-to-end from design right through to optimization," said Haarhaus.

Nintex has close partnerships with some of the biggest enterprises and government agencies in the UAE and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – and is one of their most important markets globally in terms of growth.

Haarhaus also believes their success in the region is borne out of the fact that they share the same goals.

"The UAE and KSA are two of our biggest growth markets



globally, and are two areas that we are investing most aggressively in. If you look at the Saudi Vision 2030 program then you will see that most of the partner companies within that are already Nintex customers, and most of the government entities are also customers of ours, including Public Investment Fund (PIF). I think the reason our solution has been so well received there in the region is that our objectives are aligned almost 100% with that of the goals and objectives of programs like UAE Digital Government Strategy 2025 and Saudi Vision 2030. One of the very first lines of the UAE Digital Government Strategy 2025 plan is a declaration that they don't want to leave

anybody behind, and they claim that this can be achieved by adopting open and exclusive processes," said Haarhaus.

Nintex have recently just launched a new cloud datacenter in the UAE which Haarhaus has described as hugely important and significant, whilst he also disclosed some of the key elements of its Promapp solution which has really resonated with large swathes of the market.

"When you open Promapp its looks like Facebook and Google and it is completely webbased. It captures the process in the way that people think and talk about the process, and it is highly collaborative. It is easy to use, very fast

and secure. It is a living and breathing thing because processes are never static. User experience was a guiding principle for us when designing all our products and that was the case with Promapp. If we have a trade-off between complexity and useability then we will typically lean towards useability, because we feel that complex sophisticated functionality if it is hidden somewhere that nobody can find then it is pointless, and it can ruin the interface, so it's a no-brainer – and the market response to Promapp has been phenomenal and again is empowering our customers and partners, which is what we are all about as a company," concluded Haarhaus.

LENOVO

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# **CREATING A NEW LEGACY**

**Alaa Bawab**, General Manager - ISG, Middle East & Africa at Lenovo explains to CNME Editor Mark Forker how the absence of legacy software from its datacenter portfolio has enabled them to become a market leader in that space across the Middle East & Africa.

> Alaa Bawab General Manager - ISG, Middle East & Africa at Lenovo

laa Bawab is a veteran of the IT industry and during a decorated career that has spanned 25 years – he has held senior positions at IT behemoths such as Huawei, Cisco and HPE.

Bawab was appointed General Manager of Lenovo's Infrastructure Solutions Group in October 2021, and in a candid interview with CNME he expressed his excitement to be tasked with the responsibility of spearheading Lenovo's datacenter portfolio in the Middle East & Africa.

His optimism is wellfounded as Lenovo have firmly established themselves as a key player in the datacenter space as the demand for cloud services continues to grow. Their recent Q3 financial results serves as further evidence of the growth and dominance they are enjoying across the MEA region.

"In Q3 we enjoyed our highest level of growth since 2019 – and I think that is

We are the only true software agnostic infrastructure datacenter solutions provider.

a great reflection, not only on the transformation and change the company has undertaken, but also on the potential and opportunities that exists for us in the future in terms of the datacenter vertical. We have also enjoyed double-digit growth in every single technology that we offer within ISG. In addition to this, in the last quarter we also achieved our highest ever growth for our storage solutions business unit within ISG," said Bawab.

Industry analysts are projecting that the datacenter market across the Middle East & Africa will grow by 10.4% from a CAGR perspective over the next 5 years, and the two biggest countries that will contribute to that growth are unsurprisingly the UAE and KSA.

Bawab singled out a range of key factors that he believes to be the main drivers that are fueling the exponential growth in the datacenter market.

"It has become very evident that there has been a very aggressive and advanced deployment of 5G across the board – and I believe 5G connectivity to be an important pillar that is driving datacenter requirements. There has also been a rapid digitalisation in automation across all key industry verticals globally, whilst another key growth factor is IoT. In 2020, 75% of companies deployed IoT on their applications," said Bawab.

The Lenovo executive also pointed to the high internet penetration rates in KSA, which reached a staggering 95% in 2020, as another key driver in datacenter growth.

Bawab believes Lenovo have been so successful in acquiring huge market share in the datacenter space because they do not have legacy software like some of their market rivals.

"The demand for cloud services across all traditional industry verticals has skyrocketed. The financial services, banking, IT, and telecommunications sectors for example are all going into cloud services and that has generated exponential growth in the datacenter space. However, I believe Lenovo has become a key player in this space, primarily because we are so focused on datacenter solutions. We are the only true 100% software agnostic infrastructure datacenter provider, we do not have any legacy software that we want to position directly, or indirectly in our datacenter sale unlike our competition, and that gives us a huge market advantage," said Bawab.

In terms of transformation Lenovo has undergone a seismic one of its own, the company is the world's No.1 PC provider, so therefore is rather inevitably best known for its laptops and devices. However, it has completely restructured its business model to become a major powerbroker in the datacenter ecosystem - and is attempting to move away from being viewed by many as a deviceonly provider by become the No.1 infrastructure solutions provider on the planet. "Lenovo is not only a major player in the digital



transformation journeys of our customers and partners, but we are also undergoing and experiencing an internal transformation in the way we go to market. We are moving away from the perception that we are a device-only company provider, to become an infrastructure solutions service provider that can capitalise on the ability to be agnostic, and leverage the partnerships we have cultivated and nurtured with the major Tier 1 application and software players over the years These partnerships ultimately allows us to bring products to customers really need, and not what we want

big difference," said Bawab. Bawab is now in his 26th year working in the IT industry across the Middle East, so there is nobody better placed to articulate

to sell them, and that is a big,

I am a strong believer in the channel, and Lenovo is fully committed to a channel-first vision and strategy."

the importance of building a channel ecosystem which is designed to give your company the best possible goto market path.

"I am a strong believer in the channel, and Lenovo is fully committed to a channelfirst vision and strategy. We want to go through the channel and capitalise on the channel, but we also provide huge value to the channel across all fronts. It is very important to see the alignment, because we don't just want to use the channel to go to market, we understand it's a collaborative relationship and is a win-win situation for both parties, because as the old saying goes numbers never lie. When you see the growth that a vendor like Lenovo is having from an end-user device and datacenter perspective then it is a no-brainer for a system integrator, or channel partner to work with an agnostic company like Lenovo, it's mutually beneficial for all parties," said Bawab.

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As aforementioned above Lenovo is the world's No.1 PC provider and its chairman Yang Yuanqing has expressed his desire to be the No.1 infrastructure solutions provider on the planet, but how do Lenovo plan on balancing both market segments, can both co-exist together, and again what is their channel strategy for this.

Bawab believes their Lenovo 360 framework will help them deliver on all fronts.

"We have a core global framework that we are deploying and will be officially launched at the beginning of our fiscal year, and it is known as the Lenovo 360 framework. The Lenovo 360 framework is essentially getting the end-to-end value through our channel network. The channel will benefit by offering the End-to-End value proposition from End



We have a core global framework that we are deploying and will be officially launched at the beginning of our fiscal year, and it is known as the Lenovo 360 framework."

Point (Intelligent Devices Group) - Edge to Cloud (Infrastructure Solutions Group) - Advanced Services & Solutions (Solutions & Services Group) delivering secure and comprehensive solutions to customers. This framework really empowers the channel, and we give them access to our entire end-to-end portfolio, and it also enables them to tap into managed services, such as the burgeoning everything-asa-service model. We believe by empowering the channel only serves to reaffirm our commitment to the channel and demonstrates very clearly that we are a channel-first vendor," said Bawab.

HUAWEI

# THE FUTURE IS DIGITAL

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Safder Nazir**, Senior Vice President of Digital Industries at Huawei Middle East, onsite at LEAP 2022 in Riyadh, to find out more about the role Huawei is going to play in terms of propelling the digital transformation objectives set out by the leadership of the KSA, whilst he also spoke to **Frank Dai**, President of Huawei Cloud Middle East to find out more about their plans for a cloud region in Saudi Arabia. afder Nazir has been with Huawei since 2014, and during that time he has cultivated a reputation as one of the most prominent thought-leaders in the Middle East ecosystem.

