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DARREN ROOS,
CEO IFS

IFS CLOUD

DELIVERING MOMENTS OF SERVICE

IFS has relaunched itself as an Azure cloud, targeted at reducing technology debt created by legacy applications, and delivering moments of service.

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Questions?

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REDUCING TECHNOLOGY DEBT

Vendor lock-in is a subject often heard of around systems infrastructure. But now the realities of transformation and more recently the pandemic, has put pressure on all aspects of the IT organisation. The pressure is on to move beyond the legacy of technology solutions and provide modern day agility in terms of reducing complexity and making things easier to work with, and to pay for.

In this month's cover feature, Darren Roos, CEO of global enterprise application vendor IFS, describes the three-year journey the organisation took to rebuild and reengineer its enterprise application solution stack. In March this year, IFS launched IFS Cloud, the biggest transformation and rejig the company has ever undertaken.

The basis of the launch was its confidence in the cloud solution that has been built on the basis of collective feedback from end users, which Roos refers to as technology debt.

Feedback received from end users indicated that customers were really struggling with complexity, the technology industry was creating. The IT industry was making it more and more difficult for end users rather than making it easier. End customer were struggling with orchestration of customers, assets and employees, to drive business.

IFS has now spent more on software engineering from 2018 to 2020 building IFS Cloud, than it has in the past years. IFS Cloud has been built to take away complexity from the fragmented technology landscape that has accumulated and developed over the years around end users.

IFS has gone all in with Microsoft Azure and is taking advantage of its native capabilities. While IFS has been built on Microsoft Azure, potential customers for IFS Cloud are not taking decisions based on the hyper scalar platform that it is using. Reduced complexity, deep integration inside IFS Cloud, and rapid path to progress from onsite to cloud, are some of the opt-in considerations.

IFS Cloud is focusing on the orchestration of three components of any business – assets, people and customers. By doing this, IFS is helping its end users deliver their moments of service for their customers. IFS Cloud has been built correcting a classic misconception that is inherited by most technology companies.
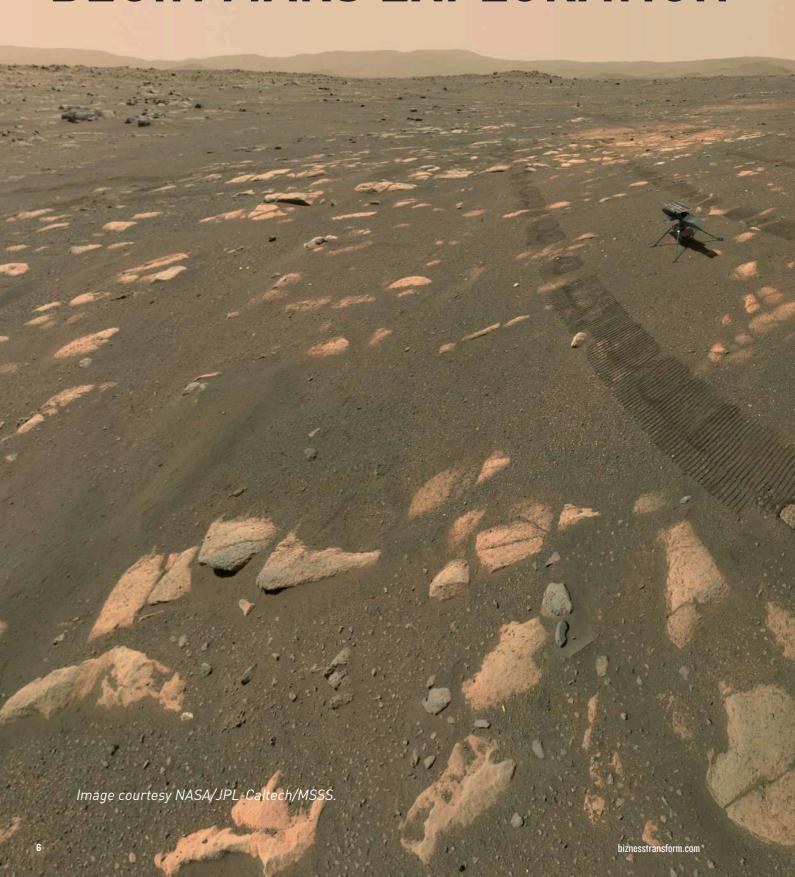
Almost every technology company thinks their technology is the center of the universe of their end users. In reality, customer experience, and the moments of service for the end user's customer is the center of the universe for the end user.

In this edition we also look at two transformation initiatives, one at Unifree Duty Free at Istanbul Airport in Turkey and the other at GMG Sports in Middle East and Asia Pacific. Both examples are built around scaling digital technologies to deliver superior customer experiences.
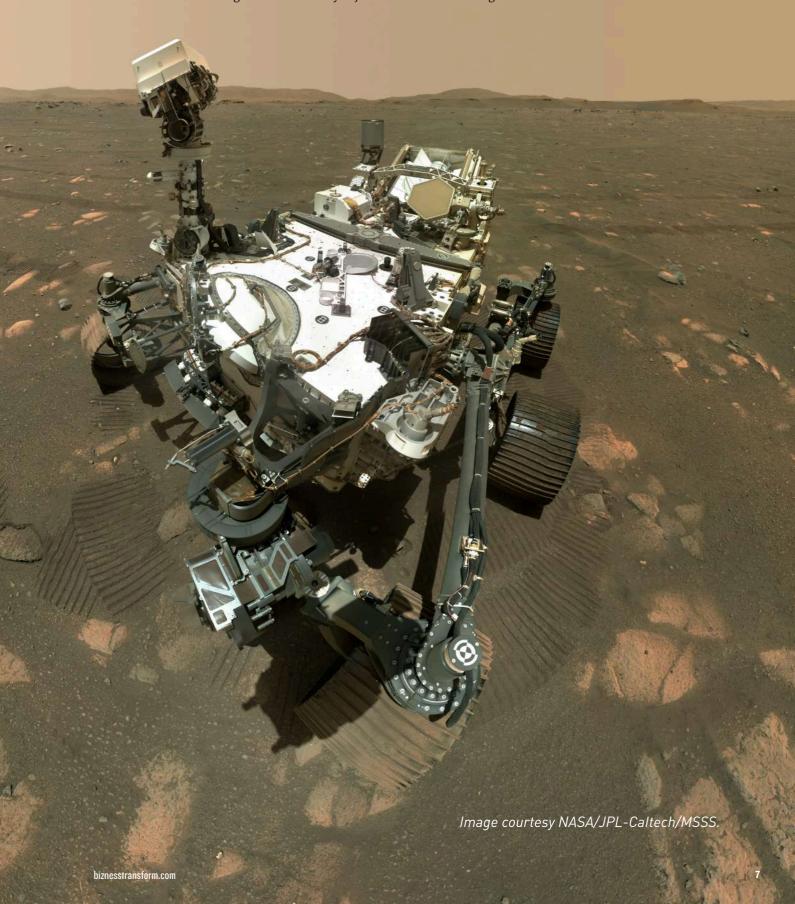
And as we enter the holy month, for all our readers, we wish them Ramadan Kareem.

Arun Shankar
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DRONE AND ROVER
BEGIN MARS EXPLORATION

Image courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech/MSSS.

NASA's Perseverance Mars rover took a selfie with the Ingenuity helicopter, seen here about 4 metres from the rover, in this image taken on April 6, 2021. The image was taken by the Wide-Angle Topographic Sensor for Operations and engineering camera located at the end of the rover's long robotic arm. A key objective is the search for signs of ancient microbial life.

Image courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech/MSSS.

NEED OF SUSTAINABLE POST-PANDEMIC ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Arun Leslie John of Century Financial writes about the themes of the new normal, the post-pandemic recovery and why it needs to be sustainable in nature.

ARUN LESLIE JOHN,
Chief Market Analyst,
Century Financial.

Noted LSU Professor Leon Megginson once famously quoted on the ever-changing world dynamics that it is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change. And no better time than in today's scenario to realise its relevance.

The phrase Survival of the Fittest was initially based on Darwinian Theory of Evolution. Initially related to more of biological and mechanical aspects of life, the theory has been deeply percolated to other aspects of life including economics and modern political warfare.

With over 108 million global Covid-19 cases and 2.38 million deaths so far, the world is about to enter a new phase of life. From homes to boardrooms, individuals and business alike are now staring at new reality. The new reality has affected both the personal and professional lives of the people.

At a personal level, families and bread winners are looking to save more and invest prudently as last year's ill experience of the initial pandemic spread stays fresh on everyone's mind. At professional level, individuals and corporate are gearing up for a more skilled and qualified work environment where past excess redundancies are done away with.

Amidst the market debate regarding what to focus on and what not too, some of the key major themes that have formed over the course include:

● New and enhanced healthcare solutions and investment pick up. Vulnerabilities in the global health care systems have been clearly highlighted with even the most developed countries struggling

New and enhanced healthcare solutions and investment pick up.

to keep pace with ICU beds to treat active and serious cases. This implies additional investment on healthcare front.

● Digitalisation and increased adoption of work from home culture is increasingly gaining traction since past couple of months. Online web meetings with clients have re-defined the way businesses are conducted.

● The pandemic had nearly wiped-out decade's build up in US job gains. The new normal has meant special areas of focus like skill refinement, adaption of products and services towards the new system, digitalisation trends and its incorporation in core business processes.

Unlike the earlier market crash events including the 2000 Dot Com bubble burst and 2008 subprime mortgage crisis, the current crisis is a health related one. Not only have jobs been lost but also thousands of people have died. In some cases, even the young individuals at their prime working age have suffered.

The initial health crisis gave way to a major economic shock for the entire world last year. People are likely to take more measures and precautions to make themselves secure in the outside social environment. As a result, proper economic recovery will be a long-drawn affair and will need to be sustainable in nature. ■

Fallen Angels
Sectors that suffered the heaviest brunt due to lockdown restrictions & degrowth. These include sectors like aviation, hospitality,etc

Technology & Healthcare
Trend towards digitailisation & new investment in niche healthcare technolgies

ESG Investing
Requirement formore resiliant &sustainable investments to driveup the sector demand

Niche & Small Businesses
Involves companies that have a more nearer geographical presence & providesa good alternative toexisting large scale producers

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MANAGING SECURITY RISKS IN CLOUD MIGRATION

To cope with the complexity of multi-network environments, a good start is to address the issue of expanded attack surface, writes Hadi Jaafarawi of Qualys.

HADI JAAFARAWI,
Managing Director, Middle
East, Qualys.

> We live in the cloud now, at least partially. Choosing the right provider will be essential.

Today, we are in a working paradigm that was supposed to be many years away. Employees authenticate themselves to corporate networks using devices that may be compromised, through third-party networks of unknown pedigree. Consumers demand better experiences online, leading to rushed development cycles and inevitable vulnerabilities in each release.

Businesses, governments, and digital service providers tackle these shifts in piecemeal fashion. Legacy, multivendor cybersecurity solutions remain, making it difficult to form a clear picture of multidimensional ecosystems and the risks they face.

To cope with the heightened complexity of hybrid, multi-network environments, a good start is to address the issue of an expanded attack surface. Vulnerabilities may be widespread, but they can be managed by taking a two-pronged approach.

First, compile a comprehensive, no-device-left-behind, asset inventory. Trying to formulate a risk strategy without profiling all the endpoints in the environment is impractical. Once you are aware of each device and its software mix, you can start to get a clear view of just how vulnerable your digital estate is.

