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AFRICA

HUAWEI'S CTO,
MIDDLE EAST

CISCO'S VP,
MIDDLE EAST
& AFRICA

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

THE UAE IS SET FOR A HISTORIC
YEAR AS THE NATION PREPARES
TO HOST EXPO 2020 - AND
CELEBRATES ITS GOLDEN JUBILEE.

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2021 will be a truly historic year as the UAE celebrates the 50th anniversary of the nation."

EDITORIAL

A NEW DAWN

It would be somewhat of an understatement to label 2020 as a difficult year. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world we live in forever – and we have all had to adapt, evolve and overcome the many challenges we have faced both personally and professionally over the last 12 months.

However, there is a renewed sense of optimism and hope as we head into 2021, especially here in the United Arab Emirates.

The UAE is 2nd in the global ranking chart for vaccinations carried out – and strong leadership from the government has helped the country to curtail and contain the virus, which allowed the economy to open back up towards the end of 2020.

The perfect illustration of this was GITEX Technology Week 2020, which was a phenomenal success and the first physical event on a large scale since the pandemic began.

2021 will be a truly historic year as the UAE celebrates the 50th anniversary of the nation – and with EXPO 2020 kicking off in October, it promises to be a memorable year for all the right reasons.

As aforementioned above GITEX Technology Week was a tremendous success for all who participated in it – and I managed to speak to some key IT thought leaders onsite at the event.

Some of the interviews included a candid discussion with Alaa Elshimy, Managing Director and SVP of Enterprise Business Group, Huawei, who highlighted the role the ICT leader played in empowering the educational sector during the COVID-19 crisis.

I also spoke to Abdul Rehman Tariq Butt, Regional Sales Director, at Pulse Secure, who outlined the details of its recent acquisition by Ivanti and the capabilities of its Zero-Trust framework.

Software AG has become a major player in the digital transformation spectrum – and I managed to secure an interview with Rami Kichli, VP – Gulf and Levant, who stressed the need for enterprises to become more resilient in this new digital economy.

GELLIFY Middle East have made a huge impact since entering the UAE marketplace and its CEO and co-founder Massimo Cannizzo, explained to me how corporate venturing models can foster an environment that lends itself to further innovation and growth.

In addition to this, we have also got excellent in-depth interviews with Porsche, Mitel and TouchForce – and some expert opinion editorials from PangeaX, Nutanix and Dataiku that focus on some predictions and tech trends that will emerge this year.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers and clients the very best of success in 2021!

Mark Forker
Editor

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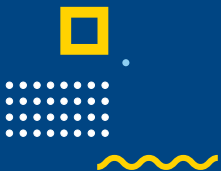
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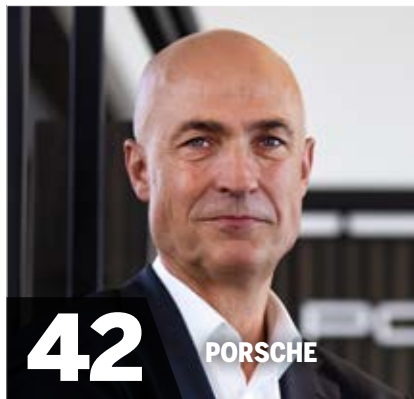
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FOUNDER, CPI MEDIA GROUP
Dominic De Sousa
(1959-2015)

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CPI MEDIA GROUP
CPIMEDIAGROUP.COM

Publishing Director
Natasha Pendleton
natasha.pendleton@cpimediagroup.com
+971 4 440 9139

ADVERTISING
Group Sales Director
Kausar Syed
kausar.syed@cpimediagroup.com
+971 4 440 9138

Senior Sales Manager
Sabita Miranda
sabita.miranda@cpimediagroup.com
+971 4 440 9128

EDITORIAL
Editor
Mark Forker
mark.forker@cpimediagroup.com
+971 4 440 9153

Online Editor
Daniel Shepherd
daniel.shepherd@cpimediagroup.com
+971 4 440 9100

PRODUCTION AND DESIGN
Senior Designer
Analou Balbero
analou.balbero@cpimediagroup.com
+971 4 375 5680

DIGITAL SERVICES
Web Developer
Adarsh Snehanjan

webmaster@cpimediagroup.com
+971 4 440 9100

Publication licensed by
Dubai Production City, DCCA
PO Box 13700
Dubai, UAE

Tel: +971 4 440 9100
Fax: +971 4 447 2409

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Kaspersky acquires an equity interest in Nexway



30 December 2020: Kaspersky has acquired a stake in Nexway, a leading e-commerce and payment platform, to strengthen its position and increase opportunities for the company's online sales channel. Nexway will remain a

separate entity, managed by its current leadership team in accordance with the European rules and regulations, with Kaspersky's Advisory Board to support with strategic guidance; thus, helping the company to achieve further growth in its customer base, expand its product portfolio and improve

the quality of services.

The market realities of 2020 have demonstrated the importance of having an effective online sales channel that is fast in management and reliable in terms of the safety of customer

"The market realities of 2020 have demonstrated the importance of having an effective online sales channel that is fast in management and reliable in terms of the safety of customer data."

data. The extended integration of the two companies will enable more effective management of the Kaspersky online sales channel and further expansion of Nexway's growth as the leading e-commerce platform for security solutions. Nexway was advised on the transaction by the

Swiss M&A firm IndexAtlas.

Despite rising competition on the market, Nexway stands out with its technologically advanced e-commerce solution that keeps businesses compliant with all local and global regulations as they operate in multiple currencies, languages and payment methods. Kaspersky and Nexway have a long and successful history of working together, and the companies have decided to start a mutually beneficial partnership – bringing together their expertise and further strengthening their businesses. Nexway has launched its Open kitchen project where it will continue demonstrating the security of users' data via advanced data storage and processing practices, with the data only being available to vendors and not to the owner of the platform.

"Together with Nexway, we decided to unite our efforts and work in the direction of further developing the e-commerce platform for security solutions. The platform will continue to operate in its current form for those other security vendors which already use it to distribute their products. We hope existing and other new vendors will join us in this strive to offer the best possible deals for customers looking for a high-quality security software," said Alexander Moiseev, CBO, Kaspersky.

EZVIZ launches the C3N Camera for outdoor home protection

Dubai, UAE, December 30, 2020: EZVIZ, a global-leading home intelligence brand, announced today the availability of its C3N camera in the Middle East region, a brilliant addition to its colour night vision camera range.

The C3N intelligently protects exterior areas around your property day and night with 1080p video, real-time person detection, and three night-monitoring modes. It makes it the ideal addition to a villa, apartment block or office as the C3N camera provides property owners

with real-time images of their outdoor property and sends motion-triggered notifications when they are at home or away.

The C3N provides users with colourful details that are traditionally unavailable with other night vision products, such as the colour of cars passing by. With advanced PQ (Perceptual Quantiser) technology, night-time images are even sharper as the image brightness is adjusted dynamically.

Thanks to H.265 video compression



technology, the C3N reduces required storage space by 50% while rendering very impressive image quality.



DUBAI, UAE – December 30, 2020:

Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) and Huawei Consumer Business Group have announced the launch of the GCC's first digital nol cards and nol Pay mobile app on the Huawei AppGallery. Huawei is supporting RTA's initiative strategy by leveraging its experience as one of the world's leading innovation and technology companies.

Mohammed Al Mudharreb, CEO, Corporate Technology Support Services Sector of RTA, Dubai said, "The new

Dubai's RTA launches the first digital nol cards with Huawei

RTA nol Pay app works with Huawei Wallet to enable residents in the emirate to quickly pay for their public transport journeys – and any facility that uses nol cards – from their Huawei smartphones. Users can download the app directly from Huawei AppGallery on their smartphones, create their Huawei ID using Huawei Wallet app and begin using this service immediately to top up their digital nol cards and pay on-the-go through their phones. Huawei Wallet provides the underlying NFC technology support to nol Pay app, which enables a seamless and secure payment experience for Huawei and RTA customers".

Moro Hub launches second local Cloud to drive innovation



Dubai, United Arab Emirates, December

28, 2020: Moro Hub, a subsidiary of Digital DEWA, the digital arm of Dubai Electricity and Water Authority as a part of Dubai 10X initiative has announced the launch of its second cloud, a secure, resilient and high availability multi-tenant cloud hosted locally in Moro Tier-III Certified Data Centres including the first green data centre in the region. Moro Hub collaborated with VMware to offer this service. The unique offering provides a range of futuristic managed

Compliance and Risk Management while leveraging Moro Hub's marketplace.

Commenting on the launch, HE Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, MD & CEO of DEWA, said; "In an increasingly digital environment, Government and Enterprise clients are trying to cope with evolving business needs and faster technology adoptions. CIOs are now looking for Cloud-Native Application Architectures with Cross-Platform Integration, and Moro Cloud will fit in perfectly to meet their operational needs".

cloud services with multi-availability zones. The cloud services include Infrastructure as a service, GPU as a service, Kubernetes as a service,

Trackimo to establish UAE presence after GITEX success



Shai Bar-lavi, CEO, Trackimo

Dubai, UAE, December 30th, 2020:

Trackimo, an American IoT solution provider focused on cost-effective tracking devices are in the midst of expanding their operations in the region after a successful GITEX participation. Trackimo works with global mobile operators such as Verizon, Vodafone, Telcel, among several others that have already rolled-out Trackimo's personal safety and asset tracking products for their customers. The company plans to build similar relationships with Etisalat, Du, Batelco, and other operators in the region.

The company specialises in developing trackers that work seamlessly over a worldwide cloud-IoT system. Trackimo's smart GPS, GSM, Wi-Fi trackers are purposed for personal, professional, industrial, and commercial use.

Shai Bar-lavi, CEO, Trackimo, said, "The trade visitors that we received at our booth were serious investors and as a result enabled us to connect with several potential distributors and partners from not only the Middle East but also the African region. We are currently evaluating the distributors and will soon be establishing our footprint in Dubai, which will serve as our Middle Eastern headquarters".

Digitalisation to unlock \$2.6 trillion in oil and gas sector



Amadou Diallo, CEO, DHL Global Forwarding Middle East and Africa

Dubai, December 28, 2020: DHL Global Forwarding has released a whitepaper examining the key trends impacting the oil and gas (O&G) industry in the Middle East and Africa. According to the leading air, ocean and road freight specialist, digitalisation will play a significant role in transforming the industry, potentially unlocking \$1.6 trillion to \$2.6 trillion by 2025. This is achieved as companies leverage digitalisation to improve margins, safety standards, as well as reduce emissions and water consumption.

O&G companies in the Middle East and Africa region need to take decisions to reposition themselves, including redefining partnerships across the supply value chain, building resilience and going digital.

Amadou Diallo, CEO, DHL Global Forwarding Middle East and Africa, commented, "Whilst it is more critical than ever to ensure the smooth completion of projects, it is equally pertinent that energy companies leverage technology to offer smarter, simplified and greener solutions. To that end, DHL has implemented best-in-class logistics solutions for leading energy companies, such as TOTAL, to collectively tackle technological, digital and climate challenges".

Edgematics Set to Launch PurpleCube Data Platform

23 December 2020, Dubai, United

Arab Emirates: Edgematics, a market-leading UK & UAE-based all-in-data service provider, recently announced its plans to launch its latest product offering to the Middle East market, PurpleCube, to become one of the region's first pioneering end-to-end data analytics platforms. This platform is set to seamlessly integrate Data Management, Machine Learning (ML), Business Intelligence (B.I.) and Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) all in one package. Set to cater for a variety of businesses across various industries with an all-in-one solution for delivering actionable analytics in the most cost-effective approach.

