computer news middle east

ISSUE 361 | JUNE 2022 Tahawultech.com

GENERAL MANAGER LENOVO GULF

ACER'S VP EMEA

ARVOIA'S CEO

THE FUTURE OF

YAHIA ALHAMI, CEO OF TAHALUF AL EMARAT, TELLS CNME HOW THEIR PORTFOLIO OF CUTTING-EDGE SOLUTIONS IS ENABLING BANKS TO TRANSFORM THE SERVICES AND EXPERIENCES THEY PROVIDE TO THEIR CUSTOMERS.

CPI

⋘ tahawultech.com





zendesk

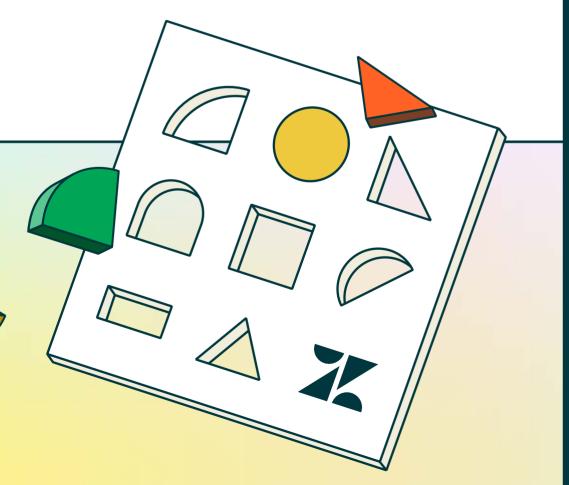
INTERACTIVE REPORT

CX Trends 2022

Access the latest research in our interactive report







global leader when it comes to sustainability.

computer news middle east

Our events











Our online platforms



tahawultech.com

Our social media



facebook.com/tahawultech



twitter.com/tahawultech



linkedin.com/in/tahawultech



Talk to us: E-mail: mark.forker@ cpimediagroup.com

Acer is one of the world's best PC and laptop manufacturers, but again one of the company's core values is sustainability."

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

PI Media Group hosted the GovTech Innovation Awards at the Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, The Palm last month – and full coverage of the event is included inside.

However, a strong theme that ran consistently throughout the awards was the fact that the UAE was fully committed to being a

The government sector here in the UAE are developing innovative programs, projects, and technologies that are designed to ensure that the vision of the UAE leadership is achieved when it comes to its 'green agenda' — and we recognized those trailblazers during our awards ceremony.

Acer is one of the world's best PC and laptop manufacturers, but again one of the company's core values is sustainability.

The IT industry is among one of the most energy intensive industries in the entire world, so businesses know they need to do more to ensure a better world for future generations.

CNME spoke to Massimiliano Rossi, VP Product Business Unit EMEA, at Acer, to learn more about its new range of Vero products unveiled during their Global Press Conference last month.

Rossi believes Vero reinforces the company's commitment to reducing their carbon footprint – and in a candid interview stressed that sustainability is not something they only started thinking about a few years ago, but instead has been in the DNA of the company.

Rossi said, "Last year, we launched our very first Vero product, which was a 15-inch Notebook, and it was the first real tangible product that really illustrated our commitment to sustainability."

On the front cover of this month's edition of CNME, is a terrific discussion with Yahia Alhami, CEO of Tahaluf Al Emarat.

He spoke at length and in detail about how the IT services specialist is helping banks adapt to the challenges of digital transformation, which he declared was necessary in an economy driven by experiences.

From sustainability to digital transformation, another hot topic in the IT domain is of course artificial intelligence.

AI is everywhere in the IT landscape — but it made global headlines amongst major mainstream outlets following the news that Google placed one of their engineers on gardening leave for claiming that AI had become sentient.

It was a headline welcomed by those who believe AI will lead us into a dystopian Orwellian nightmare, but Google moved quickly to dispel any fears that their AI is sentient - and explained that their engineer was simply duped.

There is a lot of focus on AI in June's edition of CNME.

Mike Webster, CEO of Arvoia, an AI-powered booking engine, explains how their technology is helping the hospitality sector emerge from the dark ages.

His platform is giving the power back to the hotels, who had outsourced their ability to win customers directly to the likes of Meta, Google and Booking.com.

Webster said, "What we would like to be able to do is be part of a movement of independent AI providers, who can deliver mass AI services without having to pay Google, or Facebook."

In a bumper edition, we also have interviews with GfK, Alteryx and Lenovo, coverage from our GovTech Awards and Dell Technologies roundtable – and a byline from me that examines how 'observability' is the key to managing complexity in your IT environment.

Finally, we also have 'independent commentary' from our resident tech experts from ServiceNow, FTFT Capital and Alvarez & Marsal.

We know that sometimes we can struggle to get the balance right between commercial and non-commercial analysis and insight, so we hope these independent expert bylines will go someway to addressing that issue.

Enjoy!

Mark Forker Editor



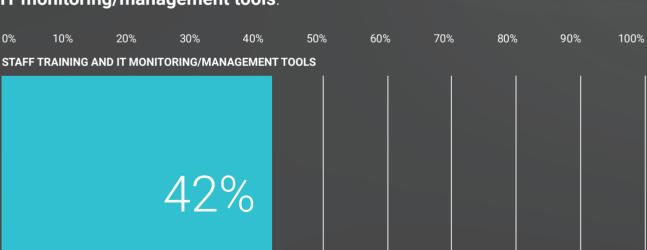


Getting IT Right

Managing Hybrid IT Complexity

The SolarWinds IT Trends Report is an annual survey that explores significant trends, developments, and movements related to and directly affecting technology professionals.

Almost half (42%) of tech pros in the Middle East said their organization manages hybrid IT complexity through training staff and adopting IT monitoring/management tools.















News

CNME rounds up the biggest regional and global developments in enterprise technology, which includes the news that Infor has appointed Kerry Koutsikos as the company's new VP and General Manager for their MEA operations, Mindware launches an Azure ISV Hub program – and a global survey from Sophos indicates that ransomware attacks in the global healthcare industry has increased by 94% in 2021.

10 Massimiliano Rossi, VP Product Business Unit EMEA, at Acer, outlines how the company's latest range of Vero products will help them achieve its sustainability goals.

- **14** Daniel Shearly, VP of Products at GfK, believes their gfknewron platform will empower businesses to be able to use their data more effectively.
- **28** Mike Webster, CEO of Arvoia, discusses how their Al-powered booking engine platform is giving hotels the autonomy to win back their customers directly.
- **32** Cathy Mauzaize, VP EMEA South at ServiceNow reveals the practices she believes businesses should adopt to ensure they cultivate a better work environment for employees.
- **44** Vishal Soni, Technical Product Evangelist at Alteryx, explains how their platform is removing complexity - and allowing everyone to gain access to data science and analytics.









FOUNDER, CPI Dominic De Sousa (1959-2015)

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

Publishing Director Natasha Pendleton natasha.pendleton@cpimediagroup.com

OnlineEditor Daniel Shepherd daniel.shepherd@cpimediagroup.com

FDITORIAL

Mark Forker

mark.forker@cpimediagroup.com

PRODUCTION AND DESIGN Senior Designer Analou Balbero analou.balbero@cpimediagroup.com

webmaster@cpimediagroup.com

DIGITAL SERVICES Web Developer

Adarsh Snehajan

Published by



Publication licensed by Dubai Production City, DCCA PO Box 13700 Dubai, UAE

Tel: +971 4 5682993

© Copyright 2022 CPI All rights reserved

While the publishers have made every

Azizi Developments makes strides in its digital transformation



Through the implementation and

enhanced used of various digital tools, Azizi Developments, a leading private developer in the UAE, is moving ahead rapidly with its digital transformation efforts, effectively benefiting all of its stakeholders, with a special focus on its investors and end-users.

Having just signed an agreement with MGB to implement Robotic Process Automation (RPA) in its internal processes, as well as with Vortex FSM, a prominent tech business providing facility management and automation software for assets and facilities upkeep, Azizi has effectively decreased its service turnaround time by over 30%. The agreement with Vortex comes as part of Azizi's continuous endeavours to adopt leading technologies and implement robust frameworks to boost field-technician efficiency by optimising the dispatching process via a mobile app or a subcontractor's web portal. Vortex includes a comprehensive asset registrar and trouble-ticketing web portal as well as the maintenance history, which is documented and provided via dynamic reports and customised business analytics dashboards.

F5 Unveils NGINX for Microsoft Azure to Deliver Secure, High-Performance Applications for the Azure Ecosystem



Eric Braun, Vice President, NGINX Product Management, F5

F5 has announced the release of F5 NGINX for Microsoft Azure, an Azurenative service offering developed in

partnership with Microsoft, that helps customers deliver modern applications on Azure with just a few clicks. With NGINX for Azure, developers can lift and shift on-premises applications to Azure and deploy new, born-in-the-cloud services using NGINX, the familiar and trusted load balancing solution.

"NGINX powers the world's busiest websites with a suite of advanced connectivity, traffic management, and security solutions—all of which bring additional value to the Microsoft Azure ecosystem", said Eric Braun, Vice President, NGINX Product Management, F5. "The combination of Microsoft's trusted cloud and NGINX's trusted software offered as a service on Azure enables developers and DevOps teams to optimise the performance, reliability, and security of their distributed applications and services at a global scale".

Ransomware Attacks on Healthcare Organisations Increased 94% in 2021, According to Sophos Global Survey



John Shier, Senior Security Expert at Sophos.

Sophos, a global leader in nextgeneration cybersecurity, has published a new sectoral survey report, "The State of Ransomware in Healthcare 2022." The findings reveal a 94% increase in ransomware attacks on the organisations surveyed in this sector. In 2021, 66% of healthcare organisations were hit; 34% were hit the previous year.

"Ransomware in the healthcare space is more nuanced than other

industries in terms of both protection and recovery," said John Shier, Senior Security Expert at Sophos. "The data that healthcare organisations harness is extremely sensitive and valuable, which makes it very attractive to attackers. In addition, the need for efficient and widespread access to this type of data so that healthcare professionals can provide proper care – means that typical two-factor authentication and zero trust defense tactics aren't always feasible. This leaves healthcare organisations particularly vulnerable, and when hit, they may opt to pay a ransom to keep pertinent, often lifesaving, patient data accessible. Due to these unique factors, healthcare organisations need to expand their antiransomware defences by combining security technology with human-led threat hunting to defend against today's advanced cyberattackers".

Mindware Launches Azure ISV Hub Program



Building on its status as a Microsoft

Gold partner, Mindware, one of the leading Value-Added Distributors (VADs) in the Middle East and Africa, today announced the launch of its 'Azure ISV Hub Program'. The initiative provides independent

software vendors (ISVs), including young start-ups or any enterprise having a unique intellectual property, with a go-to-market strategy and a pool of other benefits that can be unlocked when their solutions are powered on Microsoft

Azure. To commemorate the launch, Mindware has created an immersive, educational video that provides further insights into the program.