Next, it is important to formalise the workflow of vulnerability management. To address every vulnerability in the new hybrid environment would be costly and unwieldy, in terms of budget and manhours, so triaging potential issues should be top priority.

Some vulnerabilities are easy to exploit but may not yield great value for attackers. In the general case, attackers are not just looking for low-hanging fruit; they are looking for low-hanging, juicy fruit. Your vulnerability management approach needs to reflect this, keeping in mind your new, cross-network asset inventory.

But addressing vulnerabilities is just the first step. We live in the cloud now, at least partially. Choosing the right provider will be essential. This must be a trusted

> Compile a comprehensive, no-device-left-behind, asset inventory.

partner, capable of protecting you while you concentrate on the business of business. They should not only provide you with the basics of cybersecurity, including all the tools necessary to build your vulnerability-management strategy; they should also be proactive on regulatory compliance, automation, and governance tools.

Outside of what they provide to customers in the short term, providers must also look to the future. They, more than anyone else, should be aware of how life and work models are changing. Over the past year, they will have seen thousands of individuals and organisations retreat to digital spaces to work, shop, and socialise. They will also be aware that conventional wisdom predicts that these habits will linger to a large extent, after we receive the much-anticipated all-clear from global health experts.

Providing long-term security for digital natives and millions of freshly minted digital expats will require unprecedented levels of intra-industry collaboration. We must start building open cloud platforms with security built into every layer that interoperate with others. Managed Security Service Providers are our future if we are to live all the facets of our lives in the digi-sphere. ◾

7th MEA edition of FITS 2021 and Catalyst Awards see phenomenal success

The seventh edition of the Future IT Summit held on March 22 at Sharjah Research Technology and Innovation Park, SRTIP, concluded with a remarkable success. The event was attended by over 200+ key dignitaries including CIOs, IT managers, IT heads, VP and directors of IT, CEOs, CTOs, CDO and CHRO from Middle East, Africa, SEA, Europe, and US markets.

The theme of the seventh edition of FITS was #StrongerTogether. It was in-line with the new normal which emerged in 2020 and saw the convergence of humans and machines in a way which had never happened before. Attendees could also attend the event virtually via GCF Convention Centre.

The event was inaugurated by keynote speaker, HE Hussain Al Mahmoudi, CEO of SRTIP and Ronak Samantaray, CEO of GEC Media Group and Co-Founder of Global CIO Forum along with other key dignitaries from the government and private sectors in the UAE.

FITS 2021 was not just about knowledge-sharing and networking but also about recognising each individual's efforts through Catalysts Awards 2021. The glittering award ceremony honoured trailblazers and trendsetters of the industry through two categories, Catalyst Marketing and Catalyst CIO.

Catalyst Marketing Awards 2021

CATALYST VENDOR

ANKUSH MEHRA
Zebra Technologies

HASSAN HAMADANI
Pure Storage

LALIT POPLI
Arcon

ASHOK KUMAR
TalariaX Pte Ltd

CATALYST CHANNEL

FARAZ ALI KHAN
ASBIS Middle East

IRMAK PARLAT YILMAZ
GULF BUSINESS MACHINES

RASHA ISLIM
Emitac Enterprise Solutions

NATHALIE NASSAR
Mindware

CATALYST MARKETER OF THE YEAR – VENDOR

BEN MCDONALD
Dell Technologies

CATALYST MARKETER OF THE YEAR – CHANNEL

ADITYA PURI
Redington

Catalyst CIO Awards 2021

CATALYST GOVERNMENT LEADER
HE HUSSAIN AL MAHMOUDI
SRTIP

CIO IN GOVERNMENT - UTILITIES
ANSHUL SRIVASTAV
Emirates Post

GOVERNMENT CIO
HE NOOR AL NOMAN
Government of Sharjah - Department of eGovernment

DR KADEEJA MANSOOR
SLC - Govt of Sharjah

YOUSEF ABDULLAH AL ALI
Sharjah Directorate of Town Planning and Survey

ABDALLA AL ALI
Dubai Multi Commodities Centre, DMCC

KHALFAN MATAR AL HASSANI
Monitoring And Control Centre

SUNANDO CHAUDHURI
Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Company

NASSER AL OWGHANI
Mohammed Bin Rashid Housing Est

CIO IN BANKING AND FINANCE
DR ERDAL OZKAYA
Standard Chartered Bank

ABDUL RAHMAN JAROUDI
Aafaq Islamic Finance

MAMOUN ALHOMSSEY
Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank

CIO IN CONGLOMERATE
MANISH BINDRA
Galadari Brothers Group

MADHUKAR CHATURVEDI
Al Shirawi Group

SHRENIK JAIN
Siemens

CIO IN EDUCATION
NITHIN GEO THOMAS
Amity Education Middle East

SHAH E ROOM KHAN
Emirates College of Technology -Abu Dhabi

CIO IN HEALTHCARE
ALIASGAR BOHARI
Zulekha Hospital
CIO in Healthcare

MUSTANSIR AZIZ
Gulf Diagnostic Centre Hospital

CIO IN HOSPITALITY
ROGER TABBAL
Accor Hotels

KRISHAN KANT SRIVASTAVA
Landmark Group
(Hospitality Division)

ATUL AGGARWAL
Caesars Bluewaters Dubai

HAITHAM NATOUR
IHG Group

ASHRAF SALAH
Hilton Group

CIO IN ENTERTAINMENT
ANINDO BANERJEE
Dubai Holding Entertainment

CIO IN FACILITY AND MANAGEMENT
ROBERT P ARANIEGO
Emrill

CIO IN FMCG
SANTOSH SHETTY
Ghassan Aboud Group

SHAILESH MANI
Flemingo International

CIO IN LEGAL AND JUDICIAL AFFAIRS
ARUL JOSE VIGIN
DIFC Courts

CIO IN LOGISTICS
VINAY SHARMA
Gulftainer

CIO IN MANUFACTURING
SAMIT JHA
Laticrete International

UMESH MOOLCHANDANI
Bin Dasmal Group

VENKATESH MAHADEVAN
Dubai Investments

AZEEMUDDIN MOHAMMED
Al Rawabi Dairy

CIO IN OIL AND GAS
DR ALAEDDIN ISMAIL AL-BADAWNA
ADNOC Refining

HALA BANIHASHIM
Sharjah National Oil Corporation

CIO IN REAL ESTATE AND CONSTRUCTION
AJAY RATHI
Damac Properties

CIO IN RETAIL
FAYAZ AHAMED BADUBHAI
Al Yousuf Group

CIO IN SERVICES
MATHEW SHEATH
Majid Al Futtaim Ventures

CIO IN TRANSPORTATION
ELFASSI YASSIM
TriStar Group

IT PERSON OF THE YEAR
MOHAMMED AL NUAIMI
Federal Authority of Identity and Citizenship

GCF and Software AG hold virtual summit on Business Strategy to IT Execution

Global CIO Forum in association with Software AG hosted an event on Business Strategy to IT Execution. Organisations need to continuously adapt to rapidly changing digital transformation trends and this demands a strategic business alignment. Software AG makes IT and business transformation easy with its offerings like ARIS and Alfabet.

With ARIS, you can create, manage, and analyse your end-to-end business processes, enabling operational excellence and giving all stakeholders the tools and process insights, they need to make better decisions every day. Alfabet, on the other hand, helps in making the best IT decisions by understanding when, where, how, and why to make changes. With Alfabet, you can link the

interdependent perspectives of business, finance, and risk for a full analysis of how technology can support business change.

Based on Software AG's strategy to execution approach, this virtual session guided how one can achieve process excellence goals with integrating business process management and IT project management tools.

Cezmi Eroglu, Transformation Solutions Manager, Software AG and Sadiq Al-Shara, Principal Business Consultant, Software AG were the speakers at the event.

Eroglu started by briefing on the process of digital transformation and how it is about re-thinking the whole business strategy, digital capabilities and executing those. He stressed that the process of digital transformation is continuous and needs to keep evolving with the business model. Eroglu also highlighted that Alfabet collects data from the IT organisation and helps in making the best IT decisions.

Al-Shara started by highlighting that ARIS stands for transformation. He added that in the BPA maturity journey, it is hard to find organisations that have reached operational excellence. Al-Shara stressed that operating model in operational excellence journey is all about the customer satisfaction.

Global CIO Forum, RosettaNet Singapore GS1 announce winners of Catalyst Asia Awards

The first Asia edition of Future IT Summit and Catalyst Awards 2021 was held by Global CIO Forum in collaboration with RosettaNet Singapore GS1. The Catalysts Awards recognised and honoured the trailblazers in the industry for project management, HR, sales, finance, marketing, and technology, who have been uplifting the brand and reputation of their respective organisations in these difficult times.

The awards also recognised companies showcasing various cutting-edge initiatives, platforms and market-penetration which are truly acting as catalysts in the ever-changing market landscape. The two categories of the awards were Catalyst Asia 2021: Individual Awards and Catalyst Company Awards 2021.

FITS Asia and Catalyst Awards were held in partnership with C2FO, TechnePlus, PSA, SealNet, SEEBURGER, Intelizest and GeTS.

Winners of Catalyst Asia 2021: Individual Awards were Pradeep Kumar Sharma of AS Watson Group, Anand Sinha of OCS Group India, Tejas Shah

of SVKM, Chandran R of Bahwan Cybertek, Subhashish Roy of EXL Service, Srabanti Kundu of Hindalco, Setiaji of West Java Provincial Government, Dheerendar Srivastav of Magma Fincorp, Viren Italiya o fGSC Bank, Arivuvel Ramu of TONIK Bank, Sumanyu Vashistha of Deekshaa Infosystems, Srinivasan Mahalingam of Matrimony.com, Ashutosh Singh of Cloud24x7 Solutions, Anuroop Sundd of Siemens Industry Software India, Biswajit Mohapatra of IBM, Neena Reddy of Fint Solutions, Sajith Chakkingal of TMF Group, Anthony Raj Muthu of SEEBURGER Asia Pacific, Juliana Chua of Essilor, Dr Michael Harrison of Amazon Web Services, Harmit Singh Malhotra of Enter10 Television, Nikhil Kumar Nigam of Amity Education Group, Anil Menon of Lulu Group India, Abhishek Agarwal of Energy Efficiency Services, Zoey Lim of Elite Digital Logistics and Subhash Shelke of Essar.

Winners of Catalyst Company Awards 2021 were OCS Group India, Ccat, Everise, CIMB Berhad, TONIK Bank, Elite Digital Logistics, GeTS Asia, SEEBURGER Singapore, InterGlobe Aviation (IndiGo), EXPANZS, SealNet and C2FO.

(left to right) Fahad Al Hassawi, Acting CEO, du; Fadi Pharaon, President of Ericsson MEA.

du selects Ericsson to deploy 5G radio access network

du, from Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company, EITC, has selected Ericsson to deploy its 5G radio access network, RAN, products and solutions as part of a major network expansion and modernisation.

In line with UAE's Vision 2021, du will transform its RAN 5G network with Ericsson Radio System. This will enable it to address new business opportunities and diverse 5G use cases, including Enhanced Mobile Broadband, eMBB, Fixed Wireless Access, FWA, massive Internet of Things, IoT, ultra-reliable low-latency, URLL, innovative applications across enterprise and industry verticals such as smart city, manufacturing, health etc.

