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## HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR JOURNEY

AVAYA'S  
NIDAL ABOU-LTAIF  
ON THE SECRET  
TO INNOVATION



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**In a complex digital economy, it can be hard to navigate the right path to success, especially when it comes to AI, but this is where Avaya is excelling to deliver for their customers."**

EDITORIAL

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT PATH

It's that time of the year again!

GITEX Global 2023 is here, and this year's conference looks set to surpass previous editions of GITEX, in terms of sheer scale and participation.

It has been the region's flagship IT and technology symposium since the turn of the millennium, but over the last few years, the event really has turned global.

As always, CPI Media Group will be providing LIVE coverage from the event in the form of our 60 Minutes e-newsletter, which will be posted twice daily.

In addition to this, we will be conducting video interviews with prominent technology and business leaders from all over the world.

The theme of this year's GITEX, is unsurprisingly based around AI.

Generative AI is everywhere, and it has sparked great fanfare across the global IT ecosystem.

However, amidst such rapid technological change, it can be difficult for businesses to choose the right approach when adopting new technologies.

We have seen many enterprises over the years struggle with the demands of digital and cloud transformation, and in the current digital economy, it's now more imperative than ever to choose the right path.

On the front cover of October's edition of CNME, we have a terrific interview with Nidal Abou-Ltaif, Head of Global Sales, and President of Avaya International.

It's always a pleasure to get the opportunity to speak to Nidal, who is one of the most respected and revered technology leaders in the region.

A recurring theme throughout our conversation was how Avaya is helping their customers 'choose the right journey'.

Avaya has enjoyed a renaissance under the guidance of CEO Alan Masarek, and the company has always had a singular focus on serving the needs of their customers.

In a complex digital economy, it can be hard to navigate the right path to success, especially when it comes to AI, but this is where Avaya is excelling to deliver for their customers.

"Our customers are excited about the possibilities of AI, for sure, but they really want an integrator to bring it all together. And they don't want any disruption to what they already have. Avaya serves that need very nicely," said Abou-Ltaif.

We have some incredible interviews in this month's magazine, and one of them is with Naeem Hussain, Chief Operating Officers at CirrusLabs.

Remaining on the topic of choosing the right path, the bespoke digital transformation provider is on a mission to simplify the digital journey for their customers.

CirrusLabs has had success in the United States, and it harbours ambitions to replicate that here in the Middle East.

Hussain believes the unique offering within its digital framework gives the company a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

CNME also spoke to Sebastian Krause, Executive Vice-President and Chief Revenue Officer at IBM.

He outlined the company's approach to generative AI, which he believes if harnessed properly can drive huge financial and productivity gains within the enterprise space globally.

In addition to this, we have terrific interviews with Lenovo, DigitalX, InfraX, Moro Hub and Ruckus CommScope – and thought leadership from Orange Business, AVEVA and SolarWinds.

On behalf of CPI Media Group, we would like to wish all our clients and partners a very successful GITEX.

We will also be hosting our fabled Future Enterprise Awards at Habtoor Palace, on October 16th – following the conclusion of Day 1 of GITEX Global.

Looking forward to seeing you all at GITEX. 🍷

Mark Forker  
Editor



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## Ingram Micro announces distribution agreement with Zoho for key MENA countries



(L-R) Dr. Ali Baghdadi, SVP & Chief Country Executive – MEA, Ingram Micro & Hyther Nizam, President, Middle East and Africa at Zoho.

**Ingram Micro Inc., a global leader in technology and supply chain services,** recently announced a new distribution agreement with Zoho, a global technology company, to bring Zoho's suite of products to multiple countries across the MENA region.

The primary focus of this initiative will be on Zoho Workplace, an enterprise collaboration platform, and Zoho Bigin, a pipeline-centric CRM for small businesses. The countries

covered under this agreement include Egypt, Qatar, Oman, Morocco, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. This move is expected to significantly enhance the availability and accessibility of Zoho products to businesses of all sizes across the region.

Dr. Ali Baghdadi, SVP & Chief Country Executive, MEA, Ingram Micro, commented on the new initiative: "The integration of services between Ingram Micro and Zoho is a testament to our dedication to bringing the best technological solutions to our clientele across MENA. Zoho products can empower businesses to operate more efficiently and serve their customers better. We believe in the power and versatility of these tools, and we're excited to help usher in a new era of digital transformation in the region".

This agreement shows the growing recognition of Zoho's value proposition in the MENA region. Businesses can now look forward to better access and support for Zoho's suite of products through Ingram Micro's expansive distribution network.

Hyther Nizam, President, Middle East and Africa at Zoho commented, "We are excited to become a trusted ally for Ingram Micro. This collaboration ensures that customers can easily access innovative, affordable and scalable software solutions that streamline their business processes and improve overall efficiency, especially as organisations increasingly shift towards cloud-based solutions. This alliance signifies a strategic move that will enhance Zoho's distribution network and further expand its presence in the MENA region. It also reinforces Zoho's commitment to serving local businesses, in line with its transnational localism strategy, wherein Zoho's expansion is locally rooted while staying globally connected".

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## Lexar to showcase the future of memory and storage solutions a GITEX Global 2023



Fissal Oubida, General Manager, Middle East, Africa, CIS and the Indian Subcontinent, Lexar.

**Lexar, a leading global brand in memory and storage solutions,** is set to showcase the 'future of memory and storage solutions' at the 43rd edition of GITEX GLOBAL, the world's largest tech event that will take place from October 16 to 20, 2023, in Dubai.

The company is well-positioned to capitalise on the growing demand for memory and storage solutions through its wide range of award-winning products. The company will showcase its new, expanded portfolio that is designed on its corporate pillars of

Reliability, Data Security and Quality for photographers, videographers, gaming professionals, content creators and PC enthusiasts, at its Booth D1, Hall No.1 of the Dubai World Trade Centre.

Commenting on their participation at the event, Fissal Oubida, General Manager of Middle East, Africa, and the Indian Subcontinent, Lexar, said, "GITEX GLOBAL is an opportunity for Lexar to highlight our deep commitment to the Middle East and Africa region. We are aggressively expanding our presence and market reach in the region through our ecosystem of partners. Our participation at this event not only gives us an opportunity to reinforce our existing relationships and build new ones, it allows us to showcase our latest memory and storage technologies that aim to boost productivity for our customers while also enabling them to store and access their data securely".

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Enrique Ortega, CEO at GELLIFY Middle East.

## GELLIFY Middle East amplifies its innovative ecosystem with ARAD and TEMSI integration

**GELLIFY Group has made significant strides** in reinforcing its position as a primary hub for digital transformation on an international scale. Following its announcement of integrating ARAD and TEMSI – two renowned Italian entities known for digital project development and strategic business consulting – into its capital, GELLIFY Middle East is set to leverage this collaboration in further enhancing the region's digital landscape.

GELLIFY's expansion has been notable. During the first half of 2023, the company, with active operations in Italy, Spain, and the UAE, registered a 14 million euro growth in revenue, with an EBTIDA exceeding 10%. The group is projecting over 15% revenue growth compared to 2022 figures. This commitment to progression is evident with the firm's recent initiation of a Stock Option plan, aiming to provide options to 226 of the company's employees, marking a strategic decision to empower its workforce.

Enrique Ortega, CEO at GELLIFY Middle East, commented, "The integration with ARAD and TEMSI amplifies our commitment to reshaping the digital landscapes of the Middle East. With the unveiling of our latest initiative 'Luxury Tech CX Observatory', we're setting new standards for the region's luxury sector. The Middle East, especially Dubai, is at the epicentre of technological and business innovation. Integrating ARAD and TEMSI not only fortifies GELLIFY Middle East's capabilities but also steers the region towards its next phase of technological and strategic advancement".

## SAMENA ACCELERATOR to build case for infrastructure development in neighbouring regions



**SAMENA (South Asia Middle East North Africa) Telecommunications Council** has announced that its SAMENA ACCELERATOR on 10 Gigabit digital infrastructure will be held on October 13th at 2:30 PM at JAFZA One Convention Centre, Jebel Ali, Dubai – UAE.

In collaboration with its valued member, Huawei Technologies, SAMENA Council's SAMENA ACCELERATOR on 10 Giga will be held as a policy-level

session within the main Ultra Broadband Forum 2023.

Bocar BA, CEO & Board Member of SAMENA Council, has stated: "The October 13th SAMENA ACCELERATOR will address the need to understand how well various

regional markets are moving toward fulfilling national ICT visions and materialising the gigabit society concept, which is already under implementation in developed countries. But, here, in this region, we want to plant seeds for the 10 Gigabit society. Advancements in fixed-line networks, investments in 5G, coupled with excellent policy and regulatory approaches have the potential to help us realise this concept".

## Bybit and DMCC crypto centre announce a million-dollar Hackathon

**Global crypto exchange Bybit and the Dubai Multi Commodity Centre (DMCC)** announced the "Web3 Unleashed: Crypto Innovation Challenge" hackathon, boasting a \$100,000 prize pool.

The hackathon comes hot on the heels of a partnership that has already seen Bybit contribute AED 500,000 to 15 crypto start-ups in the DMCC crypto ecosystem. Bybit's own thought leaders Bryan Aaron and Daniel Basharimov will help adjudicate the competition, which is scheduled for Nov. 22, 2023 and focused on artificial intelligence, gaming, and blockchain security. The hackathon is set to become the largest-of-its-kind in MENA, in terms of prize pools and participation.

Bybit and DMCC partnership joined forces in June 2023, creating a strategic bond destined to accelerate the mass adoption of crypto in the heart of Dubai. Bybit is pushing the adoption of crypto worldwide, bringing its 16 million users on a journey to financial freedom and it

has vowed to invest in its growth within the emirate.

Their collaboration was symbolised as Bybit became an official Ecosystem Partner for the DMCC Crypto Centre, a place where crypto and Web3 businesses thrive, creating a charged atmosphere for innovation. Going beyond financial support, Bybit is also DMCC's crypto listing partner, assisting start-ups to bootstrap growth and offering mentorship.







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What buyers  
on the dark web look  
for: GCC in focus

## New report reveals UAE & KSA are key targets on the Dark Web

**At GITEX 2023, results-driven** cybersecurity leaders Positive Technologies will reveal insights from their new GCC Dark Web report which aims to enhance the lens on cybercrime, providing cybersecurity professionals with keen insight to protect their companies from threat actors.

Positive Technologies experts conducted the study of the shadow market used by cybercriminals as a foothold to attack GCC companies[1]. According to the data, UAE and Saudi Arabian companies are the favourite targets of attackers. The most common subject of dark web ads is the sale of access and data. The minimum cost of access is as low as \$35, with more than half of such posts advertising a price of between \$100 and \$1,000. In the vast majority of cases, access is granted with administrator rights, making it much easier for even inexperienced attackers with limited budgets to attack companies.

Positive Technologies analyst Anastasiya Chursina comments: "It is important to note that in most cases, access is very cheap (\$100–1,000), and in the vast majority of cases (90%) it comes with administrator rights. In other words, even the most inexperienced attacker with a small budget doesn't need to modify the "product" in any way: it can be used to successfully attack a target company as is. Some ads, however, offer expensive access to major companies in the region. The buyers in these cases are hackers with more advanced skills preparing to conduct sophisticated attacks".

## Tenable completes acquisition of Ermetic

**Tenable Holdings, Inc., the Exposure** Management company, recently announced it has closed its acquisition of Ermetic, Ltd., an innovative cloud-native application protection platform (CNAPP) company, and a leading provider of cloud infrastructure entitlement management (CIEM).

"The unique combination of Tenable and Ermetic will give customers tightly integrated CNAPP capabilities for cloud environments, delivered through an elegant user experience that minimises complexity and speeds adoption", said Amit Yoran, Chairman and Chief

Executive Officer, Tenable. "We're delivering unparalleled insights into identities and access, which are absolutely critical to securing cloud environments. And with the integration of insights from Tenable One, customers can also consolidate, simplify and reduce costs".



