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BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

THE CHANGE TO FUTURISTIC BUSINES

OCTOBER 2021 | biznesstransform.com

MOHAMMED AMIN,
Senior Vice President
MERAT, Dell Technologies.

THE DIGITAL FUTURE HAS ARRIVED

With AI, ML, IoT, rapidly changing how organisations operate, it is imperative they understand how to respond and keep pace with disruption.

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WILL TRANSFORMATION ACCELERATE OR DECELERATE

In this month's lead feature, we look at digital transformation from the perspective of Dell Technologies. A study by Dell Technologies showed that 90% of organisations in UAE and Saudi Arabia, fast-tracked their digital transformation programmes in 2020. The need for high performance, low latency and network connectivity has never been greater and will only increase.

At the start of the pandemic, organisations were not sufficiently prepared with the right digital infrastructure. Many had to undergo legacy IT migrations, which was a crucial turning point in helping organisations meet customer and employee needs. The demand for cloud also grew in the wake of the pandemic, and there is a lasting impact on how organisations view cloud

With the increased adoption of cloud, organisations had to make sure they were wary of misconfiguration, unauthorised access, and migration issues. The pandemic's impact on how things work has accelerated the need for digital transformation.

Says Mohammed Amin at Dell Technologies, the digital future has arrived. I am optimistic and excited about what the future holds, especially as technology plays a fundamental role in strengthening the regional economy. This time we will see technology having a stronger impact on the world with the changes driven by a stronger sense of purpose, he says.

One of the big shifts is the demand for Edge technologies. IDC estimates there will be an 800% growth in the number of applications being launched at the edge by 2024. Edge plays a key role in providing network and technology optimisation.

In our second lead feature of this month, we look at what top industry executives have to say about market drivers, roll out challenges, and best practices of digital transformation.

During my stint at IDC in another region, more than ten years back, I learnt that a key trend of any regional IT industry is the relative revenue mix of hardware, software, and services. At that time in the nineties there was nothing called cloud, but there was Citrix and application services providers, also categorised ASPs.

Today cloud players are a significant part of any local IT industry and have contributed to the rapid swing towards increasing services mix, since that is what cloud is all about. And cloud drives digital and later business transformation.

According to Mario Thomas at Amazon Web Services, the pandemic is driving awareness of new ways of working. Businesses are now prioritising new initiatives to drive digitalisation into channels to increase customer satisfaction, and to enter new markets.

Karim Benkirane at du stresses that countless regional organisations have pursued restructuring to gain benefits from digital transformation. Organisations currently lagging in transformation journeys require additional restructuring success to survive.

Turn these pages to see our line-up of transformation champions and thought leadership contributions.

Wishing you a prosperous in-person Gitex 2021 and exciting walk-though in Dubai Expo 2020.

Arun Shankar
arun@gecmediagroup.com

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HOW TO MAKE YOUR EMPLOYEES MORE SECURITY SAVVY

The core of any enterprise security awareness program should be to shape employee behavior so that it reduces the likelihood of security incidents.

WILLIAM CANDRICK, Director Analyst, Gartner.

Signature behaviors are those that clearly reflect positive intent and support by end users.

Cybercriminals have become experts at social engineering, using increasingly sophisticated techniques to trick employees into clicking on malicious links. It's up to security leaders to provide employees with the information and know-how to better defend against these attacks.

You can turn your employees into cybersecurity advocates, but only if your security awareness programs actually work. Bolster your initiatives with these three actions.

You need to turn employees into controls that detect and resist social engineering attacks, but security and risk leaders often fail to deliver a security awareness program that produces meaningful changes in employee behavior.

#1 SET THE VISION

Start by establishing a vision statement that lays out the security behaviors desired and required to enable the organisation to achieve its strategic objectives.

Do this with a cross-functional working group comprising representatives from across the organisation, including core lines of business and support functions. Secure approval from senior management.

The cross-functional team must develop a statement that embodies the end-state or the aspiration for the security awareness program and should resonate across the organisation, providing a tangible lodestar for employees to follow.

Articulate which signature behaviors would be on display if the organisation achieved its desired security awareness end-state. Signature behaviors are those that clearly reflect positive intent and support by end users for realising the security awareness vision.

#2 DEFINE TANGIBLE, MEASURABLE DESIRED BEHAVIORS

The core value proposition of any enterprise security awareness program should be to shape employee behavior so that it reduces the likelihood and or impact of security incidents. Gartner advocates outcome-driven metrics to indicate an operational and benefit outcome aligned to the behavioral statements in the vision.

Mandatory completion rates and knowledge check outcome metrics come via standard reports available in the majority of security awareness computer-based training platforms. These are useful measures of how many of your end users are completing the security awareness training and how easy it is to understand.

It's useful information but does not indicate an effective security awareness program that reduces risk or delivers other tangential business benefits. ODMs measure outcomes that can be tied back to measurable protection benefits.

#3 LINK BEHAVIORS TO MEASURABLE BENEFITS

Once the ODMs have been collated, link those insights to the business drivers that senior leadership really cares about. Start by measuring root causes of human-generated cyber risks that will deliver benefits if improved — for example, the number of cybersecurity incidents caused by data misuse or human error. Such metrics should improve over time if your awareness program is working effectively.

Then link those benefits outcomes to business drivers and benefits — which will relate at most organisations to revenue, growth, cost management, risk management and brand reputation. ■

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AUGMENTED REALITY SET TO TRANSFORM HEALTHCARE PRACTICES

Usage of augmented reality, to improve, enhance, and simplify healthcare practices, has gained momentum, and promises to grow at a fast pace in the region as well.

PAVEL MAKAREVICH, Product Manager at Proven Reality.

Virtual reality builds a 3D world inside a head-mounted display, detaching the user from their real world.

Augmented reality represents one of the most promising digital technologies for the healthcare industry. So how does augmented reality work? A device like a phone or tablet produces a live view of a physical, real-world environment which is overlaid or augmented by a computer-generated sensory input. This could be sound, video, graphics, or GPS data. In future, it is expected that such overlays or augmented reality would be a built-in feature inside digital contact lens.

Augmented reality does not detach the user from their real world and ongoing situational awareness. Information and data are rapidly overlaid on the visual image visible to the user. Virtual reality, its nearest form of a similar digital technology, on the other hand builds a 3D world inside a head-mounted display, detaching the user from their real world. It is this difference that makes augmented reality, and its use cases demonstrate a rapid pace of adoption in healthcare.

Use cases of augmented reality using head-mounted displays in healthcare include pre-hospital medical care, nursing care, and medical treatment in hospitals. Augmented reality smart glasses are expected to be in demand to support these use cases.

Research scientists are in the process of developing head mounted displays to improve efficiency of surgical processes. The video optical see-through surgical system is a head mounted medical visor, that superimposes a patient's X-ray images with anatomy in 3D.

Medical practitioners are aware of the importance of precision in surgical procedures. Augmented reality surgery superimposes a computer-generated image on a surgeon's view of the operation. It provides a composite view of the patient's internal anatomy with a computer-generated overlay enhancing the experience of the surgeon. Moreover, training surgeons on specific surgical procedures is time consuming and expensive. Augmented reality can help surgeons to perform surgeries with increasing precision.

Major players providing augmented and virtual reality solutions for healthcare include Google, Microsoft, DAQRI, Psious, Mindmaze, Firsthand Technology, Medical Realities, Proven Reality, Atheer, Augmedix and Oculus VR.

Some examples of the augmented reality applications available in healthcare include:

Pain Management VR app: This application is available for access through an all-in-one healthcare platform designed by Proven Reality. The app offers pain relief to patients, both adult and pediatric, after short and mid-term procedures and manipulations.

Auscultation VR app: The Auscultation VR app is designed to simulate a diagnostic environment, allowing medical trainees to access real-time training without an actual patient or mannequin.

AED4EU: This application helps everyday users provide aid to an unresponsive person requiring a defibrillator.

EyeDecide: Ophthalmologists can simulate impact of a prolonged eye disease on the vision of a patient through a device camera.

AccuVein: A scanner overlay helps nurses penetrate the vein in the first stick, a common challenge amongst kids and elderly.

Medsights Tech: This application recreates tumors through 3D representation, improving the surgeon's ability to perform a surgery.

HoloAnatomy: Using Microsoft's HoloLens Headset, medical experts can see anatomy through a dynamic holographic model. ■

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COMMON ERRORS WHILE IMPLEMENTING MACHINE LANGUAGE

Before utilising data for machine learning training, it is imperative to carefully analyse raw data set and get rid of unwanted or irrelevant data.

By Dr Hani Ragab, Director of the Institute of Applied Information Security and Associate Professor of Network Security and Data Science, Heriot-Watt University Dubai

It is always possible to find a polynomial of order n-1 whose curve contains the n points.

While more and more companies rely on machine learning to extract meaningful insights from raw data to quickly solve complex, data-rich business problems, it is also equally important to overcome the several barriers to effective machine learning.

Machine learning project is not only about data and algorithms, but also about humans and business processes. Ignoring this fact results in issues at different stages of the machine learning project lifecycle and could ultimately result in a failure to deliver expected outputs. Comprehensive models, such as the Cross-Industry Standard Process for Data Mining can be used to minimise that risk.

Most machine learning algorithms are sensitive to the quality of the data they learn from; poor data result in poor inaccurate models. Errors in data can happen at different stages of data collection. For example, participants in the survey do not always provide the right information, some of whom may enter incorrect information about their age, height, income, and other parameters.

Hence, before utilising the data for machine learning training, it is imperative to carefully analyse raw data set and get rid of unwanted or irrelevant data, helping your AI model work with better accuracy. Furthermore, data must come from a reliable from a random Kaggle or GitHub repository.

Missing values are quite common in machine learning, example, incomplete addresses, or missing gender or age from users who did not wish to disclose personal information.

Depending on the scenario, suitable measures could be not considering the whole record that has a missing value, using interpolation techniques to provide estimates of missing values, using a machine learning technique that is tolerant to missing values.

The polynomial is a perfect representation of the learning dataset and will result in a 100% accuracy if evaluated on it.

Interpolation techniques could be as simple as replacing the missing value by the average mean, median or mode value of its variable.

Since it is tempting to get a model that best describes its training dataset, it is easy to fall in the trap of looking, at any cost, for models that maximise some performance metrics accuracy. For example, for a dataset of n pairs xi, yi, where xi is an input scalar and yi is an output scalar.

It is always possible to find a polynomial of order n-1 whose curve contains the n points. That is, the polynomial is a perfect representation of the learning dataset and will result in a 100% accuracy if evaluated on it.

It goes without saying that this polynomial is very likely perform very poorly on the test dataset. A more reasonable alternative would be to determine the correlation of variables x and y, and if it reasonably high, propose a linear model that, while not necessarily most or even any of the points, is close enough to them to capture the essence of the correlation between x and y. ■

BTX ROADSHOW SOUTH GULF
CONCLUDES WITH TRANSFORMATION KEYNOTES AND PANEL DISCUSSION

BTX Roadshow South Gulf edition concluded on 8th September 2021.

GEC Media Group, publishers of Business Transformation, Enterprise Channels MEA, The Titans, Cyber Sentinels, announced the winners of the BTX Top Executive Awards, BTX Enterprise Awards, BTX Solution Awards at BTX Road Show South Gulf edition on 8th September 2021. The half-day event was organised at Grand Ballroom, Conrad Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai in person.

The title sponsors of BTX Roadshow were Aruba HPE, Riverbed, Pure Storage, Veeam, Logicom, Netapp, Western Digital, Arcon, Veritas, SilverPeak, Alcatel-Lucent enterprise, SecureNet, Synology, Finesse, CORK information technology, International Group of Artificial Intelligence – IGOAI, Global CISO Forum, Business Transformation, and Enterprise Channels MEA.

The face-to-face event was started with the registration of all attendees and proceed with lunch and networking. Here are the highlights of the various speaker keynote presentations.

SUCCESS AND FAILURES OF BUSINESS AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In his keynote, Dr Corrie Block, CEO, Paragon Consulting talked about the lack of alignment to business outcomes and lack of awareness within the organisation and lack of control of vendors.

PANEL DISCUSSION: HOW DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY MAKING BUSINESSES IN UAE MORE RESILIENT AND EFFICIENT

The first-panel discussion on how digital transformation, innovation, technology, making businesses in UAE more resilient and efficient was moderated by Arun Shanker, Moderator, GEC Media Group.

Taking the discussion forward, Mohamad Rizk, Senior Regional Technical Director for Middle East, Russia, and CIS, Veeam said, In the next 18-24 months, organisations in the UAE are driving plans for innovation. They should catch up plans with multiple perspectives with checkpoints. Some of those points are culture, educating people and from technology's perspective, they need varied solutions. A digital organisation should be always online. Any downtime of service means loss of money.

Shah E Room Khan, Information Technology Manager, Emirates College of Technology, Abu Dhabi, said, we have merged with different universities and colleges in Abu Dhabi for education. We are planning to implement new technologies especially Customer Experience technology which will help us to facilitate the students in different sectors where they can open a ticket for the help desk system, register online and payment as well. We have also done an agreement with a service provider for AI services to facilitate the students more.

Pankaj Bajaj, Head of IT, Capital Health, said they run as a business project. These are not technology projects at the end of the day. They are enabling business, operations and have already started the business intelligence where we are giving the insights to the management about how the revenue is going on, what are the patients experience we are getting, what are the clinical KPIs we are getting. Next our journey is artificial intelligence on existing EMR plus we are planning to publish our medical research in rehabilitation.

While addressing the event, Elie Kamel, Regional Channel Manager, NetApp said there would always be new innovations in healthcare, education etc. As he has been reading about digital twin which is a kind of a virtual twin of any physical object. Imagine in healthcare industry, they can create a virtual twin of a human being to study the effect of health and testing. So, it will create a huge influx of data.

DIGITAL AND BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES IN TABREED

Ahmad Hilmi Lutfi Al Obaidi, Manager Capital Plant Performance and Investment, O&M Support, National Central Cooling Company talked about the transformation of operations function and said their Tasheel programme and i-Connect programme are targeting their digital infrastructure.

TECHNOLOGY KEYNOTE: MAXIMIZING VISIBILITY AND PERFORMANCE FOR THE HYBRID ENTERPRISE

Salman Ali, Technical Channel Manager, Riverbed Technology discussed Covid pandemic and the new work culture in organisations and said managing digital experience is one of the most critical business objectives for most of the enterprises.

SMART TECHNOLOGIES AND SUSTAINABILITY IN URBAN LANDSCAPES

Engineer Mohammed Ahmed Alrayees, Director of Sewage Treatment Plants and Drainage Network Department Dubai Municipality talked about their vision and said our vision is to develop a sustainable city for all citizens of Dubai and we emphasise on innovation for a healthy future.

PANEL DISCUSSION: THREAT ACTORS AND CHALLENGES FOR REGIONAL CISOS

The next panel discussion was moderated by Dr Hoda Alkhzaimi, Director of Center of Cyber Security, New York University Abu Dhabi, President, Emirates Digital Association for Women and joined by Mohammed Shakeel Ahmed, Aviation Cyber Security Advisor, Abu Dhabi Aviation and Jacob Mathew, IT Consultant, IT Governance, Architecture, Services, Security, Infrastructure and Operations – Government of Abu Dhabi. They panelists briefed about digitalisation and Cyber Security.

GEC Media Group extended warm wishes to all the champions of the BTX Awards for their victory.