Bharat Phadke, CEO of Edgematics, commented: "We have created PurpleCube based on our extensive



Bharat Phadke, CEO of Edgematics

market experience and research findings for the need to fulfil the gap of a seamless, integrated analytics as a service data platform, which will drive innovation and insights for businesses enabling them to reduce costs, maximise sales, cross-sell or up-sell their products or services and enhance customer acquisition, retention and loyalty".

SAR Modernises Railway Data Infrastructure with Oracle Cloud



Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: December

23, 2020: Saudi Railway Company (SAR), has initiated a major digital transformation with Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) to enhance business agility, create a robust cyber security infrastructure, automate core ticketing and reduce costs.

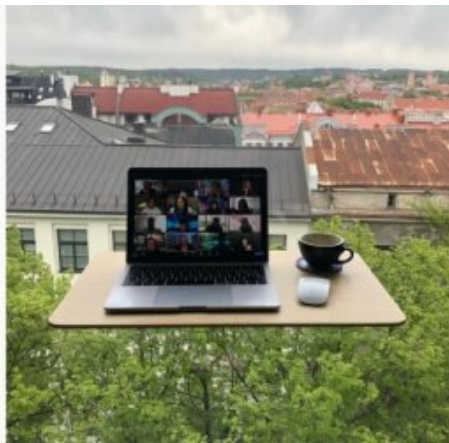
Under this initiative, Saudi Railway

Company will also implement Oracle Analytics Cloud and Oracle Autonomous Data Warehouse. Besides reducing vital total cost of ownership, the implementation will also empower SAR's leadership to access real time performance data with unique data insights to enable faster and more accurate decision making.

Remote Work Culture Boosts Teamwork of At-Home Workers



December 23, 2020. Remote work is here to stay for the time being with 33% of the US and approximately 50% of the UK workforce currently working at a distance. Although 77% of remote workers state



they are more productive outside the company's office, there are other aspects to consider when ensuring that at-home culture is beneficial for employers and employees: sense of team spirit, convenient

communication tools, productive workspace at home and team-building strategies.

Taking into consideration that 21.3% of remote workers indicate better focus, productivity, and time management when working at home, companies may want to think about incentives for the employees to adapt their home spaces for work. For instance, The Remote Company, a network of remote-first tech companies, provides a budget to each team member to buy ergonomic chairs, desks and to set up their workplace to yield the most productivity.

Encouraging daily communication, comfortable at-home workspaces, as well as a positive mindset of the team are key aspects to a productive and team-friendly remote work culture.

Hawas Group Presents Ultraleap's Touchless Tech to the UAE



(DUBAI, 2020): The current global situation has required the adaptation to a 'new normal', a time where social and physical distancing is required along with sanitising procedures. Industries have turned to technology to help its consumers, not only to engage with each other, but to tackle the problems the world is facing today.

IPlan Ideas Technologies (IPI Tech) is a newly launched establishment that offers innovative turnkey technology solutions to a variety of businesses. As a subsidiary of the reputable Hawas Group, IPI Tech has boldly ventured into the many advances in technical ingenuity and creative conceptions from its impressive portfolio of products such as Dimenco

with its contactless 3D Interface, robotics with Revotonix to its current exclusive partnership with Ultraleap, a pioneering hand-tracking and mid-haptic technology provider.

IPI Tech, along with Ultraleap, recognised the increasing demand of non-touch technologies and acknowledged the need for communities at large to adjust accordingly to the pandemic situation. As a result, this partnership will provide bespoke contactless technology solutions to the UAE with the aim of expanding throughout the region.

Ultraleap's technology has been applied in various use bases by huge conglomerates across various industries such as Lego, Warner Brothers, Qualcomm, SKODA and many others.

Ultraleap's focus is to provide people with a way to interact with digital content and interfaces naturally-

without having to use peripherals, controllers, wear wearables or touch surfaces. When placed in venues, locations and sites that have a high footfall, users can operate with kiosks and touchscreens without touching the screen's surface.

This way of interacting ensures clean, safe and hygienic control and helps to avoid high-risk scenarios and contaminations when it comes to the spread of COVID-19. Furthermore, it

enables users to experience unique and modern interaction method helping them to welcome the changes injected by the "new normal".

Founder of Hawas Group, Ahmed Hawas added: "Touchless design software will become a revolution in sanitation and contactless interactions, drastically affecting public venues such as self-service equipment, cinemas, supermarkets, health centres, public transportation and beyond".

"As a result, this partnership will provide bespoke contactless technology solutions to the UAE with the aim of expanding throughout the region."

SOFTWARE AG

AGILITY AND RESILIENCE

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Rami Kichli**, VP – Gulf and Levant, Software AG, to learn how the digital transformation enabler is helping businesses to adapt to the new challenges in the digital economy - and how agility and resilience are key components in ensuring success in the future.

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The terms agility and resiliency have been coined by many IT leaders since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the importance of businesses integrating them into their daily operations were once again echoed by Kichli during an engaging and informative interview onsite at GITEX Technology Week.



The unknown is all about change, so in a bid to be able to change and evolve quickly then you need to be agile.”

“I want to start the conversation by outlining to you what Software AG does in one sentence. Software AG helps organisations digitally transform by turning data into value. This process enables organisations to become agile and resilient, and we know that agility and resiliency are key traits for any business to have in this increasingly on-demand data-driven digital economy that we now operate in,” said Kichli.

Kichli disclosed that this year’s GITEX Technology Week represented the 7th time it had participated at the region’s largest technology and IT conference.

He heaped praise on the leadership of the UAE for its handling of the COVID-19 crisis, pointing out that hosting GITEX was evidence

of the country’s success in getting it under control, before adding that GITEX had injected fresh optimism into the IT ecosystem after a challenging year.

“It was very important for Software AG to be present and visible at this year’s GITEX Technology Week. The UAE has sent such a positive message to the rest of the world – and have emphatically proved that you can successfully host physical events safely if you adhere to the health guidelines that have been outlined. They fostered an environment which allowed customers and partners to collaborate and communicate face-to-face and it has reinvigorated us all. The new hybrid world of work has many benefits, but it’s hugely beneficial to be able to meet

your customers physically, and the success of GITEX gives everyone a timely boost ahead of 2021,” said Kichli.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had huge repercussions from both an economic and human perspective, but Kichli stressed that with every crisis comes opportunity.

“I view the COVID-19 pandemic as a Black Swan event, as it is something that is highly improbable to happen, but then it does happen and when it happens it has a high impact. It has impacted every single aspect of our daily lives both personally and professionally. However, if there is one silver lining that we can take from this global health crisis then it is the realisation that we can do better and we can be better prepared for the next crisis. I think there is also a growing acceptance and acknowledgement that technology can be the ammunition to better prepare us in the future and ultimately become resilient,” said Kichli.

The industry vertical of smart cities continues to garner attention and the deployment of technologies such as 5G is set to accelerate further innovation and start turning many of the use-cases in smart cities from concepts to realities. However, Kichli has a different take on the way IT leaders and decision-makers should approach smart cities.



Rami Kichli
VP – Gulf and Levant, Software AG



"I spoke to a customer yesterday and we were discussing the concept of smart cities, but I think we should stop referring to them as smart cities, and instead call them smart resilient cities. This reason I said this is because I believe that whilst being smart and connected is great, what we have learned is that you need to be better prepared and humankind needs to be better prepared for the unknown. What cities, governments' businesses and

individuals need to do is in arm themselves in the future with a resiliency-based model that can help them sustain their business operations through the next crisis," said Kichli.

The IT thought-leader at Software AG also highlighted the need to be agile in order to respond effectively to the ever-evolving nature of both customer and market demands in the new digital economy.

The unknown is all about change, so in a bid to be able to change and evolve quickly then

you need to be agile. In the past we have also looked at projects in months and years, but that doesn't exist anymore. We now talk in hours and days, and we deploy solutions that can help you deal with either the next challenge or opportunity. This what I like to call the 'digital value chain' – and the key components of it are agility and change – and the agility is the outcome of deploying the right technologies," said Kichli.

Kichli pointed out that it is critical that enterprises



know what outcomes they want to achieve before they implement and adopt the emerging technologies they want to integrate into their operations, warning against the notion of deploying technologies simply for the sake of it.

“I think there are two dimensions to this and adopting new technologies is one of them, but it’s vital that businesses do not just integrate these disruptive new technologies for the sake of

it and they feel it’s the right thing to do. Businesses can easily fall into that pitfall of just following the hype, and as vendors we are also susceptible of this. However, I think in this current landscape as vendors we have learned to be more responsible and accountable – and we look at technology with an outcome,” said Kichli.

He concluded a brilliantly insightful interview by once again illustrating the importance of identifying

“

I think there is also a growing acceptance and acknowledgement that technology can be the ammunition to better prepare us in the future and ultimately become much more resilient.”

where you want to get to when utilising the capabilities of new technology.

“Technology on its own is not a destination, instead it is the mechanisms that can get you somewhere. The approach is very important and as we said the technology is one aspect of it. There are some technologies if you think about them, such as IoT for an example. If I want to simplify the notion of IoT then what it does is allow you and everyone to decouple physical presence from data, which means you don’t need to go to a machine to get the data, you can get the data by reading out of sensors that are connected and integrated. That’s powerful and it equips companies with the ability to create so many different scenarios in this new world,” said Kichli. **enme**

PULSE SECURE

FINGER ON THE PULSE

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Abdul Rehman Tariq Butt**, Regional Sales Director at Pulse Secure at GITEX Technology Week 2020, to find out about its recent acquisition by Ivanti, the capabilities of its end-to-end Zero Trust framework - and what ultimately differentiates the company from its market rivals.



Abdul Rehman Tariq Butt
Regional Sales Director at Pulse Secure

Abdul Rehman did reveal that Pulse Secure as an organisation did question whether attending GITEX Technology Week 2020 was the right thing to do, but he admitted that on reflection it certainly was, and highlighted how the company had enjoyed a hugely productive week at the conference.

“It was tricky for us due to the ongoing situation with COVID-19. However, we took the decision to participate, and I can categorically state that it was the right decision for us to come here. We showcased our Zero Trust network access portfolio and our work from home solutions, which in this current climate have been extremely important in supporting our customers in terms of securing their employees that are working remotely. Pulse Secure is a market leader in providing solutions that are empowering our customers to enable their workforce to work remotely and we are delighted at the feedback we have received from our customers that have visited our stand this week,” said Rehman.

One of the universal challenges for many industries was securing their employees to work remotely at the onset of the pandemic, but this is



The beauty of Pulse Secure in this entire infrastructure setup is that we don't compromise on user ability.”

where Pulse Secure excelled by leveraging its suite of solutions to empower its customers to maintain its operations.

“The most important thing for us was we did not want to only focus on what applications and networks users were getting access to, but to determine how secure it all was. In some cases, there were people using an iPad that had their children's games

on it, and they were trying to access finance applications on it too, so we had to make sure that the access to that application was secure on that device,” said Rehman

The Regional Sales Director also pointed out that the visibility it can give its customers on their devices is one of the key differentiators it has compared to its market rivals.

“Pulse Secure has established itself a market leader because we provide visibility on the devices remotely as well. We can give a detailed overview to the CIOs and the CISO’s and provide them with information in relation to what users are connecting, when there connecting and what they are connecting to and normally for this you would have to use multiple solutions, but in our case at Pulse Secure it is a single pane of glass we provide,” said Rehman.

He added that they have a suite of products and which include work from home network connectivity VPN, all the way up to the advanced and enterprise suite which gives you the full bouquet of products including visibility and control.

