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WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEANS BUSINESS

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DATAIKU'S CEO

PURE STORAGE'S CTO

**KYNDRYL'S
MANAGING DIRECTOR**

FORCES OF CHANGE

CPI MEDIA GROUP CELEBRATE
FEMALE IT LEADERS THAT ARE DRIVING
CHANGE IN THE INDUSTRY.



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Each panelist stressed that more still needs to be done to drive greater diversity, fairness and inclusion in the IT industry."

GAME CHANGERS

CP Media Group and tahawultech.com hosted the inaugural Women in Tech Awards at the Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, The Palm last month.

The event was a phenomenal success, which set out to celebrate the outstanding achievements of female leaders from within the IT and tech ecosystem across the Middle East region.

As we know, despite the progress that has been made, the IT industry remains a male-dominated arena, however, as our event illustrated there are many female leaders that are continuing to break barriers – and they serve as a shining light to the next generation of female leaders, who perhaps were unsure as to whether they should pursue a career in IT or not.

In the panel discussions moderated by Anita Joseph, and myself it became very evident that each of our panelists have had to overcome some outdated stereotypes and conservative attitudes that still exist in the corporate world.

Unfortunately, many of these stereotypes still exist, and each panelist stressed that more still needs to be done to drive greater diversity, fairness and inclusion in the IT industry.

Female leadership has been described by many as an empathetic style of management, and again has been criticized in some quarters.

However, all panelists were universal in their belief that empathy should be seen as a strength, and a positive trait to have in management and leadership, and said the research was conclusive in terms of productivity and results in teams managed by female leaders.

The event served as a think-thank of what can be done in the future, how we can avoid mistakes made in the past – and the overall theme of the event was empowerment, and that was very apt considering the game changers we had in the room that continue to push the envelope in terms of what can be achieved despite the odds in many respects being stacked against them.

Remaining on the theme of women empowerment, CNME managed to secure an exclusive interview with Radhika Punshi, Co-Founder and Managing Director of The Talent Enterprise, a HR technology company that has gone global over the last few years due to their cutting edge assessment and measurement technology.

She penned a novel with her fellow co-founder David Jones, entitled 'Game Changers' – which examined the challenges facing women in the workplace.

In addition to the success of The Talent Enterprise, she spoke about their partnership with DHL, which is designed to alleviate the issue of women dropping out at different junctures when climbing the corporate ladder.

Dataiku are on a mission to give all stakeholders within an enterprise the ability to understand and use the data at their disposal.

CNME managed to speak to their CEO Florian Douetteau and his SVP Gregory Herbert to learn more about their quest to 'democratise data'.

Earlier this year, Kyndryl spun out of IBM's managed services infrastructure umbrella and recently posted its first quarterly earnings as an independent company, which were impressive.

CNME spoke to Andreas Beck, Managing Director, MEA at Kyndryl to learn more about the company's hopes to achieve its aspirations, which he admitted was to serve the hearts and lungs of the world's vital infrastructure.

In a bumper edition, we also have an excellent interview with Barco, and thought leadership features from Pure Storage, ServiceNow and AppDynamics.

Enjoy!

Mark Forker
Editor



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**Cover feature:
The Next Generation**



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CNME rounds up the biggest regional and global developments in enterprise technology, which includes the news that Acronis has selected Mindware as its Value-Added Distributor, Help AG launches a new digital risk protection service – and IFS acquires ULTIMO.

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40 Cathy Mauzaize, VP of EMEA South at ServiceNow, warns that technology is not always the answer when addressing the world's complex problems.

44 Nathalie Leignel, VP EMEA and Americas at Barco, claims that sometimes its beneficial to look back in a bid to find a new way forward in the complex world of IT.



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LinkShadow Achieves Integration with Fortinet Through Fabric-Ready Technology Alliance Program

LinkShadow announced today an integration combining Fortinet FortiGate Next Generation Firewalls (NGFW) and LinkShadow Cybersecurity Analytics Platform. The integration equips security teams to uncover zero-day threats with proactive threat detection and defence by getting full visibility from Fortinet Firewalls around the defence activities.

“Today, most breaches are zero-day exploits, leaving no scope for detection or mitigation. Lack of timely intelligence cripples security teams, posing a panic situation, and brings businesses to a stand-still followed by huge financial ramifications”, said Fadi Sharaf, Regional Sales Director, LinkShadow. “It is critical to deploy automated cybersecurity tools driven by Artificial Intelligence that can detect and mitigate an anomaly well in advance and save the day. With this robust integration, LinkShadow gains full visibility into the application layers to monitor abnormal connections and data exfiltration which are proactively stopped by FortiGate Next Generation Firewall before posing a threat”, Fadi Sharaf added.



Fadi Sharaf, Regional Sales Director, LinkShadow.

STC Expands Complete Digital Eco-System with Cable to Eu



STC group's MENA Hub to build East to Med Data Corridor (EMC) undersea and land fibre optic data cable that will link Europe with Asia, with Greek partners.

STC's MENA Hub with this new project shows the nature of its ambition to provide every increasing global connectivity and data centre capacity to the markets of Asia, Europe and the rest of the world through Saudi Arabia which sits at the geographic heart of these key economies.

This is another illustration of the increasing scale, scope, and pace of stc group's transformation as a digital company and as it builds out a world leading complete digital eco-system.

As the world accelerates towards

an increasing digital connectivity of businesses and people it is essential that business can offer all aspects of this world for the benefit of businesses and the customers and clients they serve.

That is why stc have also developed separate but connected IoT businesses to facilitate the analysis and implementation of greater efficiency and effectiveness of multiple operations to running multi-billion dollar manufacturing or logistics facilities.

Group-IB unveils it's Unified Risk Platform

Group-IB, one of the global leaders in cybersecurity headquartered in Singapore, has today unveiled the Unified Risk Platform, an ecosystem of solutions that understands each organisation's threat profile and tailors defences against them in real time. Every product and service in Group-IB's now consolidated security suite is enriched with information from a Single Data Lake, which contains 60 types of sources of adversary intelligence. The Unified Risk Platform automatically configures your Group-IB defences with the precise insights needed to provide the best possible defence against targeted attacks on the infrastructure and



endpoints, breaches, fraud, brand and IP abuse.

At the heart of the Unified Risk Platform is a Single Data Lake which has the most complete and detailed insight into threat actors. Group-IB has collected the industry's broadest range of adversary intelligence, with 60 types of sources across 15 categories.

KROHNE delivers insights to inspire the next generation of engineers in Oman

KROHNE Group, a leading global manufacturer and full scope supplier of process instrumentation, measurement solutions and services, proudly delivered its first knowledge sharing seminar workshop at the Middle East College today. Anticipated to be the first of several sessions, the engineering experts dedicated an afternoon in Muscat to give real-world industrial and business-related insights to students to enhance their existing studies and broaden potential career horizons.

The private college is home to over 4500 students from the region and across the world. Located in the Knowledge Oasis Muscat, the college offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in different areas of Engineering, Business, Technology and Logistics



Dr Regilal Gopalan presenting.

Management in academic partnership with Coventry University, UK, and Breda University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands.

Around one hundred attendees actively participated in the “hyflex” session, focused the regional business landscape and cross-industry Coriolis applications in a real-world

business context. Facilitated by Dr Prakash Kumar of the Department of Management Studies at MEC, the presentation was delivered by Jonathan Ashton, Head of Marketing and Communications and Dr Regilal Gopalan, Area Manager for Dubai and Oman, both from KROHNE Middle East and Africa.

Acronis announce new partnership with leading Middle East Value-Added Distributor

Acronis announced today its partnership with Mindware, one of the leading Value Added Distributors (VADs) in the Middle East and Africa, as they have signed an agreement together.

Mindware will offer the Acronis’ innovative cloud solutions ranging from cyber security to data protection,



to enterprises in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, UAE, and Pakistan. The partnership will further Mindware’s

ambitions as a ‘Cloud Distributor’ with Acronis’ strong value proposition in the Cloud protection space.

Acronis offers antivirus, backup, disaster recovery, endpoint protection management solutions, and award-winning AI-based anti-malware and blockchain based data authentication technologies through service provider and IT professional deployment models. These solutions protect data, applications, and systems in any environment.