BTX TOP EXECUTIVE AWARDS

Recognising leadership driving transformation

This award recognises a top executive who have accelerated digital and business transformation through the pandemic and created a better future for their business. They have empowered remote teams, managed change, flattened organisational structure, made it agile and secure, managed customer satisfaction, and implemented digital tools like cloud, analytics, data integration, amongst others.

The announced winners of BTX Top Executive Awards include Aditya Kaushik, Eng Mohammed Ahmed Alrayees, Gigi George Koshy, Hadi Anwar, Hussein M Dajani, Lt Col Dr Hamad Khalifa Al Nuaimi, Ritesh Singh and Abbas Dandach.

BTX ENTERPRISE AWARDS

Recognising success stories in transformation

This award recognises enterprises that have embraced digital transformation and digital tools through the pandemic and achieved success in various areas. Such enterprises would have rebuilt customer experiences, managed customer expectations, leveraged online sales models, built forecasting models, have an in-depth and ready analysis of market and demand trends, built close collaboration and data sharing amongst teams, amongst others.

The announced organisations of BTX Enterprise Awards include Abu Dhabi Health Services Company, Healthcare, Pharmaceuticals and Biotech - United Al Saqer Group of Companies, Diversified Services - National Central Cooling Company, Tabreed, Energy and Utilities - Gulf Diagnostic Center Hospital, Healthcare, Pharmaceuticals and Biotech Abu Dhabi - Amity University Dubai, Education - Global Village, Media and Entertainment - Government of Sharjah-Department of Town Planning and Survey SDTPS, Non-Profit or Government Organisations - Dubai Holding Entertainment, Attractions, Media and Entertainment - Department of Community Development, Abu Dhabi, Non-Profit or Government Organisations and Capital Health, Healthcare, Pharmaceuticals and Biotech.

BTX SOLUTION AWARDS

Recognising solutions for transformation

This award recognises the leading, exemplary, heroic efforts by vendors, channel partners, integrators, consultants, to manage the challenges of the end-user community through the lockdowns of the pandemic. This part of the IT industry helped the end-user community to successfully pivot their business models by using digital technologies and create a sustainable business through the pandemic and ahead, amongst others.

The announced winners of BTX Solution Awards include Technology Strategies Middle East - Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise - Oregon Systems - Software AG - Riverbed Technologies – AVEVA - Automation Anywhere – Veeam – NNTC.

BTX Road Show 2021 South Gulf edition was organised with all the safety guidelines announced by the Emirates of Dubai.

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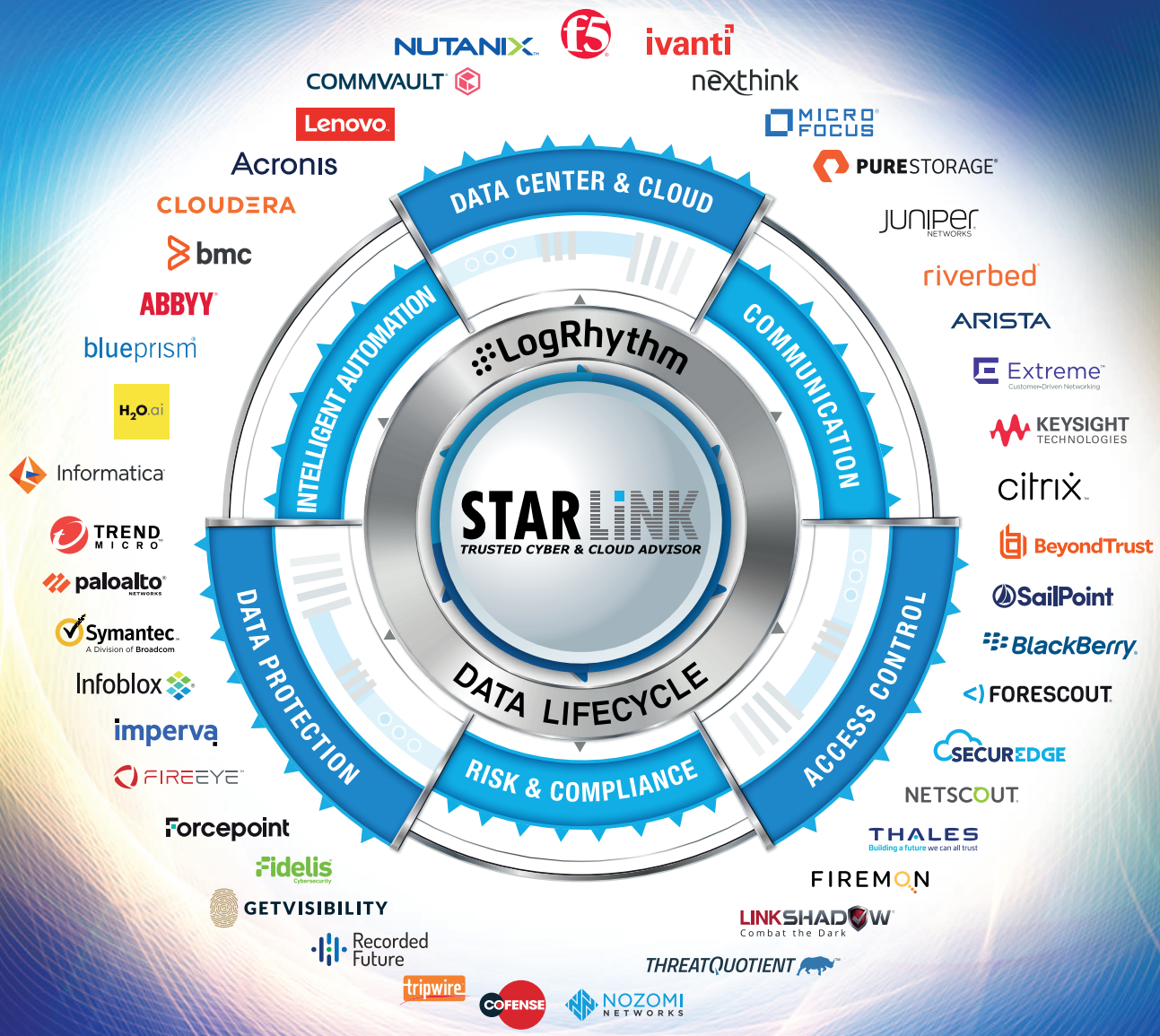

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Bahrain secures highest tourism capital in 2020 according to fDi Intelligence Tourism Report

Bahrain ranked first in the Middle East and Africa for attracting the highest tourism capital investment in 2020, according to the fDi Intelligence Tourism Investment Report 2021. Last year, major investments from UAE-based property developers helped Bahrain's tourism sector remain buoyant and created jobs during the worst ever period for the global tourism industry.

Bahrain secured $492 million of tourism capital investment in 2020, mainly made up of investments from global property developer Emaar Properties and real estate developer Eagle Hills, despite the overall regional decline in capital investment in 2020.

Capital investment into MEA last year decreased 82% from 2019, dropping to $1.6 billion. The number of tourism jobs created in the region also experienced a similar decline, decreasing from approximately 17,400 in 2019 to 2,800 in 2020.

Despite the pandemic, Bahrain ranked first in MENA for the number of tourism jobs created in 2020 and second for the number of tourism FDI projects.

Prior to Covid, Bahrain was attracting around a million visitors a month on average and the tourism sector contributed around 7% to GDP. As the first economy in the GCC to diversify away from oil, the Kingdom has positioned its tourism offering to cater for a broader set of visitors through new attractions, hotels, FandB, and retail.

During the pandemic, the country continued developing its strategy to transform its tourism sector, allocating more than $10 billion to tourism infrastructure projects, including the $1.1 billion modernisation of its international airport. More recently, Edamah, the real estate arm of Bahrain's sovereign wealth fund, Mumtalakat, also announced several new upscale property projects in the country.

MAHMOOD AL ARADI,
Chief Investment Officer at Bahrain's Economic Development Board.

Anticipating a significant rebound in tourism numbers, Bahrain is growing its portfolio of five-star hotels and is set to have around 9,300 rooms by the end of 2022. Bahrain is also anticipating a return in demand and growth for beachfront affordable brands.

Etihad Airways to use Microsoft AI to automate bank-reconciliation process

Etihad Airways recently announced the launch of the next phase of digital transformation for its finance division, which will leverage Microsoft artificial intelligence to automate its bank-reconciliation process.

The move will address the increasing demand for improvement in productivity and operational effectiveness in the post-COVID era. Etihad is set to make significant gains on efficiency by implementing the solution, as well as reducing the risk of human errors given a large number of transactions and manual reconciliation tasks currently in scope.

This latest initiative follows Etihad's successful deployment of Microsoft artificial intelligence capabilities to support automated payment inspection earlier this year and is part of a continued partnership between the two entities in driving the adoption of artificial intelligence across the company.

Microsoft will soon celebrate the second anniversary of the opening of its UAE data centres. Since entering service, the facilities have energised the region's dynamic digitisation culture, as enterprises reimagined their industries and delivered resilience and business continuity.

RTA and Hala to use new Careem application for auto dispatch of taxis to Expo 2020

Roads and Transport Authority Dubai in collaboration with Hala has launched for the first time in the region the Auto Dispatch of taxis at Expo 2020. With the objective of timely and efficient dispatch of taxis vital to Expo visitors which enhances their journey experience, the RTA remains committed to providing seamless and well-integrated overall transport services, including public transport.

Leveraging an innovative in-house technology developed by Careem, taxis will be automatically dispatched to Expo 2020 based on the required demand. Vehicles will automatically receive dispatch requests to the Expo site based on the required number of taxis needed at each hour of the day.

Hala, the joint venture between the Roads and Transport Authority and Careem, enables customers to book any taxi in Dubai via the Careem application. Tourists, residents, and visitors at EXPO will now have the ease of booking the taxis through their phones via the application, or self-serving kiosks. Customers will avail of a one-time password to instantly book via their mobile, connect with any driver, and immediately take off on their journey with zero waiting time.

In line with the Smart Dubai Vision, RTA aims to ramp up and provide the entire Dubai Taxi fleet with the Hala e-hailing service and this solution, by collaborating with all of its franchise partners.

Etihad Rail completes 139 km and connection from Al Ghuwaifat with 264 km Stage One

Chaired by His Highness Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince's Court and Chairman of Etihad Rail, the company's Board of Directors held a virtual meeting to review the latest progress of the construction works for the packages of Stage Two of the UAE National Railway Network, as well as other major achievements made in the third quarter of 2021.

During the meeting, it was announced that construction works for Package A of Stage Two, which extends over 139 km, and its connection through Al Ghuwaifat on the border of Saudi Arabia with Stage One, which extends for 264 km from Habshan to Al Ruwais were completed. This significant step brings the company closer to completing the UAE National Railway Network on schedule.

Etihad Rail has ensured the continuity of business while implementing the required precautionary health and safety measures for all employees. His Highness also expressed his appreciation for the ongoing support provided by the relevant government entities and authorities to ensure this goal was achieved.

He commented that Etihad Rail will connect vital areas in the seven Emirates via a track extending over 1200 km to enhance the UAE's social and economic development, as well as its global positioning in line with the UAE Centennial 2071.

Throughout 2021, Etihad Rail was successful in reserving 40% of the network's annual transport capacity, which by the completion of Stage Two will amount to 60 million tons of goods per year. This was achieved through the commercial agreements Etihad Rail has signed including those with Stevin Rock, one of the biggest quarrying companies in the world, Western Bainoona Group, and Al Ghurair Iron and Steel.

Farnek releases application tracking guest's journey from reservation to check out

Farnek Hotel Management, a part of leading UAE-based smart and green Facilities Management, FM company Farnek, has developed a ground-breaking hospitality app that digitalises a hotel guest's journey from the initial reservation through to check out.

The app which was developed in-house by Farnek's award-winning technology and innovation division, interfaces with the hotel's property management system affording guests a whole suite of services from uploading travel documents, such as vaccination certificates, ordering a car on arrival, room service and laundry. The hotel app can also send automated electronic updates and alerts to the guest, as well as e-registration documents, e-invoices and e-receipts, all in one convenient space.

Farnek has just completed a successful trial of the app, having secured a contract for the Expo Village, situated on the Expo 2020 site. Farnek is currently responsible for managing the reservation services, concierge, front office services and housekeeping, for the 2,273 apartments.

Sustainability is never far from Farnek's market proposition and Flexi-Guest is no exception. The app can estimate the carbon emissions generated by any guest during their stay and provide a cost should the guest wish to offset their carbon footprint.

Aramco, AVEVA form alliance creating research hub, focus on decarbonisation

Aramco, one of the world's largest integrated energy and chemicals companies, and AVEVA, a global leader in industrial software, driving digital transformation and sustainability, have announced their intention to form a strategic alliance.

Focused on driving sustainability in the region through digital transformation, the partnership will help enable AVEVA to establish their largest digital hub, with a research and development capability, in the Middle East, headquartered in Saudi Arabia. This partnership will represent a significant investment for AVEVA which is also looking to create up to 300 high skill new jobs in the Kingdom by 2030.

This transformative and groundbreaking partnership is designed to foster a working relationship between the two companies in the deployment of various digital technologies including artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data management. AVEVA and Aramco aim to work together to unlock the benefits of these technologies in line with the Kingdom's move towards industrial sustainability.

One of the key focus areas of the partnership would be to utilise digital technologies to support the development and implementation of blue hydrogen and decarbonisation facilities in Saudi Arabia in line with the Kingdom's energy transition strategy.

Another area in which the companies intend to work together is in the implementation of cutting-edge predictive analytics technology across Aramco's operating facilities. This would be one of the largest deployments of such technology in the region and the main goal is to further improve the reliability, performance, and safety of Aramco's operation.

PETER HERWECK, *CEO, AVEVA*

2Africa longest subsea cable system with 16 fibre pairs Alcatel Submarine Networks

The 2Africa consortium, comprised of China Mobile International, Facebook, MTN GlobalConnect, Orange, stc, Telecom Egypt, Vodafone and WIOCC, announced the addition of a new segment - the 2Africa PEARLS branch - extending to the Arabian Gulf, India, and Pakistan. This extension will bring the total length of the 2Africa cable system to over 45,000 kilometres, making it the longest subsea cable system ever deployed.

Now connecting three continents, Africa, Europe and Asia terrestrially through Egypt, 2Africa creates unique connectivity by adding vital landing locations in Oman- Barka, UAE- Abu Dhabi and Kalba, Qatar- Doha, Bahrain- Manama, Kuwait- Kuwait, Iraq- Al-Faw, Pakistan- Karachi, India- Mumbai, and the fourth landing in Saudi Arabia- Al Khobar. The new 2Africa branch joins recently announced extensions to the Canary Islands, Seychelles, Comoros Islands, Angola, and a new landing to south-east Nigeria.

As with other 2Africa cable landings, capacity will be available in Pearls landings at carrier-neutral facilities or open-access cable landing stations on a fair and equitable basis, encouraging and supporting the development of a healthy internet ecosystem.

To further support a burgeoning global digital economy, the expanded system will serve an even wider range of communities that rely on the internet for services from education to healthcare, and businesses, providing economic and social benefits that come from increased connectivity. As announced in May 2020, 2Africa was planned to directly bring seamless international connectivity to 1.2 Billion people. Today, with 2Africa Pearls, 2Africa will be providing international connectivity to an additional 1.8 Billion people--that's 3 Billion people, representing 36% of the global population.

Summertown Interiors offers LEED certification above 2,000sqm, 30% less landfill

Summertown Interiors, the UAE's leading sustainable fit-out contractor, has recorded positive environmental, economic, and social results in its 2021 Sustainability Report, putting it on track to achieve its ambitious JOURNEY2030 sustainability goals.