Azure's global infrastructure includes 60+ regions and is growing fast. It has a significant set of security and privacy certifications and more than 90 compliance offerings. With 3,500 security experts monitoring to safeguard data and a billion dollars a year spent on security alone, Azure is one of the most trusted cloud Platforms.

ISVs interested in starting their journey can register their interest on Mindware's portal https://onlinemindware.net/microsoft-isv/ and get ready insights from the company's video explaining about complimentary starter benefits of up to US\$ 45,000.

CyberRes Reveals Digital Value Chain Attacks on a Rapid Rise with Ransomware Victims Nearly Doubled Year over Year



CyberRes, a Micro Focus line of

business, is pleased to announce the release of the first Annual Report on the current state of cyberthreats and an overview of cyber events in 2021. This strategic report signifies another milestone of the advanced threat

research journey that started with the launch of the immersive Galaxy Online platform in January 2022 to deliver better cyber resiliency to the market.

CyberRes' Research shows that threats have rapidly evolved to target the growing threat surface of organisations that have incorporated digital into their business growth DNA. As organisations move quickly to adopt digital as a competitive differentiator, adversaries are equally quick at exploiting vulnerabilities in the digital value chain.

"Everyone is at risk from feeling direct or indirect impacts from cyberattacks, as all records were smashed last year in terms of the sheer number of cyberattacks on government entities, private-sector organisations, and individuals", said

Mark Fernandes, Global CTO at CyberRes. "Unfortunately, this trend is continuing in 2022. One of the key effective defences is to maintain a clear understanding of the current landscape, tactics, and threats that could be emerging".

Infor Appoints Kerry Koutsikos as GM and VP for Middle East & Africa Region



Kerry Koutsikos, Vice President & General Manager MEA region, Infor

Infor has appointed Kerry Koutsikos

as Vice President and General Manager for the Middle East and Africa region. Koutsikos will drive Infor's business growth and strategy in the region and ensure customer success through agile delivery of Infor's industry-specific cloud solutions.

"We are excited to welcome Kerry to our Middle East & Africa operation", said Wolfgang Kobek, Infor executive vice president and general manager for EMEA. "Kerry joins Infor at an exciting time in the region. Sectors including manufacturing, distribution, automotive, warehousing and logistics are growing rapidly in the Middle East and Africa amid surging demand, but they also face numerous challenges including inflation and supply chain issues. Infor is wellplaced to help customers tackle these challenges, boost their efficiency, and maximise their growth potential. Kerry's extensive experience of developing enterprise technology businesses and his ability to inspire teams to achieve ambitious common goals make him the right fit to take Infor's already successful regional operation to the next level. Kerry and his team will have a laser focus on helping customers digitally transform with Infor's industry-specific cloud-based solutions", Kobeck added.

Trend Micro launches the most powerful and complete security platform to reinforce the digital strides of regional enterprises



Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader

in cybersecurity solutions, announced the launch of Trend Micro One, a unified cybersecurity platform with a growing list of ecosystem technology partners that enables customers to better understand, communicate, and lower cyber risks.

Organisations are battling on all fronts to face mounting cyber risks from their complex and growing attack surface with stretched teams and siloed security products. The unified security platform approach delivers a continuous lifecycle of risk and threat assessment with attack surface discovery, cyber risk analysis, and threat mitigation and response.

"Enterprises of all sizes across the MEA region have undergone a transformational shift due to the accelerated digital transformation in the last few months", said Dr. Moataz Bin Ali, Area Vice President and Managing Director, MEA, Trend Micro. "The recent changes have also presented a more complex threat environment for organisations to navigate through. With the continued migration to the cloud and the emergence of hybrid cloud operations, bad actors are growing more sophisticated in their attacks, and we are confident that Trend Micro One is the perfect shield to counter them. This nextgeneration solution, which combines numerous sources of asset and risk visibility, will assist regional firms in achieving the strongest security posture while accelerating their digital journey, resulting in a safer digital environment to do business and thrive".



Matt McLarty, Global Field CTO & VP of the Digital Transformation Office, MuleSoft

With macroeconomic uncertainty — across

markets, hiring, costs, and more — now firmly top of mind, CEOs and leaders across the business are focused on efficient growth, cost savings, and increased productivity. As a result, companies are turning to automation more than ever to drive immediate value across all parts of the business, from technical to non-technical departments like sales, customer service, marketing and commerce.

Nearly all (96%) respondents said that

New Research Shows Automation Demand Surged in More Than 90% of Companies

modifying and rebuilding automations is a challenge as systems and business requirements change. In addition, 4 in 5 respondents said restructuring existing application and data landscapes to support automation would likely compound their organisation's technical debt.

"Organisations across every industry want to automate processes and customer experiences as quickly as possible. However, if they try to go fast with the wrong tools and techniques, they'll actually impede true innovation", said Matt McLarty, Global Field CTO & VP of the Digital Transformation Office, MuleSoft. "It's vital that organisations become more adaptable to technological change, enabling them to build automations and connect data and applications in a holistic manner. Without taking a more composable approach, organisations risk compounding rather than reducing their technical debt".

AVEVA Positioned as a Leader in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for Manufacturing Execution Systems



Rob McGreevy, Executive Vice President of Operations Business, AVEVA

AVEVA, a global leader in industrial

software, driving digital transformation and sustainability, today announced that it has been positioned by Gartner as a Leader in its 2022 Magic Quadrant for Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES) for its AVEVA Manufacturing Execution System. This is the third time in a row that AVEVA has been recognised in the Leaders quadrant.

The evaluation was based on specific criteria that analyzed the company's overall

completeness of vision and ability to execute. A complimentary copy of the full report is available from the AVEVA company website at https://engage.aveva.com/gartner-magic-quadrant-manufacturing-execution-systems.html

"Our positioning in the Magic Quadrant for Manufacturing Execution Systems by Gartner for the third consecutive year validates our ability to help customers gain exceptional value from their manufacturing systems and investments. In the post-pandemic business landscape, manufacturers' ability to operate in an agile and resilient way in the face of massive and unpredictable disruptions to demand and supply networks is key. We continue to leverage the latest technology (both on premise and in the cloud) to enable the optimisation and integration of business planning and manufacturing execution into a single digital pane", said Rob McGreevy, **Executive Vice President of Operations** Business, AVEVA.

In the report, "Gartner defines manufacturing execution systems (MES) as a specialist class of production-oriented software that manages, monitors and synchronises the execution of real-time physical processes involved in transforming raw materials into intermediate and/or finished goods".

AVEVA's model-driven Manufacturing Execution System approach is uniquely positioned to accelerate the digital transformation of manufacturing operations by digitalisation of processes, standardising best practices, KPIs and reporting across manufacturing networks. In turn, this provides full visibility and traceability for workers, consumers and supply chain planners, both in plant and across multisite manufacturing operations. Combined with AVEVA Operations Control, it allows for building a digital twin of the plant and the processes that help to improve plant productivity and throughput by up to 5–10%, reduce energy consumption by up to 16% as well as eliminate up to 25% of waste, making manufacturing operations more efficient and sustainable.

Seraphim Patel, Okadoc's Data Protection Officer & Head of Security Governance Risk and Compliance.

Okadoc, the one-stop-shop patient

engagement platform, today announces that it has received ISO 27001 certification for information security management systems. With certifications across each four locations – the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and the United States – this level of verification further demonstrates the organisation's adherence to international best practice for security management.

The intense and rigorous preparedness for the certification process involved

Okadoc is the first health tech ISO certified organisation in the region

detailed planning, which enabled Okadoc to complete the process in one year. This required Okadoc to document and follow a comprehensive and company-wide framework across more than 100 security controls, including policies, procedures, risk management, incident reporting, risk mitigation, staff training, measurement and monitoring, continuous improvement, and much more.

As the first healthtech platform across the Middle East to achieve ISO 27001 certification, Okadoc is leading compliance standards across the region.

Seraphim Patel, Okadoc's Data
Protection Officer & Head of Security
Governance Risk and Compliance, said:
"From investing into new technologies
and in-house resources, to implementing
all-staff trainings on security compliance
and policies, we saw a company-wide
and top-down supported effort to achieve
our ISO 27001 certification as well as

supporting our future compliance with other industry frameworks. While it was a very rigorous process, the certification is a crucial step in demonstrating our commitment to information security to our clients and partners, assuring that their data is consistently in safe hands. The ISO 27001 certification demonstrates that we are protecting patient data, keeping customer's information safe and secure. With this certification, Okadoc's responsibility towards information security adherence will now be raised to the next level".

The prestigious certification comes after a series of milestones for Okadoc, including becoming the first telehealth platform to receive approval by the UAE's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority the Dubai Health Authority. This year, Okadoc was also awarded "Best in KLAS" for Virtual Care Platforms in the Middle East and Africa.

ACER

ACER PROVIDING A DIFFERENT 'CONCEPT' FOR END-USERS

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Massimiliano Rossi**, Vice President Product Business Unit, EMEA at Acer, to learn more about the company's commitment to sustainability through its range of Vero products, how it is leveraging its knowledge and expertise to help its customers become more sustainable – and how its new ConceptD solutions are transforming experiences for gamers.

e know that climate change is one of the biggest issues facing our society, and the IT industry is one of the most energy intensive. A strong theme throughout Acer's **Global Press Conference** session was the company's commitment to become more sustainable. Can you tell me more about the impact your range of Vero products has had in terms of making Acer more sustainable?

A huge part of our global conference was built around sustainability, but of course we sell products, and we show our portfolio of products to our end-users, but sustainability for us is a much wider project - and it incorporates the entire ecosystem from suppliers, manufacturers, logistic operations all the way back to our customers.

Last year, we launched our very first Vero product, which was a 15-inch Notebook, and it was the first real tangible product that really illustrated our commitment to sustainability.

However, this was just the beginning of the journey, as Vero is now spreading across different product categories. It's a series, so there is a broad range of products for end-users, but we are beginning to see a lot of traction in some markets, but I think it's fair to say that we are still in a ramp up mode.

More and more countries are onboarding the Vero products, but when you are selling products that stands out from the shelf, then you also need to create a full set of communications to effectively tell that story. When we do tell the story then the acceptance and the engagement is strong, because whilst other regions may differ in terms of their maturity towards sustainability, it is something that we all know that we need to proactively pursue to ensure



a better future for our planet and attempt to alleviate the impact of climate change and our range of Vero products are helping to do that.

Sustainability is not always cost-effective for SMEs and startups, so how do you change their behavior and make it more cost-effective for them to be sustainable?

