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Technology companies all over the Middle East region are playing a key role in the fightback against COVID-19."

EDITORIAL

STAYING FOCUSED

A recurring theme in the last few magazines has rather inevitably been related to COVID-19, and May's edition of CNME has a similar looking feel to it.

The UAE government has decided to scale back strict lockdown restrictions and that has been warmly welcomed by all. It is also another positive indicator that the policies put in place by the UAE leadership is beginning to pay dividends in its attempt to get the pandemic under control.

However, it is important to reiterate that we must all avoid becoming complacent and need to adhere to the new rules put in place so we can get back to normal as quickly as possible.

Technology companies all over the Middle East region are playing a key role in the fightback against COVID-19, and one of those is global software leader Micro Focus, who is the on front cover of this month's magazine.

We spoke to Anas Jwaied, Managing Director, Middle East & Africa at Micro Focus, to learn how the IT company is leveraging its expertise to maintain business continuity for many enterprises across the region through its diverse range of tailored packages.

In GovTech, Deputy Editor Giorgia Guantario takes a much closer look at how technologies such as AI and drones have been dispensed by the UAE government as part of their efforts to curtail the spread of Coronavirus.

Ericsson's Lucky La Riccia explains how the Swedish vendor is helping operators cope with the increased demands being placed on networks as we continue to embrace the concept of working remotely.

Western Digital's Khwaja Saifuddin stresses the importance of social solidarity during the COVID-19 crisis and details how the storage solutions provider is helping its customers.

It is with a very heavy heart that I must also announce that our fantastic Deputy Editor Giorgia Guantario has left CPI Media Group.

It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Giorgia, who is undoubtedly one of the most talented writers I've ever had the good fortune of working with.

She's a brilliant colleague, with an infectious personality, and is someone who has also become a very good friend.

Her absence will be huge loss to us at CPI Media Group, and we know that whatever path she decides to take in the future she'll continue to be a huge success.

Ci mancherai Giorgia!

Mark Forker
Editor



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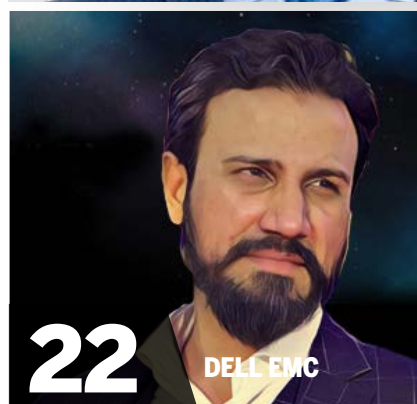
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Moro Hub reinforces commitment to providing secure cloud services in UAE

Moro Hub (Data Hub Integrated Solutions LLC), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA), has announced that it is now a Dubai Electronic Security Center (DESC) certified Cloud Service Provider (CSP) in the UAE.

DESC has developed a CSP Security Standard, which outlines requirements and guidelines for CSPs and those organisations consuming any cloud services. The CSP Security Standard mandates CSPs to comply with international best practices for cloud services. It is based on global information security standards such as ISO/IEC 27001:2013; ISO/IEC 27002:2013; ISO/IEC 27017:2015; ISR:2017 v.02 and CSA Cloud Control Matrix 3.0.1.

Mohammad Bin Sulaiman, CEO of Moro Hub, said, "The certification demonstrates Moro Hub's commitment to providing secure cloud computing platform and services to our customers. As a DESC certified CSP, our customers know that we have gone through a detailed process to ensure all their cloud service requirements are being met as per superior global standards and best practices. The certification further strengthens Moro Hub's position as customers' preferred partner for their end-to-end cloud service demands."

"The certification further strengthens Moro Hub's position as customers' preferred partner for their end-to-end cloud service demands."

HPE names new managing director for UAE



Ahmad Alkhallafi, Managing Director – UAE, HPE

Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) has announced the appointment of Ahmad Alkhallafi has been as the company's managing director of HPE in the UAE.

He will start with immediate effect and will work across HPE's Dubai and Abu Dhabi offices. Under his direction, HPE will continue to work closely with government bodies and private sector organisations to accelerate digital transformation and tech innovation across the country while leading the

response to COVID-19 locally.

Alkhallafi incoming priorities include helping customers and partners in the UAE navigate the COVID-19 crisis while maintaining business continuity and operational excellence. HPE Financial Services is designating more than \$2 billion globally towards helping businesses deal with the financial challenges stemming from COVID-19 and receive the technology they need.

"I am pleased to be joining HPE and spearheading its world-leading digital transformation in the UAE, supporting the country's economic and technological development," said Ahmad Alkhallafi, Managing Director for UAE, HPE. "At this challenging time I will be placing a special emphasis on helping our customers and partners negotiate the new landscape. I look forward to learning from our colleagues, partners and customers and believe that my local knowledge and expertise will enable HPE and its partners to achieve great success."

Zoom releases Zoom 5.0 to enhance security and privacy

Zoom Video Communications, Inc. announced robust security enhancements with the upcoming general availability of Zoom 5.0, a key milestone in the company's 90-day plan to proactively identify, address, and enhance the security and privacy capabilities of its platform. By adding support for AES 256-bit GCM encryption, Zoom will provide increased protection for meeting data and resistance against tampering.

"I am proud to reach this step in our 90-day plan, but this is just the beginning. We built our business by delivering happiness to our customers. We will earn our customers' trust

and deliver them happiness with our unwavering focus on providing the most secure platform," said Eric S. Yuan, Zoom CEO.

"When faced with questions over security and privacy, Zoom reacted quickly and very publicly to the challenges, including their CEO holding weekly public security briefings," notes Wayne Kurtzman, IDC Research Director for Social, Communities, and Collaboration. "Zoom was also quick to take actions on changing the defaults that helped address meeting privacy concerns, as well as setting a 90-day plan for deeper actions, and communicating it publicly."

CNS drives digital innovation in the region

CNS and MOHAP worked together

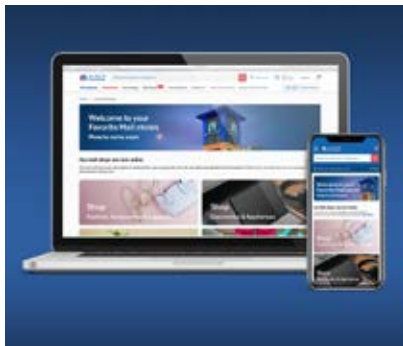
to successfully integrate the most significant IT infrastructure program in the UAE. The project comprised fundamental infrastructure with layers of network cabling; upgraded with new switches supporting 10G, WiFi controllers and APs, IPT telephony system, firewall, servers, and backup solutions. MOHAP now enjoys a top-of-the-range infrastructure to support both their day to day operations and system demands for practically unlimited further growth. It will enhance the Ministry's employees and visitors' experience by providing full WiFi coverage and high-speed internet to facilities at 130 locations across the UAE, while ensuring the highest levels of network security and system availability. This project will help MOHAP benefit greatly from the

efficient use of new technology and will be a cornerstone for its future digital transformation.

CNS was also delighted to announce its expansion in Oman with new larger headquarters and a more strategic location. "It is a great achievement that we have done for this year. With respect to our transformation and commitment to the Omani market, we are increasing our presence and investment in the country." Hatem Hariri, CNS Managing Director.

The new grand office will consolidate CNS' Oman operations, with modern solutions to help customers in their technological transformation journey. The new offices include a demo room, conference rooms, and workshop for our technology, also consolidating sales, services, and support in different locations.

Majid Al Futtaim launches online marketplace through Carrefour



Majid Al Futtaim, the leading shopping mall, communities, retail and leisure pioneer across the Middle East, Africa and Asia, has officially launched an online marketplace through carrefouruae.com that provides the company's shopping mall tenants and other businesses across the UAE with a new e-commerce channel to reach their customers.

The platform, which has been successfully piloted for six months

with third-party sellers, is available on the popular Carrefour mobile app and website which draws millions of visits per month, making it one of the most visited e-commerce platforms in the UAE. A wide range of Majid Al Futtaim shopping mall tenants have already joined the platform, including Borders, LUSH, Tavola, Arabian Oud and Jacky's.

Alain Bejjani, Chief Executive Officer at Majid Al Futtaim commented, "Through this Carrefour-enabled marketplace, we are 'going back to the future' and replicating our traditional shopping model, where grocery retail and lifestyle brands are brought together in one location and customers can access everything they need. While this new destination is digital and is here to stay, the current situation highlights the true value of shared experiences in the physical world and we look forward to welcoming customers back to our assets soon."

Cloud move top priority for UAE IT leader: study

Equinix, the global interconnection and data centre company, published the findings of a global survey exploring IT decision-makers' insights into the biggest technology trends shaping the worldwide economy. The results of the study—which gathered responses from nearly 2,500 participants from 23 countries in the Americas, EMEA and Asia-Pacific—show companies were already preparing for a more connected world, ahead of the dynamically changing environment triggered by COVID-19.

Findings revealed that seven out of ten IT decision-makers in the UAE (72%) state they are prioritising moving their infrastructure to the digital edge—where population centres, commerce, and digital and business ecosystems meet and interact in real time—as part of their organisation's overarching technology strategy.

Jeroen Schlosser, Managing Director, MENA, Equinix said, "The COVID-19 crisis has triggered an accelerated demand for digital transformation in MENA. Across different sectors, we are seeing organisations re-assess their cloud adoption strategies and cloud readiness, pivoting quickly to digital solutions and tools to ensure business continuity, be it distance learning or working remotely using teleconferencing. As the survey shows, interconnection is key to ensure full digital transformation—businesses in MENA will need to grow their interconnection bandwidth capacity to compete in the digital age."

72% UAE IT leaders state they are prioritising moving their infrastructure to the digital edge

iPhone SE: Apple unveils second-generation budget smartphone

Apple has announced the second-generation iPhone SE, a new iPhone featuring a 4.7-inch Retina HD display, paired with Touch ID for industry-leading security. iPhone SE comes in a compact design, reinvented from the inside out, and is the most affordable iPhone.

The new iPhone SE is powered by the Apple-designed A13 Bionic, the fastest chip in a smartphone, to handle the most demanding tasks. iPhone SE also features the best single-camera system ever in an iPhone, which unlocks the benefits of computational photography including Portrait mode, and is designed to withstand the elements with dust and water resistance.

iPhone SE comes in three colours — black, white and (PRODUCT)RED — and will be available for pre-order beginning Friday, April 17, starting at just \$399 (AED 1,465).

"The first iPhone SE was a hit with many customers who loved its unique combination of small size, high-end performance and affordable price; the new second-generation iPhone SE builds on that great idea and improves on it in every way — including our best-ever single-camera system for great photos and videos — while still being very affordable," said Phil Schiller, Apple's senior vice president of Worldwide Marketing.



Blue Prism appoints new head of MEA business

Blue Prism, a pioneer and market leader in Robotic Process Automation (RPA), announces the expansion of its investments in the Middle East and Africa Region with the appointment of Fawwaz Qadan as Middle East & Africa Region Executive.

The strategic importance of the region to Blue Prism and the hypergrowth in the company's business globally were key factors in the appointment of Mr Qadan who will be taking immediate responsibility to lead the company's focus and growth and oversee all Blue Prism's go-to-market operations including sales, field marketing, partner management, customer service and support.

"We are very excited Fawwaz is joining the leadership team," said SVP CEE, MEA, and EMEA North Robert Ekstrom. "With extensive experience in the field with a great track record of successfully growing



Fawwaz Qadan, MEA Region Executive, Blue Prism

key businesses in Saudi and the Middle East, he is the right leader to help the company's customers strategically leverage Digital Workers as a cornerstone of their business and digital transformations."

Blue Prism's continued investments in the Middle East and Africa Region follow the company's global 83% year-on-year growth in revenues

and an increase in its global customer base by 73% with a high net retention rate of over 143% for FY2019.

"Digital transformation has fueled business transformation and Blue Prism's innovation is not only automation per se. Blue Prism's impact comes from giving businesses the ownership to drive business outcomes through Digital Workers while adhering to the governance, security, and scalability standards that IT specifies," stated Fawwaz Qadan, MEA Region Executive.

Avaya launches IP Office Subscription through select partners in MEA

As global demand for easy-to-deploy communications solutions intensifies, Avaya Holdings Corp. has made it easier than ever for regional small and medium-sized businesses to leverage the power of agile communications with the launch of Avaya IP Office Subscription. This new offer is now available from Avaya Partners in select countries in the Middle East and Africa.

Coming at a time of increased remote working, necessitating the adoption of robust communications technologies, the launch creates a new, subscription-based way of consuming the leading all-in-one communications platform for companies up to 3,000 users, and which currently serves over 26 million users worldwide.

Avaya IP Office delivers powerful communications in a simple package

designed specifically for small and medium-sized businesses, which account for up to 90 percent of registered businesses in the Middle East and Africa. A single app provides voice, video, messaging, and conferencing and keeps employees productive on any device from any location. Avaya Call Reporting is also an option to provide simple customer interaction management.

"Today's announcement brings Avaya IP Office up to another new level. The current climate has shown us that there is no shortage of organizations that are culturally ready to digitally transform. However, many are unable or unwilling to make upfront investments in the technologies that will enable this transformation. Avaya IP Office Subscription solves this challenge by making one of the best-loved communications platforms easy to deploy and available on an attractive pricing plan," said Fadi Moubarak, Vice President — Channels, Avaya International.

Raqmiyat appoints new Managing Director

Raqmiyat's Board of directors

announced the appointment of Saeed Mohammad Al Ghurair, as its designated Managing Director. Earlier this year, the BOD has accepted the resignation of Raqmiyat's CEO, Amer Khreino who is leaving the position, at the end of four years contract term with the company, on April 15, 2020.

Saeed was elected as a board member to Raqmiyat since September 2018, since then, he was working closely with the CEO and his executive team on forming the vision and strategy of Raqmiyat 2023.

