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WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEANS BUSINESS

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OUR SUCCESS IS NO COINCIDENCE

TOUFIC DERBASS, MANAGING DIRECTOR, MIDDLE EAST, TURKEY, AND AFRICA AT KASPERSKY, TELLS CNME THAT BY COMING 1ST IN 93 OUT OF 100 INDEPENDENT PRODUCT REVIEWS IN 2023, ONLY SERVES TO REINFORCE ITS STANDING AS THE GLOBAL LEADER IN CYBERSECURITY SOLUTIONS.

GENERAL MANAGER
3M DATA

WOMEN IN TECH:
NETAPP'S MAYA ZAKHOUR

CO-FOUNDER OF THE
CORPORATE GROUP



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Microsoft will create around 153,000 jobs in the next four years, and has also committed to rolling out an AI Skilling program that will train 100,000 employees from both federal and local government institutions and departments in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah."

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THE FUTURE OF AI IS NOW

It's that time of the year again!

GITEX Global 2024, the world's largest technology and start-up symposium is back, and it promises to be the BIGGEST edition of the conference that we've ever seen.

As always, CPI Media Group will be on-hand to cover all the major announcements and breaking news that emerges from the event, and we will have exclusive interviews with all the leading players from the technology industry LIVE from our stand.

We will have full coverage of GITEX Global 2024 in November's CNME.

October's GITEX edition of CNME, is undoubtedly one of our best magazines of the year, and this year is no exception.

On the front cover, we have a brilliant interview with global cybersecurity leader Kaspersky. Toufic Derbass, Managing Director, Middle East, Turkey and Africa at Kaspersky, outlined how their performance in independent product reviews illustrated that they remain the go-to player for cybersecurity, amidst an increasingly volatile landscape.

In a wide-ranging discussion, Derbass also articulated how a 'holistic' approach is needed in the global battle against cybercrime, and highlighted how its portfolio of solutions designed to bolster an organisations 'cyber immunity' was making businesses more resilient.

He also spoke about the practices governments and enterprises needed to implement in order to better protect their critical infrastructure across the MENA region.

It's a great read, and you can check out the full exchange on Pages 30-35.

CNME also had the pleasure to sit down and speak to Naim Yazbeck, General Manager of Microsoft UAE, for the latest interview in our GovTech series.

As the headline proclaims, Microsoft is at the forefront of AI transformation across the UAE.

It has been a key partner for the UAE over the last 25 years, and the US technology leader continues to work hand-in-hand with the UAE government to achieve its objectives for the nation.

As we all know, the UAE wants to become the global hub for AI.

Yazbeck articulated the role Microsoft is playing in terms of helping the UAE deliver on its AI aspirations, and detailed the significance of bringing its Global Engineering Development Centre footprint to Abu Dhabi.

However, the two biggest revelations to come out of our conversation was the fact that Microsoft will create around 153,000 jobs in the next four years, and has also committed to rolling out an AI Skilling program that will train 100,000 employees from both federal and local government institutions and departments in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah.

It's a fascinating conversation as always with Naim, and you can find that on interview on Pages 40-45.

Maya Zakhour is the focus of our Women in Tech interview.

Zakhour is the Director for Channel Sales, Eastern Europe, META, Iberia & Latin America at NetApp.

She is in a reflective mood as she looks back to those halcyon days when she began her career as a software developer in 1998.

Zakhour has enjoyed a remarkable career to date, but declared that she is still as driven and motivated now, as she was when she set out on her professional journey 26 years ago.

She also outlined the principles that inform her own leadership style, and said that it's important to always stay true to yourself and not compare yourself to others when forging your own professional journey.

It's a great feature, and you can check that interview out on Pages 52-54.

Cizar Abughazaleh, Managing Director of Action-to-Action Robotics, dispels the Orwellian fears some have on the introduction of humanoid robots, and makes a case for the positive impact they can have on society.

Sabina Mirza-Akhmedova, CEO at Mappable, explains how the geospatial navigation solution provider is empowering enterprises all over the UAE to deliver better outcomes and experiences for their end-users.

In addition to this, we have terrific interviews with 3M Data, The Corporate Group, D-Link and two excellent op-eds from Yasmina and tech entrepreneur and investor Roman Ziemian.

We're also looking forward to welcoming you all to our Future Enterprise Awards, which will be held at the H Dubai on the evening of Monday, October 14th.

It's always a great night, and provides the perfect platform for us all to celebrate the achievements of the IT industry over the last 12 months, and unwind and relax after an exhausting day, which Day 1 of GITEX always is.

See you all at GITEX. 😊

The Future of AI is NOW!

Mark Forker
Editor

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OPSWAT at GITEX GLOBAL 2024: Hall 25, Stand C70



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18 Cizar Abughazaleh, Managing Director of Action-to-Action Robotics, makes a case for how the introduction of humanoid robots can have a positive impact on society.

39 Naim Yazbeck, General Manager of Microsoft UAE, reinforces their commitment to the UAE's AI objectives by revealing plans for a new AI Skilling program that will train 100,000 government employees in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah.

52 NetApp's Maya Zakhour looks back on her remarkable journey in technology, and highlights the need for people to stay true to themselves when embarking on a new career.

56 Sakkeer Hussain, Director - Sales and Marketing at D-Link, outlines the characteristics that he believes defines a great leader in the new digital age.

6 News

CNME rounds up the biggest regional and global developments in enterprise technology, which includes the news that Trend Micro and NVIDIA have entered a new strategic partnership designed to accelerate AI security, Proofpoint and CyberArk announce the expansion their collaboration - and Microsoft announced that it is bringing its Global Development Engineering Centre footprint to the UAE.

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Holon to highlight decentralised data storage and AI innovation at Dubai AI & Web3 Festival 2024

Holon, a reputed leader in Web 3.0 and AI-driven data storage and computing, is set to share key insights at the highly anticipated Dubai AI and Web3 Festival this month (taking place on 11 and 12 September).

At this prestigious event, organized by the Dubai AI Campus, under the directives of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, UAE, Holon will showcase its innovative solutions for decentralised data storage and sustainability, aligning with Dubai's vision of becoming a global leader in technology and sustainable innovation.

Key executives and thought leaders, including Managing Director Heath Behncke and Director of Technology & Innovation Jonathan Hooker, will discuss Holon's pioneering approach to data management and the future of AI and Web 3.0.

Heath Behncke, Managing Director at Holon, comments: "Data is the world's new commodity that's growing exponentially, and guzzling energy like there's no tomorrow. And if we want a data-sustainable tomorrow, it's critical we leave dirty-data behind and move to verifiably green data as fast as we can". Heath brings a deep wealth of experience in developing decentralised digital infrastructure.



Heath Behncke, Managing Director at Holon

Hikvision to bring smarter, greener mobility to ITS World Congress 2024

Hikvision is set to unveil its latest innovations in urban mobility at the ITS World Congress 2024, taking place from September 16th to 20th in Dubai.

Located at booth number H6-G6, Hikvision invites attendees to experience a transformative vision of urban mobility, anchored in the theme: "Embrace AIoT for safer, smarter, and greener mobility".

Highlighted solutions: innovations for every aspect of urban mobility

Hikvision will present a broad range of solutions designed to enhance urban transportation. These innovations address critical areas such as traffic violation management, traffic order management, road operations, and smart public transport. Notably, a case study will showcase how Hikvision's



innovative green wave technology has successfully reduced travel time by 50% on a major road with 34 intersections. Additionally, a simulated bus environment will demonstrate how AI-

assisted on-board monitoring enhances both safety and efficiency for public transport.

From detecting road violations and managing congestion to managing buses and ensuring road safety, these solutions use advanced technologies such as integrated traffic enforcement devices, green wave systems, AI-powered traffic cameras, and on-board devices. Together, they create a cohesive and intelligent urban mobility ecosystem that promises safer, more efficient, and environmentally friendly transportation.

Trend Micro and NVIDIA accelerate AI security

Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader in cybersecurity solutions, recently announced a strategic partnership with NVIDIA to enhance the security of AI-driven private data centres across regional and global markets.

This collaboration is a key part of Trend Micro's broader initiative to advance AI implementation for enterprises and governments, marking a significant step forward in securing AI technologies. By integrating NVIDIA NIM microservices into Trend Micro's Vision One™ Sovereign Private Cloud—a key component of the NVIDIA AI Enterprise software platform—this solution enables organisations to harness AI's transformative potential while maintaining robust security and long-



Dr. Moataz Bin Ali, Regional Vice President and Managing Director, MMEA, Trend Micro.

term business resilience.

"With AI adoption in the Middle East projected to contribute over \$320 billion to the region's economy by 2030, securing these technologies is no longer optional but essential", said Dr. Moataz Bin Ali, Regional Vice President and Managing Director, MMEA,

Trend Micro. "With the integration of NVIDIA NIM microservices into our Trend Vision One™ Sovereign Private Cloud, we are setting a new standard for AI security. This initiative not only fortifies our customers defences but also empowers them to harness the full potential of AI with unparalleled confidence. Our commitment is to lead the industry in delivering innovative, resilient solutions and driving forward the future of secure AI technology".

Proofpoint and CyberArk expand strategic partnership

Proofpoint, Inc., and CyberArk, the identity security company, recently announced an extended strategic collaboration, working together to help organisations around the world secure identities everywhere.

Supporting this joint aim, the expanded partnership includes the launch of new integrations and solutions to address critical cyber challenges.

The integration between Proofpoint and CyberArk features a combination of layered defences designed to stop threats before they reach users and applies preventative policies and controls that ensure access accuracy. Proofpoint prevents email attacks from reaching users and helps to identify the individuals and systems that are targeted by the most sophisticated, highest impact threats using its expansive data set comprised of trillions of data points every year. CyberArk takes this insight and applies adaptive controls and identity security policies to ensure legitimate users are only able to access what they need and nothing more.



Ryan Kalember, Chief Strategy Officer, Proofpoint.

“Because attackers now see people and their digital identities as their target of choice, it’s time to shift security strategies to protect people and defend the data they create, placing identity at the centre of security,” said Ryan Kalember, Chief Strategy Officer, Proofpoint. “Our strategic partnership with CyberArk represents a significant advancement in identity-centric security, empowering organisations to connect their key platform to understand human risk with their platform to mitigate it”.

Fortinet revolutionises SASE with unparalleled flexibility and AI-driven

Fortinet, recently announced the addition of sovereign SASE and generative AI (GenAI) capabilities to its robust unified SASE solution.

Fortinet Unified SASE provides



John Maddison, Chief Marketing Officer at Fortinet.

complete integration between Fortinet’s Secure SD-WAN solution and cloud-delivered security service edge (SSE) under a single console for seamless management, visibility, and security.

John Maddison, Chief Marketing Officer at Fortinet, emphasized the company’s dedication to innovation in the field of Secure Access Service Edge (SASE). “Many vendors today are packaging up fragmented SASE capabilities and calling it ‘unified SASE.’ Fortinet is the only vendor with a unified SASE solution united by one data lake, one operating system, and AI-driven security that also offers customers unparalleled deployment flexibility.”

Tenable introduces AI Aware: A groundbreaking proactive security solution for AI and LLMs

Tenable, the exposure management company, recently announced the release of AI Aware, advanced detection capabilities designed to rapidly surface artificial intelligence solutions, vulnerabilities and weaknesses available in Tenable Vulnerability Management.

With AI Aware, Tenable transforms proactive security for AI solutions. Tenable AI Aware uniquely leverages agents, passive network monitoring, dynamic application security testing and distributed scan engines to detect approved and unapproved AI software, libraries and browser plugins, along with associated vulnerabilities, thereby mitigating risks of exploitation, data leakage and unauthorised resource consumption. The combined depth of these multiple assessment methods delivers the most complete detection of AI in the modern ecosystem.

“In an effort to keep pace with the sea change introduced by AI, organisations around the world ran full speed ahead, potentially bypassing countless cybersecurity, privacy and compliance red flags”, said Shai Morag, Chief Product Officer at Tenable. “Perhaps more so than with any other new technology we’ve seen, there are many risk factors to consider, especially with rushed development and deployment. Tenable AI Aware empowers organisations to deploy AI confidently, ensuring their security measures keep pace with the rapid evolution of AI technologies”.



Shai Morag, Chief Product Officer at Tenable.

Operation Crimson Palace, Chinese State-sponsored espionage, expands in Southeast Asia

Sophos, a global leader of innovative security solutions for defeating cyberattacks, recently released its report, “Crimson Palace: New Tools, Tactics, Targets,” which details the latest developments in a nearly two-year long Chinese cyberespionage campaign in Southeast Asia.

Sophos X-Ops first reported on what they named Operation Crimson Palace in June and detailed Sophos X-Ops' discovery of three separate clusters of Chinese nation-state activity—Cluster Alpha, Cluster Bravo and Cluster Charlie—inside a high-profile government organization. After a brief hiatus in August 2023,



Paul Jaramillo, Director, Threat Hunting and Threat Intelligence, Sophos.

Sophos X-Ops noted renewed Cluster Bravo and Cluster Charlie activity, both within the initial targeted organisation and in numerous other organisations within the region.

While investigating this renewed activity, Sophos X-Ops uncovered a novel keylogger that the threat hunters named “Tattletale,” which can impersonate users who have signed into the system and gather information related to password policies, security settings, cached passwords, browser information, and storage data. Sophos X-Ops also notes in the report that, in contrast to the first

wave of the operation, Cluster Charlie increasingly switched to using open-source tools rather than deploying the types of custom malware they developed in the initial wave of activity.