Despite this year's challenges, the Covid-19 pandemic thrust upon the world, Summertown Interiors successfully met all its sustainability targets with the exception of office water usage, which was due to increased hand-washing and extra hygiene measures taken to protect staff. During the pandemic, Summertown streamlined its operations, identified new and more efficient ways of working, enhanced its technology infrastructure and focused on the health and wellbeing of its people.

Summertown's sustainability strategy is underpinned by its JOURNEY2030 goals, which are to deliver 100% of projects that meet external sustainability accreditations,

ensure zero waste to landfill and improve workplace happiness and wellbeing. This year, the company achieved positive environmental changes including a 5.5% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and diverted 19 tonnes of project waste by recycling, reusing and ensuring the use of sustainably sourced materials. Furthermore, 48% of materials used in client projects came from sustainable sources, while that figure reached 87% for Summertown's own office upgrade.

PMI launches Make Reality virtual hub for MENA to boost innovation and social impact

Project Management Institute launched Make Reality, a virtual hub designed to inspire and support the Middle East and North Africa's highly skilled innovators as they drive transformation and create positive social impact across the world — all while navigating the Covid-19 pandemic. Telling the unique stories of the region's most innovative thinkers, the virtual hub empowers changemakers to launch and see through the delivery of truly transformative projects.

Marking the launch of its new hub, PMI has also published research highlighting the post-Covid business sentiments of people and communities across the MENA region. According to the association's report — Make Reality Global Survey 2020— 69% of Emiratis are optimistic about the global community's ability to be successful in 2021.

Despite 80% of the country's business decision-makers identifying the pandemic as the most pressing macro issue of the year, the survey reiterates the general confidence of the wider UAE community, with 70% of Emiratis optimistic about the country's ability to be successful.

The PMI virtual hub features videos and true stories of changemakers across the globe turning their ideas into reality — from creating biodegradable batteries for electric vehicles in India to restoring animal habitats following the Australian wildfires.

Virgin Hyperloop display 10 Metre passenger pod at DP World's pavilion at Expo 2020

Virgin Hyperloop revealed that they will be showcasing a full-scale hyperloop cargo pod and a cutaway passenger pod as part of DP World's FLOW pavilion at Expo 2020.

Upon arrival to the FLOW pavilion, visitors will see a full-scale commercial cargo pod replica, which measures nearly 10 meters long. Once in the pavilion, guests will be able to sit inside a cutaway passenger pod complete with production-intent finishes to see what a future journey on hyperloop will feel like. Surrounding the pod, visitors will learn more about the technology and its future impact through interactive displays, videos, and models.

Selfdrive experiences 30% MoM growth in car rental customers with mobility application

Selfdrive, an entity of Pinewoods Tech Serve has launched an all-in-one Smart Mobility App. The app is serving as a game-changer for the car rental space offering its users a seamless, reliable, and convenient mechanism to rent a car on demand. The cutting-edge mobile app provides direct access to dealership fleet to its users, allowing them to rent a car by the day, subscribe by the month or lease a car up to 3 years, offering complete flexibility in booking duration.

The company to date has served over 50k customers and witnessed a 30% MoM growth in customer base in the past six months. The app is built on a proprietary tech foundation concept, Search – Select – Pay, that uses machine learning and artificial intelligence to match customers profile with the cars that they would like to drive, making the selection process and renting a car absolutely seamless experience.

This app is available to download on Android and IOS, which offers users the option to select from 65 different car models across 15 different car brands from 45 different locations in the UAE within three hours. Some of the key brands available to rent are Nissan, Toyota, Mitsubishi, Renault, Mazda, Infinity, Volkswagen, BMW and many more.

Selfdrive app will host Expo 2020 related services that will be available under its car subscription platform, which would oversee exclusive car models and deals for 6 months with no commitments and early return penalty.

AVEVA Unified Learning for end users available on AVEVA's Cloud Connect platform

AVEVA, announced the launch of AVEVA Unified Learning as part of AVEVA's portfolio available on AVEVA Connect, a common cloud platform. The new cloud-based employee development solution helps AVEVA customers advance industrial workers from novice to expert by using blended custom and generic experiential training modules, including AVEVA's Process Competency Training, Pipeline Competency Training, and The Operations Excellence Group's OEG Knowledge Library.

AVEVA Unified Learning drives competency and consistency through experiential learning on a single platform, serving as a unique offering at a time when companies are focused on improving skills to contend with radically altered business environments and an influx of new staff. Without AVEVA Unified Learning, training leaders face major challenges in managing learning programs across a diverse and dispersed workforce with varying skill levels. By eliminating deployment hurdles and simplifying program management, AVEVA empowers customers to improve the learning experience and extract greater value from their training investments.

AVEVA Unified Learning closes the competency gap between a retiring workforce and the new generation of connected workers. Overall, employees are empowered to perform better in a shorter time, thanks to targeted eLearning, video content, and simulation-based learning programs.

Since AVEVA Unified Learning simulators are entirely cloud-based and offered as Software-as-a-Service, organisations benefit from

global accessibility and scalability. With training delivered directly to each worker's device, cost, time and energy outlays are reduced alongside the organisation's carbon footprint.

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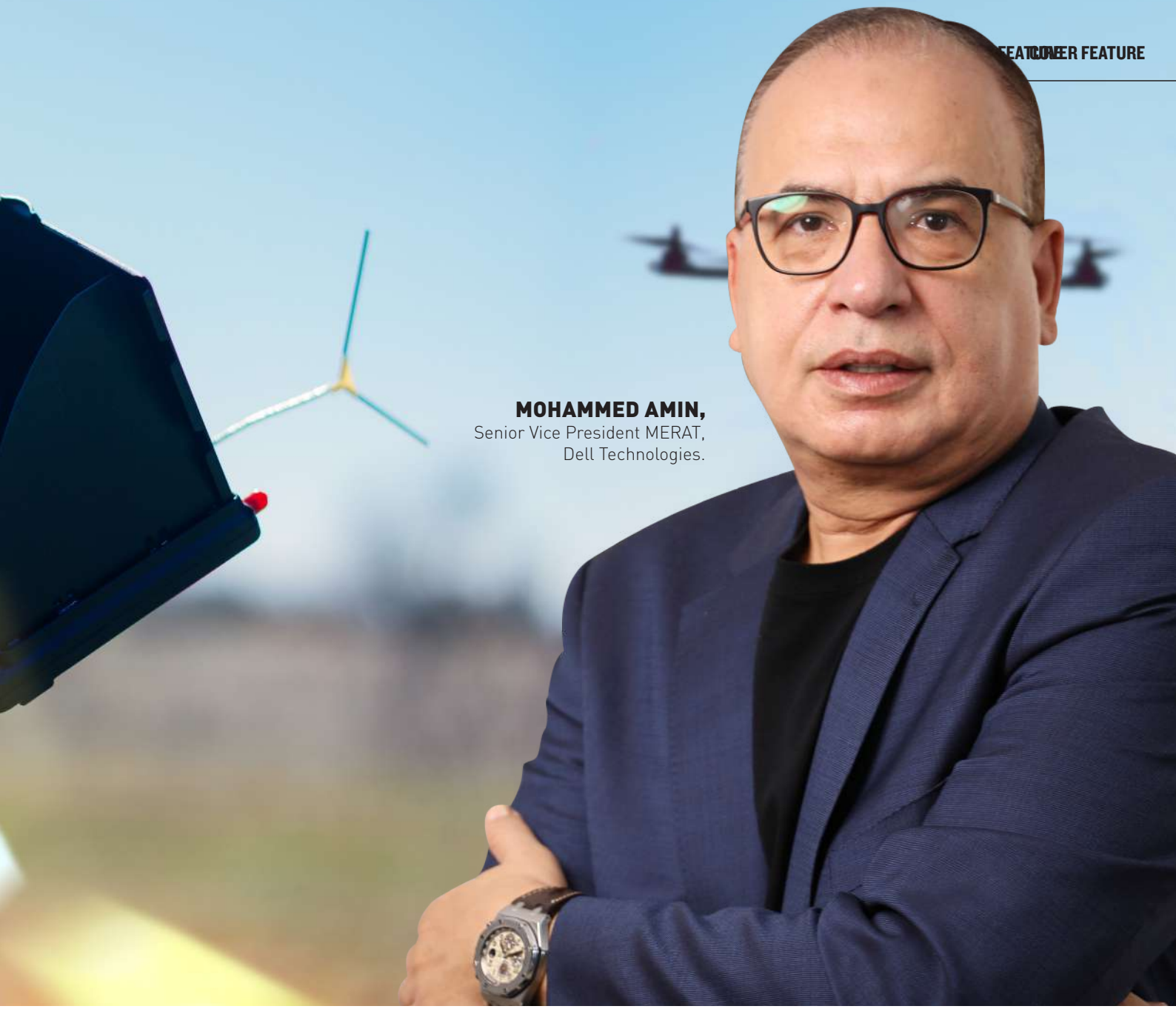
THE DIGITAL FUTURE HAS ARRIVED

With AI, ML, IoT, rapidly changing how organisations operate, it is imperative they understand how to respond and keep pace with disruption.



MOHAMMED AMIN,
Senior Vice President MERAT,
Dell Technologies.

One of the many things that the pandemic taught us is that technology is key to driving business continuity, so technology will play a key role in paving the way to economic recovery. Organisations across every sector, embraced digital transformation at a faster pace than ever before. From enabling remote work, to enhancing infrastructure and security strategies, there was an increased demand for efficient, agile, and secure solutions.

The Digital Transformation Index Study, by Dell Technologies, shows that 80% of businesses globally accelerated their digital transformation plans, with 79% reinventing their business model because of disruption caused by the pandemic.

In the region, the study showed that 90% of organisations in UAE and Saudi Arabia, fast-tracked their digital transformation programs in 2020. This is compared to the global benchmark of 80%, suggesting that regional organisations here have shifted their digital transformation programs into high gear.

"Over the last 18-24 months, customers looked to Dell Technologies for our end-to-end product lines that are helping businesses transform their IT strategies and infrastructure. From creating remote workforces with our leading line up of laptops and monitors to virtualised infrastructure, to protecting critical data and applications, we have best-of-breed products that can cater to anything our customers need," says Mohammed Amin, Senior Vice President MERAT, Dell Technologies.

The line-up of branded product lines extends across storage, servers, data protection and networking portfolio. Dell Technologies also expanded as-a-service capabilities, offering flexible payment options so that organisations have greater access to technology across infrastructure stack including compute, storage, networking, virtualisation, and data protection.

SKILLS AND SERVICES

In a time of continued uncertainty, the programme structure and

engagement with partners remains consistent. The purpose at Dell Technologies is to create technology that drives human progress. This purpose was at the forefront when Dell Technologies designed the new partner programme.

"Our focus was to accelerate innovation, leverage our corporate culture and strength, and provide a world-class experience so our partners can drive even more impact for customers and communities in a highly competitive market. This vision is reflected in our new Partner Promise: Together, We Stop at Nothing," explains Amin.

Dell Technologies is staying the course to support partners, while investing in key focus areas to drive our joint success. This is achieved by understanding the ins and outs of channel partners and customers business, by improving programs based on their feedback, by investing in the technology solutions of the future and by enabling channel partners to be qualified and prepared for the future.

This year, Dell Technologies has focused on three key areas based on partner feedback: an increased opportunity for new customer and line of business acquisition, accelerated growth and profit potential with access to our holistic portfolio, including VMware, and lastly a more streamlined end-to-end experience.

> The study showed that 90% of organisations in UAE and Saudi Arabia, fast-tracked their digital transformation programs in 2020.

As part of the efforts to strengthen the channel network, channel partners are encouraged to review the appropriate Partner Programme Guide based on their business needs and capabilities.

Together with partners, Dell Technologies is empowering customers to meet the fast pace of change from the edge to the data centre, through distributed work and modern consumption, with cybersecurity, 5G infrastructure, digital experiences, and data management.

Dell Technologies will also continue to equip the channel ecosystem to enhance their skills sets and to drive simplification of our portfolio where appropriate with a commitment to bringing the next generation of technologies to market.

TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

As the region upgrades to smart and digital infrastructures, it will prompt new models of business and services and act as a driver of economic momentum. This digital evolution will open broad spaces for new services as well as consumption in a variety of industries, elevating organisations and helping them become more resilient in the face of transformation.

Dell Technologies provides comprehensive hardware and software solutions, including platforms that are ready for the Internet of Things, AI, ML. From Dell Precision workstations to Dell EMC PowerEdge Servers, to Dell EMC PowerScale Storage and more, state-of-the-art technologies, enable every organisation to have access to the transformative power of AI, ML, DL and more.

> Dell Technologies also expanded as-a-service capabilities, offering flexible payment options.

At the start of the pandemic, many organisations were not sufficiently prepared with the right digital infrastructure. Many had to undergo legacy IT migrations, which was a crucial turning point in helping organisations meet customer and employee needs.

At the start of the pandemic, Dell Technologies saw companies quickly transform to enable their staff to work from home so that business could continue. Optimising their infrastructure with reliable and secure access to applications and data – whether running on-premises, in the cloud or both – is necessary to support users who are working and learning remotely.

The demand for cloud also grew in the wake of the pandemic, and there is a lasting impact on how organisations view cloud and the way it is deployed. With the increased adoption of cloud, organisations also had to make sure they were wary of misconfiguration, unauthorised access, and migration issues by having set cloud security strategies in place.

In addition, fighting off large scale data breaches proved critical, and organisations looked for cyber resilience capabilities to protect their data.

Dell Technologies' broad portfolio of end-to-end business solutions have supported customers through the pandemic and delivered differentiated results. The

> Many had to undergo legacy IT migrations, which was a crucial turning point in helping organisations meet customer and employee needs.

company is working with several organisations across multiple sectors, to move them from their legacy infrastructure to a digital infrastructure that deploys and supports emerging technologies.

These investments are being made for the long run as organisations are seeing the value emerging technology provides to streamline their operations, as well as allows for innovation for their go-to-market strategy.

Technology is a key path to economic recovery as IT and data are the catalysts for growth. "Supporting our customers with the right technology to achieve business recovery and continuity has always been our key priority," says Amin.

Businesses are now looking to reinforce resilience after a year in which the hybrid cloud has asserted itself as an absolute necessity. Taking stock of cloud management efficiencies will form a vital next step. Businesses will also need to harness technologies such as 5G, AI, ML, Edge and IoT, data analytics, security, and workforce transformation solutions to drive success.

> Dell Technologies is empowering customers to meet the fast pace of change from the edge to the data centre.

There is no doubt that digital businesses have the agility and flexibility to pivot, come what may. But the truth is this is only the dawn of the digital era. Dell Technologies is setting the foundations for a faster, more complex, and distributed data environment.

Looking ahead, channel partners, have a key role to help businesses understand the benefits of these solutions, based on a deep understanding of their business needs.

BIG SHIFT

One of the big shifts is the demand for Edge technologies. The pandemic's impact on how things work and the ways in which public and private organisations have had to adapt, has accelerated the need for digital transformation.