Zero Trust is a term that is dominating the cybersecurity ecosystem and there is a growing consensus amongst security experts that a Zero

Trust approach is the right model for enterprises to adopt in this data-driven digital age.

Pulse Secure has garnered huge traction with its end-to-end Zero Trust framework and Abdul Rehman outlines his definition of Zero Trust.

“I use a very simple analogy when I am describing Zero Trust. For example, if you walk into a government office complex here in the UAE, they take your Emirates ID to authenticate you, and then they to proceed double-check whether you have a meeting

or not, and then they give you a badge and grant you access, now that is in my opinion a perfect example of Zero Trust. There is absolutely no trust at all,” said Rehman.

Abdul Rehman pointed out that it’s important to strike a fine balance when implementing a robust security strategy as you don’t want to impinge and impact on the experience of end-users.

“We believe in Zero Trust in a very simple way. If I am not the right user to connect to a certain application or





network, then sorry but we will not let you in. The beauty of Pulse Secure in this entire infrastructure setup is that we don't compromise on user ability. When the security is very robust then it's the end-users that suffer, but we try to keep it simple and we have a single client whether you are in the office or outside the office. That client is providing the Zero Trust connectivity and that differentiates us hugely compared to our competitors and their offerings," said Rehman.

The success of Pulse Secure since its entry into the market in 2015 has been meteoric, and this was reinforced following the decision by global IT behemoth Ivanti to acquire the company along with MobileIron in September of this year.

"Ivanti acquired two companies in the one transaction, so in addition to Pulse Secure they acquired MobileIron, and the thinking behind that was 1+1+1=10. It is not just one company under Ivanti, we are now part



The most important thing for us was we did not want to only focus on what applications and networks users were getting access to, but to determine how secure it all was."

of what we call a security solutions division. We will be focusing purely on how we can secure the end users, but Ivanti has a huge portfolio of really amazing products like neurons and their asset management system, which are eventually going to tie up with what we do and provide a complete ecosystem to the customers," said Rehman.

The dynamic IT executive concluded by revealing that he believes there will be a lot of activity from a product perspective in the first two quarters of 2021.

"I think in the next 3-6 months you will see a lot of news coming out of the Ivanti product team on how Pulse Secure customers can take advantage of Ivanti, and how Ivanti customers can take advantage of Pulse Secure," said Rahman. **crime**



Scott Peterson
Chief Revenue Officer, at Mitel

MITEL

CREATING THE RIGHT CULTURE

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Scott Peterson**, Chief Revenue Officer, at Mitel, to find out how the global unified communications leader is positioning itself to capitalise on the opportunities that have arisen from a hybrid work environment – and the importance of maintaining culture in the new world of work.

It has been well documented over the last number of months that the way in which we work has changed forever as a direct consequence of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic.

As a leader in the unified communications space Mitel has played a critical role in helping businesses maintain continuity during the crisis as employees moved to a world of remote working, and as Peterson points out businesses need to embrace a hybrid future for their workplace as things will not return to the way it was pre-COVID.

“It’s clear that work as we knew it will never be the same again. People that work for companies that have physical offices will not be coming to those offices every day, so employers really need to start

thinking about a hybrid or blended environment, now what that looks like in each market globally, or even in certain industry verticals will be varied. But what is clear is that it has changed forever, and will be for the remainder of our lifetime,” said Peterson.

Mitel has been banging the drum over the last number



I think that first and foremost during times like this culture is a real differentiator, and people that feel safe, valued and trusted are more likely to continue to perform at really high levels.”

of the years in relation to the benefits collaboration tools can have on employee productivity and efficiency within enterprises. The pandemic has inevitable resulted in a surge in the adoption of these types of solutions and Mitel has been on hand to meet the new market demands and requirements.

“From a Mitel perspective it represents a great opportunity, because we’ve been talking for a number of years about the need to use collaboration tools to communicate more effectively inside of businesses, but also to communicate more securely with key customers, key suppliers and others within our ecosystem,” said Peterson.

He added that in many ways their solutions are best designed for this new hybrid workplace environment but

stressed that they will not rest on their laurels.

“We are going to stay nimble, because things evolve and change so quickly market-to-market, and this may not be the last pandemic we face in our lifetime either, so it’s imperative you stay agile and nimble,” said Peterson.

Creating that culture within your organisation is a key component in ensuring success, but a major challenge for many companies has been how do you expose your newly hired employees to that culture when working in a remote environment.

“I think that first and foremost during times like this culture is a real differentiator, and people that feel safe, valued and trusted are more likely to continue to perform at really high levels and be able to work with their teams using non-traditional modalities. I can only imagine how difficult it regardless how good a culture is at a company to be a new employee during this time. What we have tried to implement at Mitel is firstly focus on employee safety, and then be emphatically clear with our employees that we understand they are under an incredible amount of stress, pressure and anxiety and we want to provide them with tools to deal with that,” said Peterson.

Peterson believes that in the current climate the question

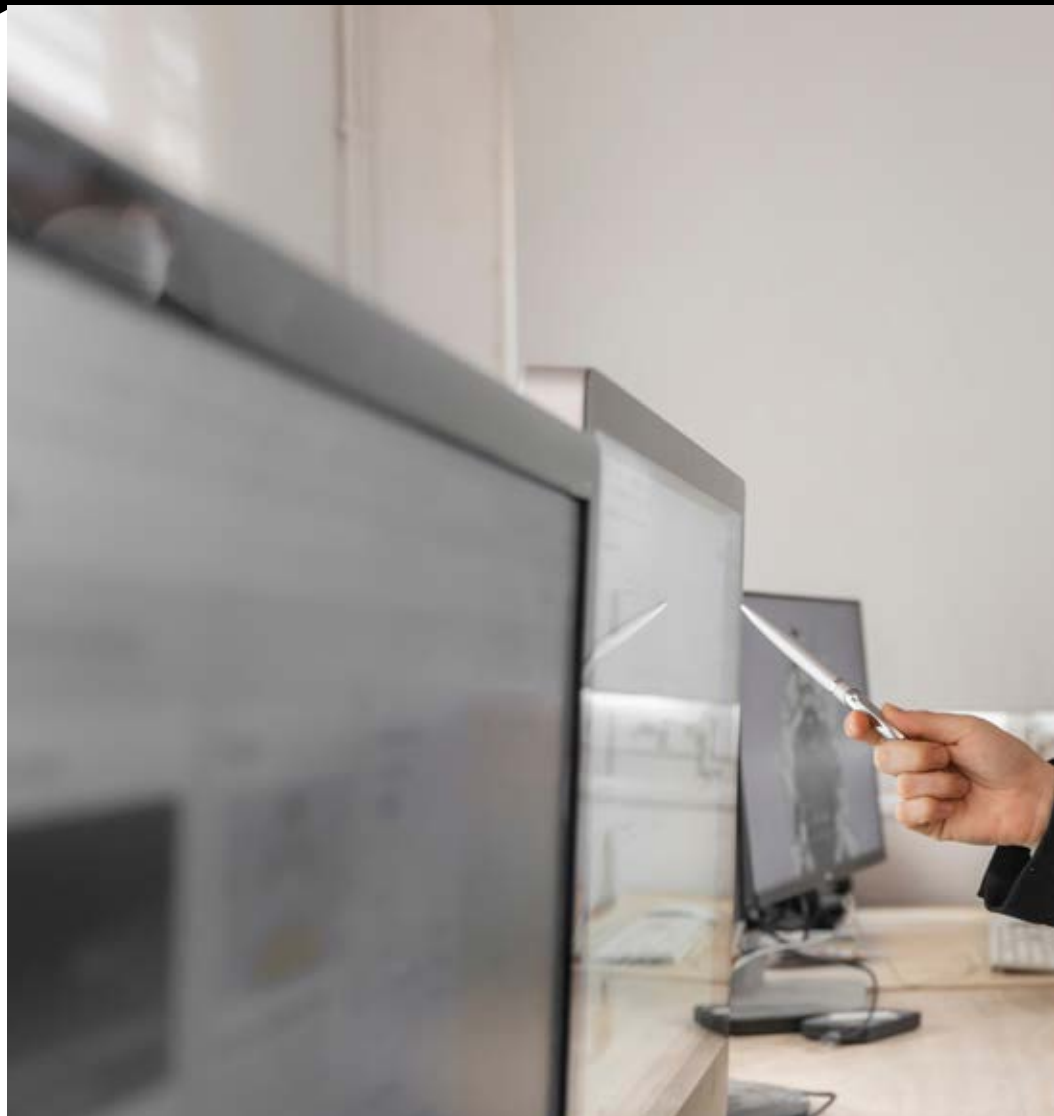
of a companies’ culture has become even more paramount.

“At Mitel, once our employees felt comfortable, only then did we talk about productivity and the ways that they can be the most effective employee that they can be. That’s been a big advantage for us, and I have to give a lot of credit to our HR team and other senior leaders, who are really focused on culture and that has allowed us to come through this in a very positive fashion, and I think the current climate makes culture even more important than it was before the COVID-19 crisis,” said Peterson.

There has been a lot of new trends that have been borne out of the COVID-19 crisis and some industry norms in the IT industry have been changed and altered fundamentally.

In our candid discussion Peterson outlined a number of emerging trends that he sees coming to fruition in the next 12 months in addition to the here to stay hybrid working model. One of the trends he sees coming are in relation to the mindsets of some enterprises, who he believes are beginning to think more expansively.

“In addition to the hybrid work model, which we’ve





already addressed in the earlier part of our discussion, there are some other trends that have emerged as a



At Mitel, once our employees felt comfortable, only then did we talk about productivity and the ways that they can be the most effective employee that they can be.”

consequence of COVID-19 that look like they are here to stay. We’re seeing mid-size capitalised companies and even smaller companies thinking more expansively about what we would offer in terms of contact center solutions, such as more sophisticated call routing and flows to make sure that employees that serve customers and partners can be reached, and can have effective and secure communication tools,” said Peterson.

The dynamic Mitel executive also outlined how during the COVID-19 crisis there had been a huge market

demand for flexibility in relation to communication, reiterating his earlier point regarding Mitel’s desire to remain nimble as the market continues to evolve.

“We used to think of those call center applications as more enterprise, but what has also emerged during COVID is that need for the flexibility of communication and the need to be nimble to make sure your employees can be responsive to a customer need, or a concern that pops up. From a traditional telepathy perspective that is really blending with call center flows versus just basic communication today,” said Peterson.

Peterson concluded a fascinating interview and insight into Mitel’s perspective on culture, the future of work and its strategy to remain nimble by highlighting one of key trend that has been elevated of late, and that is application integration.

“I think the other trend that is likely to be here for the foreseeable future is the increased need for more efficient application integration, and we’ve been very focused on that. We want our solutions to be very easy and seamless for our customers to integrate with other ERPs, CRMs, or any other solutions that they may have,” said Peterson. **cnme**

Tonya Chin*SVP Corporate Marketing and IR, and Chief Communications Officer at Nutanix***NUTANIX**

PREDICTING THE FUTURE

Tonya Chin, SVP Corporate Marketing and IR, and Chief Communications Officer at Nutanix, has exclusively compiled her predictions for 2021 for CNME, which includes how the current market climate could lead to the 'democratisation' of investor relations.

Employee **Engagement:** Zoom fatigue is real and it's not going away any time soon. As we enter 2021 without a clear sight of when the pandemic will be resolved, it is now imperative for companies to start developing a deeper strategy for meaningful engagement with employees who work remotely.