During the inaugural LEAP IT symposium held in the Saudi capital, members of the ICT press pack were afforded the opportunity of having a press briefing with Nazir, who discussed in more detail how Huawei's technologies and diverse portfolio of solutions are going to play a critical role in helping the country achieve its goal to become a global technological powerhouse.

FEBRUARY 2022

**Frank Dai** President of Huawei Cloud Middle East

#### DIGITAL FUTURE

A big focus during LEAP was examining the role played by technology in terms of supporting carbon neutrality. As Nazir pointed out the Huawei Digital Power business is focused on the intersection between digital and power electronics technologies, which are ultimately designed to create the environment and foundations needed to create zero-carbon ICT infrastructure in the Middle East, which is very much in line with the sustainability commitments that have been outlined by Saudi Arabia.

Huawei showcased the latest green energy-saving products at their impressive and futuristic stand during LEAP, some of which have shown to save 30% on power consumption compared to traditional products.

The impact of climate change is starting to influence government policy globally in a bid to combat the worrying changes to our planet, and it has been well documented that the IT industry is one of the most energy-intensive sectors in the world, so there is a responsibility on IT leaders to become more sustainable and energy efficient. **Safder Nazir** Senior Vice President of Digital Industries at Huawei Middle East

Nazir highlighted the role the Chinese ICT behemoth was playing in terms of helping Saudi Arabia become a leader in sustainability and said that Huawei's strategy was firmly aligned with that of the KSA.

"Our datacenter facilities are designed to reduce our carbon footprint due to the prefabricated nature of how we do it, and secondly, we are delivering the lowest PUE (Power Utilisation Efficiency), and as a result we have the most energy efficient datacenter project in the world. We believe our energy goals are very well aligned with the 19

objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030 program, particularly from a sustainability perspective," said Nazir.

Nazir also pointed out how charging is going to be a fundamental pillar in the sustainability ecosystem - and pointed to the policies being pursued by governments globally, and the move by some of the world's biggest automotive manufacturers to cease building self-combustion engines, to pave the way for a new era of electrification.

"At Huawei we have power modules, which essentially is our devices and products, so whether that is our routers, or switches we are always looking for energy efficiency. Huawei issues an annual sustainability report, and it has done so for several years, and sustainability is a KPI of our product lines in a bid to reduce the power consumption of our equipment. It is not only important for us to reduce our carbon footprint, but it is also very important for us to help our customers reduce their carbon handprint," said Nazir.

#### TAKE ME TO THE CLOUDS ABOVE

Frank Dai, President of Huawei Cloud Middle East, delivered a keynote presentation on the main stage on Day 2 of LEAP, but prior to his presentation we were granted permission to attend a press briefing conducted by the man responsible for Huawei's cloud





business in the region.

Dai proceeded to give us a forensic briefing that shed more light on Huawei's cloud strategy in the KSA, its relationships with industry players in the Kingdom since its entry to the market in 2004, and his expectations for LEAP as a leading industry conference in the future.

The dynamic Huawei executive kicked off the press briefing by referencing their longevity in the KSA marketplace – and noted how Huawei was the biggest partner of telecom players such as STC and Mobily.

"We have been in the KSA marketplace since 2004, and we have nurtured and cultivated relationships with some the biggest players here such as STC and Mobily, we are their biggest partners. I think it's fair to say that over the last 20 years, we have been fully focused on the business of connectivity here in the Kingdom. However, I think over the next 20 years we will



focused on digitalisation to really drive home the objectives laid out in the Saudi Vision 2030 plan," said Dai.

Dai also acknowledged that it was now increasingly evident that Saudi Arabia was changing as a society, and he heaped praised on the vision and leadership demonstrated by the government in the Kingdom - and said that LEAP was a perfect example of just how serious the nation is about becoming a technological powerhouse not only in the Middle East, but on a global scale.

"LEAP is a fantastic illustration of just how serious Saudi Arabia is about becoming a major force globally in the tech and IT landscape. They have attracted huge participation from all the key industry stakeholders from across the region, and you know that it has the potential to get bigger and better, and it is set to become a key date in the calendar for all involved in the ICT business here in the Middle East," said Dai.



We believe our energy goals are very well aligned with the objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030 program." As aforementioned above, Dai heads Huawei's cloud business unit across the Middle East, and he stressed how cloud was going to be a critically important foundation in the building blocks for the new digital economy in Saudi Arabia.

"We firmly believe at Huawei that the whole world is going to be digital, and a key element of that digitalisation will be modern infrastructure. Huawei Cloud has the modern infrastructure that is ultimately required to support the entire society here as they attempt to embrace digital transformation," said Dai.

He also echoed the sentiments expressed by Guo Ping on Day 1 of LEAP – and announced that Huawei is planning to introduce their 'everything-as-a-service' model to the KSA market, ranging from infrastructure, to technology, to experience.

"We are expanding our cloud coverage across the region, and as our rotating chairman Guo Ping announced during his keynote presentation on Day 1, we will launch a cloud region here in Saudi Arabia. We want to determine what the best architecture for cloud looks like. We really believe in our QingTian architecture that is designed to support customers to run and manage their workloads whenever it suits them the best, and we are very excited at what we can achieve here in the Kingdom," said Dai. cnme

#### AXIS COMMUNICATIONS

# SMARTER, SAFER AND **SUSTAINABLE** CITIES

CNME spoke to Martin Gren, Co-Founder, Advisor New Business at Axis Communications, to find out how they are leveraging their portfolio of solutions to not only make cities safer and more secure, but against the backdrop of the ongoing climate crisis, how can we make the cities we live in more sustainable in the future?

> an you inform our readers how AXIS Communications is committed to creating and developing products and solutions that are specifically designed to make cities smarter and more sustainable? Safety is one of the key responsibilities of every city feeling safe and secure is one of the main rights of every citizen and the foundation of a smart city. This is very much in line with our thinking and belief that cities today need to be safe to be smart. By implementing an integrated, digital surveillance system, you can see what's happening across your whole city as it's happening. The equipment can work as sensors, providing real-time insights and information that can help you: · Effectively protect your

citizens and property

- Enhance your city's image
- Deter vandals and reduce reparation costs
- Reduce criminal investigation times by providing clear, high quality images
- Be certain that your safe city system is Cyber Secure

It's also important to know that Smart & Safe Cities is a combination of various other sub-verticals working to create an optimised ecosystem. We have been driving a huge amount of innovation through Axis and partner solutions for smart traffic management, license plate recognition, parking violation, traffic management, sustainable environment, lane management, smart lighting and more.

At Axis, all of our flexible

solutions can be integrated into existing video surveillance systems so there's no need to completely replace equipment. And with our open platform, you can add extra functionality in the future - from encoders and cameras to increased security and intelligence measures.

We have successfully implemented several projects within the Middle East and have several projects in the works.

Can you outline to us how AXIS Communications has become a more sustainable company over the last few years, and could you tell us more about your participation at EXPO 2020? Sustainability has always been a natural part of Axis and we are

convinced that caring for people and the environment makes good business sense. We are signatory to the UN Global Compact since 2007 and we support the 17 UN sustainable development goals.

Some concrete and recent examples of our progress in this area include gradually phasing out hazardous substances in our products, internal training for our employees around ethical and environmental issues, supplier audits to ensure compliance with Axis policies around working conditions and environment, zero tolerance for corruption, and several projects that aim to reduce power usage in Axis products and solutions.

Axis is one of the official partners with the Sweden Pavilion at Expo 2020 in Dubai. Other partners include Ericsson, Volvo Cars, Volvo Group, SAAB, Astra Zeneca, LKAB and Getinge. We see this as an exciting opportunity and are proud to be one of the companies to represent Sweden.

The theme for Expo 2020



"Connecting Minds – Creating the Future" is well aligned with Axis focus, as is the theme for the Sweden Pavilion "Cocreation for Innovation". In the exhibition of the Sweden Pavilion we are demonstrating state-of-the-art solutions across video, audio, access control as well as customer case stories in smart and safe societies. Axis is also hosting a number of customer and partner events in the Sweden

Safety is one of the key responsibilities of every city – feeling safe and secure is one of the main rights of every citizen and the foundation of a smart city." Pavilion on topics such as smart cities, artificial intelligence, sustainability, partnership, 5G and cybersecurity.