Malicious Hackers go to Work as We Head for the Sun

As the summer vacation season approaches, Check Point Software Technologies Ltd., a leading global cybersecurity provider is warning the public to stay vigilant due to the increased cybersecurity risks for both individuals and organisations.

Ram Narayanan, Country Manager at Check Point Software Technologies, Middle East said: “For many of us, this may be the first time we’ve travelled abroad since the pandemic and as

such there may be certain elements of our travel routines that we may have forgotten about, including our cybersecurity hygiene habits. This is music to the ears of opportunistic hackers looking to take advantage of laid-back attitudes and unprotected devices. This presents a risk to the individual and, in our hyper-connected world, to any organisation they communicate with, including their employer”.



Ram Narayanan, Country Manager at Check Point Software Technologies, Middle East.

IFS acquires ULTIMO



Darren Roos, CEO, IFS.

IFS, announces it has signed a definitive agreement to purchase Ultimo Software Solutions, the Netherlands based provider of cloud Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) software. ULTIMO has been widely acknowledged for building a strong reputation for building a strong reputation for the completeness, flexibility, and configurability of its SaaS EAM solutions. IFS boasts a deep and long-standing heritage in asset management and provides end-to-end industry specific EAM software to companies with complex needs and looking to manage their assets' efficiency from cradle to grave.

IFS CEO, Darren Roos, commented, "This acquisition puts IFS in a uniquely strong position as we now offer the most complete set of EAM capabilities in the market. The flexibility and configurability of ULTIMO is a great complement to the end-to-end capabilities of IFS Cloud". Roos added: "Helping our customers deliver on their Moment of Service goals by turning assets and the services they require, into a business differentiator has been central to IFS's success in EAM, and this is something that we know resonates equally well with ULTIMO customers".

SolarWinds Unveils New Software Development Process

SolarWinds, a leading provider of simple, powerful, and secure IT management software, unveils its new Next-Generation Build System, a transformational model for software development. The new software build process is a key component of the company's Secure by Design initiative to make SolarWinds a model for enterprise software security.

The software development and build process improvements were made in an accelerated timeline over the past year in response to the highly sophisticated SUNBURST cyberattack, which targeted SolarWinds and other technology companies. The Next-Generation Build System includes both new software development practices and technology to strengthen the integrity of the build environment. This consists of the first-of-its-kind "parallel build" process, where the development of SolarWinds software takes place through multiple highly secure duplicate paths to establish a basis for integrity checks.

Because the software build process at SolarWinds used at the time of the SUNBURST attack is common throughout the technology industry, SolarWinds is releasing components of the new build system as open-source software, enabling other organisations

to benefit from the company's learnings and help establish a new industry standard for secure software development.

"Communicating transparently and collaborating within the industry is the only way to effectively protect our shared cyber infrastructure from evolving threats", said Sudhakar Ramakrishna, President and CEO, SolarWinds. "Our Secure by Design initiative is intended to set a new standard in software supply chain security via innovations in build systems and build processes. We believe our customers, peers, and the broader industry can also benefit from our practices".



Sudhakar Ramakrishna, President and CEO, SolarWinds.

Help AG Launches Managed Digital Risk Protection Service

Help AG, the cybersecurity arm of e& enterprise (formerly known as Etisalat Digital) and the region's trusted security advisor, has launched a new edition of its fully cloud-delivered Digital Risk Protection (DRP) service. The new service comes with best-in-class benefits such as comprehensive risk detection, which incorporates deep and dark web modality, as well as market-leading remediation that lowers digital risk for organisations by identifying unwanted exposure and

protecting against external threats.

Focused on six critical capabilities across three distinct categories as per the digital risk categorisation, Help AG's newest service reflects its commitment to helping customers reduce the risks that emerge from digital transformation, protect against the unwanted exposure of an organisation's data, brand, and attack surface, as well as provide actionable insights on threats from the open, deep, and dark web.

Ransomware Attacks on Education Institutions Increase

Sophos, a global leader in next-generation cybersecurity, has published a new sectoral survey report, The State of Ransomware in Education 2022. The findings reveal that education institutions – both higher and lower education – are increasingly being hit with ransomware, with 60% suffering attacks in 2021 compared to 44% in 2020. Education institutions faced the highest data encryption rate (73%) compared to other sectors (65%), and the longest recovery time, with 7% taking at least three months to recover – almost double the average time for other sectors (4%).

“Schools are among those being hit the hardest by ransomware. They’re prime targets for attackers because of their overall lack of strong cybersecurity defences and the goldmine of personal data they hold”, said Chester Wisniewski, Principal Research Scientist at Sophos. “Education institutions are less likely than others to detect in-progress attacks, which naturally leads to higher attack success and encryption rates. Considering the encrypted data is most likely confidential student records, the impact is far greater than what most industries would



experience. Even if a portion of the data is restored, there is no guarantee what data the attackers will return, and, even then, the damage is already done, further burdening the victimised schools with high recovery costs and sometimes even bankruptcy. Unfortunately, these attacks are not going to stop, so the only way to get ahead is to prioritise building up anti-ransomware defences to

identify and mitigate attacks before encryption is possible”.

Interestingly, education institutions report the highest rate of cyber insurance payout on ransomware claims (100% higher education, 99% lower education). However, as a whole, the sector has one of the lowest rates of cyber insurance coverage against ransomware (78% compared to 83% for other sectors).

“Four out of 10 schools say fewer insurance providers are offering them coverage, while nearly half (49%) report that the level of cybersecurity they need to qualify for coverage has gone up”, said Wisniewski. “Cyber insurance providers are becoming more selective when it comes to accepting customers, and education organisations need help to meet these higher standards. With limited budgets, schools should work closely with trusted security professionals to ensure that resources are being allocated toward the right solutions that will deliver the best security outcomes and also help meet insurance standards”.



Stephan Berner, Chief Executive Officer of Help AG.

Commenting on the launch of the service, Stephan Berner, Chief Executive Officer of Help AG, said: “As more organisations and businesses embrace digital practices, online channels and applications, it is more vital than ever to manage and safeguard their digital assets from the risk of unwanted exposure. Help AG’s Managed Digital Risk Protection service provides internal and external intelligence, and protection as a single service using robust tactical mitigation and strategic threat resolution, offering our clients an industry-leading assurance over their digital risk exposure”.

DATAIKU

DEMOCRATISING DATA

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure exclusive interviews with Dataiku CEO **Florian Douetteau** and his counterpart **Gregory Herbert**, SVP & General Manager, EMEA at the AI company to learn more about their mission to 'democratise' data.

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Dataiku has established itself as the world's leading platform for Everyday AI since its inception in 2013.

The AI and machine learning company has declared that it is in the business of 'democratisation'.

Essentially, what that means in a nutshell is the company is driven to empower everyone within an organisation to harness, understand and utilise the data at their disposal.

Dataiku claim that their platform provides 'accessibility' to data for everybody within an organisation, it is no longer

an exclusive club for data scientists and analysts.

I began the conversation with Dataiku's Gregory Herbert, onsite at their Everyday AI conference in at Tobacco Dock, London, by asking him what barriers are standing between the real democratisation of data at scale.

According to Herbert, the veil surrounding accessibility has in many cases been eradicated, however, establishing use-cases is the key to enabling greater democratisation within enterprises.

"When we engage and talk to our customers it has now become quite clear that the barrier regarding the accessibility of data for

people within organisations has been removed. The data is still governed and secured, but most of our customers have invested significantly in infrastructure to make that data available. However, the challenge now is to determine, document, and map the issues being experienced by employees daily to turn that into a fully-fledged use-case that can be augmented with data," said Herbert.

Herbert acknowledged that data literacy levels within companies are naturally very varied and claimed that many employees will need to be coached.



He highlighted the key role being played by ‘data translators’ in bridging this data knowledge divide.

“There will be individuals within the company that have the skillset to know how to accelerate and infuse their business with more data – but the rest of the employees will need to be coached. We are talking to a



A tool like Dataiku enables everything to be centralised, and it allows businesses to think more about the models that they want to build.”

lot of customers now that are creating specific teams that are called ‘data translators’, or data ambassadors. They sit within the organisation to match the business pains and challenges with what is possible with data. To be frank, it’s all about building the right operating model within the organisation. It is critical to move away from a very centralised organisation when you have a data scientist building the models for everyone to consume,” said Herbert.