If 2020 was the year of the CIO, with IT leaders globally raising to the challenge to help their companies continue operations in this new normal, I predict 2021 will be the year of the CPO.

Employee relations and internal communications

leaders will need to rethink how they effectively communicate with employees and keep the company culture alive without physical connection.

From providing guidance on effective meeting management (I'm personally a big proponent of 45-minute meetings and Amazon's 6-page memo approach to make meetings more productive and engaging), to segmenting employee communication to ensure personalisation, to setting up all hands company meetings in multiple time zones to facilitate direct engagement with executives across the globe, 2021 is going to be the year of communicating creatively with employees!

Customer Engagement: B2B companies have long focused on in-person events to ensure they kept their customers engaged, but that all changed in 2020. When all events became virtual earlier this year, the focus was often on optimising for lead generation.

Afterall, this was often seen as a short-term issue, so most companies focused on solving the short-term problem. Now we know better, and I expect more and more companies will put more focus on maximising customer engagement in the year ahead.

At Nutanix, we have had great success – and fun along the way – finding creative ways to reach out to our customers, from virtual cooking classes with famous chefs to remote exclusive concerts.

We have also received great feedback on activities focused

on helping build our customers themselves, from resume support, to public speaking coaching, and social media guidance.

Investor Relations: In the world of IR, in-person meetings have always been king. Investors have long relied on face-to-face meetings to capture information beyond the obvious, whether reading body language or evaluating executive demeanor right before a big presentation.

But something interesting happened in 2020, both investors and executives realised how much more productive they could be when they were not travelling most of the time.

So, while I expect in-person investor meetings to resume once COVID is under control, I also believe we'll be moving to a model where 80% of interactions are remote and 20% are in person. This will mean rethinking how to effectively engage with investors, but I also expect it will result in the "democratisation" of investor relations. If high quality investors had to be extremely selective of the meetings they attended, due to the high demand, I think we'll see them being able to listen in on many more meetings in this new normal.

Media Landscape: The media landscape has been shrinking for a long time, due to dwindling advertising budgets and the pandemic has only put a further strain on struggling publishers. One trend that has recently seen an uptick is local publications being bought, not by larger media conglomerates looking to consolidate, but by firms



Businesses need to rethink how they effectively communicate with employees to keep the company culture alive without physical connection."

producing sponsored content.

This is a completely different publication model, and one that might be more financially viable (although only time will tell) but it will sometimes put transparency at odds with financial stability. While sponsored content can absolutely be just as valuable to readers, I also expect a growing need and reader demand for transparency.

Environmental, social and corporate governance: 2020 was a very polarising year for everyone, and we definitely saw discussion around political and social issues become more prominent for private sector companies. Leaders of companies like Salesforce, Box, Okta and Expensify have been more vocal, with some even causing issues with customers or employees as they sought to discuss social issues.

In the year ahead, companies are going to have to walk a careful line between their (and their senior leaders') beliefs and being inclusive to all, and I expect many of them to more actively involve employees directly in these decisions.

As more and more companies actively develop strategies to tackle ESG, CSR, D&I issues, it will be even more critical to keep in mind some of the learnings from 2020 to balance between company key beliefs and values and employees and customers who may not agree with the more extreme (or aggressive) stances that some companies may take. This tightrope will be an ongoing challenge for communications teams everywhere. **crme**





EXPO 2020

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

2021 promises to be one of the most memorable in the UAE's history as the country gears up to host EXPO 2020, whilst celebrating the 50th anniversary of the nation.

2020 was a year that none of us will ever forget. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the world, and the unprecedented crisis that we still find ourselves immersed in has fundamentally reshaped the way we live and work forever.

However, as we head into 2021 there is a lot of optimism for the next 12 months, especially in the United Arab Emirates.

Tremendous leadership and foresight by the UAE government in the early stages of the pandemic helped the country get the virus under control and managed to incubate and protect the most vulnerable in our society.

The strict lockdown measures enforced in March, ultimately allowed the UAE to re-open its economy for the final half of 2020, which has breathed new life into the nation's economy, and helped to reinvigorate industries hit the hardest

during the pandemic such as hospitality and tourism.

COVID-19 has certainly not gone away, and with many nations still grappling with this deadly virus, the UAE will certainly not get complacent, but 2021 promises to be a historic and memorable year for the UAE, and unlike 2020, it will be for all the right reasons.

2021 is significant to the UAE for many reasons, firstly, it represents the 50th anniversary and Golden Jubilee of the country. Over the last 50 years, the UAE has become one of the most technologically advanced countries in the entire world.

The UAE is a beacon and test case to other developing nations in the world as an example of what can be achieved when you create an ecosystem and infrastructure that supports and cultivates entrepreneurship, innovation and technology.

However, rather than looking back in nostalgic fashion at the incredible



Together, we will build the Emirates of the future, with the winning spirit of the union, a spirit that strives for progress."

journey the UAE has undergone over the last 50 years, it is using 2021 as a launchpad for the next five decades, which further illustrates the forward thinking and mindset of the UAE leadership.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, the Vice President and Ruler of Dubai, announced that 2021 will be used as a catalyst to deliver a detailed blueprint and road map for the future, but will also include preparations for grand celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the nation.

In late 2019, Sheikh Mohammed unveiled a wide-ranging and robust national strategy to guide the Emirates through to its centenary in 2071.

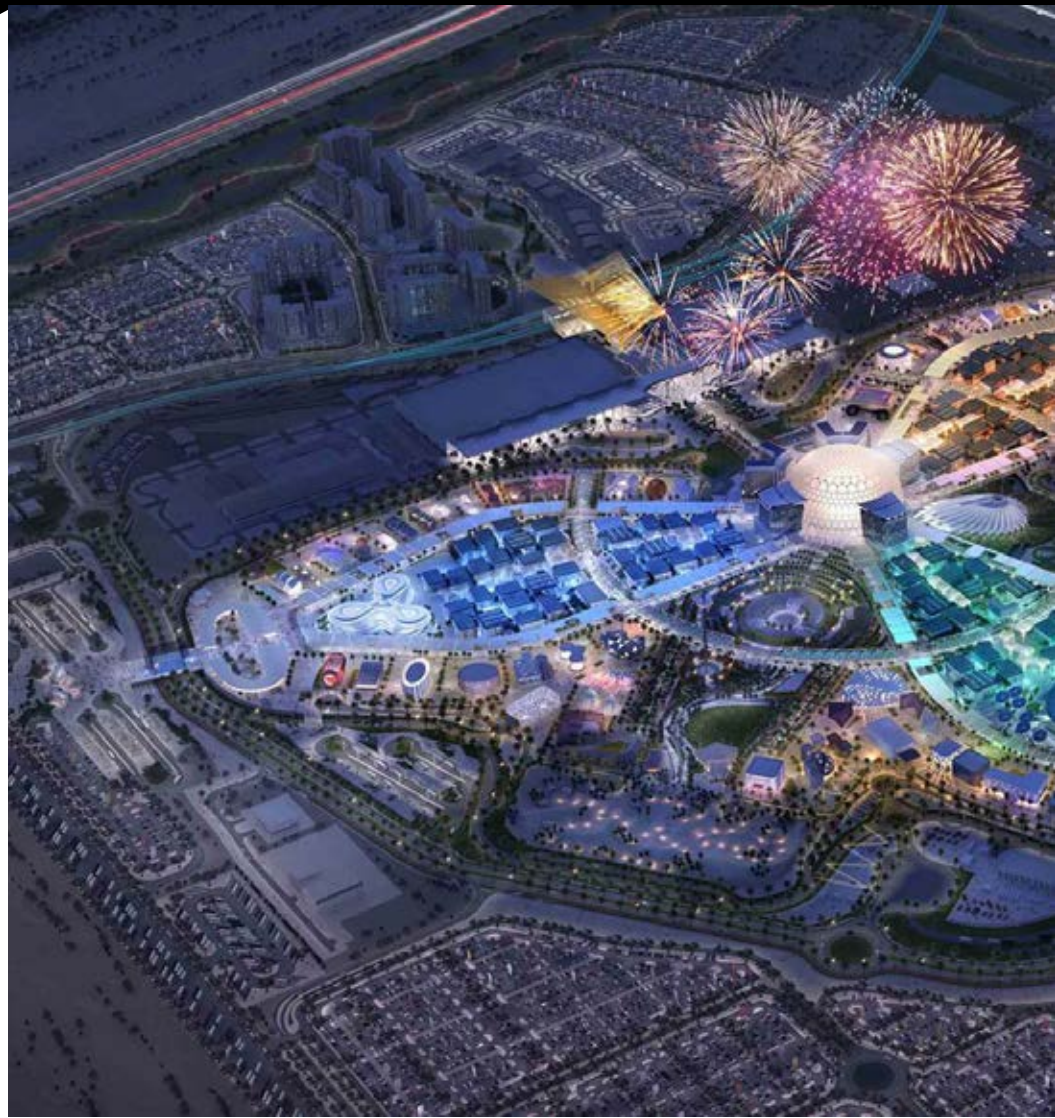
"Fifty years ago, the founding fathers shaped our life today, and in 2021, we will shape the coming five decades for the future generations. Together, we will build the Emirates of the future, with the winning spirit of the union, a spirit that strives for progress. Our development journey has no end. The UAE approaches its Golden Jubilee in 2021, a new milestone that celebrates 50 years of our young country and begins the journey to the next 50 years," said Sheikh Mohammed.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed also outlined his firm belief that the landmark 50th anniversary in 2021, will usher in an important new chapter in the country's phenomenal success story.

"With the willpower and

unity of our people, we will work tirelessly to achieve our goal in making the UAE among the best countries in the world by the UAE centennial in 2071. Today, we continue preparing and foreseeing the future and building a strong foundation to meet our goals with full confidence and persistence in a rapidly changing world," said Sheikh Mohammed.

The UAE leadership has long had its sights set on celebrating the anniversary in style and has subsequently launched a range of ambitious initiatives that have been specifically designed to mark this historic milestone and celebration



One of the initiatives that certainly captures the imagination and further illustrates the progressive nature and ambition of the UAE is the country's Hope Probe, which was launched into space on July 19th last year, and is scheduled to reach orbit around Mars in 2021, making for a moment of history in a banner year.

The other significant date in the UAE calendar in 2021, is of course October 1st, which represents the official opening of EXPO 2020.

The event was one of the many casualties of the COVID-19 pandemic last year, but in many ways due to what



has happened over the last 12 months, EXPO 2020 will now be more important than ever on a global scale in terms of giving us new hope and optimism and serving as a platform to bring



Fifty years ago, the founding fathers shaped our life today, and in 2021, we will shape the coming five decades for the future generations.”

us all together to share ideas for a better world.

Dubai's EXPO 2020 is still expected to attract 25 million visitors, despite the ongoing travel protocols and restrictions in place, but organisers are confident that the landscape in respect to COVID-19 will be healthier as more and more people get the new vaccination developed by Pfizer.

One of the key themes of EXPO 2020 is sustainability, and we know that outside of COVID-19, one of the biggest challenges facing mankind is climate change.

The signature pavilion for the upcoming Expo 2020, will be the Terra Sustainability Pavilion,

The Terra Pavilion, which features a towering 130-meter canopy is blanketed with thousands of solar panels, which fits in perfectly with the overall theme and objective of the event which is the need to create a more stable, sustainable and diversified global economy.

The Terra Sustainability Pavilion cost over \$272 million and has been designed to produce as much electricity as it uses, making it both energy and carbon neutral. It will supply and treat all of its own water, capturing rain in a vast underground cistern.