Following the 2021 deployment, which includes AI-powered 5G network optimisation services leveraging Cognitive Software, du and its customers will benefit from a 5G RAN network that will enhance versatility, improve capacity, increase cost efficiency and future-proof technology developments.

Honeywell, Strata to deliver Made in UAE masks to Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi

The strategic collaboration between Honeywell and Strata Manufacturing to produce Made in the UAE N95 masks, has expanded its support to Abu Dhabi's health and emergency service workers by signing a contract with Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi to deliver new respirators. Strata is the advanced manufacturing facility wholly-owned by Mubadala Investment Company.

The Al Ain-based manufacturing line, which produced the high-quality face masks certified to meet N95 and FFP2 standards, was established last year in response to the global pandemic. Available to enterprises across the Middle East, the masks can be also purchased by the general public via noon.com.

The Honeywell masks can filter 95% of large and small solid and liquid particles. Masks that are not certified to N95 standard may not provide this level of protection against the inhalation of smaller airborne particles. Ergonomically designed to provide comfort and optimum protection, the

N95 Honeywell masks provide a leak-tight seal that helps minimise toxic particles from entering the mask. The innovative design adapts to a wide variety of facial shapes allowing for a comfortable fit, and the large interior volume provides increased comfort to users.

Mubadala has been vital in supporting the healthcare sector to ensure the safety and wellbeing of UAE communities, and fostered the initial agreement between the two companies to utilise the latest technology and machinery at Strata's Al Ain facility to manufacture the masks. Capable of producing more than 90,000 masks per day, the collaboration celebrated its first millionth mask in July 2020.

The collaboration between Honeywell and Strata is part of Mubadala's #WeAreDedicated campaign, a recently launched group-wide response to the Covid-19 pandemic and its efforts to coordinate initiatives across its business platforms and assets to support communities locally and internationally.

Red Bull Racing selects Oracle Cloud as partner for Formula 1 championship

Red Bull Racing Honda will leverage machine learning and data analytics from Oracle Cloud Infrastructure to optimise the way data is used across its business. From the track side, through the vehicle chassis and engine, into more information visible in the devices used by its global fan base.

Red Bull will use Oracle Cloud Infrastructure across its marketing applications and audience facing interfaces to provide insights into what is happening. Artificial intelligence and machine language will be used to manage data and improve performance of the engine and the chassis. Oracle Customer Experience applications are expected to boost fan experience and engagement for Red Bull Racing Honda enthusiasts around the world.

The Red Bull team declined to provide any more details during the global media announcement, citing confidentiality to protective its competitive edge across the Formula 1 World Championship. A 0.001 second advantage aggregated across the laps usually separates one team from another.

Formula 1 is a sport often described as being driven by data; teams have an obsession with analysis and minute details which could give them a competitive advantage on the track. This relationship, will include work to optimise and elevate the use of data in improving car performance for Red Bull. This comes in the form of a multi–year roadmap, touching on both on and off–track engineering operations, leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities of Oracle Cloud Infrastructure.

This is a hugely significant partnership for Red Bull Racing Honda. Oracle is a massive organisation that has been at the forefront of technical innovation for more than four decades. Oracle's expertise will touch many areas of the business from the development of major fan engagement and brand building mechanisms to providing new resources across the Team, within the engineering and design departments.

Emirates Red Crescent, Yahsat to provide education to displaced students

Emirates Red Crescent Authority has signed a Memorandum of Understanding, MoU, with the UAE's satellite services operator, Yahsat. Under the agreement, both organisations will work together to ensure disadvantaged and vulnerable students have access to quality education through the provision of advanced satellite communication solutions. Yahsat's resources will be deployed to support the Authority's remote education programmes and facilitate help for young people, families and schools in countries affected by disasters and crises.

The partnership will bolster the quality of education offered to refugees and displaced persons in their host countries. Yahsat and Emirates Red Crescent will provide students access to a range of advanced educational tools that will empower them to fulfil their considerable potential and lead full, independent lives.

The two entities have committed to promoting sustainable development goals and developing the knowledge and skills of learners in underserved communities through the application of artificial intelligence and modern digital technology over satellite in distance education.

The MoU was signed by Dr Muhammad Ateeq Al Falahi,

(left to right) Ali Al Hashemi, CEO Designate of Yahsat; Dr Muhammad Ateeq Al Falahi, Secretary General of Emirates Red Crescent.

Secretary General of the Emirates Red Crescent and Ali Al Hashemi, Chief Executive Officer Designate of Yahsat. Yahsat will leverage its considerable expertise and resources anywhere within its satellite footprint, to address the gaps, wherever terrestrial telecommunication services are not available.

Dr Muhammad Ateeq Al Falahi stressed that the MoU embodies the vision of HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in the Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of Emirates Red Crescent Authority, in forming meaningful and constructive partnerships between Emirati companies and institutions to strengthen their programmes aimed at resolving humanitarian challenges.

ADNOC's Thamama Centre generates over $1B in value using big data, AI

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, ADNOC, has announced that its Thamama Centre of Excellence has generated $1.1 Billion in business value since its inception in 2017. Thamama is a key part of ADNOC's ongoing strategic investments in advanced technology, digitalisation and artificial intelligence to drive greater efficiencies, quickly respond to market dynamics, and enable smart growth as the company continues to deliver on its 2030 strategy.

The hub brings together ADNOC's leading subsurface experts and leverages big data, digitalisation, and smart analytics to help access hydrocarbon resources and unlock greater value from existing reservoirs. Thamama also drives innovation across ADNOC's upstream projects, optimises development costs and enhances value from all producing onshore and offshore fields in Abu Dhabi.

Some of Thamama's existing technology initiatives include one of the world's largest co-development of oil rim and gas cap reservoirs. This innovative concept will enable ADNOC to competitively monetise several trillion cubic feet of gas and associated condensate while maximising the oil value. Thamama is also engaged in optimising field development costs by designing wells with custom-fit completions and deploying them at scale.

Thamama is also enabling ADNOC to integrate AI, advanced analytics and cloud computing into its reservoir management and subsurface workflows to enhance oil recovery and improve production efficiency by more than 10%. Its integrated capacity model creates a digital twin of ADNOC's entire hydrocarbon value chain, potentially unlocking hundreds of millions of dollars in value every year.

AI based Rapid Covid-19 Test System launched in UAE

Laipac Technology, a leader in the development of IoMT, Internet of Medical Things, has announced its partnership with UAE companies YAS Pharmaceuticals and Pure Health, utilising the power of the world's first Rapid Covid-19 Antigen Test System using artificial intelligence.
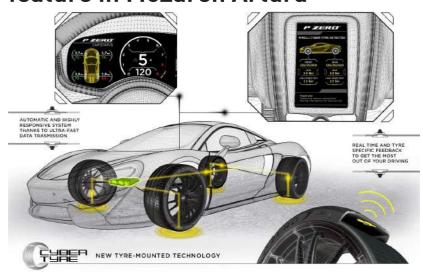
The LooK SPOT solution is an intelligent and innovative way to deploy technologies to better protect the health of people across the region. Being able to have a quick and accurate Covid-19 diagnosis can interrupt transmission, aid clinical management, and help proper allocation of resources to isolation.

The European CE-IVD approved LooK SPOT AI Covid-19 Antigen Rapid Test System is a smartphone-based diagnostic device with lateral flow immunoassay intended for the qualitative detection of nucleocapsid protein from SARS-CoV-2 in nasal swabs. The LooK SPOT Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem revolutionises medical diagnostics, enabling early disease detection with consistent and accurate results.

LooK SPOT AI Covid-19 Antigen Rapid Test uses the nasal sample collected from 1 inch in the nostril. It uses AI technology to deliver real-time test results within 5 to 8 minutes with 97.4% sensitivity and 98.3% specificity in detecting the SARS-CoV-2 virus. This Antigen test kit is one of the leading kits available in the market. LooK SPOT Covid-19 Antigen Rapid Test can also detect the new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus which was first identified in the United Kingdom and South Africa.

Pirelli makes Cyber Tyre standard feature in McLaren Artura

Pirelli now equips as standard a tyre with sensors that can talk to a car for the first time. This world premiere of original equipment is thanks to Pirelli's Cyber Tyre system, made up of a sensor in each tyre that gathers vital data for safe driving, is linked to software integrated into the car's onboard computer.

The car in question is the McLaren Artura, complete with sensor-equipped tyres: a hybrid supercar packed with technology for an even safer and more involved driving experience. Cyber Tyre technology offers a plethora of

information to the car and driver: the tyre's passport, the type of tyre, whether it is a winter or summer version, prescribed pressure, load index and speed rating as well as current running information, such as temperature and pressure.

This data, including temperature and pressure, constantly monitored and transmitted in real time, is vital when it comes to safety. The information is also delivered, with greater precision compared to traditional sensors on the valve, as the Pirelli transmitting sensors are in direct contact with the actual tyres rather than the wheel rims.

The data supplied from the sensors is processed by software created by Pirelli that is integrated into the car's electronics. Some information can be seen on the dashboard and the central display; other information is used by the car's electronics to calibrate the driver alert systems based on the exact characteristics of the tyres and their status

DLD completed 1.4M+ digital services during 2020 through smart channels

Dubai Land Department, DLD, completed over 1.4 Million digital services for its customers during 2020 through its smart channels, including its website and the Dubai REST app. This is part of the digital transformation process DLD is pursuing to support the Smart Dubai vision in line with the objectives of the Dubai Paperless Strategy. It also comes as part of its efforts to establish a culture of creativity and innovation at DLD and provide innovative and creative services.

Registration and renewal of Ejari contracts topped the list of digital services in 2020 with 393,174 services provided, followed by real estate project status enquiries, 284,641. The other digital services in the lists included rental index, 152,909, Ejari cancellations, 96,885, title

HE SULTAN BUTTI BIN MEJREN,
Director-General of DLD.

deed verifications, 84,491, service charge index, 75,338, searches for licenced real estate brokers, 50,099, property status enquiries, 26,778, land status enquiries, 23,745, requests for a map, 23,660, requests for completion of deferred procedures, 19,087.

18,139 services were provided for requests to register and renew property management contracts

and 17,960 requests for sale registrations. Case tracking stood at 10,778 and requests for disputed lawsuits – amicable settlements at 10,441.

The list of top digital services in 2020 also included requests for execution proceedings, rental good conduct certificates, validating e-cards, requests to receive a payment from the project's escrow account, requests to register a real estate valuation company data, requests for certificates of owned properties, searches for approved property management companies, requests for real estate courses, requests to register initial sales, requests to cancel initial sales, requests for approval of service charges, requests for real estate permits, requests for cancellations of property management contracts, sale registration applications associated with initial mortgages, and requests for first-instance lawsuits, among other services.

stc pay, Thales launch personalised contactless cards

Saudi mobile wallet, Saudi Digital Payments Company, stc pay, and Thales have introduced contactless cards to enable payments at Point of Sales, POS, machines, e-commerce transactions, and cash withdrawal at local and international ATMs. Thales EMV cards are fully personalised and include two different premium designs only, metal cards and transparent cards, making

the sourcing process for stc pay more secure and simplified.

stc pay's customers will be able to order the card, activate, deactivate, and set spending limits through their mobile application with no additional paperwork required. Digitised, the card is compatible with Apple Pay and mada Pay, providing a seamless and secure payment experience for iPhone and Android users.