“We’ve been in an ongoing chess match with these adversaries. During the initial phases of the operation, Cluster Charlie was deploying various bespoke tools and malware”, said Paul Jaramillo, Director, Threat Hunting and Threat Intelligence, Sophos. “However, we were able to ‘burn’ much of their previous infrastructure, blocking their Command and Control (C2) tools and forcing them to pivot. This is good; however, their switch to open-source tools demonstrates just how quickly these attacker groups can adapt and remain persistent. It also appears to be an emerging trend among Chinese nation-state groups. As the security community works to secure our most sensitive systems from these attackers, it’s important to share the insights into this pivot”.

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Core42 launches compass chat app & enhanced platform for enterprise inference solutions

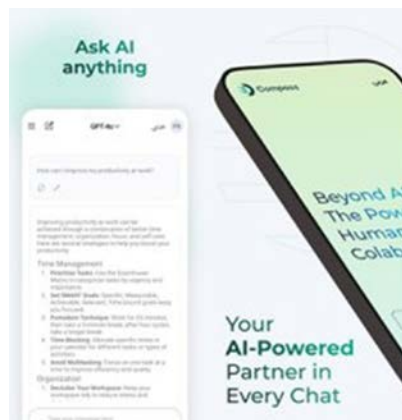
Core42, a G42 company and provider of sovereign cloud and AI infrastructure and services, announced the revamp of Compass Platform, the latest model of its Compass suite.

The inferencing platform introduces new features, including Compass Chat mobile app, designed to empower businesses and developers with seamless AI integration and infrastructure capabilities to build a wide range of GenAI applications.

The launch of Compass Version 2.0 earlier this year marked a significant milestone, with its integration of Qualcomm® Cloud AI 100 Ultra inference accelerators that allowed customers and partners to leverage a wide array of pre-optimized Generative AI, Embeddings,

Computer Vision, and Natural Language Processing AI models.

Compass offers a powerful inferencing platform with APIs, leading AI models, a chat interface, and flexible deployment options via Azure and local data centres. The platform empowers developers to build their AI models



and leverage tools that enable data sovereignty on top of it.

Core42 continues its commitment to innovation by offering an enhanced Compass platform and an all-new Compass Chat mobile app feature. The Compass platform was completely redesigned for enhanced navigation and easier access, while Compass Chat mobile app offers an advanced AI-based assistant designed to boost productivity and efficiency for organisations seeking to enhance employee performance.

“The Compass platform is a testament to Core42’s pursuit of excellence and innovation in AI infrastructure. The additions of the revamped Compass platform as well as the introduction of Compass Chat mobile app will redefine how businesses interact with AI and provide even greater flexibility and efficiency in today’s digital era”, said Raghu Chakravarthi, EVP of Engineering, Core42.

Bybit launches Islamic Account, expanding access for Muslim communities worldwide

Bybit, the world's second-largest cryptocurrency exchange by trading volume, has announced the launch of its Islamic Account, making it the first global cryptocurrency exchange to offer such a service to Muslim traders worldwide.

This groundbreaking initiative represents a major step towards providing crypto trading that is both accessible and compliant with Islamic law.

Bybit's Islamic Account offers a comprehensive suite of Shariah-compliant trading products, providing Muslim traders with an inclusive platform to engage in the digital asset market. Developed in consultation with ZICO Shariah Advisory Services Sdn. Bhd. (ZICO Shariah) and CryptoHalal to ensure compliance with the Shariah principles, the account ensures that all products strictly adhere to Islamic finance principles.

Key Features of Bybit's Islamic Account:

- Global Accessibility: Available to all



users, regardless of region, except in countries with legal restrictions.

- Shariah-Compliant Product Offerings: Initial offerings include spot trading (limited to 75 Shariah-compliant tokens), DCA trading bot, and Spot Grid Bot.
- Double Shariah Certification: Crypto Halal Certification, along with official Shariah certification from ZICO Holdings, guarantees that all products meet the highest standards of Islamic law.

The Islamic economy, serving nearly 1.9 billion people worldwide, is experiencing rapid growth. The Islamic

finance sector is currently estimated to be worth a staggering \$2.3 trillion, and the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia (MEASA) region is poised to drive its continued expansion. By offering a Shariah-compliant trading platform, Bybit is tapping into a vast and growing market, providing Muslim traders with a trusted and reliable solution.

"We are thrilled to introduce our Islamic Account, which represents a major milestone in our commitment to providing inclusive and accessible trading solutions", said Joan Han, Sales & Marketing Director at Bybit. "By partnering with Crypto Halal and ZICO Holdings, we have ensured that our offerings align with the principles of Islamic finance, empowering Muslim traders to participate in the growing cryptocurrency market".

Bybit's Islamic Account is a testament to the exchange's dedication to diversity and inclusivity. By offering a Shariah-compliant trading environment, Bybit is breaking down barriers and creating new opportunities for Muslim traders around the globe.

Microsoft expands its footprint to the UAE's capital, Abu Dhabi

Microsoft Corp. recently announced it is expanding its Global Engineering Development Centre footprint to the UAE.

A new development centre, which will be established in Abu Dhabi, one of Microsoft's first engineering centres to be launched in the Arab world, joining the company's global portfolio of development centres across key strategic locations around the world.

His Highness Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, said, "As a hub of innovation, Abu Dhabi is well-positioned to lead global efforts in AI, championing transformative solutions that benefit both people and the planet. Abu Dhabi's advanced digital and physical infrastructure, combined with the UAE's strategic

location at the heart of the world, allows us to drive positive, far-reaching impacts across industries and societies alike".

Satya Nadella, Chairman and CEO, Microsoft, said, "We are committed to ensuring transformative technologies, like AI, benefit everyone broadly and create local opportunity. Our Engineering Development Centre in Abu Dhabi will bring new talent to the region and help power innovation that will drive economic growth and job creation for both the UAE and the world".

Peng Xiao, Group CEO, G42, said, "The establishment of Microsoft's Engineering Development Centre in Abu Dhabi underscores the growing importance of the UAE as a hub for technological innovation. While G42 and Microsoft have worked together

in the past to drive advancements in AI and cloud infrastructure, this new centre will complement our collective efforts in building a more robust digital future for the region and beyond".

Samer Abu-Ltaif, Microsoft Corporate Vice President and President, Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa, said, "Today's announcement reinforces our commitment to the region and our strategic partnership with the UAE. By empowering youth, collaborating with academia and fostering IP creation, we are unlocking the region's potential. We are transitioning from consuming technology to contributing to its global creation. With a world-class Engineering Development Centre in Abu Dhabi, we drive innovation and support organisations worldwide to stay competitive in a digital world".

MDS System Integration Group Acquires Majority Shares in Aldeology, Expanding Advanced AI Capabilities



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Left to right: Jorge Colotto, CEO and Founder of Aldeology.ai and Sami Abi Esber, President of MDS System Integration Group

Mideast Data Systems, System Integration Group, “MDS SI”, the leading regional system integrator, is pleased to announce that it has entered into an agreement to acquire a majority stake in Aldeology.ai, a UAE born start-up and leading provider of AI technologies and services. Aldeology specializes in large AI infrastructure solutions (HPC AI), 3D AI including Digital Twins and Simulations, Generative and Physical AI solutions.

Aldeology has achieved NVIDIA’s Elite Partner level and collaborates closely with major AI technology players such as Dell, DDN, HPE, Lenovo, Microsoft, NetApp, Supermicro, Vast Data, Weka among others, bringing a robust AI ecosystem to the region.

Aldeology has been instrumental in deploying some of the largest GPU clusters in the Gulf region, including NVIDIA SuperPOD comprising thousands of GPUs, advanced AI

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By combining AIdeology's expertise with MDS SI's robust system integration services, partner ecosystem, financial strength, and geographic presence, we aim to be the catalyst and trusted partner for AI adoption across the region."

Sami Abi Esber, President of MDS SI

storage, and high-speed networking infrastructure empowering customers to effectively train and deploy AI models, pushing the boundaries of innovation. AIdeology has also pioneered NVIDIA Omniverse in the region, the powerful real-time collaboration and simulation platform that enables users to create and operate virtual worlds and enabling seamless collaboration on complex 3D projects. The company provides tailored consulting and development services to help enterprises unlock the full potential of Generative AI (GenAI), and has recently expanded into Physical AI integrating AI into physical systems and robotics to enable intelligent decision-making,

automation, and interaction with the physical world.

Sami Abi Esber, President of MDS SI, commented on the acquisition: "This acquisition further strengthens MDS SI's AI capabilities in accelerating the digital transformation journeys of our clients. Artificial intelligence is, and will continue to be, a critical component of every organization's operations. Customers require expert guidance in crafting AI strategies that generate value and create sustainable competitive advantages. By combining AIdeology's expertise with MDS SI's robust system integration services, partner ecosystem, financial strength, and geographic presence, we aim to be the catalyst and trusted partner for AI adoption across the region."

Jorge Colotto, CEO and Founder of AIdeology, added: "Joining forces with MDS SI presents enormous opportunities for both AIdeology and our customers. This partnership will extend our reach and fuel further innovation. Our go-to-market strategy emphasizes a unique blend of youthful enthusiasm, multidisciplinary expertise, seasoned enterprise experience, and diversity to swiftly adapt to the rapidly evolving AI landscape. This fusion of perspectives fosters a dynamic and innovative environment where fresh ideas converge with industry insights and experience, ultimately benefiting our customers by unlocking the true potential of AI."



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The Corporate Group

TURNING AMBITION INTO REALITY

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Mohamed Osman**, the pioneering visionary and force behind The Corporate Group. In a candid exchange, Osman explained how the company through its partnership with PwC Academy was committed to fostering an environment that enabled and empowered young people to turn their ambitions into reality, and drive real change and progress within the financial industry.

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Throughout his decorated career to date, Mohamed Osman has repeatedly demonstrated and displayed the attributes required in a leader that wants to transform the industry they operate in.

It's fair to say that some industries are easier to transform than others, and

typically, when it comes to the tax, audit and advisory functions within the finance sector, it would be seen by many outsiders as a relatively rigid vertical that was complex when it came to pioneering new methods and ideas.

However, Mohamed Osman was driven to remove the

complexities that existed within the tax, audit and advisory landscape, in an effort to free businesses from the burden of those challenges.

In 2016, Corporate Group was launched by Osman, and in the 8 years since its inception, the company has gone from strength-to-strength, with its customer-centric approach appealing to customers all over the UAE.

Osman is also passionate about his company serving as a vehicle and a pathway for aspiring graduates to enter the corporate world.

In a candid conversation with CNME Editor Mark Forker, he highlighted the importance of their strategic partnership with PwC Academy Middle East, but Osman kickstarted the discussion by outlining his reasons for establishing



Corporate Group eight years.

According to the Chairman and co-Founder of Corporate Group, the company was laser-focused on helping businesses to become 'better' organizations.

"Corporate Group was founded with the vision to provide financial services to different businesses locally. However, with time Corporate Group is now a consultancy that is leading, constantly evolving and fast-growing in the business landscape. Our core vision is to transform organizations into better businesses, we craft solutions that help you navigate complexities and transform by using tested frameworks and methodologies paired with a customer-centric, boutique approach to tax, audit and advisory. Our approach towards services is based on quality relationship and service efficiency, the process we have from initial briefs to execution is the reason why our clients partner with us to improve

their complex financial structures," said Osman.

Osman added their suite of solutions are tailored to meet the specific demands of each customer they work directly with.

"We provide solutions that are specific to the client problems and help them improve any inconsistent financial areas. The work we do is done by a team of professionals that have combined experience from the major finance companies aided with local and international experience. This expertise allows us to provide a perfect balance between personalized attention and quality service to our clients," said Osman.

The Corporate Group is a company that is always proactively looking at ways in which outside of its

technology can have a positive impact on UAE society.

Its partnership with PwC Academy only serves as a further illustration of that commitment.

Osman explained in more detail what the MoU between the two parties entails, and said at the core of the collaboration is a shared desire to empower the youth of tomorrow.

"The recent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between The Corporate Group and PwC Academy Middle East is a strategic initiative aimed at empowering ambitious young individuals by providing them with a unique pathway into the corporate world. This collaboration goes beyond traditional education - it focuses on offering students real-world corporate experience that will not only prepare them for the workforce but also enable them to become contributing individuals who make a genuine impact through their work. By combining The Corporate Group's extensive industry expertise with PwC Academy's excellence in education, we're creating an environment where students can apply what they learn in a practical setting. Through hands-on exposure to real corporate challenges, students will gain a deeper understanding of how businesses operate and what it takes to succeed in today's



We provide solutions that are specific to the client problems and help them improve any inconsistent financial areas."



competitive marketplace,” said Osman.

Osman added that what really sets this collaboration apart is its focus on fostering a sense of purpose.

“The students won’t just learn the theory—they’ll develop the skills, mindset, and confidence to contribute meaningfully to their organizations from day one. They’ll be equipped to make informed decisions, solve complex problems, and drive change in ways that matter. This experience will have a lasting impact, allowing young professionals to enter the corporate world not as passive participant, but as active contributors, ready to make a real difference through their work. It’s an investment in their future—and in the future of the region’s business ecosystem,” said Osman.

Osman then moved the dial of the conversation towards the ACCA program, in which PwC are a Gold Approved Partner, again he went into more detail on this initiative, and the role played by The Corporate Group once graduates complete the program.

