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WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEANS BUSINESS

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LENOVO'S
CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER

SALESFORCE'S
AREA VICE PRESIDENT

AVEVA'S
GLOBAL HEAD OF
SUSTAINABILITY

INTELLIGENT DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

NICK CURRAN, HEAD OF ENDAVA MENA,
TELLS CNME HOW THE COMPANY IS
LEVERAGING THEIR DYNAMIC PLATFORMS
TO HELP DELIVER AND DRIVE INTELLIGENT
DIGITAL EXPERIENCES ACROSS THE
IT ECOSYSTEM.



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The insurance industry is known for being risk averse, and that mindset has led to a slow adoption of the technologies needed to rapidly transform at scale."

EDITORIAL

HERE'S TO NEXT YEAR

It has been another incredible journey following the IT and technology landscape across the Middle East over the last 12 months in my capacity as the Editor of CNME.

The speed at which technologies and new innovations are scaled and rolled out at by the IT ecosystem never ceases to amaze me.

The UAE really has firmly established itself as the Silicon Valley of the GCC region, it is a hotbed for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship – and with a progressive government placing technology at the front and centre of its strategic roadmap for the next digital decade, then it's clear to see that the country is only going to solidify its status as one of the most technologically-advanced powerhouses in the world.

It's been a pleasure to report on so many brilliant companies, who really are pushing the boundaries as to what's possible with technology, and all with the combined goal of enhancing society.

Some of the companies I've interviewed in 2022 are household names, whilst others perhaps are not as well known, but they all collectively share the same goal and that is to deliver digital experiences that are designed to transform.

In terms of our final edition of CNME for 2022, this edition is a Christmas Cracker, with some top-class interviews, insights and analysis from a number of prominent IT leaders from across the region.

On the front cover of December's edition of CNME is an exclusive interview with Nick Curran, Head of Endava MENA, who tells us more about how the global automation leader is driving intelligent digital experiences.

Endava went public on the New York Stock Exchange in 2018, and its portfolio of solutions is empowering retailers and banks to adapt to the demands of a constantly changing marketplace.

CNME also spoke to Teambase, an IT software company that is helping brokers transform across the Middle East.

The insurance industry is known for being risk averse, and that mindset has led to a slow adoption of the technologies needed to rapidly transform at scale. However, the tide is turning and Teambase have positioned themselves to be at the forefront of that transformation for brokers in the form of their BenefitNet solution.

Teambase CEO Robert Koval, has enjoyed a decorated career in the IT industry, and he said the inspiration behind launching the company 10 years ago was driven by the desire to make a real difference.

We also spoke to Robbie Kearns, Area Vice President at Salesforce, who examined some of the key trends that emerged from its 8th State of Marketing report.

One of the key statistics that surfaced was the fact that 86% of marketers in the UAE believe they are driving more value than they were in the previous 12 months.

However, Kearns said what has become very evident within the marketing sphere is the fact that marketing executives are being asked to do more with less.

CNME was also on tour with Cisco and VMware in Oslo and Barcelona respectively.

Cisco is on a mission to reimagine hybrid workspaces, whilst VMware's comprehensive cloud offering and its pending acquisition under the umbrella of Broadcom represents truly exciting times for the IT cloud behemoth.

In addition to this, we also have interviews with RUCKUS, CERT, AVEVA, and expert analysis on the tech trends that are going to fuel new innovations in 2023.

2023 promises to be another exciting year in the IT industry across the region, with momentum growing on new concepts like the Metaverse – and as always CNME will be there to cover it all.

On behalf of all of us at CPI Media Group, we'd like to wish all our customers, partners and readers a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

See you in 2023! 🍀

Mark Forker
Editor

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News

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36 Robert Koval, CEO of Teambase, outlines the mission statement of the company in their quest to help brokers transform within the InsurTech sector.

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SALESFORCE

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SentinelOne continues Sterling MITRE ATT&CK evaluation performance

SentinelOne, an autonomous cybersecurity platform company, was recognised in the MITRE Engenuity ATT&CK® Evaluation for Managed Services for its Vigilance MDR.

This achievement follows three consecutive years of top performance in MITRE ATT&CK® Enterprise Evaluations and MITRE ATT&CK® Deception evaluation. SentinelOne is the only XDR vendor to participate in every MITRE evaluation spanning EDR, Identity/Deception, and now MDR – and consistently deliver top results. Integrated within Singularity XDR, SentinelOne is fully committed to MITRE's frameworks as the de facto language of cybersecurity, supporting organisations in programmatic risk reduction.

"Thousands of enterprises around the world choose Vigilance MDR to augment or replace their security operations with a team of military grade cybersecurity experts", said Brian Hussey, VP Threat Services, SentinelOne. "The combination of autonomous cybersecurity and our award-winning Vigilance MDR service reduces dwell time, operational costs, and risk. Delivered by SentinelOne and our global ecosystem of partners, SentinelOne is proud to excel in this inaugural MDR evaluation".



Brian Hussey, VP Threat Services, SentinelOne

Omnix signs strategic partnership agreement with viAct

Omnix, an end-to-end digital solutions and services pioneer, announced that it has signed a strategic partnership agreement with viAct, a leading ESG-focused AI company, to foster digitalisation and boost safety in the Architecture, Engineering and Construction (AEC) & Oil & Gas Industry across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region.

According to the agreement, Omnix will become the master distributor of viAct's products and services across the UAE, Saud Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.

"Our strategic partnership with viAct will provide an ingenious dimension for accelerating the digital transformation journey across the fast-growing Middle East region. With our team's diverse experience and knowledge of products, solutions, and services in the



Simran Bagga, Vice President, Omnix Engineering & Foundation Technologies

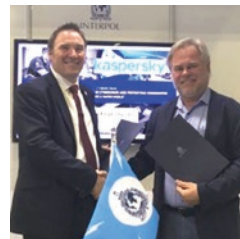
region coupled with viAct's expertise in automated monitoring powered by video analytics, the ability to digitally derive data-driven decisions in the entire workflow will be a key driver and business enabler to transform the industrial landscape, especially the AEC and Oil & Gas industry", said Simran Bagga, Vice President, Omnix Engineering & Foundation Technologies.

Kaspersky supports INTERPOL's operation to combat cybercrime in African countries

Kaspersky has contributed

to INTERPOL's Africa Cyber Surge Operation (ACSO) by sharing data, comprising of indicators of compromise (IoCs) on various cyberthreats and types of cybercriminal activity targeting African countries. This evidence provided the grounds for a series of operational and investigative activities against the threat actors behind the cybercrimes and their malicious infrastructure.

"The Africa Cyber Surge Operation, launched in July 2022, has brought together law enforcement officials from 27 countries, working together for almost 4 months on actionable intelligence provided by INTERPOL



private partners. This intelligence focused on opportunities to prevent, detect, investigate and disrupt cybercrime through coordinated LE activities utilising INTERPOL platforms, tools, and

channels. This operation focused both on cyber criminals and compromised network infrastructure in Africa, allowing member countries to identify more than 1,000 malicious IP addresses, Dark Web Markets, and individual threat actors, enhancing cooperation between INTERPOL, AFRIPOL and the member countries, and contributing to connecting policing for a safer world", said Craig Jones, Director Cybercrime Directorate.

Huawei launches SD-WAN and Wi-Fi 7 products at IP Club Saudi Arabia

Huawei has launched SD-WAN

and Wi-Fi 7 Series products and innovations for the first time in Saudi Arabia at the IP Club KSA forum on November 30, 2022, in Riyadh. Under the theme of "Intelligent Cloud Network, Unleashing Digital Productivity", the Huawei IP Club aims to build an open, free, friendly thought-sharing platform for network technical supervisors, engineers, industry analysts, and key opinion leaders. At IP Club, people will be joined by the best minds in the industry to engage in thought-provoking conversations about future network technology trends, share perspectives on digital transformation, and chart the way forward.

Daniel Kirk, Vice President of Strategy Huawei Enterprise Business said, "Robust connectivity is the



Daniel Kirk, Vice President of Strategy Huawei Enterprise Business.

backbone of the digital era. By bringing these innovations in SD-WAN and Wi-Fi, we enable our customers and partners in KSA to offer differentiated services to end users cost-effectively. The Huawei IP Club in Saudi Arabia has the largest community membership outside China, demonstrating the Kingdom's appetite for innovative technologies to drive digital transformation in line with Vision 2030".

Tenable finds 72% of organisations remain vulnerable to Log4j

Tenable, the Exposure

Management company, today announced the results of a telemetry study examining the scope and impact of the critical Log4j vulnerability, known as Log4Shell, in the months following its initial disclosure. According to the data collected from over 500 million tests, 72% of organisations remain vulnerable to the Log4Shell vulnerability as of October 1, 2022. The data highlights legacy vulnerability remediation challenges, which are the root cause of the majority of data breaches.

When Log4Shell was discovered in December 2021, organisations around



Bob Huber, Chief Security Officer, Tenable.

the world scrambled to determine their risk. In the weeks following its disclosure, organisations significantly reallocated resources and invested tens of thousands of hours to identification and remediation efforts. One federal cabinet department reported that its security team devoted 33,000 hours to Log4j vulnerability response alone.

"Full remediation is very difficult to achieve for a vulnerability that is so pervasive and it's important to keep in mind that vulnerability remediation is not a 'one and done' process", said Bob Huber, Chief Security Officer, Tenable. "While an organisation may have been fully remediated at some point, as they've added new assets to their environments, they are likely to encounter Log4Shell again and again. Eradicating Log4Shell is an ongoing battle that calls for organisations to continually assess their environments for the flaw, as well as other known vulnerabilities".

Toshiba announces 20TB MG10 series hard disk drives

Toshiba Gulf FZE Dubai, UAE

has announced the launch of MG10 Series in the MEA region, a massive capacity 20TB HDD with conventional magnetic recording (CMR). The 20TB MG10 Series has a 10-disk helium-sealed design that leverages Toshiba's innovative Flux Control Microwave Assisted Magnetic Recording (FC-MAMR) technology to boost storage capabilities.

The 20TB MG10 Series further illustrates Toshiba's commitment to advancing HDD design to meet evolving needs for storage devices in cloud-scale servers and object and file storage infrastructure. With its improved power efficiency and increased capacity, the 20TB MG10 Series helps cloud-scale infrastructure to advance storage density, thereby reducing capex and improving total cost of ownership (TCO). As data growth continues at an explosive pace, the advanced 20TB MG10 Series with FC-MAMR technology will help cloud-scale service providers and storage solution designers to achieve higher storage densities for cloud, hybrid-cloud and on-premises rack-scale storage.



Trellix predicts heightened hacktivism and geopolitical cyberattacks in 2023



(L) John Fokker, Head of Threat Intelligence, Trellix and (R) Vibin Shaju, VP EMEA, Solutions Engineering, Trellix.

Trellix, the cybersecurity company delivering the future of extended detection and response (XDR), today released its annual threat predictions report for 2023. Forecasts from the Trellix Advanced Research Centre anticipate spikes in geopolitically motivated attacks across Asia and Europe, hacktivism fuelled by tensions

from opposing political parties, and vulnerabilities in core software supply chains.

“Analysing current trends is necessary but being predictive in cybersecurity is vital. While organisations focus on near-term threats, we advise all to look beyond the horizon to ensure a proactive

posture”, said John Fokker, Head of Threat Intelligence, Trellix. “Global political events and the adoption of new technology will breed novel threats from more innovative threat actors”.

“We started 2022 with an industry-wide vulnerability in Log4J, which was closely followed by cyber and physical war targeting Ukraine. We’re closing the year observing hacktivists taking matters into their own hands, new actors in operation, and a changed but increasingly active ransomware landscape. As stress continues to weigh on the global economy, as we head into the new year, organisations should expect increased activity from threat actors looking to advance their own agenda – whether for political or financial gain”, commented Vibin Shaju, VP EMEA, Solutions Engineering, Trellix. “To outwit and outpace bad actors and advance defences proactively, security must be always-on and always learning”.