The product is just one element of how we can help our customers be more sustainable, but there are also lots of others too. For example, we can reduce the amount of air pollution created by our manufacturers by planning in advance and

having a better strategy to the entire process. In the IT ecosystem I do think there is a community of partners that are launching initiatives that are specifically designed to reduce the carbon emissions we emit during the lifecycle

SpatialLab provides a stereoscopic experience to users without wearing any glasses, and this was launched in 2021, with ConceptD."

of our products. However, all our suppliers want to be part of these initiatives because they do want to become more sustainable and want to reduce their carbon footprint.

We have also implemented several programs across the region to manage the lifecycle of the products, which essentially allows customers to refresh the product, by giving the product back to us through a third-party company that will give a second life to the product where it is possible, if it is not then they will make sure the product is dismantled properly and will reuse as much of the raw materials as they can. We also offer a discount to the customer

to purchase a new Acer product, which leverages all the latest technologies that will have less impact in terms of battery consumption and CO2 emissions, so there is a lot of things we can do to help our customers and partners to join us on this journey of sustainability.

Acer announced a broad range of products during its global press conference ranging from your SpatialLabs Model Viewer for Gaming, your Acer Chromebook Spin Laptops and Tablets and ConceptD Laptops and Desktops, to name a few – but from your perspective, which device do you think will really resonate with your end-users?

Within the company we have a division called SpatialLab, which is adding a lot of knowhow in terms of acquisitions that we have made in the past, and we have a unique solution where we use hardware and technology available in the market, but we embed it with a unique software solution. The SpatialLab provides a stereoscopic experience to users without wearing any glasses, and this was launched in 2021, with ConceptD, which is our product line that is specifically targeted for creators.

In reality, the ConceptD portfolio has several products of which one is SpatialLab because of this specific capability, because the capability is a combination of software and hardware



We are a company that has innovation in our DNA, and this is best represented in the sheer volume of patents that we have."

solutions because you need a special display, and an eyetracking camera in a bid to create that 3D effect, and in addition to this, you need a strong powerful PC because there is a lot of real-time rendering and calculations that the PC needs to the do.

This year, the product has undergone an evolution because when it was first launched it was not designed for gaming, but that has now changed, and we are now giving gamers a 3D experience.



The 3D experience really allows end-users to become fully immersed into the game. We live in a digital economy that is fueled by experiences and that experience element is key for us. Now as we announced at our global press conference if you have a powerful computer and you want this experience then you don't need to purchase a new device, all you need to do is buy the docking solution and the display that is a bit more sophisticated and use

the computing power of your standard gaming Notebook and add experiences through the display.

This is creating a new era of interaction and experiences being driven by Acer's portfolio of products and solutions, and whilst it's a new journey for us, we are delighted to be at the forefront of this movement that is ultimately accelerating this unique technology to be available for gaming solutions in the market.

Acer is regarded as one of the best manufacturers in the world when it comes to laptops and desktops – but what do you think it is about Acer that really differentiates you from your market competition?

Acer is a company where the people work in an environment that is really engaging and some of the core values of the company like sustainability are driven by the people, and the culture within the organisation fosters an environment which allows innovation to flourish. We are a company that has innovation in our DNA, and this is best represented in the sheer volume of patents that we have. We have the highest number of patents in the market because we have been innovating with a lot of new technologies, and SpatialLabs is one example of that.

We are a company that is extremely agile, quick to react – and we embrace new opportunities, and ultimately, we have the ability to put in front of customers a full set of products and solutions that enhance their operational efficiency.

We have a lot of initiatives outside of our core business that are generating revenue for us and these factors all combined is what differentiates us from our market rivals, and why we'll continue to be at the front when it comes to PC innovation and design.

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Daniel Shearly,** VP of Products at GfK onsite at the World Al Show in Dubai, to find out how the global market research leader is leveraging its new digital platform gfknewron to help their customers use their data to ultimately make better business decisions.

fK was founded in 1934, and since then the company has been providing the consumer goods industry with cutting-edge data insights and intelligence in a bid to give them a broader understanding of their own business performance compared to that of their market rivals.

We know that data has become the new oil, and any business that doesn't harness the power of its own data to form its decision-making will simply not survive in the new experience economy that we now find ourselves immersed in.

GfK has been able to evolve and adapt over the decades because

it has always embraced new technologies and change. The company underwent their own digital transformation journey in 2017, however, the launch of their Gkfnewron in 2020 has really captured the imagination.

Gfknewron is designed to revolutionise real-time access to critical knowledge and empowers businesses to make data-driven decisions to grow their brand and fuel their goto-market strategies.

In a candid interview with GfK executive Daniel Shearly, we examined the impact of the Gfknewron which has been categorised into three different products, which are Gfknewron Predict, Market and Consumer.

"The way our business works is we take data from retailers, and as a value exchange they get access to our platform, which gives them market insights on how manufacturers are performing globally. The core products we have is Gfknewron Market, which we sell to manufacturers, and then Gfknewron Consumer and Gfknewron Predict. Our market product is aligned to our traditional business which is all about telling customers about point of sale. However, as manufacturers there are lots of different questions they are trying to answer around their businesses, and we deal with almost limitless possibilities in

14

JUNE 2022



terms of companies who may be planning a new launch in a market, or they could be trying to determine and establish if one of their products is being cannibalised by another, or what their direction competition is heading for a certain product - so there are lots of different ways they can use our data," said Shearly.

Shearly expanded on the capabilities of its Gfknewron Market product by highlighting how it can give manufacturers access to 'consistent data' from different locations globally.

"What market does is provide an incredibly in-depth view of different markets globally, and the benefit of GfK is that

we work across the world, so you can get like for like data across different countries. If you happen to be a large global manufacturer, then you will get consistent data and almost a global currency that you can understand in terms of how something is performing in one place compared to another," said Shearly.

What we do is help enrich our clients and bring them data that could not get anywhere else."

According to Shearly the key component infused in their Gfknewron Consumer product is the information they can convey to customers and clients as to why someone is buying a specific product.

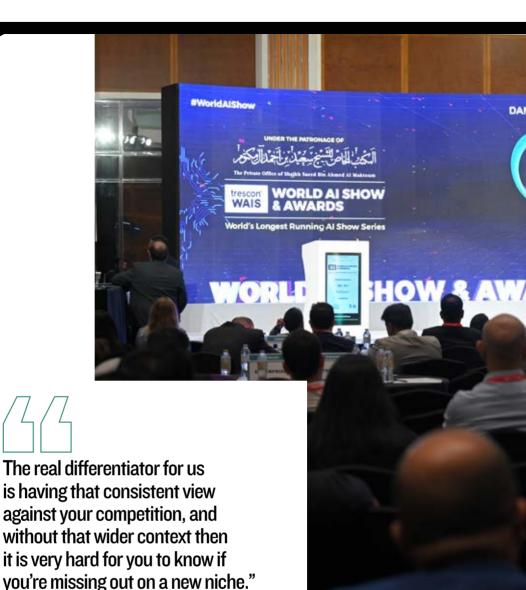
"Consumer tells you all about who is buying products and why, so if market is telling you more about what features are driving sales, then consumer is more about why are they buying your product, and who are they? You can study new trends like sustainability, or other new ethical trends like privacy, but in general consumer gives you much more information about the intent as to why someone is buying," said Shearly.

Shearly, who delivered a fascinating presentation during his The World AI Show in Dubai, revealed that the Gfknewron Predict is probably their flagship product.

"Predict is in many ways our flagship product, and a large portion of my presentation was focused on it. What predict enables our clients to do is instead of trawling through mass amounts of data that we have, it raises the key insights to the top, so you can make fast decisions based on our data. There are ways you can simulate different promotions so you can see by reducing your price how will that impact sales against other models. We also have forecasting, which will give you a better insight into what your sales will look like in the future, and there are different ways we can run simulations that will help businesses plan in terms of their future strategy - and that strategy can cover lots of things from marketing, supply chain, new products, planning and so on," said Shearly.

During his presentation, Shearly highlighted how traditionally, businesses relied on instinct, but he stressed that in the new digital economy If you want to be competitive then that attitude will no longer work and stressed the importance of establishing KPIs.

"What GfK has always been strong at is not just reporting the data, but we have an incredible commercial team who partner closely with our clients. In terms



of manufacturers the most beneficial thing that they get from us is our industry insights, and that's what neuron does, it starts to tell the stories of that specific industry insight. Our customers and clients can come to us with help for their KPIs, but they will probably already know what they are. What we do is help enrich our clients and bring them data that could not get anywhere else," said Shearly.

Shearly reiterated the importance of visibility and declared that a key differentiator for them was the 'external view' that they can provide to their clients and

customers in relation to their market competition.

"If I'm with a company then I can get good details about all the retailers, distributors, and promotions, but I have very limited visibility if none, without GfK in terms of how the competition is performing. We are not just bringing the internal view of what you are doing, but also the external view of what everyone else is doing. In terms of the KPIs there are things that we highlight through the platform like are your products being cannibalised, are your sales up or down, are your margins improving or



decreasing? However, the real differentiator for us is having that consistent view against your competition, and without that wider context then it is very hard for you to know if you're missing out on a new niche, or a new product," said Shearly.

One other element in his presentation that Shearly documented was the importance of showing clear business outcomes to justify investments being made in new technologies such as AI.

Shearly highlighted how a major problem was the fact that companies were unwilling to fail - and they ended up throwing

more and more capital at a specific project in a bid to save it, but according to the VP of Products at GfK, businesses must be willing to fail, and fail fast.

"When you do this type of work it costs quite a lot of money, and you will have heard horror stories of companies where they have refused to have given up on a project, so they have just piled on more and more money to solve it. You need to fail fast, because if you don't then suddenly people start saying AI doesn't work and it's too expensive. If you start to build small and simply then you can start to build up your

internal capability and you can start to prove the impact, and if you fail fast then at least you can take learnings and then reapply it and try again," said Shearly.

Shearly added that when it comes to the success or failure of an AI project then it all really depends on the way your data is structured, the quality of it and if you had the right people to harness all of it.

"It fails when you've got traditional waterfall type companies that put all their chips in one basket, and say this is the project do it, but your capability might not be there yet, you might not have the right people and you just simply may not be ready to do it. For AI to work you need to have your data structured in the right way. If you're a business and you want to launch a driverless car then you're going to need AI, but it's really complex, so you're going to have to spend a lot of money, but you still need to start small and build out, whereas if you're a company that does loads of stuff, but doesn't really know where to use AI then you've got to look for the easy stuff first, such as manual processes, which are easy to automate. That allows you to quickly show the impact of AI and enables you to scale at the speed that works best for you - and our range of Gfknewron product are empowering businesses to be able to do this to make better data-driven decisions faster," said Shearly. Come



DELL TECHNOLOGIES AND INTERTEC SYSTEMS

DIGITAL FIRST APPROACH

CNME Editor Mark Forker moderated a roundtable discussion between Dell Technologies and Intertec Systems, which examined the importance of next-gen cloud infrastructure in the digital economy, how businesses can recover their mission critical data following a cyberattack – and how enterprises can add 'value' to their agile infrastructure.

ell Technologies are one of the most innovative technology companies in the world, but they are an organization that does not rest on their laurels.