Amit Yoran, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Tenable.

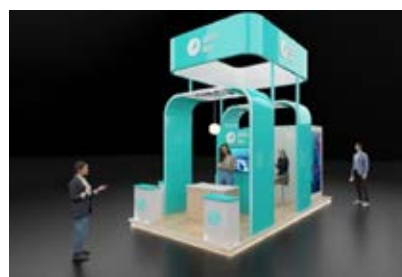
## Flat6Labs partners with North Star to host demo day at Expand 2023

**Flat6Labs, the Middle East and North** Africa's leading seed and early-stage venture capital firm, recently announced a partnership with North Star to hold a Demo Day — showcasing startups from the latest edition of the Flat6Labs Ignite Program — at this year's edition of Expand, the increasingly popular startup event

taking place at Dubai Harbour from 15 to 18 October 2023.

To be held on 16 October on the Marketing Mania Stage (XMD), Hall 4, from 4pm to 6pm, Flat6Labs' Expand North Star 2023 Demo Day will feature seven startups from the VC firm's most recent Cycle 5 cohort of its seed-funding and mentorship program, Ignite. Founders will pitch their value proposition and business strategy to potential investors, in a bid to secure additional funding.

## Dataiku to unveil everyday AI innovations at GITEX 2023



### Dataiku will showcase at GITEX 2023

its platform for democratising AI and empowering organisations to maximize AI's potential across diverse skill sets and roles in an era of surging AI adoption across the Middle East region.

"Dataiku is the Everyday AI company," said Sid Bhatia, Regional VP and GM for the Middle East, Turkey, and Africa, at Dataiku. "By empowering data experts and domain experts to work together to build AI into their daily operations, we enable everyone to add value — to be extraordinary, and to power their company into the future as a competitive force. We will attend GITEX 2023 at a nexus point in the history of AI, when technologies such as large-language models have entered the public consciousness and are seeing accelerated adoption. Our goal at this year's event is to put these developments in context and show attendees how they can leverage them to mature their AI mix."

# SAS Innovate on Tour: Revolutionising decision-making with productive, faster and trustworthy AI and Analytics

**SAS Innovate, the exclusive global** event series hosted by analytics leader SAS, visited Riyadh on September 27, 2023, to demonstrate how Saudi Arabian businesses can make data-driven, faster, and unbiased decisions based on AI and analytics. Held at the Crowne Plaza Riyadh Rdc Hotel & Convention, the Riyadh edition of SAS Innovate on Tour featured engaging sessions tailored to inspire regional business leaders into the future of analytics and the immense business opportunities they present.

Saudi Arabia aspires to rank among the 15 countries worldwide in AI, to transform the Kingdom's workforce by developing over 20,000 local data and AI

specialists and experts, and to position among the top 20 countries in scientific contribution to data and AI.

Bader Bahaian, Country Manager, KSA at SAS, said: "With a National Strategy for Data & AI in place and the ambition to establish KSA as the global hub where the best of data and AI is

made a reality, SAS strategy is aligned with the country's visionary leadership. To make that effort a success, we must invest in local data science talents. We are committed to the continuous development of in-country talents by building strong relationships with academia and establishing continuous education programs with our customers. Our commitment to investment and growth in the country is aligned with the vision of Saudi Arabia to be part of the best success story of 21 century."





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MORO HUB

# THE GREEN ECONOMY

**Mohammad Bin Sulaiman**, Chief Executive Officer at Moro Hub, tells CNME Editor Mark Forker, about the impact its solar-powered data centre will have on driving Dubai's green economy, how its diverse product portfolio is enabling customers to be more sustainable – and the key milestones it has achieved through its involvement with the Dubai Digital Cloud Project.

**C**an you tell us the role your new Green data center, which has been recognized as the Guinness World Record for the largest solar-powered data center in the world, will play in terms of helping the UAE achieve its Net Zero 2050 goals?

The importance of Moro Hub world's largest solar-powered data center comes from the fact that it enables new economic agenda.

An economy which is based on data & sustainable digital transformation. As we all know, data centers are the foundation for digital transformation.

Data centers consume a lot of power for data processing and cooling.

We have launched our solar powered green data center to show our commitments and contributions to achieving our leaders' strategies and goals towards environment and sustainability.

Moro Hub's new green data center at Mohammed bin Rashid Solar Park advances Dubai's green economy leadership.

It attracts eco-conscious businesses, fosters green tech innovation, and establishes Dubai as a global sustainability model.

**Can you outline to our viewers how Moro Hub is leveraging its product portfolio to help its customers become more sustainable?**

Over the last few years, we have launched a number of products and solutions that contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of our clients.

Migrating our clients IT infrastructure to our green data centers and clouds helped them in achieving many of their sustainability initiatives.

Another example is our Smart Cities and IoT solutions; which empowers regulators and clients to get real time analytics, helping them to take right decisions in the subjects related to environment and sustainability.

**What differentiates Moro Hub from other digital transformation providers in the market?**

Our commitment to our customers success is the key differentiator.

At Moro Hub, we have been investing in bringing to our customers the technology that will help them to achieve

This July, Dubai Digital Authority launched Dubai Digital Clouds project with an objective to facilitate secure and scalable IT infrastructure for all the entities under Dubai Government.

DDA has selected Moro Cloud for private and public data hosting and Microsoft Azure Cloud for public data hosting.

The selection came after comprehensive study on the capabilities and security features that we have and we provide.

Since the announcement, we had many meetings and workshops with government departments to guide them on how to migrate to our cloud.

Today, we have very good number of government entities who are running their business applications from Moro Hub cloud.



## **Moro Hub's new green data centre at Mohammed bin Rashid Solar Park advances Dubai's green economy leadership."**

their strategic and operational goals.


At Moro Hub, we have highly skilled professionals who possess extensive knowledge and experience in various technical domains.

We have a strong ecosystem of partners which helps in making Moro Hub a preferred one stop shop for digital transformation solutions.

**What are the key milestones Moro Hub has achieved through your involvement with Dubai Digital Cloud Project?**

**How does Moro Hub intend on continuing to spearhead new innovations over the next few years?**

In Moro Hub, we are committed to our customers and partners to continue investing in bringing advanced technologies to this region.

Some of the technologies that we are currently working on are AI and generative AI and Clean Energy technologies to power high density data centers that we are planning to launch. 

IBM

# BE OPEN TO THE SHIFT

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Sebastian Krause**, Senior Vice-President and Chief Revenue Officer at IBM, in a bid to find out how the company is leveraging their AI and data platform watsonx in an effort to help reshape the landscape of enterprise AI.

**S**ebastian Krause has enjoyed an incredible career at IBM, one that has spanned almost three decades.

Krause made a name for himself by leading IBM's software group across the EMEA region from 1995 to 2011, before relocating to New York, to head up the company's global storage organisation.

In 2015, he was appointed General Manager of IBM Cloud Europe, before heading back Stateside in 2020.

He is one of the most revered and respected executives within IBM, and is currently tasked with the responsibility of helping their customers modernise and transform their infrastructure and applications by leveraging hybrid cloud and AI technologies.

CNME spoke to Krause during a whistlestop tour of Dubai, and in a fascinating conversation he outlined IBM's plans to help enterprises succeed in their digital transformation goals.

He kickstarted the discussion about IBM's strategic shift towards a hybrid cloud and AI model, and



highlighted the acquisition of Red Hat in 2018, as significant.

"Our company's strategy is hybrid cloud and AI. In 2020, we determined that this was the best path to take, and we started making significant investments in hybrid cloud and AI in a bid to drive new innovations for our customers. For years the debate had been

public or private? However, it had become very clear by then that a hybrid cloud model offered businesses the chance to experience the best of both worlds. The acquisition of Red Hat that we completed in 2018, was essentially the cornerstone for us in terms of laying the foundations for our hybrid cloud world," said Krause.

He highlighted how the capabilities of OpenShift really served the needs of enterprises from a flexibility and autonomy standpoint.

"OpenShift provides you with the ability to integrate multiple platforms, whether that is an on-prem platform, on the cloud, or a public and private cloud, you can seamlessly exchange workloads across multiple platforms. It has become evident that companies and customers today have multiple data sources, and the data sits in different environments, so you really need an infrastructure and information architecture that allows you to bring the information together, and AI is the key technology to drive that," said Krause.

Many businesses have struggled with the demands of migrating their workloads, and Krause reinforced the importance of having a clear strategy when embarking on a cloud transformation journey.

"It's all about the strategy, why are you going to the cloud, and where are you going to be placing your workloads? Over the course of time, I think many companies have come to the conclusion that the workload that they initially moved to the cloud was not





meant for the cloud, and it's better to have it in an on-prem environment. On the other hand, there might be workloads that can easily go into a public cloud environment for technical, or cost reasons, so the strategy might not have been thought through completely. There's an evolution right now in regards to where data is residing and a realisation that you can bring your compute power to the data, and you don't need to bring the data to the compute. That is a major reason in why cloud strategies are being revised, and specifically now with the capabilities of hybrid cloud computing, and that is what we are providing through our OpenShift platform. We are giving companies much greater flexibility to deploy workloads wherever they want," said Krause.

Krause also outlined the role played by their consulting arm in terms of helping customers better understand where they need to place certain workloads.

"We have fully embraced the ecosystem, and we are working very closely with system integrators, software vendors, services partners and consulting companies. However, IBM Consulting is equally equipped to help clients to go on their cloud journey, and to help them understand what workloads they need to bring into a deployment that makes it stick to the strategy that the customer has chosen," said Krause.

Generative AI is the talk of the IT and technology ecosystem globally, and there is no denying the endless opportunities presented by the new technology.

However, Krause warned how businesses must take into consideration what the best ethical practices are for

adopting the technology, and cited how their watsonx platform is designed for generative AI.

"Generative AI came into the public domain through ChatGPT, and it has generated a lot of excitement in terms of what it can do, but there is also dangers around generative AI, especially when it comes to data privacy. That is something that businesses really need to consider when looking at generative AI use-cases and applications. I think the technology is now front and centre, and everyone is aware of it, however, there is a big difference between using generative AI in a consumer environment versus an enterprise and business environment. Our watsonx platform is designed as a generative AI offering for business and the enterprise. Our platform provides differentiated capabilities that are really suited for enterprises, because you need to be compliant to regulations that either exist today, or are currently being worked on," said Krause.

Krause also stressed the need for enterprises to demonstrate greater transparency, and highlighted the governance pillar that is embedded in its watsonx platform.

"You need to be able to provide transparency in terms of where your data is coming from, and you need to have the



**There's an evolution right now in regards to where data is residing and a realisation that you can bring your compute power to the data, and you don't need to bring the data to the compute."**

capability of data lineage. One of the three pillars within our platform is called watsonx.governance, which provides the capabilities that I have highlighted that enterprises need in order to deliver the transparency in relation to where the data stems from, what has happened to the data, and how it has been applied to this specific use-case. Nobody has the capabilities that we have brought forward in terms of what is next with governance,” said Krause.

As Krause pointed out enterprises simply can’t afford to be sloppy when it comes to data and governance.

“Enterprises can’t afford to have data that is going to their customer, or is part of their value chain that eventually has inappropriate content. If the data has not been cleansed and you don’t know where the data is coming from, and who has been working on it, then that would be a significant problem in terms of reputational damage, let alone all the issues you would face with data privacy and copyright. That’s why it has to be 100% assured that the foundational model that you are using has cleansed data and can be followed back to the source, and that’s what the watsonx.governance is doing,” said Krause.

Krause then illustrated the capabilities provided within the two other key components of the watsonx platform.

“The other two pillars of the platform are watsonx.ai and watsonx.data. watsonx.ai is basically a studio in which you can test, validate and train foundational models for

your own purpose and in your own environment. You can do prompt engineering, which allows you to really make sure that you are training your model in such a way that it does what you are expecting it to do. watsonx.data is suited specifically for the application of generative AI workloads, and it allows you to have the ability to ingest and store data that is coming from multiple sources, but is also tailored and optimised for the use-case of generative AI,” said Krause.