“The ACCA program, with

PwC as a Gold Approved Partner, is a prestigious pathway for young graduates looking to build a solid foundation in finance and accounting. This program is designed to provide comprehensive training and certification, equipping students with the skills and knowledge essential for excelling in the finance sector. The ACCA program covers a wide range of topics, from financial management to strategic business leadership, ensuring that participants gain a well-rounded understanding of the field. PwC’s Gold Approved Partner status signifies a high standard of quality and alignment with industry requirements, offering students access to top-tier resources, expert guidance, and practical insights from leaders in the field,” said Osman.

Osman stressed that the rigorous and robust nature of the learning dispensed ensures that graduates come out of the ACCA program well prepared for the problem-solving they will need to survive and thrive in the competitive world of finance.

“For young graduates aspiring to join The Corporate

Group, the ACCA program is an excellent stepping stone. It prepares them with the technical skills and professional competencies that are crucial for success in our industry. Beyond just acquiring knowledge, the program emphasizes real-world application, problem-solving, and strategic thinking—qualities that align perfectly with the values and needs of our organization. Graduates who complete the ACCA program will enter the workforce with a robust understanding of finance and accounting principles, along with practical experience that makes them highly attractive candidates for positions within The Corporate Group. We value the dedication and expertise that ACCA graduates bring, and we’re excited to see how they’ll contribute to our team and help drive our mission forward,” said Osman.

Talent acquisition and a skills shortage is not just a major problem across the UAE, and the Middle East, it is a global problem.

It has prompted multinational conglomerates like PwC to play a more proactive role in finding talent.

Osman stressed the importance of entities like The Corporate Group and PwC work together to tackle the skills and talent crisis that is engulfing major industry verticals, such as finance, and has advocated for more collaboration to overcome the issue.

“The global skills shortage is undeniably one of the most pressing challenges industries

face today, and the UAE and Middle East are no exceptions. In critical sectors like finance, this shortage isn't just about finding qualified people, it's about finding the right talent that fits an organization's culture and long-term goals. Unfortunately, talent development is not being sufficiently prioritized at present, and this lack of focus threatens to impact work output across the industry. At The Corporate Group, we understand that simply having the best skills isn't enough—what truly matters is aligning those skills with the specific needs of the business. That's why our partnership with PwC Academy is so important. Together, we can bridge the gap between what the industry demands and the talent that's available. PwC Academy has a deep understanding of the strengths and potential of their students, while The Corporate Group brings invaluable insights into the precise roles and competencies businesses are looking for," said Osman.

Osman added that the partnership between his company and PwC Academy, wasn't a short-term fix where the primary goal is to fill vacancies, but instead, create an ecosystem designed to harness, nurture and develop a 'new generation' of talent.

"By working in synergy, we can create an ecosystem where young talent is not only identified but nurtured to grow into impactful professionals who can drive

real progress within the industry. This collaboration will allow us to develop a new generation of talent, one that is equipped to meet today's challenges and contribute meaningfully to their organizations from the moment they step into the corporate world. Ultimately, this partnership isn't just about filling vacancies, it's about ensuring that the future workforce is capable, confident, and ready to make a genuine difference in the industries that need it most," said Osman.

Osman concluded a brilliant interview by reiterating that the MoU between PwC Academy and The Corporate Group is a pivotal initiative in shaping the future of the UAE's youth.

"At The Corporate Group, we firmly believe in nurturing and developing young talent. We've experienced firsthand the incredible energy and innovative thinking that young professionals bring to the table. Our own dynamic team is a testament to the fact that when given the right support, young talent can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the success of an organization. By collaborating with PwC Academy, we're ensuring that young individuals don't just learn the theory, but are equipped with the tools,

guidance, and practical experience they need to excel as experts in their chosen fields. Our goal is to empower them to not only meet their own professional aspirations but also become key contributors to the growth and evolution of the industries they enter. This MoU reflects our shared commitment to helping the youth of the UAE turn their ambitions into reality, enabling them to be part of a thriving business landscape that they will help shape for years to come," said Osman.

CNME Editor Mark Forker also managed to get a short quote from Taimur Ali Mir, PwC Partner and Professional Qualifications Lead at PwC Academy about the collaboration.

Ali Mir said the partnership between PwC Academy and The Corporate Group would yield 'impactful experiences'.

"This collaboration further reinforces our commitment to enabling the workforce of the future with the right knowledge, skills and mindset required to thrive in today's dynamic financial landscape. We look forward to working with The Corporate Group to deliver impactful and meaningful experiences that support the region's talent development needs," said Ali Mir. 



This MoU reflects our shared commitment to helping the youth of the UAE turn their ambitions into reality, enabling them to be part of a thriving business landscape that they will help shape for years to come."

Action-to-Action Robotics

TIME FOR 'ACTION'

CNME Editor Mark Forker secured an exclusive interview with **Cizar Abughazaleh**, Managing Director of Action-to-Action Robotics in an effort to better understand the mission statement of the company, the impact humanoid robotics is going to have on society, the AI infused within their suite of technologies – and why people should not be fearful of the humanoid robotics movement.

A visionary, a pioneer, a technological evangelist, a reformer, those are just some of the superlatives that have been laid at the door of Cizar Abughazaleh.

In a remarkable career that has taken him from Singapore to New Zealand, Abughazaleh has firmly established himself as one of the most respected technology leaders in the Middle East since the turn of the new millennium.

In a storied career to date, Abughazaleh has worked for IT behemoths such as HP, Seagate, Dell Technologies EMC and Lenovo to name a few.

However, in 2014, the dynamic and charismatic technology innovator and entrepreneur decided to branch out on his own, and started Action-to-Action LTD.

Under the umbrella of that holding company is Action-to-Action Robotics.

At its core, Action-to-Action Robotics is an automation company that is designed to showcase and illustrate how humanoid robotics can be nurtured, leveraged and harnessed to transform businesses outcomes, processes and performance.



In a candid discussion with CNME, Abughazaleh kickstarted the conversation by highlighting the factors that led Abughazaleh to start Action-to-Action.

“My background was working with large technology players such as HP and Dell, but I could see that things were changing, and I could also see that there was this huge depth of young talent that were hungry to leverage technology to start revolutionising industries. Nowadays, there is a huge tech start-up ecosystem, but that was not the case 10 years. The combination of all these factors and the speed at which technology was developing led me to start Action-to-Action,” said Abughazaleh.

He stressed how he firmly believes that the adoption, integration and implementation of humanoid robotics can truly transform major industry verticals, and society as a whole.

“As I stated earlier, Action-to-Action Robotics was founded over a decade ago, out of a burning passion for innovation and technology. From the start, we envisioned how advancements in robotics and AI would transform people’s daily lives. Our goal has always been to address complex challenges through practical solutions, using robotics and AI, while also developing advanced applications to complement our offerings. As a technology company, our mission is clear and straightforward, and that is to solve complex problems practically and efficiently through the use of robotics and AI,” said Abughazaleh.

Abughazaleh then outlined how he was inspired to pivot his company towards robotics and humanoids after observing how Japan was leveraging robotics to help tackle the problem they faced with an ageing population.



“I was in Japan in 2012, and SoftBank at this point had not yet acquired Aldebaran Robotics, which was the robotics manufacturer that created Pepper, the semi-humanoid robot. I was intrigued to see how Japan was planning to use Pepper, and other semi-humanoid robots to help their senior citizens and ageing population. However, at that moment it clicked in my mind that this robotics movements was going to go much further, and that’s why I decided to position the company as a leader in robotics technology,” said Abughazaleh.

The conversation then shifted to how advancements in AI technology, such as LLM and NLP, has served to really accelerate the robotics movement on a global scale.

“There are a number of factors that has propelled the robotics space, but I certainly think it has become more accessible. If you look back to 10-15 years ago, the entry level in terms of cost for a humanoid would’ve cost you an arm and leg, however,

with more and more players entering the game, it has made it more accessible and affordable,” said Abughazaleh.

Abughazaleh then went into more detail on the characteristics that ultimately define what humanoid robotics encompasses.

“Essentially, humanoid robotics involves robots that are designed to resemble and mimic human anatomy and behaviour, featuring bipedal locomotion, dexterous manipulation, and sensor integration for interacting with human environments. Key developments include reinforcement learning for improved locomotion, natural language processing for better human-robot communication, computer vision for enhanced perception, emotional AI for recognizing and responding to human emotions, and

autonomous decision-making, all of which are pushing humanoid robots closer to real-world applications in various industries,” said Abughazaleh.

Action-to-Action Robotics has enjoyed huge success as a commercial entity, and under the enigmatic guidance of Abughazaleh appears to be going from strength-to-strength.

However, it’s fair to say that the robotics industry is an ultra-competitive landscape, but Abughazaleh cleverly articulated what makes his company stand out from the crowd.

“We ask ourselves the same question every year, and that is are we going to be there next year? You have to continually keep pushing boundaries. My view is we need to be always thinking about now, tomorrow and the next 10 years, that has to be the mindset in order to remain successful. However, ultimately what I think differentiates us is having the right team and right people in place. Technology is obviously key, but it is the people that make the difference, and thankfully for us, we have an incredible team in place that can drive the technology in the right direction to ensure the projects that we deliver are successful for our customers,” said Abughazaleh.

Abughazaleh also



As a technology company, our mission is clear and straightforward, and that is to solve complex problems practically and efficiently through the use of robotics and AI.”

highlighted how their decade-long presence in the market had garnered a lot of trust in the company with both public and private sector entities across the Middle East region.

“As a pioneering entity in the Robotics and AI sector in the Middle East, we benefit from extensive visibility and influence in the region. With over a decade of experience deploying cutting-edge robotics solutions, our firm has built an exceptional reputation across public, private, and government sectors. Our notable projects span diverse areas, including healthcare, particularly hospitals, government and semi-government agencies, and educational institutions focused on research and development. Additionally, we have successfully delivered complex, customized solutions for transportation agencies, demonstrating our capability to address intricate and multifaceted challenges in various domains,” said Abughazaleh.

Action-to-Action Robotics have a broad and diverse portfolio when it comes to their suite of solutions and services, so rather inevitably they have the ability to serve a lot of key industries verticals.

However, as Abughazaleh explains, their solutions are better suited to what he described as the ‘caregiving industry’.

“One of the best segments for us when it comes to industry verticals is undoubtedly healthcare. We noticed when we started that nobody was going to say we want 10 robots in 10 hospitals,



there was a barrier to market, which was determined fundamentally by cost and compliance. We launched the concept of robotics-as-a-service to make it more affordable for them to trial the technology, and enabled them to experiment with our robotics to see the impact it could have on their day-to-day operations. In summary, Humanoid robotics is most utilized in the healthcare and caregiving industry, where their human-like appearance and interaction capabilities are well-suited for tasks such as patient care, rehabilitation, and companionship. Their ability to communicate naturally, recognize emotions, and assist with physical tasks makes them ideal for supporting both patients and healthcare workers – and the whole movement was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Abughazaleh.

Abughazaleh also stressed that industries such as hospitality and education are also good fits for humanoid robotics.

“Beyond healthcare, humanoid robots have

the potential to transform industries like customer service, hospitality, and education, where their human-like presence can enhance customer interactions, provide personalized services, and support learning environments, making them valuable assets in roles that require empathy, adaptability, and complex human interaction,” said Abughazaleh.

AI is everywhere, and following the advent of ChatGPT by OpenAI, the technology landscape is awash with Generative AI.

Enterprises across all verticals are now revisiting their AI investment strategies to see where they can harness the transformative capabilities of the technology.

However, Abughazaleh stressed the need for businesses to develop AI solutions that actually deliver outcomes for their customers, and he highlighted how their experience centre plays a unique role in helping to demonstrate how they use AI technologies.

“One of our most effective strategies is to demonstrate

the capabilities of humanoid robots in action. At our Robotics Experience Centre in Dubai, our clients can engage directly with these robots, gaining hands-on experience and see first-hand what they can do. On the technology side, we integrate advanced machine learning algorithms that enable real-time learning and decision-making. By improving sensor fusion and data processing, our robots can better understand and react to dynamic environments. Additionally, AI-driven simulation and predictive modelling allow the robots to anticipate changes and adapt accordingly, enhancing their ability to perform complex tasks with greater precision and autonomy. However, it's important to stress the need to businesses that you need to deliver results and outcomes, a shiny technology is nice, but does it solve a problem, and that is the question you need to ask yourself when setting out on your AI journey," said Abughazaleh.

Capitalism by its very definition could be described as an economic system designed not for the many, but the few.

However, there's no denying the benefit of capitalism and the free-market system, but collaboration and capitalism are something that certainly never came hand-in-hand.

That is starting to change, especially in the IT and technology domains, and in order to ensure success, more and more companies are collaborating together instead of going head-to-head, and Abughazaleh is a business

leader who subscribes to the idea that collaboration is good for growth.


"To deliver robust solutions that effectively and cost-efficiently address practical challenges, it is essential to strategically collaborate with both local technology institutions and educational organizations, as well as establish partnerships on an international level. For instance, our technology and support MOU with Taiwan's Institute for Information Industry (III) has provided us with valuable access to emerging technologies and tech start-ups, fostering mutual benefits for both parties. Another noteworthy example is our recent partnership between Action-to-Action Robotics and British University College. This collaboration aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry by offering students exceptional opportunities for hands-on experience, research collaboration, and professional development in the fields of Robotics and AI," said Abughazaleh.