The 25,000 square-meter pavilion boasts immersive experiences of forests and oceans as well as interactive exhibits guiding visitors

through the history of environmental decline and dangers of overconsumption.

Her Excellency Reem Al Hashimy, Director General of Expo 2020 Dubai Bureau and UAE Minister of State for International Co-operation, said, “This period of rapid, unprecedented change has brought with it a pressing need to rethink the way we exist, and is further accelerated by a global health crisis that has touched each and every individual on Earth. While 2020 may be remembered as a year that changed us forever, it has also given us a tremendous opportunity to come together as a global society and find answers to our most pressing challenges.”

Two other thematic pavilions entitled Opportunity and Mobility are expected to open their doors in the coming months.

Nobody in their wildest dreams could have predicted what happened to us all on a global scale in March 2020, but as we prepare for 2021, we do so with hope, optimism and excitement as the UAE embarks the next chapter of its history – knowing also that EXPO 2020 will serve as the ultimate platform to develop new ideas and innovations to reshape the world we live in.

We will never forget 2020, but in the UAE, 2021 promises to be the year in which we forge a new path for the future. **crime**

Jadd Elliot Dib
Founder and CEO of Pangaea X

PANGAEA X

THE POWER OF DATA ANALYTICS

Jadd Elliot Dib, Founder and CEO of Pangaea X, highlights the power of data analytics in terms of navigating the uncertainty that has been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Technology has always been at the forefront of enhancing our everyday lives and enabling a better future. The rise and spread of COVID-19 has triggered unforeseen demand for digital health solutions.

Let's just think about how many countries around the world were quick to install thermal cameras and advanced facial recognition technologies.

Even prior to this pandemic, leaders increasingly embraced advanced analytics and artificial intelligence (AI), says a report by McKinsey & Company 'Accelerating analytics to navigate COVID-19 and the next normal'. These capabilities are expected to offer between \$9.5 trillion and \$15.4 trillion in annual economic value.

The pandemic triggered the healthcare industry to use big data and predictive analytics tools to better understand the virus and its spread.

One of the major challenges has been the early detection of high-risk areas with the greatest number of COVID-19 cases across the country. Hospitals and health systems have leveraged predictive models to gather more insights into the risks of COVID-19, the outcome and the virus' potential impact on resources.

However, even with the most comprehensive data and predictive algorithms, given that we talk about an eight – ten months virus, it is too early to have concrete results, but definitely will help scientists



study the virus, including potential risk factors, protective factors and long-term health consequences.

Countries in the GCC have recognized the opportunities offered by Big Data and their potential impact on healthcare and other relevant sectors, according to an article by Deloitte, 'Big Data in the GCC.' To speed up the transformation, governments will need to collaborate with research centres to fuel innovation and unlock potential values of data. As a result of these efforts, GCC countries would have the opportunity to transform their economies and play a leading role in the Big Data global race.

Governments today put in a lot of effort to come up with technologically advanced solutions to contain the



The pandemic triggered the healthcare industry to use big data and predictive analytics tools to better understand the virus and its spread."

pandemic. If we think of the different apps developed – The Ministry of Health and Prevention, Abu Dhabi Health Authority and Dubai Health Authority have jointly launched an app named ALHOSN UAE.

The app is able to track whether the person is in close proximity to people who have had contact with patients infected with the COVID-19 virus. This is possible if the users have the same app on their phones as the phones exchange the metadata stored in them.

The app is also encrypted and the data remains only on the user's phone. Through this data, the health authorities can quickly identify people at risk of transmission so that they can communicate with those people and conduct a retest. **crme**

CISCO

CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Reem Asaad, Vice President, Cisco Middle East & Africa, has outlined six key tech trends that the global IT leader expects to see materialise during 2021.



Reem Asaad
Vice President, Cisco Middle East & Africa

Trend 1: Closing the Digital Divide

The internet enabled society and economic activity to continue for those with access to this invaluable resource. But that's only about half of the global population and the pandemic underlined the urgent need to expand access. Currently only 35% of developing countries have internet access, compared to 80% in more advanced economies.

The introduction and expansion of 5G and WiFi 6 networks will improve bandwidth, speed, and latency, and reach areas where fiber is prohibitively expensive. As a result, frontline mobile workers, telehealth, manufacturing, and education will all benefit. This in turn will level the digital divide as these new technologies spur growth and innovation for millions.

According to PwC, bringing the internet to offline communities would add \$6.7 trillion to the global economy and lift another 500 million people out of poverty.

Trend 2: Driving experience (and safety) through sensors

Sensors for both personal and workforce health, safety and wellbeing will take center stage in 2021. Patch-like sensors will be used to track health and well-being with sports sensors monitoring concussion. While fatigue sensors will be able to track alertness in ruggedised environments.

Data-based insights delivered by sensors will help provide

a safer, healthier, and more productive environment in the workplace. Combined with WiFi 6, 5G, location technologies, and Collaboration solutions like Webex, they will identify underutilised or overcrowded spaces, while monitoring room temperature, humidity, air quality, and light.

According to the Cisco Global Workforce Study, 96% of companies can provide better work environments with smart workplace technology.

Trend 3: Keys to the future: app-enabled agility and resilience

The Cloud enabled organisations to quickly adapt in the early months of the pandemic. Ten months later and the applications at the heart of many businesses are highly distributed. Workforces are more mobile than ever before placing unprecedented demand on systems.

IT teams will need even greater agility going forward. By using observability solutions, teams can shift to monitoring the data and insights that matter. And as they continue to scale their ongoing transformations, insights and automation will be essential to future growth, competitiveness, and resilience.

According to Cisco 2021 CIO and ITDM Trends Pulse, 75% of CIOs and IT decision makers want to be able to utilise business insights better.

Trend 4: From customer experience to brand excitement

Mobile and smart devices have transformed daily life and

mobile apps are available for shopping, banking, learning and more. During the pandemic apps became essential tools for tracking contacts. Mobile apps enable public and private-sector organisations to connect with users in unique ways with most business processes also running on applications.

The most advanced applications enable even more personal relationships, along with instantaneous responses. That demands the ability to quickly turn masses of real-time information from the network into actionable insights. Companies that employ such capabilities can respond to a customer even before they report an issue. It's this combination of immersive, intelligence-based personalisation and experience that will transform baseline customer satisfaction into deep customer engagement, excitement, and loyalty.

71% of CIOs and IT decision makers agreed that customer experience is about more than just satisfaction—it's about delighting the customer.

Trend 5: Identity and a password-less future

Mobility, distributed work, and increased use of Cloud solutions has provided huge benefits in scalability and cost but has come with increased cyber threats. Zero trust methodology can address these challenges. Stolen or lost credentials remain the common cause of security breaches, a situation that has been exacerbated with the massive shift to remote work.



Currently only 35% of developing countries have internet access, compared to 80% in more advanced economies.”

The use of technologies such as biometrics will be far more expanded as platforms, industry groups, and security providers work towards a password-free future for consumers and enterprises. Organisations need to begin preparing for this inevitable shift, where users no longer rely on a traditional password as their primary method of identification.

According to 2020 Duo Trusted Access Report, 80% of mobile devices used for work have biometrics configured, up 12% the past five years.

Trend 6: Consumption models for the tech you actually need

Organisations have long invested in one-size-fits-all digital solutions often paying for features users did not need. Today, software as a service enables organisations to pay for the features they currently need. They can then quickly scale other services, when required.

Consumption models will continue to shift, especially as more features and capabilities are available via software, whether on site or in the Cloud. These pay-as-you-consume models are far too flexible and cost effective to ignore.

This shift to pay-as-you-consume spending gives organisations more flexibility and cost predictability to manage their IT spend — something that 85% of CIOs and IT decision makers agreed is important to their business (43% called it very important) in Cisco's 2021 CIO and IT Decision Makers Trends Pulse. **Gartner**

GELLIFY

BRIDGING THE GAP

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with **Massimo Cannizzo**, CEO and co-founder of GELLIFY Middle East, to find out how the company is leveraging its knowledge and expertise to help entities in the UAE with corporate venturing models and investments.



Massimo Cannizzo
CEO and co-founder of GELLIFY Middle East

2020 is a year that none of us will ever forget in a hurry – and the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered the way in which we work and live. However, out of every crisis comes opportunity and one of the major positives over the last 12 months in the UAE technology and IT ecosystem has been the emergence of GELLIFY Middle East.

Despite all the upheaval and economic uncertainty caused by the global health crisis, the Italian innovation accelerator decided to press ahead with its plans to penetrate the UAE and Middle East technology landscape and entered the market in 2020.

GELLIFY's mission statement and purpose is to help all innovation ecosystem players to create a better way to collaborate and grow, in a fast and sustainable way by streamlining innovation through entrepreneurship, leveraging an integrated ecosystem of education, research and business communities.

Cannizzo enjoyed a decorated and distinguished career with Accenture Middle East prior

to his move to GELLIFY – and knows the region inside out. He has been tasked with the responsibility of spearheading its success in the UAE, and I began our conversation by asking him about how corporate venturing models can spur further innovation in the future.

Cannizzo praised the UAE leadership for its proactive and aggressive approach to innovation and believes that has created the right infrastructure for growth.

“The UAE and Saudi Arabia over the last number of years have been very active in terms of innovation. The UAE is one of the very few countries in the world to have a dedicated Ministry of Innovation. In 2016, the UAE also made a play to push all the large corporate entities in the country to create their own innovation arm, and in addition to this encouraged greater CVC (corporate venture capital) by investing in startups,” said Cannizzo.

Cannizzo stated that businesses are now really starting to see the positive effects of their CVC investments across the UAE – but countered by highlighting that it was also important to note that there have also been many lessons learned.

He also pointed out that the significant ‘cultural differences’ that exist between a large corporate entity and your typical startup.

“Many corporate entities have found that managing startups

is a very complex task. There is a big cultural chasm between corporates and startups. There is a generational gap and there is also a methodology of working that is completely different – and this is the reason why GELLIFY has such a key role to play in these types of partnerships and investments,” said Cannizzo.

Cannizzo is known as a technology and innovation thought leader, and he also illustrated how is GELLIFICATION program is designed to help startups become stronger and more independent.

“I spoke to an important accelerator here in the region, and he told me that if we can help startups become solid through our GELLIFICATION program then that would be a huge boost to the local economy and business community here in the UAE. When startups are in the liquid state, they need a lot of technical and commercial advice and support that normally not all accelerators can provide. GELLIFY helps startups to become stronger and become independent. In summary, CVC is something very positive and a collaboration with a company like GELLIFY is helping corporates to bridge the gap and manage it in a sustainable way,” said Cannizzo.

We know that the way we work and when we work and more importantly where we work has changed as a direct consequence of the ongoing

COVID-19 pandemic – but whilst there are many positives in terms of having more flexibility in how you work, what are the challenges that companies face?

We now live in a hybrid world and there is no doubt about that. However, in the UAE, I think we are experiencing and witnessing a very wise approach to this ‘new normal’ environment. I think businesses are focusing on keeping their employees safe, but at the same time are also protecting the personal relationships and partnerships that have been cultivated over time,” said Cannizzo.

The dynamic CEO of GELLIFY Middle East also pointed out that every business regardless of its makeup or industry was now embracing a hybrid approach to the workplace – but stressed the important of maintaining the ‘human touch’.

“I think prior to COVID-19 there were only a few companies, and they were those that were fluent in technology that were adopting a flexible and hybrid approach to work. But now this approach is not just for digital companies, it is for every company and every type of business. We are also finding an equilibrium of balancing the use of digital channels and personal interaction. It is obvious that there are fantastic tools available to us to work online, but it is also critically important to keep the human touch,” concluded Cannizzo. **cnme**



There is a big cultural chasm between corporates and startups.”