Redington Gulf fortifies cloud leadership with milestone accolades

Redington Value, the leading digital aggregator in the Middle East and Africa was awarded with Distributor Partner of the Year – APJ and the Rising Star Distributor of the Year – EMEA by Amazon Web Services (AWS) at its annual conference AWS re:Invent 2022 recently. These accolades are a testament to the company’s strengths and efforts in accelerating cloud transformation agendas across the region.

Commenting on the milestone wins, Sayantan Dev, President, Redington Value, said, “Cloud is an important strategic bet for us and this recognition coming from a cutting-edge technology and a world class platform company such as AWS is an endorsement of Redington’s efforts in this space. We are investing heavily into several cloud assets including Cloud Centre of



Excellence (CCoE) and our proprietary platform CloudQuarks, which help our partners to manage their AWS practice more efficiently. We also offer advisory, migration and managed services on cloud, all of which are delivered through a scalable and unique two-tier model. Our goal is to empower our partners to help their customers seamlessly grow in their AWS journey. We not only assist

them to embrace the opportunities presented by AWS cloud solutions but even offer support while consuming the platform to see if they can transition to better and bigger workloads. We look forward to continuing being an important catalyst for digital success in the region and strengthening our collaboration with AWS and taking it to new levels in 2023”.

Self-care matters – 36% of professional gamers in the META region worry about mental health

A survey, commissioned by Kaspersky, revealed good mental health is one of the biggest factors affecting professional gamers, with eSport pros (36% in the Middle East, Turkiye, Africa region) most worried about their mental condition than other gamers. Pro gamers pay strong attention to healthy habits and lifestyle – 35% take care of proper mental preparation and 26% don't forget to get enough sleep. Only 48% of eSport pros would rather keep playing to improve performance than take more breaks for sleep or eat healthier food.

According to a recent study, devoted to the predictors of mental ill health in eSport amongst competitors, conducted by University of Winchester, it is highly prevalent with eSports athletes at a level



comparable to other professional sports, such as football. Results also show that pro gamers can face sleep issues, burnout, and social phobia anxiety.

The Kaspersky survey proves that professional gamers – more than others – worry about mental health, and 88% of eSport pros agree well-being is essential for top performance in gaming.

In addition, professional gamers more responsibly treating their health. In particular, eSport pros mostly pay attention to healthy habits – 26% think

about getting enough sleep, 35% don't forget about their mental preparation, and 26% taking breaks to move around when possible.

Also, 48% of eSport pros wouldn't agree to keep playing, but instead will take more breaks for sleep or eating healthier food to improve their performance. In comparison, 64% of top gaming influencers would prefer playing than have healthy breaks.

"The competition level in gaming championships is extremely high, and sometimes is even like a real sport. To fight for leading positions, professional gamers spend a lot of time thoroughly preparing. In addition to the hard skills within specific games, soft skills play a big role in winning. Our survey research shows 82% of pro gamers agree that for them it's mental well-being," commented Marina Titova, Vice-President, Consumer Product Marketing at Kaspersky.

SimSpace expands globally with cyber force platform used by US cyber command elite forces

SimSpace, the industry leader in military-grade cyber ranges, is announcing today the commercial availability of its upgraded SimSpace Cyber Force PlatformSM, expanding its footprint into a global market worth over \$200 billion.

During a period of unprecedented geopolitical risk, leading organisations can now use the same advanced technology as US national cyber defenders and global intelligence agencies. SimSpace can compress three years of attacks into 24 hours to ensure the highest levels of mission and defensive readiness.

The Russian war in Ukraine has fuelled a near 50% increase in cyberattacks in the first half of 2022. Goldman Sachs predicts a Russian attack on US infrastructure could cost the economy up to \$1 trillion. Businesses of national significance are seeking battle readiness for their cyber

teams and are using SimSpace's high-fidelity range capabilities to improve team and process performance, consolidate tools, and reduce costs.

The C-suite, board members, investors, shareholders, insurers, regulators, and audit committee members are grappling with the need for more concise quantifications of risk posture. Military-grade cyber ranges provide answers to those hard questions, and help businesses make \$30 million dollar decisions about changes in key parts of their cyber spending. SimSpace is trusted by the US Government, critical national infrastructure, F2000 organisations, and global intelligence agencies. By



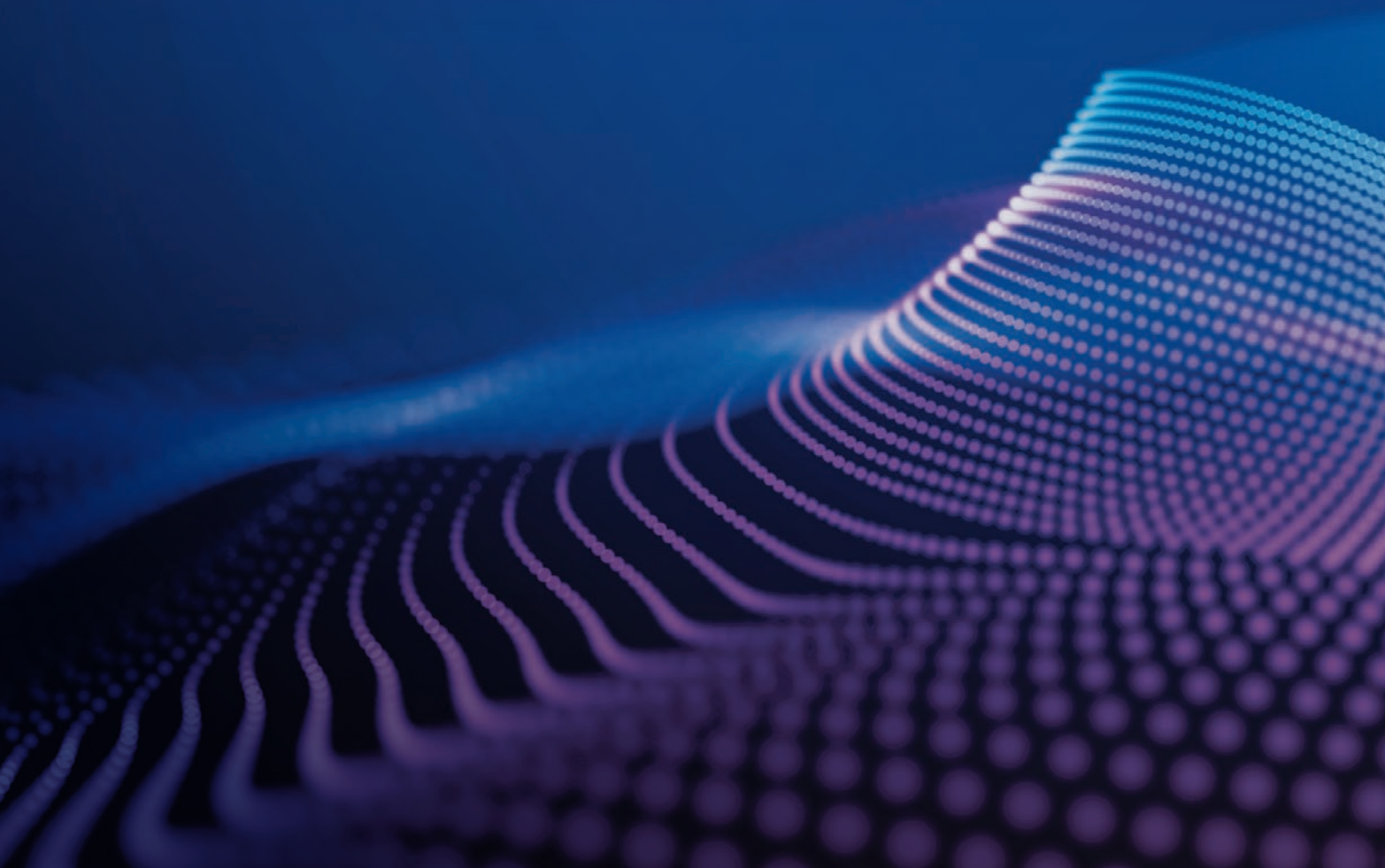
William Hutchison, former US Cyber Command Leader and CEO of SimSpace.

deploying the SimSpace Cyber Force Platform, organisations have achieved a 30% reduction in cyber operational costs and a 40% reduction in breaches in their production environments.

"SimSpace works to continuously improve the security posture of organisations and governments worldwide", said William Hutchison, former US Cyber Command Leader and CEO of SimSpace. "Our Cyber Force Platform evolved from the requirements established by our US national cyber defenders and today drives a 48% time reduction to identify and remediate breaches, as well as a 56% improvement in cyber team retention to help businesses meet their financial objectives and regulatory requirements. We help executives, governments and security teams build world-class infrastructure and find solutions to highly complex cybersecurity challenges. The US government trusts SimSpace to protect their operations and personnel, thwarting sophisticated threat actors".



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RUNNING OUT OF TIME

Lisa Wee, Global Head of Sustainability at AVEVA, explained to CNME Editor Mark Forker that the world is 'running out of time' when it comes to addressing our climate change crisis in an exclusive interview which took place during COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

AVEVA are a global leader in developing industrial and engineering software, and its broad portfolio of products and solutions have empowered businesses within global industries such as energy, infrastructure and manufacturing to scale and diversify their business since the company's inception in 1967.

It has been well-documented that when it comes to the climate crisis, the companies that AVEVA works closely with on a day-to-day basis are largely responsible for producing some of the highest global emissions.

Wee, in her role as Global Head of Sustainability at AVEVA, is on a mission to change that reality.

CNME caught up with her deep in the bowels of COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh, to learn more about the commitment AVEVA is making to reducing the emissions output of the energy-intensive industries her clients operate in as part of their bid to help save our planet.

The dynamic executive at



AVEVA began the conversation by highlighting that despite progress being made at COP26 in Glasgow, more needed to be done to accelerate change.

"We really see this as a critical decade to take action on climate change. To be quite frank, we are running out of time. I think we came out of COP26 in Glasgow with some real progress being made, but we have also witnessed a need to really accelerate some of the policies that were agreed upon

in Scotland," said Wee.

Wee then explained the importance of the COP summit and the function that it plays in terms of alleviating climate change.

"I really think it is important for people to understand what exactly COP is. COP is essentially the conference of all the parties that have signed on with the United Nations, and are committed to mitigating climate emissions. As I said earlier, coming out of COP26 in Glasgow, we are on track for a 1.8 degree Celsius world by 2050, which is not great, but it does represent progress. However, we are determined to get to 1.5 degree Celsius, and we really need to limit global warming to that figure, because anything above it will be catastrophic," said Wee.

The AVEVA executive then further disclosed that world leaders have to comply and commit to coming back to COP every year to revisit their contribution, rather than every five years which had previously been the expectation.

"I think that's so important that world leaders come back



every year, as it enables us all to see who really is living up to their commitments and hitting their sustainability targets. That's also why we are here in Cairo, because we want to send a message that we can't afford to slow down, in fact we need to accelerate. What compounds this further is the current geopolitical context. Yes, we need to acknowledge there is an energy crisis, but we also need to continue to think about how we make progress on addressing climate issues," said Wee.

Wee said that AVEVA is leveraging their own technology to reduce their own emissions, but ultimately to help their clients reach their sustainability targets and goals, which we know are critical if we want to reach that 1.5 degree Celsius target by 2050.



We see this as a critical decade to take action on climate change."

"AVEVA was at COP27 to declare that we have a role to play from two perspectives. Firstly, we have to play our part in terms of mitigating our own emissions. Secondly, we have a climate mitigation role, and a climate solution role. From my own perspective, I sit in the technology sector, and we work with global industries that have very large emission profiles. One of these industries is of course the energy sector, and our technology is used to advance their transition, and they can leverage our technology to really reduce their emissions," said Wee.

Wee also added that she has witnessed a shift in terms of mindset around COP conferences and that there was a real 'evolution' taking place in relation to the event.

"It's no longer just about what happens in the formal negotiations, that's obviously important, but it has become an entire ecosystem of activity around climate where civil society meets business, and business meets with policymakers and you see the formation of coalitions between different players and this is hugely critical when championing climate change on a global scale," said Wee.