Axis has also sponsored the Sweden Pavilion with a security system consisting of products for video surveillance, access control, door stations, recorders etc.

A recent report commissioned by Gartner showed that more and more governments are investing in AI, however, it also discovered that many within the workforce remain skeptical of AI. Why do you think there is still so much cynicism towards AI, is it well-founded, does facial recognition and biometrics impinge on our privacy? Being the leading camera manufacturer outside China we invest heavily into AI and deep learning. During the years there has been a lot of overpromise on the capabilities that AI can add,

as many have been overselling its abilities. For those of you who remember, this also happened with video analytics around year 2005.

Deep learning that is now becoming available at the edge offers significant improvements over standard algorithms. But they will most likely be used by helping server-based applications to be partially run on the edge. The main challenge with explaining AI to the end-user is to not look too much into the technology, rather into the application and the customers real problems.

In Europe and north America there is a large degree of skepticism on technologies such as face recognition where many have banned it straight forward. The market in the middle east is different.

#### Can you tell us what your goals and ambitions are as a company for 2022?

Our goal is to keep on growing. Our main driver for this will be our partners and our new generation of chips, the ARTPEC 8 that makes our product stand out. With the new ARTPEC, we bring AI and deep learning into mainstream.

#### What do you think differentiates AXIS Communications from other market competitors?

What differs Axis is our strong homogenous product portfolio where every product is forward and backwards compatible thanks to the fact that we never do any OEM. We have a very strong track record in cybersecurity. We have the most extensive network of partners and support. We also have a very strong agenda on CSR. [CITTE] 23

#### **EVERDOME AND METAHERO**

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CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with Rob Gryn, CEO & Founder of Everdome and Metahero, to learn more about his plans to create the world's most hyper-realistic metaverse - and how he's on a mission to take people to Mars!



as the most hyper-realistic metaverse, but can you tell us more about

the concept – and what are the primary objectives of your threephased plan which will be rolled out later this year?

Everdome aims to create the most hyper-realistic metaverse that will bring brands and

We work very closely with scientists, astrologists, and engineers that have studied and understand what it will take to get to Mars."

people together - all with the intent of building the most realistic web3 experience.

Through the creation and facilitation of NFTs, land sales, marketplaces, and the highest quality avatars on the market, Everdome will define life in the virtual world, providing a place for brands and individuals to interact in the highest possible quality.

The three phase plan is our way of tying our settlement of Mars (where Everdome will be located) to a real-life type experience. Instead of just creating it and saying "hey, here it is - we hope you enjoy it," we have put together a program that will allow our community and investors to join us on the journey of development and the many stages that have to happen to make Everdome a reality.

We work very closely with scientists, astrologists, and engineers that have studied and understand what it will take to get to Mars, much like a real

exploration organisation (NASA, SpaceX, etc.).

Phase 1 will allow people to experience our launch room, while interacting with our experience, each other, and big name brands - essentially to give them a taste of what's to come, the quality and type of experience that they will enjoy on Mars.

The second phase, the launch, will allow a select group of people to actually board the space vessel, and enjoy the journey to Mars - which will take roughly 123 days (actual data and experiences from real-life used to determine this timeline). Those who are not aboard the vessel itself will have the opportunity to watch the launch from their desktop, notebook, or phone.

If you were around, imagine the excitement and engagement that the Apollo 11 launch in 1969, with the world around their TVs all watching - this is the type of excitement and feeling we aim for with our launch.

Phase 3 will be the landing (settlement) of Mars, where the first boots will hit the ground. I can't say more around this phase for obvious reasons. You can be sure that we aim to wow and provide an experience like no other.

Following the landing, like any settlement, we will focus on building and expanding. Early settlers of any era of region can attest, this will be a time of getting our hands dirty and building for the future.

Can you provide us with some more background on the company, in terms of when it was established, what inspired you to create Everdome – and how have you financed the company? Have you embarked upon financing rounds to attract investment from private equity investors and venture capitalists, or has investment come from different channels?

The idea of 'Everdome' started popping up around the fall of last year (2021) and moved fast from there.

Everdome was a concept built out of need, ability, and vision. Quickly after launching our first project (through IDO) Metahero, we quickly realised that for Metahero/WDW to really be able to show their potential we needed to develop a place for the tech/avatars/objects to live.

Metahero, our first project, is what we refer to as 'the gateway into the metaverse,' where we use photogrammetric scanning technology to scan real world objects and people – creating the most realistic & authentic avatars on the planet.



Due to the fact that other metaverses such as decentraland, sandbox, etc, while paving the way and really helping to open people's eyes to web3 possibilities, were lacking the bandwidth to support the avatars that were being created by Metahero/WDW. Out of this need the idea of Everdome was born.

This just being the beginning, Everdome has VERY quickly spawned into this massive ecosystem project that aims to essentially rebuild life as we know it – without the constraints of our physical world. The metaverse allows us to use reality as a foundation to create life as it should be, overcoming real world limitations from the likes of gravity and distance to disease, inequalities, and everything in between.

We know that we live in the 'experience economy' and the metaverse and Everdome are designed to fuel incredible experiences for their end-users. However, can you tell us how you intend on monetising this experience offering, will endusers pay for the privilege of experiencing what it is like to land on Mars?

Everdome the metaverse is a project that is backed by \$DOME the token, which will play a big part in the financing of the project early on, plus the utility that will be packed into this token for transactional purposes around anything and everything Everdome will be vast. Imagine all the different things you might need to survive on the red planet, you can assume that some of those things may need to be purchased in-game.

Additionally, we are currently developing an NFT marketplace, as well as individual NFT collections that will be sold and given away



to the community. Allowing people to get involved in Everdome in more symbolic ways. The marketplace will be a place where people can sell/ trade their NFTs with others.

Furthermore, we will be holding land sales, where people can buy up land or buildings (to sell or rent) which will engage the users and allow people and organisations the opportunity to be part of the settlement of Everdome.

Lastly, we will be allowing in-verse advertising with key partners and brands that meet our criteria and vision of what we collectively want from Everdome.

Can you give us more information on the technologies that you are leveraging to deliver these experiences – and how important nextgen technologies like 5G will be to really provide a solid connectivity foundation that

#### The metaverse allows us to use reality as a foundation to create life as it should be."

is ultimately needed for you to achieve your goals?

Without going too far into depth I can say that the key driver for "hyper-realistic" vision we have is delivered through Unreal Engine 5. Initially a gaming platform, UE5 provides amazing building capabilities, graphics second to none, and the added benefit of being so widely adopted and used in the gaming community that there is a sense of built-in familiarity with the technology – making it easier for people to associate with rather quickly.

Obviously, technology will play a major role in the quality to which anyone will be able to experience Everdome. Internet connectivity will be a key factor, as will the hardware setup that's being used. Obviously, almost everyone (outside of dial up) will be able to experience Everdome, to what quality depends on their setup.

The beauty of it is the same as with anything else, if you have never experienced, let's same gaming on a proper piece of hardware, then you really don't know the difference in quality. So, when it comes down to quality, minus the very experienced gamers, the quality is in the eye of the user, and needless to say, Everdome will be offered in the highest possible quality for anyone to tap into.

We are hearing a lot more about the metaverse since Facebook rebranded itself as Meta, and Microsoft acquired Activision Blizzard, which it said was to help position itself as a global leader in metaverse. For those, still grappling to understand what exactly the metaverse is, how exactly would you best describe it?

The metaverse means different things to different people, so it's really hard to pin down one definition. The metaverse (web3.0) to me (us) is an opportunity to experience the internet in a very different way – a full sensory experience. While the tech is not widely available, there are going to be ways to tap into all of your senses in the coming years – as people rush to replicate physical experiences in the digital world.

A more utopian explanation would be that the metaverse is picking up where the physical world leaves off. We are essentially rebuilding life as we know it – but without the constraints of our physical world.

The metaverse allows us to use reality as a foundation to create life as it should be, overcoming real world limitations from the likes of gravity and distance to disease, inequalities, and everything in between. There are no boundaries or borders in the metaverse. A blank canvas.

# <image>

**Dom Poloniecki,** Vice President & Sales Chief Operating Officer, EMEA at Nutanix, spoke to CNME Editor Mark Forker onsite at LEAP 2022 in Riyadh, and articulated what the cloud solution provider really means by its mission statement of 'cloud on your terms'.