KINGSTON

MANAGING THE DATA DEMAND

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Antoine Harb**, Team Leader, Middle East and Africa at Kingston, to find out how the company's suite of solutions is helping enterprises manage their storage and datacentre requirements.

Data is growing exponentially and coupled with a massive acceleration towards public cloud in the Middle East, there is a growing demand for effective data centre storage and management solutions. Can you tell us about the suite of solutions and products that Kingston offer in terms of datacentres?

Kingston is a business leader in producing fast and reliable memory solutions. It's server SSD and memory products directly support the global demand to store, manage and instantly access large volumes of data in both traditional databases and Big Data infrastructures.

Kingston helps corporations to meet their performance and quality requirements with consistent, rigorously tested memory and SSDs.

Kingston offers a wide range of enterprise-class SSDs and server memory suitable for several generations of servers and adapted to different applications.

Many independent industry experts have highlighted the reliability and effectiveness of Kingston's SATA Storage Solutions. What differentiates this product from other similar solutions on the market?

The main difference will be Kingston Technology's experience and expertise in manufacturing high quality products for the past 33 years. In those past decades we focused on the strict quality control of used components and products we produce, a robust testing procedure and Customer Services for pre- and post-sales support.

The components to build DC SSDs, in particular SSD Controller and NAND are carefully selected by quality, reliability, longevity, requirements and not to forget availability in order to offer a long-lasting product that is worth the investment.

It further is our strong believe, that well established collaborations with our SSD Controller Vendors are essential to fulfil the required specifications such as Performance, Endurance and QoS.

Lastly, the robust and extensive testing as part of our threefold testing is essential.

What new trends do you see emerging in the datacentre industry over the next 12 months as a result of the new IT landscape that has been carved out since COVID-19?

Firstly, is the need for computing capacity, driven by the large scale move to working from home for many businesses and institutions. Digital infrastructure has never been so important to the world economy.

The associated uptake in usage of digital applications in video calling, telehealth, e-commerce and e-learning, alongside those for entertainment as we all spend more time indoors, is causing a surge in need for data capacities.

Consumers have developed an insatiable demand for the digital world. Social media, streaming services, cloud storage.

We live in an era of digital-on-demand and have the Netflix addiction to prove it. With data being devoured like never before, satisfying this hunger requires



By 2025, it is predicted that UK data centres will be storing data worth just over £102bn annually."



Antoine Harb

Team Leader, Middle East and Africa at Kingston

data centres. And lots of them. By 2025, it's predicted that UK data centres will be storing data worth just over £102bn annually.

Due to the further development of the 5G network, and edge computing micro edge data centres, which are at locations closer to where the data is being generated and consumed, are also gaining traction among enterprises seeking to ensure that their information and communications

technology system is ready for the future. The much smaller edge data centres ensure faster response and more efficient data flow as well.

Why should enterprises choose Kingston as their partner in relation to managing their storage and datacentres requirements in this new data-driven digital economy?

Reliability is the cornerstone of the Kingston product strategy.

It has played a key role in maintaining the long-term relationships developed over the years with customers.

Kingston remains committed to exceeding industry standards with every new development while maintaining the signature reliability of its products.

Kingston further offers a wide range of data centre solutions such as the DC family (D450R, DC500, DC1000M and DC100B).

Data centre architects design performance targets for a wide range of systems, while maintaining flexibility for different workloads. Various data applications may require a range of storage and memory configurations to meet a variety of system specifications and workload demands.

Kingston server memory and enterprise-grade SSDs help to manage workloads such as AI, machine learning, big data analytics, cloud computing, operational databases (ODB), database applications, and data warehousing.

Kingston's current DC flagship product, however, is the DC1000M U.2 PCIe NVMe Gen3 x4. The DC1000M provides an exceptional consistent I/O delivery with sequential speed up to 3GB/s and steady-state 4K up to 540K IOPS, allowing to manage a wide range of intense workloads. Its Quality of Service (QoS) delivers ultra-low transactional latency for large data sets and various web-based applications, while its power loss protection (PLP) feature reduces the possibility of data loss or data corruption on ungraceful power fails. **enme**

Alaa Elshimy*Managing Director and SVP of Enterprise Business Group, Huawei Middle East*

DRIVING THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Alaa Elshimy**, Managing Director and SVP of Enterprise Business Group, Huawei Middle East, at GITEX Technology Week 2020, to find out how the technologies produced by the Chinese ICT vendor have empowered industry verticals such as the education sector during the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic.

Huawei are one of the most innovative companies in the world and they have made a huge impact since entering the Middle East region 20 years ago. It continues to serve as a catalyst for major innovation and growth across the GCC region and as they demonstrated at GITEX Technology Week in 2020, they are well-positioned to continue that in the next decade.

“We decided to double our space here at this year’s GITEX Technology Week, and whilst I acknowledge that some people remain concerned about physical events due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we saw GITEX as a great opportunity for us to showcase our portfolio of solutions and products. We believe that we have the technology for today and the future and that is why we invested significantly in GITEX as we felt it was a great platform for us to illustrate the power of our technology,” said Elshimy.

Huawei’s diverse range of technologies and solutions have helped many major industries such as Healthcare, Education and Banking, to be in a position to respond to the many challenges that surfaced at the beginning of the COVID-19 health crisis.

“Our primary objective and focus is to bring value to our customers and partners. In the last number of years, we have talked a lot about technologies such 5G, AI and Cloud- and

at this year’s GITEX we have been showing new versions of these technologies which have intelligent applications infused on top of them. We have solutions for all industry verticals’ – and they can be customised along with an ecosystem that can drive real value for that specific industry vertical,” said Elshimy.

One of the sectors that Huawei has leveraged the power of its technology is in education, and the UAE has been used as an example of how education can be dispensed successfully in this new world of remote education and e-learning.

“When the pandemic first flexed its muscles’ it was clear to see early on that not every country was prepared for it, especially in terms of educational continuity. Countries that had good infrastructure in place were naturally better prepared to respond,” said Elshimy.

Education is critical and as the Huawei executive stressed it was vital that educational institutions and schools embraced technology, but regardless of the pandemic believes that the e-learning model is the future.

“The reality is that e-learning and remote education are the future, but it’s important to highlight that it’s not all just about the infrastructure, it’s also about the intelligence that you bring into it. We help to provide the devices and the connectivity to empower the education solutions that



Our primary objective and focus is to bring value to our customers and partners.”

pave the way for connected classroom,” said Elshimy.

Huawei has positioned itself as a leader in 5G, and according to Elshimy it has allowed entities to overcome a lot of challenges that they typically faced with 3G and 4G networks, and in this era of work from everywhere and learning remotely 5G will be the technology that underpins this and fuels it.

In addition to the 5G capabilities, we have also added AI and we have designed a set of applications sitting on the Huawei cloud and all the teachers and students can access that and benefit from that. The system can detect if a student isn’t doing what he should be doing, and the teacher is flagged in real-time so they can respond and as you can imagine this is a key tool to have and will empower teachers to enforce this new way of learning,” said Elshimy.

He concluded a terrific interview by pointing out that everything that you buy from Huawei today, whether it be a smartphone, smartwatches, sensor or network server are all intelligent.

“All our devices and products have an AI chipset integrated into it and it is all connected to the cloud. When you have all these devices connected to the cloud every day you get more intelligence on the cloud and that will ensure that all the applications and devices become smarter which empowers you to do more,” said Elshimy. **crme**

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or gateway



BAHWAN IT

KEY PARTNERS

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **V Meikandmurthy**, Senior Manager, Network & Cyber Security, Bahwan IT, to find out more about its key partnership with global technology giant Cisco.



V Meikandmurthy
Senior Manager, Network &
Cyber Security, Bahwan IT



Bahwan IT is proud to have been a Cisco certified partner for more than a decade."

2 020 has been full of challenges and organisations across the region have been pushed to evolve their IT infrastructure. Can you explain how Bahwan IT as a key Cisco Partner is working to support the end users in Oman?

As one of its core values, Bahwan IT has always been focused on supporting customers and providing them with the best quality solutions and services.

2020 particularly has been full of challenges and organisations have been made to evolve their IT infrastructure at an unprecedented rate.

Since the onset of the pandemic, Bahwan IT has been providing seamless and secure connectivity through Cisco's solutions to customers.

Bahwan IT has helped customers to install and configure Cisco's offerings like remote access VPN solutions, collaboration solutions like Webex, and security solutions like AMP/Umbrella, so that they enjoy the seamless and secure connectivity to their infrastructure and applications thereby not compromising on their productivity and efficiency.

The need for customers to have secure, next-generation networking technology has become more paramount in the new normal climate. How are Cisco technologies helping to address the needs of customers as they adapt to a hybrid model in which a part of their workforce might continue to work remotely post COVID-19?

Cisco has always been a pioneer when it comes to meeting the evolving needs of its customers and addressing the recent surge in remote working solutions during the new normal is no exception.

Cisco offers best-in-class

solutions that have helped organisations in ensuring secure connectivity to the remote work force throughout the ongoing pandemic.

Cisco has a wide range of offerings that addresses the needs of the customers in the new normal such as Secure Remote Access Solutions (Anyconnect VPN) with 2 factor authentication (duo), Collaboration Solutions like Webex, End point security solutions like AMP/Umbrella and Cisco's Zero trust network architecture framework (ZTNA) ensures seamless, collaborative and secure connectivity.

What are some of the key milestones that Bahwan IT has achieved as a Cisco Partner over the years?

Bahwan IT is proud to have been a Cisco certified partner for more than a decade. Being a long-time partner of Cisco, Bahwan IT has achieved many milestones in terms of successfully implementing Cisco solutions across different verticals including banking, Government, Oil & Gas and manufacturing.

Some of the notable projects include network consolidation of multiple companies, successful integration of different Cisco technologies with third party vendors, successful implementation of Data Centre technology solutions and deployment & integration of Cisco's mobility solutions in harsh environments.

We look forward to continually working with the Cisco team in supporting their customers and taking our mutual business to even bigger heights. **cnme**

**DATAIKU**

RESPONSIBLE AI

Sid Bhatia, Regional Director – Middle East, Dataiku, has penned an exclusive op-ed for January's edition of CNME that examines key data science trends that he believes will come to fruition in 2021- which includes the growing need for enterprises to apply AI more responsibly.

In 2020, data science, machine learning, and AI have emerged as critical organizational assets for handling large-scale change with less friction.

Here is a teaser of a few of our data science trends to look out for in 2021 to ensure your organization is taking a holistic approach (think agile, responsible, and collaborative) to its data initiatives:

MLOps Will Become Even More Critical

Last year, we predicted that the year 2020 will almost certainly

be one where MLOps processes are formalized and staffed as well as bolstered up with tools that make the job smoother and more manageable — little did we know at the time how true this would actually become.

Organizations will take their MLOps foundations and go a step further to implement detailed processes and requirements around drift monitoring using MLOps. Input drift is based on the principle that a model is only going to predict accurately if the data it was trained on is an accurate reflection of the real world.

If a comparison of recent requests to a deployed model against the training data shows distinct differences, there is a high likelihood that the model performance is compromised.

In 2020, the significant drift observed was a result of the global health crisis. As a result, the new year is bound to include organizations using MLOps to put more structure in place around drift monitoring so that models can be more agile and accurate.