Saudi Arabia is a pioneering development in the financial sector, and as part of Vision 2030, it has set an ambitious target of achieving 70% non-cash transactions by 2030. Saudi Central Bank, SAMA, regulations have been further supporting the banks to move towards contactless cards and mobile payment. In line with this shift, there has been an increase in demand for secure contactless cards, with a compound annual growth rate from 2020-2025 expected at 16.8%.

Thales has been an integral part of Saudi Arabia for over 50 years, providing solutions, services, and products in aeronautics, defence, space, transportation, and digital identity and security.

Khimji's House of Travel taps into Amadeus Web Services

Khimji's House of Travel, a leading travel company in Oman, has extended its partnership with Amadeus to build momentum around its digital transformation and the development of integrated travel services. Since 2012, Amadeus has worked with the agency to strengthen its position in Oman's travel and tourism market as well as helping it expand across the region.

In addition to a growing team of travel experts, the agency's recent diversification strategy can be seen with the introduction of cutting-edge travel solutions for travellers and travel partners. These new developments include the corporate platform khimjicorptravel.com, the platform for local travel agents khimjiconnect.com, and the global B2B hotel and leisure platform tripsnstay.com.

The agency's partnership with Amadeus will see it tap into Amadeus Web Services and its low fare search technology. This provides a single point of access to

the entire range of Amadeus' comprehensive content and a cost-effective way to build and update the agency's customised travel booking applications.

Khimji's House of Travel is also benefiting from leading digital solutions within Amadeus' flagship portfolio. Most notably, MasterPricer travel board, Amadeus Online Corporate Traveller, and a set of automation scripts that are enabling the delivery of an enhanced customer experience for Khimji's travellers.

Rafed to provide logistics support to G42 Healthcare for vaccines

Rafed, a healthcare group purchasing organisation that is part of ADQ, has signed a new agreement with G42 Healthcare, a healthcare technology company and a subsidiary of Abu Dhabi-based Group 42, to provide services that include the provision of storage facilities for Covid-19 vaccines.

As part of the agreement between the two Abu Dhabi entities, Rafed will oversee the logistics including the management, transportation, and storage of the vaccine doses in the new designated facilities, in line with the requirements and standards of Abu Dhabi's Department of Health

Rafed distribution centre is a dedicated pharmaceutical facility that can cater to all temperature band requirements, from +20 C° storage for PPE and medical equipment, to -90 C° deep freezer capabilities to predominantly cater for vaccine storage and handling.

Rafed has also recently announced that the company signed a collaboration agreement with Abu Dhabi Ports to jointly launch the largest healthcare and medical supplies cold store distribution centre in the UAE. Under the strategic collaboration agreement, Abu Dhabi Ports will deliver a warehouse and inventory management solution for upstream, midstream, and downstream operations as Rafed's fourth-party logistics service provider. The new distribution centre will be the largest, most technologically advanced centre in the UAE.

MINI Cooper SE comes with driver assistance systems, connected packages

From March 2021, the MINI Cooper SE will incorporate fresh design accents and new equipment features. The new MINI Electric Collection sets the scene for the first purely electrically powered model by the British premium brand.

The edition model combines the visual highlights developed for the latest edition of the MINI, such as the redesigned front end and the Multitone Roof, with exclusive design features in the exterior and interior as well as high-quality equipment details.

Newly compiled equipment packages in the areas of comfort, connectivity and driver assistance are also optionally available for the edition model of the MINI Cooper SE. Steering wheel heating is offered for the first time to increase comfort in cold weather. The standard equipment of the MINI Cooper SE includes the Connected Navigation package. The Connected Navigation Plus package includes a Head-Up Display, telephony with Wireless Charging, Concierge Service and MINI Connected XL features.

The new Lane Departure Warning is part of the Driver Assistance Package and alerts the driver to the risk of unintentional lane departure with steering wheel vibrations.

The new Driver Assistance Package Plus includes Active Cruise Control, which now features a Stop & Go function for the first time. This enables the system to slow the MINI Cooper SE down to a standstill if necessary. Then all that is needed is a short step on the accelerator pedal to set the car in motion again and continue using the automatic speed and distance control.

This provides the driver with effective support, especially in gridlocked traffic, and while driving enjoyment is temporarily restricted, the driver can instead enjoy increased ride comfort.

In addition, the MINI Electric Collection features Adaptive LED headlights including a matrix function for the high beam, door sill trims with a printed MINI Electric logo, sports seats in light grey fabric and leatherette combination, newly designed interior surfaces in MINI Yours Aluminium finish and an anthracite-coloured roof lining.

Arthur D Little report indicates NPLs will strain UAE, Saudi banks

The ongoing pandemic has resulted in Middle Eastern economies confronting severe repercussions, with banking institutions widely expected to experience companies defaulting on loans and cashflow problems. In times of economic crisis, commercial banks with issues surrounding Non-Performing Loans, NPLs, must minimise such impacts and secure NPL portfolio value, according to a new report by Arthur D Little, ADL.

The report, titled Non-Performing Loan Management: The case of setting up a Workout Unit, provides exclusive insights into how banks can mitigate NPL issues and offers a detailed overview of how to establish a dedicated Workout Unit.

As per the report's findings, the current crisis will impact banks with a significant degree of strain. While banking sector problems in the 2007 financial crisis resulted in liquidity problems in the overall economy, the current dilemma has already been unequivocally defined as a real economic crisis. The severe GDP declines following pandemic-inducted lockdowns will have a devastating effect on companies and retail customers' creditworthiness, something that directly affects players in countries across the Middle East.

The turbulent financial climate from a regional perspective has been reaffirmed by S&P Global's 2021 Banking Outlook, which details why current events and those that will transpire in the near future represent the most challenging test for banks in over a decade. In terms of the UAE, a slowing economy will weaken banks' asset quality and profitability. With the national economy expected to contract by approximately 8.5% in 2020, a mild recovery in 2021 is the most likely outcome.

With regards to Saudi Arabia,

NIMA OBBOHAT, *Partner, Global Head of Banking, Arthur D Little.*

the economy was projected to contract by around 4.5% last year. Despite the country's banking system demonstrating robustness in the face of oil price and economic growth adversity, growth here is heavily dependent on the oil market in any scenario and susceptible to economic and geopolitical trends.

TikTok removed 89M videos, 173M bot accounts, 3M advs in H2 2020

TikTok has released its fourth global Transparency Report. This Transparency Report covers the second half of 2020 and provides visibility into the volume and nature of content removed for violating TikTok's Community Guidelines or Terms of Service, with additional insight into the company's work to counter misinformation related to Covid-19 and elections.

The report also includes how TikTok responds to law enforcement requests for information, government requests for content removals, and intellectual property removal requests. TikTok has added a number of new data to this report in an effort to be ever more transparent, including accounts removed, spam accounts and videos removed, videos restored after they were appealed by the video's creator, specific policy insights and ads rejected for violating advertising policies.

Here are some of the key insights from the report:
● 89,132,938 videos were removed globally in the second half of 2020 for violating TikTok's Community Guidelines or Terms of Service, which is less than 1% of all videos uploaded on TikTok.
● 4% of these videos were removed before a user reported them, 83.3% were removed before they received any views, and 93.5% were removed within 24 hours of being posted.
● 6,144,040 accounts were removed for violating Community Guidelines.
● 9,499,881 spam accounts were removed along with 5,225,800 spam videos posted by those accounts. TikTok prevented 173,246,894 accounts from being created through automated means.
● 3,501,477 ads were rejected for violating advertising policies and guidelines.

TikTok continues to work with public health experts to help community stay safe and informed on Covid-19 and vaccines. TikTok makes public health information available throughout the app as they also work to counter misinformation.

(left to right) Wolf-Dieter Hoppe and Klaus Schmitz, co-authors of ADL's study.

Electric vehicles, pandemic disrupting global market, Arthur D Little

Arthur D Little, ADL, has released the third edition of its Global Automotive Mobility Study. Entitled The Future Of Automotive Mobility and based on a global survey of over 8,500 end customers in 13 countries, it shows that global automotive markets are currently at a crossroads. While the study identifies that the internal combustion engine still dominates the market, many vehicle owners are weighing up the pros and cons of going electric, as a result, there is confusion about where the automotive sector is heading and at what speed.

Whereas ADL's previous Global Automotive Mobility Study in 2018 depicted a business as usual industry only just taking its first steps towards electric, the mobility landscape three years later is markedly different. For example, there has been a dramatic change in both demand for cars and how ownership of them is perceived while the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the protection and independence that a private car offers, a significant number of people are contemplating giving them up for environmental reasons and embracing alternative transport solutions. The auto industry's 2% compound annual growth rate is much less than ADL's last survey predicted.

The study also shows that the move away from petrol and diesel fuelled vehicles is real and growing stronger, asked about their next vehicle, 29% of survey respondents favoured a hybrid product, while 12% were considering the move to pure electric.

And if established brands do not provide an EV offering, many of their customers are ready to migrate to other manufacturers. However, market growth is hampered by both limited model range and an immature charging infrastructure, with vehicle range still dictated by the availability of public charging points.

One of the study's most intriguing findings is the emergence of China as a special market with markedly different attitudes to consumers in the rest of the world. For instance, while excitement over self-driving autonomous vehicles has dimmed in both Europe and the US due to safety fears, 71% of Chinese drivers remain positive about using such vehicles.

Bain & Company announces top technology trends to retool world of tomorrow

Necessity being the mother of (re) invention, the Covid-19 crisis has dramatically accelerated the pace of digital transformation. As companies race to develop new digital capabilities in an effort to build resilience and retool for the post-pandemic world, keeping up with fast-moving technology trends is critical.

To monitor the most important trends and relevant tech application, Bain & Company met regularly last year with a carefully selected group of over 100 technology companies and start-ups and hit on 10 key trends that are already having an impact on a wide range of industries. These technology applications are creating big opportunities in the era of the digital enterprise.

Edge AI transplants brains to factory tools and machinery. Considered the next wave of artificial intelligence, edge AI or AI on the edge is a network infrastructure that makes it possible for AI algorithms to run on the edge of a network, meaning closer to or even on the devices collecting the data. The sudden and dramatic changes in network traffic that have accompanied Covid-19 lockdowns and the shift to working from home are likely to accelerate the move already underway toward edge computing.

Benefits of edge computing include preserving bandwidth and increasing efficiency by processing information closer to source of data, the users and devices that require it, rather than sending that data for processing in central locations or in the cloud. By embedding AI locally, manufacturers can reduce latency issues and accelerate the generation of insights at the source while lowering cloud services usage and cost.

5G factory revolutionises manufacturing. The World Economic

DR HOUSSEM JEMILI,
Partner at Bain & Company Dubai, Leader Digital Tech Practice ME.

Forum, citing IHS Markit research, expects the fifth-generation mobile network, 5G, to reach a global economic output of $13.2 Trillion and generate 22.3 Million jobs by 2035. By unlocking a new realm of technological possibilities, the global wireless standard is expected to notably accelerate the shift toward Industry 4.0, the industrial Internet of Things.

Network International finds online sales in UAE restaurants grew 30% MoM in October

According to Network International, standalone restaurants in the UAE saw a significant increase in online food delivery spend as e-commerce payments surged in 2020 following the coronavirus outbreak.