**Dom Poloniecki** Vice President & Sales Chief Operating Officer he inaugural LEAP technology conference held in Riyadh drew participation from all the major IT players from across the Middle East ecosystem, and that included major cloud player Nutanix.

Editor Mark Forker spoke to Nutanix's dynamic executive Dom Poloniecki to find out more about the company's plans for expansion in the KSA, and how it was delivering cloud autonomy for its customers.

In a candid interview, Poloniecki began the conversation by highlighting how Nutanix is 'cloud native' – and stressed that its primary objective is to remove complexity from the technology it develops.

"We are not a cloud provider per se, we are a cloud solution. We create a layer of abstraction above infrastructure and cloud. In what is an increasingly complex world, our mission has always been about how we can abstract away the complexity in the technology that we build. We were born of the cloud some of our technical founders originated from Google, and they built the Google File System, which is a distributed web-scale architecture that in the end became the blueprint for all public cloud, and it is the same blueprint that Nutanix was built on, so architecturally we are very ready for the cloud," said Poloniecki.

Nutanix boasted an impressive stand at LEAP,

Cloud on your terms essentially means that we deliver a consistent cloud experience, wherever you deploy applications or workloads."

> which showcased and demonstrated some of the cutting-edge products and solutions that they have within their diverse product portfolio. However, what caught the eye was the mission statement of the company which claims that they deliver 'cloud on your terms', but what exactly does that mean?

"Cloud on your terms essentially means that we deliver a consistent cloud experience, wherever you deploy applications or workloads. What our customers want from us, and basically what customers want from all vendors in the market is the ability to abstract away the complexity, give them choice, and full portability and compatibility. We have seen over the last couple of years since the onset of the pandemic that everything changes so fast, so you need flexibility and the ability to provide portability, because what you need today might be very different to what you need tomorrow," said Poloniecki.

The Middle East is one of the fastest growing markets in the world when it comes to investment in cloud services, and according to Poloniecki the absence of legacy-heavy architecture and infrastructure represents huge opportunities for new greenfield projects.

There has been explosive growth in this region in terms of the demand for cloud services, and I am seeing a lot more adoption of containerisation from the meetings I've had during my time in KSA and across the Middle East. The reason for this quite simply is that there is much less legacy and technical debt here than in mainland Europe. If you go into a very large heritage organisation that has been in the datacenter for 100 years, then application remediation, and refracturing for a containerised world is hard, hard work and can be very costly. In KSA you have got much more greenfield opportunity which ultimately makes it much easier to adopt these new technologies. The tech-savvy Saudi youth population eager for the latest technologies is also driving digitization in the Kingdom," said Poloniecki.

He also revealed how Nutanix saw a 177% growth in KSA for their last quarter, on what is already a large revenue base for Nutanix. When asked to outline what he believed differentiates Nutanix from other market rivals, he credited their success to its technology and customer experience.

"All enterprises claim they have great technology, but we really do because we focus on building intuitive solutions, and that has helped us greatly across the region. However, in my opinion what really matters is customer experience. What does it feel like after the sale? There are two things that really set us apart from many of our market competition, first is that the technology is incredibly intuitive and easy to use. Our customers appreciate the simplicity of the technology," said Poloniecki.

Poloniecki disclosed that the second factor that is instrumental in their success is the support they provide to their customers. Nutanix has completely transformed the support experience, and Poloniecki acknowledged that support is something that traditionally the industry has not done well.

"The support experience we provide is exceptional and we have completely reinvented the way we do support. All our support staff are engineers, so they understand the code and the platform, and they are also full-time employees, so it's not an outsourced experience. Our support team are engineers who know what they are doing. The way we measure their KPIs is not on how quickly they close a call, or how many calls they have had during the day, it is all based on the customer feedback. Every customer at the end is surveyed, and that survey score is the measurement



of success for the individual support engineer. Let's be frank the industry has not been very good at support, and it needed some re-engineering, and we are very proud we have done that. In summary, we believe that our great technology, experience, and support is what really sets us apart and differentiates us from other vendors," said Poloniecki.

Nutanix have recently entered an exciting new partnership with open-source leaders Red Hat, and Poloniecki explained in detail how that collaboration is going to generate huge value for their customers.

"We are very excited by the partnership. For me personally

what excites me the most is that this collaboration has come from customer demand. The customers have been pushing us and Red Hat and have been telling us you guys need to become partners, so when the market is pulling you, then you know it makes sense. The other thing that is exciting for us is that for the first time in 10 years Red Hat has certified a new hypervisor for RHEL and for their open-shift platform. Red Hat have stated that Nutanix is a preferred HCI platform for Red Hat openshift, and that is reciprocal because we have stated that they are our preferred platform for cloud native solutions. It

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solutions, and it is what the customers have been asking for," said Poloniecki.

Nutanix have also recently commissioned their ECI report, which once again indicated that a multi-cloud approach is the preferred cloud model in the industry. However, it's become clear that many enterprises across the region are struggling to come to terms with the demands of cloud transformation.

Poloniecki outlined what he believed were the biggest barriers and challenges facing many

businesses across the Middle

"It's the 4th year we have and essentially what we do is interview several IT

The support experience we provide is exceptional and we have completely reinvented the way we do support and customer success vs the rest of the industry."

decision-makers around the world, and for this report we surveyed 1400 IT leaders globally. We asked them open questions around cloud transformation, the challenges and opportunities that come with it, but specifically within this index we asked them about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In relation to the challenges in this region, there are some things that jump off the page, and one of those is the regulatory issues around which providers can operate in the region, and which customers want to put their data into a public cloud. We are living whether we like it or not in a multi-cloud world, now that could mean private cloud, or a public cloud, or multiple public clouds, so it's a combination, but that represents security issues. 53% of business leaders surveyed said they had a very strong security posture, whereas 42% of their respective IT leaders said they had a strong security posture, so what that means is there is a big gap in terms of perception between the C-suite feeling that they are ready and secure, and the IT reality that we are not, and this was one of the most interesting aspects that emerged from the report for me," said Poloniecki. The Nutanix platform is built with security at the core and we protect our customers' data with immutable storage - meaning you will always have a way to recover the data in the unlikely event you have a breach. Come

HPE ARUBA

# A NEW KIND OF NETWORK

**Jacob Chacko**, Regional Director – Middle East & South Africa, Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, explains to CNME Editor Mark Forker, why there is such a growing demand for Network-as-a-Service (NaaS) from enterprises looking to completely transform their IT infrastructure.

> acob Chacko needs no introduction to those who operate in the IT industry across the Middle East. He is one of the most revered and respected thought leaders within the IT ecosystem and in a candid interview with CNME, he eloquently articulated why he believes Network-as-a-Service (NaaS) represents the next

We are committed to helping the market understand that this consumption as-a-service model will give them huge business benefits going forward." inflexion point in the evolution of the networking industry.

He began our conversation by explaining the changes that have occurred in networking over the years – and provided more context in terms of the business models that traditionally fueled the industry.

"If you examine the way the networking industry was traditionally consumed then it was clear to see that it was very much a CAPEX model adopted by businesses. The process was businesses bought network infrastructure and then worked out a model with their partner in terms of how long they wanted to be supported for, and at the end of that cycle based on your performance you either went for a refresh, or bought whatever technology existed at that time," said Chacko.



The HPE Aruba executive explained that it then became common practice to deploy managed service offerings, which was ultimately the same infrastructure and the same software, but the process was now based on working out a leased model for the customers – citing how HPE FS helped their customers with this model, before explaining why he believes enterprises are now pursuing Network-as-a-Service.

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**Jacob Chacko** Regional Director – Middle East & South Africa, Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company

"HPE Financial Services helps customers build out these leasing models for their partners, so that became a managed services offering. However, what I believe is going to be the next inflexion point in the networking industry is network-as-a-service. Essentially, it is all about consuming the infrastructure and the software as-a-service on a consumption basis. I am of the firm belief that this journey is going to generate a lot of value for enterprises," said Chacko.

Chacko stressed that one of the biggest problem areas for enterprises in terms of achieving digital transformation was in relation to their internal training and skills of their employees.