Many climate change activists believe that public and private partnerships are critical in order to accelerate and drive the decarbonisation agenda on

a global scale in a bid to really start making an impact in addressing climate change.

Wee agreed with this sentiment and said AVEVA was part of a new coalition that is designed to create a greater fusion between the public and private sectors.

“We certainly need that cooperation to happen if we really want to make real progress. We’re part of the First Movers’ coalition, which consists of 65 companies that are looking to send a demand signal. Collectively, we all believe in a future of low-carbon products and we are willing to support them. Now we are cognisant of the fact that they can be expensive to develop, but we’re willing to use our own purchasing power to pay a premium price for them to make sure they get developed. The areas we’re focusing on are green steel, sustainable aviation fuel, and low-carbon cement that was just launched here at COP27. We’re sending a \$12 billion dollar demand signal that as companies we are going to buy those products when they are developed,” said Wee.

Wee said that the public-private partnership was initially launched by the US State Department, but now other governments, including the United Kingdom have come onboard to really drive this initiative forward.

“The message we are really trying to communicate is that the private sector is there, but we need to determine what the policy frameworks are that are going to support the development of those products on a large scale that makes the

impact we need,” said Wee.

Many companies have expressed concerns that becoming sustainable could be costly for them and causes their overheads to increase, and many industry experts have said businesses are reluctant to change and adopt sustainable practices as a result.

However, Wee is adamant that adopting sustainable practices will only serve to enhance your efficiency which in turn will only serve to reduce your costs.

“We are an industrial software company that works across multiple industries, but one of the benefits of digitalisation that we see is that we are able to really increase efficiency. Normally, when you increase efficiency then you cut costs. You’re using less energy and water, and you’re able to design with less waste in your system, so from that perspective sustainability and profitability are interlinked, whereas sometimes we talk about them like they are two sides of the same coin,” said Wee.

She illustrated an example of this by highlighting AVEVA’s partnership with Egypt’s largest desalination plant Al Galala.

“We work with the largest desalination plant in Egypt, and we know that we have to get clean water to people, but it is an energy-intensive exercise. However, through digitalisation and optimising their approach they’ve been able to increase process efficiency by 20%, and that means they are delivering more clean water at an accelerated level with less energy and a reduction in overall costs. This



COP is essentially the conference of all the parties that have signed on with the United Nations, and are committed to mitigating climate emissions.”

is a clear example of what can be achieved when you adopt sustainable practices into your business operations,” said Wee.

Wee then concluded a wonderful conversation by reinforcing the importance of building sustainable smart cities to support urbanisation and the projected global population increase of 2.5 billion by 2050.

“I really hope we are going to see a radical expansion of smart cities, and we really need to from a climate perspective, primarily due to the rates of urbanisation that we are seeing globally. We are projecting that the percentage of the population living in urban developments to go from 55% to 68% by 2050, so that means we’re going to add 2.5bn people, and 90% of them are going to be in Asia and Africa. We need smart cities, and what those cities do really, really matters. We see a huge opportunity to achieve climate benefits, but also to make progress on this nexus between the social and environmental benefits that exist with the development of smart cities – and AVEVA are going to be on hand to help

leverage our expertise to drive sustainable smart cities to safeguard all our futures,” concluded Wee. 



RUCKUS NETWORKS

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REDEFINING NETWORK CONNECTIVITY

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Moe Raslan**, Regional Sales Director – MEA at RUCKUS Networks, to learn more about how the company is redefining network connectivity, their impressive cloud solution portfolio – and what ultimately differentiates them from their market rivals.

Can you provide our readers with a broader overview of how RUCKUS Networks complements and enhances the services and solutions provided by CommScope since their acquisition of the company in 2019?

RUCKUS Networks delivers purpose-driven networks that can effectively keep up in the tough environments of the industries we serve.

Our enhancements to the services and solutions provided by CommScope allow us to empower our clients to deliver

best in class experiences to everyone counting on them, even in the most unpredictable environments.

This is achieved through state-of-the-art cloud-managed Wi-Fi services that make network design, implementation, and operations secure.



In addition, RUCKUS Networks redefines network connectivity, building innovative solutions that deliver seamless network experience and address major industry challenges.

RUCKUS access points, switches, joint offerings, and cloud services allow channel partners, OEMS, and ecosystem partners to provide their customers with high-quality innovative solutions.

RUCKUS Cloud is an AI-enabled converged network management-as-a-service platform that many industry analysts claim delivers exceptional user experiences. Can you tell us more about the unique capabilities that are provided by RUCKUS Cloud?

RUCKUS Cloud is our solution to the increasingly complex network environments of our customers. It allows for easier management, troubleshooting, and optimisation of high-



performing enterprise networks, regardless of whether they are wired or wireless, through a singular web dashboard or native mobile application.

With the ever-changing needs of businesses across the many industry verticals, IT and network suppliers need to stay ahead of these needs through deploying a network management solution as well as a network control solution, which allows for migration among public clouds, private clouds, and on-premises without the need to buy any new network devices – and minimising costs and efforts. RUCKUS Networks addresses this by allowing for:

- High-performance Wi-Fi 6
- Simple, secure, and scalable fixed form-factor RUCKUS switches
- Intuitive UI and intent-based workflows
- Reduced unplanned downtime
- Simple network setup
- Built-in reporting and analytics
- Native mobile application

We know that many businesses across the Middle East have really struggled to adapt to the demands of cloud transformation. Firstly, why do you think so many have faced issues, and how does RUCKUS Cloud remove complexities associated with cloud and network management?

There have been a number of different challenges that organisations in the Middle East have faced when it comes to adapting to cloud transformation.



Fear of change to network orchestration has played a big role in this, especially for those organisations that have been running on-premise/local network management for a long time.

Changing to the so-called 'new normal' will always take time. This also presents cost and complexity issues for organisations, especially those who have spent large CAPEX resource on on-premise elements as they migrate to and integrate with the cloud.

Trust has also been a key barrier. Every organisation is nervous about the privacy of their network and even allowing small parts of their data to be stored in the 'unknown' cloud can cause great concern.

When it comes to the technical side of cloud networks, organisations want to make sure there is no drop in network performance – which has caused hesitancy with the move to the cloud.



RUCKUS Networks delivers purpose-driven networks that can effectively keep up in the tough environments of the industries we serve."

Extensive due-diligence is being completed by organisations on how cloud computing complies with their performance standards. Linked to this is a fear of running out of resources and not being able to scale cloud resources as an organisation grows.

RUCKUS Networks has worked hard with organisations across the Middle East to overcome these challenges, with our state-of-the-art cloud SaaS solutions.

The simplicity and user-friendliness of RUCKUS Cloud makes it easy for organisations to adapt to cloud transformation and RUCKUS Cloud Security

makes it an even more compelling solution. Moreover, RUCKUS Cloud can integrate with a wide range of products and services, allowing for BYOD services and much more.

RUCKUS Cloud offers a comprehensive list of features so that organisations do not have to compromise on the features and functionalities they currently use.

In fact, the cloud is just a SaaS overlay to the existing network – where KPIs can be preserved and therefore it represents an attractive option for customers looking to supplement previous investments already made in their network.

Significant scalability is offered by RUCKUS Cloud with full support of multi-venue/tenancy features for larger customers and migration to RUCKUS Cloud is relatively straight-forward and doesn't require a replacement of any edge device.

In fact, RUCKUS offers a very attractive value proposition by being able to keep the customer's existing setup intact while only adding the RUCKUS Cloud subscription as an overlaid subscription service.

RUCKUS Cloud combines unique features including single pane of glass for management, AI-based analytics, and security. This is why the solution continues to serve a wide range of customers, delivering excellent performance and functionality to their RUCKUS Cloud-based Wi-Fi, wired and IoT networks.

You have an incredibly broad portfolio of solutions and products that is enabling you to shape the future roadmap and direction of the wireless industry globally. However, what do you think it is about RUCKUS that ultimately differentiates you from your market rivals?

Our customers know RUCKUS Networks for our excellence in Wi-Fi and switching. We continue to push boundaries on Wi-Fi with Wi-Fi 6E, and Wi-Fi 7 in the near future.

From a multi-gig switch perspective, we are bringing in innovation with 100G and 400G.

To cater to the needs of distributed enterprises, we are innovating at the edge with a very robust edge computing solution with edge appliances at the heart of it.

We are delivering a next generation network with converged technologies that brings LTE/5G, CBRS, Wi-Fi, IoT security and AI based analytics all under one roof.

Thanks to the broad CommScope portfolio, we can offer a mix and match of the right kind of technologies, including:

- Indoor and outdoor coverage for small to very large campuses by deploying right kind and combination of Wi-Fi, IoT radios, CBRS and 5G radios
- Autonomous, on-premises wireless networks to centralised or hybrid cloud architectures
- AI/ML-driven analytics to enable rich data insights and digital automation

CommScope is a one-stop provider for a powerful end-to-end enterprise network.

Can you tell us more about the importance of your distribution partners here in the Middle East?

RUCKUS distributors are a very important element of the overall value proposition to customers due to the fact that the sale of RUCKUS products and solutions is conducted predominantly through the channel business model.

Our distributors act as essential components of the supply chain between us as a manufacturer and channel partners and customers and they play a critical role in monitoring and ensuring strong customer relationships.

We believe that distribution goes beyond a connected group of transportation systems and storage services. When we talk about distribution, we focus on value-added distribution, where we try to ensure we engage distributors that go beyond mere box shifting to include some or all of the following services.

- Equipment pre-configuration on behalf of partners
- Network design
- Finance as a service approach
- Support specialisation, etc.

Furthermore, we believe that the success of RUCKUS Network goes hand-in-hand with the performance of our distribution channel. If there are issues in the distribution chain, it can affect deliveries and partners and customers can lose trust.

A comprehensive distribution strategy that includes sufficient stocking levels must be crafted and developed to ensure the movement of RUCKUS products through the various distributors, partners and system integrators until it reaches the end customer.

Finally, we believe that distribution constitutes our primary channel to service the market and our distributors are responsible for fostering critical relationships with the various partners that can be involved in the sale of RUCKUS product.

Without a proper, well-established distribution channel, we cannot ensure the best possible service to the market. 



Our customers know RUCKUS Networks for our excellence in Wi-Fi and switching."

ON THE EDGE

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Wilfredo Sotolongo**, Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer at Infrastructure Solutions Group, Lenovo, to find out the trends driving new innovations within the datacentre space – and the impact of Lenovo’s first in-house manufacturing facility in Hungary.

Wilfredo Sotolongo has enjoyed a distinguished career in the IT ecosystem, one that has spanned two decades.

Prior to joining Lenovo in 2015, Sotolongo enjoyed huge success at IBM, where he held several senior executive roles.

During his time at Lenovo, he has only served to further reinforce his standing as a global leader in the IT industry.

Lenovo is best-known for the being the No.1 PC provider in the world, but the company’s chairman Yang Yuanqing has made no secret of his ambitions to make Lenovo the world’s No.1 infrastructure solutions provider.

Sotolongo has been tasked with the responsibility of executing that vision in his role as SVP and CCO of Lenovo ISG.

In a candid interview with CNME, we began the conversation by examining trends that are driving new investments in the datacentre space.

“Luckily for us, our customers are continuing to invest heavily into our technology, primarily, because they see the technologies within the datacentres as real enablers for digital transformation. Unlike

other parts of the technology ecosystem, we are still seeing a very robust investment cycle in the datacentre space. The datacentre sector was projected to grow by 20%, but it has grown by 27% globally, which is just phenomenal growth for the industry and it is hugely encouraging for us,” said Sotolongo.

In terms of the areas of investment that are important for Lenovo, he highlighted edge and AI.

“I think the first key area of investment for us is edge. We are seeing customers moving away from prototyping to the production of edge use-cases, and it’s not the traditional edge use-cases, instead it is edge use-cases that incorporate some form of AI. We are witnessing that globally in the retail and manufacturing industries. There are also huge opportunities in video, but that depends on the philosophy of a country as

that can vary, but we do see tremendous optics in edge use-cases,” said Sotolongo.