The conference held by Dataiku at London’s Tobacco Dock was entitled ‘AI Everyday’ but it’s a concept that is quite broad and could be viewed by some as quite vague.

‘AI Everyday’ is a concept and mission statement that is being driven by Dataiku, but what does AI Everyday really mean?

“AI is the ability for everyone to use data to make better decisions, or to automate business processes. Once you provide datasets that again are secured and governed, then people will use analytics to make better decisions in real-time. It’s important to highlight that many businesses still rely on their own judgement and experience to make decisions, but that is not conducive to running a successful business in the new digital economy,” said Herbert.

He added that once businesses better understand how to utilise the data any

skepticism towards AI is diminished and replaced with trust.

“Once there is that trust established with the data and the algorithm then you will see a real acceleration in terms of the day-to-day business operations being completely transformed. Businesses will start delegating repetitive tasks to AI, which in turn empowers workers, and that is what I mean when I say automating business processes. This is Everyday AI. It is essentially all about providing data to everyone and giving them the ability to harness the power of data to make better decisions,” said Herbert.

Herbert also pointed out the challenge that still exists when it comes to unstructured data – and highlighted how Dataiku’s platform allows businesses to centralise all their data, which inevitably makes it easier for employees to access.

“Dataiku is providing enterprises with the ability to be a central hub, which is essentially a layer that comes on top of any data infrastructure. However, the fact remains that across many organisations data is still unstructured, sits in different systems and is very siloed. However, a tool like Dataiku enables everything to be centralised, and it allows businesses to think more about the models that they want to build. Dataiku also provides tutorials on highly configured algorithms to help people start to build the data models that are going to help them make better business decisions,” said Herbert.



CNME was then granted access to speak to Dataiku founder and CEO Florian Douetteau.

Their Everyday AI conference coincided with the announcement of new updates to their Dataiku 11 platform.

When asked about the new capabilities added to their platform, Douetteau stated that he wanted Dataiku to be the platform where users can do everything data-related, but more importantly

operate in a space that was traditionally occupied by data scientists.

“We have continued to add new capabilities to the platform in a visual way to enable our users to do more with their data. We are in the business of empowerment. Some of the new capabilities that have been onboarded are based-around computer vision, and business truths – which allows business users to really implement the data without

seeking guidance or support from data scientists,” said Douetteau.

The CEO of Dataiku also pointed out that whilst their platform is all about accessibility, he did stress that they have always been conscious of the fact that they want data scientists to be able to leverage the power of the platform, and not to be excluded from the journey.

“As a company we have always been very careful in our

efforts to make sure that data scientists can still use Dataiku as their data platform. We have integrated more and more open-source technologies, and that really enables data scientists to leverage our platform as a way to focus on what they do best, such as embarking upon technical projects, or building reusable components and supporting the overall business the way data scientists should do,” said Douetteau.

Douetteau also spoke about the new capabilities that had been added to the platform in terms of governance, which he believes foster an environment that ensures AI is used responsibly.

“We have added in new capabilities around governance, and there has been a lot written on the topic of responsible AI. It’s not just about building more AI, it is about building AI that is scalable, and allows users to understand the performance of AI, the bias of AI – and ultimately who is responsible for AI. The capabilities that we have added in governance allows users to keep track of your projects and models



The way I see it, we are now living in a particular moment where it is achievable for every organisation to have 80-90% of their data to be accessible and centralised.”

through tracking and signing off capabilities,” said Douetteau.

Another key element in the armor of Dataiku is their partnership with Snowflake.

Again, the collaboration is geared towards accessibility through the centralisation of data.

“Our partnership with Snowflake is a very important collaboration for us. They have evolved over the years and have been engaged with us in terms of the integrations that we have made to the platform. It enables our customers to push down more and more computation to Snowflake, and that has only served to enhance their machine learning capabilities. We see more and more traction of our platform alongside data warehouses because we believe that data warehouses are de facto replacing existing on-prem data warehousing, which reducing the costs and increases the amount of information that is available,” said Douetteau.

He concluded an excellent interview by saying it was now realistic and not overly ambitious for every organisation to be able to access most of their data.

“The way I see it, we are now living in a particular moment where it is achievable for every organisation to have 80-90% of their data to be accessible and centralised – and are partnership between Snowflake is ultimately fueling this movement which is creating so much accessibility,” concluded Douetteau. [GTM](#)

SFIT

ALL SYSTEMS GO

Hamed Dayani, Business Development Manager, Security & Cisco Collaboration Solutions at Systems Front Information Technology has pleaded with IT leaders to be vigilant when it comes to delivering 'secure' digital transformation in the current digital economy.

How has alignment with Cisco helped you in terms of addressing the needs of your customers?

Cisco is the market leader in routing, switching and collaboration solutions.

Cisco offers a wide range of solutions that are tailor-made to suit the needs of customers across different industries and verticals.

Our partnership with Cisco has enabled us to cater to multiple needs of our clients and provide end-to-end solutions. Along with routing and switching, we are now also offering Cisco Security solutions to our clients.

There has been a massive acceleration in digital transformation across industries since the onset of the pandemic. What are some of the key security related trends and solutions that have gained momentum?

COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digital transformation in businesses across several industries.

From the rapid, necessary adoption of remote work to the drastic rise in adoption of new technologies to support an unprecedented shift in consumer behaviour, digital



transformation has gone from being a long term aspiration to an immediate initiative for a large number of organisations.

With new digital technologies such as cloud, AI and IoT, comes a growing list of risks.

It is paramount for security teams and leaders to enable secure digital transformation.

We have been working with our customers to provide them with the right Cisco Security Solutions that can help them in their journey of undergoing digital transformation in a secure way.



It is paramount for security teams and leaders to enable secure digital transformation.”

We have seen a huge surge in Cisco remote workplace solutions and cloud instance security offerings in KSA market since the onset of the pandemic.

Can you share how your strategic partnership with Comstor has helped you in taking the latest Cisco security solutions to the customers?

Comstor team has enabled us to stay up-to-date on the latest offerings as well as programs and promotions from Cisco by providing us with sales and technical trainings on regular basis.

We value our ongoing engagement and relationship with Comstor in our journey to becoming a key Cisco partner in the region.

What are the some of the key milestones including training and certifications that Systems Front Information Technology has achieved a Cisco partner over the years?

As an organisation, we are truly committed to investing in regular trainings and certifications of our staff.

As a Cisco partner, one of the key milestones for us during 2022 has been the successful completion of Cisco MSP partner Certification.

BEST IN CLASS

Tuham Saifeldin, Solutions Architect at Integrated Computer Systems, tells CNME Editor Mark Forker how their collaboration with Cisco is enabling them to better serve their customers needs and help them execute their business goals and objectives.

How has your alignment to Cisco as a partner helped you in addressing needs for your customers?

We strongly believe that an IT partner company that invests time to understand their customers and their needs can deliver better solutions, services, and user experiences.

Since Cisco offers best-in-class products and services that provide end-to-end solution for the customer's needs, our alignment with Cisco has enabled ICS to help a lot of customers in achieving their business values and goals.

What are the key Cisco Collaboration Solutions that most in demand in the new normal?

The pandemic has further reinforced the need for organisations to invest into high quality solutions and systems in order to have business continuity.

Hence, there has been a big surge in requirements for Cisco's Collaboration Endpoints, Conferencing, Messaging and other Hybrid workspace solutions.

It is no wonder that the Cisco Webex solution is today trusted by 95% of Fortune 500



companies as it has all the features that support hybrid workspaces.

Can you share how your strategic partnership with Comstor has helped you in taking the latest Cisco Collaboration solutions to the customers?



The pandemic has further reinforced the need for organisations to invest into high quality solutions and systems in order to have business continuity.”

Comstor is a valuable partner for us. Due to our alignment with Comstor, we have been able to create best practices while providing Cisco collaboration solutions to our customers in the Saudi market.