"It has been welldocumented that there were some businesses prior to the pandemic that had already commenced their digital transformation journey, but most enterprises embraced digital transformation during the pandemic. When you have a limited workforce within your organisation, and businesses are trying to get on the digital transformation ladder, then the biggest challenge they face is redeploying skills," said Chacko.

In addition to this, Chacko claimed that the primary reason there has been a swell of support and a surge of adoption in the concept of NaaS is borne out of the fact that it ultimately empowers CTO and CIOs to focus in on digital transformation.

"When we speak to our customers about the concept of NaaS (Network-as-a-service) it is very interesting for the CTO and CIO of that organisation because it becomes evident that a considerable amount of the burden is going to be taken off them by deploying NaaS. It enables them to use the existing resources to drive digital transformation projects. This infrastructure is the networking piece, and the software is outsourced to a partner like HPE Aruba, who takes care of it and clearly demonstrates an accelerated-driven service is provided to the customer. In summary, we are effectively redeploying skills for digital transformation," said Chacko.

Chacko heralded the impact technologies like AI and Machine Learning is having on network management and bemoaned how the industry used to be reactive to issues flagged on their systems.

"AI and Machine Learning has been game-changing as it has equipped businesses with access to engage in predictive maintenance. Traditionally, with network infrastructure when something went wrong you reacted to it, businesses across the board were completely reactive, but AI provides you with the ability to be proactive, and that is critical when attempting to build and maintain resilient and robust networks. However, the best part of AI is not only does it predict

when there may be a problem, if there is an issue it tells you how to fix it," said Chacko.

Morten Illum, Vice President EMEA, at HPE Aruba has previously suggested that in a bid to unlock the value of NaaS there needs to be an orchestrated and concerted effort to bridge the gap that currently exists between knowledge and awareness.

Chacko echoed those sentiments, and he quoted a recent report they commissioned as evidence there is growing support for the concept of network-as-a-service.

"We decided that before we go global with this concept, we needed to conduct a comprehensive survey of over 500 customers from across the Middle East. The findings that emerged from that report were very interesting to say the least, and there were multiple questions that simplified the meaning of network-as-aservice. The survey indicated that 86% of customers surveyed said they are now holding discussions within their organisation about the possibility of adopting networkas-a-service, which only serves to illustrate that there is interest in the model," said Chacko.

Chacko also disclosed that HPE Aruba have been actively promoting the huge benefits of NaaS through webinars and video tutorials as part of their efforts to create greater awareness across the industry.

"We are trying to raise awareness and are committed to helping the market understand that this consumption as-a-



service model will give them huge business benefits going forward. I think it's fair to say that the Middle East is now warming up to the idea of network-as-a-service, but the US and European markets have already embraced it. You're going to hear the big names talking about why they adopted it in the next few months, and once those names are brought into the public domain that's when customers will start following that trend. There is a gap between knowledge and awareness of NaaS in the Middle East, but we are trying to bridge that gap and we are getting there," said Chacko.

It is well-known that bandwidth and peerless costs are excessive in the Middle East, but the availability and access to 5G is being touted as a gamechanger. According



to Chacko, the combination of huge IT proliferation and the demands of Industry 4.0 has created the perfect storm for 5G growth and is going to yield huge benefits for customers. He also dismissed the suggestion that there will be cannibalisation between 5G and Wi-Fi.

"We personally feel as Aruba and the industry in general believes that 5G and Wi-Fi can coexist together. 5G is a great technology, and when you're talking about mobility then it is going to be revolutionary, but when you get into indoors then 5G is faced with a big challenge. The 5G community are trying to circumvent this problem by saying you can set-up distributed antenna systems (DAS), so you can get the level of connectivity you need, but the fact of the matter is that for indoors areas DAS

is expensive. However, the economics of Wi-Fi over time simply works. If you are talking about enterprise, or the external world then the external world could be connected via 5G and the indoors could be connected via Wi-Fi, so they are going to coexist together in the digital economy," said Chacko.

Chacko concluded a brilliant interview by outlining some of the key trends that HPE Aruba are focused on in 2022 – and

We personally feel as Aruba and the industry in general believes that 5G and Wi-Fi can coexist together." how they intend on leveraging their portfolio of solutions and products to capitalise on those growth prospects.

"The economic outlook is good across the region, and I can see countries poised for GDP growth. We are living in a circular economy, so eventually that is going to lead to ICT investments. I think the silver lining in the sky from the global pandemic was undoubtedly the adoption of digital transformation, and customers are now looking for business outcomes. Enterprises are no longer looking at network infrastructure as a piece of hardware that needs to perform a certain purpose, but instead are now asking how can this piece of hardware help me drive better business outcomes? The dialogue has completely changed. We believe that there is going to be accelerated spending on security, and HPE Aruba has a very strong security portfolio, so we believe we can capitalise on opportunities emerging in the security space.

In addition to this, the demand for SD-WAN solutions and the exponential growth in cloud adoption are two other key areas of focus for us. In 2021, in the midst of the pandemic, Aruba acquired Silver Peak, the global SD-WAN leader. As organisations continue their journey down the road of digital transformation, the need for agility and speed at the Edge will only accelerate and Aruba is well poised to help customers on that journey.

#### AYUMI MOORE AOKI

# ON A MISSION OF EMPOWERMENT

Nitya Ravi spoke to **Ayumi Moore Aoki** a social entrepreneur committed to driving positive, sustainable change through technology. She is the Founder and CEO of Women in Tech, a global movement, with over 250 volunteers, 200,000 members in 6 continents and they are on a mission to empower 5 million women and girls in STEM by 2030.

itya Ravi, a contributing Editor at tahawultech.com discussed other pertinent topics in addition to gender inequality in IT, such as digital transformation and FutureTech with Ayumi, in the latest in the series of Women in Tech interviews.

"The pandemic accelerated the shift to a digital-first approach which was adopted by companies, governments and societies alike. However, it also accentuated the digital divide, and most specifically the gender digital gap that exists today across the world. There are millions of women and girls that are suffering from not having access to internet or technological equipment. To achieve SDG 5, gender equality, women need to have equal access to technology and its training. This is particularly true in developing countries. Bright young students who cannot afford a laptop, like Aishwarya Reddy, a 19-year-old college student at Delhi University's LSR College, came under tremendous

stress as she didn't have a computer to study from at home. She tragically took her life in November 2020.' said Ayumi.

She further added about the challenges that comes with rapid digital transformation and the need for a leadership that looks at digital resiliency.

"I think that digital transformation fueled by the pandemic enabled companies to rapidly switch to remote working. There are numerous challenges that come with this new "Future of Work", especially in the leadership management. Building culture for remote teams, using the right tech tools and ensuring good communication within the team are some of them. Retaining talent will also be a challenge."

"The world is currently going through many changes, that resilience is key to be successful. What we have learnt from the past 2 years is that leaders need to adopt an agile method of thinking to deal with a transformative environment and its evolving needs. They need to be digitally resilient to measure and manage risk and to use societal, business or technological disruptions as opportunities."

Ayumi also feels that Blockchain and metaverse are the future trends to look out for the future.

"Blockchain is definitely going to shift the world's legal, economic and even political landscape. This technology allowing decentralised transactions is revolutionising the whole framework of society as we know today. I also think that Metaverse and virtual world will be a hot topic in 2022. So, technologies in AR and VR will be increasingly adopted in many areas of our daily lives, including our workspace."

It has not been an easy ride for Aoki to the top and this is what she had to say about the same, "There have been several challenges I have faced being a woman entrepreneur -whether be it creating an organisation, asking for a bank loan or announcing ambitious goals but perhaps the biggest challenge for me was- not being
There are millions of women and girls that are suffering from not having access to internet or technological equipment."

taken seriously. Being a female entrepreneur, an immigrant with 4 kids who taught herself how to code, I ticked too many "no" boxes. But every time I got a rejection, it gave me the drive to prove them wrong. So, in the end it's not that bad."