The handover process has started in early January 2020, to ensure smooth management transition. Saeed is expected to announce key new appointments in the coming few weeks, yet no immediate changes are expected on business structure, business offerings or GTM during 2020. The board of directors is committed to the growth and prosperity of Raqmiyat and hope



*Saeed Mohammad Al Ghurair,
Managing Director, Raqmiyat*

the new appointment will only cement our market position and allow the company to further expand its operations and business.

"There has been tremendous growth and prosperity across all business lines during the past many years" commented Ms Shaikha Al Ghurair, Vice Chairman and Group Managing Director. "We are looking to cement our position further to accelerate our growth across digital banking, business transformation and IT Managed Services under the new leadership. Saeed enjoys a diverse experience across many industries, with strong leadership skills that will allow him continue our growth strategies with higher diversification and expansion. I also would take this opportunity to thank Mr. Khreino for his contribution and dedication to Raqmiyat throughout the past many years and wish him best in his future endeavor".

Huawei launches new flagship solution and star products in the Middle East

On Day One of the Huawei Middle East

Digital Transformation Webinar 2020, held virtually, Huawei, a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices, announced the launch of new star products and flagship solutions for the Middle East: the new series of AirEngine Wi-Fi 6 and the Huawei CloudCampus solution.

The newly launched products and solution are aimed at transforming enterprise campus networks. With its leading advantages in 5G, optical networking, Internet Protocol (IP) networking, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, Huawei implements collaborative innovation across technological domains, allowing technological evolution and business development to go along side by side to drive customer success in the

journey of digital transformation.

Alaa ElShimy, MD & SVP, Enterprise Business Group, Huawei Middle East, said, "Technology is increasingly more present and essential in our lives, especially given

the current situation the world is facing. Reliable, secure, and seamless connectivity is crucial in order to keep everyone connected to the people and things that matter the most, whether that is doctors, family, friends, schools or work. That is why we are thrilled to officially launch our latest solutions in the Middle East, which will contribute towards bringing digital to every person, home, and organisation, for a fully connected, intelligent world."



*Alaa ElShimy, MD & SVP,
Huawei Enterprise Business
Group, Middle East*

"We are committed to no layoffs for 2020": ServiceNow CEO



*Bill McDermott, CEO,
ServiceNow*

ServiceNow is committing to protect the jobs of its 11,000-plus global workforce through 2020 despite the economic

uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The company also expects to keep hiring for new jobs worldwide this year. In addition, ServiceNow expects to continue to protect the jobs and salaries of several hundred support staff and contractors who are not working while ServiceNow's offices remain closed.

"We want our employees focused on supporting our customers, not worried about their own jobs," said Bill McDermott, CEO, ServiceNow. "We are committed to no layoffs for 2020. We are continuing to hire worldwide."

"We are grateful to be in this position," said McDermott. "Keeping our company strong means we can help our customers succeed. Supporting our customers, we can help get the U.S. and global economy working again. More than ever, companies see that creating great workflow-designed experiences help protect revenue and growth, provide business continuity and drive productivity. These are the priorities for every company now. We are all in this together."

"We are committed to no layoffs for 2020. We are continuing to hire worldwide."

HUAWEI

THE FUTURE OF 5G

CNME Deputy Editor Giorgia Guantario tuned into a virtual workshop organised by ICT leader Huawei, to discuss 5G's cybersecurity and roll-out.

The roll-out and security of 5G has been a very controversial issue in the past year – an issue that has only been amplified by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The diatribe between the US and China has seen its epicentre in the form of Chinese-based ICT leader, Huawei, which has been suffering the consequences of the conflict between the two global superpowers.

While the US and China continue their trade war, the roll-out of 5G in Europe has come to an alt and the continent has become the new battle ground to determine who will win the conflict. While one might assume that the COVID-19 pandemic has also played a part in the slowdown of Europe's 5G network, Hosuk Lee-Makiyama, Director of the European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE) explained this is not actually the case, during a virtual workshop organised by Huawei.

According to Lee-Makiyama, the 5G market is "basically split into two equal sizes" – China and the rest of the world.

He explained, "Up to this point, I think it's clear that China's importance on the global market has been consolidated, both as a supplier through vendors like Huawei,



Hosuk Lee-Makiyama,
Director of ECIPEd

but also due to the size of the market. The 5G market is basically split into two equal sizes: one market is China, which accounts for 50% of the global market, and the other half is the rest of the world."

He continued by explaining that so far, only the US, Australia, Japan and South Korea significantly rolled out 5G outside of China – while Europe lags behind. The reason behind Europe's delay, explained Lee-Makiyama, is not the recent COVID-19 outbreak, nor the much-debated security concerns of this technology.

"I'd like to make very clear that there has been a

consistently lower demand in Europe for higher speed and lower latency, compared to North America and East Asia. This is also reflected by the fact that European consumers care a lot less about things like watching Netflix in HD, or doing their business on mobile. It's a cultural issue which leads to a demand issue."

However, Lee-Makiyama also attributes the delay to the operators, who prioritise higher dividends to investors and higher share prices compared to the speed of the network.

Discussing the cybersecurity concerns related to 5G, the ECIPE Director explained that

the EU 5G toolbox plays a pivotal role in the situation. The toolbox has in fact identified a number of risks both on a technical as well as strategic level, explained Lee-Makiyama.

“Many, if not all of the technical issue mentioned in the EU toolbox, can be addressed by the vendors currently on the market. However, vendors cannot mitigate strategic risks, such as state interference in the supply chain, by themselves and countries can’t mitigate them through diversification. In other words, if there is a risk of state interference in the supply chain of the mobile vendor, it can only be mitigated by strategic measures, which can include total exclusion of said vendor.”

Lee-Makiyama also explained that the EU-China relationship follows a very different geo-economics logic than the one between the US and China. Europe has had a transactional relationship with much of Asia, including China, and network equipment has followed a different order of interest. While the US can’t rely on any home manufacturers, Europe has two major players, Ericsson and Nokia, coming from two neutral countries. Because of this, network equipment has become a commercial interest for Europe, which seeks balance, rather than bifurcation.

The economist concluded by saying that the UK’s decision “may not serve as guidance for how the rest of Europe might act”, because of the different economic interests of the two entities and the UK’s higher security authorisation capacity and active defence capabilities.



The 5G market is basically split into two equal sizes: China and the rest of the world.”



Andy Purdy
Chief Security Officer, Huawei Technologies USA

“I heard that an EU country applying for authorization for a piece of network equipment might take six months, which in this industry are pretty much equivalent to six years. European countries might simply decide it’s not worth testing network equipment, so they might just allow it or ban it directly.”

Dr. Ir Johannes Drooghaag, Business Management Consultant, also joined the workshop by addressing the need for collaboration to resolve cybersecurity issues related to 5G.

Dr Doorghaag believes that the companies involved in the roll-out of 5G should come together and establish common standards and solutions. This could be achieved by sharing threat analysis and conduct similar testing and validation in order to improve cyber threats and concerns.

The business consultant also gave his take on the UK situation with Huawei, explaining that there is no proof behind the

security concerns towards the Chinese-based vendor, and that the issue might be related to the political relationship between the UK and China.

He said, “Huawei will not leave the market – they will continue to be a significant player. If we cut them off from technology development or from parts suppliers, we are going to create a significant threat for cybersecurity.”

The workshop was concluded by Andy Purdy, Chief Security Officer, Huawei Technologies USA, who once again called for assurance and transparency in the market.

“Security through collaboration is absolutely essential. Huawei always strive to provide greater transparency and we encourage our competitors to do the same. We need to encourage market forces to incentivize and raise the bar of assurance and transparency by establishing common business best practices.” **cime**

AVAYA

NEVER TOO LATE

In this month's Women in Tech, CNME Deputy Editor Giorgia Guantario talked to **Iman Ghorayeb**, Director of Marketing & Communications, EMEA & APAC, at Avaya, to understand how she became one of the most influential communications professionals in the ICT industry.

An accomplished marketer and communications professional, Iman Ghorayeb, Director of Marketing and Communications for EMEA & APAC regions at Avaya, has matured 20 years of experience in the ICT industry.

Ghorayeb came to the UAE in 2000, where she started her career at Spot On PR, a Dubai-based digital communications and marketing agency. At the time she barely knew anything about the industry, but it didn't take her long to build a strong portfolio of clients.

She said, "Every time I made a career move, it was to move a step up. I started as an account executive and rose to the role of director pretty quickly. At the time, I worked with pretty much everything tech company on the face of the earth and with teams all around the region – I worked alongside a lot of very smart people who introduced me to many different new practices in marketing and I'm very grateful for that."

Ghorayeb moved to a client side position in 2006, when she started working as Director of Communications for Wataniya Telecom (now Ooredoo Kuwait).

Well underway to continue a very successful career, her life took a turn when she got pregnant with her first child and she decided to resign after nine months from birth.

"When my child was nine months old, I decided to resign because I just felt like I couldn't do it. After that, I was unemployed for seven years, and had two more children. I completely lost touch with the industry and I had no idea when I'd be back to work.

"When my third child was able to go to nursery school, I decided to look for a job again – it took me a whole year to find one because no one wanted to give me a chance after such a long break. It was one of the hardest things I had to do in my life, but I stayed motivated and finally started working again with a PR agency, running their tech practice."

Coming into the workforce after such a long time wasn't without challenges for Ghorayeb, who felt she needed to brush up on her soft skills and adapt to the new reality of the marketing industry, which had become a lot more focused on digital. Although willing to learn and get up to speed, the

communications leader found herself without a job again when the agency wouldn't put up with her learning curve.

She continued, "At the time I thought that was it, my self-esteem was at a historical low and I just didn't see how I could progress in my career. That's when I rolled up my sleeves and approached Avaya – I asked them to give me a chance and they were incredibly welcoming. We started small by building its PR and communications practice within the Middle East region. I surrounded myself with people who taught me a lot, while at the same time I shared and built on my skill set in communications. They found value in me as much as I found value in them."

Ghorayeb's career progressed quickly, reaching her current role of Director of Marketing and Communications for the EMEA & APAC regions at Avaya – a company that she explained has a very strong diversity policy and firmly supports the women in its organisation.

"Avaya's team can spot talent, and they really nurture and encourage it to grow. They took a risk when they offered me a job after such a long time



At Avaya, we really encourage voicing one's opinions and bringing new ideas to the table"

away from the industry, but they recognised my talent and my unique skill set, and they encouraged me to take it in a direction that worked for both myself and the company.

“At Avaya, we encourage voicing one’s opinions and bringing new ideas to the table – especially in technology, you have to come up with innovative ideas almost every day, and having such an open minded working environment that welcomes new voices is the key to success,” she explained.

Ghorayeb praised Avaya’s leadership for nurturing a culture that fosters a healthy and inclusive dialogue for all its employees.

A Silicon Valley study conducted in 2015 showed that women in tech find it hard to strike the right balance without being seen as too meek or too harsh in the workplace, nonetheless Ghorayeb found that being able to voice her strong opinions is part of the reason she’s found success in her career.

“Everybody at Avaya can voice an opinion, it then depends on the individual if they want to practice this right or not. I have always taken advantage of this open culture and I know I would never be negatively rewarded for speaking my mind. Working in this kind of environment has helped me become fearless in my approach and to progress quickly in my career.” **cime**



Iman Ghorayeb
*Director of Marketing & Communications,
EMEA & APAC, Avaya*



ENTERPRISE IRELAND

A PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Mike Hogan**, Director, Middle East & Africa at Enterprise Ireland, to find out how the government agency helps innovative Irish SME's penetrate markets across the Gulf region – and what impact COVID-19 has had on its day-to-day operations.

Hogan has enjoyed a distinguished career with Enterprise Ireland, and prior to assuming his current role here in Dubai in 2017, he was responsible for helping dynamic Irish companies access markets in Central Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Russia.

Hogan explains the mission statement of Enterprise Ireland and articulates how they've fostered an environment specifically designed to allow innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship to flourish.

"In Ireland we have two sides to our economy in terms of business. We've got a piece that brings foreign direct investment

in and we've done that very successfully, and other piece which is focused on growing indigenous Irish businesses. Enterprise Ireland helps companies from the moment of their foundation to grow until they have a product or service that is capable of being exported," said Hogan.

Enterprise Ireland



Enterprise Ireland helps companies from the moment of their foundation to grow until they have a product or service that is capable of being exported.”