In the food and beverage sector, F&B, e-commerce transactions for standalone restaurants in the UAE, accepting orders online or through food aggregator apps, showed remarkable growth. Online transactions climbed more than 15% in May over reported volumes in March, growing further by over 30% in October as delivery became a popular and preferred choice following lockdown restrictions. Internet-based food ordering also rose as more outlets signed up to list their menus on multiple platforms to cater to growing market demand.

According to Statista, global revenue in the online food delivery segment is projected to reach $151.5 Billion in 2021. Recent reports suggest that in the Middle East and North Africa region, the UAE is the second-largest market for online food delivery with annual market size of $834 Million. Industry reports also suggest that restaurant operators in the GCC region have begun using a combination of cloud kitchens and aggregator platforms to launch new virtual brands.

Meanwhile, although dine-in point of sale, POS, transactions reduced in the first six months, footfall began to slowly pickup June onwards as restaurants opened under strict protocols and guidelines with regular inspections to ensure compliance.

Resident dine-in spending at

NANDAN MER,
Group CEO, Network International.

standalone restaurants in the country naturally saw a sharp decline in the earlier part of the year, falling by as much as 70% in Q2 2020 over the previous quarter, but rebounded to the single and low-double digits by the final quarter of 2020 as the UAE economy continued to ease restrictions.

Broadening acceptance of digital and contactless payments including the option to pay in-app even when dining-in, has further helped food outlets ensure and reassure customers of a safe experience.

Dubai Chamber of Commerce projects UAE retail at $58B in 2021

Analysis from Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry has projected retail sales in the UAE to rebound and grow by 13% to reach $58 Billion by the end of 2021. The forecast is supported by pent up consumer demand in the second half of the year, Covid-19 vaccination efforts and Expo 2020 Dubai.

The analysis, based on recent data from Euromonitor, predicted that UAE retail sales are forecast to maintain 6.6% annual growth in the medium term to reach $70.5 Billion by 2025, with store-based retailing growth forecast at a CAGR of 5.7%, while non-store retailing is forecast to grow at a CAGR of 14.8%.

Progress related to the UAE's vaccination campaigns is expected to boost demand in the second half of this year and attract consumers and tourists back to traditional stores. Expo 2020 Dubai, scheduled to kick off in Dubai this October, is expected to be a major catalyst for the recovery of the retail sector, in addition to the support and incentives provided by governments to business sectors at the federal and local levels.

The UAE currently leads the Middle East and North Africa region in terms of household spending on e-commerce at $2,554 per household, which is twice the value of the global average of $1,156, and four times the value of the average in the MENA region, $629.

According to JLL, Dubai saw 110,000 square metres, sqm of retail gross leasable area, GLA, completed in 2020, which brings UAE's total retail stock to 4.2 million sqm.

Meanwhile, Abu Dhabi retail space stock remained unchanged at 2.8 million sqm. During 2021, Dubai is expected to see 761,000 sqm of retail GLA added to the market, while 293,000 of new retail GLA is expected in Abu Dhabi by the end of the year.

As new retail space in the UAE continues to come online in the short term, the market has become more favourable to tenants, due to expected lower rents and more available options, a trend which should support the recovery of retail businesses.

NETWORK CABLING DELIVERS IMMERSIVE SHOPPING AT ISTANBUL AIRPORT

Inside Istanbul Airport, Unifree Duty Free is using R&M's network cabling infrastructure to deliver digital shopping experiences for post-Covid travelers.

Unifree Duty Free is the operator of the world's largest duty-free zone under one roof. It is sprawled across 56,285 sqm of retail space inside Istanbul Airport, and is reported to be biggest infrastructure project in Turkey's history. It has built its network cabling infrastructure using Swiss based R&M copper and fibre cabling. With Istanbul Airport itself using R&M for its enormous network cabling platform, both entities now have the same standards of customer facing experience.

Across Istanbul Airport, Unifree Duty Free has 117 sub-operators, with 15 stores inside the departure area, 6 stores upon arrival, 8 pier-stores, one store inside the business lounge, and one store in the transit hall. The shops inside the duty-free zones are equipped with LED facades, LCD screens, price check kiosks, and videowalls.

To maximise consumer experience and spending opportunities, Unifree Duty Free has utilised digital technologies. The immersive retail shopping solutions implemented at Istanbul Airport include, enhanced digital signage systems and display systems supported by data analytics.

The Digital Signage Federation has recognised and awarded this shopping experience in Istanbul Airport under the transportation category for 2020.

USAGE OF TECHNOLOGY

In terms of IT infrastructure and applications, Unifree Duty Free is supported by robotic customer service, ERP, shopping analytics. It provides contactless WeChat Pay transactions and QR code-based payments. "This is a first inside Turkey," points out Osman Ayhan, Director of Information Technology at Unifree Duty Free.

The Unifree Duty Free stores inside Istanbul Airport's departure, arrival and transfer floors are replenished with goods from warehouses within the airport premises. This large and dispersed area is integrated with a secure and high-available network topology.

The Internet, energy infrastructure, switch stacks, servers, storages, air conditioning systems, cyber-security infrastructure support the Unifree Duty Free stores inside Istanbul Airport to operate with high available performance.

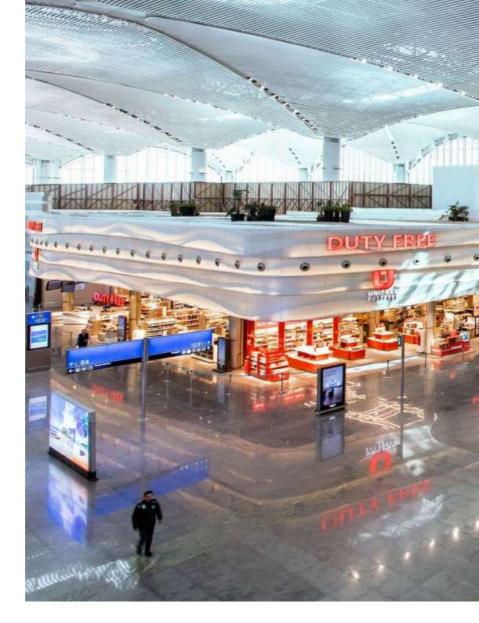For its futuristic customer transactions and

OSMAN AYHAN,
Director of Information Technology, Unifree Duty Free.

To maximise consumer experience and spending opportunities, Unifree Duty Free has utilised digital technologies.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The immersive retail shopping solutions implemented at Istanbul Airport include, enhanced digital signage systems and display systems supported by data analytics.

- For its futuristic customer transactions and customer shopping experience, Unifree Duty Free is using a mesh and distributed networking infrastructure.

- Alien Crosstalk is electromagnetic interference that can occurs when cables run alongside other signal-carrying cables.

- R&M provided more than 900 km of copper and fiber cabling for Unifree Duty Free stores inside Istanbul Airport, enabling over 10,000 network ports.

The vision of Unifree Duty Free is to provide customers with a unique shopping experience using technology.

customer shopping experience, Unifree Duty Free is using a mesh and distributed networking infrastructure. "Networking layer 1 to layer 7 has been carefully chosen and implemented. We improve our systems continuously according to the changing technology trends and several security vectors," remarks Ayhan.
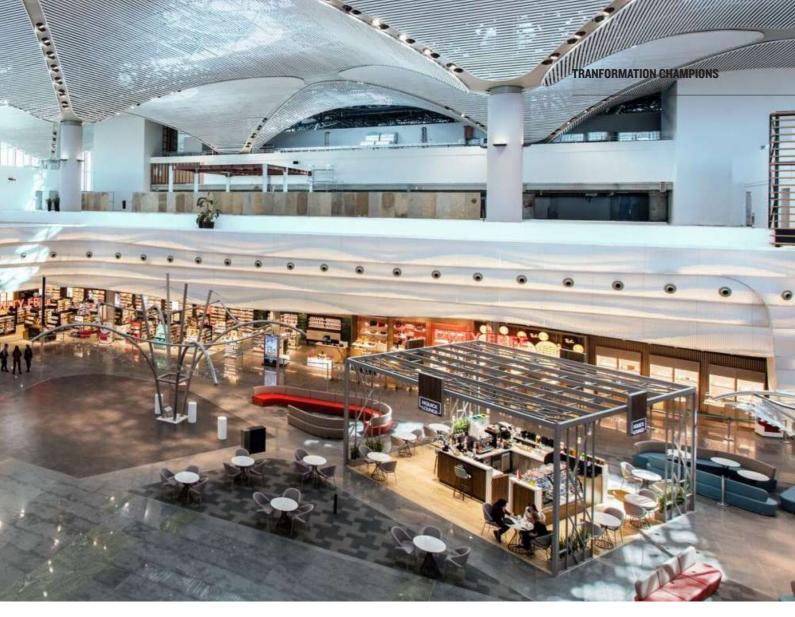
BUILDING THE NETWORK

To create such an advanced, immersive type of shopping experience requires technology that delivers a seamless, secure, performing Ethernet-IP infrastructure as well as reliable data coverage, according to Ayhan. Unifree Duty Free selected R&M as its networking supplier because the cabling fulfilled the required specifications.

R&M had already provided Istanbul Airport with structured Cat 6A UTP cabling, rated as Low Smoke Zero Halogen and equipped with a special design for elimination of Alien Crosstalk. Alien Crosstalk is electromagnetic interference that can occurs when cables run alongside other signal-carrying cables.

Crosstalk occurs between different bundles of cables, rather than between single cables. Alien crosstalk can be particularly troublesome and cannot be eliminated by phase cancellation. It is a hash of electromagnetic noise that is too complex to be dealt with by phase-cancellation measures.

R&M provided more than 900 km of copper and fiber cabling for Unifree Duty Free stores inside Istanbul Airport, enabling over

R&M AT ISTANBUL AIRPORT

Opened in late 2018, Istanbul's new airport has been operating at capacity since April 2019, and relies extensively on the latest networking infrastructure and systems. The fibre network cabling infrastructure for the airport and its datacentre was supplied by the Swiss company, R&M (Reichle & De-Massari AG).

In the first phase of the network installation, R&M supplied 5,400 km of copper cablings and 3,270 km of fiber-optic cabling. The installation required fiber-optic distribution cabinets, patch panels as well as 115,000 connector ports. The service level agreement for the network cabling was to support 9,000 surveillance cameras; 3,000 card readers in real-time; and 5,000 Wi-Fi access points.

The airport networking infrastructure with a colour coding scheme interconnected customs, security and the police. R&M's network cabling is designed for a lifetime of 25 years with a guarantee of 99.982% reliability to support a Tier III datacentre. Several aspects of the cabling had to be specifically designed for this mega-project.

Another part of R&M's service level agreement was to guarantee high quality signal transmission and eliminate interference for decades. The R&M installation provides automation, monitoring and operation of the data network from a central location. This allows detection of unsolicited changes to the infrastructure or any attempt to tamper with the connectors in real time.

Using a modular design, the cabling systems can keep pace with the expansion of the airport. R&M's roll out and installation was managed out of its Middle East office in Dubai, UAE.

10,000 network ports. Since Unifree Duty Free is located inside Istanbul Airport, which is itself using R&M cabling, integration and cross over is smooth.

"We have a self-owned and self-operated networking infrastructure within the airport as Unifree Duty Free. If we need any integration, we use the required security specifications to realise the required configuration," adds Ayhan.