As an international expert in women empowerment and a champion of equality, Aoki regularly takes to the stage at global, industry-leading events including Pause Fest (Melbourne), Women in

Business Expo (London), TEDx Ist (Lisbon), Skolkovo Conference (Moscow), UFM Business Forum (Barcelona), and MITT Summit (UAE). "My advice to upcoming women entrepreneurs and women in tech is to aim high and not to let anyone tell them otherwise. The only person who can define who they are and what they can achieve is themselves. Also, they must know that they're not alone. Women in Tech is a

global movement and a safe community that exists to support, inspire and accompany women in STEM. Women are Tech's most untapped resource. Not only is creating diverse teams ethical, and will drive more economic growth, but future proofing the job opportunities of women will ensure sustainable communities worldwide. Because when women rise, we all rise." said Ayumi. Come

#### KISSFLOW

# UNDERSTANDING THE CODE

**Rahul Bhageeradhan,** Global Director – Digital Architecture at Kissflow, has penned an exclusive op-ed for February's edition of CNME, which examines how the combination of no-code and low-code platforms have propelled a movement towards the democratisation of IT, but which path is the correct one for your enterprise?

s applications have increasingly become the first, and subsequently the primary touchpoint between consumers and businesses, organisations have been under increasing pressure to ramp up their development capabilities. But with the pandemic promoting a need for the introduction and acceleration of a plethora of digital initiatives, IT teams have already been stretched to their limits. Consequently, organisations have started to look at ways to empower non-IT staff to take ownership of digital innovation. With their ability to effectively eliminate the need for extensive coding knowledge, low-code and no-code platforms have been at the epicentre of this movement towards the 'democratisation of IT'.

As this revolution is still somewhat in its nascent stages, one of the challenges now evident is that businesses are yet to fully comprehend the difference between these two approaches. This is further complicated by the fact that most commentators use these terms interchangeably. It doesn't help either that the capabilities that differentiate low-code platforms from no-code solutions aren't apparent at the UI level either.

But to fully realise the potential of either, it is imperative for organisations to understand the basic, yet vital distinctions of each, such as the target audience that is going to use the platform, and the complexity of applications that need to be developed.

#### No-code

No-code is aimed primarily at business teams that might not have any coding knowledge. Nontechnical teams that can chart out the underlying business logic to build an app visually can reap great benefits from a

**Rahul Bhageeradhan** Global Director – Digital Architecture at Kissflow

www.tahawultech.com

no-code development platform as the action of simply dragging and dropping components enables anyone to build apps. By automating and bundling multiple workflows and processes together in a single console, even non-technical staff can build custom apps for their everyday operations. However, what's important is to choose a platform that will also cover issues such as scalability, technical debt, shadow IT and more.

These characteristics of no-code solutions make them ideally suited to use cases that enable business users to operate more effectively. For example, the convenient creation of business intelligence reporting and dashboards. Business intelligence analysts or programmers need the best reporting tools to transform raw data into meaningful insights and will find that no-code solutions are just what they are looking for. With no-code, they can get real-time access to their company data and transform it into useful data grids, visualisations, and critical statistics.

Or consider applications for data management. Users may link sources of data with a nocode platform to any database, such as MS SQL Server, MySQL, PostgreSQL, and others, and modify, add, remove, and update information. Corporate customers may create their database apps fast and easily. In this way, the collection of information, storage, sharing, and collaboration becomes significantly easier.

While no-code can help organisations achieve shorter development cycles and lower the dependencies on IT, it isn't free of limitations. For example, to add advanced components in a no-code application, visual programming alone might not be sufficient. That's when you instead need to consider a lowcode platform.

#### Low-code

Low-code is an app development technique that brings business and IT together to build custom applications with a minimal amount of coding. However, this doesn't necessarily mean writing extensive lines of code. The true motive behind adopting a low-code approach is to shorten development cycles, accelerate time to market, and reduce developer dependencies as much as possible.

Low-code is an app development technique that brings business and IT together to build custom applications with a minimal amount of coding."

> Enterprises that recognise the significance of a fast time to market require such technologies that can expedite the development process while still affording the ability to build responsive, varied, and powerful applications. Generally, Lowcode platforms are open systems that allow a greater possibility for custom code, thus making themselves suitable for multiple use cases.

Consider an e-commerce application that requires feedback forms, chatbots, FAQs, shopping carts, store, products pages and more to be integrated into a single application. This act of bundling them together under a single console requires the writing of some amount of code, which is the strength of low-code platforms lies. Such technical customisations may not be possible with No-code platforms as they are meant to build only front-end applications.

Because of their generalpurpose nature, lowcode platforms enable the construction of more sophisticated programs and can handle a wider range of digital operations, such as those that employ innovative next-generation technology. Many low-code solutions have a large part collection created by industry leaders, and also the ability to use third-party cloud digital solutions such as AI, machine learning, cryptocurrency, and facial and voice identification services, and also accessible tools. Low-code platforms are also suitable for the development of applications that transcend departments and domains to improve productivity and operational performance.

#### The way forward

Both low-code and no-code platforms can help circumvent the skill shortage prevailing in the industry by enabling employees with little to no coding knowledge to build powerful applications effectively and conveniently. However, having a clear understanding of which is right for the specific needs of your organisation and its business objectives will go a long way in ensuring your business rapidly gains a significant digital advantage. Come

DARWINBOX

# SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Jayant Paleti, Co-founder at Darwinbox explains to CNME Editor Mark Forker how they have become one of the fastest growing HR tech platforms in Asia, its plans to scale its operations in the Middle East, and how they took inspiration from Charles Darwin's famous theory to develop a brand that is resilient enough to survive the shark infested waters of the corporate world.

arwinbox has enjoyed phenomenal success in Asia and has positioned itself as the leading HR tech platform in that market. However, can you please give our readers a broader understanding of the products and solutions that you provide for your customers and how that drives better employee experiences within those organisations?

When we started our journey, we realised that there was a clear gap in what Asian enterprises needed and what was available to them. Asian enterprises are complex in unique ways – one size does not fit all. For example, multiple business models can thrive under the same entity, organisations may have more heterogeneity in tech adoption, decision making, and approval flows can be complex. We built our web and mobile apps to seamlessly accommodate these process complexities.

Darwinbox, therefore, offers a high degree of configurability that puts the power in HR's hands and empowers them to enable agility in operations. In fact, Darwinbox's adaptive frameworks and highly configurable workflows empower HR teams across 650+ enterprises by enabling them to configure or modify processes along with evolving needs of the organisation without any coding required.

We also build for the enduser. Inspiring change is hard, and we sought to productise change management with an employee adoption first approach to building Darwinbox. This enabled us to innovate on usability and build functionality like voicebot for HR that enables self-service with simple voice commands, facial recognitionbased touchless attendance, and several other features that have proven critical to managing the post-pandemic workplace. Furthermore, the mobilefirst platform combines the intuitiveness and user experience of daily apps with the deep functionality of enterprise-grade solutions, thus simplifying HR for employees. Mobile features such as OTP-based logins for field forces, WhatsApp push notifications, and more have helped us ensure unparalleled adoption rates in comparison to other legacy applications.

Our extraordinary focus on customer success stems makes us the best partner for any enterprise on their Digital HR transformation journey. Be it enabling faster time to value so you can see quicker results or productising change management, we are constantly optimising to ensure our customers can maximise ROI.

We have found that our learning from building for Asian enterprises translates to those in the Middle East as well and have already begun seeing early results in the region.

In your recent press release that documented your latest round of funding and investment, you say that your technology platform caters to ALL the needs within the public and private sector in relation to the entire employee lifecycle, so does that mean you can empower companies to simplify the onboarding process of an employee, and likewise when an employee leaves a company, does your platform enable companies

#### to be able to effectively decommission access from that employee that protects their sensitive data?

Darwinbox is one of Asia's fastest growing HR tech platforms that solve an organisation's HR needs across the entire employee lifecycle including recruitment, onboarding, core transactions (leaves, attendance, directory), payroll, travel and expenses, employee engagement, performance management, rewards & recognition, and people analytics.

With Darwinbox's onboarding module, organisations can offer their new hires a seamless, personalised digital onboarding experience from day 0. From digital offer letters, smart forms, ability to configure custom fields according to the employee's location, to automated workflows - the onboarding module simplifies the onboarding process and gives new hires a delightful and seamless experience.