Despite the fact that AI is becoming more democratized and accessible to the mainstream, there still are some Orwellian fears over what impact humanoid robots will have on society.

Some are fearful of the fact that once the genie is out of

the bottle it is hard to put back in, and despite the evident benefits of its introduction, the jury in some people's minds are still out.

However, Abughazaleh concluded a wonderful conversation by reinforcing his view that humanoid robots will enhance our quality of life.

"While it's natural to have concerns about humanoid robots, it's important to recognize the significant positive impact they can have on society. These robots are designed to assist, not replace, humans in roles where support is most needed, such as in healthcare, where they can help care for the elderly, assist in rehabilitation, and provide companionship. They can take on dangerous tasks, reducing human risk in hazardous environments, and improve accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Rather than being Orwellian, humanoid robots are tools created to enhance our quality of life, empower us to focus on more creative and meaningful work, and address challenges that humans alone cannot solve efficiently. Embracing this technology with responsible development and ethical considerations can lead to a future where humanoid robots are trusted partners in improving human well-being," said Abughazaleh. 



These robots are designed to assist, not replace, humans in roles where support is most needed, such as in healthcare, where they can help care for the elderly, assist in rehabilitation, and provide companionship."

Mappable

GETTING ON THE 'MAP'

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Sabina Mirza-Akhmedova**, CEO at mapping, geospatial and navigation solution provider Mappable, to better understand how their bespoke technological solutions are designed to serve the local market across the UAE, and how their suite of solutions are empowering better business outcomes and customer experiences for their clients.

Sabina Mirza-Akhmedova is the Chief Executive Officer at Mappable, an exciting technology company that provides customizable and locally-relevant mapping and routing solutions across the UAE.

Mirza-Akhmedova is the enigmatic force behind the rapid growth of the company over the last number of years.

Since assuming the responsibility of CEO in October 2022, she has utilised her experience in strategizing and spearheading large scale IT projects to put Mappable on the map pardon the pun.

She has quickly established herself as a business leader within the technology ecosystem across the MENA region, and it's clear from our conversation that she is driven, has a purpose and a vision for Mappable, and subscribes to the belief that technology should not only empower, but inspire.

In a stellar career to date,



Mirza-Akhmedova has worked for Deloitte, KPMG, and technology company Yandex, prior to her move to Mappable.

Mirza-Akhmedova kickstarted the conversation by outlining the business model behind Mappable, and how it's ability to provide such tailored services was a

market differentiator for the geospatial company.

"Our suite of solutions and services are deliberately very tailored to the MENA region, and this is quintessentially what Mappable is all about. We have designed our technologies to serve the unique landscape of the MENA region, but particularly in the UAE. If you examine some of the other leading geospatial players in the market then you'll see that they are all very global, and don't focus specifically on one area. That business model makes sense for them because they have global customers and partners, and they simply don't have the time to focus exclusively on one small region.

However, that represented an opportunity for us to provide a really bespoke service, and that's why we decided to focus initially on the MENA region," said Mirza-Akhmedova.

The enigmatic driving force behind Mappable added that just because the company is focused primarily on the MENA region, doesn't mean they don't harbour ambitions to scale the company and expand their services to different regions.

"We are headquartered in Dubai, and we really want to have our technological, cartography and customer focus on the UAE, KSA and Qatar. We feel that we have now reached a stage where



We have designed our technologies to serve the unique landscape of the MENA region, but particularly in the UAE."

our technology is detailed and granular enough across these regions to the extent where we really understand both the data and the requests from our clients. We definitely will move on to more regions, but we'll do this together with our clients. The clients we work with are local and operating within the UAE, but they are also regional and have aspirations to go global, so we want to follow their lead and go on this journey with them hand-in-hand as a technology partner," said Mirza-Akhmedova.

Mirza-Akhmedova highlighted how the landscape across the Middle East was rather 'peculiar' compared to Europe and North America, and that in itself presents a unique set of challenges.

As the CEO pointed out, people in Dubai think vertically due to skyscraper skyline that spans the entire city.

"The MENA region in terms of its landscape is quite peculiar. If you take the European landscape for example, then it's fair to say that it is pretty horizontal, and the addressing system has been well-established for centuries all across Europe. However, the same can't be said for the MENA region, it is so different here, and the entire city of Dubai is vertical, and that creates challenges in itself. The people that live here think in vertical terms, they are not going to use the name of the street, or the building number, instead they will use the name of the tower. So, this is something that we need to adhere and cater to

in order to get closer to the customers. We're a B2B provider, but ultimately our real customers are the customers of our clients," said Mirza-Akhmedova.

The technology on offer from Mappable can be utilised across a broad range of industry verticals, but the company has made huge inroads in customizing their technology in areas such as ride-hailing services, logistics and e-commerce.

"We have a number of clients that operate in the ride-hailing space, for example. Essentially, we're trying to cover all the potential scenarios that may occur during the entire process, such as selecting your car, then your driver. In addition to this, we want to relay the information to the end-user in relation to where the driver is, and is he using the turn-by-turn navigation. In my opinion, the customer interface is the most important component in this entire interaction. When you're ordering a taxi you need to establish a couple of important fundamentals such as a clear pick-up point, and a clear drop-off location. In order to ensure that happens seamlessly then you need to have a full database in terms of points of interests within the city," said Mirza-Akhmedova.

In order for businesses to deliver frictionless services then they need access to the most 'up to date' map on the market.

"If a customer wants to go to a new restaurant that has just opened, and that map doesn't have this new information then the experience is not going to be a good one, and you know in relation to the way that Dubai is designed, that if you miss one exit then it adds 10-15 minutes to your journey time. So, if that experience with that app is not a good one, then users will switch to another ride-hailing application, we don't have a high tolerance for bad customer experiences in the new digital economy we live in. Typically, people who order taxis are in a rush, so if you tell them you're going to pick them up in 8 minutes, for example, then you need to pick them

up in 8 minutes. It's all about managing expectations and delivering on what you're promising. In the current experience economy climate that we all live in, businesses can't afford to get it wrong, otherwise they won't survive," said Mirza-Akhmedova.

When pressed on the actual technological solutions driving the business model at Mappable, Mirza-Akhmedova highlighted the phenomenal impact of its Distance Matrix API has had.

"In terms of the solutions that we provide to help businesses to be able to predict and calculate the length and time of their journeys, one of these solutions is called Distance Matrix API. It essentially calculates the distance between Point A (pick-up) and Point B (drop-off) – but as we all know, and especially in a city like Dubai, you need to factor in elements such as traffic. Our Distance Matrix takes into consideration not only traffic – historical and real-time, but also weather forecasts, adding additional accuracy to the route calculation" said Mirza-Akhmedova.

In April 2024, there was apocalyptic flash flooding in Dubai, and all over the UAE.

The biblical flooding led to huge traffic disruption, and this freakish weather incident left many organisations completely unprepared.

However, according to the Mappable CEO, their Distance Matrix can adapt in real-time to inclement weather conditions.

"The flash flooding in



Our Neurogeocoder API solution is our answer to be as customizable and as high-tech as possible.”

April caused chaos in Dubai, and the disruption didn't go away overnight, with some roads impassable for days, so you've got to ensure that your technology is adaptable to be able to respond to issues in real-time. The common theme here is adaptability and being able to react and respond in real-time. The beauty and unique capabilities of the Distance Matrix API is that it learns to take into account volatile weather conditions at certain times, and factors that into its calculations for journeys at certain times, and that is a powerful tool to have for businesses that operate in this space,” said Mirza-Akhmedova.

The conversation then shifted to another of their flagship solutions that is helping put Mappable on the map.

The Neurogeocoder API solution provides businesses with the opportunity to ‘customize’ the map according to their own specific needs and requirements.

“Our Neurogeocoder API solution is our answer to be as customizable and as high-tech as possible. We're trying to leverage AI in our business because it has become a fundamental part of all our lives. To take a step back for a moment, what is a geocoder without the Neuro part? Essentially, the geocoder is the technology that when you're inputting an address, the geocoder finds that that address and puts it into the exact point required on the map. You're putting a pin on the map, and the geocoder will translate all the coordinates


into the address,” said Mirza-Akhmedova.

However, as the Mappable CEO outlined, many issues stem from the fact that people aren't always very accurate with their inputs, and they can make mistakes, and don't always know the exact address, and can make typos, and this inevitably can create challenges, but by leveraging AI technology, their Neurogeocoder API can counteract the problem in an effective manner.

“If the input has a mistake the Neurogeocoder can still get the correct coordinates as it a machine learning tool and can access previous requests to learn in real-time. It is becoming smarter all the time. The reason I used the word customizable earlier was the fact that the Neurogeocoder can be tailored to meet specific industry demands, so based on that sector's requirements, the Neurogeocoder can be customized to adapt and deliver for what these individual customers want from their application, and that is a gamechanger,” said Mirza-Akhmedova.

Mirza-Akhmedova concluded what was a wonderfully enlightening conversation, in which she superbly articulated the vision of Mappable by highlighting what she felt differentiates the company in what is an ultra-competitive space.

According to the Mappable CEO, locality, customization and its investment strategy were the three core components in what makes the company stand out from the crowd.

“There are three things that I believe differentiate us from our market rivals, and the first one is we are specifically local, and that is our strategic approach. We're on the ground, we have our staff here, and we are committed to this market and have a desire to understand the unique needs of the region. I think this is key, because if you're not on the ground, then you won't be able to understand and experience the challenges faced by your clients, and you won't be able to cater to what they need. The second part is customization, this is critically important. We are willing to customize our map data and solutions, and we want to grow our business together with our customers, and I think this is a powerful thing. The final element is based around our investment strategy. We are investing heavily in our technology, and we're not resting on our laurels and early success. When you operate in a B2B space you can't just focus on sales and marketing, and being local, you have got to keep pace with new technologies and be at the forefront of cutting-edge solutions in order to keep innovating - and these are core principles and values that we have as a company at Mappable. We want to lead, and we are leading,” concluded Mirza-Akhmedova. 

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3M Data

DELIVERING EXTRAORDINARY OUTCOMES

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with the dynamic executive leadership team at **3M Data**, in an effort to better understand the company's vision, strategy for future growth – and how its ability to deliver 'extraordinary outcomes' is what differentiates 3M Data from its market rivals.



Earlier this month, CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to Mohamad Hejazi, General Manager of 3M Data, Mohamad Jamous, Sales Director at 3M Data, and Musa Kazim, Director of Services at 3M Data, for a broader overview on the Saudi-based IT services and consulting leader.

3M Data has described itself as an entity that is 'powering the digital revolution' across the Kingdom.

Despite being a new entity, 3M Data already has a broad portfolio, with an array of technological solutions from next-gen cloud architecture, managed services, and



Our purpose is to create and deploy digital transformation of the highest standard, enhancing the way we live and work."

cybersecurity that makes the company the perfect fit for enterprises looking for tangible business outcomes amidst a backdrop of rapid digital transformation.

The company has declared that it is in the business of delivering 'extraordinary outcomes' across major industry verticals.

Mohamad Hejazi is a hugely respected IT leader, not only in the KSA, but across the Middle East.

He came to prominence in the IT landscape across the KSA over the last 15 years, but earlier this year, Hejazi decided alongside two of his industry peers to establish 3M Data.

He kickstarted our conversation by highlighting the factors that led to him to form 3M Data.

"The journey of 3M Data began with three industry leaders who have been in the market for over 15 years, particularly in the Saudi Arabian and Middle Eastern

markets. We worked closely together in our previous roles, achieving significant success and delivering exciting projects. After years of collaborating and understanding the market's needs, we decided to come together and take on a new challenge. Our goal was to create a company that could exceed client expectations and provide even more comprehensive solutions than we had in the past," said Hejazi.

Hejazi added that 3M Data has lofty aspirations and ambitions, and stated that they want to bring 'bold' ideas to fruition.

"Our vision is to embody the boldest ideas and bring them to life. We're dedicated to building the technological foundations for some of the most visionary projects in the Middle East. Our purpose is to create and deploy digital transformation of the highest standard, enhancing the way we live and work. We focus on synergizing expertise in next-generation cloud architecture, AI and automation, digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and managed services. This vision drives our strategic initiatives and innovation efforts," said Hejazi.

Hejazi also said that in terms of some of the guiding fundamental principles that are at the core of what 3M Data stands for, establishing trust was high on their agenda.

"Our values are centered around focus, flexibility, and trust. We strive to be a trusted partner for our

clients, ensuring that we are perfectly positioned to take on their challenges and deliver outcomes that exceed expectations. These values guide every aspect of our work, from strategic planning to execution," said Hejazi.

CNME then spoke to the man responsible for overseeing the sales operations of 3M Data.

Mohamed Jamous, is the Sales Director at 3M Data and he believes the company's ability to incorporate AI, automation, and advanced technologies into its solutions is a key market differentiator.

He discussed their sales strategy, and outlined how it was closely aligned with the goals and objectives of the KSA's Vision 2030 economic reformation program.

"Our sales strategy is deeply aligned with the digital transformation initiatives outlined in Vision 2030 for Saudi Arabia. This includes a strong focus on cloud computing and cybersecurity. We see significant investment in these areas, and our strategy is to position ourselves as a leading partner for organizations undergoing these transformations. Our approach is to align with these national objectives, ensuring that we meet the technological needs of our customers while supporting the broader vision for the

region," said Jamous.