MOVING FORWARD

The vision of Unifree Duty Free is to provide its customers with a unique shopping experience using technology. "That is why we always research and implement, high-end technology products, which are enriched with analytical and cognitive tool sets," says Ayhan. "We have different customers from different cultures of the world at this international airport. We need to understand, internal and external customer expectations, with the highest level of operational excellence using technology," he emphasizes. ■

BHAVNA BUTTAN,
Group Chief Operating Officer,
Gulf Marketing Group.

GMG SPORTS

BUILDING A TRUE OMNI-CHANNEL SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

GMG Sports leverages 550+ shops, e-commerce and mobile shopping platform, digital technologies and digital team to build a true omni channel experience.

Gulf Marketing Group's sports business has grown from a single retail store in Dubai to a multinational operation, making us the largest sports retailer in the MENA region. The GMG Sports portfolio includes homegrown brands such as Sun and Sand Sports as well as distribution for global brands Nike, Columbia, Timberland, Vans, and more.

In late 2020, Gulf Marketing Group acquired Royal Sporting House, one of the largest multi-brand sports retailers in Southeast Asia. This expanded the sports business in Middle East, and helped to enter Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

GMG Sports now operates 550+ sports retail stores globally, with the potential to reach more than 700 million consumers. In addition to this brick-and-mortar presence, Gulf Marketing Group is constantly investing in and enhancing digital infrastructure.

Gulf Marketing Group is gearing up for a continuing surge in e-commerce demand across the GMG Sports division, in which online sales more than doubled in volume between 2019 and 2020.

DIGITAL OMNICHANNEL

Gulf Marketing Group announced at the start of 2021 the deployment of an expanded omnichannel ecosystem that enhances customer accessibility to the sports brands through digital and mobile-commerce platforms.

It has always challenged itself to look at innovative ways and use of advanced technologies is fundamental in this ambition. Whether this means building unique in-store environments or developing mobile offerings, digital transformation aims to ensure that customers enjoy the experience across all touchpoints.

The rapid rise in its online sales demonstrates the effectiveness and headroom for further growth in the future.

Customers have strong expectations for quality, but also an engaging retail experience from GMG Sports brands. This is true regardless of the channel they choose to engage with. Delivering that experience requires different elements whether online or offline.

In-store customers expect to meet knowledgeable staff who can guide them and inspire them. They also

Online sales more than doubled in volume between 2019 and 2020

desire accessibility to the physical product, to feel it, try it, even if they eventually do purchase the product online.

Meanwhile, customers starting their purchase journey online want the convenience of being able to browse at their leisure, from anywhere, and to easily save their digital shopping basket. In both cases, consumers have shown they prioritise product variety and availability, and the option to speak to a knowledgeable authority—whether that is in person, via mobile, or otherwise.

PANDEMIC TRIGGER

The pandemic has created circumstances that have impacted retail. The conditions of the last year have ignited significant e-commerce surge in the region and globally. Digitalisation has long been part of business strategy, yet Covid-19 greatly accelerated this digital transformation.
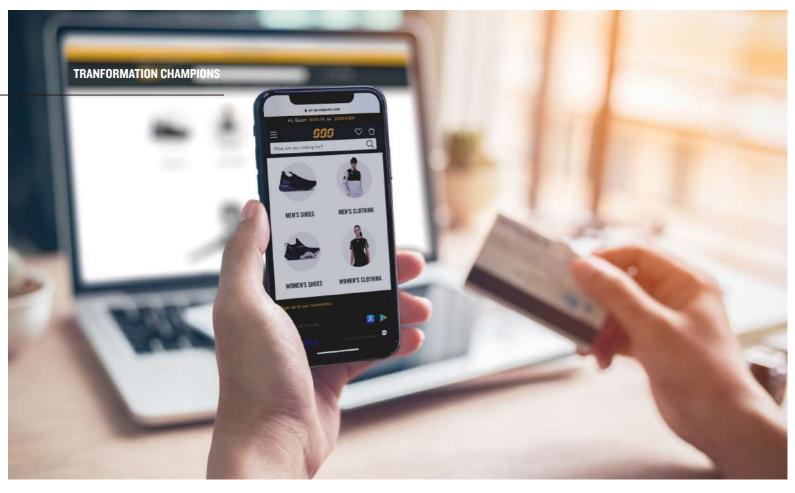
Gulf Marketing Group focused on home fitness products so that people in lockdown could still work out at home – and were met with greater than expected demand. That

is why Gulf Marketing Group have been investing in new infrastructure and even greater capacity on the e-commerce front.

Gulf Marketing Group has considered a strong digital strategy to be of key importance—in retail sports as well as in other business divisions such as food, health, and more. The pandemic did prompt an aggressive review of its IT policies and infrastructure.

Digitalisation plans were accelerated by Covid-19, but the foundations of the strategy have been in place for many years.

To realise those ambitions, Gulf Marketing Group has strategic partnerships with many consultants and solution providers. Their global expertise and experience have been invaluable. Gulf Marketing Group has expanded its in-house capabilities over the last three years in particular.

Currently Gulf Marketing Group is focused on upgrading its current IT applications landscape, investing in new infrastructure both on-premise and in-cloud along with next generation technologies in the areas of machine learning,

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- GMG Sports has a legacy that spans more than four decades.

- For GMG Sports division, online sales more than doubled in volume between 2019 and 2020.

- Gulf Marketing Group is investing in and enhancing digital infrastructure.

- Rapid rise in online sales demonstrates effectiveness and headroom for further growth.

- Gulf Marketing Group has deployed an expanded omnichannel ecosystem using digital and mobile-commerce platforms.

- Consumers have shown they prioritise variety and availability, and the option to speak to a knowledgeable authority.

- Digitalisation has long been part of the business strategy, yet Covid-19 accelerated this digital transformation.

- The pandemic did prompt an aggressive review of IT policies and infrastructure.

artificial intelligence, robotic process automation, and data analytics.

Gulf Marketing Group omniverse strategy comprises of high-speed connectivity, mobility, social media, location-based search, analytics, data on cloud.

DIGITAL CULTURE

One of the factors that has made transformation successful is inherent entrepreneurial culture. Gulf Marketing Group knows it must always keep evolving. That requires taking risks and being at the vanguard of new technologies and infrastructure.

Digital teams live this culture, and are empowered to make bold decisions and to learn from those, even if they do not work out the first time.

Gulf Marketing Group's digital transformation strategy revolves around the simple philosophy of serving its customers with the best possible technologies available. The objective is to provide customers with a consistent experience whenever and wherever.

The strategy is driven by an in-house team, who work closely with industry solutions providers to match the pace of the retail market changes around digital and

consumer experience.

Gulf Marketing Group is a growth business. Its operations are rapidly expanding through acquisitions, partnerships with international brands, diversification of business streams, and entering new geographies. As such, the customer base is also growing rapidly.
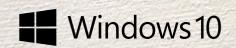
While that happens, Gulf Marketing Group believes the best way to serve those customers is to understand what motivates and inspires them. It looks at where it can create new experiences for them. Gulf Marketing Group analyses the gaps in what customers want and what is available in the market, and then looks to fill those gaps using its expertise.

Technologies change all the time and no one solution is guaranteed to work today and even one or two years from now. Gulf Marketing Group's vision cannot be anchored in the technologies themselves, but rather the experiences for the customer.

At present, consumers are showing just how much they value accessibility, convenience, choice, and availability–especially as e-commerce continues to grow.

Wherever the shopping experience starts, and regardless of where they make a final purchase, Gulf Marketing Group aims to meet their desires through a truly omnichannel offering. ▪

ORCHESTRATING ASSETS
PEOPLE, CUSTOMERS

Built over the last three years, IFS Cloud has been engineered to reduce the technology debt of end customers and deliver their moments of service.

By Arun Shankar

In March this year, IFS, the near billion-dollar global enterprise applications vendor, released a new brand identity to announce its evolved market position. IFS rebranded itself and launched IFS Cloud. IFS Cloud is the most significant launch in the company's history and sets a benchmark for the global enterprise application industry.

The new IFS branding was deployed across all touchpoints, including digital platforms, print and digital marketing, collaterals, merchandise, and office interiors. The roll-out was also accompanied by out-of-home advertising on some of the world's most iconic activation sites including Times Square in New York, Burj Khalifa in Dubai, and Shibuya in Japan.

"I do not think anyone who looked at the old logo felt like it was a modern logo. It has been around for decades and our business has changed," explains Darren Roos, CEO IFS. "We have changed from being an ERP and asset management vendor into delivering services for our customers," he points out.

IFS decided to have the launch event coinciding with its rebranding and announcement of the IFS Cloud. More than that it was also an announcement of IFS taking a new position as a vendor in the enterprise solutions and services market place.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

The rebuilding and reengineering of IFS started three years ago, when Roos joined in 2018. From the beginning he actively engaged and sought feedback from end customers on the challenges they faced with technology solutions and the application of technology into their business. Over time the feedback fell into a pattern of consistent pain points for end users and sluggishness from the IT industry to make amends.

"The feedback was consistent. Customers were really struggling with the complexity that the technology industry were creating," says Roos.

Enterprises had moved from mission critical applications and server-based hosting into a complex and fragmented world built around migration to the cloud. "They had no plan and they had this multitude of applications and they were really struggling with complexity," continues Roos.

Some of their challenges were how do you secure all of these disparate applications; how do you manage the release cycles of all of these applications; how do you manage the complexity of integration of all these different applications, and others.

Another conclusive feedback that Roos received was that the IT industry was making it more and more difficult for end users rather than making it easier.

End customer were struggling with the orchestration of their customers, assets and employees, to drive their business, customer loyalty, share of wallet and profitability. End customers are not really concerned about application integration and release cycles and would much rather focus on driving value, and this sentiment has developed over time.

"At a fundamental level, none of that made any sense to customers," points out Roos.

The takeaway for Roos, was that end users were looking for an environment that was simpler, easier to manage, easy to use, with a lower total cost of ownership, to orchestrate assets, people, and customers. If IFS could do that, it would be a solution that everybody

DARREN ROOS,
CEO IFS.

Customers were really struggling with complexity the technology industry were creating

would want and IFS would win more often.

"And that is what we have built," reflects Roos. IFS has now spent more on software engineering from 2018 to 2020 than it has in the past years building the IFS Cloud.

"We sat about leveraging the assets that we had, made some acquisitions, and we did a truckload of engineering. And today, we have a single solution. We have taken away all of the complexity, that very fragmented landscape," he explains.

IFS Cloud has been built for customers in service centric industries. It has the next generation capability of augmented reality, artificial intelligence, low code, robotic process automation, augmented reality. These components have been natively built into the solution and the customer does not have to go and buy them additionally. It is available on-premises or in the cloud.

LATE MOVER ADVANTAGE

Contrary to text-book management principles, being a late mover has actually helped IFS. As a late mover in the cloud go-to-market, coming up from behind has

actually helped it to avoid the development and release pitfalls that other early mover ERP vendors have had to go through in the past. Moreover, by starting as late as 2018, has helped IFS to use the latest software tools to build its IFS Cloud solution stack.

"I think we had an advantage, which, frankly, a lot of the others did not have, which was - the when, we did it. The technology landscape has changed so much in the last few years, that if we had undertaken this, maybe five years ago, or ten years ago, the only option to achieve, a scalable, elastic, flexible cloud environment would have been to rewrite it. You would have had to completely rewrite the stack," elaborates Roos.

As a late mover, and taking advantage of the latest cloud development tools including containerisation, automation, Kubernetes, hyper scalar hosting platforms, has made it easier to build an effective cloud solution.