The dynamic Lenovo executive said that the second area of investment is intertwined and related, but is not just on the edge, and that’s AI.

“At Lenovo, we now see AI being embedded in to all applications, whether that’s voice recognition, video, or complex algorithms to identify trends in complex data. The first people that started trying this out were in academia and research environments, but now it’s going into production mode. A perfect illustration of this was a conversation we just had with the Road and Transport Authority (RTA) in Dubai, the vast part of the conversation was focused almost completely on how they could apply AI to improve their services for passengers in Dubai. So, in summary, these are the two areas of investment that I see growing exponentially in the datacentre space over the next 12 months,” said Sotolongo.

Sotolongo conceded that the company is primarily known as a hardware player, and stressed that they are enabling AI across all primary layers of their technology. He highlighted



At Lenovo, we now see AI being embedded in to all applications, whether that’s voice recognition, video, or complex algorithms to identify trends in complex data.”



that they are now developing AI hardware capabilities into all of their platforms.

“We are developing AI hardware capabilities in all our platforms, so our phone and PC businesses are now incorporating AI capabilities, and that includes niche speciality devices that are purpose built for AI use-cases such as AR and VR glasses. In addition to this, our datacentre business is now incorporating specialised technology like GPUs that enable AI use-cases, and within that business we are enabling specialised adapters in all form factors,” said Sotolongo.

He also disclosed that Lenovo are now building the industry standard frameworks for AI.

“We are building unique use-cases where we can help customers who have come to us and asked us to help them implement an AR application for the maintenance of a jet engine for example. We’re beginning to develop unique use-cases in specific industries for specific customers as part of our services businesses – and we have a very strong focus around the world in terms of expanding our services business,” said Sotolongo.

Interestingly, the Lenovo ISG SVP and CCO further disclosed that the company is also now investing significantly into developing their own algorithms, which he conceded is largely unknown to most.

“We are now also investing in developing algorithms. We are doing the base infrastructure layer, and we are adding components to the AI frameworks that are standard in the industry. The algorithm work we are doing is not visible, it’s behind the scenes, so it’s not visible. There are very few people as a result that know we are doing algorithm



development,” said Sotolongo.

He also added that Lenovo are currently evaluating driving the algorithm work into specific manufacturing use-cases.

“We want to develop algorithms to analyse manufacturing data and to detect trends. We’re doing this to improve the quality of our products, it’s for our own consumption, so we don’t know whether we are going to put this out as products in the marketplace or not, but it is something we are evaluating closely,” said Sotolongo.

Earlier this year, Lenovo opened its first in-house

manufacturing facility in Hungary.

Sotolongo said the decision to open this facility was driven by a desire to have more control and autonomy over the manufacturing of their end-user products.

“Historically, Lenovo has adopted a hybrid model when it comes to manufacturing. Traditionally, half of our production is built in Lenovo factories, and the other half of our production is built in partner factories. However, most of our competitors have around 90% of their production built in partner factories. In 2019, we made the decision to bring more and more of our manufacturing capacity inhouse, so we have better control and autonomy over the control and supply. We were depending on one of the largest OEM manufacturers in Hungary, to build all of our datacentre and workstation products, and they were doing an excellent job, but frankly we saw an excellent opportunity for us to dramatically increase our manufacturing capacity, whilst reducing our manufacturing overheads and costs,” said Sotolongo.

Lenovo announced plans to open this manufacturing facility in 2019, but the pandemic has made it a rather protracted and at times painful process.

However, Sotolongo said that the factory is already delivering on its promises when it comes to output.



Historically, Lenovo has adopted a hybrid model when it comes to manufacturing.”

“It has taken us 3 years to get to where we are, so it has been a bit of a painful process, but there was a pandemic in the middle of it, but the facility is now almost at full capacity. The factory is producing all of our datacentre and workstation products for all of EMEA, and occasionally we ship to the Americas, and that’s the great thing about having your own factory, as it gives you the flexibility to do things like that. The factory is delivering on its promise, as we are now producing two times in terms of volume of what we could do in our partner factory. Now, currently the costs are very similar, but as we fine tune our manufacturing processes, we expect our costs to drop significantly,” said Sotolongo.

The Metaverse is consuming a lot of column inches, and was a hot topic at GITEX in October. Sotolongo explained that Lenovo is committed to providing the ‘building blocks’ required to bring the Metaverse use-cases to real life.

“In terms of the Metaverse, we are primarily providing the components needed for that world. I’m talking about the subsets of technology that you need to build these use-cases. We are providing the compute, the virtualisation technology, and the end-point devices, and we are essentially toying with the software technology that is required, and that runs on our systems to enable it. We are working with companies like NVIDIA – providing them with the fundamental building blocks that are needed to accelerate and drive the vision of the Metaverse,” concluded Sotolongo. CRM

VMware

CLOUD SMART

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Ahmed Auda**, Vice President and General Manager of VMware Middle East, Turkey & North Africa, and Kit Colbert, CTO at VMware onsite at VMware Explore 2022 in Barcelona, to find out how the cloud computing behemoth is helping their global band of customers become 'cloud smart' in the new digital economy.

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The Fira Gran Via in the stunning city of Barcelona was the venue for VMware Explore 2022.

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure exclusive interviews with senior VMware executives Ahmed Auda and Kit Colbert to learn how the company has positioned itself as the go-to market player for enterprises looking for a multi-cloud experience.

It's broad portfolio of solutions tailor and cater to the needs of a demanding customer base that are seeking to find a strategic partner that removes the complexity associated with a cloud transformation journey.

Ahmed Auda has been driving VMware's consistent growth in the Middle East region, and he stated that digital enablement and multi-cloud are intrinsically interlinked.

"We are the only vendor that is truly geared to enable that multi-cloud experience that businesses are demanding in the current digital economy. At VMware, it is our belief that multi-cloud is a 'digital enabler'. We know over the last few years there has been an exponential increase in digitalisation across all key industry verticals, and multi-cloud has been a real enabler for this digital transformation. Customers want choices, flexibility and autonomy – and multi-cloud facilitates this demand, whilst VMware also helps businesses figure out and determine what workloads work for their operations and business model," said Auda.

Data sovereignty has been somewhat of a sticky subject in

the Middle East, but VMware's ability to provide customers in the region with access to their sovereign cloud offering has given them a real edge.

"Our ability to be able to offer sovereign cloud has provided us with a huge market advantage, as we continue to look to help our customers adopt and access the wide-ranging advantages of multi-cloud that exist across the board. It is important to maintain the need to keep our clients' data secure and sovereign in each market that those clients serve," said Auda.

Staying on the topic of data sovereignty, Auda further disclosed that VMware are driving a new initiative with 25 partners globally.

"It's our job to work closely with them to make sure they adopt the sovereign cloud guidelines and comply with the directions provided. The ability to provide data sovereign solutions is one of the many advantages our broad portfolio of solutions provides as part of our overall multi-cloud strategy," said Auda.

A strong theme that was prevalent throughout VMware Explore 2022 was the necessity to be 'cloud smart' and to remove the cloud chaos engulfing many companies on their cloud transformation journey.

When asked what it meant to be cloud smart, Auda began by highlighting the challenges that customers are facing on their journey to the multi-cloud.

"One of the biggest challenges we see is the skills gap, or the knowledge gap as some would label. The talent shortage significantly impacts how quickly enterprises can absorb and implement the multi-cloud strategy that they want to adopt. Another key issue is the volume and complexity of the applications that they need to migrate to be able to leverage a multi-cloud approach. However, once you run these applications after they have been migrated, the next challenges comes' in the form of how you can do it in a secure and seamless fashion across multiple clouds," said Auda.

In terms of what he believed differentiated VMware from other market players in terms of helping businesses become cloud smart, Auda claimed it was their ability to deliver a consistent and unified experience that is a telling factor in their success.

"By offering a consistent and cross-cloud platform to manage workloads easily across different cloud environments is a key differentiator for us, and we allow our customers to use the same expertise and skills that they have already invested in on their journey to the cloud. That unified experience on one platform to manage your workloads across multiple clouds is key in the current landscape and it is the perfectly illustration of being 'cloud smart'," said Auda.

He also highlighted their



We are the only vendor that is truly geared to enable that multi-cloud experience that businesses are demanding in the current digital economy."



consultative approach as another key factor in their ability to deliver that seamless multi-cloud experience.

“We also provide guidance and enablement to our customers in terms of helping them understand when to adopt the workload that we think best fits their needs and requirements. We have the ability to expand quickly

with a network of partners across different markets, who have the capability to build on the investments that they have already made in terms of offering a public cloud to the local market,” said Auda.

Kit Colbert is the CTO of VMware, and is one of the most highly regarded and respected thought leaders in the IT industry.

When quizzed on what the key characteristics are for enterprises searching to become ‘cloud smart’ – Colbert said from a VMware perspective being cloud smart was essentially choosing where you want to run an application.

“Technology is not holding businesses back, instead it is allowing them to really accelerate the choice of where



they want run an application. I think in order to fully realise that vision we are going to need to enable these higher-level services available on-prem, in sovereign clouds, on the edge, or wherever a customer wants to run an application,” said Colbert.

During his keynote address at VMware Explore 2022, Colbert highlighted how Machine Learning was going to continue

to play a central role in the future innovation of VMware’s product portfolio.

He highlighted three ways that they are supporting machine learning today.

“Firstly, we have products that support customers running their own ML. We have our own products that have ML built into them to make them smarter, and we also look at how we use ML internally to optimise our business operations. The first category is really all about what capabilities do we provide that enables customers to create ML solutions internally? We have partnered heavily with NVIDIA, and we have done a lot to virtualise the GPU with them that makes it much easier for customers to be able to run ML-based workloads,” said Colbert.

Colbert then highlighted the impact of vRealize AI which has been developed to make their own products smarter.



From my experience Broadcom is highly focused on driving innovation, and I think one of the primary reasons Broadcom is acquiring VMware is because of the fact we do a lot of innovation.”

“We are starting to enrich a lot of our products with ML, and the quintessential example of that would be our vRealize AI product – which is essentially focused on enabling the system to auto configure itself. What we have seen is if you do properly optimise vRealize AI for your workloads then you can get dramatic performance increases and operational efficiency,” said Colbert.

In terms of how they use ML to optimise their internal business operations, Colbert pointed to its VMware Cloud offering on AWS.

“We had to work with AWS on VMC and tell them in advance how many servers we think we are going to need based on our customer demand. We use various ML algorithms to predict and understand the aggregate server usage to tell AWS what we are going to need, and that has enabled and empowered us to be far more efficient as a result of that process,” said Colbert.

Broadcom has acquired VMware for \$61bn, and Colbert believes that it is a really good fit from an innovation perspective and pointed to Broadcom’s track record of building long-term successful businesses to alleviate fears of the company being broken up.

The acquisition process is obviously ongoing, and we know these acquisition deals take time, but it has been a really good process in the sense that it has allowed us to educate Broadcom on how we do things. From my experience Broadcom is highly focused on driving innovation, and I think one of the primary reasons Broadcom is acquiring VMware is because of the fact we do a lot of innovation. It’s our observation that given the competitiveness in the market in which we live in we have to continue to innovate, and my experience of Broadcom CEO Hock Tan is that he is very committed to building long-term successful businesses, so we are very excited about the acquisition,” concluded Colbert. 

Endava MENA

INTELLIGENT DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Nick Curran**, Head of Endava MENA, to find out more about how the global leader in intelligent automation is harnessing the capabilities of their platforms to help industries like banking and retail to completely transform in the new digital economy.

Endava has cultivated a reputation for being a global leader when it comes to intelligent automation services since its inception in 2000. Why have you decided that NOW was the right time for you to expand your services and operations and enter into the Middle East market?

Despite launching in the Middle East earlier this year, we've been working with organisations in the payments, banking and retail space for almost 4 years now.