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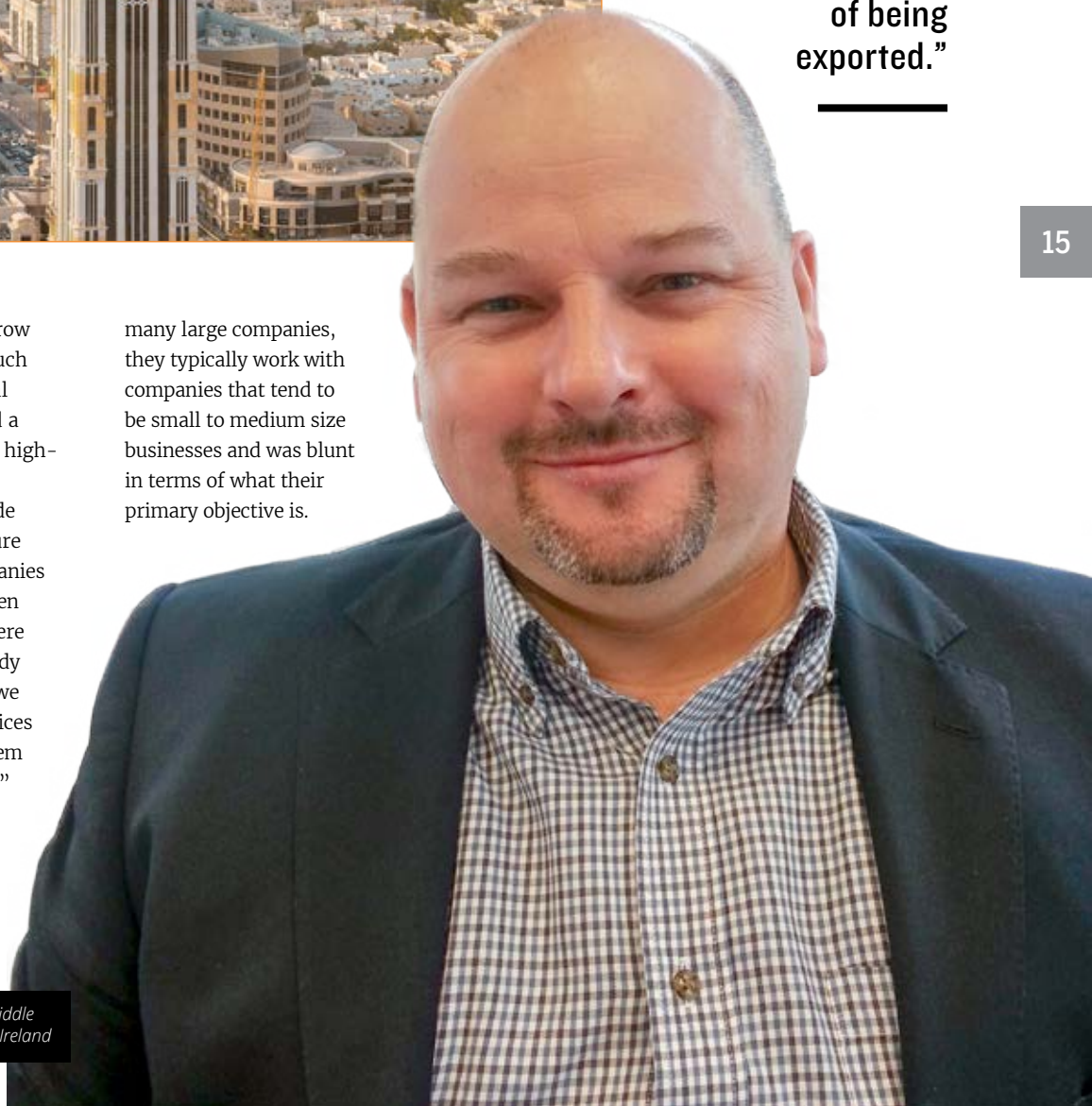
enables companies to grow through various ways such as consultancy, financial assistance packages and a venture capital fund for high-potential startups.

“We essentially provide a framework and structure which helps those companies to develop, and then when they get to the stage where they have an export-ready product or service then we have a network of 34 offices worldwide that helps them break into new markets,” said Hogan.

Hogan conceded that whilst they do work closely with

many large companies, they typically work with companies that tend to be small to medium size businesses and was blunt in terms of what their primary objective is.

Mike Hogan, *Director, Middle East & Africa at Enterprise Ireland*



“The range of services we offer companies overseas in particular would be consultancy, market-entry and how to scale the market. Realistically, I could put a lot of fancy names on it, but at the end of the day a lot of the things we do and the initiatives we have is about putting an Irish company in front of a potential buyer,” said the Director of Middle East & Africa at Enterprise Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland’s footprint in the Gulf region stretches back to the 80’s when they established an office in Riyadh. They expanded operations by opening an office in Dubai in 2003 – and have continued to expand as the Middle Eastern market continues to open-up and become more attractive for foreign investment.

Hogan points out that Ireland’s historical lineage in terms of exports was teaching, horses, duty-free, medicine and construction, but highlighted that now there is a huge level of diversity in terms of what industries the companies operate in.

“Where we have a lot of activity in is in areas of technology such as ICT, Internet of Things and FinTech. In FinTech we have a burgeoning reputation as a center of excellence. In terms of healthcare, Ireland is the No.2 exporter of medical devices in Europe, and we’ve got a lot of Irish companies that have worked hand in hand with multinationals over the years to develop their own products and services in healthcare and pharma,” said Hogan.

Enterprise Ireland like so



many other businesses have been affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that has grounded flights, disrupted supply chains and ground the global economy to a halt.

Hogan said that Saudi Arabia had been a major focus for many of the companies they were working with, but COVID-19 has now forced them to deviate away from that strategy and admitted that many enterprises were still trying to grapple with the fallout caused by the outbreak.

“Six weeks ago, we were still very much focused on Saudi Arabia, because Saudi had really opened-up, in a big way, and we had a lot of pent up demand and interest in companies going into the Saudi market. That’s completely changed now, as we have travel bans in place. There are two elements that are now at play, one is the shock affect. A significant number of our companies are still coming to terms with what is happening and a lot of their plans in terms of future growth have gone out the



window. Essentially what they're looking to do, is hold on to what they have and maintain what they have to the best of their ability, so we're not in business development mode anymore, we're in business protection and stability mode," said Hogan.

Saudi Arabia is undergoing an ambitious reformation under the tutelage of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and the foundation of these new reforms are his Saudi Vision 2030 plan which is specifically designed to help diversify its economy and

reduce its dependence on oil.

Hogan believes that Saudi Arabia represents huge opportunities for dynamic Irish companies and stressed how its new visa regime has completely changed the landscape for SMEs.

"The single biggest thing that happened in Saudi Arabia was the decision last year to reform its visa regime. It was the single biggest act. For years, we would have had clients that would've loved to have gone into Saudi, but they were looking at the price equivalent of airfare to go to Saudi just to get a visa, and if you're a small to medium sized business then that was a massive barrier," said Hogan.

According to Hogan, if Saudi Arabia continues with its policy regarding visas in the changed environment, then it opens-up the market in a much bigger way for companies to go in and out, and to more freely exchange and conduct business, but he countered this by saying that Saudi doesn't have any other choice but to continue on this path.

"If you're looking at a world of lower oil prices where let's say people are moving to more benign methods of energy, then Saudi Arabia doesn't have any other choice in many ways. They're moving towards a more balanced economy, and that sort of diversified company is going to provide a plethora of new opportunities for Irish companies," said Hogan.

Hogan was also keen to point out that the key to all of this in Saudi Arabia is demographics.

"You've got a young population that is tech-savvy,



The single biggest thing that happened in Saudi Arabia was the decision last year to reform its visa regime."

and when I look at an economy like Saudi people are very fond to look at things like GDP and growth, but I'm more interested in what people are doing. How do they live their daily life, how do they interact with their environment and how do they buy things and interact with one another?" said Hogan.

The Enterprise Ireland director also argues that in the tech space these demographics are a more important gauge, because in Saudi Arabia you have a scenario in which they're moving to an e-government online service delivery model.

"This type of ecosystem is going to offer opportunities for tech solutions, and when you look at the demographics which indicate that 50% of the population is under 25, and the population is continuing to expand rapidly, then that's an environment for a tech company that is very attractive. Saudi also doesn't have a domestic ICT industry, and there is also a very high propensity of Saudi buyers that want to acquire the best and latest in foreign technologies, so it's a market that represents a lot of opportunity for Irish companies, and it's our responsibility at Enterprise Ireland to help them access the market," concluded Hogan. **enme**

ERICSSON

"THE INTERNET IS BUILT FOR SITUATIONS LIKE THIS": LUCKY LA RICCIA

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Lucky La Riccia**, Head of Digital Services, Middle East & Africa, at Ericsson, to find out how the global ICT vendor is assisting operators to cope with the increased demands on their networks during the COVID-19 crisis.

In a compelling interview, La Riccia delivered a comprehensive overview of the current network situation in terms of connectivity, bandwidth and latency as businesses and employees' transition to 'working remotely'.

The dynamic Ericsson executive stressed that the internet isn't going to break – and explained the subtle nuances between fixed-broadband and mobile internet connectivity.

"People keep asking me will the internet break? But I can reassure them that it won't break, in fact the internet is built for situations like this.

There is a difference between the fixed-broadband type of connectivity versus the mobile internet connectivity. The fixed internet is built for high-definition streaming, but the current type of traffic that is being generated is in relation to video conferencing and gaming. However, it's important to note that this generates nowhere near as much traffic as that high-definition fixed broadband type of use-case," said La Riccia.

La Riccia explained that the challenge facing mobile operators amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic is the geographic redistribution of traffic.

"COVID-19 has forced us to work remotely and that has fundamentally realtered the traffic patterns on the networks. Traditionally, we would have traffic hotspots in places like shopping malls and large business districts. However, now you're moving that traffic into a suburban area and you're changing which base stations these mobile phones were connecting to, but the problem is that there is a huge

spike in connections coming into a base station that simply wasn't optimised for that type of traffic," said La Riccia.

The Head of Digital Services for the Middle East & Africa, at the Swedish ICT vendor believes that operators may need to change tact in terms of their investment plans and that a major focus for them will be additional capacity planning and network re-optimisation.

"There is a collective group of issues that operators need to accommodate for. Service providers need to be able to provide bandwidth and connectivity, and the re-optimisation of the network is an absolute must. However, when it comes to the ability to switch, so think about it from a pure user perspective, what we've started to find here in the Middle East, is that mobile internet traffic has increased. That increase is to be expected, because as I lose the ability to be on a fixed connection in the office, then I'm going to use my mobile connectivity elsewhere," said La Riccia.



COVID-19 has forced us to work remotely and that has fundamentally realtered the traffic patterns on the networks."

La Riccia pointed out that when you come back to your own home, you've got the option to either connect to your Wi-Fi connection, or use your mobile internet. The UAE has some of the highest FTTH penetration in the world, but that isn't necessarily the case in other parts of the Middle East.

"In the UAE, we have incredible fixed-broadband connectivity, which means a lot of users will move towards that sort of connectivity. However, you'll find that across the Middle East, it is a very different scenario country-by-country, where in fact in some countries the mobile internet connection becomes a much more critical piece of infrastructure. Mobile networks more so than fixed are very much built for simultaneous user connectivity, and that is why mobile internet is just one of those bastions in this type of current crisis that is helping us to maintain connectivity," said La Riccia.

It isn't that long ago that Ericsson were in choppy waters, but since Borje Ekholm took control as CEO he has really steadied the ship and the vendor has become the go-to player for operators. During this crisis operators have once again found comfort in knowing Ericsson is one of their key partners.

"I think there are two or three key operational areas that we're helping operators in, such as network re-optimisation and planning. In addition to this, when it comes to capacity planning and expansions of the networks we're working very closely with them to ensure that they have the capacity

that accommodates the current traffic levels, and that the capacity is in the right areas that suits the traffic patterns," said La Riccia.

La Riccia said that the initial challenge for operators was in the first 4-6 weeks of the crisis when it was difficult to predict the traffic pattern. However, he stressed that since the lockdown, which has pretty much been enforced globally, that predictability is now easier to determine.

"The traffic pattern now will change gradually and incrementally, but at a much smaller rate than what we had when the first lockdown came into effect. When that lockdown was first announced we saw that traffic pattern was changing very, very quickly and moving from typical hotspots into suburban areas. It was our role to help mobile operators to reoptimise in a bid to ensure they had optimisation and capacity in the right areas," he said.

In a thoroughly engaging and informative interview, La Riccia also highlighted the operators' 'preparedness' for major emergencies like the one we're now currently living in.

"I think another area we need to think about is the tools and emergency responses that we put together with the service providers. Our service providers do a terrific job to get ready, and make sure that if there is an issue out in the

field that together with all their suppliers such as Ericsson, we're ready to address the emergency situations together to ensure that people remain connected during times of crisis like this COVID-19 pandemic," concluded La Riccia. **crme**



Lucky La Riccia, Head of Digital Services, MEA, Ericsson

LENOVO

ON THE 'EDGE'

Dr. Chris Cooper, Director and General Manager at Lenovo DCG, discusses the disruption caused by COVID-19 - and how its unique ThinkSystem SE350 is delivering AI applications at the edge.

CCOVID-19 has disrupted the global economy and forced people to work remotely in a bid to curb the spread of the virus. How has Lenovo been affected by ongoing pandemic, and what challenges have you faced in terms of exclusively transitioning from a traditional work environment to a virtual workplace?

Our immediate priorities remain the welfare and health of our employees all over the world, continuity of manufacturing and rebuilding capacity, and assisting those working to contain the outbreak in communities around the world.

The coronavirus situation is a global industry-wide challenge and given its dynamic and fast-changing nature it would be inappropriate to make any long-term forecasts about the future.

However, we are leveraging the full strength of our global manufacturing and distribution networks to minimise any potential impact on customers.

We're confident in everything we're doing as a company to ramp up production and serve our customers during this time.



Lenovo's ThinkSystem SE350 addresses issues around security, latency and bandwidth. These issues have come to prominence amidst COVID-19. Can you outline to us why businesses should adopt the software in order to maintain business continuity?

Lenovo's strategy aims to empower and facilitate 'Intelligent Transformation' across various sectors and industries across the region. The first purpose-built edge server, the ThinkSystem SE350 is a prime example that comes to mind.

Designed to operate outside data centers and in locations close to where data is generated, the ThinkSystem SE350 delivers an open platform to support software that address issues surrounding security, latency, bandwidth and downtime with regards to smart city applications. This platform is designed to deliver AI applications at the Edge, something few can do at this time.

The global Data Center market is set to grow exponentially in the Middle East. The decision by Microsoft to establish data centers in the UAE has resolved the issue of data sovereignty for many businesses, is this one of the main reasons for the spike in growth?

Similar to Europe's introduction of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2008, the UAE is implementing its own data protection law which falls under the country's National Cybersecurity plan.

With global cloud providers like Microsoft establishing their own hyperscale cloud offerings in the UAE, we will see an increasing

number of companies adopting cloud solutions that comply with strict data residency laws.

In line with this Lenovo has recently certified its Edge Computing platform with Microsoft Azure to deliver the Azure suite at the Edge. There is an ever-increasing set of use cases that are demanding for such technologies today and likely to grow significantly.

It's almost four years since you were appointed as Data Center Group General Manager, Lenovo Middle East, Turkey & Africa. Can you outline your journey, and document the success and growth the company has enjoyed during that timeframe?