Similarly, our robust workflows engine can be used to configure necessary separation workflows that are both in line with the company's

We at Darwinbox, also believe that it is the people in any company who build the future, it is the people who push the boundaries of what is possible and imaginable." needs as well as the local privacy laws of the region.

Following your latest funding round, you have now reached Unicorn status, and the company is now valued at \$1bn, which only serves to illustrate further the incredible success you have enjoyed since your inception in 2015. However, what do you think it is about your technology offering that has really resonated with the market? Darwinbox currently has 650+ global enterprise customers, a third of which have moved away from legacy players such as SAP, Oracle, or Workday, to adopt our agile HCM suite.

This can be attributed to our focus on building highly configurable, user-friendly, and innovative technology capable of preparing enterprises for an ever-changing reality of Work.

The past few years have represented some of the most transformative years in defining the future of work. Organisations all over the world were tested on their ability to respond to and thrive during times of change. Extraordinary focus on enabling workforces to thrive in an uncertain environment, and keeping them happy and productive, no matter where they were, stood out as a priority for every CXO.

Darwinbox is at the heart and center of this movement and enables large enterprises with a mobile-first HCM platform that puts employees squarely at the center while crafting meaningful experiences for them. Darwinbox HCM enables



organisations to achieve up to 95% employee adoption on the platform by delivering consumer-grade intuitive experiences to attract, retain, and develop talent.

The agile, intuitive, and robust feature-set enables HR teams to quickly adapt to evolving business needs. Furthermore, the solution was built with a deep understanding of local nuances and is capable of solving the unique needs of organisations in the region.

#### Can you tell us more about your ambitions and aspirations to scale and expand your presence across the Middle East, particularly in the UAE and Saudi Arabia?

The last year has been nothing short of a dream run for us in the geographies we already operate in. We are currently the 3rd most popular HCM solution in South Asia and growing at 3X in our newer markets. We are super excited about serving MENA enterprises where we expect to grow by 400% this year.

The new funding will supercharge our team's plans by allowing us to accelerate our platform innovation agenda and scale our go-to-market presence in MENA. With our regional office already based in the Dubai International Financial Centre, we aim to invest aggressively and grow our team in the UAE. We will also be staging the opening of our next GCC office in Saudi Arabia soon.

Markets across the Middle East, especially in the UAE and KSA, have some of the world's highest smartphone penetration rates and a growing young population that's techsavvy. The pandemic was a significant inflection point for Middle Eastern enterprises, with a majority adopting remote and hybrid work practices. We will work closely with companies across the region to deliver a disruptive, modern and intuitive experience to their workforce. Furthermore, keeping

with prioritising our product development for the region,

Charles Darwin's theory on survival of the fittest is something we understood to be true in the corporate world for any enterprise wanting to grow and advance into the future." we will be launching the Arabic Darwinbox mobile app specifically tailored for MENA employees later this year.

#### Darwinbox is a very interesting name, can you tell our readers more about the story behind your decision to name your company Darwinbox?

Charles Darwin's theory on survival of the fittest is something we understood to be true in the corporate world for any enterprise wanting to grow and advance into the future. Darwinbox's vision has been to build technologies that help enterprises evolve and stay ahead of change.

We at Darwinbox, also believe that it is the people in any company who build the future, it is the people who push the boundaries of what is possible and imaginable. Empowering people to become their best is the biggest competitive advantage any organisation can build. It is this unshakable belief that drives our passion to build Technology for People -Technology that is unbelievably easy to use, is designed for any and every kind and is relentlessly innovating to evolve faster than change. This is the story behind our name – Darwinbox. cnme

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#### J.P. MORGAN PRIVATE BANK

# **I ROBOT**

**Steven Rees,** Head of Investments, Middle East and North Africa at J.P. Morgan Private Bank, takes a closer look at the impact industrial robots are going to have in terms of completely transformation manufacturing in Industry 4.0.

he mechanisation of mundane tasks, underway for generations and essential to the rise of living standards worldwide, dramatically picked up pace this past decade. The number of industrial robots more than doubled. Software continued to replace humans in repeatable processes. Autonomous vehicles actually started traveling our roads.

Globally, the AI market is booming as governments invest in technology to drive efficiency and savings in the postpandemic era.

The UAE, the Arab world's second-largest economy, is projected to benefit the most in the Middle East from AI adoption. Technology is expected to contribute up to 14% to the country's gross domestic product — equivalent to \$97.9 billion — by 2030.

We see greater change and promise ahead, as enabling technologies and macroeconomic necessities push companies and governments to increase productivity, improving bottom lines as well as society as a whole.



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#### Driving the change: Macroeconomics and tech advances

As workers in tighter labour markets are able to negotiate higher wages, companies will look to enhance their productivity, or simply replace them, with automation.

The pandemic turbocharged this structural economic trend. A recent study by the Federal Reserve found that one-third of firms having difficulty finding workers were looking to replace some existing staff with automation systems.

Technology is certainly one partial solution to labour shortages, and even if full replacement of employees may be rare for a while, opportunities abound right now for robots to replace workers.

We expect to see automation rapidly deployed in coming years. A number of technologies, such as 5G networks, cloud computing services and artificial intelligence (AI), are reaching the price point and reliability metrics that unlock automation solutions impossible only a few years ago.

Downsides include threats to cybersecurity and data privacy. On the upside, there is the potential that automation can enhance employee, client and customer experiences in every sector, while driving down costs for firms and improving profitability.

#### Customer service gets chatbot

Companies already are turning to technology to replace customer service workers. Hence, the rise of chatbots, aka "conversational AI", computing programs that mimic the human voice or written conversation with human users. The use of chatbots rose from 23% of companies surveyed in 2018 to 39% in 2020. The technology is used in roles ranging from customer support to sales and recruiting.

In the UAE, integration of chatbots with WhatsApp has seen more and more adherents. Travel agents use it to send ticket confirmations as WhatsApp messages — by default.

#### Manufacturing, revolutionised

The "fourth industrial revolution," coined by World Economic Forum President Klaus Schwab and referring to "the fusion of technologies which blur the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres" is now coming at

#### The UAE's Fourth Industrial Revolution Strategy focuses on advancing the national economy by driving innovation with the latest emerging technologies."

us faster than ever, sped up significantly by the pandemic. The UAE's Fourth Industrial

Revolution Strategy focuses on advancing the national economy by driving innovation with the latest emerging technologies. IDC estimated that public cloud services adoption is accelerating at a CAGR of 28% year on year between 2020 and 2025 in the UAE.

Industry 4.0 builds on humankind's previous industrial revolutions by automating entire manufacturing lines and ultimately combining physical industries with the digital world and its data. Innovations in automation and connectivity are expected to improve not only productivity, but also quality and safety.

#### Pandemic drives investment in industrial equipment

Many businesses now believe digital transformation and automation technology is key to their survival. In 2020, the global market for technology that enables hyper-automation (where companies automate processes quickly, using technology such as AI and virtual assistants) stood at \$418 billion. By the end of 2022, that figure is forecast to reach almost \$600 billion.

Executives also are increasingly aware of automation's potential to improve not only factory yields, but also sustainability (by reducing waste and decreasing overall factory emissions).

#### Autonomous vehicles take to the road

Autonomously driven trucks are likely to have a dramatic impact on life and the supply chain as we know them. Already, logistics companies, retailers and grocers are experimenting with, and in some cases even deploying, them.

While the unpredictability of long-haul routes, traffic patterns and the last-mile portion of the supply chain may still require human intervention to make the final delivery to the consumer, autonomous trucks are likely to have a large impact on short, predictable hub-to-hub routes over the coming years—and that alone could reduce logistic costs by 46% by 2030.

#### LAILA AL HADHRAMI

### INSPIRING CHANGE THROUGH LEADERSHIP

Nitya Ravi spoke to **Laila Al Hadhrami**, Smart Cities Development Manager, NEC (National Energy Center), Oman who is one of the leading experts in Development of Smart Cities in the Middle East. With 15 years of experience leading national projects in digital transformation and innovation, Al Hadhrami is considered one of the most inspiring and influential women leaders in Oman and the Middle East.

n the latest in our series of Women in Tech interviews, Nitya Ravi spoke to Laila Al Hadhrami, founder of the Smart Cities Ambassador program and a global keynote speaker and distinguished author, to learn more about her views on the digital transformation sweeping the Middle East region, the importance of digital resilience – and what advice she'd give young women considering a career in IT.