And organizations won't stop there. Aside from using MLOps for the short-term to address model drift during events during a crisis, teams will also likely look to implement MLOps practices for the long term in an effort to more effectively scale their machine learning efforts.

Teams Will Need to Infuse Agility Amidst a Post-Pandemic Environment:

From a people perspective, the year 2020 more or less

normalized remote and hybrid working styles, making collaboration even more critical for agility and efficiency. It's also going to take time for organizations to navigate their unique market and understand the ever-evolving dynamics in a post-pandemic setting.

According to Gartner, the theme of resilient delivery “isn't about ‘bouncing back’ — it's about having the ability to nimbly adapt or pivot in a dynamic business or IT environment. The theme's underlying assumption is that volatility exists, so it's vital to have the skills, capabilities, techniques, operational processes and systems to constantly adapt to changing patterns.”

In 2021, the use of AI for sustained resilience will be underscored, particularly with regard to empowering every team and employee to work with data to improve their business output. These challenges we observed in 2020 will remain in 2021 for teams that don't have a collaborative data science platform:

Access to systems: Whether accessing the various data sources or the computational capabilities, doing so in a remote setting can be challenging.

Collaboration within teams: Without the physical in-office proximity, individuals can become siloed in the execution of their data projects.

Collaboration across teams: Data projects require buy-in and validation from business teams and also



The theme of resilient delivery “isn't about ‘bouncing back’ — it's about having the ability to nimbly adapt in a dynamic business or IT environment.”

require data engineering and other teams to help with operationalization.

Reuse over time: Capitalizing on past projects is key to maintaining productivity and reducing duplicate work. The lack of in-person discussions can limit this ability.

Organizations Will Go From “What Is Responsible AI?” to “How Can We Implement Responsible AI?”

Up until now, a lot of the conversations around the topic of Responsible AI have been “We haven't thought about this yet” or “How can we think about it and acknowledge the harms and impacts that AI can have on the world?”

Teams might be determining how Responsible AI differs across job functions (data scientist vs. an analyst, for example), agreeing on and establishing a framework for their organization's ethical rules, and putting checklists into place for Responsible AI across the AI pipeline.

In 2021, we believe we'll see more organizations put this research and work into practice. There's no longer a need to convince people that this is the way to go, as they've already gotten there. Now, it's going to be a matter of bringing organizations the expertise to implement the ethical use of AI across their existing and future use cases.

Embracing these AI trends will not only accelerate organizations' post-COVID recovery, but the adoption of enterprise-wide AI as well. **crme**

Dr Manfred Braeunl*Chief Executive Officer, Porsche Middle East and Africa FZE*

PORSCHE

PORSCHE DESTINED FOR AN 'ELECTRIC FUTURE'

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to Dr Manfred Braeunl, Chief Executive Officer, Porsche Middle East and Africa FZE, to find out about the automotive industry's shift towards electrification, the future of mobility in a digitally connected world - and how Porsche has established itself as a global leader in electric vehicles.

There is a growing momentum on a global scale for the rollout of electric cars, with fears over the role emissions from passenger vehicles play in contributing to climate change. Porsche is leading the way globally with

their electric car offering.

What differentiates Porsche from its other rivals when it comes to electrification?

Electric or not, first and foremost Porsche builds exclusive sports car. We do not compromise this. Our E-Performance strategy is a vital pillar of our company

strategy going in line with our positioning as an emotive sports car brand with a focus on dynamic driving, design, quality and sustainability.

Every new hybrid or electric model will always be the benchmark in its respective segment. This is our recipe for

success, and this is also why there is no plan to electrify all of our models. For the 911 for example, considerations include the development of a very sporty hybridisation known from motorsports.

The next logical step is to offer an all-electric Macan, our first all-electric compact SUV from Porsche. It will be produced in Leipzig (Germany) where a significant expansion of the production facility is under way.

The Porsche Taycan has garnered huge attention since its inception and has been labelled as the 'world's most innovative car'. What are the unique capabilities of the vehicle and why is it the most innovative in the world?

The Taycan models are at the cutting edge of Porsche E-Performance and are among the most powerful production models we currently have in our range. An independent panel of scientists and engineers has listed 27 technological innovations in the Taycan, 13 of which are world firsts.

We beat 250 other vehicles in the evaluation process claiming top spot. The Taycan is the first world's production vehicle with a system voltage of 800 volts instead of the usual 400 volts for electric cars. This is a particular advantage for drivers where high voltage charging is available: in just over five minutes, the battery can be recharged using direct current from the high-power charging network for a range of up to 100 kilometres.

In 22 minutes, the charge can reach up to eighty per cent under ideal conditions. The two-speed transmission installed on the

rear axle in the Taycan is another innovation developed by our engineers. The first gear gives the Taycan even more acceleration from a standing start, while the long second gear ensures high efficiency and power reserves even at very high speeds.

Porsche features hybrid models in its range. Will hybrid cars have a future, in your opinion?

Porsche will continue to build sports cars focusing on three drive technologies: petrol-engine vehicles, hybrids and electric sports cars. There are several advantages to choosing a hybrid model, besides lower fuel consumption and lower CO2 emissions.

Drivers can choose from either driving fully electric in the E-Power driving mode or using the electric motor as for an additional power boost, as the maximum torque is available immediately during acceleration.

Already today, the fastest model in the Panamera and Cayenne range is the Turbo S E-Hybrid.

Succeeding models will be designed with an even greater focus on performance as well as a longer electrical range of over 80 kilometres. Hybrid models remain important for the brand's product line-up in the years to come.

In many cities the rollout of electric vehicles make sense, as the infrastructure is in place to support it, but in rural areas that infrastructure is not there, so do you envisage a lot of resistance to electric vehicles from a large part of the automotive industry globally?

Some governments like the UAE are doing a lot to increase



Porsche will continue to build sports cars focusing on three drive technologies: petrol-engine vehicles, hybrids and electric sports cars."

sustainability and reduce CO2 emissions, especially by focusing on the charging infrastructure to make the use of Battery-Powered Electric Vehicles viable and encourage their sale by reducing owners' range anxiety.

It is true that other governments are not yet that advanced. Our local investors are backing the drive to reduce CO2 emissions through our Porsche Destination Chargers to provide conveniently located charging points at popular locations, like hotels and malls, for customers' peace of mind.

However, we expect that that most Taycan drivers will charge their car comfortably at home, thanks to the on-board AC charger with 11 kW using alternating current. And, with a range of up to 463 km in the Taycan 4S, there is almost no difference to internal combustion vehicles with regards to everyday use.

Which types of customer will buy the Taycan in the future?

The Taycan customer reflects the classic lifestyles and attitudes of previous customers – but there are many new themes. The future Taycan customer is brand-savvy, committed to responsible use of resources and is a tech fan.

Brands with a reputation are important to them, as our studies have shown. However, status for these customers increasingly derives from conscious actions from an environmental perspective, which makes the question of a brand's sustainability more important.

It is also striking that these customers have a strong affinity for new technologies. They want to be among the first to own the latest innovations. **enme**



Faisal Malik
 CTO, Enterprise Business Group,
 Huawei Middle East

HUAWEI

THE INTELLIGENT FUTURE

CNME Editor Mark Forker moderated a panel discussion during the Huawei Middle East Data Center Network Online Summit 2020, which was held during GITEX Technology Week.

The stellar online summit brought together global and regional stakeholders and experts from the ICT ecosystem to discuss in detail the latest data center network technology trends, which included how enterprises can leverage intelligence from their data to accelerate digital transformation and promote the development of the digital economy.

Mark Forker was joined on the panel discussion, which was entitled 'How to adapt the next-gen network solution to support the new normal' by esteemed industry leaders such as Abdullah T. Alotaibi, Government Presales Director, Solutions by STC, Andrew Lerner, VP, Gartner, Leon Wang, President of Data Center Network Domain, Huawei, and Faisal Malik, CTO, Enterprise Business Group, Huawei Middle East.

Solutions by STC has positioned itself as the go to partner for digital transformation in Saudi Arabia, and according to Abdullah T. Alotaibi, Government Presales Director at the company believes that heightened customer expectations have forced enterprises in the Kingdom to rethink business models.

"In Saudi Arabia, from a government and private sector perspective they are looking

at digital transformation as a methodology in which they can rethink the way they conduct their business. It is a new way of defining business models and how they interact with their customers and of course technology is a key enabler for this sort of transformation. When you look at the current expectations that customers are looking for from different entities, then it becomes evident that expectations are very high, so businesses must always be ahead of the curve and looking at new ways that allows them to be more flexible and agile to meet these demands,” said Alotaibi.

In addition to this, he also highlighted the role cloud can play in accelerating these transformation projects.

“When you examine the capabilities and promises of the cloud such as greater flexibility, faster time to market, being efficient as an organisation and reducing the complexity of operating the technology in that environment then you can see that it is aligned with what organisations are looking for in terms of digital transformation,” said Alotaibi.

Andrew Lerner, VP at Gartner was unequivocal when asked about the role cloud technologies play in the acceleration of digital transformation in this increasingly data-driven digital economy that we now find ourselves immersed in.

“Cloud is the center piece of digital transformation. When you think about the recent

advances in speech recognition, Machine Learning, and data analytics they are all heavily, heavily driven, influenced and enabled by the cloud and access to services. When I think about the next-generation of analytics, such as edge computing and AI-driven insights then there is no doubt in my mind that cloud will be center piece for that as well,” said Lerner.

Leon Wang, President of Data Center Network Domain, Huawei spoke about the role data centers are playing in the formation of intelligent cities in China – and highlighted how their function is to serve as the brain for these cities that fuels decision-makers with information in real-time to makes the cities more intelligent.

“We all know the power that can be harnessed from Big Data and with the exponential increase in data the need for intelligent data centers to manage all of this has become of paramount importance. We need to build intelligent networks and intelligent data centers. In China, the government wants to digitalise their cities and has deployed smart sensors on bridges and roads, and this allows them to predict things and optimise the traffic and construction of the city to really build an intelligent city – and the data center is essentially the brain of these intelligent cities that powers them,” said Wang.

Faisal Malik, CTO, Enterprise Business Group, Huawei Middle East, pointed out that in relation

to digital transformation there had been a huge shift in mindset since the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic in the Middle East.

“I think digital transformation over the last 5–6 years has been one of the most discussed topics in the ICT industry, but it has also become one of the most adopted strategies too. However, in the past there has been some doubt expressed by many companies as to whether they needed to embrace digital transformation, but COVID-19 brought the realisation to them that digital transformation is not a tool or an option it is a necessity for your survival,” said Malik.

He added that if you examined any industry verticals such as education, healthcare, or government, you would find examples of digital transformation strategies that were implemented successfully which ensured the continuation of many businesses – and illustrated the importance of cloud in the digital era.

At Huawei, we firmly believe that 5G, AI and cloud computing will play a very important role in the transformation of our society. Cloud is going to be everywhere, and cloud strategy is extremely important in this new digital economy, and we witnessed those that had a cloud strategy pre-COVID were able to respond during the crisis effectively, but those that didn’t are now fast-tracking their cloud journeys to get up to speed,” said Malik. **crme**



It is a new way of defining business models and how they interact with their customers.”



Syed Shahan
Founder of TouchForce

TOUCHFORCE

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Syed Shahan**, Founder of TouchForce, to find out the inspiration behind the creation of the company and how it is positioned itself to help companies in the Middle East to become empowered through the utilisation of emerging technologies.

GITEX Technology Week 2020 was the setting for my discussion with the serial entrepreneur, who firmly believes TouchForce is destined to have a seismic impact on the ICT ecosystem here in the Middle East region.