The need for high performance, low latency and network connectivity has never been greater and will only increase. By 2024, IDC estimates there will be an 800% growth in the number of applications being launched at the edge. Edge plays a key role in this digital transformation journey,

At the start of the pandemic, many organisations were not sufficiently prepared with the right digital infrastructure.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The demand for cloud also grew in the wake of the pandemic, and there is a lasting impact on how organisations view cloud
- With the increased adoption of cloud, organisations had to make sure they were wary of misconfiguration, unauthorised access, and migration issues.
- One of the big shifts is the demand for Edge technologies.
- The pandemic's impact on how things work has accelerated the need for digital transformation.
- The need for high performance, low latency and network connectivity has never been greater and will only increase.
- IDC estimates there will be an 800% growth in the number of applications being launched at the edge by 2024.
- Edge plays a key role in providing network and technology optimisation.
- The full potential of 5G speeds can only be realised if network latency is reduced by processing data close to the end user.

providing network and technology optimisation.

The full potential of 5G speeds can only be realised if network latency is reduced by processing data close to the end user. In addition, by improving the performance of applications and facilitating huge amounts of data to be processed in real-time, edge enables other next generation technologies such as IoT, AI and wearables.

Then there is the focus on multi-cloud solutions. Investments in cloud operating models that span public, private and edge environments will continue to grow, enabling rapid scale and management of IT everywhere, with the security and visibility organisations need to keep their data protected.

Finally, as-a-service solutions promise the ultimate simplification and agility that will set businesses up to succeed and advance their digital transformation roadmaps. Breaking down data complexities will be critical and cloud, storage and flexible IT infrastructure as-as-service solutions will prove to be a balm for customers' data management needs.

In this region specifically, the digital future is already here. With AI, ML, IoT and other new interfaces rapidly changing how organisations operate, it is imperative that they understand how to respond and keep pace with disruptive technologies.

Dell Technologies has focused on three key areas based on partner feedback.

Globally, Dell Technologies had a very strong Q2 and first half of the year, driven by our ability to execute and deliver consistent performance amongst unprecedented demand for our solutions.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RECOVERY

The primary focus in the coming months will be to help regional organisations accelerate digital transformation initiatives with speed and purpose as Dell Technologies works together to power local and national innovation agendas. Given the reach of digital technology and the change it promises, there is a need to shepherd these exciting technologies without diminishing its potential.

As one of the largest global technology providers, Dell Technologies also has a unique role to play in transforming the future for better. Another key priority is the Progress Made Real 2030 Social Impact Vision, which is designed to enhance Dell Technologies' purpose to use technology to drive human progress.

The goals are centred around four focus areas: advancing sustainability, cultivating inclusion, transforming lives, and upholding ethics and data privacy. For each pillar, there is a moonshot goal that is aspirational and across MERAT, Dell Technologies has various programs in place – from providing technology access to underserved communities to youth skills training and sustainability initiatives.

"I am optimistic and excited about what the future holds, especially as technology plays a fundamental role in strengthening the regional economy. Digitisation will accelerate the transformation of key sectors and help boost recovery, as well as allow for innovation to once again be central to the regional growth agenda. In short, this time we will see technology have a stronger impact on the world with the changes driven by a stronger sense of purpose, to enable wider socio-economic growth," reflects Amin. ■

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CULTURE-ALIGNED SHIFT HASTENS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Collaborative effort can help shift the culture to understand, embrace and advance digital transformation, thus reducing challenges and roadblocks.

SANDRINE MOUSTAFA EL KHODRY, Vice President Middle East and Africa, Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise.

> With pandemic in place, the business model is now 40% to 50% OpEx versus CapEx to allow users to pay on usage

The business environment is changing from being just profitable to being more socially responsible. Across the region, businesses either thrive or struggle depending on their ability to quickly adapt to evolving ways of working. In addition, they need to have the capacity for supporting and motivating their staff throughout an incredibly challenging period.

Digital transformation takes more than technology alone. Business continuity has become the main concern of all companies, and working from anywhere is crucial today. Organisations are obliged to follow the evolving trend to survive.

Business continuity mixed with agility and real-time service becomes the new way of dealing with businesses. Implementing this should take into account culture, especially in Middle East and Africa, MEA, where culture has a significant impact on doing business. In order to do business together, people need to meet, exchange ideas, and discuss. They can now rely on digital tools, but this can never replace the human contact which this region is known for.

Nearly 30% of companies with successful digital transformations offer training programmes that cover not just technical skills, but also new behaviours and mindsets. One related key to transformation success is establishing practices related to working in flexible ways. As organisations prepare for and work through a digital transformation, it is vital to create a culture in which everyone is tech-savvy. But digital transformation calls for more than just updating technology or redesigning products.

Failure to align the effort with employee values and behaviours can create additional risks to an organisation's culture, if not managed properly. In contrast, a comprehensive and collaborative effort can help shift the culture to understand, embrace, and advance digital transformation. A culture-aligned transformation reduces challenges and avoids roadblocks.

Leaders can focus on messages communicating the cultural attributes that may help the efforts succeed, including transparency, accountability, and a willingness to experiment. Employees may be understandably apprehensive about the reopening of workplaces, and leaders need to listen carefully to what they are saying and feeling.

Effective leaders will formulate a clear vision of the transformation and effectively communicate it throughout the organisation on an ongoing basis. Companies are going to need to reframe their futures around very different digital behaviours. It is crucial to create a culture where everyone is tech-savvy, and where risk is everyone's business. With better preparation and more warning of potential disruptions, you adapt much faster. ■

CAN ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL STRATEGY DRIVE BUSINESS IN PANDEMIC

When selling products in over fifty countries, one strategy would not work equally across all markets as business differs across regions and segments.

OMAR FAKHRI,
Director, EMEA
Component Channel, AMD.

The team has adapted to this new world and continued to work hard throughout the pandemic. To be able to manage personal lives, work lives, and all the changes, is truly impressive. Proud of the initiatives with which AMD has been involved, such as the COVID HPC fund. On April 15, 2020, AMD announced the AMD COVID-19 HPC Fund to provide research institutions with computing resources to accelerate medical research on COVID-19 and other diseases.

One thing that quickly became obvious in 2020 was that one strategy would not work equally across all markets. Talking about the experience of selling products in over fifty countries, and the business differs across regions, as well as between segments.

During the second quarter of 2020, a massive increase in demand for premium technology products were seen in the established Electronic Retail, E-tail, channels. However, in some of the emerging markets with less established online sales platforms, an initial slowdown was seen. This was followed by a resurgence as they developed new platforms to support the increased level of demand.

As such, the top priorities for the remainder of 2021 are enthusiast gaming, Authentication, Authorisation and Accounting, AAA, system integration and working closely with the partners, whether in the consumer space, commercial Small and Medium Business, SMB, segment and high-end desktop or workstations. Now, more than ever, there is an incredible focused on driving AMD's business into these market segments and with continued support to the specialist channel partners who specialise. It is going to be an exciting year.

A concerted effort is made to listen to the needs of the customers and ensure that every support is offered to them that they need remotely. The lines of communication clear and fully embraced virtual engagements for training opportunities. The AMD Arena, a one-stop-shop where partners can receive product training, marketing assets and everything else they need to support their business.

Sustainability objectives can and should be integrated within digital and business transformation initiatives. In fact, moving forward

> It became obvious in 2020 that one strategy would not work equally across all markets

digitally will have little success in the near future if it is not done sustainably. In order to integrate objectives into one's business, it is firstly important to establish a clear aim, whether that's increasing your use of renewable energy sources, upholding a responsible supply chain or fostering a culture of diversity, inclusion and belonging, for example.

Once these objectives have been established, it is important to engage your business partners and customers, as well as communicate these goals throughout your organisation and develop conditions that are constantly supporting sustainability-related innovations so that they become engrained into everyday life.

AMD recently announced the publication of its 26th annual Corporate Responsibility Report which highlights features of the four key Environmental, Social and Governance, ESG, strategic focus areas that guide the company's purpose-driven approach to high-performance computing: digital impact, environmental stewardship, supply chain responsibility, and

COMPOSABILITY ARE SHARP DIFFERENTIATORS IN BUSINESS

Organisations prioritise flexibility, embrace agile applications that enable capabilities to quickly deploy new technologies efficiently within hours.

NIDAL ABOU-LTAIF, President, Avaya International.

It is no secret that there are seeing huge transformations taking place across almost every business sector. A lot of that was brought on by the pandemic, which forced businesses to go digital, and showed us there is no one-size-fits-all model for the new ways of delivering experiences. But the transformation has since been sustained by the fact that enterprises realise that their customers and employees expect personalised experiences, wherever they are, and however they are choosing to interact.

This is very obvious at the regional level, where you have governments setting out their visions for a post-pandemic world, and the private sector is following. The UAE aiming to build a dynamic economy in the world, with significant investments being made in upskilling young talent and creating a nation of coders. Likewise, Saudi Arabia is investing $1.2 Billion in technology initiatives.

And organisations are now looking to answer the question of how they can keep up with all of this change. They recognise the challenges and opportunities within the world, and they understand that delivering unforgettably positive experiences is among the most powerful differentiators for businesses today.

To deliver those experiences in a new world, and to really make this forced digital transformation count, regional organisations are moving towards a composable approach. To keep up with these ever-changing customer expectations, businesses providing great experiences are not satisfied with monolithic, apps in a cloud world. Instead, they need solutions that can be composed, as needed, regardless of whether the application sits on-premises or in the cloud.

This pivot is towards customisation is exactly right. Today, businesses are looking at how they can deliver a Total Experience to their customers, encompassing an entire customer journey from web enquiry to after-sales support and beyond. When today's consumers connect with organisations, they want experiences that are simple and seamless. If the company that they are counting on cannot provide them with what they need, these customers will go find another company that can. And the only way to satisfy these customers is by addressing the Total Experience and composing personalised customer journeys for them.

It is known that consumer and employee demands are constantly changing. And, despite the positive environment now, with the end of the pandemic in sight, the current situation can still be fluid. So, for a business it can be difficult to keep pace and be flexible, especially if you are using older technology that prevents you from quickly rolling out new services.

That is why regional organisations are prioritising flexibility above anything else. They are embracing agile, services-based applications with large ecosystems that enable capabilities to be quickly composed as and when needed. And the composability of the technology is the key, it is no longer good enough to say that a deployment will take six months. You need to be able to deploy new technologies and capabilities within hours. ■

> Customers and employees expect personalised experiences, wherever they are, and however they are choosing to interact

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE INDUSTRIAL WORLD

The pandemic has fast-forwarded digital transition of the industrial sector by five years and several technologies are set to underpin a sustainable future.

RAVI GOPINATH, Chief Strategy Officer and Chief Cloud Officer, AVEVA.

As the world begins to recalibrate itself after the pandemic, businesses have undergone a radical and irreversible shake up of the status quo. The crisis, while extraordinarily unprecedented and challenging, offered radical insights into running and optimising organisations in unpredictable times. Put simply, the crisis showed how oil and gas enterprise operations could be upended almost overnight.

Workforce routines, supply chains, essential maintenance and parts movement were disrupted, while border closures and an unprecedented drop in demand squeezed already tight economic operations. To thrive in this brave new world, energy players were compelled to respond with transformative action.

As such, the crisis has fast-forwarded the digital transition of the industrial sector by around five years. Several developing technologies are set to underpin a sustainable, optimised and streamlined future for the energy industry.

CLOUD

The industrial sector is rapidly digitising. Companies that were initially hesitant to migrate to the cloud were compelled to make their move amid the pandemic, and now they are seeing transformational benefits. Cloud adoption is accelerating rapidly globally – industrial data volumes are set to treble in the next four years, topping 159 Zettabytes by 2024, according to IDC data.

Energy giants like BP, Shell and Equinor are all accelerating their cloud programs, while Chevron is set to go cloud-only this year. By leveraging Cloud, companies can integrate standalone products, linking AI modules together into a broader intelligence for more efficient performance. With integrated systems comes integrated analysis.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

As AI becomes more sophisticated, with wider use cases, it allows organisations to improve productivity and make better decisions. With unified smart analytics that bridge complete data stacks, teams can leverage mathematical thought processes across all their activities. A recent IDC report predicts that in accelerating digitisation efforts, worldwide spending on AI systems will reach $98 billion by 2023, more than two and a half times the spend in 2019.

MACHINE LEARNING

By leveraging the power of machine learning, it is also possible to transform asset performance. Using a knowledge graph – a data map of the entire asset that uses AI and machine learning to build connections – the software comes to understand over time the critical processes and components needed for optimum asset management. The knowledge graph uses this information to help define the asset's safe operating envelope, and to automatically notify the owner of key thresholds for safety, performance or other metrics are being met or exceeded.

CONNECTED WORKFORCE

The impact of pandemic-driven worker lockdowns has forced industrial organisations across the globe to rapidly accelerate their migration to digital. With the help of technologies like cloud, the industrial internet of things, digital twins, and AI, companies are overcoming supply chain, production, and distribution complexity obstacles by linking core processes into a unified remote digital environment.

For example, ENEL, an Italian multinational energy company, recently developed a semi-autonomous plant using AVEVA digital twin technologies. This enabled them to transition 30,000 of their workers in Italy to a remote working model literally overnight. Key information from their core on-site systems was migrated to the cloud without any disruption to their operations. ■

PANDEMIC DRIVING AWARENESS OF NEW WAYS OF WORKING

Businesses are now prioritising new initiatives to drive digitalisation into channels to increase customer satisfaction, and to enter new markets.

MARIO THOMAS, Head of Experience-Based Acceleration, EMEA, at Amazon Web Services.

The pandemic has been one of the most significant drivers of accelerated digital transformations, with businesses on average accelerating their plans by 29 months. But underlying this is also increasingly demanding customers with lower tolerances of poor experiences, and with lower switching costs.

Modern businesses have recognised both the need to adopt new technology at pace, and that traditional organisational structures and philosophies have become a barrier to innovation at scale. Consequentially we are seeing more businesses break down siloes focused on just one part of the value chain into teams organised around lines of businesses and outcomes.

These teams can quickly gain and react to customer feedback, iterating and releasing products rapidly. This requires increased collaboration, transparency to data, and a culture that genuinely focuses on the customer, in turn driving the accelerated adoption of enabling technologies such as the cloud, data analytics, and machine learning.

There is also a heightened awareness around reducing overhead by not just turning analogue back-office processes into digital equivalents, but fundamentally rethinking them. But this comes with the backdrop of a skills shortage which will ultimately impact businesses' ability to execute. Executives know that they, and their workforce, need to continually upskill to continue to meet demands.

Many businesses accelerated transformations to survive the pandemic, considering it a black swan event after which normality will return. In reality the pace of societal, regulatory, and consumer changes will continue at pace, creating a never normal in which companies need to learn to sense, adapt, and respond quickly to thrive.

Executives should formalise programs to increase workforce mobility and remote working; prioritise meaningful environmental, social and governance efforts; accelerate value-capture from data using AI ML and analytics to drive operational efficiencies and customer insights; upskill the workforce from the Board down to retain and capitalise on their talent to provide a constant pipeline of new and improved services, and rethink their customers' experiences while removing bureaucratic barriers to productivity.

> We are seeing more businesses break down siloes into teams organised around lines of businesses and outcomes

Transformation and sustainability are interlinked. Both are lived pursuits of dynamically responding to changes in the environments in which businesses operate, with increased transparency and a focus on positive outcomes. With the move to hybrid and remote working, the use of cloud rather than home grown IT solutions, and customers increasingly demanding digital channels to engage with, businesses have an opportunity to significantly reduce the impact they have on the environment

A study by 451 Research found that AWS's infrastructure is 3.6 times more energy efficient than the median of surveyed enterprise data centers, with more than two thirds of this advantage due to a more energy efficient server population and higher server utilisation. The principles of digital transformations including clarity of vision, a unifying culture, rapid experimentation, and an outcome-based focus, lend themselves well to driving meaningful investments in sustainability and carbon footprint reduction. ■

COMPLEMENT IN-HOUSE EXPERTISE TO EMBED DIGITAL MODEL

Embedding digital at the core of the organisation contributes to sustainability leading to less physical waste and decreased need for travel.