Innovation is infused in their DNA, and they are constantly investing in R&D to develop solutions and technologies to address the customer demands of today's complex IT ecosystem.

Intertec Systems is one of the most respected systems integrators in the UAE and has been in business for over 30 years.

During that time, it has earned a reputation for being one of the most reliable and trusted IT service specialists in the region, evidenced by the close relationship it enjoys as a channel partner of Dell Technologies.

In what was an extremely informative, engaging, and thought-provoking roundtable discussion, the session was kickstarted by Bassam Zantout, Enterprise Architect at Dell Technologies in a session entitled 'Infrastructure for Cloud-Native Platforms'.

In what was a fascinating presentation, Zantout highlighted how application modernization was a huge challenge with business and technology teams being misaligned.

"We know that application modernization enables organizations to make the most of their digital technologies, whether it be AI, machine learning, big data, and cloud. It helps transform your IT ecosystem based on current market trends and build a

flexible foundation for future innovation. However, we know that far too many enterprises are taking an API-only approach to app modernization and some vendors are guilty of overcharging customers looking for application modernization," said Zantout.

Zantout said that unlike other vendors, Dell Technologies supported choice and advocated for the use of Kubernetes for managing containerized applications across multiple hosts.

"Cloud-native applications are the future of software development. Exploiting the advantages of the cloud computing delivery model, a cloud-native application offers greater agility, resilience, and portability across public, private and edge cloud environments. Cloud With Dell Technologies Cloud, enterprises can deploy a hybrid cloud model and run traditional workloads alongside cloudnative, container-based applications, managing everything from a single pane of glass," said Zantout.

The next presentation was conducted by Ashraf Helmy, Regional Channel Sales Manager at Dell EMC, who showed the methods and solutions businesses can deploy to help them recover from the devastating impact of a cyberattack.

Cyberattacks as we all know are on the increase and are becoming more sophisticated, meaning that they can be harder to detect, flag and prevent.

Helmy made no qualms when it declared that businesses need to understand that it is not a case of if we will be attacked, but instead when.

"We are seeing more and more cyberattacks every day, and there has been an exponential increase since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. But what is your plan as a business? Too many



Cloud-native applications are the future of software development."

enterprises are guilty of thinking it's not going to be them, why would they attack me? But research has shown that 49% of those attacked are SMEs, many of whom are left crippled if they need to pay a ransomware fee to get their data back. That statistic shows you that these cybercriminals are not just going after the multinational conglomerates, everybody is a target. What businesses need to understand is how they can mitigate the damage of an attack when they are hit," said Helmy.

In addition to this, Helmy also pointed out that an employees' PC was the weakest part of the security chain, and this was a major issue facing large organizations in a hybrid world.

"We now live in a work from

anywhere world, but that has made employees in many cases sitting ducks. They are vulnerable, and we have seen countless cyberattacks via this method. The PC is the weakest part of the chain, and it's important for enterprises to recognize that a disaster recovery plan is very different to cyber recovery, as I stated earlier, businesses need to start thinking about when they are attacked as opposed to if and have a concrete plan in place to mitigate and offset the damage done," said Helmy.

The final session of the roundtable discussion was conducted by Manish Uttpal, Senior Presales Consultant at Intertec Systems, who delivered a presentation called 'Adding Value to your Agile Infrastructure'.

He gave a detailed overview of the company's impressive track record in the region since its inception in 1991 and spoke about its converged infrastructure.

"Our converged system for virtualization can be managed with a common management platform across servers, storage, and networking. Automation capabilities and templates are in place to eliminate many manual operations and device-focused processes. Vendor support is available to help prevent problems through continuous scanning, dashboard reporting, personalized consultation, resolving issues faster and making system-level updates easier," said Uttpal. Come

LENOVO

GOING THE FULL 360

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Mohammed Hilili**, General Manager, Lenovo Intelligent Devices Group, GULF, to find out how the IT leader has mitigated the impact of COVID-19 for its channel ecosystem, the capabilities of its new Lenovo 360 framework – and the skillset channel partners now need to excel in the multifaceted digital economy we now operate in.



Innovation is infused into every single facet of their organisation and that has fostered and cultivated an environment that has allowed the Chinese conglomerate to continue to flourish in an era labelled as Industry 4.0

However, a critical component in Lenovo's success, particularly across the Middle East region is its burgeoning channel ecosystem. CNME spoke to Lenovo's Mohammed Hillil to learn more about the relationship that exists between the world's largest PC manufacturer and its channel partners.

It has been well-documented how the COVID-19 pandemic completely disrupted every global industry and fundamentally reshaped the way we live, work, and learn.

Lenovo is a company that has always adopted a 100% channel first strategy, as see it as an extension to their existing team that is on the ground, Hilili explains this in more detail.

"Our approach is a very strategic, ensuring flexibility and collaboration to ensure our end customers are receiving the best-in-class service from both Lenovo and the channel. This approach has proven very effective, especially during the volatility of the pandemic. Also, with the pandemic creating an accelerated need for digital transformation

across the region, we made sure our channel ecosystem was fully supported from channel enablement programs, online trainings, and co-marketing. The pandemic also created a higher need for services, which meant that we had to work closely with our channel community to create new opportunities for growth," said Hilli.

There has been much fanfare about Lenovo's new channel framework entitled 'Lenovo 360' and that has been designed to encourage the channel to deliver Lenovo's portfolio of products as a service.

Hilili highlighted predictions compiled by a recent report by IDC as to why there is such a demand for a framework like Lenovo 360 from within the channel community.

JUNE 2022

"If you examine IDC's predictions for the META region for 2022, then it indicates clearly that spending on security (hardware, software, and services) will grow by 7% to top \$3.76 billion. In addition to this, spending on public cloud services will grow 27.3% to surpass \$6.8 billion and SaaS apps will account for 41% of public cloud software spending. Investments in AI will grow 24.7% to total \$1.2 billion, whilst spending on RPA (Robotic Process Automation) software will grow 47.5% to cross \$159 million – and Big Data analytics will grow at 8.1% to reach \$3 billion. Also, it's important to note that the region's IT spending remained resilient throughout the pandemic due to the need for contactless services, the accelerated digitalisation of operations, and the rise of digital business models," said Hilili.

Hilili believes that all these predictions represent huge opportunities for the channel to generate new revenue streams, and he added that he firmly believes their 360 framework gives them the autonomy to be proactive in terms of innovation.

"The predictions are looking very positive, and we can honestly say that the Middle East region has maintained resilience in IT spending. There are so many opportunities lying ahead and the channel will need to be proactive and expand their existing portfolio of solutions to react to changing end-customer needs. Our new channel framework Lenovo 360 offers channel partners the flexibility and breadth of resources to sell across products and services to do just that," said Hilili.

Lenovo has identified services and solutions as a key focus area for them, but talent acquisition and possessing the right skillsets remain a problem in terms of the channel having the competency to deliver everything as-a-service, but according to Hilili, this is where the Lenovo 360 framework really demonstrates its power.

This is where Lenovo 360 shows its true value. With the new framework the channel will have direct access to global experts in as-aservice, and subject matter experts to build vertical-based solutions - and our programs will help partners sell or upsell solutions and services. Through the new framework, partners will be able to sell and customise solutions with Lenovo's consolidated asa-service offerings. We'll have experts who will work with directly our partners on building a complimentary service delivery model via the Lenovo 360 ecosystem. All this falls into our channel first strategy of working with and empowering the channel simultaneously. In essence the new framework encourages our channel partners to participate across the L.T. value chain from

Our new channel framework Lenovo 360 offers channel partners the flexibility and breadth of resources to sell across products and services." devices, infrastructure to services covering the breadth of Lenovo's portfolio," said Hilili.

In terms of what Lenovo's primary goals and priorities are when it comes to enabling and empowering the channel, the Lenovo General Manager for Intelligent Devices Group stressed that hardware was high on its list of priorities.

"In the Middle East our device and hardware offerings remain a focus for us. However, infrastructure solutions and services are rapidly growing areas of our business. Our key priority here is to ensure that our channel partner network is engaged, educated, and empowered to truly enable them to sell across the entire Lenovo portfolio to meet specific customer needs, be it in providing devices, infrastructure, or services. With the opportunities arising in the market from services and solutions our channel partners, who only sell devices at the moment for instance can now expand their portfolio by adding infrastructure solutions and attached services to help them tap into the growing opportunities in the services and infrastructure market," said Hilili.

Hilili concluded a wonderful interview by reinforcing his belief that their new Lenovo 360 framework can really empower the channel and enable them to engage with customers at a much deeper level.

"We see Lenovo 360 paving the future of the channel moving away from traditional features and cost drivers, and towards a solutions-based approach. The framework unleashes partner potential to grow their business and engage customers on a deeper level," said Hilili.



FTFT CAPITAL

THE ROLE OF NFTS IN THE METAVERSE

In-house CPI Technology Expert **Ola Lind,** CEO of FTFT Capital, outlines the role played by NFTs in the burgeoning new arena of the Metaverse, described by some IT and tech analysts as representing the future of the internet, in the first in a series of op-eds for CNME.

he Metaverse is everywhere, and NFTs represent this new concept of digital property, and the fusion of both is expected to create new industry verticals estimated to reach 13.6bn by 2027.

To give us a better understanding of what the Metaverse and NFTs entail, we've asked our tech expert Ola Lind, to articulate to our readers what exactly is the relationship between them both.

Reflecting today's investors' increased interest in the nonfungible token (NFT) sector, a new study projects that the present \$3 billion market size will reach \$13.6 billion by 2027. According to MarketsandMarkets, several factors will contribute to the

explosive growth of the NFT market. These include its increasing use cases. Accessing the Metaverse has been identified as one of the growing use cases.

With the increase in the application of NFTs in the Metaverse, people wonder about the relationship between both. Since NFTs are often linked with websites and connections that occur via web browsers, and because the Metaverse is mostly virtual reality (VR)-based, there may be some uncertainty over their common ground or the role NFTs play in the Metaverse.

NFTs and the Metaverse defined

An NFT is a unique, encoded digital asset representing real-world items such as art, music, in-game products, and videos. They indicate ownership and originality and are predominantly issued through the Ethereum blockchain.