Over the past years, Lenovo has been on a successful journey based on innovation. In 2017, we unveiled the new ThinkSystem and ThinkAgile families in what the company called its largest server launch.

A year later we emphasised our offering to focus on storage, unveiling our partnership with NetApp and launching Lenovo ThinkSystem DE and DM Series. The company later diversified its offerings to focus on edge to cloud solutions by introducing the ThinkSystem ES350, an enterprise class edge server a little larger than a notebook that can be stacked on a shelf or put on a wall.

Today, as hyperscalers such as Microsoft setup shop in the UAE, Lenovo diversified its offerings even more by introducing the ThinkAgile MX1021 which harnesses the power of Microsoft Azure Stack HCI at the edge to reduce latency and analyze data where it's produced.

Lastly, our software and

services group as well as our world Leading HPC business is also on the rise. This is reflected in Lenovo's commitment to diversify its offerings focusing on delivering the best-in-class solutions to its clients.

2020 is off to a rocky start for many businesses in terms of their economic prospects, but what is your main objectives for the remainder of 2020 at Lenovo, and what is your independent outlook on the IT sector as a whole?

Lenovo has business continuity plans, teams and processes that focus on both protecting employees and maintaining service to customers amidst the widest range of unanticipated contingencies. We are leveraging the full strength of our global manufacturing and distribution networks to minimise any potential impact on customers.

With regards to the general outlook of the IT sector, according to a recent study from the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, IT spending in the UAE was forecasted to exceed AED 23 billion by end of 2019. Furthermore, IT services sales reached a record AED 11.4 billion in 2018 with a recorded double-digit year-over-year growth rate of 10.2 per cent.

As a result, the UAE is making great strides towards achieving its various development objectives as outlined in the likes of the Dubai Plan 2021, the 10X Initiative and UAE Centennial 2071.

We trust in the governmental efforts and leadership of the country and we firmly believe in the industry and that it will bounce back after COVID-19 situation subsides. **cme**



We're confident in everything we're doing as a company to ramp up production and serve our customers during this time."

DELL EMC

"OUR PRODUCT PORTFOLIO IS UNPARALLELED AND UNMATCHED": DELL EMC

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Azeem Mohammed**, Enterprise Distribution Lead at Dell EMC – Middle East, to find out how the technology leader is leveraging its expertise and knowledge to help their customers and partners deal with the challenges caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Mohammed has enjoyed a decorated and distinguished career in the IT industry – and has served Dell EMC with distinction for 17 years.

He started his Dell EMC career in Ireland, before relocating to Dubai in 2008. In the 12 years he has spent in the Middle East, he has firmly established himself as a key figure in the IT distribution ecosystem.

In a compelling interview the charismatic executive at Dell EMC began the conversation by outlining what his primary responsibilities at the company consists of.

"My main responsibility is to support the distribution of the Dell EMC-ISG channel business, which mainly revolves around servers. It is also my role to support our partners and train them to ensure that our resellers and distributors

are stocking the right products at the right price, which makes us stand on par with the competition," said Mohammed.

Mohammed also highlighted how he believes that the sheer diversity of Dell's product portfolio was a key reason in cementing its status as an industry leader.

"Dell EMC has a comprehensive portfolio that is unmatched and unparalleled in the industry. We want our

partners to drive that strategic message and cascade it into our customers and system integrators, so they understand our story and vision. We're industry leaders from endpoints all the way to servers, storage, HCI, networking and security," said Mohammed.

COVID-19 has ground the global economy to a halt and every industry has been affected in some shape or form. However, Mohammed believes the outbreak has represented an opportunity for Dell EMC to communicate their vision to their customers, whilst assisting them in resolving some of their key challenges, namely the transition from a traditional office environment to a virtual workplace.

"The wonders of modern technology ensure that we're still able to speak to our customers, and we can conduct meetings with them via video conferencing tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, so we haven't been impacted from that perspective. However, we're trying to help our customers in terms of enabling their remote endpoints and its workforce to work remotely in an effective way. There has never been a better time for us to communicate our story to our customers and convey to them what exactly Dell EMC can do to help them in this current crisis," said Mohammed.

The dynamic Dell EMC executive also pointed out that in some cases they have customers that have 80-100% of their entire workforce working remotely from home - but stressed that it's not just about enabling the workforce.

"It's not just about working remotely, it's also about supporting the IT needs. It's about supporting the systems that are backing everything up, there are entire infrastructure and applications that need to be protected at all time. There are remote workers who are using various types of endpoints such as a corporate notebook, personal iPad or a handheld device, and we totally understand the security concerns of the customers.



Some workers will need a high level of network performance in terms of downloading a lot of data."

We're aligned with what they need from us in terms of ensuring their security on these types of endpoint devices," said Mohammed.

Mohammed said that the predominant challenges that customers are coming to them with are issues they've previously dealt with in the past, which are primarily focused on security.

"A lot of our customers are encountering challenges that isn't something new to us. We've been asked these questions in the past from customers who already had adopted the concept of remote working prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The question we're typically being

asked by customers is how do we ensure that all their workers are protected and secure when working remotely? What has happened is that traditionally sensitive information, which was managed onsite, is now being managed remotely, so instead of being inside the firewall, it is now outside of the firewall," said Mohammed.

The Enterprise Distribution Lead at Dell EMC concluded a fascinating conversation by explaining the nuanced challenges facing some employees working remotely. A large portion of employees will need high-speed broadband connections and a strong network to process some of the data on their intensive applications. If connectivity is disrupted, then it can be financially detrimental for businesses.

"We need to extend the security profile for these endpoints or end-user devices which are remote to ensure that these workers get a high level of network performance. Some workers will need a high level of network performance in terms of downloading a lot of data. We need to make sure that these latency intensive applications don't create a bottleneck on the network. If some of the workers don't have access to intensive applications and are unable to download large files, then that can result in the company losing millions. However, we're well-positioned, and well-placed to help customers overcome all these challenges - and they've entrusted us to help them achieve their business goals and objectives during these unprecedented times," concluded Mohammed. **crme**

MICRO FOCUS

'EMPOWERING' BUSINESS CONTINUITY

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Anas Jwaied**, Managing Director, Middle East & Africa, at Micro Focus, to learn how the software company is leveraging its diverse product portfolio to ensure 'business continuity' following the widespread chaos and disruption caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

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CCOVID-19 has wreaked havoc on global supply chains, grounded flights and forced many businesses to completely shut down its operations.

That has rather inevitably triggered a seismic shock to the global economy and the economic ramifications of COVID-19 may be the worst that we've ever experienced in our lifetime.

However, there are many companies leading the fightback and striving to ensure businesses remain operational in these unprecedented times, and one of them is Micro Focus.

Micro Focus is one of the biggest pure-play software companies in the world and is the biggest in IT operations

management. It serves 40,000 customers globally and has really positioned itself as an agent of digital transformation.

Its ability to deliver speed, agility, security and insights that are necessary to succeed in an evolving marketplace really differentiates Micro Focus from its market competitors.

Under the visionary leadership of Jwaied, the IT leader has really positioned itself as the go-to player for businesses in the Middle East that need assistance in terms of maintaining business continuity amidst COVID-19.

Its comprehensive portfolio is equipping enterprises with the tools they need to ensure that they can maintain their day-to-day business operations.

Jwaied explains that Micro Focus has always been a

customer-centric company - and declared that it is striving to ensure they help all its customers overcome these new challenges presented by COVID-19.

"The global coronavirus COVID-19 global pandemic is affecting every aspect of our lives, from how we work to how we conduct our daily lives at home with our families. Micro Focus is standing firm in our company values, in putting customers first, in teaming and working together for the best outcomes, in deciding and acting in a way that makes an impact, and in learning and adapting so that we can help our employees and customers adjust to this new way of life," said Jwaied.

As businesses transition to allow their employees to



We know that software only solves part of the problem, to truly mobilise teams for the 'new normal' then training and enablement are critical.”

work remotely, Micro Focus is making it easy for organizations to ensure continuity of service to their customers, by offering tailored packages that are specifically designed to help businesses and their teams.

One of the solutions Micro Focus is promoting as part of their efforts to empower businesses is its Adoption Readiness Tool (ART).

According to the Managing Director at Micro Focus, this training solution will ultimately allow businesses to help prepare their staff

Anas Jwaied, *Managing Director, Middle East & Africa, at Micro Focus*

to be able to cope with new challenges and demands.

“We know that software only solves part of the problem, to truly mobilise teams for the new normal, training and enablement are critical. The Adoption Readiness Tool (ART) training solutions will help teams transition to new ways of working. ART enables businesses to rapidly generate their own custom onboarding content and launch virtual training with simulation based hands-on exercises and video’s, on any topic required, in a simple and fast way,” said Jwaied.

One of the biggest challenges for many enterprises has been the task of transitioning their employees from the compounds of a traditional office environment to a new virtual workplace. However, once again Micro Focus is on hand to address many of the security concerns that businesses would have.

As employees move to working remotely, they need secure access to the data and systems required for their job. To help with this challenge, Micro Focus are providing an unlimited edition of NetIQ Advanced Authentication that offers multi-factor authentication for your users.

In addition to this, many employees working from home may well be using unsecured e-mail systems. Micro Focus is helping to ensure your employees e-mail are secure during these unprecedented times by dispensing their Voltage SecureMail solution

which provides internal and external encryption from the originator to the intended recipient.

“We are acutely aware that many of our customers have many employees working from home at this time and they need to collaborate virtually to ensure business continuity. One of the major challenges for businesses is keeping their assets secure and protected in this remote environment, and NetIQ Advanced Authentication and Voltage SecureMail provide robust security frameworks that allows enterprises to ultimately focus on their own business objectives and not have to worry if they are secure or not,” said Jwaied.

One other major issue for businesses is connectivity. Traffic patterns and hotspots

have switched from business districts into suburban areas and the base stations in those areas are simply not optimized to manage the exponential growth of traffic in these areas.

Many employees need to use network intensive applications to effectively do their job, but latency, bandwidth and network performance problems have thus far plagued major enterprises and SMEs.

Micro Focus is again leveraging its phenomenal product portfolio to assist businesses encountering network performance and latency problems by ensuring scalability of their critical internal and external applications through its LoadRunner licenses.

“As more and more employees and customers are





forced to work remotely due to the spread of COVID-19, ensuring the scalability of businesses internal and external apps is critical to handle the unprecedented influx of online traffic. We're here to help by making it easier for them to identify any performance issues that may arise, and ultimately ensure continuity of service. To enable businesses to quickly find defects and pinpoint root-cause in real time, effective immediately, which we will provide you free-of-charge," said Jwaied.

One other consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the evolution of data backup practices. A lot of SMB & Mid-Market customers have to backup data locally, and due to the lockdown can not leave

their homes to change tapes or vault them.

As a result of this many of these customers are looking to adopt native cloud options as an archive during this period hence. Micro Focus can showcase their product capability of native integration with its Micro Focus backup solution in which they've partnered with well-known public cloud providers to produce.

"Our Micro Focus Enterprise Service Management solution can be used by existing or new customers. The solution is a dedicated crisis management application that can be fused together without any single line of code to provide logistics and visibility on working remotely and service requests related to the crisis. The overall data coupled with external data if desired can also be presented on Business Value Dashboards," said Jwaied.

As aforementioned above Micro Focus is a global technology leader and its cutting-edge innovations and solutions have transformed companies all over the world. However, it has recognized that people turn to the company for inspiration in times of crisis and it has duly responded with its comprehensive business continuity plans (BCP) which has been tailored to tackle a wide range of issues.

"As we all deal with the unprecedented world event that is the spread of COVID-19, we know that like us, customers will be enacting their Business Continuity



One of the major challenges for businesses is keeping their assets secure and protected in this remote environment."

Plans (BCP) and readjusting those plans to accommodate the evolving situation. We know that time sensitive and unimpeded access to technical experts to bolster your readiness capabilities is critical. We want businesses to know that Micro Focus is here to partner with them through these times and we want to help provide them with the easiest access to resources so they can ensure the successful implementation of their BCP," said Jwaied.

In order to be able to respond to businesses that require help during these times, Micro Focus have put together a series of packaged offerings that are specifically designed to be rapidly deployed to help customers do everything from temporarily supplementing staff in the case of regular team members being out through to providing 24x7 solution support in case of emergency.

"We have adapted our offering to be delivered fully remotely and can accommodate your security requirements with US or local-based resources or leverage our global center of excellence," said Jwaied. **cme**

INGRAM MICRO

INGRAM MICRO EQUIPS ITS PARTNERS WITH NEW SKILLS DURING COVID-19

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Sophia Antony**, Senior Product Manager - Dell EMC at Ingram Micro, to find out how the company's global supply chains have been affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Sophia has been a key component of the distribution operations at Dell EMC at Ingram Micro for years – and is recognized as prominent thought leader within the IT industry.

She is tasked with the responsibility of managing sales, business development, strategy and ultimately the distribution of products from Dell EMC.