RAMI RIAD MOURTADA,
Partner and Associate Director,
Boston Consulting Group, BCG.

The rise in digital transformation has renewed attention to putting technology and data in concert with human interaction

A definitive recent change has been the greatly increased regional consumer adoption of digital channels for almost all products and services, broadly driven by COVID-19 accelerating an existing trend.

This has led to companies having to better digitise their offerings front-to-back to keep up, based on a better, first-hand understanding of the material advantages a proper digitisation and datacentric approach provides, whether in new customer offerings or optimised internal processes. This has been a strong driver in putting digital transformation even further at the top of Leaders' agendas, and crystalised the important role digital plays at the core of organisations' continuing viability and resilience.

The rising digital transformation mandate has heightened the focus on internal gaps and customer pain-points across organisations' processes and operations, and has driven renewed attention to importance of putting technology and data, in concert with human interaction, at the centre of the organisation.

Thus, a transformation is needed towards what we at BCG call the Bionic Company, one that seamlessly connects strategy, operating model, and offerings in an agile, platform-focused, and customer-centric way, leading to further outcomes in new business growth, additional capabilities, and enhanced offerings.

While there are some variations in technology priorities, for example across sectors and between SMEs and large multinationals, a common set of new digital-driven capabilities is key for any company aspiring to be Bionic. These include revised automated customer-facing processes and channels, enhanced internal technology-driven platforms with embedded Artificial Intelligence, AI, and advanced data analytics, and new design and development skills across key teams.

There are still viable opportunities for partnerships, the aim there should be to complement, and not replace, sufficient in-house capabilities to properly drive the transformation and embed the new digital operating model.

For top leadership: first, directing a rapid assessment of where the organisation stands in the digital transformation journey overall, identifying key capability gaps and major pain-points; and second, agreeing a strategic activation roadmap to accelerate the digital transformation in a phased Bionic approach that ties technology, data and human skills, and which deploys pilots to test, refine and build momentum with emerging results.

For technology leadership: it is imperative that a vision be developed for the target platform landscape that underpins the new digital operating model, aiming to streamline technology and data foundations for key offerings, processes and channels, end-to-end.

However, the criticality of sustainability as an organisation's collective responsibility means that independent cross-cutting initiatives are still needed to coordinate and ensure impact holistically. ■

E-COMMERCE MAKES A SHARP SHIFT TO USER EXPERIENCES

User experiences are the key focus in E-commerce with technologies like AI, data analytics and security gaining prominence for business growth.

RANJITH KAIPPADA, Managing Director, Cloud Box Technologies.

Companies need to shift to integrating data analysis to optimise business workflow and operational efficiency

It is not just about change, but the rapid pace at which it is taking place that has a direct impact of how digital transformation is shifting the way businesses operate and varies according to industry needs. Many organisations were forced to experiment with new technologies, processes and systems over the last few months.

Overall, the changes are not limited to utilisation of technologies, but it has also accelerated the way businesses are placing the right leaders to enable digital transformation changes, making stronger investments in talent and skill development, changes in organisational and business model transformation as well as process and domain transformation.

Emphasis is being laid on making employees more effective, strengthening security, making faster business decisions and building more effective business partnerships.

Many Gulf Cooperation Council, GCC, countries have very high Internet penetration levels where customer expectations and demands are increasingly in search of instant service delivery. Many organisations have invested and implemented digital technology to ensure that they remain relevant in a highly competitive environment.

However, more companies need to be able to take advantage of machine learning and predictive analytics to help them gain accurate insights that will help them deliver much more impactful communication and customer services. Additionally, focus also needs to shift to integrating data analysis to optimise business workflow and operational efficiency.

Every business sector is engaged in integrating digital technologies. This is not only changing the mode of operations, but is making sharp shifts in customer experiences and value gains. User experiences are now a key focus. Electronic Commerce, E-commerce, which is thriving in the region, is a strong adopter of digitisation and the key is to ensure that employee skillsets are developed to further the business growth.

From technical advancement knowledge to customer communication, technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, AI, data analytics, security, are gaining prominence.

Alongside prioritising data over documents, action plans have and must include data privacy and security. While some industries were resilient to the effects of the pandemic, others such as travel, hospitality and events are questioning their viability and how they plan to sustain themselves.

Many organisations are equipping themselves with good leadership, strengthening the Information Technology, IT, needs, adapting the new normal and strategising on the future of the business. More importantly they are looking at assessing and becoming more prepared to tackle sudden changes as well as to enable themselves to make sharper and quicker decisions and use the resources on hand more effectively.

There is a growing interdependency between business progression and sustainability and more organisations are incorporating their sustainability strategy within the over business plans. From Cloud computing to resource planning and usage to new work from home initiatives are all helping in lowering the carbon footprint. ■

REDESIGN FOR DIGITAL AGE WITH CUSTOMER CENTRICITY

Restructuring happens across people, culture and technology to leverage data-driven insights and make rapid changes in response to market fluctuations.

WALID YEHIA,
Senior Director, Presales for MERAT,
Dell Technologies.

The impact and changes over the last 18 months have been all-pervasive and felt by businesses of all sizes. One of the definitive and earliest changes in the wake of the pandemic was a shift in working model, as overnight organisations moved to a remote or hybrid model. This proved to be a viable and efficient solution for organisations as they were able to leverage latest technological infrastructure to serve their customers efficiently.

For instance, through hybrid cloud, businesses were able to unify their environments and scale their working model to align with their business needs. Employees were able to respond to new work challenges and remain engaged contributors in their organisations.

Digital transformation, hence, is more than a disruptive technology. It represents value, flexibility and innovation in legacy systems. It is a key driver for building a data-powered business, a new revenue source, and a necessity in today's digital era.

The customer experience is increasingly becoming important. Optimising end-to-end customer journeys, operational flexibility and innovation are key to remaining competitive. Legacy systems can hold organisations' back, and agility is crucial in these times of fast shifts. There needs to be a fluidity between IT and other functions within the organisations.

Restructuring needs to happen not just across technology but also from top to bottom, including culture and people, to be able to embrace and adapt to these changes successfully. It is really about redesigning the organisation for the digital age and focusing on customer centricity. Having the ability to leverage data-driven insights to make rapid changes in response to market fluctuations will be necessary for regional organisations moving forward.

Chief Information Officers, CIOs, when prioritising infrastructure are increasingly looking at three main factors, namely value, people and optimisation. They want to know the value the upgrade will bring to the customer, how it will empower their workforces, and how best an organisation can adapt and optimise their assets for long-term returns and sustainability.

Current and future shifts are often a result of several factors, often occurring simultaneously and require immediate attention. Before undergoing an overhaul, however, decision makers need to be flexible and adapt to a new way of business by adjusting their digital agendas in terms of priorities to respond to and be open to embracing a culture of change in today's fast-evolving market dynamics.

Moving forward, organisations need to reimagine their business models to adapt to the post-pandemic world. This involves continuing their investments in digital and workforce transformation, with a simultaneous focus on customer centricity. While this has been key during the pandemic, keeping the momentum for digitisation will ensure agility and resiliency moving forward.

Incorporating updated cybersecurity and technologies like Cloud, Anything as a Service, XaaS, storage and Artificial Intelligence, AI, will remain priorities. Additionally, agile working models for workforce transformation are essential at maintaining productivity and business performance, as is utilising data and analytics for better informed decision making and solutions. ■

> A definitive change in the wake of the pandemic was a shift in working model, to a remote or hybrid

COUNTLESS REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS HAVE PURSUED RESTRUCTURING

In last 18 months regional organisations have pursued business continuity, digital technologies, equipped themselves with agility and other capabilities.

KARIM BENKIRANE, Chief Commercial Officer du.

Digital transformation acceleration has seen organisation's benefit from valuable reform in various ways. Technologies including Artificial Intelligence AI, Internet of Things IoT, Blockchain, 5G, and big data analytics have driven a complete digitalisation of business processes, leading to streamlined operations, efficient performance, and enhanced business models. Organisations are benefitting from improved resource management, faster time to market, and greater agility, resilience, and responsiveness.

At the same time, customer engagements have also improved. Through digital, customers are more satisfied with newfound ease, convenience, and empowerment, accessing services, acquiring products, and communicating with relevant teams seamlessly whenever required. du managed the pandemic by offering higher network capacity and 5 stars home experience to further facilitate the digital transformation.

The last 18 months were mentioned previously, and this is relevant again because, within this timeframe, countless regional organisations have already pursued comprehensive restructuring to ensure business continuity, adopt digital technologies, and equip themselves with agility and other capabilities.

These same organisations will be required to keep pace with emerging technologies and further transformation in due course. From a consumer standpoint alone, expectations are continuously evolving, with people demanding more and more personalisation and customisation. Furthermore, organisations currently lagging in their transformation journeys require additional restructuring success to survive and cater to customers.

Deciding which digital technologies to prioritise varies per enterprise. After all, enterprises have different commitments to honour and different objectives to fulfil. However, there have been several primary factors emerge which are commonly considered by enterprises from all sectors.

With operational sustainability imperative, many enterprises are analysing returns on investment ROI, assessing cybersecurity benefits, and exploring long-term competitive advantages that digital technologies can provide.

At the same time, other factors dictating which technologies are prioritised include complementing organisational culture and strategy, scalability, and efficiency outcomes, and whether they can solve persisting business problems and upcoming challenges.

While enterprises have navigated the pandemic, the digital landscape is evolving exponentially. New business requirements, challenges, and consumer demands will emerge, and leadership teams must pursue priority steps to continue building resilient enterprises in the future. In terms of productivity, enterprises must continue online platforms migration, hastening decision-making processes, increasing operational efficiency, and innovating operating models.

Regarding the workplace, enterprises should explore critical competencies employees will need to collaborate in hybrid environments as a blend of remote and office learning is here to stay. Employees should also be skilled in all new digital technologies integrated with the business moving forward.

Already, sustainability and carbon reduction commitments are being met following integration with digital transformation initiatives. For example, reduced reliance on paper and printing lowers carbon emissions, digital platforms enable customers to interact and transact online rather than traveling to offices to conduct business in person, and remote working is eliminating daily commutes and the emissions that accompany personal travel.

However, independent initiatives also represent a prudent way to meet related objectives. Enterprises could, for example, launch employee awareness programs and take additional steps to lower waste reduction. ■

DIGITALISATION WITH AI WILL REDUCE CARBON EMISSION

While AI optimises delivery and route management, and reduces carbon emissions, digitisation bundles and connects data across the supply chain.

BURAK ERTUNA, CIO, DHL Global Forwarding, MEA.

Robotics, Big Data analytics, ML, IoT, wireless play a critical role in supply chains

The regional logistics sector is in the midst of a transformational phase, accentuated by an exponential increase in Electronic Commerce, E-commerce, and massive technological disruption across operations. Robotics and automation, Big Data analytics, machine learning, sensors, Internet of Things, IoT, and next-generation wireless play a critical role in the future of supply chains and are some of the changes being implemented in the wake of the pandemic.

In the logistics industry, organisations that fail to recognise the central role of digital adoption in their processes will be left behind. The goal for organisations should be to build a supply chain that is both automated and agile, capable of sensing, adapting, and learning as supply and demand conditions change. Customers are quickly coming to appreciate the benefits of faster delivery, higher service levels, and clear communication.

Alongside digitalisation, logistics companies must pay close attention to a human-centred approach to innovation. Digital systems need people to build, maintain, and improve them, and supply chain operations require close and continual collaboration between people and machines.

The rise of the expectation economy, where consumers expect their E-commerce orders to be delivered within a matter of hours has spurred E-commerce giants to build their own logistics digital platforms and regional footprint to handle the surge in volumes, as retail commerce moves online.

One-stop customer portals ensure that customers have full visibility, control, and access to all relevant information. These digital platforms do away with the need to print documents.

Completely transparent management of freight rates, offers, transport modes, carbon emissions, and all other relevant shipment data is readily available with just a few clicks and can be downloaded in detailed analyses and reports. Last-mile delivery, a crucial component of E-commerce fulfilment, can be made more efficient with the deployment of AI and automation.

Dealing with the pandemic has taught business leaders the importance of adaptability and its linkage to resilience. They have been pushed to reconstruct their organisation's crisis operations while fundamentally reimagining strategies and business models.

Digitalisation combined with AI can increase sustainability in logistics operations. For example, AI can optimise delivery and route management, thus speeding up deliveries, improving efficiency and reducing carbon emissions. Digitisation bundles and connects the available data across the supply chain, a process that is an important factor contributing to sustainability.

For example, DHL Global Forwarding's myDHLi tool, which is a fully integrated online platform for freight forwarding customers, provides complete visibility in the management of freight rates, offers, transport modes, carbon emissions, and other relevant shipment data.

Other tools such as a carbon calculator, also launched by DHL Global Forwarding as part of their goal to achieve zero carbon emissions globally by 2050, helps predict transport-related emissions for almost all shipment sizes and modes of transport, and provides alternatives to reduce or even completely neutralise the carbon emissions by using sustainable marine fuels. ■

CAN NETWORK AGILITY ALLOW BUSINESSES TO CAPITALISE

An Agile approach to network makes operations manageable and predictable, and allows businesses to capitalise on digital transformation investments.

KAMEL AL-TAWIL, Managing Director for Middle East and North Africa, Equinix.

An agile IT environment adapts to ever-changing market conditions and ensures operational efficiency

With the pandemic forcing working models to shift from centralised to distributed ones, new challenges have emerged in the blink of an eye. As workloads move to the edge, enterprises are having to react swiftly and re-evaluate their business agendas. Among all the priorities, an agile Information Technology, IT, environment has become essential to help them adapt to ever-changing market conditions and ensure operational efficiency.

According to International Data Corporation, IDC, 65% of organisations have shifted to a digital-first model this year; and more significantly, 54% of organisations will increase their investment in technologies that can help them digitalise their businesses in the coming months.

Without any doubt, a fast-changing environment requires higher standards for security, adaptability and flexibility in IT operations and support. This is putting the spotlight on digital ecosystems, as they enable enterprises to work closely with service providers, partners, and customers to create efficient end-to-end business flows and deliver positive business outcomes.

Navigating the pace and growth of the digital landscape requires a network-wide transformation. Digital leaders are looking for ways to create and interconnect modern digital infrastructure by leveraging more agile network architectures to bridge legacy infrastructure with emerging digital technologies. Some of the approaches they are taking are scalability, interconnection to ecosystems, high availability, high performance, and security.

An agile, flexible approach to network makes changes and operations manageable, scalable, and predictable, while reducing costs. At Equinix, the network agility allows businesses to capitalise on their digital transformation investments and see top-line benefits. Arguably, network agility is the most important priority of today's digital leaders transforming their digital architectures.

Digitising infrastructure, improving network optimisation, and moving infrastructure to the digital edge are top priorities for EMEA organisations, according to the latest Global Interconnection Index, GXI, an annual market study published by Equinix.

Other top priorities reflected in the survey results include complying with data protection regulation, improving cybersecurity, and improving the user experience for customers and employees. Virtualisation helps companies address those priorities and gives them even more ways to access the right places, partners, and possibilities they need to create business advantage.