The Comstor team has played a big role in our success by keeping our team up-to-date on the latest solutions and updates from Cisco.

What are the some of the key milestones including training & certifications that Integrated Computer Systems has achieved a Cisco partner over the years?

We are extremely proud to have continuously invested into Cisco trainings and certifications for our staff over the years.

We have recently invested into making additional members of our team become Cisco CCIE certified – and going forward in the future our continued partnership with Cisco is going to enable us to continue to remain competitive in the marketplace.

NADAIR AL FARIS

BRINGING AN 'EDGE' TO DATACENTRE TRANSFORMATION

Philip Joseph, General Manager at Nadair Al Faris believes that digital transformation begins with datacentre transformation in a candid interview with CNME Editor Mark Forker.

It goes without saying that digital transformation starts with data center transformation. How is Cisco's data center solution positioned to support customers as their digital transformation continues to accelerate?

Cisco has a well-defined technology strategy to support IT in their transition to the Edge Cloud Continuum.

Cisco's Strategy is built on a foundation of delivering intent-based data center infrastructures focused on three pillars: Automation, Multi-cloud Strategy and Pervasive Security.

Cisco Data Centre offers a broad spectrum of key solutions to support customers in driving their Digital Transformation experience.

Few amongst these key solutions are - Cloud-Native AppDev Platform (Cisco Container Platform), SDN (ACI Anywhere, Network Assurance Engine), Multi-cloud Orchestration, Automation

& Infrastructure as Code (Intersight), Hyper Converged Infra.

In addition to that is, Data Protection Sol, Compute UCS for the coming decade, HyperFlex, Visibility/ Actionable Insights (Nexus Dashboard, AppDynamics) Security (Stealthwatch, Tetration), Multi-Cloud Optimisation (Intersight Workload Optimisation) and superior SAN connectivity experience through leading MDS solutions.

What's your view on the role of Cisco Nexus Dashboard platform?

The new Cisco Nexus Dashboard unleashes a unified experience and automation workflows by standardising on the Cisco Nexus Dashboard platform (physical/virtual/ cloud).

It enables us to standardise operations' processes on a single platform. It provides advanced visibility, monitoring, orchestration and deployment services from a unified pane of glass.

The Cisco Nexus Dashboard platform can be deployed across the hybrid cloud infrastructure in the form factor of customer's choosing (physical/virtual or cloud).

The Nexus dashboard platform is extensible and integrates with third-party services such as ServiceNow and Splunk and also provides the central point for cross-domain integrations and is integral part in the direction of having Full Stack Observability.



Cisco has a well-defined technology strategy to support IT in their transition to the Edge Cloud Continuum."



How easy is the onboarding of public cloud sites to the NX Dashboard?

It's a seamless journey to onboard and manage multi-cloud environments, along with on-premises sites, with site onboarding for Amazon AWS, Microsoft Azure, and Google Cloud. Cisco Nexus Dashboard is now available on AWS and Azure marketplaces.

When it narrows down to operational services, is NX Orchestrator proving to simplify, automate, and operate hybrid cloud networks?

Cisco Nexus Dashboard Orchestrator provides the granular visibility and connectivity to different fabric controllers and unifies them into one Single Orchestrator,

ensuring that consistent intent-based policies are provisioned properly.

It Assures Visibility, inter-site connectivity and site-wide configuration of multiple fabrics through one pane of glass while leveraging the distributed scale-out model of Application Policy Infrastructure Controller (APIC) and Cisco NX-OS with Nexus Dashboard Fabric Controller (NDFC) controllers for on-premises, cloud, and hybrid environments.

Where do you see Cisco Intersights' platform adding value to IT-Ops?

Intersight is a cloud operations platform that provides simple & unified 'dashboard' for any infrastructure that is readily and easily accessible via

multiple modes or platforms, be it the traditional local machine in the support area, remote work (home environment), or mobile (android or IOS), as it's web-based.

It has an enormous impact on efficiency and time savings, by administering a pool of resources collectively.

In simple words, Intersight streamlines operations and accelerates problem resolution for complex IT-Infra and standardise the language & methodology between different operation teams to work as one team instead of different teams in silos.

How do you see the customer challenges proactively addressed by Cisco innovations including Intersight, HyperFlex, and UCS X?

Cisco's innovative products & Solutions address real-time customer challenges.

The hyper-distributed nature of hybrid clouds is spawning islands of infrastructure and operations, which reduces visibility while increasing costs and complexity.

The wide diversity of Applications is driving infrastructure diversity, demanding specialised systems, which also increases operational complexity.

The fragmentation of technologies is impeding time-to-value by forcing IT organisations to expend valuable time and resources on platform integrations. Also, Cisco solutions offer Investment protection by providing proven technology ready for the future. 

PURE STORAGE

CONTAINING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Patrick Smith, Field CTO EMEA, at Pure Storage has exclusively penned a thought leadership article for July's edition of CNME, in which he makes the case for widespread adoption of containers by 2025.

It is in the midst of a tectonic shift. Almost everything about the way organisations deliver and build applications is changing, in what has become known as digital transformation.

That digital transformation can be characterised as having three main elements. Firstly, it sees the digital enablement of processes within organisations and outwards to customers and partners. Secondly, it is heavily cloud-influenced, by literal use of cloud resources or by use of cloud-like operating models. Thirdly, the way in which application

development takes place is changing too, to a continuous integration and deployment model allowing for frequent iterative changes.

At the pinnacle of these three elements is containerisation, which brings together the ability to build applications on a continuous development model and which are supremely self-contained, highly-scalable and portable while being granular in terms of the services components they encapsulate.

It's no exaggeration to say that containerised applications — deployed and managed via an orchestration

platform like Kubernetes — will play a pivotal role in the next decade's worth of IT evolution. According to Gartner, 85% of organisations will run containers in production by 2025, up from 35% in 2019.

Containers can be run at much higher density than traditional virtual workloads, meaning fewer servers are required. This has the knock-on effect of reducing licensing costs and, importantly, power requirements. For these reasons we're starting to see containerisation underpin cost reduction initiatives and wider business cases, with organisations targeting 25%



to 40% of apps as a common starting point.

But what about storage, data protection, backups, snapshots, replication, HA and disaster recovery? These are vital to an organisation's application infrastructure, but can be a challenge in containerised operations. Before we look at ways to resolve that, let's look at why containers are so important and how they work.

The agility of containerised application deployment

Say an organisation's core business is centred on frequent launches of many



According to Gartner, 85% of organisations will run containers in production by 2025, up from 35% in 2019."

new products with rapid peaks in demand, and accompanying analytics requirements. It might be a ticketing operation, for example, with sudden and massive spikes in sales. Traditionally-built applications on a three-tier (client-server-database) architecture would be slow to deploy, not scale well and creak under high levels of demand. Containers are conceived of to deal with exactly such a situation.

That's because containers encapsulate the myriad components of an application — meaning many such microservices are reusable as new applications are developed — and can rapidly multiply to meet the demands of scaling. In addition, containers hold all the API connectivity to those they depend upon and can be ported to numerous operating environments.

So, for example, that sudden rapid spike in event ticket demand could be accommodated by rapid reproduction of interconnected containerised service instances and burst to multiple datacentres including in the public cloud.

The technical underpinnings of containers — much simplified — are that it is a form of virtualisation. Unlike virtual servers, they run directly on the host operating system, and without an intervening hypervisor. That means containers are a much more granular, lightweight virtual machine that usually provides



discrete components of the whole application, connected by code (ie, APIs).

While there's no hypervisor, and no consequent overhead, containers do benefit from an orchestration layer, provided by tools like Kubernetes, which organises one or more running containers — each with their code, runtime, dependencies and resource calls — into pods. The intelligence to run pods sits above them in one or more Kubernetes clusters.

The Kubernetes storage and backup challenge

But one of the biggest challenges to be overcome

with Kubernetes is storage and data protection. The roots of the issue go back to the origin of containers, which were originally intended to run on a developers' laptop as an ephemeral instance and for which data storage only persisted as long as the container executed.

Since containers became a mainstream enterprise approach to application development, however, that just wouldn't do. The majority of an enterprise organisation's applications are stateful, meaning they create, interact with, and store data.