#### Being 'digital first' is the need of the hour in a post -pandemic world. What is your take on the same?

I completely agree with the same. The companies who are not improving their services and aligning themselves to the current demands of the industry and the current pace of technology will always be left behind and that will affect their business and sustainability in the market. 'Innovation' has to be the core motto of any organisation to continue improving their services and to be aligned to the market and the vision of the country. With companies across the region undergoing digital transformation, what do you think will be the new challenges they have to face in the digital ecosystem?

One of the challenges I feel companies will face is resistance to change. New processes and technologies often present challenges in the form of resistance to change from employees who feel there is nothing wrong with the way they're currently doing things. Companies must foresee this and provide dedicated investment in the form of training and support to help employees become productive and innovative.

A very important point I would like to highlight is that as a first step, organisations must work to simplify their internal processes before thinking of moving them online. If processes are not improved as part of the re-engineering process, it will lead to online chaos.

Another challenge is privacy and cybersecurity concerns. Most digital transformation efforts involve leaving behind on-premise solutions to move to the cloud, as well as integrating all of a company's data into one centralised system. This brings up the increased threat of cyberattacks that compromise sensitive data. Companies need to have a plan in place to proactively mitigate these threats before they can happen.

#### How important is leadership that focuses on digital resiliency for the future of the company / community or country?

Great leadership will have great foresight on how to drive their company or country towards greatness. It is very important in this era of digitalisation that leaders be aware of FutureTech and empower themselves and those around them with continuous learning and adoption of new technologies. Due to the pandemic, a lot of companies around the world have transformed digitally at a much quicker pace however it's essential to do this before any sort of disaster knocks at our door.

#### Our ambition is to lead and contribute to the Oman 2040 Vision, which is designed to improve the quality of life for its citizens."

#### What disruptive technology do you see taking form in the coming years in Oman?

Technologies are changing every day so it is challenging to decide which one will dominate the market in the coming years. As NEC, we are a company dealing mostly with smart city projects and there will be new cases to implement which involves integration of different technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Big data to have a sustainable improvement in services and products.

We are taking the lead in proving and executing smart cities projects in Oman and regionally. Our ambition is to lead and contribute to Oman 2040 Vision which is designed to improve the quality of life for all its citizens.

I am proud to say that recently, we launched the Smart Innovation Hub that aims to empower sustainable innovation with all our different stakeholders in our own model in a Smart ecosystem and launched two new smart solutions which are the Smart Environment Solution and Smart Street Lighting.

What advice do you have for aspiring young women looking to enter the technology field? I can sum up the following from my humble experience and lessons learnt. Women must always keep empowering themselves with continuous learning and obtaining global certificates in their field.

Write down your goals and believe that you can achieve it. Don't work alone and always compete with yourself to improve your skills. Surround yourself with positive people and avoid negativity and negative people. Always know your rights and fight for it. Improve your communication skills and learn to balance your work and personal life.

#### COMMSCOPE

# EMPOWERING THE DATACENTER

CNME Editor spoke to **Mahmoud Elmadhoun**, Systems Engineering Lead for the Emerging EMEA at CommScope, to find out more about its market presence in Saudi Arabia, the impact its portfolio of solutions is having for its datacenter customers – and what ultimately differentiates CommScope from other players in the home network solutions space.

> ommScope is a market leader in home network solutions has earned itself a reputation globally for pushing boundaries when it comes to developing some of the world's most advanced wired and wireless networks.

CNME Editor Mark Forker was onsite at LEAP in KSA, and he secured an exclusive interview with CommScope's Mahmoud Elmadhoun. In a candid interview the dynamic CommScope executive began the conversation by outlining the company's presence in Saudi Arabia.

Our solutions are helping our datacenter customers intelligently, and more efficiently manage their datacenter infrastructure." CommScope is not a new market incumbent when it comes to the KSA – and has been present there since the late 90'. That longevity has left them wellpositioned to leverage their products and solutions to capitalize on the burgeoning opportunities that now exists across the Kingdom.

"We have been established in Saudi Arabia for well over 20 years and during that time we have continuously grown and developed over the years. We consider Saudi Arabia to one of our most important strategic markets across the world. Over the years we have adapted our strategy and that has led us to significantly invest in local resources, because it's critically important to have that expertise on the ground. We have also made investments in technical resources in a bid to cover our in-building wireless, outdoor wireless, wi-fi networking infrastructure,

and datacenters portfolios," said Elmadhoun.

Elmadhoun pointed out that its presence over the years had helped them to cultivate and nurture relationships with key players across the KSA and that has led to strong brand identity and trust.

"We have a very strong presence in the market, and a solid market share in the KSA. Our continuous presence in Saudi Arabia over the years has led to widespread brand recognition, and we have developed strategic partnerships with major players across all the key industry verticals such as telecommunications, banking, government, and education," said Elmadhoun.

The company was participating in the inaugural LEAP technology conference that was held in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh earlier this month – and the event demonstrated how serious the Kingdom's leadership is about becoming a major hub for innovation and technology, as part of its ongoing efforts to diversify their economy through



Systems Engineering Lead for the Emerging EMEA at CommScope

its ambitious transformation program Saudi Vision 2030.

"I think LEAP is a very ambitious event, and it has undoubtedly brought a lot of the technical and technology innovators into the country. It is very evident from being in Saudi Arabia that there is an accelerated digital transformation program ongoing. There are also a lot of datacenters being constructed, which really reflects the exponential demand for cloud services in the Kingdom. LEAP is a great illustration of how committed the country is its Saudi Vision 2030 program, which is ultimately all about enabling local companies and international enterprises to invest in the local economy. It's a great initiative and I think we

will see more events like LEAP in Saudi Arabia in the future," said Elmadhoun.

CommScope boasted an impressive stand at LEAP and were demonstrating and showcasing some of the cutting-edge products and solutions from their diverse portfolio. Elmadhoun referenced the ongoing growth in datacenters and said they solutions were equipping enterprises with the tools they needed to effectively manage their datacenters.

"We are a leader in telecommunications, whether that is indoor, outdoor, wireless, or wireline. We are showcasing all the leading solutions that we have in every segment. There has been a lot of focus placed on 5G across the region in terms of indoor and outdoor wireless connectivity. We are also showcasing our Wi-Fi 6 access point solutions and networking solutions, but more importantly the intelligent physical solutions in datacenters. Our solutions are helping our datacenter customers intelligently, and



more efficiently manage their datacenter infrastructure. There has been a huge increase in demand for datacenters, and that has rather inevitably put more stress on efficiency and uptime. However, our solutions are alleviating the problems that are being encountered by datacenter operators and are enabling them with the capabilities to efficiently manage their datacenters," said Elmadhoun.

In terms of trends that they are seeing and that they are focused on, Elmadhoun said that the industry vertical of smart cities and smart buildings was a burgeoning sector, whilst he also revealed that CommScope had made significant investments in sectors such as education and banking.

"The most relevant trends from our perspective have been in the smart buildings and smart cities verticals. There are a lot of new projects ongoing in that space and we are actively engaged in this, and we can see that end-users are looking and searching for the most efficient way to design infrastructure that really enables intelligence and integration in smart city projects. Over the last few years, we have witnessed many verticals undergo transformation, such as banking and education, and as a result we have invested in those areas and are leveraging our technologies to help our customers in those sectors to have more robust and resilient networks," said Elmadhoun.

Elmadhoun concluded a fascinating exchange by articulating what he believed where the key differentiators that separated CommScope from its market rivals. "Look I think we have great products and solutions, and we invest heavily in R&D. However, I do feel that our market differentiator is both our presence and the relationship we have with our customers. We are very intimate with our customers, and we strive to develop solutions and products that really empower them. We want to help them meet their business goals and objectives. We're not trying to fit our solutions into their needs, but instead we want to understand what they want. We are on a mission to get them from where they are today, to where they want and need to get to. Every customer has their own unique requirements, and we tailor our solutions to help them. We leverage our technology and expertise to help them build the best network possible that really empowers and enables them them to grow and expand and thrive in the new digital economy," said Elmadhoun. cnme

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