As the global business community adjusts its understanding of ownership and responsibility around climate change, sustainability and the uncertainties around COVID-19, leading datacentres are innovating around a few key areas to ensure continued progress on environmental sustainability.

The datacentre of the future is no longer just about space, time, and availability, it is about efficiency, innovation, and reliability for all stakeholders, from customers, investors, and employees to surrounding communities. ■

CROSS INDUSTRY AND PROJECT-BASED TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS

Factors such as cost, industry functionality, ability to achieve digital transformation, provide key comparison points between different solutions.

MEHMOOD KHAN, Managing Director and Vice President, Middle East and South Asia, IFS.

While digital transformation has its share of challenges, inside industrial environments these soar as projects must cut across onshore and offshore locations, multiple plants, and complex assets says Mehmood Khan, Managing Director and Vice President – Middle East and South Asia, IFS

The challenges of today's macro-economic disruption have failed to dampen digital transformation plans. According to a global research study from IFS, 52% of companies will increase their spending on digital transformation. While many people might assume that businesses would pull back on technology spending, the reality is that investment is increasing.

During these dynamic times, plans to increase spending on digital transformation tracks closely with concerns about economic conditions disrupting the business. In fact, people concerned with economic disruption are 20% more likely to increase spending on digital transformation.

Appetite for digital transformation initiatives is, however, not consistent across all geographies or industry verticals. Construction leads with 75% respondents saying they have plans to invest this year. Next is information technology and manufacturing companies.

On the other end of the spectrum, energy and utilities industries are more cautious, followed by retail. The construction industry, which has historically been a laggard when it comes to enabling technology, is investing heavily to catch up with more digitally mature sectors such as manufacturing.

Despite a widespread willingness to invest, digital transformation execution is fraught area for many decision-makers. The ability to deliver a measurable return on technology investment quickly, and to the satisfaction of internal stakeholders, is the number one concern for majority of decision-makers.

Many companies are wisely using the global downturn to divert resources to technological renewal and innovation. As most businesses are adapting to economic recovery, and not permanently scrapping digital transformation initiatives, there is reason to believe that companies with a progressive mindset toward technology investment will be well equipped to rebound.

While enterprise software will doubtlessly play a role in accelerating recovery, it is important to remember its vital role in helping companies here and now. Providing the necessary process transparency and analytics to ensure effective and informed decision-making is critical in these trying times.

So how should decision makers select enterprise software faced with economic and business challenges? When it comes to selecting enterprise software, most companies want to achieve efficiency improvement; reduce operational costs; and achieve digital transformation.

The application selection process is a chance to apply a rigorous evaluation of business requirements to ensure the ongoing success of the business. Factors such as cost, industry functionality, ability to achieve digital transformation, provide key comparison points between different solutions.

However, for many industrial decision makers managing complex projects, finding a software solution that meets requirements is not as simple as it seems. Often operating in disconnected and challenging environments, decision makers have come to rely on a patchwork of solutions and spreadsheets to run their operations.

The key reasons decision makers struggle to find a software solution that meets such requirements is that it will typically cut across industries and operate both onshore and offshore. It will include project management, services, construction, manufacturing, and asset maintenance. In such a complex, hybrid environment, finding the best fit solution that meets all the

COMBINING LEADERSHIP AND TRANSFORMATION FOR RESILIENT FUTURE

Organisations must be confident their enterprise networks will adapt to requirements, proactively protect the business, and be operationally efficient.

YAROB SAKHNINI, Vice President, Emerging Market EMEA, Juniper Networks.

It is clear that many organisations today are updating their IT environment to become more agile, and are looking to streamline their operations with simpler, less time-consuming, more resource-efficient networks. As a result, organisations are becoming increasingly focused on modernising their IT network environments by leveraging software-defined and intent-based network solutions.

Juniper Networks believes it can help to increase operational efficiencies for these organisations, for example, in the data center environment with the introduction of the recently announced Apstra 4.0.

The best digital strategy is one that includes optimising the deployment speed of applications and services and enhancing end-user experiences in a simple and efficient manner.

Juniper Networks is committed to experience-first networking, with enterprise solutions that leverage proactive automation, assured user experiences, agile cloud services and connected security to deliver the best end-user and operator experiences from client-to-cloud.

With the strategic acquisitions of 128 Technology and Apstra, Juniper Networks continue to deliver software-based solutions for enterprise customers.

Increasing numbers of enterprises today are recognising that consolidating computing workloads—including operational technology, communications technology, and information technology —can offer many benefits, particularly when cloud-native services are integrated into their infrastructure.

The key business considerations include:

- Gaining easy access to cloud-based services
- Improving business agility cost-effectively by converging operational technology, communications technology and information technology
- Unifying cloud operations in a secure, visible manner
- Lowering latency and increasing the availability of cloud-based solutions at the network edge.

As we continue to grapple with a world changed by COVID-19, organisations must combine strong leadership coupled with digital transformation initiatives to build a resilient enterprise for the future. Organisations must be confident that their enterprise networks will adapt to changing requirements, proactively secure and protect the business, be operationally efficient and deliver a superior user experience to employees, partners and customers.

> Organisations must combine strong leadership with digital transformation initiatives to build a resilient enterprise for the future

Environmental factors should be key considerations for businesses and technology leaders running next-generation companies. Juniper Networks is committed to play its part in enabling a sustainable energy future, striving to deliver efficiencies within its portfolio to help customers meet their ongoing energy reduction requirements.

Juniper helps customers maximise the utility of their infrastructure and minimise their energy consumption by delivering solutions that offer space, energy and cooling savings, and offer anywhere, anytime secure remote access. ■

GREENER TECHNOLOGY BOOSTS EFFICACY AND SAVES CAPITAL

Companies calculate carbon footprints, develop ESG programmes and provide smarter technology for a sustainable future for customers and communities.

CHRIS DOCHERTY,
Regional Manager,
Infrastructure Solutions Group,
ISG, Middle East, Lenovo.

Businesses must be data-centred to capitalise on the growing data economy

The world is facing significant challenges and our future is not clear. Healthcare, education, the environment, and the global economy have been challenged in unprecedented ways. For doctors, teachers, scientists, and business leaders to tackle these issues, their success increasingly depends on a second group, the Information Technology, IT, Leaders.

Lenovo's solutions have been designed for these deployment scenarios, with features such as end-to-end data management that is architected and implemented for requirements from the edge to core, to the cloud; encrypted data protection and protection of data at motion, at rest, and in the cloud; integration with leading public cloud platforms and enterprise applications and workloads; and intelligence and automation to ease implementation, and support for embedded analytics for future-proofed data management, delivering superior long-term economic and operational value to the organisation.

Organisations do not necessarily need to restructure themselves, but they do need to prepare themselves and their people to take advantage of technologies and data. Lenovo believes it is time for businesses to become data-centred and to capitalise on the growing data economy.

In this new economy, all businesses are data businesses, and every employee works in a data ecosystem. A data strategy, focusing on skills, literacy, and analysis, therefore, needs to be put at the heart of your organisation to reap the value of transformative technologies while protecting what really drives competitive advantage, your people.

Every business will have its own unique circumstances that will influence its digital transformation agenda and the technologies that it chooses to prioritise. There are some factors that are consistent across most organisations, such as the need to stay competitive, securing data, and managing growing volumes of data in a way that allows companies to use that data to create value.

What matters most is that organisations have underlying data management strategies and infrastructure that are designed with the flexibility to meet the demands of changeable and complex requirements, with scalability to grow and adapt as business priorities change.

Lenovo's global research study, The Future of Work and Digital Transformation, shows that many companies of all sizes face a range of concerns due to having switched to a distributed workforce, working from office and home. Managing data security and privacy policies was the top challenge faced by IT leaders in the Future of Work study, followed closely by concerns about cybersecurity.

Overall, greener technologies have been seen to significantly improve efficiency and save money. Consumers respond positively to environmentally conscious companies and are willing to pay a premium to support greener brands.

As such, it is crucial for companies to calculate carbon footprints and develop Environmental, Social and Governance, ESG, programmes to provide smarter technology that builds a more sustainable future for customers, communities, and the planet. ■

DATA IS THE NUCLEUS DRIVING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Cloud unleashes the power of data ensuring smooth dataflow, data mobility, cloud adoption and establishes business strategies for a true data fabric.

FADI KANAFANI, Managing Director, Middle East, NetApp.

Security postures protect intellectual property and data to ensure compliance with privacy laws and policies

The pandemic has indeed been a life and business disruptor over the past 18 months and equally a digital transformation accelerator that will continue to impact people's lives and businesses alike in the future. The challenge, however, has been in the pace of execution and readiness to transform into the new normal. Many organisations were caught unprepared and suffered as a result.

Other organisations were able to not only sustain their businesses, but also thrive exceptionally well through the digital services that enabled the delivery of differentiated customer experiences. For example, E-commerce accelerated exponentially in addition to all the associated functions related to it from application and web development, contact centres, warehousing, logistics, etc.

Resisting change is a typical and natural human behaviour. Organisations ought to harness the unwelcome change that has come unexpectedly to impact their business, go-to-market strategies, marketing plans, working models, etc. As such, adaptability, and agility to the new normal is key to navigate successfully.

For example, at the peak of the pandemic NetApp has supported financial organisations make a successful transition to the cloud, fully or partially, to maintain a positive business motion and support clients remotely. Those experiences were successful because the customers had adopted a culture of innovation and a true sense of being digitally data-driven, irrespective of where the resources live.

Depending on the type of industry and where an organisation is on its digital transformation journey, determines the ease or complexity of such restructure even though there are many examples of businesses running without missing a beat and delivering positive business outcomes and customer experience despite the pandemic.

Considering the rapid changes experienced recently, it has become of paramount importance to consider many factors ahead of embarking on digital technologies. Although the journey should not be a costly affair, it could be that the transformation is a knee jerk reaction to the unfolding events and executed for the sake of placing a tick in the box.

The remote workplace, for example, necessitated that organisation reconsider their Information Technology, IT, infrastructure to serve all their users with the same speed and agility expected as if they were on premises.

Leveraging cloud resources and consuming IT as a service, ITaaS, as well was necessary to provide the scalability that the business needs to support innovation, while keeping

UAE has carbon reduction initiatives as an integral part of smart cities strategy and its social responsibility

the cost down by moving from Capital Expenditure, CapEx, models to Operational Expenditure, OpEx, and paying for the service only when required as you pay for the utility bill.

Additionally, as cyberattacks rose exponentially, security postures needed overhauling not only to protect own intellectual property and data, but also to ensure compliance with global standards and privacy laws and policies. Adding to that was an evolution in the supply chain systems developed from the factory to the consumer with everything in between.

As a result, real AI use cases in life are experienced through the introduction of chatbots in several industries, machine, and deep learning in more complex scenarios in healthcare, retail, banking, or even national security. All of it to attain the best customer experience and happiness whilst controlling cost.

And lastly, as organisations embarked on their own respective transformation, in-house skills and employee self-development became essential to cope with the changes and deliver value and relevance back to the organisation.

There is a saying: what does not kill you, makes you stronger. The adversity imposed by the pandemic has been the catalyst to many learnings, some of which would be great case studies for academia. The old myth of IT in an organisation being a cost centre has been totally debunked. Top executives are now evaluating all available options to leverage so that they become data-driven since most are looking for that extra competitive edge.

Heads of technology should be considering implementing cloud enabled datacentres based on a complete data-fabric architecture that will allow for seamless dataflow from core to edge to cloud. The heads of business should partner closely with the technology heads to drive cost of operation down, break traditional siloes, improve efficiencies, become more agile, re-visit security posture to meet new remote workplace challenges, consider data regulations and compliance, whilst building a resilient Disaster Recovery, DR, and business continuity strategy in support of the business.

From being a cloud-averse environment to becoming home to all the major Hyperscalers and several local cloud service providers in the Middle East, cloud adoption has been on the rise and it is looking very promising in terms of unleashing the power of data to enable digital transformation projects. IT consumption has changed and organisations are now seriously considering service business models which directly ties into having the right IT architecture that is cloud enabled.

Reducing carbon footprint can definitely be integrated within a digital and a business transformation initiative. The UAE is a living example of many such initiatives. As a matter of fact, the UAE government has sustainability and carbon reduction initiatives as an integral part of smart cities strategy and its social responsibility and development.

The latest and successful example was announced last year by MORO Hub who launched the first Tier 3 datacentre in the Middle East that is carbon-neutral and completely runs on renewable energy exceeding 100 megawatts.

Similarly, Masdar City in Abu Dhabi is great use case in terms of carbon footprint reduction in a smart city. Such examples demonstrate that digital and business transformation projects should not be siloed, but integrated in a comprehensive forward and future looking digital strategy. ■

Technology heads must implement cloud enabled datacentres for seamless dataflow from core to edge to cloud

COMPANIES MUST EVOLVE TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE AND GET BETTER

Effective change management helps companies identify opportunities to gain a competitive advantage through reduced costs, specialisation, and innovation.

ADRIAN PICKERING, Regional General Manager MENA, Red Hat.

The future of work will be highly virtual.

Despite technology being pivotal for pre-outbreak business competitiveness and government effectiveness, the pandemic has since impacted related decision-making significantly and companies' continuity plans did not fully address pandemic variables.

Typical operational contingency plans are intended for events such as natural disasters, cyber incidents, and power outages. They do not consider potential widespread quarantines, school closures, and travel restrictions for a global health emergency.

Consequently, most public, and private organisations had to appoint a technology leader to manage the crisis. Leveraging technology to create a data analysis and decision-making framework and run simulation exercises has proven essential for business continuity.

Companies must evolve continually to remain competitive and get better at what they do. Organisational change, enabled by technology, is a key component of this transformation process. Effective change management helps companies identify opportunities to gain a competitive advantage through reduced costs, specialisation, and innovation. Furthermore, increased service quality and change to the organisation and related practices is fundamental to this process.

As with any form of organisational overhaul, digital transformations are typically driven by change agents who understand organisation's purpose, the power of available technologies, and actively seek out useful new technologies to enable this transformation.

Transforming digitally to improve company performance revolves around five factors: leadership, capability building, empowering workers, upgrading tools, and communication. Red Hat supports companies on their digital transformation journeys, recommending certain areas are considered before embarking on projects.

The first is assessing organisational readiness based on the success factors previously mentioned and paying particular attention to cross-organisational process boundaries. The second is examining the processes used by IT and other groups while looking for potential gaps that could slow progress. Thirdly, companies should consider investing in people and changing leadership when necessary to ensure workforces are comfortable with inevitable change and disruption.

Red Hat observes three key themes emerging. Firstly, the future of work will be highly virtual. Secondly, work from home is here to stay. Here, two major technology trends will accelerate in the post-COVID-19 world – touchless technologies and highly automated robots that augment human tasks, namely robotic automation, and AI. Furthermore, many touchless technologies will emerge due to robots, IoT, and 5G becoming increasingly available.

New devices and technologies will be designed with touchless-first or minimal human intervention principles. And in addition, computer simulation and biotech will also become more prominent.

A sustainable company attracts new talents, customers, and investors. Moreover, integrating climate actions in business strategy, communicating transparently, and demonstrating social and environment governance provides competitive advantages.

With a sustainable business, companies will also drastically reduce energy usage, waste production, and costs. When companies fail to assume responsibility, the opposite can happen, leading to issues like environmental degradation, inequality, and social injustice. ■

DATA IS THE CORE DIGITAL FUNCTION DRIVING OVERHAUL

Data must be collected, retained, analysed to reach the business' peak potential, upscaling staff to understand complexities of navigating such systems.