Orchestration above the orchestrator

So, customers that want to deploy containers with enterprise-class storage and data protection need to be looking at a newly-emerging set of products.

This is the container storage management platform, from where they can run Kubernetes and provision and manage its storage and data protection needs.

What should customers look for in this product category?

A key thing to look out for is that any Kubernetes storage product should



be container-native. That means that an application's storage requirements are themselves deployed as containerised microservices in which provisioning, connectivity and performance requirements are written as code, with all the dynamism

and agility that implies. That's in contrast to other methods — such as Container Storage Interface (CSI) — which rely on hard-coded drivers to storage allocated to containers.

Meanwhile, a software-defined container-native



A key thing to look out for is that any Kubernetes storage product should be container-native.”

Kubernetes storage platform should provide access to block, file and object storage, and be able to make use of cloud storage too. In doing so, it should emulate the core characteristics and benefits of containerisation and Kubernetes. That means the data should be as portable as the containerised app, it should be managed via a common control plane, and should scale and heal autonomously.

When it comes to data protection, such a product should provide all the key methods of securing data, including backups and snapshots, synchronous and asynchronous replication and migration functionality. Again, this should allow for the cloud as source or target in these operations.

To handle the scalability of Kubernetes environments, the product should be able to manage clusters, nodes and containers that run to hundreds, thousands and hundreds of thousands respectively, with manageable storage capacity in the tens of petabytes.

Lastly, it should be intelligent, with rules-based automated management that, for example, creates, replicates and deletes containers as determined by pre-set monitoring triggers as well as provisions and resizes storage as required.

Once you find and implement a solution which ticks all of these boxes, you'll soon see for yourself why 85% of organisations will be relying on containers by 2025, and wonder why you didn't take the leap sooner. [GTM](#)

KYNDRYL

BUILDING MOMENTUM

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Andreas Beck**, Managing Director, Middle East & Africa at Kyndryl, to find out more about the momentum it has generated since it spun out of IBM's managed infrastructure services business nine months ago.

Kyndryl is the world's largest IT infrastructure services provider, and in May, the company reported its first financial quarterly since becoming an independent company after it was spun out of IBM's managed infrastructure services business. How has that transition away from IBM been – and has it been difficult to communicate to the industry that you're no longer part of the IBM Corporation?

We spun off over nine months ago and it's been an incredible journey so far. As you can imagine, in a spin, there's plenty to work on, from bringing on customers with us to building a new culture.

We take great pride in what we do as we touch the lives of billions of people everyday by designing, building, managing and modernising the mission-critical technology systems that they depend on, from banking systems and mobile



connections to passenger vehicles.

Thanks to our more than 90,000 skilled employees, over 4,000 customers have decided to join us in our journey as a stand-alone company. These customers include 75 percent of the Fortune 100 and are in more than 60 countries around the world.

Over the years, customers have been asking for the solutions that our partners offer, combined with Kyndryl's distinguished service. This is why in our first 100 days as an independent company, we moved fast to establish strategic partnerships with the top hyperscalers, including Microsoft, Google and AWS, in addition to tech vendors such as VMware, SAP and NetApp. Our ecosystem is growing and today includes Pure Storage, Nokia, Cloudera, Lenovo, Dell, Red Hat, Cisco, Veritas, Oracle and more.

We are enthusiastic about our momentum, making meaningful progress and excited about the future.

As aforementioned above, Kyndryl, are the global leader for IT infrastructure services, but what is that ultimately differentiates you from your market competitors?

There are a lot of worthy competitors out there, and will always be. However, I like to think that what works

in our favor is a number of things. We're a startup. But we're a startup of more than 90,000 people and decades of experience in supporting mission-critical systems. As our chairman Martin Schroeter said, we are ready to support the hearts and lungs of the world's vital infrastructure. So it is that scale and expertise coupled with our freedom of action that sets us apart.

Additionally, our delivery operations around the world enables us to be closer to our customers than ever. So when we're talking with a customer here in the region, for example, and if they need help in Turkey, Egypt, Saudi, or the UAE, we can deliver that because we have a presence.

Kyndryl have declared that they are a strong advocate of open technology ecosystems that is designed to cultivate an environment in which collaboration thrives. However, what are the main advantages of adopting an open technology ecosystem approach, and why are many businesses still opting for closed systems?

Firstly, I would like to re-emphasize that partners are essential to Kyndryl's core purpose – serving our customers. And through our ecosystem strategy, Kyndryl provides partners access to a \$500 billion market space that's experiencing double-digit growth. As for our customers, Kyndryl's service delivery and our partners' solutions is the magic combination when it comes to managing the complexities of various aspects of their digital transformation.

Today, our customers are

able to migrate their business-critical workloads to a hybrid cloud environment which, in turn, enables them to infuse AI into their core operations and leverage the best of what each cloud has to offer.

So as a business, we have gone from predominantly an IBM portfolio to a portfolio that includes the full spectrum of solutions from hyperscalers and leading technology providers, giving our customers access to a wider range of technologies and meeting their unique requirements.

In reality, every organisation is at a different stage of its own digital transformation journey. Therefore, organisations opting for closed systems could be due to various reasons, including relying on legacy systems, incompatibility due to outdated solutions or vendor lock-in.

Can you tell us more about your partnership with Lenovo in relation to building out scalable hybrid cloud solutions?

Kyndryl and Lenovo announced an expanded partnership aimed at helping customers embrace scalable hybrid cloud solutions and edge computing implementations. Both companies will create joint solutions that employ automation, optimisation and differentiated IT infrastructure services to help customers

meet their mission-critical on-premises and cloud-based distributed application service needs.

Distributed computing architectures require deep management expertise coupled with operational and performance excellence. As 75% of data moves to the edge, both companies aim to meet customer goals by providing a premium technology and services experience that drives innovation to address changing business needs and requirements.

Kyndryl and Lenovo also aim to provide integrated solutions for customers via an edge-to-cloud experience that leverages Lenovo's diverse portfolio of products – spanning edge computing, mobile, PCs and data center – with Kyndryl's customisable services for deployment, migration and optimisation as a service or on prem.

Lenovo will continue as Kyndryl's strategic partner for IT server projects for PCs, servers, storage and next generation edge compute technologies with a portfolio of joint solutions. Kyndryl's managed services skills and expertise will enable and support deployment of these joint solutions across customer infrastructure – from end user devices to the cloud.



As our chairman Martin Schroeter said, we are ready to support the hearts and lungs of the world's vital infrastructure.”

THE NEXT GENERATION

WOMEN IN TECH

CPI Media Group and tahawultech.com celebrated the female IT leaders that are inspiring the next generation across the Middle East with their inaugural **Women in Tech Awards**, held at the Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, The Palm.

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Star of the Year in Information Technology - Sherifa Hady, Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company



Marketing Personality of the Year - Lena Halbourian, Commvault



Influential Sales Personality of the Year - Konica Khandelwal, Yellow.ai



Channel Chief of the Year - Kinda Baydoun, Veeam Software



Senior Marketing Leader of the Year - Diana El Kara-Infor



Technology Frontrunner of the Year - Mansi Shah-Gandhi, Rackspace Technology

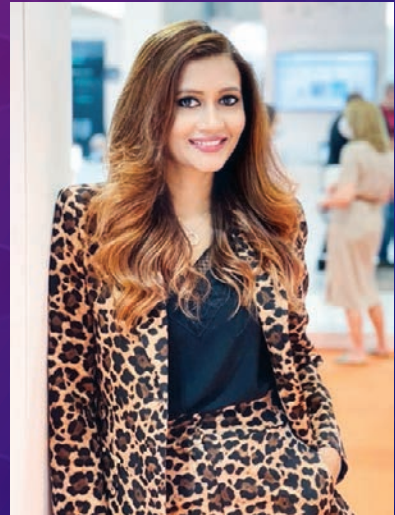
WOMEN IN TECH



Channel Performance Pioneer of the Year -
Tarannum Saqib, Ingram Micro Gulf



Change Maker of the Year -
Sonal Basu Roy, Bulwark Technologies



Brand Awareness Marketeer of the Year -
Sanchari Roy, Barco



Strategic Leader of the Year -
Selina Bieber, GoDaddy



Influential Marketing Personality of the Year -
Widad Abdalhadi, CISCO



Marketing Rising Star of the Year -
Tatiana Makarova, Hikvision MENA



*Woman Executive of the Year -
Maya Zakhour, NetApp*



*Brand Marketeer of the Year -
Nichola Banerjee, ESET Middle East*



*Technology Leader of the Year -
Ekta Puthran, BARCO*



*Marketing Transformation Pioneer of the Year -
Mallika Sharma, Aruba,
a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company*