The Metaverse is a digital environment that allows people to connect virtually by combining social networking, online gaming, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and cryptocurrency. Augmented reality enhances the user experience by superimposing visual components, music, and other sensory input onto environments. As the Metaverse expands, it is expected to provide online worlds where user interactions are more multifaceted than present technology allows.

Is NFT a component of the Metaverse?

Most metaverse-related conversations focus on the possibility of combining the Metaverse with NFTs. In addition, many individuals believe that NFTs are another component of the larger Metaverse.

Apart from being both web and VR-based, the fundamental reason for these assumptions could also be the quick emergence of NFTs in the blockchain gaming industry. It is logical to assume that only virtual worlds will influence the Metaverse.

Furthermore, linking actual identities with digital avatars provides the potential for defining metaverse access through NFTs. In 2019, the first instance of NFT-controlled access manifested the Metaverse NFT token for the first time. 2019's first NFT.NYC conference used an NFT-based ticket for an event entrance. Even if no one could refer to the meeting as the "metaverse," it established

44

Whether NFTs are a part of the Metaverse or not, it is obvious they play a significant role in the Metaverse." a positive precedent for the NFTs-metaverse interaction.

Metaverse applications of NFT

Recent years have seen the emergence of several new initiatives aimed at the convergence of NFTs and the Metaverse. Some of the NFT use cases in the Metaverse covers NFT controlled access assistance in securing exclusive access to real-world and Metaverse events.

The new trends for real estate are another initiative with the use of NFTs to gain complete ownership of virtual spaces in the Metaverse. Using blockchain technology, users can demonstrate ownership. An example is Decentraland, a 3-D virtual territory where land portions can be bought and sold using nonfungible tokens.

NFTs also play a role in the Metaverse in the virtual marketplace. There is no doubt that VR communication spaces may also serve as a healthy trading environment for nonfungible tokens since these areas are already thriving. Sellers can give links and previews to web-based assets or create assets right inside the virtual reality environment.

Furthermore, several museums are presently incorporating NFT artwork in the Metaverse in the form of art galleries powered by mostly the Ethereum blockchain.

Whether NFTs are a part of the Metaverse or not, it is obvious they play a significant role in the Metaverse.



ike many other major global industries, the banking and finance sector has been forced to embrace new technologies in a bid to respond to the changing demands of their customers. However, some banks had already embraced digital transformation prior to the onset of the pandemic, whilst others had resisted change. In your expert opinion, are those traditional banks that are legacy-heavy in terms of infrastructure banks under threat, can they adapt quick enough to keep customers happy?

In the last few years banking ecosystems is heading towards a new era, as a result, in terms of digital transformation and social media you see the demand is

heading towards a seamless and fully digital experience where human involvements in any banking transactions are reduced.

We saw the growth of paperless banking, and gradually the growth of e-KYC and now digital banking, those changes are massive and will give a facelift to the industry in a few years. Where the seamless and full digital banking will be the new standards.

We started to measure the success of any bank based on amount of digital and seamless services that banking is providing via e-services and mobile applications.

Automations and full digitalisation's must be implemented in the front customer side as well as in the backend of banking systems to assure the quality of services and better service time for the customers, removing manual interactions will be key to success and essential to assure full journey digitalisation.

Banking systems are critical, and it transacts with the most important asset (the money) that's why it's always delayed when it comes to technology adoptions because of sensitivity of the industry, but many banks already started and achieved great shape in digital era. However, that is not enough due to big competitions, not only from local banks, but also from international providers which will be game changing.

We know that you can now open a bank account in other countries fully digitally, using eKYC, and you can use most of banking services without any limitations or delay, so the game now is not only to compete with local market, but also internationally, which is applying further pressures on all banks to adopt faster digital banking transformations, otherwise banks will be out of race.

I forecast any bank that is delayed in terms of adoptions for digital banking will be out of the game gradually in a few years. The lack of digitalisation will cause poor customer satisfaction, more time to serve the customer, which will result in a higher cost of operations inside non digital banks.

We know that with the advent of technology our expectations as consumers and end-users have skyrocketed, and that puts immense pressure on service providers such as banks to deliver great customer experiences in an era known as the 'experience 'economy. What technologies do you believe that banks need to harness and leverage to deliver these experiences?

Digital banking is considered as a market disruptor in this field; however, banks need to adapt to new growth and customer demands and heightened expectations. To be a digital bank you need not only the latest technology, which most banks today already have, but instead digital banking ecosystems must also include better processes, agile management, improved customer services via less customer interfacing and interactions, so my answer is that technology is not enough.

There is root cause for delayed full digital banking adoptions



which I have listed below:

Sensitivity of the industry, even if you have amazing technology, it will take time to make it safe and secure to adopt, so even if some banks are the first to adopt the technology, they run the risk of lagging behind in terms of security.

Organisations structures of the banks are huge in most cases, and it contains not only retail banking but other departments, which maybe are less digitalised such as wholesale banking, or other types of banking. That absolutely will make it harder to manage hybrid banks by having half or more digitalised whilst other parts are not, that will keep the mentality somehow complicated and not 100% tuned in for further digitalisation of processes.

77

Once digital banking and open banking practices are robust in one country, then you will quickly see it adopted in other countries." The average age of the management within a bank is hidden, but why is that important you may ask? Well, it's very crucial due to fact that most of the C-Level management in banks nowadays were born in the 70's and 80's, so it's still very hard for them to digest the daily digital movement and the impact of social media. This mindset has led to many banks not investing heavily enough in digitalisation until it's too late.

Digital transformation is like a revolution where you need to get more than 60% out of your current human resources department. In addition to this, you need new fresh faces who believe in the change with the same passion as you do. This can be considered as a disturbance for any bank, but you need strong leadership and commitment to do it in a speedy manner that can compete with international providers.

Regulations and policies sometimes can serve as a stumbling block for digital transformation programs, and this point is very important due to fact that regulations and policies may



vary from country to country, so if you are operating in a supportive environment, then you can grow faster, however if you are operating in a non-supportive environment then that can be very challenging. We also encourage clients to always have open channels with regulators from the industry in a bid to push forward and to lead full banking digitalisation.

Lack of competition in some markets may also lead to low digital adoptions. So, we see the accelerated growth of digital banks coming only after the first digital bank is open, so it's a matter of being first and fast in terms of being a successful bank in the new digital era. Those providers will set the new standards for the market and digital banks will set the pace for everyone who will come to the party later. Customers in the experience economy will not accept poor services if better services are available.

The adoptions of expensive technologies and tools is important. Traditional classic banks will adopt expensive

tools and brands in terms of technology from Tier One providers, but this can be killer for digital banks, because you can't grow digital banks if your tools are expensive. If you want a digital bank then you need to stop thinking like a traditional bank, so expensive technologies can't be selected. We need to stop doing this - and start using opensource tools and best technical practices to decrease the cost of IT, because we can't grow in IT investment if the cost of software licenses and tools are massive.

So, as I explained above its not only technology that is needed to do digital banking, but a full ecosystem of partners. If I need to look only at the digital banking side then I can say e-KYC solutions, such as digital identity, biometric solutions, PKI, business rule engines, flow management and many other tools will be needed to shape the success of my digital bank.

FinTech disruptors like Revolut and Monza are having great success across Europe, but many banks are working with those disruptors because quite simply they need the banks to be able to deliver their services.

Do you see the banks adopting a collaborative approach towards FinTech's in the UAE and across the Middle East in the next few years?

Of course, more banks will work with FinTech providers because they are ready and agile. The cost of digital banks if properly optimised is always much less than normal banks, which makes it much easier to use such platforms, instead of re-investing and doing it from scratch. It would be a wise choice to white label such services, however, that can be risky for the future of your banking services because your then dependent on another provider which can be risky.

Adopting FinTech solutions can be cheaper, faster, more successful, but it comes with cost in terms of a lack of service personalisation as the platform is owned by third parties, and the same platform is used by other banking providers, so customers will start feel bored due to lack of service personalisation.

Each bank must do evaluations for his current market share from customers demographics and characteristics such as age, background and target markets then based on that it can be decided if a third-party platform will be used or something must be tailored.

In your opinion, and given all what we have discussed, what do you believe the future of banking will look like – and what technologies are going to underpin it all?

Cross-border banking will

be the new face of banking. We may use providers from other countries, and I see the financial systems going towards more open-banking and more integrated banking, which will lead us into an era of digital banking, and we will slowly see the end of traditional banks as we know them.

Digital banks will be new standard and it act as a domino effect for other providers, once digital banking and open banking practices is robust in one country, then you will quickly see it adopted in other countries. That adoption will be a little bit slow to begin with over the next few years, but then I forecast an acceleration of digital banks to eliminate classical banks. I project a timespan of five years to finalise the full ecosystem of the digitalisation required. Providers will be left with no other option but to become fully digitalised in terms of both their services and mindset of their operations, failure to do so, and they will be out of the market.

We will enjoy sending money in a few seconds internationally between bank accounts, which has already been started with pay send and other providers, but we will also entertain IBAN and banking services from overseas, credit scoring services will start to grow internationally, and it will be a brighter future, but we need to navigate carefully.

There is one drawback when it comes to credit scoring and that is that internationally operating this will become harder and harder to get any bank account if we do make a mistake with one local, or international provider. Data and scoring will be fully connected and linked,

which is good for keeping the market healthy, but it might mean that a single mistake for any customers when it comes to bankruptcy or business operations could spell disaster.

Tahaluf Al Emarat have developed a reputation for producing first-class security solutions and smart services. Can you tell us how banks are leveraging your solutions to be more secure as cyberthreats and attacks continue to grow and become more sophisticated?

Our solutions now vary between industries, so we have developed our own products and are moving the company from horizontal system integrators to full

Customers in the experience economy will not accept poor services if better services are available."

products owners, where I reshape the sales from horizontal to verticals, so I have always three high level steps, which are sense the market, develop products, and then build vertical sales around it and operate.

I have the target to be active in seven industries in the upcoming two years that will include solid products practices in transportations, health care, law enforcements, immigrations, smart cities and IOT, environmental, AI and no code platforms, we are shaping the future of developments in the region.

We are passionate to see Tahaluf become the best IT software company in just a few years, and we are operating within a very supportive environment inside the UAE, where the ecosystems are ready to support such initiatives.

When it comes to banking industries, we are working hand to hand with many banks in providing multiple solutions such as anti-money laundering solutions, open banking, backend systems and digitalisation, and we also provide e-KYC solutions with our market leaders partners. In banking we developed many products which can make the transformations process easier and simpler for any banking provider.

Tahaluf Al Emarat is regarded as one of the most innovative companies in the UAE, innovation is in its DNA as a company, however, what differentiates you from your market rivals?

Agile, passionate, fast to adopt, we work not talk, working silently with loud results. We do IT with passion, that is our key feature, however, the long-term vision for our product developments and verticals sales practice is complementing the ecosystem of offering where you will find our team knowledgeable in the areas we serve.