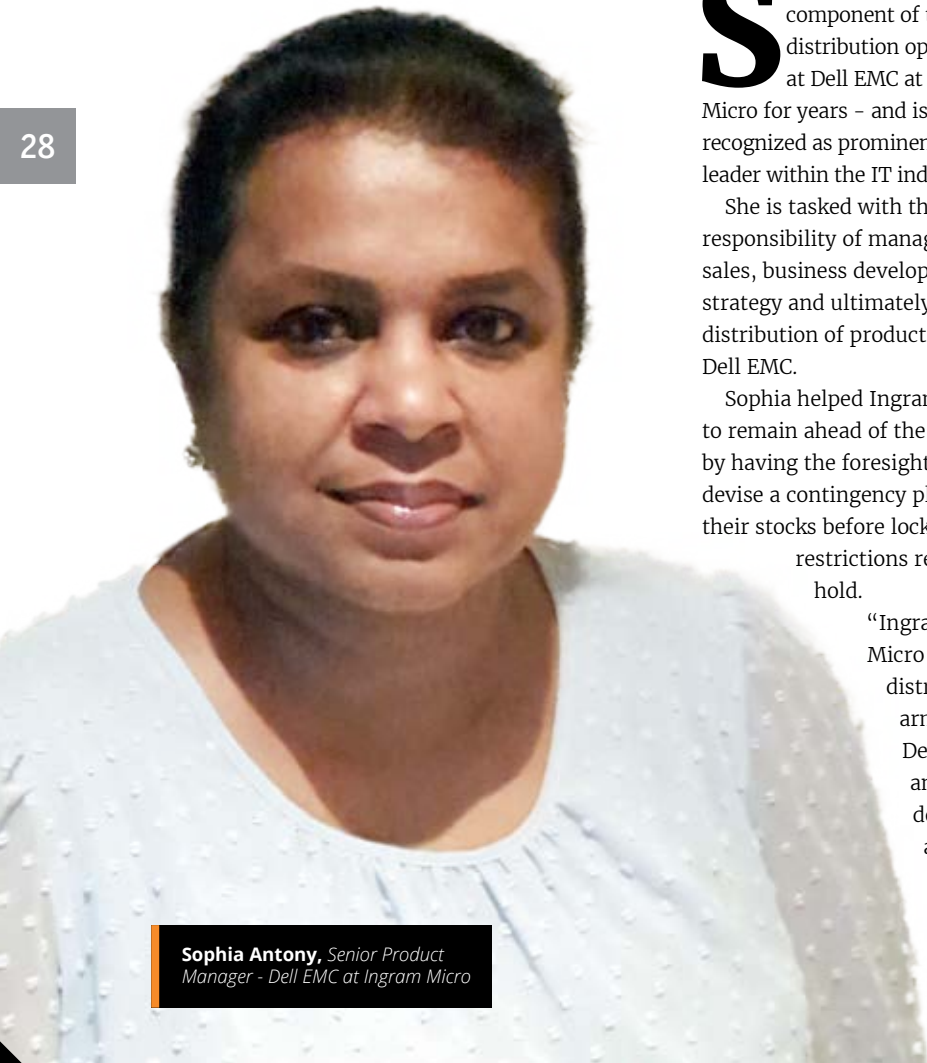
Sophia helped Ingram Micro to remain ahead of the curve by having the foresight to devise a contingency plan for their stocks before lockdown restrictions really took hold.

“Ingram Micro is the distribution arm of Dell EMC, and we do stock and sell business and back-to-back

business for them. We're currently facing a global pandemic in the form of COVID-19, but we projected that there could well be severe disruption in terms of shipping and distribution, so we ordered a lot of stock before the virus took a grip and halted supply chains. That decision enabled us to be in a position to have enough stocks available to meet market demands,” said Sophia.

She also pointed out that another challenge in terms of supply chains is the fact that many countries have different rules, policies and regulations around shipping, importing and exporting. The other problematic factor for many enterprises is that lockdown restrictions has forced them to realter their traditional methods of distribution which was spread across freight transport, aviation and shipping.

“In February, we anticipated that it was likely we were going to encounter challenges, so we placed additional orders. However, in terms of how we typically received our stocks, we



Sophia Antony, Senior Product Manager - Dell EMC at Ingram Micro

normally used a mix of shipping, air and trucks to deliver it from Europe, as part of an effort to reduce costs. But now that air cargo flights are the only viable options for distribution, and there is increased demand, then inevitably the costs have doubled.

Sophia stated that although costs had grown exponentially, they hadn't imposed any additional charges on their partners, and instead are working tirelessly with them to find a resolution that works for all parties.

In addition to this, the Senior Product manager at Dell EMC at Ingram Micro also declared that when COVID-19 is brought under control there will be increased demand.

"In terms of our back-to-back business we do have problems because we have orders placed that are not shipped or are still in production due to lockdown measures. However, as I've already stated I believe we have a healthy pipeline, and we will be well positioned when the lockdown restrictions in countries are scaled back. It's important to note that when this crisis is over there is going to be demand, because the market is dry now without stocks. But as I already said we placed a lot of orders in February, to ensure we were still able to meet the market demands of our customers," said Sophia.

The executive also conceded that every business is facing challenges due to COVID-19 – but said that the crisis represented a unique opportunity for many of their



COVID-19 has disrupted business continuity in every industry from education to aviation, but what we're doing is trying to stay 'connected' with our partners."

partners to learn new skills that wouldn't have been possible prior to the outbreak.

"COVID-19 has disrupted business continuity in every industry from education to aviation, but what we're doing is trying to stay 'connected' with our partners. What we've identified is that most of our small partners are now sitting idle at home, because they're unable to open their shops. However, we recognized that this provided us with a unique opportunity to help them increase their knowledge – and we're conducting one-on-one training with them" said Sophia.

As the dynamic executive points out before this pandemic it was difficult for partners to upskill because they were working from 10-10 every day, and simply didn't have the time to learn new skills. Now they can avail of free training that is being provided to them by Dell EMC.

"The global pandemic has created a situation where small partners now have a lot of time on their hands, so we're providing training to them to help them get certified by Dell EMC. The sales, pre-sales and product managers are delivering

the training seminars, which is specifically tailored to what they want to learn, and we're doing this all for free,".

She also praised the outstanding leadership that has been displayed by their management time during this crisis and declared that internally the company has adopted a mindset and approach in which they want to become better by actively staying busy through re-learning and training.

"We've been supported in this approach by our management and during times of crisis your leadership needs to be inspirational, and they've certainly displayed that at Ingram Micro. Our management have been a phenomenal support and normally they would've been focused on crunching numbers which is the norm in distribution. But now they are fostering an ecosystem and an environment which is encouraging us to learn new skills and undertakes new challenges," said Sophia.

She also pointed out that the knock-on effect of that cultural leadership has trickled down into their partners.

"The effect of that sort of direction and support from management has resulted in us doing the same with our partners by encouraging them to do likewise. We want them to become certified by Dell and know more about the products, solutions and services they're re-selling for us. We now have time to learn, so let's seize on that, because it won't last forever, and when this storm eventually passes, we will all be very, very busy again," concluded Sophia. **cme**

FORTINET

AS SECURE AS POSSIBLE

In an exclusive interview with CNME, **Alain Penel**, Regional Vice President Middle East and Pakistan at Fortinet, explains how the cybersecurity leader is supporting organisations to implement a strong security strategy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the global economy and created uncertainty for many organisations across the globe. How is Fortinet ensuring support for its customers during these difficult times?

Fortinet took appropriate steps to support and protect businesses. We have and carry on helping our customer on quickly transition to an effective and secure remote workforce strategy without incremental costs. Thus, all deployed FortiGate security platforms already include the technologies and tools customers need to rapidly establish a secure teleworker solution. Our FortiClient VPN solution is also available free of charge to ensure remote workers have fast and secure network access.

We have also introduced a new, free of charge FortiGate Essentials

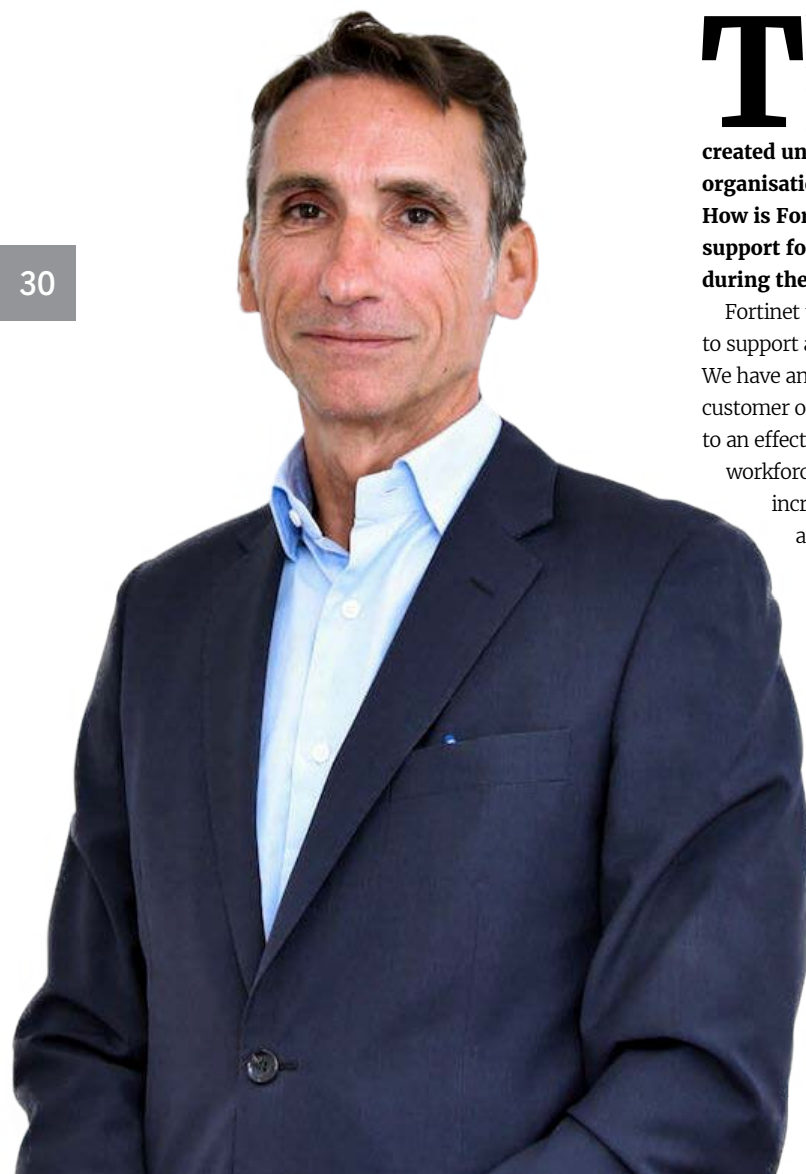
Training Course, designed to ensure that anyone looking to improve their cybersecurity skillsets has a way to advance their training from home. In addition, we have maintained a longstanding commitment to making everyone cyber aware through our cybersecurity awareness courses, NSE1 and NSE2, which are available free of charge to everyone online.

The pandemic has also forced organisations to adapt to remote working, however this new reality is not without risks. What should organisations take into account to implement a strong cybersecurity strategy for remote working?

First and foremost, organisations need to make certain that access control policies ensure that all business-critical users and devices have access to the resources they need to perform their jobs. From there, businesses must also validate that these users and devices are secure. There are a number of security aspects that will only be magnified due to the sudden influx of devices connecting remotely to the network.

There are two major issues to focus on to best support a telecommuting workforce:

Training – For business administrators and employees who typically conduct daily business affairs in-office, the security requirements of telecommuting are something very new. For this reason, organisations must devise a plan for delivering online training to those users who need to learn how to access systems remotely and securely. Remote work tools,



such as conferencing platforms, generally put access to your internal network into the hands of users and devices that may not stand up to your security standards. Training these users to recognise red flags will be essential to protecting your more widely distributed network.

Email – Currently, the majority of cyberattacks occur via email. In an attempt to steal personal and financial information, cyber criminals have been launching phishing attacks to exploit the current crisis. Making it appear as though they are from organisations like the CDC or the World Health Organisation, CEOs of major corporations, banks and financial institutions, or a victim's CEO or HR department with important news about their company or job. These malicious actors are using the same ploy to target businesses across all verticals from financial services and healthcare to retail and more. It is essential, therefore, to have the right security controls and training modules in place to protect your business, your employees, and your customers from compromise. To do this, organisations must have appropriate plans in place to protect their customers and employees from themselves from clickbait.

The SD-WAN market is rapidly growing, with IDC predicting that it will reach \$5.25 in 2023. With an increasing number of competitors in this market, what would you say differentiate Fortinet's Secure SD-WAN solution from others?

Fortinet established the concept

of Secure SD-WAN with the introduction of integrated SD-WAN functionality into the FortiGate Next-generation Firewalls in 2016. Since then, Fortinet's security-driven networking approach to SD-WAN has enhanced user experience while providing networking and security functionalities through a single offering.

Fortinet Secure SD-WAN enables network connectivity throughout an organisation from distributed enterprise locations to data centre to multi-cloud environments. In addition, it helps on reducing WAN costs by consolidating disparate point products and enabling broadband augmentation without compromising security; enhancing application experience via faster cloud on-ramp connectivity and prioritising business-critical applications; and reducing complexity by shrinking deployment time from weeks to minutes with zero-touch deployment and centralised management for Network and Security Operations. Today, Fortinet counts over 21,000 SD-WAN customers globally.

The Middle East cloud market has seen a huge growth in the past year, with many hyperscalers opening new data centres in the region. How can organisations stay secure in the cloud? How can Fortinet help customers in this transition?

Cloud adoption can add new levels of performance, productivity, and responsiveness to organisations, but also includes new levels of cybersecurity risk. And these risks can impact the entire network if not proactively addressed.



Our priority is to support companies in ensuring their employees' teleworking is as secure as possible, through the Fortinet Security Fabric, a secure SD-WAN and Cloud solutions."

Organisations require a comprehensive security strategy that can span all networked environments, IoT and end user devices, and mobile access points. This starts by knowing where data lives, understanding the nature of that data and the applications and devices that use it. Next, organisations need to assess their security policies to ensure that they can be enforced consistently across their dynamically evolving network, including continuously updated cloud-based applications, the rapid adoption of IoT, and exponentially growing volumes of data. They also need to consider how the health and security of those cloud-based applications will be monitored and managed as part of their information security framework.

Fortinet addresses these challenges with its unique Fortinet's Dynamic Cloud Security strategy which enables organisations to develop dynamic cloud-based business infrastructures without ever compromising the protection of users, data and connected resources. The result is a complete solution for even the most dynamic cloud environments, with visibility and control delivered across the extended dynamic cloud environments – private, public, and hybrid.