*Sales Executive of the Year -
Nandini Sapru, EMT Distribution*



*Innovative Marketeer of the Year -
Sandy Issa, Intelligent Security Systems*

WOMEN IN TECH



Marketing Trendsetter of the Year -
Nevine El Tanahy, Alpha Data



Brand Strategist of the Year -
Maleeha Riaz Khan,
NMK Electronics Trading LLC



Technology Visionary of The Year -
Loubna Imenchal, Logitech



Most Innovative Go-To-Market Strategist
of the Year - Nikita Kandath, Commscope



Above and Beyond Award -
Kiara Israni, Secureworks



Senior Sales Leader of the Year -
Faten Halabi, Avaya



Marketing Executive of the Year - Mareva Koulamallah, Acronis



Sales Personality in Channel Growth - Shaista Ahmed, Nutanix



Brand Activation Pioneer of the Year - Aparna Chaturvedi, Newcom Computer Systems



Innovator of the Year - Dolly Solanki, CyberRes a Micro Focus Company



Female IT Business Leader of the Year - Joumana Karam, Acer



Marketing Influencer of the Year - Nilu Kamkarjar, Rackspace Technology



Transformation Leader of the Year - Haidi Nossair, DELL Technologies



IT Trailblazer of the Year - Hailey Yoon, IO21

THE TALENT ENTERPRISE

MEASURING TALENT

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Radhika Punshi**, Co-Founder and Managing Director at The Talent Enterprise, to learn more about the success and exponential growth enjoyed by the HR technology leader in the UAE over the last number of years.

The HR technology industry is a burgeoning vertical, and The Talent Enterprise have been able to capitalise on the opportunities emerging from the space through the combination of social sciences and disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence.

CNME spoke to the charismatic Radhika Punshi, who is one-part of the dynamic team responsible for driving the rapid growth of the UAE-based company across the Middle East region and beyond.

In a candid and forthright interview, Punshi described HR technology as ‘assessment technology’ and said it was an extremely exciting space to operate in, but also stressed that it was highly complex due to the fact that they are essentially attempting to measure human behavior.

“The reason I believe it is so challenging is because we are really looking at measuring human behavior using technology, which essentially means we need to understand psychology, behavioral sciences and social sciences. For us to do that effectively then we need to leverage complex data models to analyze people, because as we know human beings are complex enough! We have arrived at this intersection between psychology, behavioral science, data science and technology,” said Punshi.

Punshi also highlighted the weight of responsibility that is placed on them when helping businesses to make appointments.

“There is no doubt that there is a huge responsibility on us in relation to the kind of work that we do. The

projects that we engage in range from typical things like hiring who will be the next CEO of a holding company, or who the next minister might be when you are appointing a government leader. We also assist in the process of organisation restructuring, so we need to decide who stays, and who goes, and that’s difficult, but are leveraging our expertise and knowledge to help enterprises to make very critical decisions,” said Punshi.

The Talent Enterprise was launched in 2012, so they are celebrating 10 years in business, and over the last 3-4 years have gone global.

Interestingly, the company has resisted the temptation to engage in seed funding, with Punshi explaining how they wanted to have full autonomy on the direction they are headed as an organisation.

“We are self-funded, and



thus far we have resisted the temptation of raising venture capital, as we wanted to have full autonomy over the decisions and the direction that we take as a company. As a startup company, that's a tough choice to make, but we believe it has served us well as we have enjoyed significant growth outside of the UAE over the last few years," said Punshi.

When asked what inspired the launch of The Talent Enterprise in 2012, Punshi said that they entered the marketplace looking to address three real challenges, the first of which was 'measurement', which she said at the time was archaic and not fit for purpose.

"The first issue we identified that existed in the recruitment space was related to measurement. We discovered that a lot of local talent were coming across as very average when they took an ability test, or engaged in a personality profile. However, the fact of the matter was they weren't average, the crux of the problem lay in the tools that companies were using in 2012. They were archaic, and quite simply not relevant to the region at all," said Punshi.

Technology is advancing at a rapid pace and evolving all of the time, and the second challenge the team at The Talent Enterprise were looking to resolve was related to technology, which again similar to the measurement tools in operation were outdated.

"When we launched the company in 2012, a significant proportion of HR tech was

generally quite outdated, and there certainly wasn't enough Arabic, or customisation tools available. In addition to this, a lot of our competitors were using technology that was developed way back in 2004 and 2005, so again it was all very outdated. There appeared to be a lot of stuff happening in the backend, but nothing at all in the frontend," said Punshi.

The third and final challenge according to Punshi was in relation to the way businesses operated within the assessment technology sphere.

Flexibility and choice were non-existent, the norm was one company providing all your tools and products.

"The final problem we were looking to address in the assessment technology space was the fact that traditionally it was driven by a client hiring a single company, which offered and provided all the tools and products. 10 years ago we really started to adopt an aggregator model - and we built our own assessments and tools, however, we also incorporated the best tools and solutions from everywhere in the world on our platform, which gave customers the choice and autonomy on what tools they wanted to use, instead of having to use the assessment tools provided by us. I think across the industry there has been an acceleration in the adoption of the aggregator model, but it was us that began pioneering it 10 years ago," said Punshi.



In addition to this, Punshi also highlighted how The Talent Enterprise have built the region's first and only assessments.

"We have built the region's first and only assessments that still exists, everyone else is still using other brands and other products. We have built our own, yet we offer some of the most progressive technology and most choice to our clients in terms of what they really want to use for decision-making - and that

really helps to differentiate us from our market competition," said Punshi.

AI is still met with strong skepticism in some quarters, and it's deployment in some industry verticals, including recruitment has shown there remains many flaws in terms of the way it has been used.

However, as Punshi quite rightly points out there is bias everywhere, granted most of it is unconscious bias, but it still exists, she explains how they use AI to make better decisions.



The fact of the matter is that bias exists everywhere. I think our role is to really manage and mitigate that bias much better."



We are self-funded, and thus far we have resisted the temptation of raising venture capital, as we wanted to have full autonomy over the decisions and the direction that we take as a company.”

“The fact of the matter is that bias exists everywhere. I think our role is to really manage and mitigate that bias much better – and if you think of the traditional recruitment system it is very interview-based and that is obviously very biased because human beings are naturally very biased. If you examine how promotions occur within organisations managers are making performance decisions and reviews, and again managers are biased. What we are really trying to do is use traditional psychology, data science and AI to better inform our recommendations and decisions,” said Punshi.

The Talent Enterprise has been unequivocal in its support for the next generation of female leaders across major industries globally – and they have reaffirmed their commitment to addressing the gender inequality that still exists in some industry verticals when it comes to senior leadership roles through their new partnership with DHL.


However, Punshi candidly admits that she was once a skeptic in terms of the perception that more needed to be done to ‘level the playing field’, but said her opinion went the full 360 following the research and data she uncovered when working on her first novel.

“For me personally, we have been working in the area of diversity and inclusion for a long time, but to be quite frank initially I was never a big believer in it, primarily because I felt what works for men should work for women. However, it wasn’t until about five years ago, when I wrote a book with my co-founder David Jones, called ‘Gamechangers’ that I became aware of the research around the lack of diversity in big business and that was a stark insight to me in terms of the lack of diversity that existed,” said Punshi.

Punshi then pointed to the 50% paradox, which is something that she has written extensively about over the years. The figures speak for themselves.

“I have talked a lot about the 50% paradox, but what is it? Essentially you have 50% of female employees dropping out of every stage of a career path. 60% of women are graduates, but only 40% make it into the workforce, then out of that 40% only 20% make it to managerial, or supervisor roles. Then 6–7% get leadership positions, but then only 1–2% get board positions, so that means you are having about 50% of females drop out at every level of transition,” said Punshi.