Krause then moved the dial of the conversation towards the use-cases that are actually driving the adoption of generative AI applications.

He pointed to three use-cases where he sees a lot of activity, but predicted many more will emerge as the technology matures.

“In terms of use-cases we are seeing a lot of traction in customer care. When you are enhancing the experience of a user, whether you are doing that through summarisation, or process optimisation that is something that generative AI can do to help. These user experiences are driving significant MPS improvements because it is faster, and you are getting much more accurate information than you would have done through a traditional contact centre. We’re also seeing a lot of customers doing modernisation in their

environments, generative AI can help developers change the code they are using in a much more seamless way, with a vast reduction in errors in comparison to if humans were doing it. There is also the digital labour use-cases, which is essentially providing automated processes where you augment the capabilities of humans to eliminate some of the mundane tasks employed are faced with. These three use-cases are lifting off quite significantly, but they are also multiple other use-cases that will come to fruition very soon,” said Krause.

Krause highlighted the investments IBM have made in what the company describes as client engineering capabilities, which he feels bring them closer to their customers.

“We have thousands of our consultants trained on generative AI and the watsonx platform and they are helping customers to transform by leveraging generative AI. We have also significantly invested in what we call client engineering capabilities. Our teams work with our customers very closely, and in a lot of instances on a much smaller scope. Ultimately, we want to showcase how our software capabilities will drive tangible outcomes for the clients. That’s why we have these client engineering teams that are highly trained experts to really help customers provide the technology for their specific strategy, and the objectives that they have articulated,” said Krause. **enme**



**Our watsonx platform is designed as a generative AI offering for business and the enterprise.”**



# The Picture Says it All!

A 2023 Gartner® Magic Quadrant™ Leader  
for Primary Storage

Figure 1: Magic Quadrant for Primary Storage



Source: Gartner

Gartner®





# DRIVING THE CONNECTED WORLD

**Rashid Alahmadi**, Chief Operating Officer at InfraX, tells CNME Editor Mark Forker about how his company provides versatile IoT connectivity solutions for their customers, their focus on revolutionizing user experiences – and its strategic blueprint for the next few years.

**What is InfraX's strategic roadmap for achieving its key objectives, and how does it plan to leverage its strengths to create a lasting impact in the industry?**

In today's highly connected world, the demand for advanced technology solutions is on the rise.

Companies worldwide are embracing this challenge, and InfraX, the Information Communication and Technology arm of Digital DEWA, is leading the way in advanced connectivity operation as a certified IoT operator.

By leveraging a secure and reliable super- fast fiber optics network, InfraX connects Digital DEWA's value-added services to customers, positioning itself as a key player in the technology industry.

With a strong foundation of over 50 years of DEWA in

delivering dependable water and electricity supply in Dubai with assets and infrastructure have set the gold standard for reliability.

**What cutting-edge IoT services does InfraX offer, and how do these services drive value for businesses? Can you share some impactful use cases that demonstrate the practical benefits of InfraX's IoT solutions?**

InfraX holds an IoT License from the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA), granting the company the capability to offer a diverse range of IoT connectivity options.

With a focus on supporting smart cities' digital

transformation and industrial requirements, InfraX provides cutting-edge IoT solutions that drive value for businesses.

**Versatile IoT Connectivity Options:** As a licensed IoT Service Provider, InfraX offers a wide array of IoT connectivity options to meet the specific needs of smart cities and industrial applications.

This diverse range ensures that businesses can choose the most suitable connectivity solution tailored to their requirements.

**Empowering Smart Cities:** InfraX's IoT solutions play a key role in empowering smart cities' digital transformation.

The company provides a variety of IoT sensors and devices, facilitating various smart city applications and enabling the seamless collection of valuable data.

**LPWAN Sensors for Large-Scale Deployments:** InfraX leverages its public Low-Power Wide-Area Network (LPWAN) and sensors for large-scale smart city deployments.

This low-energy approach ensures long-lasting performance and cost-effective scalability, making it ideal for extensive city-wide implementations.



**In today's highly connected world, the demand for advanced technology solutions is on the rise."**



Focused Partnerships for Connectivity: InfraX collaborates with and complements national operators in the Narrow-Band IoT (NB-IoT), Machine-to-Machine (M2M) and other LPWAN Network providers, to ensure that it caters to diverse connectivity preferences.

These partnerships expand the reach and diversity of our IoT services.

**How does InfraX's comprehensive suite of managed services empower businesses to optimize their infrastructure, fostering growth and maximizing operational efficiency?**

At InfraX, we are dedicated to driving business success through our specialized Managed Services.

Our business-focused

approach, powered by state-of-the-art technology and proactive strategies, guarantees secure, dependable, and high-performance services for our esteemed clientele.

With a focus on revolutionizing user experience operational efficiency and redundancy, our solutions are tailored to meet the unique needs of businesses across various industries.

**Managed Network Services: 24/7 NOC Support for Uninterrupted Availability:**

InfraX's Managed Network services offer round-the-clock NOC support, ensuring continuous availability with prompt issue resolution.

**Smooth Change Management for Digital Transformation:**

We facilitate seamless change management for digital

transformation, enabling businesses to adapt swiftly to evolving requirements.

**Customized Service**

**Provisioning Support:** InfraX delivers tailored solutions aligned with clients' unique needs and objectives.

**Proactive Maintenance**

**& Detailed Reporting:**

InfraX ensures optimal network performance with proactive maintenance and comprehensive reporting.

**How does InfraX's diverse project portfolio demonstrate its contributions to the industry, and what key insights can be drawn from the successful projects to drive innovation and growth within the industry?**

InfraX's impressive project portfolio is a testament to its commitment in delivering successful outcomes while upholding core values of sustainability, innovation, and efficiency.

The company's remarkable achievements include its involvement in the Moro Hub Green Data Centre, a Guinness World Records-certified solar-powered data centre, demonstrating InfraX's unwavering commitment to eco-friendly solutions.

Moreover, InfraX's contributions to DEWA's communication infrastructure upgrades have significantly enhanced data transmission efficiency and reliability.

Its support for DEWA SmartGrid Network Connectivity represents a pivotal step in advancing smart grid technology, facilitating efficient energy distribution and management. [gmw.com](https://www.gmw.com)





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CIRRUSLABS

# A FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS

**Naeem Hussain**, Chief Operating Officer at CirrusLabs, tells CNME Editor Mark Forker, how the 'niche' digital transformation provider plans to capitalise on the burgeoning opportunities across the META region – and how its unique digital framework gives them a huge competitive advantage for helping customers accelerate on their digital transformation goals.

**N**aeem Hussain has enjoyed a truly remarkable career thus far in the global IT and technology ecosystem.

In a career that began with US telecommunications behemoth Verizon back in 1998, Hussain has held leadership positions with some major companies such as Siemens, Capital One and ING to name a few.

He displayed his entrepreneurial drive by founding Medzspeed Solutions and AgileTrailblazers in 2011 while pursuing an MBA from The University of Chicago.

Naeem is a co-founder of CirrusLabs and he was appointed as the Chief Operating Officer in 2020. CirrusLabs is a bespoke digital transformation provider with a market presence in the United States, Canada and India.

After a successful US led trade delegation – Tradewinds, CirrusLabs decided that it was the right time for the company to enter the META marketplace.

Hussain kickstarted a very candid discussion with CNME, by documenting what he believes differentiates CirrusLabs from other digital transformation providers.

“We know that the term digital transformation is a widely used term, and it can mean different things for different people. How we like to differentiate ourselves at CirrusLabs is our digital

building blocks provides us with a very holistic view of how an organisation can look at charting their own digital transformation journey, and that's ultimately how we differentiates ourselves,” said Hussain.

Hussain elaborated more on how certain customers will select a specific pillar of their framework that best suits their needs – and highlighted that



**The most important thing in our success is the people. These are real experts that know their craft, and are very empathetic with our customers, and understand our mission, which is ultimately to help our customers succeed.”**

transformation framework that essentially captures the pillars that we view digital transformation with. It starts with digital strategy at the bottom, then goes up to agile team organisation, modernisation of technology, data, AI and cloud, with the sole purpose of getting products to market and driving business value for our customers. These pillars, and the way we view these

they leverage their partner ecosystem to accelerate the entire process.

“In many cases, we provide the services, but within our ecosystem we have brought in partners, and vendors that really help us accelerate that journey for our customers. Many of our customers will begin their journey with a particular pillar, and will then work their way through as they evolve towards the objectives



of their digital transformation project. We've been very fortunate to have applied this in industry verticals such as financial services, banking, healthcare, defence sector, start-ups, and all the way up to Fortune 500 companies. The sheer breadth and scope of what we have worked on really helps us get a perspective of different blueprints that can help accelerate the journey for our customers to achieve business value. Given the experiences we have had in the United States, we are excited to bring that knowledge and expertise to the UAE, and the entire Middle East region," said Hussain.

Hussain moved the dial of the conversation to the topic of customer experience.

He outlined the benefits of inviting customers to

participate in design thinking sessions.

"Some of the best practices that we have experienced has been in partnering with our customers. In the US, we have offices in Atlanta, and Washington DC, and we regularly invite our customers to come in and participate with us as we conduct design thinking sessions as part of our efforts to create solutions for them. Our customers want to observe how our teams operate and work, and we do that in a very agile way across our organisation, and this approach is very unique, and again makes us very different," said Hussain.

In terms of their move earlier this year to establish operations in the Middle East, Hussain said Dubai was the logical choice.

"We strategically picked Dubai as our location because of all the economic activity that occurs here, and the fact it such a hotbed for innovation. The idea for us is to bring our customer prospects to our office and experience the way we work, create and collaborate with our counterparts in the US, Canada and India. Participation with the customers works best when they come to our offices, explain their problems to us, and then we use our expertise to help solve that issue using the different techniques that we have built up over the last few years," said Hussain.

A couple of months ago, CirrusLabs announced ScienceLogic as their partner in the region.

According to Hussain, the partnership will enable their





customers to have 'continuous monitoring'.

"I have talked about our digital transformation framework, and the different pillars within it. However, we package our services in a very logical order. We have a digital strategy, and agile product management – and the way that works is you have an idea for an organisation but how do you actually go to market? The second element is hyper-automation, and the other component is cloud computing and security, which is a critical component in the multi-cloud space. One of the most important components in all of this is security, and this is where AIOps and ScienceLogic comes into play. We are fully focused on ensuring we deliver the best experiences

for our customers in terms of technology, but we don't have to do it all, as we have a great partner ecosystem. ScienceLogic will allow our customers to have continuous monitoring, both at an application and network level, which will drive improved security and a higher level of automation," said Hussain.

Hussain also highlighted the impact the acquisition of Lockthreat has had for delivering that continuous monitoring for customers.

"We acquired a company called Lockthreat, and we're building the next-generation of AI-powered GRC, which is a governance risk and compliance solution. Again, the way we are viewing this is from the lens of how do we hyper-automate? Part of

this automation is continuous compliance, which again has to be done by continuous monitoring and ScienceLogic is an obvious fit for us. The integration of Lockthreat and ScienceLogic gives our customers from a governance risk and compliance perspective continuous monitoring," said Hussain.

The Middle East is home to some of the most ambitious economic transformation programs such as Dubai Digital Strategy 2050, and Vision 2030 in the KSA, Hussain believes that the company is perfectly balanced in terms of being big enough to help with large-scale projects, and small enough to provide customised support.

"If you look at some of the government visions like the



Dubai Digital Strategy 2050, and Vision 2030 in the KSA, a common theme throughout all of them is digital enablement. Whether that is creating digital strategies, digital talent, or accelerating smart city projects, we believe that in all of these cases we can support the government in achieving their transformation goals. We believe through our digital transformation framework that we can help them map out their journeys from a strategic perspective. We are big enough to support large projects, and small enough to provide that customised support for our customers. Our mission is co-creating, and that is something that we stand by. We are always trying to work with customers to understand their problems, and are looking to develop a solution that helps them overcome that, instead of imposing a certain set of frameworks on them,” said Hussain.