SAIFUDDIN KHWAJA, Senior Sales Director at Western Digital.

Whilst the digital environment has been constantly changing in the Middle East over the last few years, the pandemic ushered in, by necessity, a degree of digital transformation that is unprecedented for the region in both its scale and scope. The rapid acceleration of digital across both private and public sectors alike forced the roll out of digital systems and placed connected technology and data storage at the forefront of adoption.

The next few years should be an exciting time for smart technology providers in the Middle East. As various technologies continue to evolve so will the data storage needs and how to get the best value from it. Specialised storage is therefore necessary to create optimum value from IoT data, which must be considered when building out the wider data infrastructure.

The implementation of the right storage infrastructure and technology and subsequent education on them will help consumers to feel that their information is more secure and remove doubt around these technologies.

The core digital function that is driving most internal infrastructure overhauls is data. Data must be efficiently collected, retained, and analysed to reach the business' peak potential, upscaling staff to understand the complexities of navigating such systems. Therefore, digital businesses must be prepared to manage and mitigate any event where there is potential for data to be corrupted or lost.

Data protection in the modern enterprise is seeing fast-paced changes often requiring a new approach and strategy. As we move towards a more regulated world, it is also necessary to remain compliant with data privacy regulations and eDiscovery requests. Data must also be protected from loss, disasters, and cyber-threats.

Successfully adopting a cloud strategy will help businesses end up with a more powerful, cost effective and highly reliable solution for long-term data retention and a robust platform that can respond to new capacity or hardware challenges in a flexible manner and facilitate data forever.

Business leaders need to look at the bigger picture of data as an enterprise asset because when a company's data strategy is aligned with their business strategy, better business decisions can happen. Data infrastructure is critical in our digital world as data must be stored and analysed quickly, efficiently, and securely. Thus, data architectures need to go beyond simple data capture and storage to data transformation and creating business value.

> Many businesses, still use general-purpose architecture to manage their IoT data

Many businesses, however, still use general-purpose architecture to manage their IoT data. This architecture does not fully meet the varying needs of IoT applications and workloads for consumers and enterprises. Therefore, businesses must move from general-purpose storage to purpose-built data storage and different solutions for different needs.

Taking on transformative digital solutions should not mean sacrificing sustainable initiatives, in fact, it should do the opposite. It should mean building the foundation for data, giving people new ways of utilising technology like never. ■

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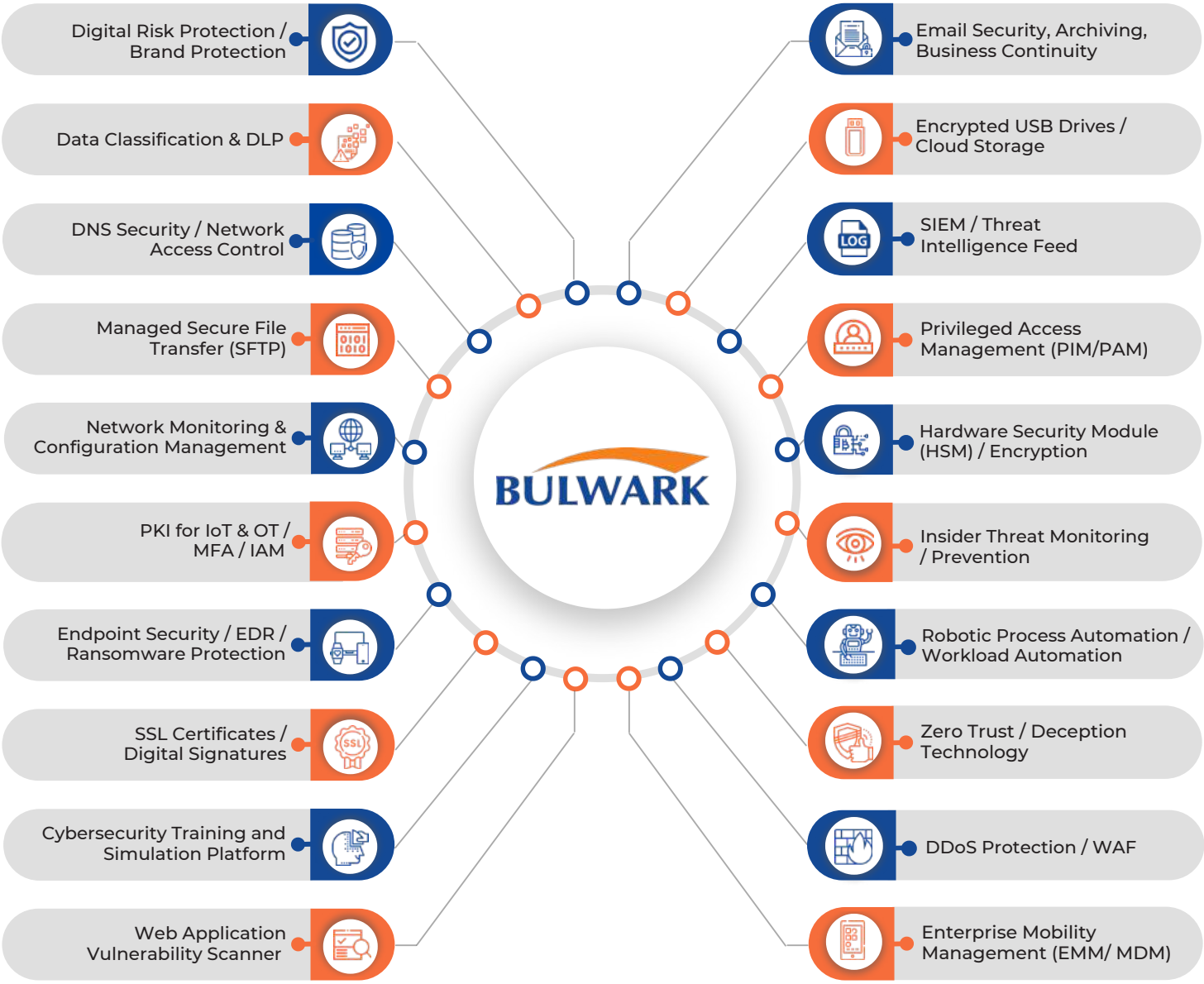

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37% GCC residents looking for quality family time during travel, Yas Island survey

Yas Island, one of the world's leading leisure and entertainment hubs, recently conducted a survey to discover what GCC residents really want when planning a vacation. The research, which surveyed almost 900 participants across the region – including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar as well as Kuwait - comes as regional border restrictions ease.

GCC residents revealed that the number one thing they were looking for in vacation was being able to spend time with their family, with 37% sharing that they are seeking quality family time during their travels, with 47% of GCC travellers citing family activities as a must-have when travelling abroad. Almost half of over 45-year-olds hoped to spend much deserved time with family members during a holiday.

With Yas Island's extensive range of attractions for the whole family, vacationers can experience a destination like no other and enjoy the wide diversity of rides, hotels, retail and dining outlets available on Yas Island.

Researchers also found that over one-third of GCC residents are looking to escape into a world of relaxation when heading on a vacation. Holidaymakers based in Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia look for a relaxing vacation, with 47%, 37%, 33% and 31% of respondents respectively sharing that they prioritise rest and relaxation.

Additionally, 46% of survey respondents stated that a great beach was a must-have during a vacation in the UAE. With world-class hotels, stunning beaches, and more, all offered at Yas Island, there are few better spots in the UAE to be able to relax on.

UAE on upward trajectory for sustainable investing but adoption lower than global, Standard Chartered

Standard Chartered's latest survey, the Sustainable Investing Review 2021, shows that there is a heightened desire to leave a positive legacy in the UAE in the area of sustainable investing, with 74% of investors in the UAE reporting this is important compared to 65% overall.

The majority of UAE investors prefer investments that have a strong, credible story, with this being a pivotal factor for 70% of UAE respondents compared to 58% overall. The key to reaching the tipping point for sustainable investments in the UAE could lie in financial institutions sharing compelling stories that highlight the positive social and environmental outcomes for the next generation.

The UAE is on an upward trajectory when it comes to sustainable investing but its adoption rate of 57% is slightly lower than the global average of 61%. However, given 74% express a desire to leave a positive legacy, compared to the global average of 65%, the UAE could overtake other markets

in terms of adoption going forward.

At the same time, the survey finds that 56% of investors in the UAE are apprehensive about sustainable investments compared to 51% overall, with 78% believing it is possible to do good and make money at the same time, compared to 75% overall.

The Sustainable Investing Review 2021 gauged sustainable investing trends among the emerging affluent, affluent, and high net worth investors and revealed that sustainable investing is at a tipping point, with awareness and interest at an all-time high. However, investor apprehensions – lack of measurement and transparency topping the list – are preventing sustainable investing from becoming more mainstream.

44% increase in usage of collaboration tools since 2019 according to Gartner

CHRISTOPHER TRUEMAN,
Principal Research Analyst, Gartner.

Nearly 80% of workers are using collaboration tools for work in 2021, up from just over half of workers in 2019, according to Gartner, Digital Worker Experience Survey. This is an increase of 44% since the pandemic began. Storage or sharing and real-time mobile messaging tools also saw increased use during the pandemic, used by 74% and 80% of 2021 respondents, respectively.

Specifically, the use of meeting solutions surged during the pandemic. While workers globally reported that they spent, on average, 63% of their meeting time in-person in 2019, that number dropped to 33% by 2021 as more meetings took place over audio and video-enabled meeting solutions. The shift away from in-person meetings is expected to continue. Gartner predicts that by 2024, in-person meetings will drop from 60% of enterprise meetings to 25%, driven by remote work and changing workforce demographics.

Collaboration tools found renewed importance during Covid-19 for their role in ensuring the productivity of suddenly remote teams. As many organisations shift to a long-term hybrid workforce model, cloud-based, personal and team productivity technologies, along with collaboration tools, will form the core of a series of new work hubs that meet the requirements of various remote and hybrid workers."

As IT leaders prepare for a mix of meeting modalities, it will be critical that they ensure equitable collaboration, tool and resource access for all meeting participants, regardless of location. Cloud-based meeting solutions and content service platforms can support this through offerings or integrations with technologies including virtual whiteboards, rich chat features, and recording and transcription capabilities.

Pressure to decarbonise, demand for energy, key challenges for oil and gas says Gartner

SIMON CUSHING,
Senior Director Analyst, Gartner.

Oil and gas CIOs must be aware of these trends - including accelerating digital innovation, rethinking vendor partnerships, and reacting to climate change - to ensure that their organisations are agile and resilient in an increasingly complex future.

Global oil and gas markets are poised between two competing drivers - rising pressure to decarbonise energy provision and increasing demand for energy in developing economies. Executives must find new ways to maintain competitiveness and growth.

The unique stresses of 2020 have elevated three business imperatives for 2021: optimising business performance, creating new capabilities and strengthening technology foundations. The 10 key trends in this report, individually and in combination, reflect the reformation of the industry in the face of complex growing challenges.

CIOs who understand these trends can enable breakout performance that will differentiate them and their organisations in the months ahead.

Trend No. 1: Enterprise capabilities diverge as new business strategies emerge

Trend No. 2: Accelerating digital innovation is now table stakes for CIOs

Trend No. 3: Digital twins drive transparency and automation

Trend No 4: Comprehensive engineering creates intelligent assets

Trend No. 5: Key vendor partnerships define enterprise platforms

Trend No. 6: Reliance on artificial intelligence becomes more widespread and less visible

Trend No. 7: Connected field workers drive efficiency and reliability

Trend No. 8: Establish a roadmap to avoid carbon management chaos

Trend No. 9: Face the challenge of attracting fresh talent

Trend No. 10: Multiple disruptions yield hybrid reformation of IT operating model

Disruptive forces such as the cost reductions due to demand-supply challenges since 2020, growing demand for new systems and more IT agility are driving significant changes to IT operating models. While oil and gas CIOs do not expect another year like 2020, they know disruptions will continue in the sector. Oil and gas CIOs are facing a sustained period of constant flux.

These organisations need to provide a hybrid IT operating model that balances new and traditional capabilities against a continuously evolving set of business priorities. This will include reskilling the IT workforce, accelerating digital transformation, improving cybersecurity performance and establishing a composable computing landscape for agility.

73% UAE HNWIs believe companies yet to feel economic impact of pandemic, Bupa Survey

Bupa Global launched the 2nd edition of the Bupa Global Executive Wellbeing Index analysing the continued effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the world's high-net-worth community. The index, which surveyed over 1,200 HNWIs and senior business executives based across Europe, North America, the Middle East and Asia shows that despite concerns about economic recovery and mental health, global executives have been quick to redefine existing working models and re-align corporate values in order to future-proof their businesses.

The report revealed that, compared to the optimism expressed in 2020, HNWIs in the UAE are still uncertain about the prospect of global economic recovery. 73% believe that their companies are yet to feel the full economic impact of the pandemic, compared to the global average of 9%. This comes as a contrast to their confidence in 2020, when 88% held the opinion that the economy would rebound strongly. This sense of caution extends to the global economy as well, with only 9% expecting a full economic recovery, compared to 20% globally across surveyed counterparts in Egypt, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France, Singapore, China and Hong Kong.

While the UAE has taken the lead globally in terms of Covid-19 vaccinations and re-openings, the study has shown that the pandemic is still very much at the front and centre of our attention. Despite relatively low rates of infection and death, high-net-worth individuals are more worried than they let on with almost all 96% reporting at least one symptom of mental stress which is the highest of all regions surveyed, and significantly higher than the global average of 77%. 76% cite the continued threat of the pandemic as well the efficacy of vaccines on a daily basis, followed by pressure on personal relationships 74% and work-life balance 68%.

83% clinicians agree real-time intelligence is essential for optimal patient care, Zebra study

Zebra Technologies Corporation, released the findings of its latest healthcare vision study. The "Smarter, More Connected Hospitals" global report reveals a stronger commitment to advanced technology tools as acute care providers strive to become more resilient and digitalise the patient journey.

89% of executive decision-makers and 83% of clinicians surveyed agree real-time intelligence is essential for optimal patient care, and hospitals are increasingly investing in clinical mobility tools, Real-Time Location systems and intelligent workflow solutions to support smarter, more connected workflows. However, more than two-thirds, 67% of hospital executives still do not feel their organisations are investing enough to maximise staff efficiency and more must be done moving forward.

Approximately two-thirds of executives acknowledge physicians and caregivers are overextended during their shifts and spend too much time locating medical equipment and supplies. Over half report

their administrative staff is equally overburdened and unable to complete their work during their shift.

Approximately 80% of executives plan to automate workflows in the next year to improve supply chain management, make it easier to locate critical equipment and medical assets, better orchestrate emergency rooms and operating rooms, and streamline staff scheduling.

About three-quarters plan to use locationing technologies such as radio frequency identification- RFID to better track equipment and specimens and improve patient flow and security. They are also turning to locationing solutions to create more dynamic workflows and improve staff efficiency, safety and compliance.

Gartner identifies Responsible AI as driving near-term AI hype cycle 2021

Four trends on the Gartner, Hype Cycle for Artificial Intelligence, 2021 are driving near-term artificial intelligence innovation. These trends include responsible artificial intelligence, small and wide data approaches, operationalisation of artificial intelligence platforms; and efficient use of data, model and compute resources.

The artificial intelligence market remains in an evolutionary state, with a high percentage of artificial intelligence innovations appearing on the upward-sloping Innovation Trigger. This indicates a market trend of end-users seeking specific technology capabilities that are often beyond the capabilities of current artificial intelligence tools.