"This is technology that just was not around before," he stresses.

While development of the user interface was a lot of work, Roos indicates that the element of risk was fairly low, due to the advanced level of development tools available to build the IFS Cloud solution.

MAKINGS OF IFS CLOUD

To begin its journey, IFS has built IFS Cloud entirely on the Microsoft Azure hyper scalar platform. Roos points out that the decision to use only one platform was based on not stretching limited resources across other platforms, including AWS.

IFS has gone all in with Microsoft Azure and is taking advantage of the various native capabilities that are

available on Azure including Power BI, Power Apps, native automation. It is working closely with Jason Zander, Microsoft's Executive Vice President and the Azure team and leveraging the capabilities available on Azure. "Microsoft has been a great partner to us," reflect Roos.

Has IFS lost out on customers who would have preferred the availability of other hyper scalar platforms as well, including AWS? Roos does not think so. "I have not known one customer say to us, we are not going to go with IFS because you are not on AWS. It is just not the way it works."

Potential customers for IFS Cloud are not taking decisions based on the hyper scalar platform that it is using. They are interested in the capability they are getting.

"Because we are all-in on Azure, we get the benefits of being able to leverage all of that capability on the Azure stack. And frankly if we were on AWS, we could do the same. But it is very difficult to do it across both, because you have finite resources," rounds up Roos.

Another aspect that IFS has managed carefully is the refresh cycle of its updates. Do it too fast and end users will be in a continuous cycle of operational disruption. Do it too slow and end users will lag behind in their innovation cycle. Hence a fine balance is required.

The three key areas in the core of IFS Cloud including Enterprise Resource Planning, ERP; Enterprise Asset Management, EAM; and Field Service Management, FSM; are still complex and large applications. These need to be updated to keep end customers at the edge and yet not be overly disruptive.

Roos feels that customers should not be waiting for years to receive the latest innovations and by the same token customers do not want updates every month. Hence, IFS has chosen to follow a biannual cycle of refreshes for IFS Cloud, once every six months.

CORE AND PERIPHERY ARCHITECTURE

Another important feedback from end customers that has been used by Roos while building IFS Cloud is how the various components of IFS Cloud need to work with each other. IFS Cloud has a core built around ERP, EAM, and FSM.

"We are so focused on having a single application, a single platform, single database, single UX, single data model – but does everything have to be in that model," he asks. "We have realised very recently, when it comes to the big applications ERP, EAM, FSM, it has got to be in that core."

But as IFS adds on applications either as built or bought, into IFS Cloud, it will need to decide whether to add on the new additions into the core or to deploy them on as stand-alone, on the periphery. If they are intrinsically part of the IFS Cloud process then they would reside in the core, and not be deployed as stand-alone and on their own.

"There are certainly capabilities that I can think of that makes sense for them to be in the core," says Roos.

On the other hand, there are capabilities that can be implemented quickly and have standalone use cases, and it may not make sense for them to be deployed inside the core of IFS Cloud.

Moving forward, any new bolt-on into IFS Cloud, whether in the core or on the periphery, will always follow the singular principle of deep integration. This is a guiding approach based on consistent feedback voiced by customers, whereby such new additions should not feel like a new product.

Roos wants to avoid a situation where IFS' customers start getting, for example, a suite of technologies that have no harmonisation, the user experience and business processes make no sense, and the release cycles are out of sync.

"There must be a very clear relationship between the core and

IFS has chosen to follow a biannual cycle of refreshes for IFS Cloud, once every six months

the peripheral application. If we are building, we will design with that imperative in mind. And if we acquire the very first thing we will do is focus on deep integration," he explains.

All this is possible because IFS Cloud is using a framework of Restful APIs to connect existing and new components, across the core and the periphery.

REDUCING TECHNOLOGY DEBT
End users also complain about their growing technology debt created by software application vendors as they release upgrades and higher versions for their flagship products. Enterprise application vendors that have a large installed base, find their community of end users on multiple levels of upgrade and multiple versions over the years. And often, the end users find that there is no way forward for them.

Roos points out that this happens with end users of legacy ERP vendor applications. "There is the technology debt that any software vendor has got. The installed base of customers is on versions that do not necessarily transition or allow the customer to transition. There is no technical upgrade path for

them to the latest version on those platforms."

With the launch of IFS Cloud, this has been a key consideration as well. "That was particularly important for us. We did not want to leave customers behind."

Another type of technology debt that is created by enterprise application vendors is when products do not work and interoperate with each other. "Every single customer I talked to is thinking about how they rationalise their estate," Roos indicates.

Amongst the feedback that Roos has heard are comments like: I have too many applications and they do not work together; my users do not have a good experience, help me to rationalise the estate; how do I get rid of some of the applications that makes it easier to secure my environment; how do I make integration and the release cycles easier; amongst others.

Roos believes the IFS Cloud as it has been launched will help to reduce the technology debt of end customers, with its core and peripheral application architecture, and deep integration using the API framework.

IFS has also designed an upgrade path for its end user community to move from on-premises to the cloud. "We have put an immense amount of thought into it. And there is no reason why we cannot take them to IFS cloud in a few months."

Roos also feels that the real challenge is not so much technology and process as it is a mind shift. "You are going from building server farms and having to stand up applications and manage those applications to really being the recipient of somebody else's service."

MOMENTS OF SERVICE
Technology vendors often believe that end users are looking out to buy technology. However what end users are really looking for is to solve their business problems. "No executive,

I have ever spoken to has said what I really want now, is to buy an ERP solution," points out Roos.

The technology piece is the easy piece and that is not a problem. And what is a problem is really understanding what end users are trying to achieve. As a typical example, often times at the end of a technology project, there is no definitive answer about whether any value has been created for its end users.

"Every technology company thinks their technology is the center of the universe," according to Roos. "And that is fundamentally flawed." Technology is never the center of the universe for the end user. The customer experience, and the moments of service for the end user's customer is the center of the universe for the end user.

"We are explicitly trying to come at this from a non-technology perspective," Roos points out. By helping to orchestrate assets, people and customers, through IFS Cloud, IFS is helping its end users deliver their moments of service for their customers.

"With the moment of service, what we are helping them to do is to frame that problem in the perspective of their customer. So, what is the moment of service that you are trying to create for your customer." However, Roos also feels many of them have not thought about their business in that context.

"If the company can understand what the moment of service is, and then orchestrate assets, customers and people to deliver an outstanding moment of service, that is when the magic happens," feels Roos.

"There is no question that companies that are able to do that will win more often, they will get more repeat business, and they will be more profitable," he feels.

At the end of it all, there can be many approaches to the end goal. "What does matter is where you focus and the focus has got to be the moments of service," reflects Roos. ∎

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SkyHawk AI is the world's first purpose-built drive for AI-enabled surveillance systems. Designed for deep learning applications that extend AI surveillance capabilities, SkyHawk AI simultaneously supports heavy AI workloads and smooth video streaming. With capacities up to 18TB, it offers features that are ideal for AI environments with intensive computational workloads: enhanced caching, delivering low latency, and strong random read performance.

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HOW TO MANAGE RISKS WHEN A SERVICE CONTRACT IS TERMINATED

The deplatforming of Parler is motivating businesses to better understand the risks of relying on technology service providers, writes Lydia Leong of Gartner.

LYDIA LEONG,
VP Analyst, Gartner.

Multiple technology service providers, including Amazon Web Services, Okta and Stripe, suspended, or terminated service to Parler after the January 6, 2021 mob invasion of the US Capitol building. This effectively resulted in Parler's business being shut down, or deplatformed. As a result, business leaders are revisiting their risk management strategies to understand how exposed they would be if a critical online service contract were terminated.

Deplatforming does not happen often, but it does happen. Technology service providers have rejected, terminated, or announced they would no longer support contracts with certain companies.

For example, PayPal announced that it would no longer process payments for performers on a platform for adult video content;

and Salesforce changed the language in its terms of service in 2019 to prohibit certain types of firearms retail transactions.

Service providers can terminate contracts for material breaches of the terms of service, choose not to renew them or offer such unattractive terms that nonrenewal is the only reasonable option. This is true not only of cloud service providers, but also of payment processors, e-commerce service providers, traditional hosters and many critical internet infrastructure providers. If a provider terminates a service contract, it may have a severe impact on your business.

There are common reasons why service providers suspend or terminate service, and some companies may be at higher risk of negative provider interactions. Every business can assess the risks and minimise them.

Most technology service providers require in their contracts that customers adhere to an acceptable use policy, AUP. The exact nuances of an AUP vary by company, yet almost all service providers at minimum prohibit illegal activities, as well as content that exposes the provider to excessive risks. In the case of an adult entertainment website, for example, Mastercard,

> Most technology service providers require in their contracts that customers adhere to an acceptable use policy.

Develop policies and procedures for end-user monitoring and management.

There are common reasons why service providers suspend or terminate service.

Ensure that you maintain adequate security for IaaS and PaaS resources.

Visa and Discover blocked customers from using their cards on the site out of concern that the site featured child exploitation.

Parler and an adult entertainment website represent different forms of excessive risk for providers, usually a high bar to reach given laws that shield service providers from liability. US law protects service providers when they act in good faith to moderate content but does not obligate service providers to do so in most, but not all, cases. Content or actions that break laws will generally be judged as too high risk to tolerate and will almost certainly result in AUP enforcement actions.

Some customers may be concerned that deplatforming could occur as a result of the voice of society, employee activism, shareholder activism, corporate activism, and other forms of internal or external pressure driven by a particular cause. Different service providers will have different stances toward such pressures. In general, infrastructure providers are less likely to be

influenced by these pressures than other types of service providers. Note that these pressures and reactions are not unique to cloud computing.

Few legitimate business customers are in any significant danger of breaching an AUP in a way that would result in suspension or termination. To reduce your risk:

● Ensure that you maintain adequate security for IaaS and PaaS resources. You do not want to inadvertently breach the AUP because an attacker has misused your resources.

● Develop policies and procedures for end-user monitoring and management. Document behaviour norms in service agreements with your end users, and monitor your systems for adherence to prevent AUP breaches before they happen.

● Promptly handle AUP violation warnings. Create a process and clear lines of responsibility for handling any AUP breaches.

● Negotiate an enterprise contract. Operate on a negotiated enterprise contract rather than on a click-through agreement. If your organisation could potentially violate the AUP in its normal course of business, you should negotiate an AUP clarification in your contract.

IaaS providers, such as Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud Platform, usually consider themselves to be public services that are neutral as to what customers they accept and serve, as long as those customers comply with their contractual obligations, including respecting the AUP. However, other types of service providers may be more selective about the organisations they are willing to serve. ■

EMPLOYEES NEED TO UPSKILL IN ANALYTICS PROCESS AUTOMATION

Abboud Ghanem of Alteryx writes that upskilling of people is the most important aspect in achieving success in a competitive market.

ABBOUD GHANEM,
Regional Vice President
MEA, Alteryx.

Companies across every vertical and industry are driving upskilling across their workforce.

There is no question that data has become the lifeblood of the modern-day enterprise. From engineering, to manufacturing to retail, organisations globally are all looking to leverage data insights through analytics to deliver breakthroughs. We see this at an individual level as well with the digitally enabled specialist who can command a higher salary than their non-digital counterpart, or the analytically savvy professional who can find more opportunities and higher wages than their non-analytic peers.