The Chief Operating Officer at CirrusLabs described the company as an ‘asset-based’ industry transformation provider – and highlighted the impact of its new Cirrus Insights Now solution that was developed in-house by the team.

“I would say we are an asset-based industry transformation provider, and what I mean by that is the digital transformation framework that we have talked about, in every single pillar we have assets and accelerators. The biggest thing we bring to the table is the time-to-market for our customers, that’s our USP. I’ll give you an example, we

recently built a new solution inhouse called Cirrus Insights Now, which uses generative AI. The idea is to take a business idea using a lean business canvas, and decompose that idea for product management all the way to creating user requirements and test cases. We’ve experimented on this with a few customers, and a process which would typically take 3-4 weeks for gathering requirements is brought down to less than an hour. This is especially valuable when business people want to communicate requirements to the technical people!” said Hussain.


Hussain added that the company has been able to carve out a space in what he described as niche areas.

“When we talk about the cloud space, we work with Microsoft Azure, AWS and GCP, and our partnership with ScienceLogic brings this single dashboard to do multi-cloud management, which is very valuable for large enterprise customers, who want to hedge their bets using different technologies, or the backend for various different purposes. We have carved out a space in some very niche areas, and that is what we try to bring to our customers,” said Hussain.

He concluded a wonderful discussion by reinforcing the strength of their digital transformation framework,

which is never static.

In terms of what made CirrusLabs unique and successful, Hussain feels it is a combination of the thought leadership the company has, and the people within the organisation.

“I think one of our main differentiators is thought leadership. The digital transformation framework that I have referred to throughout our conversation has evolved continually to keep up with technology, it is not a static framework. We are constantly at the forefront of technology, and our industry experts are constantly working with our customers to understand where the challenges are – and we evaluate the technologies that can help them solve their problems. We have also just added an AI and data component to the framework to reflect what is currently happening in the marketplace. In the past, we used to call it emerging technologies, today you have to be creating solutions using AI to make your customers experiences even better. The most important thing in our success is the people. These are real experts that know their craft, and are very empathetic with our customers and understand our mission, which is ultimately to help our customers succeed,” said Hussain. 



**I would say we are an asset-based industry transformation provider, and what I mean by that is the digital transformation framework that we have talked about, in every single pillar we have assets and accelerators.”**



# THE X FACTOR

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Hamad Karam** – Chief Operating Officer at DigitalX to learn more about the value it derives for its stakeholders, its professional services portfolio – and how its cutting-edge digital assets is revolutionizing industries like AV.

**What is the mission of DigitalX and how does it create value to your stakeholders?**

DigitalX is committed to empowering clients in this fast-paced digital era. Our solutions provide easy access to a broad talent pool and productivity resources, reducing time to market and optimizing costs.

This enhances clients' competitive advantages in a dynamic landscape. We catalyze growth, fostering innovation and agility while nurturing a culture of continuous improvement.

With a vast network and deep industry knowledge, DigitalX guides clients through the complexities of the digital age, keeping them ahead of the competition.

In a time-sensitive and cost-focused environment, we are a strategic partner, helping clients maximize efficiency and profitability.

Our success is intertwined with theirs, and we remain dedicated to enabling their achievements in this demanding digital landscape.

**How can DigitalX's professional services be leveraged to create a significant impact on businesses and industries?**

DigitalX enhances client productivity via expert IT teams. We optimize businesses with advanced tech and IT management, enabling focus on core activities. Our solutions empower success in a competitive landscape.

#### **Our Offerings:**

**Talent Recruitment:** We provide tailored recruitment, on-site/off-site, direct hiring for efficiency and skills management for project excellence.

#### **Staff Augmentation &**

**Management:** Our outsourcing fits unique client goals using skilled resources for varied projects.

**Outsourcing Benefits:** With our services, we help reduce costs, shift expenses and focus on growth.

**Reliable Partnerships:** Our outsourcing involves a broad network of trusted partners and vendors, delivering the utmost service quality and assurance.

**How do the innovative solutions and cutting-edge digital assets of DigitalX revolutionize the industry and**

#### **drive unprecedented growth and success?**

At DigitalX, our Solution & Digital Assets Division distinguishes itself by delivering superior tech and creative solutions, fostering a seamless integration approach that consistently yields exceptional outcomes.

#### **We are currently focused on: Smart AV Solutions:**

We specialize in enhancing audio-visual experiences across various settings.

Through cutting-edge technology, we elevate management and efficiency of large-scale video walls, command and control centers and corporate meetings collaboration tools; these technologies are fundamental to enable wide range of smart city management systems, utilities and healthcare to name a few.

#### **Digital Assets Services:**

Our commitment extends to optimizing essential technological assets such as robotics, notebooks, tablets, gadgets and more.

By leveraging our services, you can expect better productivity, significant cost reductions, and an elevated level of customer satisfaction. **cnme**



**DigitalX is committed to empowering clients in this fast-paced digital era.”**





# TAKING THE RIGHT PATH

**Nidal Abou-Ltaif**, Global Head of Sales, and President of Avaya International spoke to CNME Editor Mark Forker, about the company's mantra of 'choose your journey', their ability to provide their customers with stability amidst rapid technological change – and how AI can be extended to the very heart of customer experience.

**“U**nequivocally, and undeniably, Avaya is back.”

These were the words of Avaya CEO Alan Masarek as he opened proceedings at the Avaya ENGAGE user conference in Orlando earlier this year. It was a rebuke to the endless column inches that had been written about the strife of an iconic company that had entered Chapter 11 proceedings twice in the past five years. And based on the positive energy that flowed from the thousands of Avaya customers and partners in the room, it was clear the audience agreed with him.

But according to Nidal Abou-Ltaif, who was in January promoted to the role of Avaya's Global Head of Sales, in addition to his role as President of Avaya International, that positive energy, and loyalty among customers, wasn't a new phenomenon. Indeed, it's something that has carried the company through the financial turmoil of the past year.

“Honestly, we never left,”

he says exclusively to CNME.

“Despite everything, we always had a singular focus on serving our customers, and throughout the entire restructuring period, we made it very clear to our customers that we were here, we were able to serve them, and we were helping them achieve their customer experience ambitions. And we delivered.”

The fact that Avaya delivered will be plain to see at this year's GITEX Global, where the company is, as usual, participating in a major way. On the stand, the company will showcase how it has helped DEWA to digitally transform its contact center, how it has enabled the Government of Fujairah to unify its service delivery, and how it keeps communications seamless at Batelco, the Bahraini telecoms provider.



**Despite everything, we always had a singular focus on serving our customers.”**

And Avaya's customers are trusting it with new projects, too: GITEX will see Avaya announce projects with the likes of Dubai's Department of Economy Tourism and with the Magdi Yaqoob Heart Foundation in Egypt.

Indeed, Abou-Ltaif says that Avaya has ended the financial year – one in which Avaya entered and then re-emerged from chapter 11 proceedings within a mere five weeks – with six million contact center agents using its solutions. It also has more than 90 million unified communications seats, an extended ecosystem of over 4,000 partners and 120,000 developers, and a customer base that's the envy of the industry with organizations that include 90 per cent of the largest U.S. companies, more than 90 governments, and each of the top 10 global airlines, auto manufacturers, and banks.

It would appear, then, that the viability of Avaya as a business is no longer in question – if it ever was. So what about the future?

## Choosing Your Own Journey

Today, Avaya's mantra is “choose your journey”, the theme under which it will be exhibiting at GITEX Global. Borne out of the ‘innovation without disruption’ strategy that the company has adopted since Masarek was appointed in 2022, the idea is that Avaya will give its customers the freedom to pick and choose the innovative features they need, while continuing to leverage their existing investments at a pace, and on a journey,



that makes sense for their businesses.

According to Abou-Ltaif, that proposition is incredibly attractive to the kinds of large enterprises that Avaya typically serves.

“If you look at some of our largest customer deployments, we’re talking tens of thousands of seats. Yes, these organizations want the latest features so that they can serve their customers in new and innovative ways, but they tend to place a higher value on stability and getting the basics of customer service right. That’s the kind of stability that Avaya can provide,” he says.

“At the same time, we’re letting them have the best of both worlds. We’re saying that, no matter where you are on your innovation journey, you can have AI capabilities, or advanced analytics or multichannel communications. Whether you want it in the cloud or on-prem, we can deliver these functionalities, at the pace you want them. And in the meantime, you get to keep leveraging the existing Avaya solutions that you trust. It’s resonating incredibly well with our customers, and our roadmap is built around this entire proposition.”

This strategy, says, Jon Arnold, Principal Analyst at J Arnold & Associates, appears to be a sensible one.

“Innovation without disruption speaks to the anxiety many of [Avaya’s] customers

have about moving to cloud and modernizing effectively. They need a bridge from old to new, and roadmap can be tailored to whatever their starting point is – having that flexibility serves needs that are arguably more important than the need to have every single new feature that’s out there,” he explains.

### **Journey to AI**

Today, the ‘journey’ that Avaya’s customers – and indeed every other organization – are embarking on increasingly involves taking advantage of the recent advances in artificial intelligence – particularly generative AI.

A recent Insight report found that two-thirds of organizations plan to use generative AI to enhance customer service in the next three years, and 81% have already established or implemented a generative AI. And according to Abou-Ltaif, those figures are borne out in Avaya’s conversations with customers.

“Every large RFP we’re seeing, there’s a line in there about generative AI and how we can integrate it into the customer experience. Every large customer we’re talking to is thinking about how they can leverage generative AI. There’s a lot of excitement building about it, but we’re still in the early days of AI in the context of the large-scale contact centers we serve. We’re helping our customers define the right use cases and get the



**If you look at some of our largest customer deployments, we’re talking tens of thousands of seats.”**





technology adoption right,” he says.

A good thing, then, that Avaya is also using GITEX Global showcase how it can infuse generative AI into the heart of the customer experience. One stand-out demonstration will integrate generative AI capabilities into the Avaya Experience Platform, helping CX leaders to implement workflows and glean precise, actionable insights with the stroke of a keyboard.

“Up until now, AI in the contact center has typically been at the front-end, usually answering routine questions from customers in the form of intelligent virtual assistants. Now we can show how AI can also be extended right to the heart of the customer experience, creating workflows, reports and helping agents better serve their customers,” Abou-Ltaif says.

The approach that Avaya has taken with this demo is indicative of its general approach to AI. The core AI technology is not developed by Avaya in-house – in this instance it’s powered by Cognigy, a leader in the space. But it could just as easily be OpenAI’s ChatGPT or Google CCAI. What Avaya brings to the table is a trusted CX solution in the form of Avaya Experience Platform, and the ability to integrate these AI-powered capabilities into the contact center stack.

“Our customers are excited about the possibilities of AI, for sure, but really they want an integrator to bring it all together. And they don’t want any disruption to what they

“

**Every large customer we’re talking to is thinking about how they can leverage generative AI.”**



already have. Avaya serves that need very nicely,” Abou-Ltaif explains.

Indeed, according to Arnold, there’s an opportunity here for Avaya to carve out its own space in the market.

“It’s still early in the game with AI, and payoff for getting it right is actually much bigger than with the technologies the company has historically been built upon. We know Avaya doesn’t have the resources to become an R&D powerhouse, but there are plenty of ways to infuse AI into the portfolio. This might include having more reconnaissance out there for under the radar AI startups, and creating a culture for agile AI innovation that’s really good at

tapping or incubating this type of talent,” he says.

Dave Michels, Principal Analyst and Founder at TalkingPointz, agrees that there could be fertile ground here: “A new round of AI technologies will dominate the sector in 2024. Almost all of it comes from OpenAI, Google, or Meta. The differences will be implementation and access to clean data.”

The good news is that these ideas flow nicely into a revamped roadmap that Avaya has announced. “CX is our north star,” said the company’s executives when announcing the roadmap, making clear that R&D dollars are being funneled towards its contact center portfolios.