We work hard and we hope that we will be able to achieve huge success.

As a final word for digital banking, we know it is a very big topic and I can write hundreds of pages and guidelines of how the market will be shaped, and how banks must act and proact, but we are optimistic that the future will be full of bright achievements and success in the banking industry.

www.tahawultech.com



JUNE 2022

ARVOIA

BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Mike Webster**, CEO of Arvoia, to find out how its Al-powered booking platform is equipping the hospitality sector globally with the technology it needs to win customers directly in the new 'experience economy'.

rish technology company
Arvoia believes its AIpowered platform can
empower hotel chains
globally to emerge from what its
CEO Mike Webster has described
as the 'dark ages' in terms of
customer experiences.

Since its inception in 2014, the company has been patiently building its AI platform, which is enabling the hospitality industry to become independent in terms of building and delivering hyper-personalised experiences for their customers.

Unlike other industry verticals, the hospitality industry was slow and reluctant to embrace new technologies, which inevitably resulted in archaic websites, simply not fit for purpose in our digital world.

In a bid to win customers they outsourced the task to online travel providers like TripAdvisor and Booking.com, however, in a world fueled by 'experiences' hotel chains were cognisant of the fact that they needed to turn the tide.

Step forward Arvoia, to be the vehicle required to elevate hotels back to forefront of customer experience.

Our expectations as consumers have been heightened due to the role technology now plays in our lives, and we now expect, and demand curated experiences tailored to what we want.

In a candid discussion with Arvoia CEO Mike Webster, he kickstarted the conversation

Where AI is currently in existence elsewhere is its ability to understand what every individual wants, and just gives it to them."

by outlining the problem that the company was attempting to overcome and rectify.

Webster highlighted how the hospitality industry is a \$3 trillion dollar industry globally – and that 30–40% of customers still book their hotel stay directly through hotels, but only a small portion of those make that booking using the hotel website.

"The problem is that they go on the hotel website, and to be honest they simply can't really figure out what they want. They are then forced to ring up the hotel's front-desk to search for a deal, and in this day-an-age I find that quite staggering, and you see this from the very large brands all the way down to smaller independent brands. Customers are arriving at the website, but they are just simply not getting what they want," said Webster.

That has cultivated an environment which sees billions of dollars of bookings coming via the front desk, but as Webster explains that is not a sustainable business model in a world in which businesses need data to drive better decisions and deliver better experiences.

"You have this crazy scenario where you literally have billions of dollars of bookings coming through the front-desk, so to effectively process all of that then the hotels need more staff and need to invest in training them to a high standard to make sure they are answering the phone - and responding to all these emails. However, in the digital economy we now find ourselves in, this is an archaic system. I mean can you imagine ringing

Spotify and asking them to recommend songs for you? It just

We plu

Webster outlined how the unique capability of AI is to ultimately understand our behaviors to deliver the experiences and recommendations that we want, citing Netflix and Spotify as prime examples of how to effectively deploy AI with their customers.

wouldn't happen," said Webster.

"Where AI is currently in existence elsewhere is its ability to understand what every individual wants, and just gives it to them. When you go on to Spotify, or Netflix, you are being presented with options based on what you have previously consumed, and new recommendations are being made for you. AI possesses the ability to understand a customers' behavior and curates' material back to them. However, hospitality is still in the dark ages," said Webster.

According to Webster, the current system employed by hotels is essentially very long 'unstructured' lists that contains thousands of different rooms and rates, which only serves to reinforce the viewpoint of the Arvoia CEO that the sector is completely out of touch when it comes to CX – but explains how their AI platform is helping them to transform.

"What happens today in hospitality is that you just get these very large unstructured lists, and there are thousands of different rooms and rates that every hotel puts together. Some

We plug-in this platform and give the customers experiences, but what we give the hotel is incontrovertible proof that this works."



are with breakfast, without breakfast, 3-night specials and so on, but it's a complete mess. The hotels keep creating these lists of room and rates, stick them on the website and categorise them from the cheapest to the most expensive. However, what our platform does is elevate all the old existing technology and allows them to simply connect into us. What we do is understand the behaviors and the mindset of every individual passing across that journey and it basically serves up what the AI believes that customer wants to see," said Webster.

Webster added that AI is understanding every individual

based on everything they do from clicking on images, to checking certain prices, and their AI platform uses that information to build a behavioral profile in real-time, and at scale.

"It's like a hot plate, and every customer going across it are leaving all these clues, like device size, mobile type, location, so it enables us to build thousands of behavioral profiles to really tailor the experience for the individual," said Webster.

Arvoia received investment for its AI platform through a combination of different channels, which included EU research funding, that was



matched by its own funding, and then additional capital venture funding — and that allowed the company to start building their platform in 2016, but as Webster stressed you can't half build it, due to the sheer size and scale of the platform.

He explained in further detail as to what the platform can do.

"For example, if we were working in Ireland with Dalata Group, who have a chain of hotels across the country, for us to just figure out what room and rate to show somebody we'll have 100 models running in real-time. Those models are essentially mathematical vehicles, so if you come from a TikTok advert, we will have

a model specifically for TikTok users because those users will have specific profiles or behaviors. However, someone coming from an Irish Times link will be a very different type of person. What we've managed to build at scale is thousands of models for thousands of hotels simultaneously, which are always on and are always learning, so instead of this outdated idea that you go a website, and you do all the work, our platform does all the work for you and that's transforming the experiences hotels are providing for their customers," said Webster.

The platform built by Arvoia is ultimately giving power back to hotels, who like we highlighted above had outsourced its ability to win customers to online travel companies like Booking. com, TripAdvisor, whilst others spent heavily on Google and Facebook advertising.

"Every hotel wants more bookings that's the reality, and hotels in the United States in 2019, spent a staggering \$29bn on companies like Booking.com to basically win customers, but with our platform they can win those customers directly with a better experience and those customers are more likely to come back to the hotel directly. We plug-in this platform and give the customers experiences, but what we give the hotel is incontrovertible proof that this works, and we measure the performance of the models in financial terms," said Webster.

Webster added that his platform is allowing hotels to be part of what he described as a 'movement of independent AI providers' that breaks the monopoly and control enjoyed by tech behemoths such as Google and Facebook.

"Everyone we talk to wants to do it, so the booking engine platforms, website creators, and all the hotels want it. It's almost like we were in a lab building this platform from 2016 to 2017, because it is an extraordinarily challenging thing to build at scale. There is a big question here, and that is that the owners of AI have all the power, so companies like Facebook, Google, Amazon use that for surveillance capital to track and monitor, but we don't track and monitor any individual, we are just looking at their behaviors. What we would like to be able to do is be part of and start a movement of independent AI providers, who can provide mass AI services without having to pay Google, or Facebook. Google own the AI and data and the hotels need to pay all this money to win customers, but we are trying to help them understand is that there is another way. We are saying there is an independent movement here with our platform, and if you can understand your customers better then they won't go to Google, they will come to you, and even if they go to Google, you're going to make more money on them because you are serving them better," said Webster. Come

SERVICENOW

BUSINESS RESILIENCE: HOW TO WORKFLOW A BETTER WORLD

In-house CPI Technology expert **Cathy Mauzaize**, VP, EMEA South at ServiceNow, explains how a fragmentation of systems has led to a poor ROI on digital transformation for many businesses – and outlines the practices she believes lends itself well to creating a better work environment for employees in the first in her series of op-eds for CNME.

he pandemic was perhaps the greatest test to our resilience seen in any of our lifetimes. Upheavals in our home, social and work lives, combined with the economic side effects of social distancing and lockdowns, were felt across the globe.

When dealing with the crisis, some nations fared better than others. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was decisive, swift, and effective in its response, and now the country's economy is in recovery. In February, Fitch Solutions predicted the UAE's real GDP growth to reach 4.6% in 2022, compared with 3.4% in 2021.

Now businesses face the challenge of sharing in this success. Recovery periods traditionally claim casualties, so competitiveness has become more than just a bullet-point in a boardroom presentation. Digital transformation was made necessary by the crisis, but because it happened on such

a scale and at such incredible speed, for many it has exposed operational weaknesses that must be addressed.

Expectation gaps

Various studies have shown us that despite massive spending on transformation, the number of projects that yield positive ROI is a disappointing minority. And many stakeholders are confounded by the results because pre-project expectations were high. The problem is rarely ambition; the GCC region has no shortage of that. And it is not even strategy. No, the problem is fragmentation of systems. Silos — of data people and processes - mean technology cannot have the impacts on efficiency and

Now imagine being the customer or employee of such an organisation. When innovation fails because of ineffective underlying architecture, both customer and employee may disengage from the brand. And

productivity that lead to ROI.

it goes without saying that both are required for sustainable growth. Such a business is neither a disrupter nor an industry leader. It is, at best, an "also ran", and at worst, on the road to failure.

To avoid this path, regional technology leaders must convince line of business owners of the virtues of consolidation and collaboration. Consolidation refers to the streamlining of operations and the elimination of silos. And collaboration refers to a new view of data sharing — business performance can be greatly enhanced by dismantling linear processes and replacing them with an ecosystem of data and resources that move freely between customers, suppliers, partners, and even competitors. It is also vital to empower employees to make real-time decisions. This will deliver the business agility necessary to react to market changes as they happen. To be agile is to be competitive.



The employee and the world

In the digital age, customerfacing employees bring a lot more knowledge-based contributions to the table than ever before. Attracting and retaining the talent required to capitalise on that capability has become paramount. The pandemic threw into sharp relief a series of issues concerning work-life balance, health and wellness, and job satisfaction. At the same time, lockdowns established that remote, flexible work was not only possible, but of great benefit to both employee and employer.

Businesses need to balance the employee experience with the customer experience. If employees are happy and can work collaboratively and easily with the tools and technologies at their disposal, then customers will naturally receive a better experience from that company. To achieve this balance requires the thoughtful development of a corporate culture that is open, inclusive, and nurturing and the implementation of technology that enables employees to get work done without being bogged down by cumbersome processes.

Employees that know where their contributions fit in the broader business mission are more likely to deliver outstanding CX, which boosts the bottom line. These employees are also more likely to remain with the company and act as encouragement for the next wave of new hires.



Employees that know where their contributions fit in the broader business mission are more likely to deliver outstanding CX, which boosts the bottom line."

A platform for change

To transform the world of work, ensure employee productivity and job satisfaction, and drive impactful customer experiences, we must implement the right platform for the job. The optimal platform will help us get the most out of existing technology tools and processes via a simple interface, allowing technology leaders to deliver quick wins and enhance buy-in from other business leaders.

Over time, platforms that eliminate system fragmentation deliver genuine business resilience. And they allow technologists to offer great digital experiences to employees and customers. Meanwhile, boosts to efficiency lay the groundwork for ROI from digital transformation programs.