The partnership with DHL has been formulated to alleviate the alarming dropout rate that occurs at different junctures of a woman’s career – and according to Punshi has been designed to help ‘prepare’ women for the pitfalls and challenges that lie ahead.

“I work with about over 400 organisations across the region, and I have engaged with a lot of boards, and many of them are not very diverse, or inclusive. Our collaboration with DHL is really important because what we are doing is running their global women in leadership program, where we are really helping women in these transition roles. If you’re a senior manager who is getting ready to be promoted as a head of a certain facility then we are essentially preparing them for those leadership challenges, and personal challenges that they were undoubtedly face, so when given the choice they don’t decide to opt out, and ultimately are really prepared for that next level,” said Punshi. 



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS

LEADERS OF TRANSFORMATION

CPI Media Group and tahawultech.com paid tribute to the IT figures that have demonstrated incredible leadership and pioneered new technologies designed to transform over the last 12 months at the **Transformational Leadership Awards**, held at the Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, The Palm.







WOMEN IN TECH





SERVICENOW

A WORLD OF UNCERTAINTY

Resident CPI tech expert **Cathy Mauzaize**, Vice President of EMEA South, ServiceNow, has cautioned that technology alone is not always the answer to the world's complex problems – and stressed the importance of investing in the right technology.

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The Middle East is no stranger to overcoming adversity.

Businesses of all scales, maturities and industries have felt the impact of the past two or three years. The economic crisis that arose from the global pandemic has created a climate of uncertainty that businesses find difficult to navigate. But they must. A road of opportunities stretches before them. If they do not seize them, others will.

The answer to this uncertainty is no mystery. Digital transformation was already in full swing before COVID, and it remains our

one true path to building businesses that are always ready for the next crisis — adaptive, flexible enterprises that bend with the trends. But there are two sides to digital transformation, and each is as important as the other.

1. Invest in the right technology

Realities have forced us to transform rapidly at scale. During the pandemic, tentative feasibility studies became rapid rollouts. But to ensure the prescribed outcomes occur, business leaders need rich data and solutions that unlock actionable insights from

within to give a detailed view of the organisation — a control-tower model in which decision makers can see systems, people, and operations at a glance.

From this vantage point, given the right technology, leaders will see how the outside world affects the business.

This approach is a lot easier to implement for smaller, younger businesses that do not have to dismantle legacy practices. But in choosing the right technology mix, a rip-and-replace approach may not serve a more established business when its technologies have been in use for some time



and have become critical to productivity.

It is important for each type of business to select the right platform for its needs. For legacy integration, some solutions will allow older companies to build a control tower on top of existing technologies in a layered approach that not only saves money but also time and resources when it comes to training.

The control-tower model goes a long way towards eliminating silos and unifying data, operations, and digitisation projects. When digital transformation is linked to what is going on in

the world at large, uncertainty is reduced considerably because everyone “sees the signs” together, rather than a single stakeholder having to convince colleagues of the necessity of a change.



Realities have forced us to transform rapidly at scale.”

This control-tower model also strengthens projects, and transformation has the scope to reach all parts of the enterprise equally.

2. Put people first

A business is, at its core, people. Uncertainty does not evaporate in the heat of technology alone. People — employees, consumers, citizens — are all part of the journey. It is important to remember that not everyone is a digital savant. So, even if a business invests time and money in the best technology available, it will not count for much if people are unable to use it to its full potential.

Training is essential. If it is not an integral part of a transformation project, it is unlikely that value can be derived from any technology implementation. Performance will suffer, resources will be wasted, and the business agility that can ultimately lead to a reduction in uncertainty will not be forthcoming.

The focus on technology in the service of people extends to the outside world. External business processes that connect consumers or citizens to the enterprise must remain viable even if people do not have access to newly implemented technology.

Likewise, technology must address the employee experience. Any new system must not encroach on the things that matter most to today’s workforce. Any modern business must recognise that being agile (and hence, less uncertain) requires not only a well-equipped



workforce but a happy one. Inclusive policies bring benefits that include greater success ratios in project execution.

Beyond technology considerations, a very important part of 'Putting people first' is Diversity, inclusion and belonging (DIB), something that has become an economic imperative for the savviest companies. A diverse

workforce is a more productive one. It thrives and innovates.

And it is more likely to ensure the success of digitisation ventures designed to deliver agility and control-tower visibility. DIB is arguably as important a milestone as technology procurement on the road to eliminating uncertainty. But inside and outside the business, we see skills gaps.

Gender parity is a great way to rid ourselves of this burden.

If we were to deliver DIB at scale, skills will accrue to businesses more easily, and that means more agility. A welcoming workforce takes commitment, but a range of analyses show that it is worth it. It is time to recognise the benefits of ensuring equity for all, of training everyone in the skills they need to add value, of giving employees a voice that is heard and respected, and of being DIB advocates in the outside world.



Bringing certainty to an uncertain world may get us thinking immediately about technology, but systems and processes alone will not get the job done.”

What works

Bringing certainty to an uncertain world may get us thinking immediately about technology, but systems and processes alone will not get the job done. Each organisation is different. Finding what works and building on it will take commitment and time. But persistence will pay off. **cmme**



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BARCO

BACK TO THE FUTURE

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Nathalie Leignel, Vice President EMEA and Americas, at Barco has penned an exclusive thought leadership article for July's edition of CNME, in which she believes that sometimes you have to look back to go forward – especially when it comes to collaborative technology for hybrid working.

The second year of the pandemic work environment saw the concept of the more flexible hybrid operational model become reality. While the blueprint for hybrid work – in which employees split time between a physical office and a remote location of their choice – began to take shape before COVID's emergence, businesses now are witnessing its impact.

Hybrid work will look different for every industry and company, and the successes, struggles and needs of one team likely will differ from another. However, what has become clear in the initial

phase of broader hybrid adoption is the value of collaboration technology.

Businesses continue to implement new tools to increase productivity and maintain a sense of connection among a workforce that is more widespread and diverse in its needs and preferences.

With the adoption of hybrid work likely to grow in 2022, businesses are uniquely positioned to set the tone for the model and define how hybrid best suits their day-to-day needs. As leaders begin to look ahead to the New Year, these four hybrid collaboration and technology trends should be front of mind.

Hybrid will shine a light on employee needs

One positive that has come out of difficult times is that employees feel more empowered to dictate their own ways of working. Workplace technology is no longer just a functional part of the day, but a key component of employee satisfaction. Many employees are not yet ready to forego the routines and systems they've become comfortable with at home as they return to the office.

As employee needs evolve, collaboration technology likewise must evolve to support them. Barco's ClickShare Hybrid Meeting Survey found



that 71 percent of employees struggle with hybrid meeting technology, indicating an opportunity for innovators and business leaders to apply enhancements that make their lives easier.

The good news is that we're already beginning to see this push for simplicity come to life through more flexible and compatible video conferencing.

Unified communications and collaboration (UCC) software tools such as Microsoft

Teams, Zoom and WebEx quickly became fixtures of the pandemic workplace. Now, businesses are finding new ways to enhance the



As employee needs evolve, collaboration technology likewise must evolve to support them.”

functionality of these tools across hybrid collaboration platforms and improved meeting room peripherals (including cameras and microphones) for a dynamic and familiar conferencing experience.

The best technologies will strive for seamless usability

Remember the “old age” process of setting up for and launching a multi-location



meeting? Between securing a dedicated room, navigating cords and clutter, and ensuring clear visibility and audio among all participants, meeting organisers often found their conversations starting late and among a frustrated audience.

During the pandemic, remote workers enjoyed the ability to join a meeting from their laptop in a few simple clicks. Even as they return to the office, workers will not want to go back to the obsolete and complex legacy routine.

As a result, we expect more businesses to invest in workplace collaboration technology that synchronises workers' laptops with

meeting room components and allows immediate connectivity and start-up as participants walk in.

Ease of use also will serve as the foundation of future workplace technology. We're already beginning to see artificial intelligence enter the workspace, creating new potential for smarter and hassle-free professional engagement.