Echoing the sentiments expressed by his General Manager, Jamous reiterated how the company is inspired to be 'bold'.

"The idea of being the boldest is about leading the market with cutting-edge technology and innovative solutions. Our strategy is not just about providing traditional services; it's about bringing the right technical aspects to empower the next generation of products in the region. We're focused on being ahead of the curve, offering solutions that are not only current but also future-proof," said Jamous.

Jamous highlighted how the demand for cloud services across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has seen the company pivot their solutions towards that market vertical in particular.

"We are focusing to provide our clients a unique and advance approach, where we aim to differentiate ourselves by incorporating the advanced technologies into our offerings. On the cloud side, we're targeting the rapidly growing demand for cloud services in the Middle East. The cloud journey in this region is just beginning, and we see enormous potential to help organizations transition to the cloud efficiently and securely," said Jamous.



Our strategy is not just about providing traditional services; it's about bringing the right technical aspects to empower the next generation of technology in the region."

AI is everywhere, and when asked how does he see the cloud market evolving over the next few years, Jamous believes the implementation of AI will drastically change the landscape.

“We anticipate massive demand for cloud, AI and cybersecurity in the next five to seven years in the middle East. As organizations expand and adopt more AI and cloud-based solutions, the need for robust security measures will grow. We plan to be at the forefront of this transformation, providing the expertise and technology needed to support these developments,” said Jamous.

The final person on the executive leadership team that I spoke to was Musa Kazim, Director of Services at 3M Data.

He highlighted the two major pillars on which its product portfolio is designed, and again believes that this is another market differentiator for the company.

“Our portfolio is built around two major pillars. The first is system integration, where we focus on network security, workplace collaboration, and other core technologies. However, we don't approach this like a traditional system integrator. We're heavily focused on incorporating Cloud services, AI, automation, and advanced tools into our solutions, which sets us apart in the market,” said Kazim.

Musa added that cloud and cybersecurity are key areas of focus for 3M Data, and said they were wholly committed

to helping their customers yield the transformative benefits of cloud technologies and services.

“The cloud is a critical part of our strategy. We're focusing on the full spectrum of cloud services, including on-premise data centers, private clouds, public clouds, and multi-cloud environments. In the Middle East, the cloud journey is still in its early stages, which presents a huge opportunity for us to lead. We aim to help organizations navigate this journey from start to finish, ensuring they



Whether it's cloud, cybersecurity or system integration, we're here to lead the way.”

get the most out of their cloud investments,” said Kazim.

The cybersecurity landscape is complex to say the least, and its imperative for companies to be agile and adaptable, as new threat actors continue to emerge.

Musa believes that AI technology can empower companies, enhancing their ability to defend against potential threats effectively.

“Cybersecurity is a paramount priority for us. We are focusing on key areas such as consulting services, with a strong emphasis on cloud security, governance, risk, and compliance (GRC), as well as securing operational technologies (OT) and implementing advanced cybersecurity solutions, whether in on-premises, cloud, or multi-cloud environments. As threats continue to evolve, so do our

strategies. We are committed to staying ahead of the curve by integrating the latest AI and automation technologies into our cybersecurity offerings. This proactive approach ensures that our clients remain protected at all times,” said Kazim.

Musa concluded a wonderful insight into the vision of 3M Data by reiterating that its focus is primarily to be a trusted partner for its customers, and believes the company is well-positioned to meet the market demands of the KSA.

“The Middle East is in a phase of cloud readiness, where many organizations are looking for trusted advisors to guide them through their cloud journeys. At the same time, as cloud adoption increases, so does the need for robust cybersecurity. We're seeing a massive demand for these services, and we believe this demand will only grow in the coming years. 3M Data is perfectly positioned to meet these needs, helping clients navigate the complexities of cloud adoption while ensuring their data remains secure. Just to reiterate, our focus is on being a trusted partner for our clients. We're committed to delivering high-quality, innovative solutions that meet their needs and help them achieve their goals. Whether it's cloud, cybersecurity, or system integration, we're here to lead the way,” said Kazim. 



“COMING 1ST IN 93 OUT OF 100 PRODUCT TESTS IN 2023 IS NO COINCIDENCE”

– TOUFIC DERBASS

CNME Editor Mark Forker, sat down with **Toufic Derbass**, Managing Director, Middle East, Turkey, and Africa at Kaspersky, to learn more about how the global cybersecurity leader was equipping their customers with the products required to bolster cyber immunity, why he feels their holistic approach to cybersecurity is the most effective method needed in the fight against cybercrime, the success of its independent product reviews in 2023 - and what government and organisations across the MENA region need to do to quell attacks on critical infrastructure .

Toufic Derbass is regarded by many of his industry peers to be one of the most effective sales leaders in the global multinational software business.

In a stellar career thus far, Derbass made his name at HP, where he spent 14 years, and he has also worked for technology giants such as HPE, SAP, and Nortel Networks.

He also worked for Micro Focus, and was the company's Managing Director for the Middle East & Africa before it was acquired by OpenText in 2023.

In January of this year, Derbass was appointed the Managing Director for the Middle East, Turkey & Africa at global cybersecurity leader Kaspersky.

In a candid discussion with CNME, Derbass brilliantly articulated his vision for the cybersecurity

practitioner across the META region.

He kickstarted the conversation by outlining why he believes a holistic approach to tackling cybersecurity is 'essential' in our increasingly connected world.

“Now that the world is more connected than



A holistic approach to cybersecurity is no longer optional – it's essential. A holistic approach importantly ensures every part of an organization's infrastructure is secure, leaving no vulnerability exposed to cybercriminals.”



ever, a holistic approach to cybersecurity is no longer optional – it's essential. A holistic approach importantly ensures every part of an organization's infrastructure is secure, leaving no vulnerability exposed to cybercriminals. The best way to explain this approach is to think of an organization as a house, where all entry points need to be secured – consider the doors, windows, the gate and even the chimney. This is no different to an organization's IT infrastructure, while it changes from one company to another, they need to protect endpoints, mobile devices, cloud services, servers and your network, as well as your virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) and any other entry point viable," said Derbass.

Derbass also stressed that within that holistic approach employee training and threat intelligence must take precedence.

"We can proudly say that Kaspersky's portfolio of

solutions offers a holistic approach to protecting all potential entry points – but organizations must not stop there – the security approach must also include Threat Intelligence and employee training; which Kaspersky offers in different bandwidths for employees and IT specialists alike. Having a wide-ranging portfolio of products and services allows us to efficiently mirror the needs of the company. By covering the entire digital ecosystem with a proactive defense, companies can have rigid protection that also maximizes IT security investments. This allows businesses to not only safeguard their most critical assets but also scale security in a way that supports long-



The sharp rise in attacks on critical infrastructure is a direct consequence of the rapid digitization that the industry is witnessing, ranging from automation to the adoption of IoT."

term growth and resilience," said Derbass.

There has been an exponential increase in attacks on critical infrastructure across the MENA region over the last 12 months.

When pressed on why there has been such a spike in attacks on critical infrastructure, Derbass pointed to what he described as a 'rapid digitalisation' across multiple industry verticals across the MENA region.

"The sharp rise in attacks on critical infrastructure is a direct consequence of the rapid digitization that the industry is witnessing, ranging from automation to the adoption of IoT. While digital transformation brings significant operational improvements, it also introduces new vulnerabilities. Cybercriminals have been quick to exploit this, especially given the lack of communication between Information Technology (IT) and Operational Technology (OT). Such disconnect worsens the gap between the practical and technical, making critical infrastructure even more susceptible to cyberattacks. In fact, our telemetry shows that over 30% of all industrial computers in the Middle East were targeted with malware

in the first half of this year,” said Derbass.

In terms of how Kaspersky is helping governments and enterprises across the GCC region, Derbass highlighted how they were using cyber immunity products and their IoT Security Gateway 3.0 solutions.

In addition to this, he shed light on pioneering ICS research and their specialised training programs for OT professionals.

“We aim to help governments and organizations best protect their critical infrastructure by leveraging our sector-focused products and services, from intelligence services and security assessments, to training programs and Cyber Immunity products, such as Kaspersky IoT Security Gateway 3.0 (KISG). In short, this is a Cyber Immune gateway to protect industrial internet of things (IIoT). This is why Kaspersky has been pioneering ICS research and has a dedicated ICS CERT team, an industry-first, which is focused on identifying vulnerabilities and securing industrial environments. Through our ICS Security Assessment service, governments and organizations are provided with actionable intelligence and insights into potential threats, like identifying indicators of compromise. We also offer specialized training programs for IT and OT professionals, designed to bridge the skills gap and equip them with the necessary expertise. Through

such solutions, Kaspersky ensures that as industries modernize, their security evolves in tandem, protecting vital assets from the growing number of cyberthreats as the world continues its digitization,” said Derbass.

Critical infrastructure encompasses systems, facilities and assets that are absolutely vital in order for a society and economy to function properly, so it is almost goes without saying how imperative it is that they are protected.

When asked for what he believed were the best steps, measures and practices that organizations needed to adopt in order to avoid becoming unstuck by a cyberattack on their critical infrastructure, Derbass was unequivocal in declaring that the approach needed to be wholly comprehensive.

“You need to start with regular audits and security assessments of IT infrastructure. Security teams must also ensure timely updates of the enterprise’s OT network. Additionally, reliable protection of industrial networks and automation systems must be enabled, using specialized solutions such as Kaspersky Industrial CyberSecurity. This is an operational technology XDR platform that offers scalability and IT-OT Convergence with Kaspersky ecosystem. Training is another important aspect that needs to be organized, specifically designed for those employees who work with industrial control systems and those

directly responsible for IT/OT Security. Finally, teams need to be provided with up-to-date threat intelligence on the industrial control systems they protect – a service which our ICS Threat Intelligence reporting provides, offering updates into attack vectors and other OT vulnerabilities, as well as ways to mitigate them,” said Derbass.

Critical infrastructure has been a key focus in developing Kaspersky’s Cyber Immunity approach. Derbass revealed that one of their first products was designed for this industry, given it is highly susceptible to attacks and extremely essential for global economies.

CNME asked Derbass on the changes and enhancements that have been made to their cyber immunity portfolio.

“Our Cyber Immunity portfolio is evolving to meet the growing automation of critical processes and technologies. Our approach is reshaping the future of cybersecurity by moving away from traditional methods toward secure-by-design IT systems. The latest addition, Kaspersky IoT Security Gateway 3.0 (KISG), is a Cyber Immune gateway that we’ll be showcasing at GITEX, designed to secure communication between technological and corporate data networks, providing robust protection for the industrial Internet of Things (IIoT). At GITEX, we are also going to be launching our Kaspersky Appcenter, which is a digital application distribution platform for

KasperskyOS-based devices. It connects end-users, developers, and vendors, facilitating the discovery of new applications and offering developers tools and support to build secure-by-design solutions,” said Derbass.

Derbass claimed that their strategy was gaining ‘global momentum’.

“These innovations help to strengthen an organization’s security posture by embedding protection into the core of IT infrastructure. Our Cyber Immunity strategy is gaining global momentum, underscoring the need for cybersecurity to be a fundamental, integrated part of critical systems. This is the future of secure operations across industries,” said Derbass.

The dial of the conversation then switched to Kaspersky’s detailed and comprehensive Dark Web Threats Report, which detailed some of the biggest threats facing organisations in the Middle East.

According to Derbass, the report only served to reinforce the ongoing threat of ‘hactivism’.

“At Kaspersky, we have a dedicated Digital Footprint Intelligence team that help customers to monitor their digital assets and detect threats from the Deep and Dark web. In fact, Kaspersky is the only vendor that offers this service and it’s fully available in the region. In our latest report covering the first half of 2024, the Digital Footprint Intelligence team revealed some of the most



prominent Dark web threats targeting organizations across the region. In particular, they found that ransomware groups were most pervasive in the UAE and Saudi Arabia – 19 of which are operating across the Middle East. The report also highlights the ongoing threat of hacktivism, which is another distinct pain point due to the geopolitical turbulence that the region is currently facing,” said Derbass.

Other threat actors that emerged from the dark web report was the ongoing problem with stolen user accounts across the KSA, UAE and Egypt.

“Other threats, such as info stealers and data leaks, were also stressed in this report – especially given the fact that almost 10 million records of stolen user accounts were identified by our team, with info stealers being most widespread in Egypt, KSA and the UAE. Such figures provide further reason for our customers to monitor their assets on the Dark web, where they can receive these types of valuable intelligence through our Threat Intelligence Portal, which has recently been

updated. The portal provides customers with real-time alerts to respond quickly and effectively to potential threats, mitigating against the dangers of the Deep and Dark web,” said Derbass.

The threat landscape is constantly evolving, but it appears to be heightened even more following the advent of ChatGPT by Open AI, which has triggered the Generative AI revolution.

Derbass explained how Kaspersky is using AI to detect cyberthreats.

“The cybersecurity landscape is constantly evolving in line with emerging technologies, like AI. At Kaspersky, we’ve been using AI for nearly two decades – it has been crucial when analyzing our vast amounts of data and malware, detecting rapid developments in cyberthreats. However, cybercriminals are also leveraging AI to launch more sophisticated attacks, such as deepfakes and AI-generated phishing schemes. In addition to this, the issue of data privacy must be addressed, especially since AI tools are becoming ever more prevalent in our day-to-day. In fact,

a recent Kaspersky survey found that 95% of C-suite respondents knew that GenAI tools were being used in their organization and more than half were worried about the possibility of their employees leaking sensitive information as a result,” said Derbass.