The cultural changes required to realise the digital vision of a company are many. They are deep and they are broad. Departmental silos will be supplanted by cross-team collaboration and innovation. And industry-specific focuses will be uprooted to make way for industry-agnostic approaches.

Once the right technology is in place, the work is not done. In fact, it is just beginning. Businesses that differentiate themselves today may be ordinary, or even subpar, tomorrow, if they do not continually evolve. Whether a company is trying to streamline employee experiences and processes or understand its customers better, digital transformation never stops. Platforms need to be ever ready to workflow a better world.



34





GOVTECH AWARDS



du ICTDigital Solutions Provider of the Year



Dubai Economy and Tourism DepartmentInnovative Initiative of the Year



Higher Colleges of Technology Mobile App of the Year



DEWACustomer Happiness Entity of the Year



Ministry of Cabinet AffairsDigital Transformation Project of the Year



Dubai MunicipalityPublic and Private Partnership of the Year



Emirates Health Services
AI Implementation of the Year



Ankabut Abu Dhabi IT Department of the Year



Dubai Health AuthorityCitizen Empowerment Initiative of the Year



RAKEZRas Al Khaimah IT Department of the Year



Dubai Petroleum Dubai IT Department of the Year



Dubai Airport Free Zone AuthorityBest Blockchain Implementation
of the Year



Road Transportation AuthorityGovernment Pioneer of the Year



Dubai Air Navigation Services Cybersecurity Solution of the Year



Telecommunications and Digital Government RegulatoryBest Customer Experience in UAE Government Sector



HikvisionAI Security Innovation
Vendor of the Year



Dubai Department of FinanceBest Digital Wallet Payment Solution in Public Sector



Intelligent Security Systems Security Product of the Year



CommvaulltCybersecurity and Public and Private
Partnership of the Year



BARCOCollaboration Vendor of the Year



Fouzia Al TayerMinistry of Cabinet Affairs
Woman in Government of the Year





The Executive CouncilIoT Implementation of the Year



Nitin Shingari Daman Health CISO of the Year (New)

ALVAREZ & MARSAL

IT'S ALL IN THE DATA

In-house CPI Technology expert **Sooho Choi**, Managing Director at Alvarez & Marsal, has reiterated the important role played by data in building digital ecosystems in the tourism sector, in the first in a series of exclusive op-eds for CNME.

n the luxury travel and hospitality industry, travelers expect an exceptional level of customer service and outstanding personalised experiences. Knowing and delivering upon the preferences of the customers - favorite foods, hotel suite configuration, preferred activities, the list goes on — while balancing the desired level of automation and self-service is vital for travel destinations determined to deliver upon the luxury experience promise.

Overlay the mobile-everything age and consumers' new expectations for ubiquitous connectivity and online conveniences, and the stakes for getting it right are high. Many travelers have had stellar experiences, but in today's digitally enabled, socially connected world, consumers often take for granted when things go smoothly and have long

memories with vocal responses when disruptions occur.

How do you provide a consistent, seamless travel experience that mirrors the bespoke, high-touch approach in the digital world? How can developers continue to offer excellent customer service and meet modern expectations?

It's a challenge that several countries in the Middle East are trying to untangle. A trillion dollars is pouring into Saudi Arabia alone for multi-purpose travel destinations, such as Neom and Qiddiya, in a bid to win over 100 million tourists a year and to diversify a regional economy highly reliant on the oil sector.

Great Potential, But It Comes with Challenges

Middle East developers face hurdles similar to many other industries that engage directly with the consumer. They're building digital capabilities in which partners, vendors and suppliers all must operate ubiquitously in a single ecosystem. At the heart of this is how data is collected, shared, and activated consistently and seamlessly.

According to The Red Sea Project Master Plan, "upon completion in 2030, The Red Sea Project will comprise some 50 resorts, offering up to 8,000 hotel rooms and more than 1,000 residential properties across 22 islands resorts, mountain retreats and desert hideaways. The destination will include luxury marinas, golf courses, entertainment, and leisure facilities." Imagine the data complexity of having all participants across different sub-sectors and brands both competing for the customer while serving the overall experience the destination must enable. They must mutually utilise multiple technologies and data capabilities such as:



- **Data sensors** to collect the data required to support customers and optimise operations
- **Customer profiles** to map data on to activities, captured through real time transactions
- **Predictive technology** to accurately and timely make recommendations to consumers
- **Conversational AI** to automate and accelerate meeting customer needs

Even with the tools and technology providers in hand to enhance customer experience, there are still failures along the way. While companies that successfully create digital ecosystems can experience growth and profits 23 percent to 32 percent higher than industry averages, fully 85 percent fail within seven years according to a Gartner study. Odds are there will be far more misses than hits if companies don't spend the time designing how data will be used within the ecosystem

architecture before they build the infrastructure.

Disney World in Orlando
Florida uses smart technology.
It tracks customers from the
airport to the on-premises
hotel and in restaurants, at the
park and through activities
during the stay. Their system is
manageable partly because they
have control over most steps
along the guest's journey with
direct engagement with the
required external partners.

Developers of new destinations in the Middle East face orders of magnitude more complexity. They have many service partners, each with their own technology, processes, and standards — restaurants, hotels, airlines, recreation providers, retail stores, sporting venues, and more across different multinational brands. How can developers create and maintain a more seamless customer experience? Is it even possible?

Focus On The Digital Ecosystem Design, Not Just The Tools

Developers naturally focus on infrastructure — the physical build — but how data will be activated is often an afterthought — at which time the debate often turns to which platform, architecture or cloud solution is best.

In reality, how you design your digital ecosystem is vitally important and can allow for versatility and scalability across future needs and tools. In a multiuse environment, many parties are constantly adding to the data ecosystem, and each will have their own technology footprint. Whether these entities know it or not, they are all dependent on the other's technology to deliver a differentiated customer experience while at the destination.

This of course does not mean that tool selection and architecture definition are not important. However, having an open application programming interface (API) foundation to enable different entities to connect with each other in the ecosystem is critical. This allows organisations to extend integration not just across their own silos but rapidly with business partners through established standards. The result of planning ahead is that new capabilities dependent upon the mounds of rich data can be brought to life rapidly.

In practical terms this helps smooth out the experiences so that a consumer enjoys the same fantastic interaction at a restaurant that they had at the hotel they are staying at.

www.tahawultech.com JUNE 2022



Developers Should Focus on Consistency

Two organisations that have successfully capitalised on an API-first architecture are Uber and Amazon. Uber has successfully relied upon ecosystem integration for a variety of capabilities - mapping and routing, payments, receipts, customer messaging, etc. — all brought to life through their mobile app. Amazon's entire business model is built upon this integration, not just for external integration but for virtually every transaction within their own walls.

In bringing this approach to life in a ground-up Smart Destination build, developers have a challenging decision to make. Given the cost and time required to develop comprehensive capabilities across a vast ecosystem of partners that ultimately interact with the customer, the "Deep vs. Wide" question is perhaps inevitable. While the

44

Truly "smart" systems are defined by the intelligent use of data to provide consistent capabilities to enhance customer experience."

right architecture foundation can support both scenarios, our recommendation would be to focus on consistency.

Since the Smart Destination experience is dependent on the lowest common denominator of capability, the ecosystem should be designed to bring consistent experience to life for consumers. Truly "smart" systems are defined by the intelligent use of data to provide consistent capabilities to enhance customer experience. To this end, begin with a base standard with broad reach and rapidly and incrementally add new capabilities. Otherwise, there

is the risk that the integrated experience breaks down across vendors or points in the travel journey resulting in a vastly diminished experience.

So, What's Next

The data foundation is the heart of any modern development, both to enable Smart capabilities as well as to bring differentiated experiences to life. Given its importance and the many players contributing to the destination, now is a good time to review and evaluate regardless of whether a development is in early design, in construction, or approaching operation. It's vital to get input from objective partners with shared interests including speed and value underpinned by data and architecture unencumbered by a predisposition to a specific technology supplier.

Stay tuned for the next article on Smart Destinations, including data privacy, ESG, and regulatory considerations in the region.





We Connect You to the World

700+ Global MNO Connections | 40+ Data Centers
24Bn Monthly Transactions | 3500+ Employees
70+ Offices | CPaaS Leader in IDC Marketscape 2021
Rocco Best Customer Engagement Platform 2020
Rocco Best A2P SMS Vendor 2018, 2019, 2020

For more information please visit www.infobip.com

ACCESSIBLE ANALYTICS

comme Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Vishal Soni**, Technical Product Evangelist at Alteryx, to find out how the global automation analytics leader is helping businesses to make better decisions by providing them with 'access' to data analytics through their platform.

ince its inception in 1997, US company
Alteryx has carved out a niche for itself in terms of producing best-in-class products in data science and analytics.

We now know that we live in a society and economy that is fueled by data, but it is also quite evident that many businesses have struggled in terms of the visibility on their data – and understanding how best they can deduce value from it to make better business decisions that will ultimately ensure their competitiveness in an increasingly volatile marketplace.

Alteryx has witnessed huge growth over the last few years due to its ability to provide its customers with 'accessibility' to data science and analytics through its easy-to-use platform.

44

JUNE 2022

In a candid interview with CNME, the dynamic and charismatic Soni outlines how the mission and purpose of the company is all engineered towards making data and analytics accessible to everyone regardless of their background.

"It doesn't matter if you have a statistical degree in data science, or mathematics. One of our core principles is to give the power of analytics to absolutely everyone. Essentially, our platform gives you access to data science and equips you with the ability to start interacting with your data through low code, or no code. If you are familiar with coding then it will allow you to go in and write what you want, or alternatively if you just want to drag and drop, and have the analytics done for you then you can access that option too. The primary idea behind the platform is to help fuel business decisions by giving people more data driven insights. We provide everything from data preparation and blending, to enriching data all the way down to doing things like geospatial analytics and automated machine learning that is all available out of the box," said Soni.

Soni highlighted that in the current digital economy, one that is fueled by experiences, there is a real appetite and need for data-driven insights across all major industry verticals on a global scale.

However, he stressed that there remains a massive gap between the amount of investment that businesses are making versus the fruits of that labor.

"Alteryx is designed to really modernise the way business and organisations approach the subject of data analytics. What we strive to do with our platform is give everyone within these companies the power and ability to be able to start doing these data tasks, be it joining two different datasets together, and making it super simple to do. We are removing the complexity around this subject — and we are all about democratising data," said Soni.

Alteryx has a strong footprint in all of the major industry verticals from healthcare to retail, however, he revealed that demand for data analytics is strongest within the financial services sector in the MEA region – but stated that he has seen huge growth in the supply chain sector.