With the year off to a rocky start, what does Fortinet hope to achieve in the following months and for the remainder of 2020?

Now more than ever, the challenge of securing digital infrastructures is growing and will certainly continue all over the year. Our priority is to support companies in ensuring their

BAHRAIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

BAHRAIN AIMING TO BE LEADING STARTUP NATION

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **David Parker**, Co-Chief Investment Officer, Bahrain Economic Development Board, to find out how the Kingdom is leveraging cloud technology to position itself as a leading startup nation.



The Bahrain government has been pursuing progressive new strategies that revolve around emerging technologies as part of its continued efforts to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on oil.

Parker has played a key role in helping foster an environment that makes Bahrain an attractive destination for foreign investment in the ICT sector.

In a compelling interview Parker articulates the lofty ambitions of Bahrain to be a hub of technological advancement – highlighting how it is deploying cloud technology to drive innovation and entrepreneurship.

He also stressed how the country wanted to be a key figure in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

“People talk about the Fourth Industrial Revolution, but we missed the first and second industrial revolution back in the 18th and 19th century. The third industrial revolution took place in the 60’s and 70’s through the emergence of computing in Silicon Valley, but we were too

busy at that time making money from oil. However, we want to be very much at the forefront of the Fourth Industrial revolution, and we've been pursuing this digital transformation strategy for the last number of years and cloud technology has been at the heart of that," said Parker.

Parker has recently penned a superb op-ed, which documents how cloud technology has enabled Bahrain to be able to respond effectively to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"COVID-19 is one of the great crises of my lifetime, both from a health perspective and the emerging economic ramifications it's going to have as well. I think cloud technology has been a very important part of what Bahrain has been building long before any of us were even familiar with the term COVID-19. However, I think Bahrain has again shown great leadership in moving very quickly to put in place a whole raft of measures aimed at containing the outbreak, but without the cloud technology and infrastructure that we've implemented this wouldn't have been possible," said Parker.

The Bahrain government has been driving and advocating a cloud first policy for many years and has migrated all their services to the cloud. In addition to this, they also secured a major win when US cloud behemoth Amazon Web Services selected the country as the location for its first data center in the Middle East.

"I think from an inward investment perspective when you're looking to attract new technologies and game-

changing companies, it's not just a case of just flying out to the US and speaking to Amazon Web Services, and saying that Bahrain would be a nice place for you to locate your data center for the Middle East region. It's about having the necessary infrastructure in place, to make it attractive to invest in Bahrain, and to ensure to them that the frameworks and conditions are already in place here to enable them to be able to build something special," said Parker.

Parker said that whilst having Amazon Web Services in Bahrain was something there were extremely proud of – he stressed that its presence goes way beyond just the data center and the access to AWS services that businesses now have. He wants to continue to further develop the ICT ecosystem in Bahrain, so the nation becomes a problem-solving country.

"I think for us the question is how do we continue to build upon the presence of AWS to position Bahrain very much as a startup hotbed and a problem-solving nation? The online education that we've been delivering here in Bahrain, in response to social distancing has been done in collaboration with AWS – and we're in dialogue with them around a whole raft of other initiatives for the greater good of the Kingdom during this time of crisis," said Parker.

The dynamic EDB executive said that it's important to build a sustainable infrastructure that makes Bahrain, both robust from an economic perspective and robust in times of crisis.



How do we continue to build upon the presence of AWS to position Bahrain as a startup hotbed and a problem-solving nation."

"We ultimately want to be a startup capital. We talk about innovation as the new oil, and we talk about the response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and that's going to be led by the innovators and the entrepreneurs, and the startup ecosystem and the scale ups that emerge from that. We've been trying to establish the different pillars of a startup ecosystem, and obviously it's very important to get the corporates onboard and AWS is a great example of that. One other great example of that in Bahrain is the work we've done around FinTech. We've really got the banking and financial institutions behind it and has been a huge success," said Parker.

Parker concluded a fascinating conversation by highlighting how the cloud infrastructure already in place has enabled 'business continuity' in the Kingdom.

"I'm an avid user of the BeAware app that the Bahrain government has launched. The application will notify you if you've been potentially in contact with someone that has been infected by COVID-19. It's a fantastic service. In addition to this, the Bahrain government has moved onto Microsoft Teams and that is once again powered by the cloud which allows us all to work remotely from home. This has been a whole government approach both in terms of digital transformation and embracing cloud technology and putting the relevant infrastructure in place to ensure we both maintain business continuity and combat the spread of COVID-19," said Parker. **enme**

WESTERN DIGITAL



Khwaja Saifuddin, Senior Sales Director, Middle East, Western Digital Corporation

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

Deputy Editor Giorgia Guantario caught up with **Khwaja Saifuddin**, Senior Sales Director, Middle East, Western Digital Corporation to understand how the storage solutions leader is coping with the coronavirus pandemic and to discuss the importance of IT during this crisis.

In the past few months, the world has been swept by a new reality as the COVID-19 pandemic introduced a whole set of rules individuals and organisations have to abide to in order to mitigate the spreading of the outbreak.

Western Digital, a global leader in data storage solutions, was deemed an “essential business” amid the coronavirus

crisis, as it provides some of the most essential IT solutions and products in the industry.

Khwaja Saifuddin, Senior Sales Director, Middle East, Western Digital Corporation, explained the company is still working hard to deliver its products at a time when its customers need it most.

He said, “All of the over 60 thousand employees of Western

Digital have been taking all the necessary measures to continue our business. We have been deemed an essential good in today’s challenging times, so our factories are running, and we have taken a lot of incremental steps in terms of taking care of our employees’ safety and security.

“Our priority is ensuring our supply chain is not impacted

and that our products are delivered to our customers. From students who need to save their homework on one of our USB drives or external hard drives, to employees who need our access the cloud, we are determined to help when they need it most.”

Discussing the state of the data storage solutions market during the pandemic, Saifuddin explained that although there has obviously been a slowdown due to supply chain issues and the physical stores being shut, data has never been more important than now, and customers are looking for the best solutions to store it.

Saifuddin continued by discussing the challenges organisations are facing during this pandemic – challenges that have been mitigated by the solidarity the world is showing and the strong impact of the IT industry to enable it.

He explained, “One of the basic things that we need to address and accept is that although we might call it social distancing, what we’re experiencing is physical distancing and social solidarity. Even though we’re confined at home, we spend more time interacting with our friends and families through all the different solutions the IT industry as to offer – now more than ever, we’re standing together as one.

“Although the IT industry is going through challenging times, it has proved to be one of the central industries in today’s situation, alongside F&B and healthcare. IT has enabled us to continue our children’s education and

businesses’ process and day-to-day functioning; but most importantly, it’s helped us interact with one another when we physically can’t.”

As more and more businesses face economic challenges and make cuts to their budgets, Saifuddin was also keen on emphasising the need for IT for any business hoping to stay afloat during these times.

“Keeping that IT connectivity and people IT enabled is critical in today’s world. Everyone’s facing challenging, but IT should be the last to be considered for a cut from a business perspective.



All of the over 60 thousand employees of Western Digital have been taking all the necessary measures to continue our business.”

Organisations need to look at other ways to cut down their overheads – this could be going remote and saving on rent expenditures, or cutting whatever it’s not fundamental to the business. IT is the backbone of today’s society and should be protected, and enhanced at all costs,” Saifuddin explained.

Similarly, Saifuddin also expressed his concerns over businesses choosing to lay off staff during the pandemic. According to the Senior Sales Director, laying off staff is not the adequate solution to

reduce overheads costs and organisations should find sustainable ways to keep their workforce in place until the end of these challenging times.

He explained, “Organisations shouldn’t let go off their teams during these difficult times – there will be good times again and having a strong team will make the difference between successful and unsuccessful businesses. It’s time to stand in solidarity and face the situation together.”

Saifuddin concluded by discussing the burgeoning gaming industry, which sees an estimated value of \$4.8 billion and year-on-year growth of 11 percent in the MEA region.

At the beginning of March, Western Digital introduced a new portfolio of external storage solutions in the Middle East purpose-built for PC and console gamers and built on the top-tier performance of the WD_Black SN750 NVMe SSD.

Saifuddin explained the WD_Black solutions have been one of the company’s best sellers in the past few months, and have proved fundamental for gamers during the coronavirus outbreak.

“Our portable WD_Black P10 Game Drive and the WD_Black D10 Game Drive have been very well received by our gaming customers who are looking for the best storage solutions for their needs. It’s all about having an edge, and storage is where the speed is and what makes a difference between winning and losing. I think these new solutions have definitely reduced the tension gamers might feel during these times and it’s made their overall experience much better,” he concluded. **cnn**

VONAGE

CRISIS CONTROL

Omar Javaid, President, API Group explains how its communications technology is equipping businesses with the tools they need to maintain business continuity against the backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

How is Vonage helping its customers to embrace and adapt the concept of 'remote working' which has been accelerated due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Amidst this unsettling, challenging time, many businesses are scrambling to adjust to the 'new normal' while adhering to best practices and safety precautions outlined by global health organisations.

At Vonage, we are doing everything we can to maintain the health and well-being of our employees, while also ensuring we run our business effectively and help our customers do the same. Because of the flexibility of our platform, the fact that we own our full technology stack, and the nature of our cloud-based services, Vonage is uniquely equipped to help customers overcome the communications challenges resulting from the COVID-19 crisis.

No matter the situation, Vonage solutions can empower businesses to connect with whoever they need, whenever they need, from wherever they need – from quick, easy transitions to remote office set-ups using the Vonage Business Communications (VBC) platform to ensure business

continuity; to fully functional virtual contact centers that quickly replicate existing call plans and workflows to distribute calls to remote agents, wherever they may be; to powering virtual visits with doctors and educators through the power of Vonage APIs and the Vonage Video Conferencing solution.

We recently announced a range of new offerings designed specifically to address the increased demand for remote work, video capabilities, and timely alerts. In fact, in response to the COVID-19 crisis, Vonage developed a new SMS alert solution that can link anyone on earth with their local government agency for real-time updates on the pandemic, including agencies such as the CDC in the United States, the NHS in the UK, and the WHO.

Vonage has long championed emerging communications technologies that have transformed modern forms of business communication in the Middle East. However, do you think COVID-19 in an indirect way has really illustrated how businesses can better engage with their customers in real-time from anywhere in the world?

The COVID-19 crisis moved quickly and has had massive,

global implications for all businesses. I think a lot of companies were caught by surprise by the reality of this situation and quickly realised that they did not have the tools in place to best support their employees and customers. Sometimes, we just are not able to continue with business as usual.

When that happens, having a strong communications plan in place can be helpful. Whether by implementing technology that can help with challenges, such as sudden increases in remote work or having a strategy when face-to-face interactions must become virtual conversations, companies can start planning now for the next time business continuity becomes a challenge.

From now on, businesses will know the importance of enabling remote work – for challenging times as well as to simply offer flexibility to their employees.

Vonage is fortunate enough to work with some of the most innovative digital start-ups and agile enterprises in the region, including Aramex, Etisalat, Noon Academy, Souq.com and more. Our projects with these companies have been focused around Digital Transformation and helping local Middle East businesses adapt to the experience economy, by



While the COVID-19 virus caused an expedited shift to widespread remote work, the movement toward a more distributed workforce has been growing organically.”



bringing Vonage international expertise and combining local culture and customs.

In 2020 focus and priorities in the Middle East have changed from Digital Transformation to business continuity and operational scalability, and we're proud to confirm that Vonage is at the core of these requirements.

Do you think if remote working is a success in the Middle East, that there could be a paradigm shift culturally in how we view working from an office?

While the COVID-19 virus caused an expedited shift to widespread remote work, the movement toward a more distributed workforce has been growing organically.

For example, 6 in 10 UAE businesses have introduced flexible hours for workers

and sought to impose travel restrictions in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Companies are becoming increasingly reliant on video, or audio-conferencing tools' and the rapid changes could lead to long-lasting changes in employment practices even after the crisis ends.

Traditionally, the Middle East was behind some of the more mature markets, like the US, UK and Singapore in the WFH area. However, now companies may realise they have similar or greater productivity when their employees work remotely and contemplate making the change permanent. Companies like Careem, Souq.com, Noon.com and Talabat.com are leading examples of this change.

Rather than try to stop this inevitable shift in the way we

work, business leaders can instead embrace our ability to bring the office anywhere. To help them prepare for this new paradigm, they can turn to technologies that specifically allow for productive, efficient, and easy remote work that can be a pillar of business continuity.

Can you tell our readers what the unique capabilities of the Vonage API Platform are?

Vonage makes communications more flexible, intelligent, and personal, to help enterprises the world over, stay ahead.

We provide a unique combination of unified communications, contact centres and programmable communications APIs, built on the world's most flexible cloud communications platform. This flexible approach helps us to better serve the growing collaboration, communications, and customer experience needs of companies, across all communications channels.

We are in a unique position in the market globally, and for the Middle East especially, because our platform and solutions can improve both internal collaboration with employees, external communication with customers, at scale and on budget.

The Vonage API platform provides communications APIs that allow businesses to embed contextual, programmable communications via messaging, chat, social media, video, voice and more into mobile apps, websites and business systems. Leveraging Vonage APIs, businesses can innovate the way they engage with their customers in real time, anywhere in the world, through their preferred channels. **crme**



HUAWEI

A NEW AGE OF TRANSPORTATION

Alaa Elshimy, Alaa Elshimy, MD & SVP, Huawei Enterprise Business Group, Middle East explains how smart technology will keep cities moving well into the future.



A digitally-enabled world means more than connecting people via 5G; it means providing convenient new ways to enhance the world around us, such as by using technology to augment transportation systems and traffic networks to increase reliability, efficiency, safety, and environmental friendliness. Physical infrastructure stands to benefit from digital development as much as anything else, and society can only gain when transportation is empowered by smart technology.