Abou-Ltaif, though, offers a small improvement on that phrase, claiming, “Our customers are our north star. It’s as simple as that, and we’re investing where we need to address their priorities.”

In a sense, then, Abou-Ltaif’s claim that Avaya never left is entirely correct. And he’s not the only one that shares this view.

Michels says, “Avaya is not back because it really never went away. Yes, it had some leadership and financial challenges, but it never abandoned its customers.” CRM

“

**We can show how AI can also be extended right to the heart of the customer experience.”**

SAP

# HAVE YOU GOT THE 'EDGE'

CNME Deputy Editor Veronica Martin secured an exclusive interview with **Sven Denecken**, SVP and Chief Marketing Officer at SAP, during their Future of Business Summit in Walldorf, Germany, in an effort to find out how the company is collaborating with its customers to develop industry-specific solutions that are required to give them an edge in the current digital economy.

**C**ould you elaborate on how SAP collaborates with customers and partners to develop industry-specific solutions for digital transformation?

First and foremost, our vast customer base, exceeding 400,000, is complemented by an extensive ecosystem. Identifying our position at what I call the 'vertical edge,' which is highly industry-specific, is of paramount importance.

While the spotlight often shines on our efforts towards standardisation, my organisation is dedicated to a distinctive aspect known as 'industry advisory councils.'

Within this framework, we convene a diverse array of customers, ranging from the largest to the smallest, the most loyal to the most innovative.

Our aim is to facilitate discussions around use cases, processes, and innovations that they may perceive as non-differentiating. This process enables us to standardize or incorporate these insights into



**Identifying our position at what I call the 'vertical edge,' which is highly industry-specific, is of paramount importance."**

our platform seamlessly. This approach, which I refer to as 'core innovation,' has been a cornerstone of our operations for many years.

**What are some examples of business solutions SAP has developed to address industry-specific processes?**

Let's focus on the retail industry, which has been undergoing significant transformation alongside the automotive sector.

Retail is a stark example: either you establish an online presence or risk losing customers who prefer the convenience of e-commerce.

This transformation was rapid, challenging, and marked by numerous mistakes. Now, as we transition to a more normalized business environment, two noteworthy trends have emerged.

Firstly, online presence remains crucial, but customers are gradually returning to



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**Microsoft**

physical stores. To bridge this evolution, we've introduced an innovative solution on our industry cloud platform: AI-powered replenishment automation.

Secondly, the challenge lies in seamlessly sharing data between online interactions and in-store experiences.

These processes have been traditionally tailored for retailers. However, consider a scenario where you operate a filling station, and a significant portion of your profit comes from in-store sales. In such cases, it becomes imperative to harness this capability. Hence, we've designed this solution as an industry cloud offering. While the standard purchase and construction processes remain highly standardized, this unique differentiator allows us to seamlessly integrate it.

**As the Senior Vice President of Marketing and Solutions for Industries and CX at SAP, how do you contribute to the go-to-market approach?**

My role involves a deep dive into our engineering processes, as well as those of our partner organizations.

Interacting with customers and clients is their primary focus, and my team specializes in this aspect. While we maintain a close connection with engineering, we also keep a finger on the market's pulse.

We utilize conventional marketing principles, such as assessing the addressable market and evaluating different geographies in Asia. In some regions, it's not a matter of 'if' but 'when,' while in others,

there's a cautious approach, characterized by a desire to test the waters and understand how things work before diving in.

Our team plays a pivotal role in striking the right balance, ensuring that technology, engineering, market priorities, and marketing efforts are all harmonized. This involves effective communication strategies to successfully introduce our solutions to the market.

**How have your various roles, including ERP product management and post-merger integration, shaped your approach to supporting SAP's industry customers?**

At SAP, we consistently view our strategies and approaches from an industry-specific perspective.

Throughout my career, whether I was involved in acquisitions related to customer integration or focused on ERP solutions at the core, I always assessed which industries were poised for transformation and in need of our solutions.

In my current role, this extensive knowledge base has proven immensely valuable. It enables me to identify the unique strengths that potential partners bring to the table.

By seamlessly integrating them with SAP, our customers, and our technology, we unearth hidden opportunities that might otherwise remain undiscovered.

This is achievable only when you possess a deep understanding of our products, the market dynamics, and, of course, the underlying technology.

**What role does SAP play in helping industries adapt to rapidly changing technological landscapes?**

We continuously explore emerging technologies in our innovation centres in collaboration with our partners. However, when it comes to achieving scalability and resilience at the enterprise level, it presents an entirely different challenge.


While experimenting with various technologies is accessible to consumers, transitioning them to an enterprise-scale is where our team truly excels.

As I provide feedback on the value and specific use cases these technologies should support, it becomes a mutual learning experience, allowing us to understand the requirements for resiliency.

For instance, a decade ago, I initially perceived AI as a complex, PhD-level concept. Over time, I witnessed the rapid evolution and increasing significance of AI and machine learning.

I collaborated with our engineering team to understand the specific challenges customers face when aiming to scale in the retail and e-commerce sectors.

With the shift away from physical stores, the responsibility of delivering a seamless service falls heavily on a robust platform.

We realized that industry-specific solutions within our ecosystem rely on the same fundamental service. By uniting our efforts, we can enhance the resilience of this service and optimize model training with pertinent data. 



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SOLARWINDS

# FOUNTAIN OF VALUE

**Kevin Kline**, Technical Evangelist for Databases at SolarWinds, believes that the adoption and implementation of AIOps can transform the deluge of digital data facing many businesses into a ‘fountain of value’.

**O**rganizations today are facing a deluge of digital data. Transactions, conversations, clicks, alerts, smart devices and even social media streams – this list of sources goes on.

And while far from exhaustive, even just these are more than enough to exhaust already overworked IT teams.

Most incoming data is of little consequence long-term so long as it is in line with expectations. But every so often, something anomalous occurs.

It may be something that has the potential to cause harm, or equally important, it may represent an opportunity to help the business.

Either way, it warrants closer attention. Sadly, when the IT team is drawing from a firehose of incoming information, it's easy, if not inevitable, that many of these precious drops will whiz by unnoticed, and with each, the possibility of mitigating a threat, or seizing an opportunity.

In the Middle East, we've all heard the phrase ‘data is the



new oil’, and there’s no doubt businesses now understand just how valuable this asset it.

But if they hope to mirror the successes of regional Oil & Gas players and turn crude inputs into immensely valuable outputs, they must work to refine it.

Of course, this is harder than ever before. The amount of data produced daily is mind-boggling—and growing.

The multi-cloud environments in which data is now housed are more complex than ever. Privacy concerns and regulatory requirements are a constantly tightening noose, and attackers are always on the

prowl, ready to strike when a single slip-up is detected.

All told, the task put to today’s database and IT teams isn’t a simple one.

So how can such teams be expected to not only manage these exploding amounts of data on behalf of their organization, but do so while pushing innovation forward, avoiding burnout, and navigating important security and compliance regulations?

## From Buzzword to Backbone

With all the buzz around Artificial Intelligence (AI) this year, it should come as no surprise that this forms the backbone of the solution.

Indeed, AI, ML, and AIOps are transforming how IT professionals work in today’s increasingly complicated digital environments—enabling them to automate tasks, detect security threats and performance anomalies, optimize performance, and make better decisions based on data analysis. Because these technologies process such massive amounts of information, they help IT professionals optimize performance by ensuring applications and services are running properly.

By embracing AI and ML, enterprises can better detect, predict, and even prevent application or system crashes and outages by automatically analyzing key performance indicators (KPI)—improving the end-user experience, boosting productivity, and safeguarding profitability.

Accomplishing this today is



notably challenging because many companies run their systems across multiple clouds and rely on hundreds of applications to get work done.

More than simply ensuring applications remain operational, they enable DevOps teams to accelerate innovation and add more value to the business on a continuous basis.

Through AIOps, the benefits of embracing AI and ML can be realized at higher levels of the organization, too. These tools can autonomously filter the flow of incoming data to look for anomalies, keep track of searched areas, and detect incoming precious drops—or even new threats entirely.

### Time Well Spent

When you do not need to focus on low-level labor, you're now free to spend valuable time pursuing other higher-level pursuits that help ensure profitability and productivity.

You can assist dev teams and business analysts, train data analysts to write more efficient queries, or help build new and better applications.

AIOps bring these benefits to DataOps and IT teams, too.

AIOps is a relatively new term Forrester® describes as a “practice that combines human and technological applications of AI/ML, advanced analytics, and operational practices with business and operations data.”

AIOps-powered service management allows companies to resolve service issues faster



**When AI and human intelligence is combined, it's a partnership that unlocks nearly limitless potential at every level of the organization.”**

than ever before, reducing toil and relieving the pressure on end-user services teams.

Businesses leveraging AIOps are better placed to identify patterns and anomalies that could signal potential problems in an IT environment, quickly correlate vast amounts of data to provide root cause analysis, recommended remediation strategies, and even automate many tasks that are essential “heavy lifting” operations. After all, when “slow is the new down” for your applications, every second counts

Additionally, AIOps enables end-to-end visibility regardless of a company's infrastructure

or where they may be on their digital transformation journey.

More than that, applying AIOps helps organizations take the critical steps toward proactive management of digital services and moves them toward autonomous operations, which require little to no human intervention.

All told, AIOps allows leaders to gain back valuable time and brainpower—not to mention better protection from simple human error—to focus on critical priorities that amplify the business' ability to serve its customers.

### Not a Silver Bullet, But a Sniper Scope

I must caution that AIOps isn't a replacement for all the work needing to be done. Instead, we should view it as an aid in understanding the information we can't possibly sift through ourselves to rapidly focus in on what's important.

When AI and human intelligence is combined, it's a partnership that unlocks nearly limitless potential at every level of the organization.

The stakes for IT professionals are high, and coping with exploding amounts of data is a skill set unto itself.

And in the coming years, we will see organizations giving preference to IT professionals who are effective at using AI tools.

Yet effectively monitoring and analyzing this increasing amount of systems information is absolutely critical for any large companies hoping to remain competitive in the decades ahead. **GMI**

AVEVA

# DATA IS THE KEY TO NET ZERO

**Rashesh Mody**, Executive Vice President, Operations Business at AVEVA, believes that smart data is the key component for greening energy companies and helping global leaders achieve their goals of a net zero world.

**G**lobal leaders are on an urgent path towards net zero, acknowledging that the world must slash emissions by 50 per cent within this decade to avert a climate emergency.

Amid this pressured backdrop, the world has collectively undertaken colossal initiatives to decarbonize, including electrification and the increased use of hydrogen to reduce fossil fuel use. By 2050, experts expect renewable power to account for roughly 80% of global demand.

In the same vein, the oil and gas industry must redouble its efforts to stay relevant.

To reach the lofty emissions goals leaders have set to meet social and political mandates, the world must lean on a combination of efficiency measures, renewable electricity generation techniques, proper distribution infrastructure as well as green fuels like hydrogen, renewable diesel, ethanol, and biofuels.

## Solving tomorrow's challenges today

For fuel producers, adjusting to this shifting landscape



demands innovation, precision, and agility driven by quality operational and carbon data management and layers of analytics. In short, fuel producers must use every tool at their disposal – particularly foundational enabling digital technologies – to solve tomorrow's problems today.

For decades, operational data has been one of the most potent tools by which companies of all industries have optimized their processes, cut costs, and empowered their workforce.

However, as we continue to move from an analogue to a digital world, operational data has become the most important company asset to empower the

workforce, underpinning all strategic initiatives including operational excellence and digital transformation.

The addition of carbon data management as an extension of environmental data management only amplifies this strategic point.

## Decarbonization and profitability are not mutually exclusive

However, not all information is equally useful. To produce actionable intelligence, data must be structured and accessible to those who can best use it, particularly subject matter experts who have the knowledge and experience to put data insights into action – a strategy that's all the more vital, now that fuel producers must prioritize decarbonization alongside profits.