When asked did he think that AI is a major threat to cybersecurity, or is it more complex attacks such as APTs that pose a greater threat, Derbass conceded that AI-powered threats do present significant challenges to cybersecurity practitioners.

“While AI-powered threats pose significant challenges, Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs) remain among the most dangerous, especially in today’s geopolitical climate. APTs are often state-sponsored, highly complex, and costly, designed for espionage or sabotage. They target both the private and public sectors, with industries like government, diplomacy, telecom, healthcare, manufacturing, and aviation being prime targets. Kaspersky is currently monitoring 20 APT groups operating in the Middle East, reflecting the growing

threat to critical sectors. Given these threats, it’s vital for organizations to have robust threat intelligence solutions that not only detect but anticipate cybercriminal tactics. Kaspersky’s Threat Intelligence provides critical visibility, helping organizations to stay one step ahead,” said Derbass.

When you think of cybersecurity one of the first names you think of is undoubtedly Kaspersky.

When asked what ultimately differentiates Kaspersky from their market rivals, and how they have been able to sustain huge success over such a long period of time, Derbass

our innovative products have been regularly tested by independent vendors for performance, and I’m proud to say that Kaspersky is the most tested and awarded brand in the industry. We received 1st place in 93 out of a 100 independent tests and reviews in 2023. This is a real success and a testament to our pioneering efforts in creating reliable cybersecurity solutions for our valued customers.

Given this, what truly sets Kaspersky apart is our Cyber Immunity approach. We’ve redefined industry standards by delivering secure-by-design IT systems, shifting




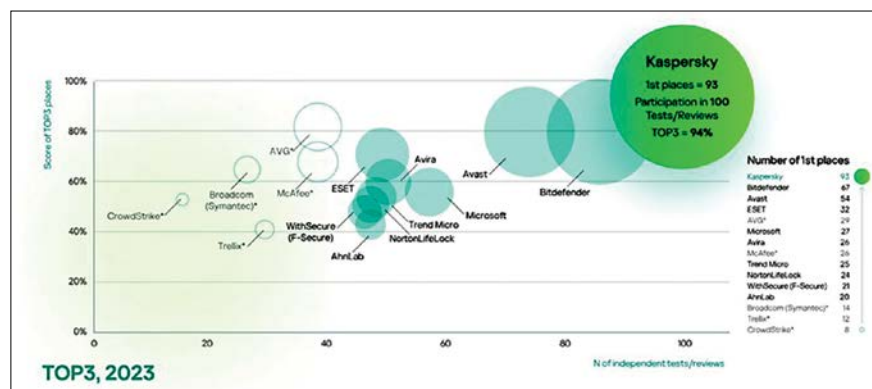
What truly sets Kaspersky apart is our Cyber Immunity approach. We’ve redefined industry standards by delivering secure-by-design IT systems, shifting away from traditional cybersecurity models.”

pointed to their relentless commitment to innovation and pushing boundaries.

However, he did once again stress that a real market differentiator for them was their cyber immunity approach.

“Throughout the years,

away from traditional cybersecurity models. This strategy is gaining significant global momentum as more organizations recognize the need for inherently secure technologies. In the coming years, we expect this shift to continue accelerating. By continuously expanding our Cyber Immune product lineup, we stay at the forefront of cybersecurity excellence, meeting growing demands for the security that is embedded into the very fabric of IT systems. This forward-thinking approach keeps us ahead of market trends and sustains our leadership in the industry,” said Derbass. 



Technology Opinion

THE FUTURE IS AUTONOMOUS

Roman Ziemian, a serial entrepreneur known for his technological ventures, delves into how Dubai is swiftly advancing toward a future of autonomous transportation, positioning itself as a global leader in smart mobility and innovation.

The UAE has always been at the forefront of technological advancement, particularly in transportation.

With its visionary leadership and commitment to innovation, the country is making significant strides in the integration of self-driving vehicles, which will not only revolutionise transportation but also enhance its urban infrastructure.

The government's ambitious plans for autonomous vehicles signal a promising future where technology is at the heart of mobility.



is not just about embracing novelty. It is part of a larger effort to make transportation safer, more efficient, and more environmentally friendly.

Self-driving cars have the potential to significantly reduce traffic accidents, most of which are caused by human error.

Moreover, by optimising routes and driving behaviour, autonomous vehicles can help cut down on fuel consumption and carbon emissions, making them a key component of Dubai's sustainability initiatives.

DUBAI'S VISION: THE DUBAI AUTONOMOUS TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY

Dubai, in particular, is already setting the pace globally with its cutting-edge approach to automotive technology.

One of the most ambitious plans currently underway is the **Dubai Autonomous Transportation Strategy**, which aims to transform 25% of all transportation in the city to autonomous modes by 2030.

This target aligns with the broader vision of making

Dubai the smartest city in the world, a goal firmly rooted in its leadership's drive for progress.

While 25% may seem like a daunting figure, the RTA has already achieved remarkable progress, with 9.4% of transportation now operating autonomously. This momentum underscores Dubai's commitment to achieving its objectives within the next six years.

This shift toward autonomous transportation

A GLOBAL FIRST: SELF-DRIVING CHEVROLET BOLT TRIALS IN DUBAI

One of the most significant milestones in Dubai's journey toward autonomous transportation was **the launch of the first trial run of self-driving Chevrolet Bolt electric vehicles**. This made Dubai the first city in the world outside of the United States to operate the company's autonomous cars. The introduction of self-driving electric vehicles marks a critical step toward achieving a sustainable, autonomous future.

These trials are not just limited to testing the technology itself; they also serve as a proof of concept for the integration of autonomous vehicles into urban environments.

The seamless interaction between these vehicles and Dubai's existing infrastructure demonstrates the city's readiness to adopt cutting-edge transportation technologies.

AIR TAXIS: THE NEXT FRONTIER IN URBAN MOBILITY

While ground-based autonomous vehicles are the focal point of most discussions, Dubai is also pioneering the future of **air transport in urban areas**.

The city has revealed plans to introduce vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) air taxis, setting the stage for a new era of urban mobility.

Four specific areas have already been identified for air taxi stations, indicating that Dubai's leaders are not content with merely revolutionizing ground transport—they have their sights set on the skies.

Air taxis offer a unique solution to the growing issue of urban congestion, especially in a fast-paced city like Dubai where space is at a premium.

The introduction of VTOL air taxis would alleviate the strain on existing transportation networks and provide an efficient, futuristic alternative for commuting in and around the city.

Furthermore, by tapping into airspace, Dubai would again place itself ahead of the curve, turning science fiction

into reality while cementing its reputation as a technology hub.

A NEW LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

As part of its strategy to integrate self-driving cars and electric vehicles (EVs) into everyday life, the UAE has also introduced a new **legal framework** to govern the use of these technologies.

The law, enacted in June, reflects the country's adaptability in the face of rapid global changes in the transport industry. It outlines how autonomous vehicles will be regulated, ensuring the safety of passengers and other road users while encouraging further innovation in the field.

By enacting this legal framework, the UAE is demonstrating a forward-thinking approach to technological integration.

It not only acknowledges the potential benefits of autonomous vehicles but also proactively addresses the challenges that come with their deployment, such as cybersecurity risks and ethical considerations. This balanced approach will be crucial in ensuring the smooth adoption of autonomous technologies in the coming years.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

While the prospects of autonomous vehicles in

the UAE are undeniably exciting, several challenges remain. Issues such as public acceptance, data privacy, and infrastructure upgrades will need to be addressed.

The success of autonomous vehicles hinges not just on the technology itself but on creating an environment where these vehicles can operate seamlessly alongside traditional modes of transportation.

On the flip side, the opportunities are immense. The UAE's commitment to investing in autonomous technologies positions the country as a global leader in the field, attracting further investment and talent.

In turn, this fosters a climate of innovation that will benefit other industries as well, from artificial intelligence to renewable energy.

The UAE's focus on self-driving cars and autonomous transportation is a testament to its forward-thinking leadership and its desire to be at the forefront of global innovation. Dubai's progress so far signals that the country is well on its way to becoming a global model for future urban transportation.

By 2030, Dubai's streets (and skies) may look very different, but they will undoubtedly reflect the city's enduring commitment to a smarter, more sustainable future. [enr](#)



This shift toward autonomous transportation is not just about embracing novelty. It is part of a larger effort to make transportation safer, more efficient, and more environmentally friendly.”

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Surface Pro and Surface Laptop deliver the best of AI across devices and the cloud to drive productivity, creativity, innovation, and resilience. To ensure a seamless experience, we built and tested Copilot and Copilot for Microsoft 365 on Surface devices.

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GOVTECH

OCTOBER 2024

MICROSOFT: AT THE FOREFRONT OF AI TRANSFORMATION

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MICROSOFT: AT THE FOREFRONT OF AI TRANSFORMATION

Naim Yazbeck, General Manager of Microsoft UAE, reinforces the company's unwavering commitment to the AI aspirations and ambitions of the UAE, by outlining their plans to train 100,000 government employees in a new AI skilling program in an exclusive interview with GovTech Editor Mark Forker.



MICROSOFT IS VERY MUCH AT THE FOREFRONT OF AI TRANSFORMATION ACROSS THE UAE, AND THERE'S NO MISTAKING THAT. HOWEVER, AT THE END OF THE DAY THE FOUNDATION FOR AI IS CLOUD TECHNOLOGY."

Naim Yazbeck is one of the most respected technology leaders in the Middle East, and one of the most competent IT practitioners when it comes to leading and executing digital transformation programs across multiple industry verticals.

In a storied professional journey to date, Yazbeck began his career at NCR Corporation, before moving on to Citrix Systems.

However, it's fair to say he made a name for himself at Microsoft, which he joined in 2008.

He initially led Microsoft's operations in Qatar, before relocating to Dubai with the US technology behemoth in 2016, to head-up their regional sales team.

In 2022, he replaced Sayed Hashish as the new General Manager of Microsoft UAE.

Over the last two years, he has overseen the solidification of Microsoft's standing as the market incumbent in the technology ecosystem across the UAE.

Microsoft has been right, front and centre in relation to the rapid AI transformation that has occurred across the UAE in the last couple of years, and

the backbone of this movement has been underpinned by Microsoft's datacentres in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

In a candid conversation with CNME and GovTech Editor Mark Forker, Yazbeck highlighted the key role Microsoft is playing in the technological and economic development of the UAE.

Yazbeck began our conversation by reinforcing his view that AI transformation was 'born in the cloud'.

"Microsoft is very much at the forefront of AI transformation across the UAE, and there's no mistaking that. However, at the end of the day the foundation for AI is cloud technology. The UAE has always been a core focus for Microsoft, and that is evidenced by the datacentres we have established in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. We currently have one datacentre in Abu Dhabi, but we have plans in the pipeline to build more, because we know that this AI transformation and movement can only be truly facilitated and supported with a strong cloud foundation," said Yazbeck.

Yazbeck then revealed some key findings that emerged from Microsoft's recently



published Cloud Dividend Snapshot report for the UAE.

As the old saying goes, the numbers don't lie.

And the numbers from Microsoft's Cloud Dividend Snapshot Report are incredibly impressive, with Microsoft's cloud and partner ecosystem projected to generate

around \$74.4 billion in revenue between now and 2028.

"I believe that the findings of our latest Cloud Dividend Snapshot Report perfectly illustrates the economic impact our cloud technology is having on the UAE GDP. In the next 4 years, Microsoft, along with its partner ecosystem and cloud customers



THE WHOLE MICROSOFT ECOSYSTEM FROM A TECHNOLOGY PERSPECTIVE WILL CREATE AROUND 153,000 JOBS OVER THE NEXT 4 YEARS. THESE JOBS WILL BE CREATED BOTH DIRECTLY BY MICROSOFT, AND INDIRECTLY THROUGH OUR CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERS THAT USE TECHNOLOGY THAT SERVES MICROSOFT.”

will generate a staggering \$74.4 billion in revenue, and that's substantial when you look at the overall UAE economy. In addition to this, Microsoft will support the local economy by spending more than \$5.1 billion on our data centre and digital infrastructure. We have also established that our partners will receive \$6.3 for every dollar Microsoft sells, and that will increase to \$8 for every dollar Microsoft sells over the next four years,” said Yazbeck.

However, Yazbeck revealed that one of the most significant announcements being made by Microsoft was the creation of around 153,000 jobs in the UAE over the next four years.

“Out of all the numbers I'm revealing to you, the most important is undoubtedly the fact that the whole Microsoft ecosystem from a technology perspective will create around 153,000 jobs over the next four years. These jobs will be created both directly by Microsoft, and indirectly through our customers and partners that use technology that serves Microsoft. We're extremely proud of the impact we're delivering in the UAE in terms of economic GDP and job creation,” said Yazbeck.

The UAE is one of the most progressive nations in the world when it comes to innovation and technological advancements.

Microsoft has been a key partner for the UAE on every step of its technological evolution. In a further demonstration of their commitment to helping the UAE achieve its overall goals, the company recently announced the expansion of their global engineering development centres footprint to the UAE.

Yazbeck heralded the government's ambition to be a global hub for AI.