It has been well documented that out of every crisis comes opportunity and that was certainly the motive for Shahan, who conceded that his new company was formed as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"TouchForce was born out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is our vision to empower companies through technology and solutions which will ultimately enhance productivity. The best way to do this is to bring in technologies from the rest of the world into the GCC region - and there has been a demand to bring in technologies that creates a lot of value-add for the enterprises located in the region, especially in the UAE," said Shahan.

Shahan reinforced the point that their motto was to empower companies through technology and that it was their responsibility to join the dots and bring value to enterprises.

"We have a plethora of solutions that includes AI, drone technology and performance monitoring solutions. We believe that it is not going to be a case of work from home, but instead work from anywhere. However, I do think we need to be very cautious in terms of how we empower staff, clients and vendor partners to make this journey a seamless one, and

that's where TouchForce comes in and brings real tangible value to enterprises in the GCC region," said Shahan.

The charismatic entrepreneur added that if you examined the work from anywhere or working from home model over the last 6 months, then the one factor that has become prevalent for all businesses is the desire to ensure that customer experience is always at its best.

"If you do not have the tools to do deliver customer excellence in this current climate then you're going to struggle. Somebody needs to identify that gap and then proceed to bring razor sharp technologies into organisations that empowers their customer service offerings. The most valuable and crucial aspect for every business in this on-demand digital economy is customer service, and you've got to be able to tick all those boxes to be successful, and again this is where TouchForce adds value and helps you to achieve this," said Shahan.

The Founder of TouchForce said that two key priorities for many businesses was how to tackle revenue leakage and productivity.

"Revenue leakage and productivity are major challenges for enterprises in this current business environment. For example, we are working very closely with some major banks, and if they are scaling from 25 million customers to 100 million customers in the next 2-3 years then one key priority for them is that every employee in their organisation

is top of their game in terms of performance, but how do you identify that. You need visibility on the entire landscape, and we have the technology to do that," said Shahan.

He added that all their technologies are AI-powered and that they are all designed with self-learning and machine learning capabilities, which inevitably over a certain period of time makes them intelligent.

"These solutions enable organisation to realise that they are getting predictive analysis of what might happen in their organisation if their architecture or infrastructure has some changes," said Shahan.

According to Shahan, TouchForce knows the pain points in the majority of cases for business, and highlighted the unique capabilities of Israeli security company Neurolegion.

"We work with an Israeli company called Neurolegion, which is the only dynamic application security testing entity in the world. They have a purpose built DaaS solution, which is targeted at application security, developers' and DevOps. Now everybody does application testing, but they bring in API security testing. It gives organisations like banks and e-commerce player the opportunity to define what industry they are from. However, incredibly this technology automatically does that, and it also even identifies the business logic vulnerabilities, and this technology does that and we are now in the Middle East doing that. This gives organisations the wow factor to please its customers," concluded Shahan. **cime**



If you do not have the tools to deliver customer excellence in this current climate then you're going to struggle."

APPSFLYER

DRIVING BUSINESS GROWTH

Paul Wright, Managing Director UK, FR, ME & Turkey at AppsFlyer, discusses the importance of adapting your marketing strategy to meet the demands of the 'new normal' business climate.



Paul Wright
Managing
Director UK, FR,
ME & Turkey at
AppsFlyer

With vaccines being rolled out across the UAE, businesses have started the work of rebuilding for the 'new normal'. For many, this will include reclaiming lost ad spend and adapting their marketing strategy to navigate new challenges.

At a time when brands are still taking a hit to their marketing budgets or possibly just starting to recover from cuts, it is more important than ever they minimise costs and tap into innovation and creativity to drive growth. But this can feel overwhelming when your budget is limited – how to start, where to begin?

A great example is Snapchat, which has debuted its first brand-facing campaign – using innovation and creativity to draw advertisers' attention to its ad products.

The Snapchat campaign was created in-house with a limited budget, with the innovative decision to target marketers directly for the first time in a B2B campaign.

Snapchat's parent company experienced a tough quarter in which brands cut spend because of

COVID-19 restrictions; attracting new business by drawing attention to its advertising products is a crucial tactic as it looks to reclaim some lost ad spend.

Here are my top four tips to help app marketers navigate the challenging environment.

Tapping into owned channels

We all know that a decent marketing plan involves a blend of earned, owned and paid channels. While it's tempting to use paid media from the get-go, many marketers have such tight budgets that this just isn't an option.

Frankly, if you haven't any budget whatsoever, then your only choice is to capitalise on your imagination and creativity to win. If you're faced with this challenge it's a smart move to make the most of your brand's owned channels first, minimising marketing costs and driving growth and retention goals.

Adopting this zero-budget marketing strategy allows marketers to rely on innovation and creativity, and to leverage their brand's unique assets.

Retargeting existing users to drive revenue

Retaining existing users is crucial even in usual circumstances. With poor retention rates, intense competition, and rising user acquisition costs, re-engaging with existing app users has become a key component of an app marketer's toolbox.

But throw a pandemic and challenging economic conditions into the equation, and customer loyalty takes on an even more vital function.

Brands can adjust their marketing strategy to avert focus from engaging new users and instead increase the

potential to re-engage existing users to drive growth and retention goals.

Recent data shows that retargeting is on the rise – with 30% of apps now running retargeting campaigns to establish a loyal user base.

The research found that retargeting campaigns create a significant performance uplift, as it drives more ad revenue, thanks to more ad views, which in turn increases the likelihood of making in-app purchases.

Prioritising ad budgets

It's best not to 'go dark' by freezing ad spend entirely; brands that do risk being forgotten as competitors take over.

Instead, app marketers need to use existing data and tools to extract rich insights from their ad campaigns – allowing them to learn what works best, optimise future campaigns and ensure budgets are spent most efficiently.

Work that inbox

App marketers shouldn't underestimate the power of email marketing. eMarketer found that 83% prefer email for communication, far and away from the top choice over text, SMS, messaging apps and social apps.

We also know that the vast majority of emails are opened on mobile devices, making this an attractive channel for directing customers to your app store.

As for content, why not use your email marketing to share product updates, offer discounts, announce upcoming events and, of course, encourage engaged users to install your app for improved user experience and conversion. **crme**



2020 was full of surprises and unknowns, but the new year brings with it hope and plans for recovery and long-term growth."

AVEVA

TRANSFORMING SMART CITIES

Data-powered insights deliver more resilient infrastructure and shape a more sustainable future, leaving smart cities poised to rise to even the most challenging disaster explains Dr Tariq Aslam, Head of MEA, AVEVA.



Dr Tariq Aslam
Head of MEA, AVEVA



As we transition towards a new normal in a post-pandemic world, digital capabilities will increasingly act as a barometer for economic resilience."

In December 2020, Dubai became one of the first cities in the Middle East to take a data-driven approach to governance when it launched a holistic leadership dashboard for informed decisions to be made in real time.

By way of use cases, the new tool allows authorities to forecast the number of potential cases using existing epidemiology equations, and to identify areas at risk of becoming infection hotspots. By aggregating financial, contractual, and human-resource-related government data into a big-picture yet simultaneously granular overview, the city has improved its resilience and strengthened its ability to thrive in the new normal.

Resilience – for cities and organisations alike – has come into focus in the wake of the pandemic. The term reflects the capacity of a

city to ensure continuity in times of disaster, to rebuild quickly and to thrive after the event.

High levels of urban resilience rely on quality infrastructure, interconnected communities and good governance. When these components link in with each other, cities can cope with and bounce back quickly from even the most challenging crisis.

Integrated data for smarter decisions

Smart cities optimise the efficiency of urban operations and services and connect to citizens through the use of integrated Command and Control Centers. These centralised units integrate information and communication technology (ICT) devices across IoT networks to manage and administer vital services during and after a crisis.

The pandemic has shown how digital transformation helps organisations evolve into location-agnostic entities that connect remote workers while delivering improved results. As we transition towards a new normal in a post-pandemic world, digital capabilities will increasingly act as a barometer for economic resilience.

Unified data and analytics equip smart organisations – and smart city operators – with more reliable information, helping authorities make sense of this array of data and deploy it across the breadth of

applications needed to keep their cities humming.

Similarly, artificial intelligence (AI) can leverage data to trial different solutions for maximum impact, offering realistic scenario modelling for resilience building. With AI, tests can be being created and re-run across innumerable different scenarios, automatically identifying the highest-value solution while freeing up developers' time for more pressing issues.

Maximum performance, minimal costs

Data-powered insights deliver more resilient infrastructure and shape a more sustainable future. Bringing the most advanced technology into a unified data environment enables teams to maximise performance, minimise cost and delay, and ensure efficient operations.

This in turn reduces energy usage and cuts emissions both outright through smart models and as a by-product of reducing the need for emergency alerts and rework. With economic resilience now tied so closely to the city's digital infrastructure, and with the rate of data consumption growing exponentially, cities that invest in innovative technologies will be the ones that thrive in the coming years.

AVEVA works with megacities such as London, a leader in smart city technology, as well as smaller municipalities with populations of 50,000 or fewer, that are looking to leverage technology to improve sustainability and resilience.

Our solutions help unify city operations to ensure safe, reliable, and resilient services.

Although digital transformation is a complex, dynamic process, requiring real commitment and engagement from the top, the rewards are impactful for individuals, communities and the planet. **enr**

NASMA TELECOMMUNICATIONS

BEST IN CLASS

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Naresh Pai**, Director of Nasma Telecommunications, to find out how it leveraged its working relationship with Cisco to respond to market changes and new customer demands.



Naresh Pai
Director of Nasma Telecommunications

Organisations across the Middle East have been forced to transform their IT infrastructure at an unprecedented rate. Can you explain how Nasma Telecommunications, as a key Cisco Partner is working to address the evolving needs of their end users in Oman?

As a key Cisco Partner in Oman, Nasma Telecommunications has been assisting end customers with the solutions that not only meet their current needs, but also address the evolving nature of their business in the new normal environment.

Our team puts a lot of effort in understanding the current infrastructure and uses it to leverage new proposed solutions. We believe in offering customer centric and tailored solutions that will help customers meet the new requirements in a timely manner rather than offering a generic solution.

One other key consequence of the pandemic has been that small businesses across the region have been made to think about business resilience, which was something traditionally only large organisations would do as a part of their IT strategy. How is Nasma supporting small to medium sized organisations in developing business continuity and resiliency plans with Cisco?

We at Nasma, pay a lot of attention towards understanding the customer's business model and then offer products/services that the customer requires to maintain resilience.



We have been educating our customers on how Cisco offers the best-in-class solutions that can help them maintain continuity and develop resilience."

The ongoing global pandemic has made more and more organisations realise the importance of having the right solutions in place to maintain business continuity. We have been educating our customers on how Cisco offers the best-in-class solutions that can help them maintain continuity and develop resilience.

Through Cisco's Secure Remote Workforce and Trusted Workplace solutions, we have helped our customers achieve employee productivity, performance, security and operational consistency.

In addition to this, we have been creating awareness on cloud subscriptions for critical services has been a key focus area. We have been making customer experience the workings of these cloud subscriptions firsthand by demonstrating failover scenarios and understand the value of cloud-based solutions.

What are some of the key milestones that Nasma has achieved as a Cisco Partner over the years?

Cisco is a global leader in networking, security and collaboration and as one of their key partners in the region, Nasma has gained vast knowledge on these architectures. Cisco offers products and solutions that cater to a broad spectrum of users and this has widened our client base.

The trainings, webinars and frequent certification requirements keep our technical team updated on the latest technology and this helps us serve our customers better. **cnme**

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