With our self-serve digital tools that are grounded in solid operational and carbon data management with streaming analytics, events, and notifications with AI-infused intelligence at their disposal, as well as a clear strategy for decarbonization, oil and gas companies can manage





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and address these competing interests more easily and effectively.

For the oil and gas industry, which accounts for roughly 9% of global green-house gas (GHGs) emissions, the decarbonization path is challenging but not insurmountable.

One of the first –and most important – steps for any company in its decarbonization journey is to use operational data intelligence to accelerate traditional energy efficiency efforts, thereby reducing the associated emissions.

Historically, financial concerns motivated companies to optimize their value chains and invest in unified supply chain planning, scheduling, and optimization.

However, given the recent proliferation of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors, oil and gas companies must now consider the cost of carbon alongside traditional financial concerns.

As such, companies must rely more than ever on digital tools to explore windows of opportunity, both financially and in terms of carbon intensity.

AVEVA's suite of industrial software solutions, built on Microsoft Azure's cloud platform, supports these goals.

Our tools are designed and optimized to connect asset, data, people, sites, systems and

processes, offering a holistic and bespoke view of operations that is perfect for digital transformation.

The software solutions enable companies to explore consolidated process optimization models, using real-time data to minimize carbon emissions within their operational and economical constraints.

In addition, software that offers a unified supply chain approach can empower companies to model both financial and carbon-intensity implications.

### Evolving with the times

Our industrial software also allows oil and gas companies to explore data from the project phase during operations.

The combination of the engineering digital twin, with its associated streaming analytics, events, and notifications, with the operational twin results in a sophisticated, integrated digital twin that empowers teams to make the best decisions.

For example, users can see real-time compressor efficiency with head versus

flow in real time against the design compressor curve in the engineering digital twin.

In a broader sense, too, companies must also adapt and evolve their business strategies to include decarbonization solutions and services.

Many early-adopters of decarbonization strategies have founded alternative energy divisions within their companies, which are specifically tasked with public-facing ESG.

Oil and gas enterprises must find other ways to reduce their carbon output too. Carbon capture and underground storage (CCUS), or carbon capture and sequestration (CCS), is one of the most rapidly deployable technologies at their disposal, though CCUS is not without its challenges.

Whether it's stored or repurposed for carbonating soft drinks, agriculture, or other myriad uses, carbon dioxide must be purified of contaminants like sulfur and chlorides.

Ultimately, the core of any comprehensive plan to cut carbon emissions must be solid operational and carbon data management combined with smart data insights.

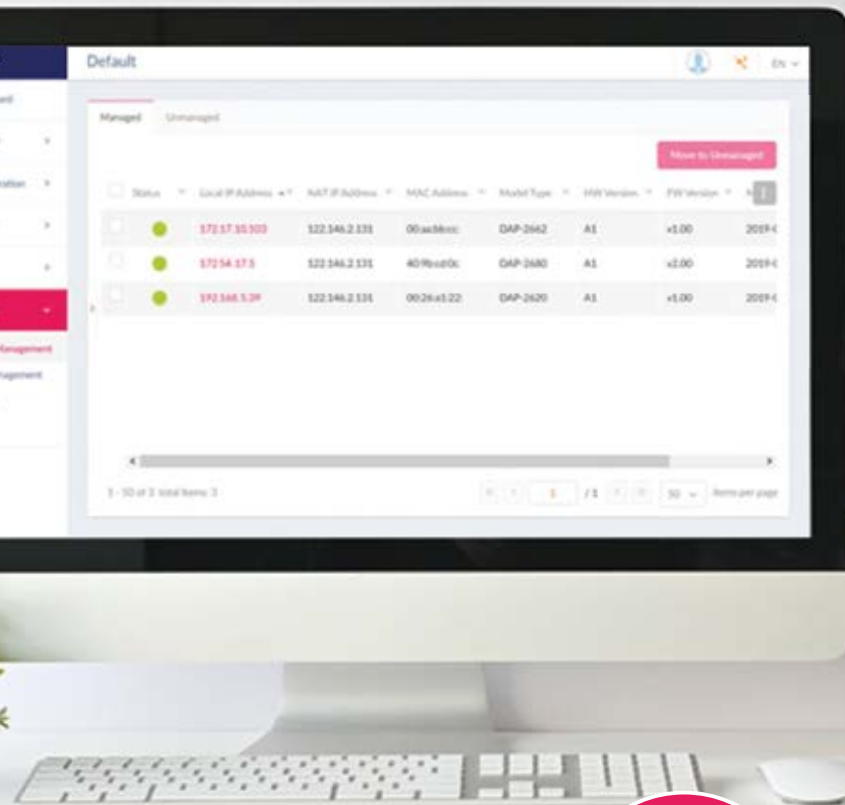
Companies should seek to tightly integrate – rather than accumulating new, disparate systems – their data and information management, as well as add more advanced capabilities by diversifying their digital toolset. **aveva**



**Our tools are designed and optimized to connect asset, data, people, sites, systems and processes, offering a holistic and bespoke view of operations that is perfect for digital transformation.”**

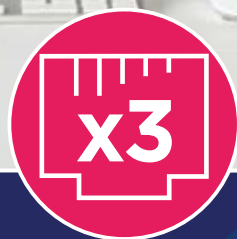


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The DAP-2622 is equipped with two PoE ports, which are able to power an external device (such as an IP phone), as well as a LAN port if a wired connection is necessary.

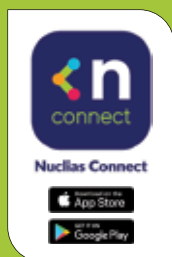
Wall-Plated Access Point



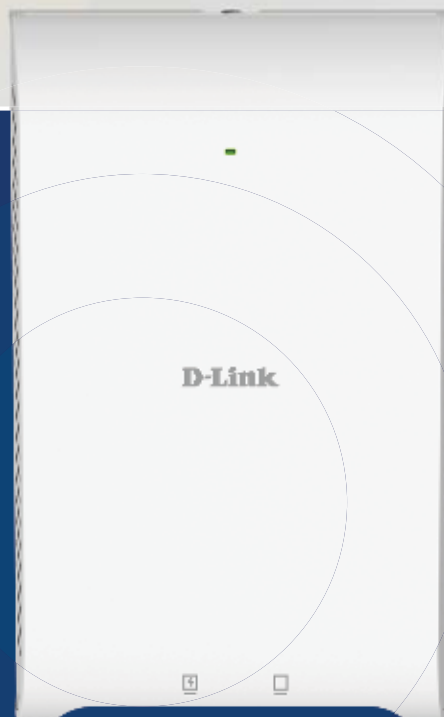
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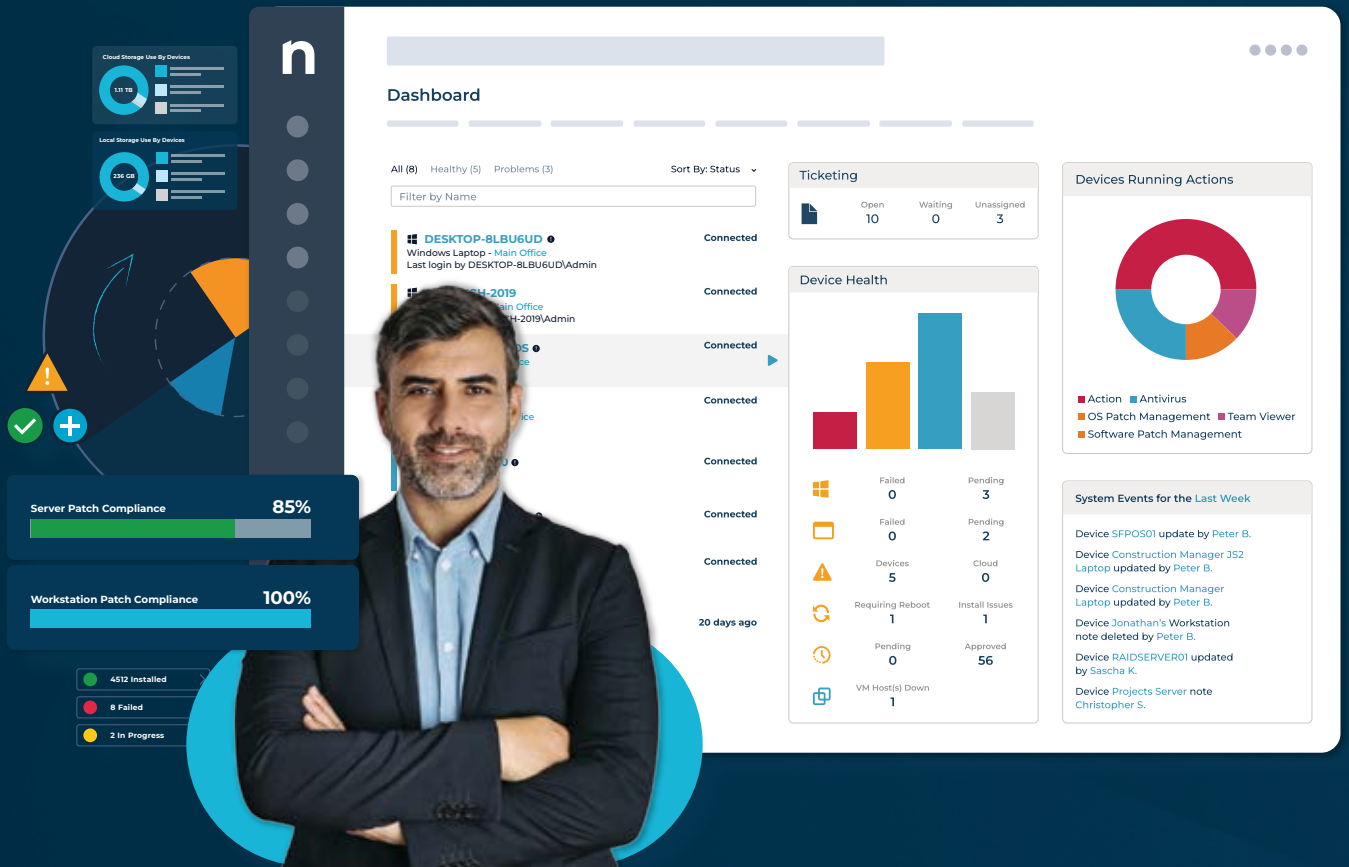


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## ORANGE BUSINESS

# THE FUTURE OF WORK

**Marie-Hélène Briens Ware**, VP Workplace Together at Orange Business, has penned a thought leadership article which examines how generative AI can completely revolutionise the future of work.

**G**enerative artificial intelligence has suddenly taken front stage since OpenAI's ChatGPT was made available to everyone in November 2022.

Since then, the key questions for every organisation have been: What's in it for us? What can it change in the way we work, in our customer experience, in our operations?

The race is on to bring the power of generative AI into the workplace.

One key development has been the announcement by Microsoft that they were soon releasing Microsoft 365 Copilot in general availability.

Orange is one of the organisations around the world to participate in the Microsoft 365 Copilot early access program (EAP).

Microsoft 365 Copilot combines the power of Large Language Models with data in the Microsoft Graph – calendar, emails, chats, documents, meetings and more – and the Microsoft 365 apps to help users create content faster and better.

Copilot will be available in



Microsoft 365 applications, such as Teams, Excel, Word, Outlook, and PowerPoint this fall.

It uses generative AI to help users write, design, and present more effectively. What's unique about Microsoft 365 Copilot is that it is fully integrated into our daily work tools. Yet, you don't have to use it if you don't want to.

Let me give you an example: I used it to draft a first version of this blog. I prompted Microsoft

365 Copilot with a few bullet points using natural language, as I would use in a normal chat. It came up with a well-written draft, and I added my personal edits on top. It saved me at least one precious hour of work.

This is a good example of where Copilot excels: it helps users do various tasks, such as writing a blog, creating a PowerPoint presentation, or summarising a meeting, faster and perhaps better.