"Alteryx has a footprint in pretty much every major industry vertical that you can think of. However, in terms of where our footprint is the largest, I'd say that would be in the financial services sector. We are also seeing a huge transformation in the way supply chains operate, which was really exacerbated by the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen a huge increase in the demand for our platform

77

Alteryx is designed to really modernise the way business and organisations approach the subject of data analytics."

in terms of the optimisation of supply chains and being able to really help businesses better understand their inventory management and demand management," said Soni.

When asked did he believe the pandemic was the real accelerator in terms of the transformation within global supply chains, Soni suggested that many were investing in disruptive technologies prior to 2020 - and pointed to the scale enjoyed in terms of delivery over the last decade or so.

I do think the transformation of supply chains was accelerated by the pandemic, no doubt about that, but that's not to say that they weren't already investing in new technologies. Technology has played a huge role in an industry vertical like global supply chains, and in time delivery models have really scaled over the last 10–15 years, the delivery of parcels to our doorstep every couple of days is a testament to that," said Soni.

In terms if new use-cases that may emerge due to the changes that have occurred, he believes they will continue to see growth in things like dynamic demand forecasting.

"What we are seeing in relation to new use-cases for Alteryx, is things like dynamic demand forecasting, which very quickly allows you to be able to understand what potential roadblocks could be coming down the track and being able to start enriching that data as well with internal and third-party data is key. We are also seeing with third-party data sources people are modelling on traffic

www.tahawultech.com JUNE 2022

conditions, and holidays to really maximise their ROI and to use that forecasting methodology to see how they can use it for their benefit," said Soni.

In addition to this, Soni said that its Alteryx platform was enjoying a rise in popularity when it comes to sales and marketing functions.

"I was with a client recently and they wanted to equip their sales team with a robust way to figure out who they should go and target. Previously, they were just given lists of people, and a lot of time they were inevitably wasting a lot of time calling up people who may not be interested at all in what they are selling. However, by leveraging the capabilities of Alteryx, they were able to start building without any code some very cool models, that allowed them to be able to prioritise people based off their likeliness to be a candidate for a cross-sell opportunity and this has also helped them with customer retention. It has increased efficiency ten-fold and having the ability to target a specific demographic is a real gamechanger in terms of sales. We are also doing some interesting stuff in the healthcare space, and anyone that uses data really has some incredible use cases with Alteryx," said Soni.

In terms of what differentiates Alteryx from other automation analytic providers, Soni said there was key components which he felt really distinguishes them from their market rivals, the first of which was 'ease of use'.

"Our market differentiator is a mix of three things, and the first one is something we have already talked about and that is doubling down on that ease of use — and



that is something that has been infused in the platform since the very inception of Alteryx. Having that drag and drop user interface, and having examples built into the platform itself, which are industry specific has been key for us, as it really allowed us to take out that complexity that exists right from the get–go," said Soni.

One of other key element in their offering was the sense of 'community' that Alteryx fosters with its customers, partners, and users.

The second unique aspect of what we do is our Alteryx community. We have made a lot of content available without people having to log-in, and a lot of the times I'm on a call

77

One of our core principles is to give the power of analytics to absolutely everyone."

with customers and they've got a query, or a question, we literally go to the Alteryx community page together. We search together and type in the question. Our average response time is very short, and it's not just Alteryx employees, or partners who are on that community space, most of our users are our customers," said Soni.

The third and final component was the close relationships and collaborations that Alteryx enjoys with the major Tier 1 technology providers.

In terms of our partners, we work quite closely with a lot of the major technology vendors out there. The primary reason for that is to make it easy to connect to anywhere your data lives and resides, be it on-prem, or in the cloud – and you get incredible insights across hundreds of different use-cases, and that essentially allows every type of persona within an organisation to start to see the benefits for themselves, which is crucial," said Soni. **CITICS**

JUNE 2022



DISPLAY & CONTROL SOLUTIONS WITH PRESENTATION MATRIX & SCALER













Hikvision is the world's leading IoT provider with video as its core competency, commercial display business also being its key focus area. Malco Technologies is an official Hikvision Displays distributor in the UAE, offering LED/LCD Video Walls, digital signage and 3D/transparent screens to suit every Boardroom, Media advertising, NOC/SOC control room requirements. By pairing with Kramer's Matrix switchers, VIA Connect PRO Wireless Collaboration Solution and Video Wall Controller etc. the applications are unlimited.









EDITOR OP-ED

OBSERVING CHANGE

CNME Editor Mark Forker takes a closer look at the impact of 'observability' in the IT ecosystem – and examines how the deployment of the SolarWinds Hybrid Cloud Observability Platform is empowering enterprises with the ability to accelerate their digital transformation efforts.

he IT landscape is one that is constantly evolving, such is the nature of the world we now live in, on that is underpinned by technology.

As more and more technologies continue to disrupt the traditional way in which businesses and major industry verticals operate globally, then as a direct and inevitable consequence of that, solutions to manage the complexities that emerge through transformation are sought.

Every business regardless of industry wants to leverage their data to make better business decisions.

Sounds simple right?
However, we know that
many, many businesses
struggle when it comes to
'visibility' on their data. If they
can't see, or probably dissect
what information is valuable
to them, and what isn't, then
it's going to be extremely

challenging to extract value from that data.

A remedy from analysts and experts from within the IT and tech domain has been proposed, and that remedy comes in the form of observability, but what is observability?

Tom Nolle writing for Tech Target, claimed that observability possessed the ability to 'separate' critical information from routine, or mundane data.

"Observability is a management strategy focused on keeping the most relevant, important and core issues at or near the top of an operations process flow. The term is also used to describe software processes that facilitate the separation of critical information from routine information," said Nolle.

Other explanations and definitions of what observability are quite similar,

US software company Splunk believe its value lies in its ability to measure the internal states of a system by examining its outputs.

A Splunk spokesperson was quoted as saying, "A system is considered "observable" if the current state can be estimated by only using information from outputs, namely sensor data."

Many would understandably have arrived at the conclusion that observability is a new buzzword in the IT industry, however, the term originated years ago along with control theory, which is all about describing and better understanding self-regulating systems, although it has become evident that observability has been applied to improve the performance of distributed IT systems.

In this context, observability uses three types of telemetry data — metrics, logs, and traces — to provide deep



visibility into distributed systems and allow teams to get to the root cause of a multitude of issues and improve the system's performance.

As businesses continue to modernise their operations at scale and accelerate their digital transformation objectives, the level of complexity has grown ten-fold.

In a recent report conducted by Gartner, they found that many enterprises already have over 15 monitoring toolkits and are reluctant to add further complexity.

The report said,
"Organisations managing
these complex, diverse, and
distributed environments have
amassed various monitoring
and management tools across
different teams. As a result,
ITOps, DevOps, and SecOps
teams receive an overload of
alerts and disjointed analytics
and have difficulty accessing
the actionable insights they

need to quickly identify, prioritise, and resolve issues in business-critical services. These disparate tools can also be cumbersome to implement and manage, and they can become cost-prohibitive to maintain and scale, creating operational and business risks."

Transformation is necessary in the new digital economy, and so to, is the modernisation of existing applications and systems, however, how can businesses do that without adding a

44

As businesses continue to modernise their operations at scale and accelerate their digital transformation objectives, the level of complexity has grown ten-fold."

further layer of complexity.

Well, step forward SolarWinds!
The global secure IT
management software
leader recently launched its
SolarWinds Hybrid Cloud
Observability, built on their
SolarWinds Platform.

The SolarWinds Platform offers organisations of any size the ability to accelerate their digital transformation efforts by providing a comprehensive and unified view of today's modern, distributed, and hybrid network environments.

Rohini Kasturi, Chief Product Officer at SolarWinds, said the inspiration behind the game-changing platform was driven by the growing demand from their customers to have a platform that can help them overcome their challenges and drive better business results.

"The level of IT complexity organisations face is growing at an unprecedented scale due to tool sprawl, rising costs, security threats, and siloed operations. Customers have told us clearly, they need help to meet today's challenges and reduce operational noise so their teams can scale to address a broad range of business needs faster, maximise budget outcomes, and drive business results. Building upon our more than 20 years of delivering monitoring and management solutions to market-leading organisations across different segments and verticals, SolarWinds Hybrid Cloud Observability provides organisations with a single solution from one vendor, delivering a more streamlined approach to helping them

www.tahawultech.com JUNE 2022



advance their modernisation and cloud migration initiatives," said Kasturi.

Douglas McDowell, General Manager – Database at SolarWinds, wrote a detailed byline on observability and highlighted the importance of moving beyond monitoring.

He conceded that complexity was in many ways the natural outcome of modern tech stacks and said that the proliferation of data should not slow any business down – and he proclaimed that observability was the only way forward.

In a byline for Forbes, McDowell wrote, "Complexity is the natural outcome of modern tech stacks. And traditional monitoring tools and processes can't keep up with the overwhelming amount of data produced by the expansion of systems, services and microservices. But the volume of data shouldn't slow you down. Full-stack observability gives your IT and data pros end-to-end oversight of service delivery and component dependencies. They are better equipped to predict and detect problems before they occur in critical areas such as

workload and capacity changes. In other words, your teams will always know if there's a fire approaching," said McDowell.

The consensus from IT thought leaders was further reinforced by a recent report compiled by IDC, who found that as more and more mission-critical workloads move to connected cloud architectures that span public, private, hybrid, and multi-cloud environments, enterprises recognise they need to invest in the tools that will help them ensure consistent policies and performance across all platforms and end users.

However, the report also discovered that they simultaneously face challenges such as budget, time constraints, and barriers to implementing observability as a strategy to keep pace with hybrid IT realities.

President and CEO of SolarWinds Sudhakar Ramakrishna also pleaded with businesses to 'reexamine' their investment plans and stressed that observability is the only option for businesses looking to manage complexity across their IT environments.

"Operational complexity prevents organisations from capitalising on their technology-driven transformation and investments and delivering benefits for end users. As organisations look beyond the pandemic, they must re-examine their investments from the past few years. Part of that requires organisations to have visibility into their IT environments to understand what's working and not working, and where to prioritise their efforts to achieve the ROI targeted in their planned projects. Observability is increasingly becoming the clear answer for tech pros charged with managing greater levels of complexity in these diverse and distributed environments spanning onpremises, private and public clouds," added Ramakrishna. "However, organisations must set aside time and resources to upskill and train tech pros to help them properly implement observability strategies and manage hybrid IT realities more effectively—and set up their teams and business for success in the long run," said Ramakrishna.



Manage your network centrally from any location, without the need to set up a server. Because Nuclias Cloud devices only need plugging in and powering up, it's perfect for businesses that don't have trained IT professionals.

Who needs Nuclias Cloud



SMBs & Large Enterprises



Retail Chains



Hospitality



Education