Here are the four trends that are driving artificial intelligence innovation, according to Gartner:

RESPONSIBLE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Increased trust, transparency, fairness and auditability of artificial intelligence technologies continues to be of growing importance to a wide range of stakeholders. Responsible artificial intelligence helps achieve fairness, even though biases are baked into the data, gain trust, although transparency and explainability methods are evolving; and ensure regulatory compliance, while grappling with artificial intelligence's probabilistic nature.

In fact, Gartner expects that by 2023, all personnel hired for artificial intelligence development and training work will have to demonstrate expertise in responsible artificial intelligence.

Business technologists influencing users outside their own departments says Gartner

Half of the business technologists produce capabilities for users beyond their own department or enterprise, according to a new survey from Gartner. They are primarily responsible for building analytics capabilities 36%, but are also involved in building digital commerce platforms, artificial intelligence and robotic process automation, among others.

Gartner defines business technologists as employees who report outside of IT departments and create technology or analytics capabilities for internal or external business use.

Dramatic growth in digitalisation opportunities together with lower barriers to entry, for example low-code development tools and artificial intelligence assisted development, are among the core factors that enable the democratisation of technology development beyond IT professionals. 77% of business technologists routinely use a

combination of automation, integration, application development or data science and artificial intelligence tools in their daily work.

Compared to creating technology or analytics capabilities independently, four out of five respondents reported finding value in collaborating with IT, rather than trying to circumvent them, citing increased innovation, security and speed when doing so. In addition, 76% of business technologists assume enterprise risk ownership, or believe it is their responsibility to ensure their work is secure, adheres to regulatory requirements and does not negatively impact others.

Gartner analysis shows organisations that successfully enable business technologists are 2.6 times more likely to accelerate digital business outcomes.

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Real estate after Expo 2020? Booz Allen Hamilton identifies 6 new post era trends

With the opening of Expo 2020, Booz Allen Hamilton anticipates a new set of priorities for the UAE's real estate sector. The six-month-long Expo extravaganza promises to be an unprecedented showcase of ingenuity, innovation, progress, and culture. With Dubai house prices increasing for the first time since 2015, the fundamental question is whether the Expo will have a transitory or long-lasting impact on the UAE real estate market. Booz Allen has identified key trends and strategic priorities that have emerged and can be leveraged by the UAE's real estate sector to thrive beyond Expo 2020. These include:

SHIFT IN THE UAE'S DEMAND BASE BOOSTING ALTERNATIVE SEGMENTS

From being a stopover destination, the UAE is evolving into a country of choice for long-term stays where families and individuals lay down roots, study, and retire. Aided by expatriate-friendly visa and investor programs, a steady demographic shift is already occurring with old and young dependency ratios at a decade high. Developers and investors should explore resulting alternative pockets of demand, such as larger and affordable family housing, student housing, or assisted living facilities for affluent retirees. Other pandemic-driven segments gaining momentum include healthcare and well-being, logistics, digital infrastructure, and biotech.

ASSET MANAGEMENT TO THE FORE

As in all real estate cycles with subdued development growth, the focus shifts to extracting maximum value from standing assets through rigorous and active asset management. As the UAE's largest asset owners consolidate and rationalise portfolios like with Dubai Holding's take-over of Meraas in 2020, the pressing priority is the in-depth management of operating assets and more synergetic re-thinking of uses, especially amidst Covid's new realities. This includes the rejuvenation of mall offerings to a rapidly changing, more local demand, rethinking lifestyle destinations and their digital integration, repurposing under-used offices into alternate uses, and reimagining the hotel experience beyond the room.

BRUNO WEHBE,
Vice President at Booz Allen Hamilton.

DOUBLE-DOWN ON THIRD-PARTY SERVICES

As demand slowly recovers, top real estate players have been redirecting their best-in-class capabilities into safe businesses that generate sustainable recurring income, such as fee-based development and operations. One of the regional pioneers in the space, ALDAR went all in on such services and reaped immediate rewards from its investor base.

Trust, growth, change, dominating 2021 hype cycle for emerging technologies

Engineering trust, accelerating growth and sculpting change are the three overarching trends on the Gartner Hype Cycle for Emerging Technologies, 2021 that will drive organisations to explore emerging technologies such as nonfungible tokens, sovereign cloud, data fabric, generative artificial intelligence and composable networks to help secure competitive advantage.

The Hype Cycle for Emerging Technologies is unique among most Gartner Hype Cycles because it distils insights from more than 1,500 technologies into a succinct set of must-know emerging technologies and trends that show promise in delivering a high degree of competitive advantage over the next five to 10 years.

Engineering Trust: Trust demands security and reliability. However, it can also extend to building innovations as a resilient core and foundation for IT to deliver business value. This foundation must consist of engineered, repeatable, trusted, proven and scalable working practices and innovations.

For example, the market for digital and cloud technology and services is currently dominated by the US and Asian providers. As a result, many European companies store their data in these regions, creating political uneasiness as well as concerns about retaining data control and complying with local regulations. Countries can engage a sovereign cloud to achieve digital and data sovereignty, which will in turn provide legal requirements to apply data protection controls, residency requirements, protectionism and intelligence gathering.

PHILIP DAWSON,
Research Vice President, Gartner.

The technologies to watch to engineer trust are sovereign cloud, NFT, machine-readable legislation, decentralised identity, decentralised finance, homomorphic encryption, active metadata management, data fabric, real-time incident centre and employee communications applications.

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IS YOUR B2B ENTERPRISE READY TO BE THE NEXT APPLE?

Independently audited NPS and industry analyst reports will tell you how likely customers are to recommend you, use them to optimise operations and offerings.

BY JAMES PETTER, VP International, Pure Storage.

We live in the age of experiences. A good customer experience can turn a one-off consumer into a loyal brand advocate. Given that we now live in a digital-first world, businesses across the region are investing heavily in building digital capabilities that allow them to adapt quickly to customer demand.

This is obvious in the success of B2C companies such as Apple and OSN, but what about B2B organisations? Many see significantly slower growth regionally than fast moving consumer-based online businesses. So, what can B2B enterprises learn from B2C that can accelerate their growth?

CUSTOMERS, NOT COMPETITORS

The first step is to become customer obsessed. Retailers bond with customers through the nuances of psychology that make them choose a brand and remain loyal to it. Consumers are less tantalised by product features than they are by buying experiences, and e-tailers have capitalised on that.

In B2B, enterprises should be emulating this. If they can understand the business their customers operate in — the opportunities and challenges — and design solutions and services that meet these needs and solve those challenges, they are within reach of a winning proposition. The need to nurture relationships is vital in the B2B world.

So B2B entities must put customers first and foremost. Similar to the way the designers of the iPhone were obsessed with the user experience and were constantly asking How can we make the phone more user friendly. They understood that customers respond to a company that improves their lives in some noticeable fashion. In the age of social media, even for B2B companies, if you can get people talking about a service or product of yours and how it helps their business grow, you have taken an important step.

FOCUS ON EASE OF USE AND FLEXIBILITY

Involving your customer in your product-development cycle is a strong start. Feedback can lead to discoveries of wants or problems that your customers have that you can solve. Then you can stop being a link in a supply chain and become an industry hero.

A huge part of that feedback process will involve ease of use. In the new normal, where businesses and consumers have ever-changing needs, products and services that fulfil those needs will only be successful if they are easy to use. Getting bogged down in arduous training courses and endless technical manuals does not make for

A huge part of that feedback process will involve ease of use.

B2B businesses, like their consumer-serving peers, must hold themselves to account.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The first step is to become customer obsessed.
- Whether it is Netflix or Amazon, successful B2C companies know full well that their greatest asset is data.
- The knock-on effect is that IT teams will have more time for supporting innovative projects which positively impact customer experience.
- Everything from network latency to cost efficiency can help to oil operational efficiency and lead to better consumer experiences.

the best customer experience.

An extension of the ease-of-use element is flexibility. A good customer experience is made better by giving customers options in how they consume a product or service.

Indeed, the XaaS concept itself is all about turning what used to be products into services and whether it be for security or infrastructure, we are seeing more and more customers pivot to an as-a-service consumption model that helps to address the delivery of aftersales, because the business remains with its customer throughout the consumption journey. Aftersales is, if you like, baked right into the original sale.

BETTER INSIGHTS LEAD TO BETTER OUTCOMES

Whether it is Netflix or Amazon, successful B2C companies know full well that their greatest asset is data. These companies use modern analytics on the high volumes of data to create personalised customer experiences as well as cross-sell and upsell subscribers and users on products and services. B2C businesses also look inward to improve their products and services.

Everything from network latency to cost efficiency can help to oil operational efficiency and lead to better consumer experiences. Analytics play an increasing role in actionable intelligence for digital businesses.

B2B firms have as much access to extensive stores of high-quality data as B2C organisations do. Now is the time to make use of this potential treasure trove of insight. A sound, modern data-analytics strategy can be a great accelerator for digital transformation in general, yielding actionable intel on everything from the customer experience to energy consumption.

AIOps is another area which B2B organisations should have an eye on. AIOps is the application of advanced analytics to big data to automate IT operations. This means looking into the future to predict business requirements based on current activity. It can take a burden off teams by predicting and automating mundane tasks.

The knock-on effect is that IT teams will have more time for supporting innovative projects which positively impact customer experience. In fact, a recent study by Pure Storage showed that organisations that are furthest along the analytics-maturity scale, when compared with those that are the least mature, are 3.2 times more likely to be more popular with customers than their competitors.

TAKE A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

In the B2C space, a true measure of success of a product or service is consumer sentiment. B2C companies rely on consumer feedback — be it via social media or forums and reviews. B2B businesses, like their consumer-serving peers, must hold themselves to account. Independently audited Net Promoter Scores and industry analyst reports will tell you how likely customers are to recommend you. Use them to optimise operations and offerings.

B2C businesses have been dancing to these tunes for years. Infrastructure that gives customers flexibility; adjustment of business models to suit customer needs; analytics that tell stakeholders when the mood is about to change and whether they have read the room correctly. B2B enterprises across the region are starting to see the benefits in implementing parts of these B2C models. Is your enterprise ready to be the next Apple? ■

ARE WE REALLY THROWING AWAY ONE THIRD OF WORLD'S EDIBLE FOOD?

Cheese, bread, meat, food can be efficiently produced using data-based algorithms, while machine learning helps optimise sales and production planning.

OLIVER GUY,
Senior Director Industry Solutions,
Software AG.

One place to start is by reducing the daily mountains of food waste around the world – which can use a helping hand from some clever technology solutions.

World hunger continues to loom, intensified by lengthy and unexpected droughts, a pandemic and unmitigated poverty. At the same time, an estimated 1.3 billion tons of food is wasted globally every year, one third of all food produced for human consumption.

Are we really throwing away one third of the world's edible food? It is enough to feed all of the 815 million hungry people in the world, four times over. That's a lot to swallow.

Retailers and food outlets are conscious of the issue, working with consumer apps like Too Good to Go, but technology can help reduce food waste even more – in three innovative ways.

INTRODUCING THE INTERNET OF FOOD

Imagine food being smart like our phones, TVs, and cars. Hard to believe? The Internet of Things IoT, integration and analytics all have promise that might surprise you.

Supply chain transformation, using billions of IoT connected devices, is projected to reduce global food waste by as much as 20% in the next four years. That percentage will jump to 50% by the end of the next decade.

Here's the key with IoT: Single use smart labels and real-time data tracking. With the information transmitted via printed IoT circuits, batteries and cellular connectivity-capable labels, companies can actually see everything - from location to temperature, humidity and even oversupply of food – and prevent waste between farm and fork.

Smart farming deploys sophisticated real-time data tracking sensors to determine color, size and shape of fruits and veggies while they are still growing. This actionable data is vital in monitoring growing conditions, water supply and also optimal harvesting.

That, of course, is just the beginning. What about when wasted food gets to the garbage can?

A decade ago, Scientific World Journal published an article about using RFID technology in waste management, adding the capability to sense when it's time to pick up the trash – in essence, smart garbage cans. The tech, developing in the Republic of Korea currently, is aimed at a RFID-based garbage collection system using chips and stickers to measure the actual weight of garbage being thrown out.

A prototype RFID collection bin then communicates with a central server to request pickup. If it's over the allowable tolerance, no pickups

A prototype RFID collection bin then communicates with a central server to request pickup.

In Germany alone, around 12 million tons of food ends up in the trash every year and over 30% of that is destroyed in the production process.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Thanks to process mining, the potential savings and reductions at this meat producer were estimated to over $800,000 per year.
- A decentralised hub is capable of automating the transparency blockchain enables.
- You can expect food suppliers to pick up the slack and eliminate their own inefficiencies just to keep up.

are requested. This in turn helps to manage the habits of organisations, restaurants, and retail chains in decreasing discharge via allowable tolerances. It is almost like the garbage can is saying no to waste!

In Germany alone, around 12 million tons of food ends up in the trash every year. Over 30% of that is destroyed in the production process. Cheese, bread, meat, and other food products can be efficiently produced using data-based algorithms. Machine learning helps optimise sales and production planning, as well as process and plant control systems.

PROCESS MINING FOR FOOD

The idea of process discovery solving the world's problems of hunger might seem far-fetched, but not for one of APAC's leading meat processors. How does process mining contribute?

The meat industry operates the production of raw materials within certain national standards and regulations. Issues include a hefty amount of waste and costs - as is typical in manufacturing. Instead of industrial products, though, what gets wasted is a lot of meat.

Thanks to process mining, the potential savings and reductions at this meat producer were estimated to over $800,000 per year. Turnaround times for meat products even improved by about 30%. The key takeaway on process mining's discovery was the need for newer, more efficient cold storage.

Because if turnaround times increase, product can last that much longer. Better transparency reveals any discrepancy between expected and actual production volume. Adding it all up results in a significant improvement, which also benefits the overall production from cost to quality.

BLOCKCHAIN, TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN

Segueing from data mining and analytics, unlocking the power of blockchain technology might be just the boost the food industry needs, hopefully leading to a sustainable ecosystem. But how? Through supply-demand algorithms.

Whereas process mining seeks to discover newer, more efficient pathways, distributed ledger technology or blockchain ensures those pathways remain clear and secure. The immediate tracking and transfer of data via blockchain ensures that a flour producer can verify every single shipment down to the granular details: harvesting time, conditions, transit points, freshness preservation methods, etc.

Human error then becomes a thing of the past. With a decentralised hub capable of automating the transparency the blockchain enables, you can expect food suppliers to pick up the slack and eliminate their own inefficiencies just to keep up.

As a matter of fact, Walmart has been working on leveraging the blockchain to accurately track produce supply chains. It is amazing to think that technology can play even a small role in something as fundamentally devastating as world hunger. But with a little creativity, connections – and perhaps, some simplicity – it can be possible to leverage the power of technology to do enterprising things. Like fill a pantry with good food.

So, think about what your company can do with technology to reduce food and other waste. ■

DRONE NIGHT SHOW LIGHTS UP DUBAI FRAME

In September, a spectacular drone show lit up the iconic Dubai Frame, as part of global technology leader Xiaomi's addition of three new smartphones to the Xiaomi 11 family of devices. Xiaomi launched the content creation smartphones Xiaomi 11T, Xiaomi 11T Pro, and Xiaomi 11 Lite 5G NE, coming soon to the UAE. Xiaomi continues to revolutionise smartphone photography and videography by offering filmmaking features.

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