A combination of the UAE's largest economic expansion in 11 years, a dynamic and vibrant private sector, and the government's vision and leadership, means we couldn't have hoped for a better moment to announce the establishment of our regional headquarters in Dubai.

Our strong global engineering footprint and proven expertise across customer-centric industries such as payments, banking, and retail can yield a significant difference for businesses in the Middle East market as they plan to face further disruption, strengthen their collaboration with existing clients, acquire new ones and enter new geographies.

We look forward to contributing to the growth of the region by supporting local digital economy initiatives and helping businesses to thrive by partnering with them to define, design, and execute against their digital acceleration journeys.

As aforementioned above, Endava has enjoyed huge success globally, signified by the fact the company went public on the New York stock exchange in 2018. However, can you tell our readers more about your capabilities – and what differentiates the company from its market rivals?

Endava is reimagining the relationship between people and technology. We have helped some of the world's leading payments, financial services, telecommunications, media, technology, consumer products, retail, mobility, and healthcare companies accelerate their ability to take advantage of new business models and market opportunities.

We created a technology company based on a simple philosophy, focused on helping people succeed – the people who work for us, the people who engage with us, and the people who use the systems and applications we design, build, and operate.

From the very beginning, we set up our business to accelerate the technology revolution, basing our user-centric approach around agile multidisciplinary teams that blend in-depth knowledge of the industries that we work in with the strategy expertise of a consultancy, the user-experience capabilities of an agency and the engineering excellence of an IT services company.

This combination of strategy, experience and engineering drives change for our clients and provides exciting and challenging careers for our people.



We want to leverage our global lessons learnt and work with local governments and local universities to help attract, retain, and develop top technology talent.”

We are passionate about understanding how and why users want to engage with a product or service, and we put that knowledge at the centre of everything we build to enable users to get the most out of their interaction with a business, and their product or service.

By ideating and delivering dynamic platforms and intelligent digital experiences, we help our clients fuel the rapid, ongoing transformation of their business.

By leveraging next-generation technologies, our agile, multi-disciplinary teams provide a combination of product & technology strategies, intelligent experiences, and world class engineering to help our clients become more engaging, responsive, and efficient.

Can you explain to our readers what is 'digital acceleration', what are its fundamental characteristics – and how does it help enterprises become more cost-efficient and productive?

While the term digital transformation is more prevalent in the current business scenario, it transformation implies a clear and finite ending, yet companies' digital journeys never end.

New technologies, changing business conditions, and competitive pressures mean that companies must always be moving forward and changing their digital properties.

In the current economic landscape, businesses need to constantly re-examine, update, and improve the use of technologies to solve business challenges. This is why companies should approach their use of technologies as not a one-and-done transformation process, but an ongoing, continuous process, better described as digital acceleration.

Organisations no longer have the technology blank canvas that “transformation” suggests. Market conditions have clearly accelerated and pushed new adoption in all areas.

So, it’s important that businesses are able to acknowledge and build upon those choices, get the most out of those investments, refine them, and iteratively improve.

This also allows them to innovate more freely and respond in a more agile way to the market and changing customer demands.

Using an iterative approach to keep up-to-date with the latest trends and market conditions acts as a safeguard, as it compels organizations to constantly re-evaluate their current approach and technology capabilities, matching it periodically to meet their goals.

This reduces business risks associated with digital adoption, and both the public and private sectors will be able to analyse, acknowledge and fine-tune their digital strategy upon the new trends, actions, attitudes

and plans with future-proofing in mind.

Ultimately, the path forward in digital adoption is acceleration, not transformation.

Employing such a mindset and strategy will free up business resources for more agile innovation and reaction, deliberately driving progress that is far more meaningful and purposeful.

Those who embrace this approach should find themselves being able to improve their digital properties on an ongoing basis rapidly. Those who don’t risk finding themselves left behind their faster, more digital-savvy competitors.



Endava is reimagining the relationship between people and technology.”



It has been well documented that in the IT stratosphere there is a huge talent acquisition problem across the industry on a global scale. Can you explain to us how Endava plans on leveraging their knowledge and expertise to help enterprises overcome these challenges?

Talent acquisition and training is a significant priority in the region. This can be illustrated by the launch of the UAE Strategy for Talent Attraction and Retention earlier this year which aims to boost the country’s attractiveness to foreign investments and talents.

Moreover, one of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Saudi Vision 2030 is for 40% of the workforce to be trained in basic data and AI skills. A recent report found that more than four in 10 employers in the UAE said applicants lacked crucial work experience and necessary technical skills.

ME businesses have a huge opportunity to bolster their international competitiveness, but if innovation is the engine for competitiveness, then people are its fuel. The challenge lies in having the capabilities, the people power, available to create a platform for innovation.

As regional business seek to address attrition rates, they seek a strategic partner that not only understands their culture but can also demonstrate proven leadership and strong retention levels within their own business.

There is a real benefit to having a partner who can both develop sophisticated digital tools to support and enhance

employee experiences and understand industry-specific workforce issues.

One of the ways we help businesses is that we enable them to better leverage data and connectivity internally to support employee retention, growth, and opportunities, and minimise the strains that have brought on The Great Resignation.

By continuing to reimagine the relationship between people and technology and developing people-centric systems for innovative HR that allows them to keep up with the changing pace of the employment market, people and businesses we enable them to work smarter, not harder.

We want to leverage our global lessons learnt and work with local governments and local universities to help attract, retain, and develop top technology talent.

Our goal is to give talented individuals an opportunity to work in careers that are driving digital change in the region.

We are hearing more and more about new concepts like the Metaverse, but in terms of use-cases, there doesn't seem to be anything concrete established. From your perspective, what is your view on it?

Dubai is embarking on a journey to become a global metaverse hub. There are many indications that it is good for many companies and organizations to already start thinking about, setting up a strategy, and planning for what and how they want to use the metaverse to their advantage.

In terms of how enterprises

should approach the metaverse, the key is to look at all available technologies – such as VR, AR, real-time 3D, AI, and cloud-based – not in isolation but as an architecture, and think about how to make the best use of them. To do so, companies need to consider which scenarios are appropriate for their particular business, products, or services and how they can be implemented.

Companies seeking to understand if and how they should integrate the metaverse into their digital strategy should start by understanding the trends that have led to today's metaverse moment.

As they determine if they should launch a new metaverse initiative, companies should ask themselves three questions

- 1) does the metaverse initiative address their business need?
- 2) does it generate data that they can use to improve business outcome?
- 3) does it deliver an experience that is user-centered?

Since most company operations are already digital in some capacity, accommodating the metaverse may not require a fundamental reorganization of the business. Most businesses can attempt to incorporate the metaverse into their current digital strategy by implementing an on-going, iterative digital acceleration approach.

This approach reflects that a company's business is likely already at least partially digital, and thus does not need to be fundamentally transformed to accommodate the metaverse.

What are your main goals and objectives over the next 12 months in the Middle East?

Due to its dynamic environment and insatiable appetite for new technology and digitisation, Endava is committed to continued growth in the Middle East.

We have built on our 22 years of experience and legacy team of the industry's best engineers to service the growing number of Middle Eastern companies that see the value in providing their employees and customers with access to the latest innovations in information and communication technology. Our mission is to provide companies of all sizes with the means to take advantage of the evolving digital business landscape in the Middle East in order to accelerate their own innovation, growth, and productivity.

We help companies in the Middle East reinvent their processes, cultures, and technologies to become more adaptable and responsive to market shifts.

We are committed to expanding our partner ecosystem to provide our customers with access to the best talent in the business as well as the most cutting-edge innovations in technology. This is especially true in the rapidly evolving payments and financial services sectors. In 2023 and beyond, Endava will expand its footprint in the Middle East by investing in our people, strengthening our client relationships, and expanding access to our world-class engineering and strategic consultancy services. 

CISCO

BACK TO THE FUTURE

CNME Editor Mark Forker travelled to Oslo to find out how IT behemoth **Cisco** is leveraging their extensive product portfolio to really reimagine the way we work in our new 'work from anywhere' world.



Cisco are a company that since its very inception have pushed the boundaries as to what's possible, especially when it comes to driving and delivering new innovations and technologies that are fundamentally designed to inspire and transform the lives of the end-users accessing their products and devices.

During a press trip to Oslo with Cisco, I was given the opportunity to take a look into the future to see how the company is positioning itself to be a champion and pioneer of hybrid working.

It's rather apt that I reference the word future, considering the first stop on our media tour was to a workspace hub called REBEL, that has been

specifically established in a bid to foster and cultivate an environment that allows innovation to flourish across Norway.

However, what was really unique about REBEL, was the fact that the design and layout of the building appeared to be heavily inspired by the 80s sci-classic 'Back to the Future'.

Now, considering Marty McFly was a childhood hero, and this movie was one of my favourite films growing up, the press tour had got off to a 'flying start' from my perspective.

Upon our arrival at the REBEL HQ in Oslo, we were greeted by the company's CEO and Chief Rebel, Peter Jetzel.

His sheer energy, drive, passion and enthusiasm for what REBEL is aiming to achieve with its futuristic and collaborative hybrid workspace was infectious.

During our tour of the REBEL HQ, Jetzel, a former Microsoft executive kept reiterating that the facility is designed to be a 'knowledge hub'.

He explained how REBEL is bringing thought leaders from various different industry verticals across the country under the one roof to share knowledge.

"Our mission with REBEL is to provide a platform for all stakeholders in the IT and technology ecosystem to come here and exchange knowledge. This is a knowledge hub. We want them to engage, collaborate, network, and ultimately be creative to solve the issues and challenges that only technology can resolve," said Jetzel.

REBEL has been such a success that companies that would typically compete against each other in the same market come together to share knowledge and ideas.

“We see market cannibalisation all the time on a global scale it’s part and parcel of capitalism. However, within this environment, I have witnessed so many companies that are competing directly against each other in the market exchanging ideas and knowledge. They are not afraid of the other company stealing their idea, or something like that, now granted they won’t perhaps tell them everyone they are doing, but there is a lot of transparency and trust. They are cognisant of the fact that by sharing information and knowledge with each other, regarding whether a specific project, or solution was feasible or not is in the best interests of everyone, as all this does is serve to fuel new innovations being developed within a quicker timeframe,” said Jetzel.

Many businesses leaders have bemoaned the fact that despite the many benefits of hybrid working, it’s hard to be innovative and creative as a team when working remotely.

There have been a number of organisations that have also expressed concerns that their ‘culture’ is being eroded, especially when it comes to the onboarding of new employees.

When asked was REBEL able to bridge the current gap that exists in our new world of work, Jetzel was emphatic in his response.

“You can’t schedule innovation for a Tuesday

morning, it doesn’t work like that. It has to happen organically, and it can be hard for companies to retain that sort of innovation and brainstorming that is required in a problem-solving industry like IT and technology.

However, this is what REBEL has been designed for. We have David Bowie, Doctor Who and the Back to the Future themed workspaces in order to create a completely type of work environment that is



Hybrid work has certainly complicated manageability, but if we leverage the right technology with the right mindset then we can absolutely make hybrid work better than how we worked before.”

absolutely geared to fuel ideas and creativity. That’s why so many companies from all over Norway are becoming part of REBEL, because they can use it as a space to be innovative and together, we are reimagining the future,” said Jetzel.

We were then whisked off to the Cisco offices in the heart of Oslo for a number of product demonstrations and keynote presentations.

It was incredibly cool to hear about Cisco’s new office in New York, and their plans for something similar in Paris in 2023.

We were treated to a pretty mind-blowing presentation from Jono Luk, Vice President of Product Management at Cisco, who outlined how Cisco’s technology is helping NASA with their Moon expeditions, the first of which

is expected to happen in 2025.

However, from my perspective the presentation from Snorre Kjesbu, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Cisco Collaboration Devices really set the tone when it comes to the both the current challenges of hybrid work and its future.

We know that the global COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally realtered the way we work, but interestingly, Kjesbu was adamant that hybrid working, despite its promises of flexibility and autonomy, is actually harder than the way we worked before.