Microsoft 365 Copilot has the potential to help many people work a lot more efficiently. Expect it to make a big impact!

That's why we are thrilled to be part of the Microsoft 365 Copilot early access program (EAP), and why it's important for Orange.

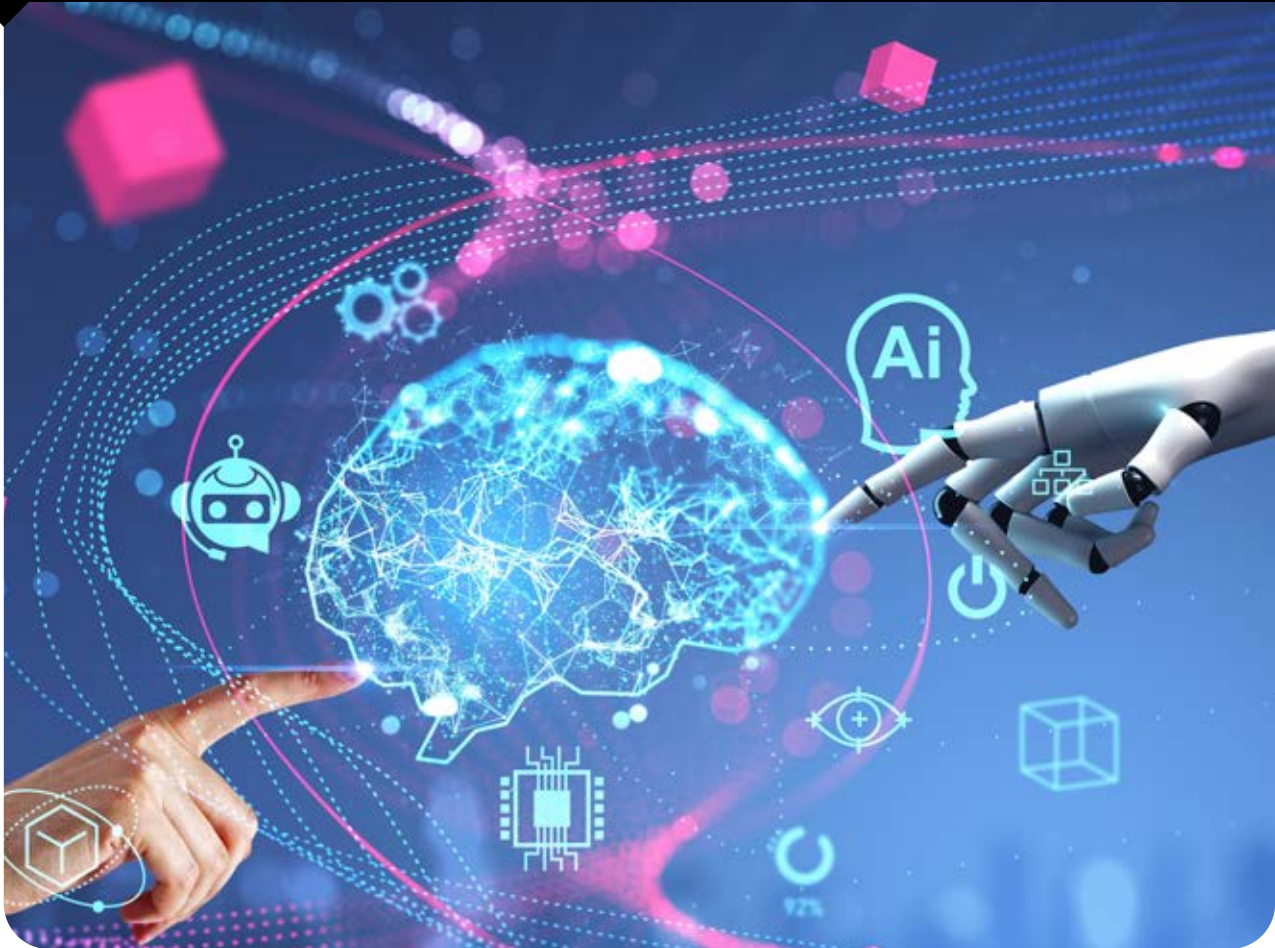
We want to figure out how Copilot can change the way people work. What we experience as a diverse, global company will probably look similar to what many large organisations will experience.

For Orange Business, being able to help our enterprise customers leverage the best of the technology in a smooth manner is a key goal.

By applying our learnings, we can help our customers make the most of Microsoft 365 Copilot. We are also proud to have the opportunity to provide feedback to Microsoft based on our testing to help improve Copilot to boost employee experiences across the board.

Ultimately, this kind of new tool will enable us to save time on low or moderate value-added tasks, freeing up time for tasks where humans excel.

Creativity, listening, forming convictions, taking care of



customers, imagining new services, reacting to new situations...these are just a few examples of what will be more possible because other tasks will be accelerated and optimised by Microsoft 365 Copilot.

### Preparing to test

Over the summer we assembled a core team to select a wide range of testers across Orange worldwide and prepare the roll-out.

Participants needed to understand both what to expect from the early access program and what was needed from them. Generative AI generates a lot of excitement, so setting appropriate expectations was important.

A main concern for Orange was data privacy and GDPR

(General Data Protection Regulation) compliance.

People had concerns about what would happen to their data. Was it safe? Were we taking a risk regarding GDPR or privacy in general?

Were other people going to access their data? The best solution was to make sure that our data would be protected and stored in the EU (European Union).

Microsoft listened to our concerns confirming that Microsoft 365 Copilot benefits from Microsoft's security and privacy contractual commitments (including GDPR

compliance) as well as the Microsoft EU Data Boundary initiative that aims to define a European boundary within which Microsoft has committed to store and process customer data.

### How's it going? Early insights

We gathered a diverse and representative group of testers who could use Microsoft 365 Copilot in different scenarios, contexts, and job roles, including sales, marketing, HR, IT, consulting, operations, personal assistants, project managers, legal, finance, and more.



**For Orange Business, being able to help our enterprise customers leverage the best of the technology in a smooth manner is a key goal."**





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We also made sure to include representation from 12 different countries. The program formally kicked off earlier this month, and we launched a testers' community on Teams, and it is already very active. We collect feedback weekly from the testers.

Key objectives for us are to evaluate the impact of Microsoft 365 Copilot on our employees' experience, and then see how our learnings can be applied to support our customers' experience.

We want to see how Copilot can help save time, reduce errors, increase quality, boost creativity, and more generally make users feel better in their job.

We also want to understand what they need to adopt Copilot as effectively as possible.

We are also deploying

internally other AI tools, for instance based on Microsoft Azure OpenAI Service, and some of the feedback from our employees is to better understand which technology to use for a specific situation.

We want to get a clear idea of the most powerful use cases – and it's not just “doing a summary” or “creating a pivot table.”

We want to understand in which context Microsoft 365 Copilot brings most value, i.e.: summarising commercial contracts, creating a report on quarterly financial performance, etc.

We want to see which job roles will benefit most from Copilot, hence the diversity in the recruitment of testers.

And it's not just about the diversity of people, but also the

diversity of data: the power of Microsoft 365 Copilot will likely express itself differently in different organizations because just like any AI, the quality and nature of the input data has a big impact on the output.

### What's next?

We are learning as we go as all of this is obviously very new.

Not just the generative AI technology, but how people see it and use it. It is already clear that data management, change management, and governance will be important efforts to the rollout of any generative AI solution.

We are looking forward to seeing the results and leveraging our insights and takeaways both internally and with our customers to unleash positive productivity! **enms**



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RUCKUS

# THE NUMBER 'ONE' PLATFORM

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Moe Raslan**, Regional Sales Director MENA at CommScope Ruckus, to find out how their Ruckus One platform is helping enterprises deploy 'future-proof' networks in the ever-evolving and complex digital economy.

**R**UCKUS One is an AI-driven network and business intelligence platform designed to help enterprises deploy 'future-proof' networks in a simple, safe and cost-efficient way. However, can you expand on the technical capabilities of the RUCKUS One platform, and how has it resonated with end users?

At RUCKUS Networks, we always looked at solutions that help deploy, manage and operate the next generation of purpose-driven networks.

With RUCKUS One, I believe we have achieved just that. RUCKUS One is a cloud-native platform that delivers network assurance, service delivery and business intelligence in a unified dashboard to simplify converged network management across multi-access public and private networks.

This means that it delivers results through a unified dashboard to allow for an overall simplified experience.

The combination of state-of-the-art AI and multiple patented machine learning (ML) algorithms, RUCKUS One has the ability to react at high speeds to address incidents and prevent



them from compounding and becoming problems that impact services.

Ultimately, it improves the end-user experience by allowing for easy troubleshooting of problems by lean IT teams.

Today, many businesses are investing lots of money and time to manage their network infrastructure through several management interfaces and the management of several appliances.

As RUCKUS One is a one-stop solution providing quality converged network management solutions for converged and switching needs, it has resonated well with customers and end-users.

RUCKUS One greatly reduces

the time to solve problems on the network as it is able to detect and identify issues as they happen and also keep records of this.

It reduces the need for technical staff to trouble shoot the issues as the AI has already identified them and given suggestions as to how to fix the issues.

Gone are the days of technicians having to spend hours on site troubleshooting an issue that might have happened in the past.

RUCKUS One does not maintain any personal information regarding the end user in the cloud. Only networking information is maintained in the cloud, minimizing issues with privacy and security.

**We know that many enterprises have struggled with the demands of cloud transformation. Can you explain to our readers why RUCKUS is such a strong advocate for cloud-managed networking? What are the key benefits of this approach?**

Cloud-based and AI-driven RUCKUS One is made for today's



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enterprises and is future-ready to deal with tomorrow's intelligent network needs.

In this digital age, networks are becoming more dynamic and, as a result, more unpredictable. This creates blind spots, which make it harder to provide consumers with consistency.

However, RUCKUS One simplifies the complex nature of modern networks. It is easy to use and expand, with flexible configuration to allow for an entirely customizable, yet secure multi-access network experience.

In RUCKUS One, a single software platform can incorporate multi access, smart services, network assurances, policy and security and device management and control. Key benefits include –

- Deploy future proof networks in simple, reliable and secure ways
- Provide a top-level view of the network and visibility into status of all APs and switches in the network
- Customize and optimize network resources on a granular level

**In terms of the cloud networking offered by RUCKUS, do your solutions provide 'complete flexibility' for end users to move their management architecture across public and private cloud? We have seen many businesses locked into one deployment architecture, so how do you avoid that from happening?**

RUCKUS One acts as a "one-stop shop" for everything – delivering network assurance, service delivery and business intelligence.

Many enterprises are looking to provide the right kind

of connectivity for their consumers, trying to decide between Wi-Fi or 4G/5G, or even both.

RUCKUS One is exactly what they're looking for. We are passionate about providing a flexible solution for any case scenario for enterprises of all sizes – from the smallest of businesses to the largest of them, with multiple branch offices.

As mentioned before, one of the benefits of switching to RUCKUS One is its ability to customize and optimize network resources.

Once a customer has added all wired and wireless networks on the unified platform, they can change network settings depending on the demand, such as the network upload and download rates, the LAN port settings of the APs or access control policies.

And since RUCKUS One helps manage networks and their devices on multiple locations, businesses are not locked into any one deployment architecture.

With the platform the network engineers can customize the switch settings or ports as per needs and have complete control over device access within their network.

**Do the solutions provided by RUCKUS continue to manage the customer's network should their subscription lapse or a customer decides to discontinue their subscription for any reason?**

We give a grace period, for renewal of the cloud subscription. If the end user does not want to carry on with cloud our access points



**In this digital age, networks are becoming more dynamic and, as a result, more unpredictable."**

can be migrated to different controllers. We do not stop the access points from working.

**In terms of growth, have you been happy with your performance thus far in 2023, and what is your strategy for further growth across the Middle East region in 2024?**

Since the pandemic, several Middle Eastern sectors have bounced back, from a general industry connectivity viewpoint.