“Look, I think it's important to introduce some context here, the UAE is a country that has a phenomenal appetite for digital transformation, and has lofty ambitions and aspirations when it comes to AI. The UAE President was in Washington a few weeks ago, and met with some of the most prominent technology leaders in the world, and a lot of the conversations revolved around AI, and he spoke of his vision for the

UAE to be an epicentre for AI. The beauty of this vision is that it trickles down into every facet of the UAE economy. There is a responsibility on everyone to contribute to the vision of the nation, and everyone who is operating in the UAE needs to align their strategy to support the overall AI vision, and this is very unique when compared to other parts of the world. A critical element in facilitating this AI vision is being able to create innovation in the country, and that's why we are immensely proud to bring our Global Engineering Development Centre to Abu Dhabi,” said Yazbeck.

Yazbeck said that the real impact the Global Engineering Development Centre will have will be in relation to technical talent, and enabling and empowering businesses with the ability to nurture creativity and innovate.

“It is a significant announcement, which will help take the UAE from mostly being a consumer of technology to a creator of cutting edge innovation that will be used around the world. In terms of what results it will yield for the UAE, the obvious one is the technical talent it is going to bring. It will allow the UAE to innovate on a bigger scale than in the past in terms of depth and scale. We're also going to focus on creating local talent through the centre, and we will partner with several universities all over the UAE to accelerate this movement. In summary, it's an important development for us, and the UAE, and only serves to reinforce our commitment to the AI vision of the nation,” said Yazbeck.

Microsoft have a whole suite of AI solutions that have really caught fire on a global scale, and one of those is its Microsoft Copilot suite.

According to Yazbeck, Microsoft Copilot has transformed workforce productivity levels at a whole host of multinational organisations across the Middle East region.

“We've embedded Copilot into each of our product portfolios from productivity to development, to security and the business application components. It's become very evident to us how receptive our customers are becoming to Copilot, they are really embracing it. In the UAE, we can see that



our customers are adopting it in multiple different ways. However, it's become quite pertinent in terms of its impact on productivity levels. Take ADNOC for example, they've been able to improve the productivity levels for thousands of employees by leveraging the capabilities of

Microsoft 365 Copilot. Other large entities like Emirates NBD have harnessed GitHub Copilot for their developers, and they have seen their developers' productivity improve by 20-30%. In addition to this, Emirates NBD have utilised Copilot in relation to customer service, and they have seen a



EMIRATES NBD HAVE HARNESSED GITHUB COPILOT FOR THEIR DEVELOPERS, AND THEY HAVE SEEN THEIR DEVELOPERS' PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVE BY 20-30%."



substantial improvement in that area too, so it's been hugely beneficial for them from both a productivity and customer service perspective. In summary, the data we have indicates that 77% of people who use Copilot don't want to go back to working without it, and 85% says that the productivity gains are very clear, and are taking productivity to the

next level. So, as I said earlier the numbers don't lie, and it's very clear the positive impact that Microsoft 365 Copilot is having for so many enterprises across the UAE," said Yazbeck.

Microsoft has always adopted an unwavering commitment to skilling and training, and it has been well documented

that organisations on a global scale face a huge problem when it comes to finding the right talent to harness the capabilities of disruptive new technologies that continue to emerge, especially in relation to AI.

As always, Microsoft is leading in the space, and Yazbeck revealed that the AI skilling is a major priority for the US technology leader. They are launching an AI skilling program aimed at training 100,000 government employees in the UAE.

“AI skilling is a major priority for us over the next two years. We have to take stock and be cognisant of the fact that when it comes to the AI market, and for all of us to really capitalise on the opportunities of AI then we need to focus on skilling, because the skills required to extract the maximum value from AI is not there. The only way our customers are going to get all the benefits of AI is through an AI skilled workforce. During GITEK 2024, we’re going to officially announce that we will be launching an AI training program designed to train 100,000 government employees across local government institutions and departments in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah. It will be a 12-month program on AI, and we need this training if the UAE government is going to be able to become the global hub for AI innovation that it desperately wants to become. This skilling program represents a substantial investment from Microsoft, and once again shows our commitment to helping the UAE achieve its AI goals and objectives,” said Yazbeck.

The opportunities of Generative AI are boundless. However, there are valid ethical concerns over it in terms of data privacy, hallucinations and biases.

Microsoft coined the term ‘Responsible AI’.

They have recently partnered with G42, on the opening of a new AI centre in Abu Dhabi designed to identify best practices around using AI responsibly.

Yazbeck believes the collaboration represents the intent the UAE and Microsoft both share in ensuring AI is used responsibly.

“Responsibility is at the very core of our

AI development. We apply the principles of our Responsible AI strategy in every region we operate in. The partnership with G42 is significant, and ultimately we want to embed our AI principles into our partnership with G42. Our AI for Good program is mainly related to research and development, but it is all intertwined in relation to our overall goal, which is to use AI to help humanity and make the world a better place. The partnership will ensure that AI development in the UAE will be much more responsible, and shows just how serious the nation is when it comes to responsible AI. The UAE wants to lead on AI globally, so it has to show its commitment and focus towards ensuring the technology is used, and developed in a safe and ethical way and that is so important,” said Yazbeck.

Yazbeck concluded a wonderfully insightful, informative and intuitive conversation by highlighted the ‘uniqueness’ of GITEK Global, which is the Middle East’s flagship technology symposium.

Yazbeck lauded GITEK, describing it as the biggest technology conference in the world, and said its ability to educate attendees was powerful.

“GITEK has now become the world’s biggest technology event, but I believe the uniqueness of the event is the fact it brings stakeholders from the global technology community, global customers and local customers under the one roof to not only demonstrate new technology, but to actually educate each other on what’s new, what’s emerging and what’s coming next. When you see the calibre of speakers delivering keynote presentations, and participating in panel discussions, it almost serves as a full week of education and learning. It’s also great to meet customers from all over the region in a face-to-face capacity, the importance of that type of interaction can be difficult to quantify, but it is so important. It’s always an intense week, but it is always so rich and rewarding for all that attend and exhibit. The GITEK brand is unique, often copied, but never replicated, and I think this year’s event will be the biggest GITEK ever,” said Yazbeck. ■



DURING GITEK 2024, WE’RE GOING TO OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCE THAT WE WILL BE LAUNCHING AN AI TRAINING PROGRAM DESIGNED TO TRAIN 100,000 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ACROSS LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND DEPARTMENTS IN DUBAI, ABU DHABI AND SHARJAH.”



تقرير مايكروسوفت بعنوان "لمحة عامة حول عوائد التكنولوجيا السحابية في دولة الإمارات" لافتة للنظر بطريقة مذهلة، حيث من المتوقع أن تحقق منظومة مايكروسوفت السحابية والتي تشمل شركائها وعملائها حوالي 74.4 مليار دولار من الإيرادات بحلول عام 2028. هذه الأرقام تؤكد التأثير الكبير الذي ستحدثه منظومة مايكروسوفت السحابية على الاقتصاد الإماراتي والنمو المالي في السنوات القادمة.

مراكز البيانات في أبوظبي قريباً، انطلاقاً من إيماننا بأن التحول في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي لا يمكن أن يحقق كامل إمكاناته إلا ببنية تحتية سحابية قوية تدعمه".

كما كشف نعيم يزبك عن نتائج مهمة من تقرير مايكروسوفت الأخير حول عوائد التكنولوجيا السحابية في دولة الإمارات. وبحسب القول المأثور "الأرقام لا تكذب". فالأرقام الواردة في

يكروسوفت: رائدة التحول في عالم الذكاء الاصطناعي.

في مقابلة حصرية مع محرر مجلة "GovTech"، **مارك فوركر**، أكد نعيم يزبك، المدير العام لشركة مايكروسوفت الإمارات، التزام الشركة الراسخ بدعم رؤية الإمارات الطموحة في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي. وأوضح يزبك خلال المقابلة خطط مايكروسوفت لتدريب 100,000 موظف حكومي ضمن برنامج جديد يهدف إلى تعزيز مهاراتهم في الذكاء الاصطناعي.



تأتي شركة مايكروسوفت في طليعة المؤسسات التي تسعى بوضوح لقيادة عملية التحول في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي على مستوى دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. ولكن، يعتمد هذا التحول في النهاية وبشكل أساسي على التكنولوجيا السحابية، التي تشكل الأساس الذي يُبنى عليه الذكاء الاصطناعي."

نعيم يزبك هو من أبرز قادة التكنولوجيا المرموقين في الشرق الأوسط، وهو من أكثر المتخصصين تميزاً في مجال تكنولوجيا المعلومات، حيث أثبت جدارته العالية في قيادة وتنفيذ برامج التحول الرقمي بنجاح عبر العديد من القطاعات الصناعية المختلفة، مما يجعله أحد الخبراء الأكثر كفاءة في هذا المجال.

بدأ نعيم يزبك رحلته المهنية مع شركة "NCR Corporation"، ثم انتقل إلى شركة "Citrix Systems". ومع ذلك، فإن انضمامه إلى مايكروسوفت في عام 2008 كان نقطة التحول في مسيرته، إذ قاد يزبك بنجاح عمليات مايكروسوفت في قطر قبل انتقاله إلى دبي في عام 2016 ليتولى قيادة فريق المبيعات الإقليمي. وفي عام 2022، خلف سيد حشيش ليصبح المدير العام لمايكروسوفت الإمارات، وهو ما يعكس نجاحه المتواصل وتأثيره الكبير في الشركة.

أشرف نعيم على مدار العامين الماضيين على توطيد مكانة مايكروسوفت بصفتها شركة رائدة في المنظومة التكنولوجية على مستوى دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، مما عزز من حضورها وثقتها كقوة رائدة في دعم التنمية الاقتصادية وشريك موثوق على الصعيد الحكومي في دولة الإمارات. وخلال السنوات الأخيرة، لعبت مايكروسوفت

دورًا مركزيًا ورئيسيًا في الإسراع من وتيرة عملية التحول نحو الذكاء الاصطناعي في الإمارات، وذلك بفضل مراكز البيانات الخاصة بها في أبو ظبي ودبي، التي شكلت البنية التحتية الضرورية لهذا التحول.

وقد أبرز نعيم في حديث صريح مع مارك فوركر - محرر مجلة كمبيوتر نيوز الشرق الأوسط (CNME) ومجلة (GovTech) - الدور الذي تؤديه مايكروسوفت في التطور التقني والاقتصادي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. وأوضح يزبك في بداية الحوار أن التحول في الذكاء الاصطناعي قد بدأ من الأنظمة السحابية أو على حد قوله "وُلد من رحم السحاب"، مشيرًا إلى أن البنية التحتية السحابية لمايكروسوفت كانت العنصر الأساسي في تمكين هذا التحول وتوسيعه.

واستهل يزبك نقاشنا في هذا الحوار قائلاً: "تقود مايكروسوفت عملية التحول في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي في الإمارات بشكل واضح، حيث تعد الشركة في طليعة هذا التحول التكنولوجي. كما أن الأساس الذي يدعم الذكاء الاصطناعي هو التكنولوجيا السحابية. إن الإمارات كانت دائمًا محورًا رئيسيًا لجهود مايكروسوفت، والدليل على ذلك هو إنشاء مراكز بيانات في أبو ظبي ودبي. كما أنها تمتلك خططاً توسعية لإنشاء المزيد من



كوبايولت (GitHub Copilot)، بالإضافة إلى تحسينات كبيرة في خدمة العملاء بفضل هذه التقنية. باختصار، تشير البيانات إلى أن 77% من المستخدمين لا يرغبون في العودة إلى طرق العمل التقليدية بعد استخدام 'كوبايولت'، و85% منهم يلاحظون تحسناً واضحاً في مستويات الإنتاجية. تؤكد لنا الأرقام التأثير الإيجابي الكبير الذي تقدمه

ترحيب العملاء بهذه التقنية، حيث لاحظنا تبنيها بطرق متنوعة في الإمارات. على سبيل المثال، تمكنت شركة أدنوك من تحسين إنتاجية 30,000 موظف بفضل استخدام قدرات 'مايكروسوفت 365 كوبايولت'. كما حقق بنك الإمارات دبي الوطني زيادة في إنتاجية مطوريه بنسبة تصل من 20 إلى 30% عند استخدامه أداة (غيت هاب



ستساهم منظومة مايكروسوفت ككل (تشمل مايكروسوفت مع شركائها وعملائها) في خلق حوالي 153,000 وظيفة خلال السنوات الأربع القادمة. هذه الفرص ستأتي عبر مسارين: الأول، من خلال الوظائف التي ستوفرها مايكروسوفت بشكل مباشر ضمن مشاريعها وتوسعاتها. أما الثاني، عبر عملائها وشركائها الذين يعتمدون على تقنياتها لتطوير أعمالهم، مما سيخلق فرص عمل جديدة بشكل غير مباشر".

واستطرد يزبك قائلاً: "أرى أن التقرير الأخير يبرز التأثير الاقتصادي الكبير لسحابة مايكروسوفت على الناتج المحلي الإجمالي للإمارات. فمن المتوقع أن تولد مايكروسوفت، بالتعاون مع شركائها وعملائها، حوالي 74.4 مليار دولار من الإيرادات خلال السنوات الأربع المقبلة، مما يشكل إضافة كبيرة إلى الاقتصاد الإماراتي. إلى جانب ذلك، ستستثمر مايكروسوفت أكثر من 5.1 مليار دولار في مراكز البيانات والبنية التحتية الرقمية لتعزيز النمو. في حين سيغني شركاء مايكروسوفت 6.3 دولارات عن كل دولار تبيعه الشركة، ومن المتوقع أن يرتفع هذا الرقم إلى 8 دولارات عن كل دولار خلال الأعوام المقبلة".