“I think it’s important to establish that hybrid working is both very different and harder than how we worked before. Let’s examine some of the changes that have happened to our work norms over the last few years, take the office for example, it was at its core a place you went to work, now it’s a place to meet, network and collaborate. Working from home was a rare exception, but now it is an extension of the corporate office. Video and digital collaboration tools were what would be labelled as a ‘nice to have’ – however, now they are no longer a luxury resource, but instead a fundamental requirement. Finally, everyone talks about the importance of culture, but culture in its current form is quite simply all about retaining and keeping your talent,” said Kjesbu.

Kjesbu stressed the importance of reimagining workplaces and reimagining hybrid work.



“Some businesses feel that their culture is under threat because a lot of staff are working remotely, many have sort of compelled them to come in a couple of days a week, in the hope they will want to come in to the office more regularly. However, the issue has been that when employees have gone back to the office, they are doing the exact same thing they could do at home, so you can understand the contempt employees would have for that. They may spend an hour commuting to the office and home again, but they are not doing anything different in the office than they would be doing at home, so it really is so important we reimagine hybrid working to strike the right balance, and

foster an environment that helps companies be creative and innovative when they need to be,” said Kjesbu.

Kjesbu also disclosed some pretty startling statistics, one of which that in the next few years 98% of meetings will have at least one remote participant, and incredibly 6.2% of meeting rooms and classrooms are video-enabled.

He believes that collaboration in any location is key to delivering ‘consistent experiences across workspaces’ and said the future is very much multi-platform.

“In the current climate we have shared office space, home office, shared home office, conference rooms, hot desks, and the ability to work from anywhere. The key element

in all of this is ensuring you are delivering a consistent experience regardless of which setting you are working and operating from. That is key. To achieve this, businesses need to adopt a multi-platform environment, it is critical. 85% of organisation support 2 or more meeting platforms, and that is essential for achieving consistency in terms of experiences. Hybrid work has certainly complicated manageability, but if we leverage the right technology with the right mindset then we can absolutely make hybrid work better than how we worked before, and at Cisco, we believe our portfolio of solutions and products are going to enable this to be a reality,” said Kjesbu. **cmms**



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PLUG
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MODE



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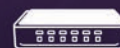
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DREAM 'TEAM'

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure exclusive interviews with **Robert Koval, Paul Boyle, and Helen Burke**, the leadership team of Teambase, to find out how the IT software company is leveraging their technology to equip brokers with the tools they need to adapt to the transformation demands of the burgeoning InsurTech space across the Middle East.

In 1999, just before the end of the last millennium, H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, unveiled his aspirations and ambitions to make Dubai a hub for global technology and innovation through the conception of Dubai Internet City.

It attracted some of the world's largest tech and IT companies to come to the Middle East, offering them long-term leases, full ownership and quick access to government services.

There have been very few people that have been lucky enough to be in UAE at the end of the last century, to not only witness the start of the UAE's phenomenal and seismic transformation into one of the most technologically-advanced countries in the world, but also play their part in helping the nation become a hotbed for global innovation.

However, there's always a few exceptions to the rule, and one of them is Robert Koval, the charismatic and dynamic CEO and Founder of Teambase, who also moved to Dubai back in 2000.

Microsoft were one of the tech behemoths who were lured



Robert Koval, CEO and Founder of Teambase.

to Dubai in 2000, and Koval was a key component in their early success across the region.

However, 10 years ago, Koval decided that the time had come to set-up his own company and as a result Teambase was formed.

As Koval pointed out, the UAE had a reputation for 'importing' technology, and that was something he wanted to change, and was one of the driving factors in his decision to start Teambase.

"I was always passionate about not only the implementation side of things, but also the creativity. During my role at Microsoft, I became very close to the insurance industry. I worked on other industry verticals with Microsoft, but I got to really understand the complex nature of the insurance industry – and I really wanted to create something that made a difference. I think that's it fair to say that across the Middle East, and certainly 10 years ago, the region was very much viewed as being technology importers. The technology was brought over from the US, or different parts of the world, and it was subsequently adopted, but it didn't always work because of some of the regional differences that existed. However, I was driven, not only to prove to myself, but to create something in this part of the world to illustrate that the talent is here in this region, and that we can build our own technology to help businesses transform," said Koval.

Koval conceded that the landscape has certainly changed when it comes to the homemade innovation coming out of the region, which has accelerated exponentially in the last decade.

"If you look at how things are changing within the start-up ecosystem across the UAE, then you can see a huge shift. If you look at the sheer volume of innovation coming out of the region then you can see that the tide is turning, and I'd like to think that we've played a

small part in fostering a culture and environment that inspired others to create. In summary, the two factors that inspired the inception of Teambase, was my intrinsic understanding of the challenges within the insurance sector, and my desire to create something completely new,” said Koval.

Digital transformation has been a recurring theme across multiple global industries over the last 5 years, but Koval stressed that amidst the backdrop of the current landscape, it remains very relevant.

“Digital transformation has been an overused term over the last few years, especially since the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and it has different meanings for different businesses, but I still think it’s very valid. Primarily, because the fact remains that in order for different organisations to remain competitive in our new digital economy, then they quite simply have to embrace change, and transform to retain operational efficiency – and in order to do that, they need technology,” said Koval.

It’s not easy to start a company in any global market – but given the ultra-competitive nature of the technology and IT ecosystem in the UAE, the success Teambase has achieved since its creation has been nothing short of astounding.

Koval outlined the company’s core principles, and said that he believes that in the new digital economy, every company regardless of their sector is at heart a ‘software company’.

“Our core mission statement is to advise and help organisations accelerate

their transformation through the implementation of digital technologies to become more efficient, profitable, customer-centric and innovative. Those are the core beliefs and guiding principles we have as a company. We strongly believe that any organisation, regardless of their industry vertical needs to leverage technology to either be able to attract customers, or innovate. I also truly believe that in the current climate every single organisation at its heart is a software company,” said Koval.

In addition to its abilities to deliver top-class technology,

according to Koval, Teambase also sees itself as a consultant.

“Fundamentally, what we want to do is advise our customers, and leverage our expertise through our knowledge of their industry, because I think there are a lot of providers out there who are fairly generic, and I think that is very often where the disconnect comes from. Organisations that understand the industry, and the challenges within it, and that can bring the IT and technology expertise to the table are the ones that can truly make a difference – and I think we fall firmly into that category,” said Koval.

Paul Boyle, is the Director of Business Development at Teambase, and he joined the company from Ireland in 2017.

Prior to joining Teambase, Boyle worked for Pramerica, a subsidiary of US giant Prudential, and has over 10 years of experience as an IT professional.

He kickstarted our conversation by highlighting the similarities between the emerging InsurTech space, and that of the FinTech industry 10-15 years ago.

Boyle explained how the insurance industry is seen as being ‘risk averse’ – and that naturally means many of the market players are slow to adopt nascent technologies that are needed to transform.

“If you take a look back to about 10-15 years ago, then the FinTech space was where the InsurTech space is now. An analogy we regularly use when we are speaking to prospective clients is the fact that internet banking became a huge concept around 10 years ago, prior to that nobody had internet banking in place, it



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Paul Boyle, is the Director of Business Development at Teambase.

hadn't become conceptualised. However, financial technology companies identified a gap, and adopted the technology they needed to implement to transform. I think it's fair to say that the InsurTech space still struggles with technology, but there has been somewhat of a shift, and more and more brokers, insurers, and clients are becoming digitalised, and if you don't embrace digitalisation then quite simply, you're going to be left behind," said Boyle.

As aforementioned above, Teambase has been a huge success since its inception, and the engine driving their growth is their BenefitNet solution, which Boyle described as their flagship product.

"We see BenefitNet as a key introductory platform for brokers to bridge the gap that currently exists in insurance brokerage and help them better manage their clients. BenefitNet is our flagship product, and it doesn't really have any direct market competition because it is a centralised client software. Essentially, it's a broker platform that automates key workflows for brokers, and that is ultimately empowering them to be more digital, streamlined and efficient," said Boyle.

Another key feature of the platform is its ability to connect brokers with insurers directly, something that traditionally, and still to this day is a common problem within the InsurTech industry.

"It's a one-stop shop for brokers to handle all their clients service needs. However, BenefitNet also allows them to speak to the insurers through the application, and that

provides them with a direct link to the insurers, which is key, as traditionally that process would be disjointed, or fragmented. A lot of brokerages remain disjointed, and don't have that direct link with insurers, but we believe we can leverage the capabilities of our BenefitNet platform and bring brokers into the new digital economy," said Boyle.

Boyle added that Teambase are not just a company that provides software technology, instead he stressed that they are a 'strategic partner' for their clients, and pointed to their lengthy partnership with Al Futtaim Willis as an illustration of that.

"Look there is a lot of software out there, and in the InsurTech sphere a lot of companies are providing software, but at the end of the day, software can be built. We firmly see ourselves as a strategic partner to our clients. For example, we have worked with Al Futtaim Willis for 9 years, and we can customise our solution based on their requirements, and ensure that they meet their market needs through our application. That customer-centricity we can deliver is a key market differentiator for us, and our ability to do that with Al Futtaim Willis, is ultimately why we have enjoyed such a long and fruitful working relationship with them. We strive to make our clients happy and as I have already said, we see ourselves as a strategic partner and deliver an end-to-end service for them," said Boyle.

Helen Burke is the Chief Operating Officer at Teambase, and joined the company in 2014.

As we know, hybrid work has become the norm, regardless of what industry vertical you operate in, and Burke is example of that, having relocated back to Ireland in July 2021, where she now performs her duties for Teambase remotely.

Remaining on the capabilities provided by the BenefitNet platform, Burke highlighted the importance of the 'customer experience' element that it delivers to its users.

"The customer user experience is absolutely paramount in the new digital economy that we find ourselves in. It is imperative that the product, or platform that you're bringing to market is enhancing the customer journey, and ultimately ensures that it is easy to use, simple, and as automated as possible, and that's what we do here at Teambase. If you're not automating, or adding value to manual processes, then bluntly put, your product is not fit for purpose," said Burke.

Burke reinforced the company's customer-centricity by reiterating that it is their mission to ensure that all stakeholders accessing their platform enjoy a rich digital experience.

"What we do here at Teambase, and what we continue to strive for everyday is to ensure that the entire management and administration of the health & benefits, which is medical and life insurance within the insurance industry is as seamless and pain-free as possible. The primary objective for us is to enable all stakeholders interacting with



Helen Burke is the Chief Operating Officer at Teambase.

the platform to have a great digital experience. We talk about the digital economy, but in many ways, it could be called the experience economy, as everything is driven by good digital experiences,” said Burke.

What comes across as very evident in my conversations with each member of the leadership team at Teambase is their ambition to achieve more and generate new growth opportunities.

A perfect illustration of that, has been the decision by Teambase, to open Teambase Ireland, as part of their strategic plans to enter the European market.

Teambase Ireland is being headed by Burke, and she explained the reasons behind the decision to expand, and the opportunities that the company can capitalise on in Europe.

“Teambase Ireland is our innovation hub – and we’re extremely excited about our growth and expansion plans for Europe in 2023, and beyond. I moved back to Ireland in July

2021, and set-up Teambase Ireland in January 2022. It made sense for us to expand to the European market, not only because I had relocated back to the country, but we firmly believe that the capabilities of our solution offering can have a huge impact in the InsurTech sector across the European continent,” said Burke.

Burke conceded that the European market is very, very different to the Middle East market from a compliance and regulatory standpoint, but was bullish in her belief that their solution offering can resonate with brokers in Europe.

“We’re cognisant of the fact the European market is very different to the Middle East. It is slightly more sophisticated and advanced, and the competition is fierce. However, we’re bringing the experiences we have gained operating in the insurance markets in the Middle East, Africa and Asia across the pond to Europe, and we have a lot of ideas for new products that we really believe will make an impact on the insurance industry in Europe,” said Burke.

In her role as COO, Burke has got to possess the ability to spot emerging trends, so Teambase can leverage their technology and products to capitalise on new opportunities.