As the region's digital economy continues to take shape, the investment in information and communications technology is expected to continue to grow.

Digital is now a permanent and dynamic fixture in today's enterprises. Digital acceleration proved effective for several organizations in the region, and those that didn't adopt the digital-first strategy have already begun investing in this direction.

CommScope is positioned in a way to offer industry-leading innovation to support enterprises' growth.

Last year, in 2022, CommScope invested approximately 600 million USD in R&D and new product introductions, with continued aggressive investment in RUCKUS® and ONECELL™ in-building wireless solutions to drive future growth. However, growth is a never-ending and ongoing process.

Our strategy is to expand and help more enterprises on their digital journey. **comm**





# Wi-Fi 7

## Wi-Fi Like Never Before

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Sophisticated  
Algorithms



More Device Connections  
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Self-Learning  
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Seamless AI-Driven Mesh



Enhanced Security – HomeShield



Network  
Protection



Parental  
Controls



Private IoT  
Network



Quality of  
Service (QoS)

ENDAVA

# TIME TO STEP UP

**David Boast**, General Manager – MENA at Endava, argues that it is time for boardrooms to step up to the plate and move away from short-term thinking to really drive sustainable digital acceleration.

**A**s a term now synonymous with the Middle East, innovation is on every boardroom's agenda. Organisations need to constantly push the boundaries of what's possible.

Failure to do so could render even industry heavyweights irrelevant, with their market share eroded by agile up and comers.

Innovation isn't just a remedy for staying relevant either, it's a prerequisite to commercial progress. A quick look at the meteoric rise of Netflix, and OpenAI, or closer to home, Swvl, and Kitopi, is testament to this.

But innovation isn't without potential downsides. The constant need to pioneer new paths has an unfortunate side effect — short termism.

In the rush to be first to market, the end result is all that's prioritised, with little consideration for the execution path to getting there, which results in saddling the organisation with technical debt — the rework and additional investment needed to undo the shortcomings of quick fix tech solutions that are destined to become weak links in the long run. Instead of creating a springboard for success, organisations unwittingly end up building a house of cards.



## If it isn't broken why fix it

When all eyes are on the road ahead, not enough attention is paid to what's in the rear mirror. And as long as things go right, few bother to question this myopic mindset.

After all, business stakeholders haven't had the need to understand the technicalities of product design, development, and delivery.

CEOs need to think about the company's performance for the quarter, and CFOs need to concern themselves with budgeting and forecasting. This way of working forces CTOs and CPOs to be tactical.

## The unintended cost of innovation

Bubbling under the surface though is a problem that has the potential to entirely derail business operations. Tech debt is the silent killer of the modern enterprise, and a consequence of its willingness to build skyscrapers over sinking sand.

There are many elements that contribute to tech debt — not having the right architectural foundation to support modern software development, and rushing digital services to market are perhaps the greatest offenders.

But so too is insufficient testing, the lack of comprehensive documentation, or poorly written code.



These problems are magnified in the region due to the revolving door of IT professionals who have little insight into how legacy investment really works. And this contributes to a precariously poised IT environment that could fail at any instant.

### One step back, two steps forward

It might seem counterintuitive but given that these are the factors that cause tech debt, innovation roadmaps can actually benefit from organisations taking a step back to consider their risk profile, rather than blindly surging forward.



**Short-term technology decisions that serve immediate business needs are setting enterprise-scale organisations up for catastrophic consequences.”**

But herein lies the challenge. With the way that innovation is currently handled within large organisations, the short-term mindset is an inevitability rather than an unexpected outcome.

After all, how can boards expect leaders and employees, who are evaluated on a quarterly basis, and whose average tenure at organisations is constantly shrinking, to consider the

long-term implications of their actions?

Boards and C-Level executives have to instil a longer term, stewardship behaviour that enables a culture of innovation, and technology planning well beyond the current horizons.

This is why there's a strong case to be made for technology advisory to be brought into the boardroom. Just as the board assesses and outlines the long-



term business strategy, so too it must take ownership of the innovation roadmap.

This may in some cases mean pausing new digital transformation initiatives and instead giving the organisation's infrastructure a long overdue health check and to see how viable it is to build products in an agile way, which in most cases is not technically possible without an upgrade.

It will require a careful look at organisational needs, not just as they presently stand, but as they are likely to evolve in the face of expansions, evolutions and changing regulatory environments.

It might also require a change in the company culture, from

being an organisation that is easily swayed by the attractive, though often unattainable, promises of 'disruptive and sweeping' innovation, to one that embraces continuous improvement, implementing iterative advancements that can be given the time needed for perfecting.

### **In it for the long haul**

It might be hard to imagine that in today's era of constant digital acceleration, an organisation that prioritises getting things right, rather than getting to market first, can come out on top.

But the fact that Apple is the world's most valuable company, and still sells more smartphones

than any of its competitors, proves that being a perfectionist can be more important than just being a pioneer.

Once organisations are ready to forgo their near-sighted view, they will easily see that innovation without long-term intent is a recipe for disaster.

And who better to set this long-term roadmap, than those who are unencumbered by the pressures of hitting quarterly commitments, or annual appraisals.

It's time for the board to see that it's not just the business, but the tech strategy that they need to take ownership of. It will then be them who can take credit for eliminating tech debt. **CRIM**





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## LENOVO

# LENOVO'S PIONEERING ROLE IN AI INFRASTRUCTURE

Veronica Martin secured an exclusive interview with **Kirk Skaugen**, Executive Vice President at Lenovo, President Infrastructure Solutions Group, in a bid to find out about Lenovo's strategic approach to its Infrastructure Business, the key drivers and objectives behind the company's strong focus on AI and how AI will contribute to the growth and development of Lenovo's Infrastructure Business Group.

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**C**NME spoke to Skaugen at the Lenovo's office in Dubai, where he outlined Lenovo's strategic approach to its Infrastructure Business.

"Lenovo's vision is to provide smarter technology for all. We're working to become a global technology powerhouse and we're excited now that 41% of our business is non-PC. Some of the fastest growing parts of our business are the software solutions and services, but also a data centre infrastructure. Since I've been here in 2016, we've gone from approximately number 10 in the world to number three in the server, the storage and data management, and now as an AI infrastructure provider. Our goal is to simplify the technology for people and be able to offer end-to-end solutions," said Skaugen.

He also provided insights into the global and regional performance of Lenovo's Infrastructure Business, especially in the MEA region.

"In the MEA region and specifically here in the Middle East, we grew triple digits last year, so it's one of our fastest

growing regions. Around the world we're trying to grow at roughly double the market, but here in the Middle East we're doing it much faster. We've become the largest supercomputer company in the world and approximately one in three of the top 500 computers in the world are running Lenovo.

"We're running 17 of the top 25 research universities now on Lenovo and we are also number 1 in the Green 500 list of the world's most efficient supercomputers. Broadly speaking on infrastructure, we're trying to drive edge to cloud. The amount of data in the world will double in the next two to three years. This will be more data than that's been created in the entire history of the world up until now, but we're only computing 2% of that data. At the same





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time, 75% of the compute will move out to the edge where the data's created. This means the way we're growing the infrastructure business at Lenovo is we're taking the data out to the edge, whether that's a smart factory or a smart hospital or smart retail or smart government, moving it out to the edge to do the computing. That this area will be a big focus for us as customers seek to use live data computed at the edge to boost efficiency of their businesses," commented Skaugen.

Skaugen also shared some notable projects and clients the Lenovo Infrastructure Group is currently engaged with in the region.

"We're working with nybl here in the UAE who are producing AI solutions for verticals such as oil and gas. We created an AI innovators' program about three years ago where we invested over a billion dollars in AI and now, we have over 165 AI solutions. As part of our AI innovators programme, Lenovo can take local home-grown companies such as nybl

and allow them to offer their solutions globally to benefit our customers worldwide due to Lenovo's presence in 180 markets. ENOC is another example in the UAE. We're putting our edge servers into every gas station to deliver a better client experience from the gas pump to the security at the stations to the point-of-sale terminals. That's been one of our largest edge server



**Lenovo's vision is to provide smarter technology for all. We're working to become a global technology powerhouse and we're excited now that 41% of our business is non-PC."**

deployments on what we call our think agile platforms, which is a Nutanix software defined infrastructure. We've also recently been chosen by Saudi's National Centre for Meteorology (NCM) to build a supercomputer to enhance numerical forecasting models, increasing the timeliness of forecasts and enabling NCM to issue warnings for severe weather incidents, so that preventative action can be taken," said Skaugen.

In addition to this, Lenovo has made significant investments in AI and Skaugen explained what the key drivers and objectives are behind Lenovo's strong focus on AI.

"Lenovo believe in AI for all and that eventually AI will be everywhere. We think of AI in three parts. Personal AI, that's like a personal twin that will sit only on your PC or your phone and give you advice based on your personal habits. For example, if you ask for a good vacation, it will know your personal preference, where you've already gone, so it won't recommend places where you've already been and whether you prefer a beach or a city holiday. Then the second kind of AI will be enterprise AI or private AI. This is where either because of government sovereignty or the need to have your own IP in a data lake, you can ask AI to do things for your company without it going into the public cloud. The third is

public AI, such as ChatGPT where you want to have a pool of information from the public. We invested a billion dollars three years ago, created four AI innovation centres and 770 products that are AI centric," said Skaugen.

Skaugen also highlighted Lenovo's investments in AI start-ups globally.

"We've become the third largest AI infrastructure company in the world, but the last part is how do you simplify



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this? Because there are over 16,000 AI start-ups in the world, and Lenovo is investing in some of those companies helping IT departments understand which are the most promising ones, and then certifying them on our hardware and then ultimately delivering professional services where we can deploy that into the market. Now whether it's cybersecurity, smart cities, smart retail, smart healthcare, smart manufacturing, we have 165 solutions in our AI innovator program. We grew 139% last year in a market that grew 39%, so we're over a hundred points premium to the market as a result of being an early adopter of AI," said Skaugen.

Skaugen also outlined how AI will contribute to the growth and development of Lenovo's Infrastructure Business Group.

"We are the reference designer for OVX, for the omniverse and Metaverse. We are partnering with NVIDIA and Microsoft to run Azure cloud for Nvidia OVX. This means if you're going to do a digital twin or things in the metaverse, you will most likely be doing

it on Lenovo technology. Additionally, we want to drive AI out to the edge, so I think we will have a tremendous growth as a result of the AI solutions we work on," said Skaugen.

Lenovo Group is also undergoing a transition away from its traditional identity as a hardware-centric company. Skaugen elaborated on this transformation and shed light on its implications and strategies.

"At Lenovo corporate level, we have our three SSS strategy, smarter devices (whether that's tablets, PCs, phones, or headsets), smarter infrastructure and smart solutions and services. We have over 10,000 people that do maintenance and warranty support on our products worldwide, so we can deliver mission critical support. We have a set of

services around managed services with our Lenovo True Scale, so everything that we deliver at Lenovo, you can actually buy it as a service in a monthly subscription. We also have a whole new growing set of professional services. We're bringing water cooling technology into the data centre and that's 40% lower power consumption and super sustainable. We can actually do data centre design for people, AI consulting services and asset recovery services," said Skaugen.

He concluded a brilliant conversation by reinforcing Lenovo's commitment to sustainability.

"Part of our commitment to sustainability is we can actually recover the equipment of us or our competitor's equipment and responsibly recycle it. We can actually give customers credit back if there's value so that they get a discount on their future purchase. We can also give you a certificate that says that it was responsibly recycled. Especially here in the Middle East, a lot of the products are coming from our factory in Hungary, that is a net zero factory. We have also removed all the plastic from all our packaging on our PCs, so our commitment to sustainability is very strong as well," said Skaugen. **enme**



**Whether, it's cybersecurity, smart cities, smart retail, smart healthcare, smart manufacturing, we have 165 solutions in our AI innovator program. We grew 139% last year in a market that grew 39%, so we're over a hundred points premium to the market as a result of being an early adopter of AI."**





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