Anyone who has lived in a major city will have likely experienced the ups and downs of commuting. Whether by road, bus, train, metro, or any other form of transportation, the fact is that urban residents need reliable, seamless ways to traverse the city – but there are nearly always pitfalls in today's congested environments. Picture

city highways; the London Underground and New York City Subway at rush hour, or trying to hail a taxi cab during peak hours. Cities are crowded with people eager to get where they need to be, and with most of us working similar schedules, we're typically all trying to get places at the same times of day, leading to congestion, frustrations, and possibly even road accidents.

If it seems bad today, imagine what your commute will be like in 10 years or so, when the world's population has grown by around a billion people and an estimated seven billion people will live in cities around the world...

Smart technology is essential in order to keep cities moving well into the future. Digital transformation of the transportation sector, via robust communications solutions and solid networks, will enable the sector to evolve in sync with the city around it. After all, a smart city cannot fully thrive or realise its true potential if its transportation network remains unevolved.

But even more than enabling people to move seamlessly from A to B, a smart transportation system has the potential to improve quality of life, too. For one, fewer traffic jams should lead to less road rage and lower stress levels amongst drivers and passengers. Studies have found that adding just 20



Alaa Elshimy
MD & SVP, Huawei Enterprise
Business Group, Middle East

minutes to a daily commute has the same negative effect on job satisfaction as receiving a 19 per cent pay cut, so cutting down commute time should reflect positively on personal happiness as well as potentially boosting employee engagement.

And, of course, there is the environmental aspect to consider, as technology can certainly play a role in making transportation networks more green, with fewer emissions and a lower impact.

Today's transportation systems do take advantage of some offerings from the information and communications technology (ICT) sector – consider Dubai's driverless metro system, for example, or the smart cameras that are installed on roads across the region. There is considerably more that can be done, however, to enhance it further.

Take roads, for example. It isn't always possible to expand a frequently-used road to make room for more vehicles, and even if there is room to do so that will not necessarily solve the problem of congestion. Intelligent video surveillance systems (IVS), however, can monitor troublesome areas and identify issues using real-time analytics and big data, which can then be communicated to drivers. This gives the opportunity for drivers to change course and avoid hotspots, thereby lessening the congestion. Connected cars and autonomous

vehicles will be able to make automatic suggestions to drivers based on data sourced from the IVS cloud. Perhaps even more valuable here is the benefits of IVS for informing emergency services of any incidents that require urgent attention.

Now, consider the benefits of smart parking. This is something that anyone who drives a car will understand the frustrations of, especially when visiting a popular area such as a shopping mall or commercial district. Parking availability can be in short supply in many cities around the world, which is why smart parking is gaining appeal. Smart parking improves the experience for everyone, by allocating drivers to parking spots, alleviating congestion, and helping to better utilise space – something that is at an absolute premium in urban environments. Connected parking lots and spaces are essential in order to make smart parking a reality, but there is still a considerable way to go in order to shift from the silos that they currently exist within. Various shopping malls around the region have implemented the beginnings of smart parking by installing sensors that inform drivers of availability, but in order for this to become a seamless network these car parks must be connected to publicly accessible cloud-based system.

Blockchain also has a role to play in smart transportation. Databases can be used to

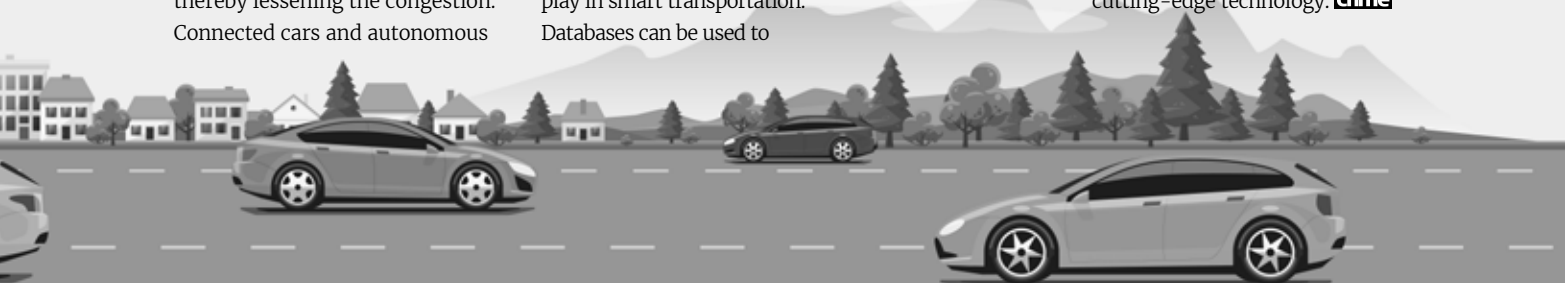
coordinate all aspects of vehicle ownership, such as insurance, registration, road taxes due, fines accumulated, vehicle reselling, servicing schedules, maintenance requirements as communicated by connected vehicles, and much more. Developing a system such as this will require collaboration between the public and private sector, but it will ultimately lead to a more efficient, safe, and convenient transportation network for any vehicle owners and traffic regulatory bodies as well.

Huawei has numerous solutions that can contribute to the development of smart transportation networks for cities, including cloud data centers, smart cameras, wired and wireless networks, and, of course, 5G. 5G will prove significant to the future of smart transportation, as it will enable stronger, faster connectivity with lower latency and the ability to support an increased number of connected devices, whether they be cars, cameras, road signals, metro trains or otherwise.

ICT frameworks will form the heart of smart transportation, just as they are at the center of smart city development. From 5G to AI, big data to cloud data centers, the more solid and robust the ICT framework is, the more advanced the world around it can become – and the more people can benefit from living in a smart city environment with seamless transportation powered by cutting-edge technology. **cnme**



Technology can certainly play a role in making transportation networks more green, with fewer emissions and a lower impact."



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THE UAE'S FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

CORONAVIRUS SPECIAL

THE UAE'S FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

In this special edition of GovTech, we take a look at how the UAE has been leveraging technology to lead the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UAE government has been at the forefront of the fight against the COVID-19 outbreak. At the end of March, the government started a nation-wide disinfection programme to mitigate the risk of spreading across the Emirates, while throughout the month of April, government entities and the private sector have been working together to leverage innovative technologies, such as AI, drones and robots, to continue the fight against the virus.

In the UAE, the coronavirus has already infected over ten thousand people, with more

than two thousand already recovered and less than one hundred deaths – although the numbers have increased in the past couple of weeks, the UAE has reacted to the outbreak better than most countries around the world, and technology played a huge part in this.

Artificial intelligence

To limit and monitor the movement of Dubai residents during the lockdown, the UAE government used AI and the more well-known DXB permit platform. Dubai Police's 'Oyoon' programme has played a key role in helping the government

mitigate the spreading of the coronavirus. The programme leverages a network of cameras across Dubai to employ facial, voice and license plate recognition. The Oyoon programme was introduced last year to tackle crimes and help reduce traffic and congestion in the city. To mitigate the risks of coronavirus, the footage from the cameras is fed into a database, cross-referenced and analysed to determine if a resident has a valid permit.

Drones and robots

Drones also played a huge part in helping the country fight coronavirus. The

aforementioned National Disinfection Programme used advanced technologies in its operations, which included the use of drones to enhance the speed and effectiveness of the sanitation. The General Administration of Civil Defence in Abu Dhabi deployed firefighting robot TAF35 on the capital's streets to support the sterilisation operations. The robot can be controlled from a distance of 300 meters and is capable of spreading a huge amount of sanitiser in a short amount of time.

Drones have also been used to broadcast messages during the lockdown urging the public to stay inside and avoid public places. The 'Nawras' project, held in cooperation with the Drone Centre of the Dubai Police, was firstly introduced to enhance the security and safety in a marine environment, but it's now being employed to capture images and broadcast police's messages and announcements to the public during this crisis.

Smart helmets

Dubai Police has been deploying smart helmets to scan the temperatures of people as they walk by. The intelligent helmets can monitor people's temperatures within five meters and can scan up to 200 people a minute. The initiative allows police teams to monitor temperatures from a safe distance, and to react to possible fevers more accurately and more quickly than using normal thermometers. The helmets, which feature a night vision mode, can also scan QR



codes thanks to cameras and sensors that recognise faces and license plate numbers.

A police officer told Reuters, "We've implemented the smart helmet during this time of crisis, with COVID-19, across all police stations in Dubai, as well as at patrolling stations whose duty requires them to be on the frontline."

3D-printed masks and face shields

The UAE University's Science and Innovation Park launched the "CoMakers VS COVID-19" movement to mitigate the outbreak of the pandemic. The UAEU has also been 3D printing a Protective Face Mask; similarly, a tech lab in Sharjah, Immensa Technology Lab, has developed, designed and produced face shields by using 3D printers. Talking to Khaleej Times, Fahmi Al Shawwa, CEO and founder at Immensa Technology Labs, said "One particularly effective personal protective equipment is the 3D-printed face shield, connected to a headband. The face shield or visor is made from a special polymer that repels

viruses and bacteria."

Dubai Police has also been providing 3D-printed face shields to its frontline personnel working to fight COVID-19. Manufactured by Dubai's Proto21 3D Printing LLC using 3D printing technology, the face shields provide an extra layer of protection when placed over face masks.

Smart radars

The UAE higher education institutions have been contributing to the fight against COVID-19 by spearheading the creation of innovative solutions. At Khalifa University, based in Abu Dhabi, researchers have developed a radar that accurately monitors a person's vital signs such as body temperatures and heart rate. The technology could prove beneficial to hospitals when employed directly at patients' home in order to reduce house visits and the need for monitoring machines. The researchers have also inferred the technology could be used in airports to monitor the health status of passengers. **cme**



The intelligent helmets can monitor people's temperatures within five meters and can scan up to 200 people a minute."

GIORGIA GUANTARIO

THE IMMINENCE OF IMMORTALITY

Deputy Editor **Giorgia Guantario** takes a look at the tech companies trying to fight death, and what immortality could mean for humanity.

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When I started reading *Homo Deus*, by Yuval Noah Harari, I had no idea how close to home it would hit. The coronavirus outbreak is without a doubt one of the biggest pandemics in modern history. It has reshaped the way we live and even the way we think about our lives. Everything we experience seems a bit more precious – when the 24 hours lockdown was still in place, I realised how important fresh air and going for a walk are for my mental health. During normal times I'd give anything to chill on my sofa for a whole day, now I can't think of anything worse. Living life to the fullest and being able to make new experiences is something that we often take for granted – at least until we were

deprived of those possibilities.

However, in his book Harari pictures a world where time and possibilities are relative – a world where humans could finally achieve immortality, as well as bliss and divinity. Harari imagines a world where an elite group of humans will become “Homo Deus” (i.e. godlike) through biotechnology and genetic engineering. As incredible as all that sounds, what really struck me was to find out that technology is a lot closer to immortality, or rather super longevity, than we think.

There is a huge number of researchers and companies out there trying to fight death, or at least slow down ageing. A California-based biotechnology company formed in 2017, called AgeX Therapeutics, is set out to decelerate ageing

by using technology related to cell immortality; similarly, a company called CohBar is trying to harness the therapeutic potential of mitochondrial DNA to regulate biological functions and cell death.

Google founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page have heavily invested in Calico, a secretive health venture focused on understanding and beating ageing. Time magazine first reported on the venture in 2013 with a cover story title “Google vs. Death”, however there isn't much information about how Calico is actually fulfilling its mission or what technology it's using to do so. Its website says it's “tackling ageing, one of life's greatest mysteries” and its mission is to “harness advanced technologies to increase [their] understanding of the biology



that controls lifespan.” The website doesn’t say much more, but provides a series of interesting publications that span from genetic variants associated with human lifespan, to the discovery that naked mole-rats essentially don’t age.

It’s fair to say that even if we were to reach immortality, it wouldn’t come cheap. It’s no surprise that people like Amazon’s Jeff Bezos, PayPal’s founder Peter Thiel and Google’s founders are supporters of companies that hope to combat ageing. In 2014, Thiel said, “I think there are probably three main modes of approaching death – You can accept it, you can deny it, or you can fight it. I think our society is dominated by people who are into denial or acceptance, and I prefer to fight it.” Silicon Valley and the idea of

living forever go hand in hand, confirming that immortality will probably be just for a few.

When you think about it, compared to a hundred years ago, humanity has already massively extended people’s expiration date – according to the CDC, American life expectancy in the early 1900s was about 50 years old, while it reached almost 90 years old in the second decade of the 2000s. However, the statistics are obviously very different when considering third world countries, where life expectancy is still very short compared to richer countries.

Immortality would follow exactly the same pattern: biotechnology, organ 3D printing, gene therapy or nanotechnology are all very expensive, and even if they were to reach the level of innovation to turn someone practically immortal, they wouldn’t be the answer to the world’s mortality problems.

Another possibly cheaper option to reach eternal life would be “digital immortality”. As we all continue to build our digital footprint, in the future it would be possible to create a virtual version of ourselves that could survive our mortal bodies and interact with our loved ones from a computer.



It’s fair to say that even if we were to reach immortality, it wouldn’t come cheap.”

While it wouldn’t be quiet the same as combating ageing and living a whole lot longer, some researchers believe this could be the answer to humanity’s quest for immortality. In 2011, Dmitry Itskov, a Russian entrepreneur and billionaire, founded the 2045 initiative “to create technologies enabling the transfer of an individual’s personality to a more advanced non-biological carrier, and extending life, including to the point of immortality.” Obviously, the initiative aims to complete its mission by 2045, which, when you think about it, is not a long time way. Similarly, Gerontologist Aubrey de Grey and inventor Ray Kurzweil went as far as to say that in 2050, anyone with a healthy body and enough money will be very likely to be able to achieve immortality.