As globalisation brings more competition in every industry, it is these types of data-driven competitive advantages that will set companies and countries apart in the future. We see companies across every vertical and industry driving upskilling across their workforce, helping their employees become more data aware and capable of automating business processes by leveraging AI and ML in their work.

But accessibility and understanding of data is still an issue for many businesses struggling to transform and take advantage of the digital economy, collecting data is one thing, having the right culture and skill sets to digest, understand, and turn it into a breakthrough is another.

Skills gaps are affecting industries around the world, and the Middle East and Africa is no different.

An analytic divide is separating individuals and companies who have analytic skills to leverage the information that is available and automate processes from those who do not have those skills.

With unprecedented automation set to alter the business landscape like never before, this gap could continue to grow. In their latest research on automation, titled, Jobs lost, jobs gained: Workforce transitions in a time of automation, the McKinsey Global Institute predicts as many as 375 Million workers or roughly 14% of the global workforce, may need to switch occupational categories as digitisation, automation, and advances in artificial intelligence disrupt the world of work.

The kinds of skills companies require will shift, with profound implications for the career paths individuals will need to pursue. While every journey is different, there are common patterns in how this upskilling and data culture occurs.

Employees frequently start by learning a new platform or self-service technology that enables to automate analytic processes. They then apply the technology to what they were already doing. They assess if they can wrangle data faster and easier and analyse it or find patterns more readily. Once they are comfortable on this step, they move along the analytics journey towards

Organisations are looking to leverage data insights through analytics to deliver breakthroughs.

Skills gaps are affecting industries around the world, and the Middle East and Africa is no different.

Analytic Process Automation replaces time-consuming, repetitive manual processes.

automating existing processes. At this first step of the transformation the savings are modest, measured in time savings that can be put into higher value work.

A key component of upskilling the workforce is around the velocity at which you can accomplish it and the best way for people to learn is when they collaborate. It goes back to the well-known saying; power is not in what you know; it is what you share. As knowledge workers of any discipline continue to upskill and easily learn new techniques through self-service solutions that include an option for employees to self-onboard, they can move beyond human decision making and use predictive analytics to quickly harness the hidden power within thousands of disparate data sources and automate processes to uncover actionable insights.

The next step is typically adding analytics to the process, with forecasting, anomaly detection or more basic analysis to allow optimisation of a business outcome. In this step, processes begin to be re-engineered and changed. Let us look at an example that we all can picture during this current Covid-19 situation: the shipping of goods.

A major manufacturer has thousands of products that they ship. Each product has hundreds of parts that have to be managed to ensure

no disruption in the production cadence. The standard shipping times for all parts have been entered into their fulfilment system and based both on how fast the plant is consuming parts and, on the sales forecast, orders are made to ensure the supply parts show up before running out. Everything is working smoothly until suddenly the supply chain is disrupted and shipping times start to change dramatically.

How does the manufacturer re-enter all the new shipping times into the system to ensure the re-ordering is happening at the right time? Certainly, a team of people could manually go work on this, and depending on the number of parts, eventually they would have the system updated. A day later, though, the shipping times could begin to change again, and this would cause a never-ending cycle to update the system. Alternately, a simple analytic model could be built that monitors the shipping times in real-time and automatically updates the system with the most current estimates.

Analytic Process Automation, APA, replaces time-consuming, repetitive manual processes to enable every employee to focus on getting much deeper insights from their existing data quicker than ever before revolutionising the speed in which they can make business critical decisions. But for automation to be successful, self-service human-lead data science is required.

Over the coming years, it will become apparent that to achieve success in a competitive market, companies have an immediate need to shift focus and embrace a model that provides insights faster and speed decision making. One of the most important aspects this journey is the upskilling of people. Empowering anyone in the business to ask hard questions about the business and get answers quickly, without needing to rely on highly trained specialist professionals. ■

Milagrow appoints TR Ganesh as new Global Business Director

Milagrow Robots has announced the expansion of its management team with the appointment of TR Ganesh as the Director of Global Business. An expert in business growth and value creation, Ganesh will expand Milagrow's footprint across the Middle East and Africa, South Asia and Commonwealth of Independent States, CIS, region by overseeing the company's growth and partnership initiatives through partner collaboration.

Ganesh will lead Milagrow's regional operations and expand the company's channel partner network by appointing established distributors, resellers, and retailers in different countries. He will be in charge of Milagrow's robotics segment and will drive the launch of new products in the consumer, industrial and commercial space.

Walter Knight to lead Farnek's new hospitality division

Facilities Management company Farnek has appointed Walter Knight as Director of its new hospitality division. Knight will be responsible for structuring and developing a new fully functioning hospitality division, which will provide a comprehensive range of outsourced or third-party services.

Quite apart from concierge services, housekeeping, property operations, maintenance, energy consultancy, POMEC, and security, Farnek will manage central reservations and front office services.

Knight has more than 15 years of international experience, across different operations, ranging from five-star to mid-market hotels and upscale apartments. As a sales and marketing director, Knight completed successful assignments for Hyatt in Kazakhstan and Avari in Pakistan, before taking up operational and general management positions in the UAE with Ramada, Holiday Inn and Citymax.

Nadya Abdulla Kamali joins Accenture as Country Managing Director

Accenture has appointed Nadya Abdulla Kamali as Country Managing Director for the UAE. Based in Dubai, she will be responsible for leading operations across the country and driving Accenture's Health and Public Service industries, two strategic sectors in the region.

In addition to her Country Managing Director's role for the UAE, Kamali joins the Accenture Middle East Executive Committee. She brings to her role 27 years of experience spanning diverse industries. She has held leadership positions with Ports, Customs and Free Zone Corporation, PCFC, DP World, and Emirates Global Aluminum, EGA, and an early experience in Dubai Municipality and Dubai Petroleum. Most recently, Kamali was Chairperson and Managing Director of DUTECH and CEO of Customs World.

BNP Paribas appoints Reema Al Asmari as Head of Territory for Saudi Arabia

BNP Paribas has announced the appointment of Reema Al Asmari as Head of Territory for Saudi Arabia, reinforcing the bank's corporate and institutional, CIB, presence in the region.

In her new role, Asmari will oversee the bank's national commercial strategy, with a focus on strengthening relationships with strategic clients, multi-national corporates, and government related entities. She will also drive BNP Paribas' product and service offering across all CIB metiers, including growth in areas such as sustainable finance.

Asmari takes over from Jean-Francois Sibille who becomes Head of Compliance, BNP Paribas Middle East and Africa. She will work alongside Ammar Pharaon who heads BNP Paribas' Investment Company, BIC, also located in Riyadh.

Bruno Wehbe returns to Booz Allen as VP for Real Estate

Booz Allen Hamilton has appointed Bruno Wehbe as Vice President for Real Estate and Investments practice covering the MENA region and its ambitious mega-projects that include the foremost cities of the future.

Wehbe's consulting expertise spans a number of related industries and other high-profile engagements. Prior to re-joining Booz Allen, Bruno was Chief Portfolio and Strategy Officer for Arabian Centres, which is Saudi Arabia's largest developer and operator of lifestyle centres, where he managed 1.3 Million sqm of properties worth more than $4 Billion. He also co-led the IPO of the company in 2019, one of Saudi Arabia's largest listings of the past decade.

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ULTRA-LUXE ADVENTURE IN AFRICA

The inaugural ROAR AFRICA Emirates Executive Private Jet Safari is an extraordinary travel experience designed to support Africa's wildlife and wild spaces. This is the first time a premier airline has partnered with a travel specialist to curate a journey targeting conservation. The life-changing itinerary delivers 10 guests in luxury to four iconic African destinations that offer the ultimate adventure. The 12-day safari is priced at $125,000 per person and is available in August 2021, 2022, 2023.

Image courtesy ROAR AFRICA

UAE WORKERS BEST EQUIPPED FOR REMOTE WORK

Life and Work Beyond 2020

How our values, relationships with businesses and working lives are changing

2020
was an emotional roller coaster

43%
Were less happy

What made us less happy?

82% Covid-19 pandemic

68% Less face to face contact with others

64% Money worries

62% World affairs

27%
Were happier

What made us happier?

62% More flexibility in deciding where I work

61% Own health

61% Family circumstances

57% More work from home & boss trusting me

The top 3 emotions we felt were:
WORRIED ANXIOUS FRUSTRATED

Source: The Life and Work Beyond 2020 from Avaya.

Our routines changed

Avaya's The Life and Work Beyond 2020 study, conducted by research firm Davies Hickman Partners, polled 10,000 consumers and workers in 11 countries to discover values as the world embraces a new world of work. The survey revealed UAE workers are world's best equipped for remote working, with 64% claiming they have access to technology necessary to work from anywhere, a higher number of respondents than seen in any other country. United States workers are second-best equipped with 62% having access to the technology they need to work from anywhere, while in the UK that number was 55%.

Our routines changed

Today, we are

51% Feeling more risk averse than ever before

50% Feeling anxious about doing our own thing while being considerate and respectful of others

37% Placing more importance on work than our well being

58% Feeling safer taking a holiday at home rather than travelling abroad

We are doing more of

75% Paying with our smartphone

76% Shopping online

68% Having a day out shopping

Source: The Life and Work Beyond 2020 from Avaya.
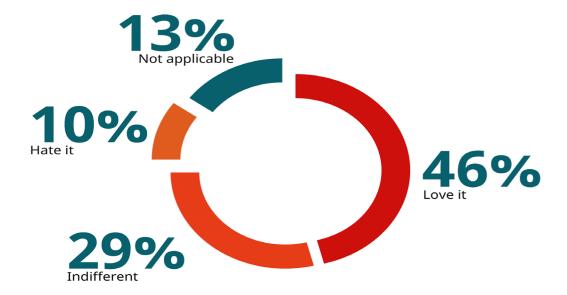
RETURNING TO OFFICE FULL-TIME BIGGEST WORRY

Some of the biggest worries that UAE employees have about the future of work, 51% said that returning to office full-time would be their biggest worry, while 44% identified being replaced by automation as their top concern. Workers in the UAE are among the fondest of work-from-anywhere models, with 64% saying that the ability to conduct hybrid work, from a home or office, would contribute to their happiness. That compares to 40% of respondents in Germany, 44% in the UK, and 62% in the United States who said the same thing.

Working from anywhere
loved by some, not others

Source: The Life and Work Beyond 2020 from Avaya.

13%
Not applicable

10%
Hate it

46%
Love it

29%
Indifferent

2 in 3
couples are happier working from anywhere

53%
of our Gen Z colleagues wish they had the option to work from anywhere

Our new values are impacting our relationship with organizations

69%
of us are actively choosing organizations that reflect our values

45%
of us are being more appreciative of good service

ADD TO CART

36%
of us are being nicer to shop and customer service assistants

And in turn organizations have a big impact on our well-being

79%
of us are expecting organisations' contact centres to do everything possible to make us happy customers

While only
13%
of us are feeling that organizations always make us feel good after an interaction

Source: The Life and Work Beyond 2020 from Avaya.

The least empathetic organizations were

Airlines
61%

Utilities Firms
60%

Telecom Operators
59%

GCF
Reboot

UNITE CIO MEET

THEME OF UNITE
BOTS

BODY

TEAM
BUILDING

SOUL

OPPORTUNITIES
AND OBSTACLES

MONTHLY ALL-ROUND WELLNESS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING INITIATIVE FOR THE CIOS.

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FITNESS   WELLNESS   NUTRITION   ENGAGE