Burke said the two big trends emerging in the InsurTech ecosystem is embedded

insurance and on-demand insurance, but Burke stressed that at Teambase they will be fully focused on the embedded insurance vertical.

“Embedded insurance is essentially the attempt to bundle digital insurance products together. Amazon have entered this space, so if you purchase a product, or device from Amazon, then they’ll ask you do you want insurance on that product, so that’s an example of embedded insurance. Basically, you’re attempting to cross-sell insurance, whilst selling a specific product or service. That’s something we do a little bit with BenefitNet, but we’re working on a new product called Policy Lane, and that product has been specifically designed and developed for embedded insurance. BenefitNet is more administration focused, whereas Policy Lane is very sales orientated, and we really believe when we roll it out that it’ll have the same transformative impact that BenefitNet has had for brokers in the Middle East,” said Burke.

Teambase have been a great success story thus far, and serve as a great example and template for other companies starting out on their entrepreneurial journey as to what can be achieved when you have the right product offering and mindset.

However, with its new expansion in Europe, and a number of disruptive products in development, it’s an exciting time for Teambase, so expect to hear more from this brilliant company that has quietly helped the InsurTech space in the Middle East to transform, next stop Europe! **enme**



We believe we can leverage the capabilities of our BenefitNet platform and bring brokers into the new digital economy.”

APPDYNAMICS

NO RETURN POLICY

James Harvey, Executive CTO, EMEA at Cisco AppDynamics, has warned retailers that they only have one chance to get it right this holiday season as consumers continue to demand that seamless digitalised shopping experience.

Consumers in the UAE are in the midst of holiday shopping. Whether it was the recent Yellow/White Friday or indeed the traditional holiday sales that take place throughout December and January, people are seeking out the very best prices as they shop for everything from electronics and household essentials to gifts for the holiday season.

But this holiday shopping season is undoubtedly feeling a bit different to previous years. Rising costs of living and worrying economic forecasts mean that consumers are putting even more emphasis on finding great deals.

People feel that they need to get the products they want at the lowest possible prices in order to make their money go further and manage their finances.

Shoppers target seasonal offers as rising costs of living start to bite

At Cisco AppDynamics, we recently conducted global research — across 12 countries including the UAE — exploring



online shopping habits during the holiday season and how consumers plan to use retail applications and digital services during this period.

97% of consumers in the UAE said that they will be relying on online shopping applications and services during the holiday period and 93% stated that they typically wait for online shopping dates and holiday season sales to take advantage

of discounts and low-cost deals.

This emphasises the extent to which these key shopping dates have grown over recent years and the importance that they now hold for both shoppers and retailers.

Significantly, the research highlights how the current economic environment is making these shopping moments even more critical this year. 98% of consumers across the Emirates claim that it is even more important for them to find great deals and cheap prices this year, given rising costs of living and the uncertain economic situation.

Shoppers are looking beyond deals to digital experience

Interestingly, while shoppers will flock to retail brands that are offering the lowest prices, our research reveals that they are attaching just as much importance to the level of digital experience that they receive when use a retailer's application.

Great deals and discounts will lure shoppers to a particular brand, but retailers also need to ensure they provide a brilliant, seamless experience when customers get there. Almost all (99%) of UAE consumers state that it is important that apps and digital services provide a fast and seamless experience without any delays or disruption, and 88% claim that the experience they get when using a shopping app is just as important as the deals that are on offer.

And significantly, shoppers are now considering the experience they get beyond researching a product and

making a purchase. 97% of consumers point to the importance of getting regular updates on the status of their online purchases, given ongoing supply chain issues and the stress of ensuring holiday gifts arrive on time.

No second chances for retailers this holiday season

With consumers feeling under pressure to hunt down bargains this year, they simply won't have the time or patience to put up with poor digital experiences. If applications and digital services fail to perform, it will leave people feeling anxious and angry.

Expectations for seamless and intuitive digital experiences have shot up over recent years, as people have become increasingly reliant on apps and more sophisticated in their use of digital services.

Shoppers have seen first hand the types of digital experiences that the most innovative retailers are now offering and they have come to expect this level every time they engage with an online brand.

Consumers have become totally unforgiving towards brands that fail to match their elevated expectations around digital experience.

Indeed, 73% of people in the UAE state that brands have only one shot to impress them during this holiday season and that if their digital service doesn't perform, they won't use it again.

Put starkly, it doesn't matter how good the deals are that retailers are offering, shoppers will leave (and possibly delete) any application that is slow or unresponsive.

And significant numbers will make a point of sharing their negative experiences with friends and family and more widely on social media platforms.

Retailers must prioritise cloud-native observability to avoid customers walking away

The pressure is on retail IT departments to deliver frictionless, seamless digital experiences every second of the day. However, the reality is that managing IT availability and performance has become increasingly challenging over the last couple of years.

Wholesale digital transformation across retail organisations since the beginning of the pandemic has been founded on the rapid adoption of cloud-native technologies often leveraging microservices and containers — such as Kubernetes.

And while these modern application architectures are enabling technologists to innovate at breakneck speed, building apps in cloud-native environments is also making it far more challenging for ITOps teams to optimise availability and performance.

Technologists are having to manage hugely complex cloud-native application architectures but, in most cases, they're unable to get visibility and

insight into their applications and infrastructure running on public clouds.

These highly distributed systems utilise thousands of containers, generating an immense volume of metrics, events, logs and traces (MELT) telemetry every second. IT teams don't have the tools to cut through this overwhelming data noise and therefore they're unable to quickly troubleshoot application and performance issues that span hybrid environments.

Technologists are stuck in firefighting mode, struggling to identify and fix performance issues before they affect end users.

This is why it's vital for retailers to implement a modern, cloud-native observability solution which enables their IT teams to manage and optimise increasingly complex and dynamic applications and technology stacks. They need a solution that allows them to monitor the health of key business transactions distributed across their entire technology landscape.

With real-time insights from the business transaction's telemetry data, technologists can easily identify the root cause of issues and expedite resolution, ensuring that their applications are providing customers with seamless digital experiences at all times.

In doing so, they can ensure their organisation is able to grasp the one opportunity that shoppers are giving retail brands over the holiday season. **CTMO**



Consumers have become totally unforgiving towards brands that fail to match their elevated expectations around digital experience."

CERT

AGENTS OF CHANGE

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Dr. Mohamed Baka**, CEO of CERT, to find out how the commercial arm of the Higher Colleges of Technology, has played a key role in fostering and cultivating an ecosystem of innovation and technological progress across the UAE, and how the entity has really served as an 'agent of change' for the nation.

Can you give our readers a broader and more comprehensive overview of the history of CERT - and what the mission statement of the UAE-based educational entity is?

CERT is the commercial arm of the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), the largest higher education institution in the UAE. CERT was founded in 1996 with the mission to deliver innovative solutions and programs in life-long learning and technology development as a capacity-building partner for the nation.

As the UAE undertakes visionary agendas for economic diversification, CERT becomes an agent of change in the realisation of these transformative roadmaps, through our Training & Education, Consultancy and Technology portfolios.

We are committed to the initiatives to propel Emirati talent competitiveness and work closely with the public and private sector in talent acceleration programs to achieve this vision.

Our position at the convergence of academia, industry and government, allows us to activate these linkages to deliver economic and strategic value to our partners and clients,

through human capital and institutional development.

From your perspective, what are some of the greatest achievements CERT has delivered in terms of aiding and accelerating the national development of the UAE since its inception in 1996?

CERT's core mission is to design and deliver world-class programs to develop the nation's workforce. We have trained over 50,000 UAE Nationals over the past two decades across different industries and professions, combining immersive and impactful methodologies.

Our large-scale programs overarch occupations in critical sectors of economic activity for the UAE, from oil and gas to healthcare, insurance, taxation, finance and banking, and AI.

Hallmarks of our Talent Acceleration strategies are the Emiratization programs such as the National Training

Program (NTP) with the Ministry of Human Resources & Emiratization and Train for Work with Mubadala. One of the latest achievements is the authorisation from the regulators for the delivery of the Diploma in Health Care Assistant, a novel qualification endorsed by the National Qualifications Authority.

These programs opened doors to untapped Emirati talent to enter or make midcareer transitions to vital occupation in new segments of the labor market.

As the training arm of HCT, the role of CERT has been well documented and championed by leading academics across the Middle East. However, what do you think it is that makes CERT so unique and differentiates them from other similar educational faculties that exist across the region?

CERT is a pioneer in large-scale talent acceleration programs in the UAE, with a unique, in-depth understanding and alignment to the country vision and national strategies. We understand the local and regional business dynamics and therefore focus on developing solutions for talent sourcing and placement, talent development,



CERT was founded in 1996 with the mission to deliver innovative solutions and programs in life-long learning and technology development as a capacity-building partner for the nation."

talent retention and performance management, that empowers industry and government to lead in the global arena.

CERT owes its success to the high standards of practice and our ability to connect to the vision of our partners to attract, support and develop their talent.

Our academic and industry experts design integrated end-to-end solutions and models for organisations seeking to set up Learning & Development programs via their own Talent development units, or via our centers across the seven emirates.

Our integrated solutions, encompass seven clusters, which may include all or some of the stages in the step up of an effective Learning & Development program for the organisation.

From formulation of the strategy and set up of Project Management Offices, to the design of curriculum and content development, recruitment and assessment of competencies, co-creation of career pathways, certification of their skills and sustainability of their knowledge acumen through enhanced On-the-Job Learning.



We know that training and education is a major component in the makeup of CERT, and in the IT and technology sectors there are growing concerns over a lack of talent that is needed to harness and nurture the capabilities of nascent and disruptive technologies. How are CERT leveraging their expertise and knowledge to help enterprises deal with this issue and enable the next generation of Emiratis to have the skills required to address this talent shortage?

A well-educated workforce is an invaluable asset for an organisation and the economic development of a country. In line with the strategy of the UAE to modernise the economy and increase AI investments, it becomes imperative to create a sustained and trusted Digital Talent pipeline.

We work side-by-side with our partners to design digital transformation pathways to ensure that Humans are in Loop of AI adoption.

Our focus is on increasing the awareness of key decision-makers and advisors at the enterprise level, about the risks and opportunities of AI technologies and leveraging the power of human intelligence at every stage of AI adoption, from design to deployment. CERT's bench of expert consultants in AI enterprise integration, provide insights to employers in the recruitment, placement, and effective transition to digital and AI-related jobs.

This was the driver in the creation of CERT AI Academy, a strategic initiative launched in 2019, to equip learners with the skills to seize the opportunities of AI. We are committed to bridge the gap in AI knowledge and AI talent in the UAE.

Designed with a human-centric approach to innovation, our programs aim to prepare a national digital workforce in technical and non-technical fields. The AI Academy comprises five pillars: (1) AI Talent Acceleration, (2) AI knowledge transfer, (3) Enterprise AI Integration, (4) AI start-up incubation and (5) AI Programs for Digital Thinkers.

In this quest, we cooperate with global entities in the creation of competency frameworks and assessments to qualify digital talent across functions of procurement, HR and customer service, finance and accounting.

The Association of International Public Accountants (AICPA-CIMA), Chartered Insurance Institute (CII), TADAT Secretariat, Global Association for Research Methods and Data Science (GRMDS) are partners in the expansion of our digital skilling programs, qualifications and certifications.

What are your future growth plans for CERT looking ahead to 2023?

As the demand for digital talent increases in the region, CERT is working dynamically to release innovations to deliver excellence in service to our partners and clients. The vision of the UAE to lead in 4IR is the driver of the future plans of CERT.

Our growth strategy relies on a dual approach of investing in enhancing our current Talent Acceleration programs while expanding our offerings to the creation of competence centers in line with the plans of the country in advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, and future technologies. 

SALESFORCE

STATE OF PLAY

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Robbie Kearns**, Area Vice President at Salesforce, to learn more about the key takeaways from its State of Marketing report, how the role of the CMO has evolved – and how marketers are being forced to do more with less in the current digital economy.



Robbie Kearns has been with global CRM leader Salesforce since 2013, and he is responsible for driving their cloud business across commerce and marketing.