Quite frankly, the possible imminence of immortality scares me. If there is one thing I have realised while being stuck at home due to COVID-19, it’s how precious and fragile life can be – a realisation that made me appreciate all I have so much more. If we were to become immortal, would life actually have the same “magic” and meaning to it? And if only a few were able to afford immortality, would we widen social inequalities by essentially creating two “species” of humans – immortals vs mortals? Maybe we’ll have the answer in a few decade, but until then, we should start considering life as a finite gift we were all given equally – one that has nothing to do with technology. **crme**

EPICOR

PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Steve Murphy, CEO at Epicor Software Corp. explains how to stay current on product knowledge with six practical tips for companies and employees.



Steve Murphy,
CEO, Epicor
Software Corp.

If you're in the business of selling technology, you know that you win sales when you can solve tough, specific problems.

However, to demonstrate that you can solve a customer's pain points, you must know technology solutions at a detailed level—you need deep product knowledge. You must also understand the specific needs of your customers so you can communicate which solutions and capabilities are most relevant to them. When you have more comprehensive knowledge on both fronts, you can communicate how your solution is differentiated, relevant, and superior on a functional level.

Take, for example, an automotive manufacturer. Production scheduling is a crucial aspect of their business. Contrary to manufacturers in other industries that may be more focused on cutting assembly line costs, many automotive

manufacturers prioritise flexibility. They need solutions that provide the opportunity to make live adjustments in production scheduling as needed. If new data shows more customers are buying red and black cars than yellow, they can adjust the assembly line to produce cars that reflect that current market demand. A smart sales rep understands the auto manufacturer's priorities and communicates how their solution provides the flexibility to meet this need.

But simply understanding there's a need for deep product knowledge is not enough. You also need to know how to best obtain product knowledge and then seek it out continually.

Here are six practical tips to help you stay current on product knowledge—three for companies and three for employees.

WHAT COMPANIES CAN DO **Embed product knowledge in company culture**

This first step is crucial. The importance of product knowledge starts at the top. Executives and other leaders should diligently work to ensure product knowledge is a valued part of your company culture.

Don't just know your product—talk about it with each other and your customers. Hold town halls with your employees and share how product knowledge will play a central role—if it hasn't already. Connect employees with internal subject matter experts so that ongoing conversations can be developed about the true benefits of your solutions.

Furthermore, when you meet with customer advisory boards, talk specifics about your solution. Demonstrate your expertise and enthusiasm for addressing your customers' pain points.

Invest in product knowledge training

Once the importance of product knowledge is established in your company culture, follow through. You need to spend time and money on education that delivers information and training to your employees on product knowledge, important product updates, etc.

If you run into pushback on this front, emphasise the long-term benefits you'll get out of this investment. When a customer feels your sales rep understands their business and specific challenges, not only is your company more likely to win a sale, but you also establish a greater level of trust for a long-term working relationship with that customer.

Working relationships built on trust also foster better communication that can have many unforeseen benefits. For example, your customer may end up providing you with feedback that leads to future innovation for the solutions you offer. But it all comes back to the trust you establish with your customer through product knowledge.

Be smart about sharing product knowledge

While providing employees with access to product knowledge is important, be strategic to maximise the impact of your efforts. First, consider your words. Use plain language so

communications and training are simple to comprehend and remember. Also, translate complex industry jargon so it's easy for employees to share the information with customers.

Second, push out tech updates on an exception basis. This means sharing notable changes to a product. Avoid inundating your employees with unnecessary information.

Third, only send technology updates out to relevant personnel. Mass customise who gets what information based on their job function.

Finally, consider providing in-person workshops given by leaders in your business who are black belts or superusers on a specific solution. Have them go out and share their knowledge on pain points of businesses you serve, as well as the value propositions of your solution.

WHAT EMPLOYEES CAN DO Consume in manageable doses

Think back to your college days. If you crammed for a test, you might get a B—rarely an A. But, if you studied throughout the year and stayed up-to-date on reading, the time you needed to study for your test was less intense, you typically performed better, and you were able to retain the information long term.

The same is true for consuming product knowledge. Consume information as frequently as you can—even if it's only two or three minutes at a time. Read an article while you wait in line for coffee. Watch a short tech update after you put the kids to bed. This doesn't need to be a heavy lift—just a mindful one.



Don't just know your product—talk about it with each other and your customers.”

Ignore product release data at your own risk

When your company provides you with a product update, use it. It's part of a good-faith relationship. They are prioritising the importance of product knowledge, and they want you to as well.

Go a step further. If you receive information that is helpful to you, share feedback and say why you found it helpful. Conversely, if you need additional information, don't be shy about seeking it out.

Pursue information from objective outlets

In addition to the product knowledge provided by your company, seek information from outside outlets. Consider looking beyond tech publications. Professional, balanced publications and think tanks offer credible, researched information. For example, The Wall Street Journal and The Financial Times have tech sections that can provide a well-rounded perspective.

Technology constantly evolves and maintaining up-to-date product knowledge is by no means easy. Remind yourself that it's an investment in your success with your customers. When you can provide them with specific information and articulate how solutions address tough problems, everyone wins. **enr**

SHIFTLING

"WE'RE TRYING TO REVOLUTIONISE HOW STAFFING IS DONE IN THE MIDDLE EAST" – SHIFTLING CEO

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Annabel Arcari-Bowler**, CEO and founder of Shiftling, to find out how her innovative and disruptive new startup company is going to bring the gig economy to the GCC region.

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Arcari-Bowler has enjoyed a successful career as a venture capitalist – but decided to launch her own business 15 months ago after identifying a glaring problem for many enterprises across the Middle East.

In a brilliant interview, Arcari-Bowler eloquently articulates her vision for Shiftling and the zeal, passion and ambitions she sees for her new company are tangible.

The charismatic African entrepreneur believes her platform can finally resolve a major issue for many seasonal businesses here in the Middle East.

"I founded the company out of the acknowledgement that the traditional ways of working in this market in terms of hiring and retaining staff didn't necessarily lean itself towards the likelihood of profitability for companies. We have a lot of seasonal industries here that are only generating significant

revenue for 6 or 7 months out of the year, but they need to retain and hire staff for 12 months of the year," said Arcari-Bowler.

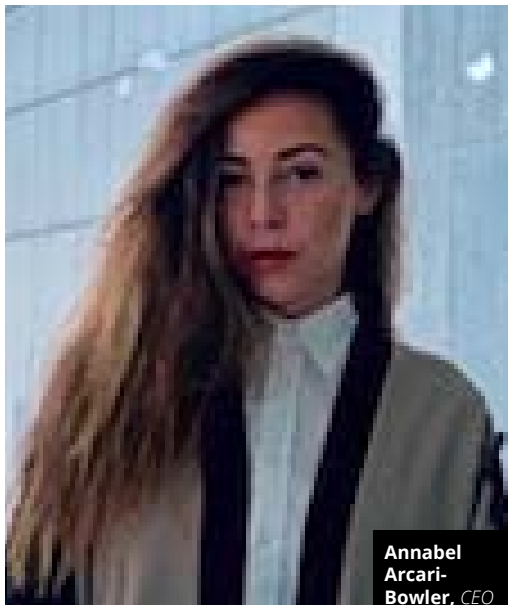
Arcari-Bowler pointed out that in the Gulf region particularly it's not just a case of hiring someone and paying them a salary. There are additional onboarding costs in terms of an employee's visa, insurance and medical requirements. Businesses are forced to hire staff on year-long contracts, but if that employee is only contributing revenue to your business for 6 months then you have obvious PnL implications.

"I was acknowledging all these challenges for seasonal businesses, and I thought there needs to be a better way for us to do this, and that's when I had my eureka moment. I thought to myself if there was an opportunity for companies to book staff on demand as and when they need them, then that would inevitably have a hugely positive impact for

businesses here in the Gulf," said Arcari-Bowler.

As the CEO of Shiftling highlights the gig economy is very robust in Western nations, and it is very well-understood. In addition to this, the way in which millennials and Generation Z want to work is vastly different to how it has been traditionally. All these factors combined triggered her to launch her business here in the UAE in 2019.

"When I talk about Shiftling and what we can provide I often get questions like don't manpower companies do this, don't staffing companies do this? However, the reality is that they don't fundamentally understand the dynamic nature of seasonal businesses, because what typically happens is that they lock people into year-long contracts with minimum volume requirements. If you're a coffee shop owner in Al Quoz, then you only really need staff on the



Annabel Arcari-Bowler, CEO and founder of Shiftling

weekends. That's really the niche that we at Shiftling really serve, because you can book 1 person for 1 shift, or 100 people for 3 months, and we're really trying to turn the industry on its head and revolutionize how staffing is done," said Arcari-Bowler.

In terms of tech adoption, the Middle East, tends to lag behind more mature markets such as Europe and North America, but Arcari-Bowler believes that the current COVID-19 crisis has only served to further illustrate the need for change regarding the nature of work in the GCC region.

"It's only a matter of time before the gig economy explodes here and I believe the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the need for such a platform. As the founder of Shiftling, I want to seize on the opportunity to bring this tech-enabled gig platform for service workers here to the Middle East," said Arcari-Bowler.

Whilst the gig economy brands itself as a system that

empowers workers and gives them greater autonomy, there are many vehement critics of the gig economy who believe it is another example of bad capitalism and is largely based on exploitation.

Arcari-Bowler is acutely aware of the criticism levelled towards the Gig economy or gig capitalism, but once again stressed that her platform is a tool that ultimately elevates employees to take control on how they want to work, and has been specifically designed to help them avoid being exploited by scrupulous employers.

Global ride-hailing multinational Uber has been the subject a huge number of controversies in the US due to the classification of its workers and the lack of protection they're given in terms of healthcare and insurance by the Silicon Valley unicorn.

However, the CEO of Shiftling believes that the regulatory frameworks in place across the GCC region already means workers are protected.

"I think we've got a couple of things on our side in this region because of the regulatory environment 90% of freelancers or service providers that come on to Shiftling platform already have full-time jobs. Shiftling is just another bonus for them, and in many ways simply democratizes access to work and they can work when they want to work," said Arcari-Bowler.

In addition to this, Shiftling has implemented additional protections for workers by adding a rating system in which staff can rate the different companies that they work for which ensures double accountability. Arcari-

Bowler conceded that for her platform to be a success then there is a fine balance to be struck between satisfying both the supply and demand.

The business model of Shiftling far exceeds just a seamless tech platform which empowers workers and addresses huge economic challenges for many businesses, instead the visionary young entrepreneur is looking to leverage the platform to create an entire new ecosystem.

"We're trying to build out an ecosystem as well for these service providers, and when I say an ecosystem what I mean is essentially added benefits for them. For example, many low-income workers in the region don't have access to financial services and are unbanked. We're trying to partner with FinTech companies to get them digital bank accounts, cheaper remittance fees for sending money back home and cheaper data packages so they can engage with us easier. It's critical for us that there is no exploitation, and we're driven by the fact that we're creating a platform that really provides 'opportunity'," said Arcari-Bowler.

Startup companies are a dime a dozen and many of them then don't survive past 6 months. However, with the impressive Arcari-Bowler at the helm, coupled with her background in venture capital mean she is a different proposition than the entrepreneurs you'd normally encounter in a startup. I've got a feeling you're going to hear a lot more from Shiftling and Arcari-Bowler as the platform positions itself to accelerate the gig economy across the Middle East. **crme**



It's only a matter of time before the gig economy explodes here and I believe the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the need for such a platform."



Chris Pope,
VP Innovation,
ServiceNow

SERVICENOW

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE FUTURE OF WORK

Chris Pope, VP Innovation at ServiceNow gives his take on how the COVID-19 pandemic will impact the future of work.

We are living in unprecedented times — cities, regions and countries across the globe are locked-down in an attempt to ‘flatten the curve’ and contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Quite suddenly, the vast majority of us have had to get used to working from home. Aside from the web-connectivity challenge that this presents for some people, it also gives us a new set of challenges in terms of how we work.

For many office workers, the set of tasks they are involved in can be encapsulated in a workflow of methods and responsibilities that everybody almost instinctively understands, possibly due to our human proximity. But now we’ve taken that proximity factor away, so how are we going to connect, collaborate and cooperate effectively in the weeks ahead?

Will the way we work be changed forever by COVID-19?

When working remotely, it goes without saying that technology becomes the heart of every interaction. But online videoconferencing anxieties aside, we’re all going to have to make sure that we understand the value of communication a lot better.

For some, this whole shift is going to be massive. We may find that ‘older school’ managers have become so dependent on the structure of physical office meetings that the leap is almost too much. We know that some people feel that they have to be in the room with other people in order to get things done. They don’t have the ‘soft skills’ needed to express themselves effectively over video and voice calls.

Younger workers among the millennials and open-minded Generation X workers will have more of these skills, but for Generation Z this kind of thing comes instinctively. Born in and of the web-cloud era, Gen-Z is happy with a webcam pointed at them and will naturally feel less of a shift here.

Although I’m painting a largely positive picture here for individuals, let’s remember that employees are just one of the three corporate elements in the central work equation. Employers can find positives from remote work too, but equally they may find that tracking some specific tasks and managing performance become harder.

Thirdly — and always crucially — we have the customer. Aspects of goods and services

provision will differ by industry, and some will change for the better, while some may be less positive, it’s still too early to say at this stage.

Just be your (authentic) self

Very often it may be the core family issues that people find most challenging. If you have kids, then the next few weeks will require you to navigate some uncharted waters. How do you manage to ensure they keep up with their distance learning assignments, how do you keep them entertained, what rooms can they go into, when is it appropriate for them to interrupt you if you’re busy working? We will no doubt see countless memes and parodies of hilarious and unfortunate situations.

On the flipside, maybe now the kids, and/or our significant others, will start to understand what it is we do all day when ‘going to work’. Our family is now seeing aspects of work life that they won’t get to experience until they themselves are in the thick of it. There’s a positive to be gained here. As our families get exposed to our work methods and hear us on telephone calls and web-based video platforms, we gain a new and fresh feedback loop that may have never previously existed. **crime**



When working remotely, it goes without saying that technology becomes the heart of every interaction”



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