For instance, if a meeting leader begins to lose his voice, automated technologies can pick this up and disable his camera to allow for a momentary pause or sip of water. In the coming years, we expect this will also expand

to include holograms, virtual reality and multi-projector and display wall alignment.

Meeting equity will become the new currency

Although the structure of the hybrid workplace ideally encourages unity and collaboration among a workforce that at times struggled while fully remote, the model can come with an unintended divide.

Even as technology evolves, it's difficult to truly replicate the camaraderie and connection that comes with an in-person meeting. For some workers joining a hybrid meeting remotely, it can feel



more challenging to have their voices heard.

The evolution of the hybrid workplace will see a greater focus on meeting equity, and the integration of technology that prevents remote workers from feeling like “less than” participants.

Beyond equipping remote workers with adequate cameras, microphones and video conferencing platforms, business leaders are recognising the value of ensuring they have an equal seat at the table. Modern workplace collaboration platforms include virtual blackboarding and annotation, easy content

upload and sharing, and breakout room functionality to remove many of these barriers.

Meeting equity also will become more important as functions and gatherings that previously took place in person transition to hybrid or remote settings.

With some organisations hesitant to resume travel, or recognising the budget benefits of continuing virtual operations, we’re seeing everything from sales presentations to training sessions now taking place across multiple locations. Future hybrid technology will need to be versatile and powerful enough to support this transition.

The decline in collaboration will get the attention it needs

If hybrid working environments are to experience success in longevity, enabling collaboration is essential. On this point, it is important to make the distinction between productivity and collaboration.

At the start of the pandemic, when home working first began, productivity actually improved. This phenomenon

isn’t new for the Covid era, and was analysed in a study by Nicholas Bloom in 2013.

His experiment involved employees of a travel agency who were assigned to work from home for nine months, and it saw their performance increase by 13%.

Despite this improvement in productivity, however, levels of collaboration have decreased. An employee’s productivity boils down to their individual performance, whereas being connected to colleagues is a necessity of collaboration: enabling collaboration is about creating an environment ignited by a sense of sharing.

Given that employees are now distributed across multiple locations, a major challenge when it comes to the future is: How can the collaboration that existed in an in-person workplace be achieved in the hybrid world? By digging into this question and responding with investment and innovation, the hope is that the future will bring new and improved opportunities for collaboration regardless of whether colleagues are able to be together physically.

When it comes to hybrid working, there are no doubt challenges ahead. Employee needs are constantly evolving, and in the COVID era, those needs are exacerbated by uncertainty. Despite these difficulties, we believe collaboration technology is up to the challenge.

For business leaders who prioritise the technology that enhances employee experience, the future of the hybrid workplace looks bright. **cmo**



One positive that has come out of difficult times is that employees feel more empowered to dictate their own ways of working.”

APPDYNAMICS

MANAGING CLOUD PERFORMANCE

Gregg Ostrowski, Executive CTO at Cisco AppDynamics has shared the best practices he believes businesses should adopt when managing their IT performance in the complex world of the cloud.

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Gaining visibility into dynamic and complex cloud-native applications and technology stacks is arguably a top priority for technologists in organisations across the Emirates. They recognise that their traditional monitoring and APM tools aren't designed to cope with the complexity of cloud-native environments, and this is limiting their ability to monitor and optimise IT performance and availability and deliver seamless digital experiences to end users.

This is why we're seeing an acceleration in the adoption of full-stack observability solutions across every industry. The latest AppDynamics report, *The Journey to Observability*, reveals that 55% of businesses in the UAE have now started the transition to full-stack observability, and



a further 38% plan to do so during 2022.

However, in the rush to make the transition to full-stack observability and consequently generate more data and insight into cloud environments, it's vital for technologists to think

carefully about the solutions that they are implementing. They need to ensure they select technology that not only addresses their immediate pain points, but that will also be future-proofed as they continue on their digital transformation journey.

To that end, here are four crucial areas for technologists to consider when thinking about observability in the cloud:

Modern cloud-native environments require new generation observability solutions

Technologists should be looking to implement a new generation solution which can observe distributed and dynamic cloud native applications at scale. Traditional monitoring solutions continue to have a huge role to play, but there will increasingly be certain

limits to their functionality in cloud environments. For instance, when new use cases are added to existing solutions, data can sometimes remain disconnected, which requires users to jump between tabs in order to identify the root causes of performance issues.

There is an inherent difference in the way traditional and future applications are built, and they're being managed by different IT teams with different skills and ways of working — that's why we're seeing a massive demand for Site Reliability Engineers, DevOps and CloudOps. These new teams require a completely different kind of technology to track and analyze performance data. They need a solution that is truly customised to the needs of a cloud-native technology stack to decipher short-lived microservices interactions with one another and which can be long gone once troubleshooting is done.

The pivot to open standards

Technologists need to ensure that the solution they choose accepts open standards, giving a full-stack, correlated view of all telemetry data — most notably, OpenTelemetry.

OpenTelemetry is a vendor-agnostic and portable standard for metrics, logs and traces (MLT) telemetry. It allows technologists to collect information from every

part of their IT stack and not just the mission-critical applications where most have typically deployed agents to collect performance data until now.

Across all verticals, technologists are realising the benefits of OpenTelemetry as a simple and quick way to generate visibility into performance and availability across every single technical element of their IT environment. As Gartner describes it: OpenTelemetry's emergence as an open standard for telemetry collection promises improved interoperability and greater observability of microservices, containers and Kubernetes.

This shift towards OpenTelemetry will undoubtedly gather pace over the coming years. And so technologists need a solution capable of consuming, processing and correlating the huge volumes of data that OpenTelemetry delivers. It also needs to be capable of providing a holistic view on all of the trace data which technologists now have at their fingertips, to understand IT performance and availability at a business transaction level.



Technologists need to think about cloud observability as a multi-stage process which supports and enables the organisation's wider digital transformation journey."

Ability to deliver business-level insights hinges on advanced AIOps

UAE technologists need to leverage the power of AIOps to prioritise actions for their cloud environments. In the future, organisations will leverage AI-assisted issue detection and diagnosis with insights for faster troubleshooting.

Ultimately, this will allow technologists to identify and remedy the root causes of issues faster, minimising the impact on end user experience.

This technology can also enable prioritisation based on business impact, so technologists can focus on what really matters most to end users and the business, and business leaders can understand the impact of IT performance on business transactions.

The transition to cloud observability is a marathon, not a sprint

Despite the increase in cloud computing initiatives, most enterprise businesses in the region, and across the globe for that matter, are still running the core of their application portfolio in traditional environments. And while technologists may

have intentions to make the transition to cloud-native architectures over the next few years, it will more likely be a case of extending rather than entirely replacing their application portfolio. Traditional monitoring solutions are still performing a critical role, enabling technologists to identify issues and take appropriate action on a large part of the IT landscape. This will continue to be the case for some time to come in most organisations.

Technologists need to think about cloud observability as a multi-stage process which supports and enables the organisation's wider digital transformation journey.

And this means that they need to work with a partner that can guide them as they make the switch, whether that is in two years or 10 years. They need a technology partner that can meet them where they're currently at and then help them to transition to a cloud-native solution in a gradual and seamless way, when the time is right for them.

As end-user expectations for exceptional digital experiences continue to rise amongst both customers and employees, technologists in the Emirates know that they simply cannot afford any slip-ups when it comes to IT performance and availability. But currently, too many simply don't have the tools and insights they need to identify and resolve issues within a fragmented and dynamic hybrid cloud environment.



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With the accelerated move to cloud-native applications, technologists need to ensure that their monitoring capabilities keep pace. From understanding how highly-distributed cloud-native applications work and preventing incidents, to adopting new ways to gather vast amounts of MELT telemetry data, technologists need

contextual insights that provide business context deep within the tech stack.

This is why it is imperative for technologists to implement the right cloud-native observability solution — one that can meet their immediate needs and also allow them to scale functionality as their organisation continues its own unique journey to the cloud. [Grimo](#)



UAE technologists need to leverage the power of AIOps to prioritise actions for their cloud environments.”

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**.



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

STAFF TRAINING AND IT MONITORING/MANAGEMENT TOOLS

42%

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