Kearns covers the Middle East, Africa and Israel for Salesforce – and he has played a central role in helping the company expand their market presence across those regions.

CNME managed to secure an exclusive interview with the Salesforce AVP, who is currently located in Dublin.

The first topic on the agenda for our discussion was the 8th edition of their State of Marketing report, the study surveys' opinion from 6,000 key decision-makers from across 35 countries.

One of the most striking statistics that jumped off the page was the fact that 86% of marketeers in the UAE believe that they are providing more value than they were in the previous 12 months.

“Our State of Marketing report is a very important piece of research for us, and it gives us a really broad insight and overview into the perspectives and views of over 6,000 CMOs, executives and directors. In terms of the findings that have emerged in the UAE, you can see it has yielded hugely positive feedback in relation to how businesses in the country really feel they are driving value for their business. I think the results are a blend of what marketeers do traditionally, those tried and tested routes they employ are still relevant, and I think that coupled with the fact they are



adopting nascent technologies is fostering an environment that is allowing them to deliver real value,” said Kearns.

Kearns believes that amidst the backdrop of the current global economy marketeers are being asked to do much, much more with less, and praised the resilience they have shown.

“I believe that marketeers have become more resilient and they have a firm belief in their own ability – and quite frankly they’re being asked to do more with less. It’s also clear that people are tracking more and more through the use of metrics to examine what they have done in the past. Speed to insight has become particularly prominent, and essentially speed to insight allows people to see how quickly

they can deliver a message, or how quickly they deliver marketing results,” said Kearns.

Despite the turbulent challenges facing enterprises, Kearns believes that the findings from the UAE give a great sense of hope for 2023.

“When you consider some of the issues that we have faced such as the global supply chain, talent shortage, and the macro-economic situation globally, then it has been incredibly difficult. However, I do believe that the incredibly positive feedback from the report in terms of how marketeers believe they are adding more value from last year has to give us hope for 2023,” said Kearns.

The conversation then shifted to the role of the CMO and how it has drastically evolved over the last 3–5 years.

Kearns believes that in our ‘digital first’ world more and more organisations are coming to the CMO to help solve their problems.

“The CMO role is fundamentally changing, there’s no doubt about that in my opinion. You can see that organisations in the UAE are increasingly going to the CMO, or going to their marketing teams more and more often, because they are the people, rightly or wrongly, that are going to be tasked with the responsibility of meeting the challenges being presented to them by their customers. Customers now in the current climate have more digital first expectations, the consumer is changing, the world is changing, so as a marketing sector we need to change with that,” said Kearns.



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Kearns said that this change represents a seismic shift in terms of the function of a CMO, as historically it wouldn't have been the blueprint of a CMO role years ago.

In terms of the challenges facing CMOs, Kearns said the age-old problem of budgets within marketing is still prevalent, despite the fact we are in now operating in an economy fuelled and driven by digital experiences.

"There remains a lot of issues around marketing, such as budgetary constraints, and as I said earlier, marketeers are being asked to do more and more with less as these economic headwinds continue to get harder and harder against us. Some marketeers like to walk familiar roads, and continue to stick to what they would call the basics. Audio, events and sponsorships, and website/applications have seen the largest increase in usage in the last year by UAE marketers. However, email marketing remains dominant, accounting for over 80% of all outbound marketing messages, according to trillions of message sends from Salesforce Marketing Cloud. With that in mind, you can understand why that is a pragmatic approach to take. However, others are testing new technologies, and as a consequence of that they are having to walk a sort of personalisation, privacy and regulation tightrope. In summary, the role of the CMO has changed, and its importance in responding to ever-evolving customer demands is only going to increase," said Kearns.

Kearns also claimed that the 'knowledge gap' that currently

exists is a key challenge facing businesses – but again highlighted the value of its State of Marketing report for identifying these issues.

"As the concerns around these economic headwinds grow, customers are being more demanding, and we are all experts in buying because we are all consumers. With that in mind it is so important that organisations transform their ability to reach and serve those customers. I believe there is a really challenging knowledge gap and in terms of how we address the awareness around the knowledge gap, reports like the State of Marketing are so important," said Kearns.

Kearns also pointed out that only 19% of those surveyed in the UAE said budgetary constraints were a concern, versus 33% globally – and claimed that was another good indicator and a reassuring statistic that the UAE is going in the right direction.

Kearns highlighted that the top priority that emerged from the State of Marketing report was the experimentation of new marketing strategies and tactics, whilst the top concern was in relation to balancing the personalisation aspect with the customer comfort levels.

"If you take a closer look at the top priority that emerged from the UAE, then we can

clearly see a drastic shift to 'real-time' being such a big requirement for our customers. It's just fundamental to them. The launch of Salesforce Genie is huge for addressing that need. I've been with Salesforce for 9 years, and it's undoubtedly one of the most important announcements that we have made with the introduction of Salesforce Genie," said Kearns.

Kearns said that Salesforce Genie can add more automation, intelligence and real-time to Salesforce Customers 360 – but said the platform's ability to give customers access to that real-time element was a key market differentiator for them.

"Salesforce is going to market on the fact that through Genie we can provide customers with access to all of this data in real-time from sources like Snowflake and MuleSoft, which allows them to extract any legacy data and can harmonise all that information in order to make all that data actionable," said Kearns.

Kearns added that the real-time requirement that emerged from the State of Marketing report is the real power that Salesforce can bring to the table.

Salesforce Genie runs on Hyperforce which is the public cloud infrastructure, and all that data control and data residency is built in – and that's a really powerful announcement for the UAE. That real-time requirement is the standout piece of information that emerged from the report, and at Salesforce, we have the product portfolio to address that need to real-time and are committed to empower our customers who are being asked to do more with less," said Kearns. cmms



I believe that marketeers have become more resilient, they have have a firm belief in their own ability – and quite frankly they're being asked to do more with less."

TECH PREDICTIONS

PREDICTING THE FUTURE

Aaron Cockerill, CSO at Lookout, **Prasad Ramakrishnan**, CIO at Freshworks and **Uday Shankar Kizhepat**, VP and General Manager MEA at WSO2 outlines their technology and IT predictions for 2023 in an exclusive byline for December's edition of CNME.



**AARON COCKERILL,
CHIEF STRATEGY
OFFICER AT
LOOKOUT:**

Data breaches will only prove more complicated

If there could be a headline for 2022 it would be "The Year of Ransomware." If you look at

the successful ransomware attacks in recent years, almost every single one was oriented around data theft and double extortion.

At this point, attackers don't need to go through the trouble of encrypting data. It's more effective for them to be able to demonstrate that they've stolen data and receive their payout.

On the whole, we expect 2023 to be similar in terms of the volume and severity of data breaches. What will be different is how attackers will execute the attacks that lead to these breaches.

Because of the widespread adoption of cloud services—which is, no doubt, a good thing—bad actors have shifted gears from attacking unpatched systems and have opted instead to attack cloud services by executing account takeovers and exploiting cloud misconfigurations.

We've observed that the majority of bad actors are either purchasing credentials on the dark web or mounting

social engineering campaigns to gain access to these cloud systems. This means that tools that rely on breach detection through the presence of malicious code are going to be less effective.

Breach detection that relies on user and entity behavior analytics will be more effective.

While two-factor authentication is critical in the fight against data breaches, it alone is not enough at preventing them. In the future, the best of both worlds will be to move Fast ID Online (FIDO) tokens to mobile devices.

This technology would allow for the use of biometric sensors and many other contexts that would help to establish whether the authentication is legitimate or not.

The burning issue now is data protection. In the next year, CISOs and CIOs alike will need to worry less about malicious code installed on systems and worry more about the potential theft of data. The two areas of focus should be better continuous user authentication and data protection.

Since attackers are primarily focused on data, CISOs and CIOs need to be able to understand when data is being attacked, stolen, or misused. Additionally, because malicious code has been used less by attackers, we need to be able to identify data breaches through things like anomalous data use. This is how we turn the tide against data breaches.



**PRASAD
RAMAKRISHNAN,
CIO AT FRESHWORKS**

Cut the bloatware: #1 on priority for CIOs:

Bloatware is a \$84B money pit for businesses—and increasingly under scrutiny in a rocky economy. For IT, it means doing more with less, and cutting out discretionary bloatware spend.

Just about every CIO I speak with is planning, or in some cases already in the process, of reviewing their app inventory across the enterprise. It's important to know which apps should be retired, maintained, replatformed or postponed.

Company headcount will increase in 2023 with bot workers:

In 2022, companies took high-efficiency measures, like layoffs, to financially safeguard business. But in 2023 companies

will need to replace this headcount because customer expectations remain high.

Companies will deploy more bot workers in 2023 to reduce human dependence on mundane tasks. Bonus: it'll also reduce cost and margin for human error. We've started to see this trend with understaffed retailers, but it'll soon be mainstream.

Automation rewriting automation:

47% of developers don't have access to the tools they need to build applications fast enough to meet deadlines.

Next year we can expect the next wave of automation to automate its own development to fill this gap. Code will be written by AI engines, intelligently generating its own code.

As low code and no-code platforms continue to enable the technology behind these innovations, we'll see more maturity, more time savings (cutting down development time by 90%), fewer errors and faster development.

Beware of deal sweeteners:

With the broader macro environment that we're in, we can expect to see creative sales offers in an effort to secure longer-term contracts, but buyers beware.

My recommendation is to review and reevaluate your contracts on any subscriptions often to ensure you still need it.

Being mindful of what you are subscribed to gives organisations more flexibility when it comes to renewal time and stops you from buying more than you need.



**UDAY SHANKAR
KIZHEPAT, VP AND
GENERAL MANAGER
MEA AT WSO2**

Digital disruption will determine who survives 2023

With the oldest millennials now in their 40s, we live in a digital-native world. The region's businesses must contend with that. Digital user experiences for smartphones and Web browsers are now the norm for the acquisition and retention of customers.

Across the UAE, in every industry, we saw examples of this. Those that did it well, survived and thrived. Those that did not, did not. In 2023, expect to see pressure mount on businesses to leverage digital experiences to compete for consumers with less disposable income.

Somewhere between 65% and 75% of established businesses' workloads continue



to rely on legacy mainframe backends.

In 2023, they must move to the cloud and refactor their digital offerings into cloud-native microservices to achieve the scale, agility, and reliability required for always-on digital experiences that can compete with digital disruptors like Amazon.ae.

Next-gen apps must be cloud native

The region's lack of skilled developers persists, even as initiatives such as the UAE's National Program for Coders get underway.

A recent IDC study predicts that the global developer shortage will reach 4 million by 2024. And developers with

cloud-native skills are in even shorter supply. This will have a severe impact on cloud migration, which will remain a top priority for IT teams given the need for them to deliver on business agility and digital experiences.

WSO2's Reprogramming the Enterprise Survey found that almost two in three (65%) IT decision-makers (ITDMs) believe cloud-native development is their organisation's most sought-after skill because of its



Companies will deploy more bot workers in 2023 to reduce human dependence on mundane tasks."

established link to the pace of innovation.

And more than half (54%) of ITDMs polled indicated that the shortage of developers has led to delayed projects and reduced productivity. Such bottlenecks to progress must be overcome in 2023 to deliver the right experiences at the right pace to appease digital-native consumers.

An API-first strategy will be a must for accelerating innovation

Application programming interfaces (APIs) allow innovation to hit a pace that individual organisations cannot reach on their own.

Businesses that have an API-first strategy can be from any industry, but APIs are of particular use to highly regulated sectors where compliance with privacy and other standards is of prime concern.

For example, banks could produce APIs for resilience, agility, and scale. They could accelerate their migration by standardising ways for cloud-based applications to interact with existing internal systems and the sensitive data they hold even before banks transition those systems to the cloud.

Any enterprise that has adopted API-first strategies will soon reap the benefits of faster innovation and more strategic partnerships. Developing API capabilities early in the cloud migration process makes it easier to develop or adopt new applications across more of the organisation's services as migration continues. **cmo**



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