ومن جهة أخرى، كشف نعيم يزبك عن أحد أبرز التصريحات التي أعلنت عنها مايكروسوفت، وهو عزم الشركة على خلق حوالي 153,000 وظيفة جديدة في الإمارات خلال السنوات الأربع القادمة. ونوه يزبك في حديثه قائلاً: "من بين جميع الأرقام التي أكشفها اليوم، فالأهم بلا شك هو أن منظومة مايكروسوفت المتكاملة بشركائها وعملائها ستساهم في خلق حوالي 153,000 وظيفة جديدة في الإمارات خلال السنوات الأربع المقبلة. هذه الوظائف ستتولد بشكل مباشر من خلال مايكروسوفت، وأيضاً بشكل غير مباشر عبر عملائنا وشركائنا الذين يستخدمون تقنياتنا. نحن فخورون للغاية بالتأثير الإيجابي الذي نحققه في دعم الاقتصاد الإماراتي من خلال تعزيز الناتج المحلي الإجمالي وخلق فرص عمل جديدة".

وبما أن الإمارات تعد واحدة من أكثر الدول تقدماً على مستوى العالم في مجال الابتكار والتطور التكنولوجي. لطالما رسخت مايكروسوفت مكائنها كشريك رئيسي وموثوق لدى حكومة دولة الإمارات في كل مرحلة من مراحل رحلتها التكنولوجية. وتعزيزاً لهذا التعاون، أعلنت مايكروسوفت مؤخراً عن توسيع مراكزها العالمية للتطوير التكنولوجي لتشمل الإمارات، مما يعكس التزامها بتمكين الدولة من تحقيق أهدافها التكنولوجية الكبرى تماشياً مع رؤيتها الوطنية. وقد أشاد نعيم يزبك بطموح الحكومة الإماراتية في أن تصبح مركزاً عالمياً للذكاء الاصطناعي قائلاً: "إن الإمارات تُعتبر من الدول الرائدة في مجال التحول الرقمي، حيث تمتلك شغفاً كبيراً وطموحات عالية في الذكاء الاصطناعي. وفي هذا السياق، قبل عدة أسابيع، التقى صاحب السمو الشيخ محمد بن زايد آل نهيان رئيس الدولة "حفظه الله" في واشنطن بأبرز قادة التكنولوجيا في العالم، وركزت المحادثات بشكل كبير على

الذكاء الاصطناعي، حيث ناقش رئيس الدولة رؤيته لجعل الإمارات مركزاً عالمياً في هذا المجال. وتكمن روعة هذه الرؤية بأنها تؤثر بشكل إيجابي على جميع جوانب الاقتصاد الإماراتي، ولا تقف عند حد معين، بل إنها مسؤولة تقع على عاتق الجميع بدءاً بالفرد الذي يتوجب عليه المساهمة في تحقيق الرؤية الوطنية لهذه الدولة".

وأضاف يزبك قائلاً: "من المهم أن تكون استراتيجيات كل من يعمل في الإمارات متوافقة تماماً مع هذه الرؤية الطموحة، وهو أمر يميز الإمارات عن بقية دول العالم. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، يُعتبر الابتكار عنصراً أساسياً، ولهذا السبب تشعر مايكروسوفت بالفخر لاختيار أبوظبي لتكون مقراً لأول مراكزها العالمية للتطوير التكنولوجي في العالم العربي، لتكون بذلك أول دولة عربية تستضيف مركزاً لتطوير التكنولوجيا. وبهذه الخطوة الهامة على صعيد الوطن العربي والتي تنطلق من أبوظبي بالتحديد، ينضم هذا المركز إلى شبكة مراكز التطوير العالمية التابعة لـ"مايكروسوفت" والمنتشرة عبر مواقع استراتيجية ورئيسية حول العالم. وتأتي هذه الخطوة في إطار سلسلة الاستثمارات التي تواصل "مايكروسوفت" ضخها لتعزيز مكانة دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة كحاضنة عالمية للابتكار التكنولوجي والمواهب. ولن تتمحور أعمال مركز التطوير التكنولوجي الجديد حول تطوير أحدث التقنيات في المنطقة فحسب، بل سيعمل المركز أيضاً على صناعة كفاءات وكوادر محلية، وكذلك جذب واستقطاب أفضل المواهب في مجال التكنولوجيا من مختلف أرجاء العالم سعياً منه لتطوير حلول مصممة خصيصاً للتغلب على التحديات الملحة التي تواجه القطاعات الحيوية على مستوى العالم".

وفي سياق آخر، تطرق يزبك في حديثه إلى ما تقدمه مايكروسوفت من حلول شاملة في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي، والتي حققت شهرة واسعة على الصعيد العالمي، ومن أبرزها حزمة (مايكروسوفت كوبيلايت - Microsoft Copilot)، التي أحدثت تحولاً ملحوظاً في مستويات إنتاجية القوى العاملة عبر العديد من المؤسسات متعددة الجنسيات في منطقة الشرق الأوسط.

وفي هذا الصدد، أشار يزبك قائلاً: "لقد دمجت أداة كوبيلايت التي تعمل كمساعد شخصي مدعوم بتقنيات الذكاء الاصطناعي في جميع حلول مايكروسوفت، بدءاً من أدوات تحسين الأداء، مروراً بتطوير البرمجيات والأمان، وصولاً إلى تطبيقات الأعمال. وقد أصبح من الواضح لنا مدى



سنعلن رسميًا على هامش معرض جيتكس 2024 عن إطلاق برنامج تدريبي شامل في الذكاء الاصطناعي يستهدف تدريب 100,000 موظف حكومي. هذا البرنامج سيشمل المؤسسات والدوائر الحكومية على المستويين الاتحادي والمحلي في دبي، وأبو ظبي، والشارقة، بهدف تمكين الموظفين من اكتساب المهارات اللازمة لمواكبة التحولات التكنولوجية وتعزيز قدراتهم في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي."

الممارسات لاستخدام الذكاء الاصطناعي بشكل مسؤول. ويؤمن يزيك أن هذا التعاون يعكس النية المشتركة بين الإمارات ومايكروسوفت في ضمان الاستخدام المسؤول للذكاء الاصطناعي، بما يدعم الابتكار ويحترم المبادئ الأخلاقية. وذكر يزيك في تعليقه على هذه النقطة قائلاً: "في مايكروسوفت نعتبر المسؤولية هي الأساس الذي نعتمد عليه في تطوير تقنيات الذكاء الاصطناعي. نحن نطبق مبادئ استراتيجيتنا للذكاء الاصطناعي المسؤول في كل منطقة نعمل فيها. وتُعتبر شراكتنا مع 'G42' خطوة مهمة، حيث نهدف إلى دمج هذه المبادئ في كل جوانب التعاون. يركز برنامجنا 'الذكاء الاصطناعي من أجل الخير' بشكل رئيسي على البحث والتطوير، وكل هذه الجهود تصب في مصلحة تحقيق هدفنا الأشمل والذي يتمثل في استخدام الذكاء الاصطناعي لخدمة الإنسانية وجعل العالم مكاناً أفضل. فمن خلال هذه الشراكة، نضمن أن يكون تطوير الذكاء الاصطناعي في الإمارات أكثر التزاماً بالمسؤولية الأخلاقية، وهو ما يعكس جدية الدولة في ضمان استخدام هذه التكنولوجيا بشكل آمن وأخلاقي، وجهودها الرامية لأن تكون رائدة عالمياً في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي".

اختتمت نعيم يزيك حديثه الغني والمثمر بتسليط الضوء على تميز معرض جيتكس جلوبال، الذي يُعد الحدث التكنولوجي الأبرز في منطقة الشرق الأوسط. كما أشاد يزيك بمعرض جيتكس واصفاً إياه بأنه أكبر مؤتمر تكنولوجي في العالم، مشيراً إلى أنه ليس مجرد تجمع للشركات التقنية، بل منصة قوية تهدف إلى تثقيف الحاضرين وتمكينهم من التعرف على أحدث الابتكارات والتقنيات.

وأكد يزيك أن معرض جيتكس أصبح اليوم أكبر حدث تكنولوجي عالمي، ويتميز بقدرته على جمع قادة التكنولوجيا والعملاء من جميع أنحاء العالم تحت سقف واحد، فلا يقتصر الأمر على استعراض التقنيات الجديدة، بل يوفر للمشاركين فرصة تبادل المعرفة حول الابتكارات المستقبلية مما يعزز تفاعلهم وتطوير أفكارهم، وبفضل المتحدثين البارزين والنقاشات المتخصصة يتحول المعرض إلى أسبوع مكثف من التعلم والتفاعل المثمر، مما يعزز فهم احتياجات العملاء بعمق ويجعل علامة جيتكس التجارية فريدة رغم محاولات التقليد، وأتوقع أن يكون هذا العام هو الأكبر في تاريخ المعرض. ■

أن تطوير مهارات الذكاء الاصطناعي يمثل أولوية قصوى لمايكروسوفت. وفي هذا السياق، تعتزم مايكروسوفت إطلاق برنامج تدريبي يستهدف تدريب 100,000 موظف حكومي في الإمارات على مهارات الذكاء الاصطناعي، مما يعزز جاهزية الكوادر الحكومية لمواكبة التحولات التكنولوجية المستقبلية.

وتعليقاً على أهمية تطوير وتأهيل المهارات في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي، شدد يزيك على هذه النقطة قائلاً: "يعتبر تطوير المهارات في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي أولوية كبيرة بالنسبة لنا خلال العامين المقبلين. لذلك علينا أن ندرك أن النجاح في الاستفادة من الفرص الكبيرة التي يوفرها الذكاء الاصطناعي يتطلب تركيزاً على التدريب، حيث أن المهارات المطلوبة لاستخلاص أقصى قيمة من الذكاء الاصطناعي ليست متاحة بشكل كافٍ حالياً. والطريقة الوحيدة لتحقيق الفوائد الكاملة من الذكاء الاصطناعي هي عبر وجود قوى عاملة مدربة بمهارات عالية في هذا المجال.

وسوف نعلن رسمياً خلال معرض جيتكس 2024، عن إطلاق برنامج تدريبي متخصص يهدف إلى تدريب 100,000 موظف حكومي من مختلف المؤسسات والدوائر الاتحادية والمحلية في أبوظبي، ودبي، والشارقة. يركز هذا البرنامج الذي يمتد لمدة 12 شهراً على تطوير مهارات الذكاء الاصطناعي، وهو خطوة ضرورية تجاه مساعي الإمارات لتحقيق رؤيتها بأن تصبح مركزاً عالمياً للابتكار في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي. مع العلم، يمثل هذا البرنامج استثماراً كبيراً من قبل مايكروسوفت، ويعكس التزامنا الراسخ والمستمر بدعم الإمارات في تحقيق أهدافها وطموحاتها في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي".

ومن منطلق مصطلح "الذكاء الاصطناعي المسؤول"، والذي جاءت به مايكروسوفت على خلفية الفرص الهائلة التي تقدمها تقنيات الذكاء الاصطناعي التوليدي والتي لا حدود لها، ولكنها في نفس الوقت تفتح الباب على مصراعيه لمخاوف أخلاقية مشروعة تتعلق بهذه التقنية مثل حماية الخصوصية، وظهور معلومات خاطئة (الأخطاء الرقمية)، ومسألة التحيزات في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي. ارتأت مايكروسوفت بأن تطلق هذا المصطلح الذي يؤكد على أهمية استخدام الذكاء الاصطناعي بطريقة تحترم القيم الأخلاقية.

وتأكيداً على التزامها الراسخ بمفهوم "الذكاء الاصطناعي المسؤول"، تعاونت مايكروسوفت مؤخراً مع شركة G42 لافتتاح مركز جديد للذكاء الاصطناعي في أبو ظبي، يهدف إلى تطوير أفضل



استخدم بنك الإمارات دبي الوطني أداة (غيت هاب كوبيلوت (GitHub Copilot- لدعم مطوريه، مما أدى إلى تحسين كبير في إنتاجيتهم بنسبة تتراوح من 20% إلى 30%. وبفضل هذه الأداة المدعومة بالذكاء الاصطناعي، أصبح المطورون قادرين على إنجاز مهامهم بكفاءة أكبر وبسرعة أعلى".



العالمي الذي تواجهه المؤسسات في العثور على الكفاءات المناسبة للاستفادة من التقنيات الحديثة والمتطورة، وإيجاد المواهب القادرة على التعامل مع هذه التقنيات المتقدمة، مثل الذكاء الاصطناعي. وكما هو الحال دائماً، تنصدر مايكروسوفت المشهد في هذا المجال، حيث كشف نعيم يزبك

أداة 'كوبيلوت' من مايكروسوفت للشركات في الإمارات، سواء من ناحية تعزيز الكفاءة أو تحسين خدمات العملاء". وفي إطار مجال التدريب والتأهيل وأهميته على صعيد جميع المؤسسات الحكومية والخاصة، تلتزم مايكروسوفت بشكل دائم بتطوير المهارات وتدريبها، خاصة في ظل التحدي

Women in Tech

NOTHING COMPARES TO YOU

In this month's edition of Women in Tech, CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to NetApp's **Maya Zakhour**, to reflect on her decorated 25-year career to date in the IT industry, how much the landscape has changed during that time, the importance of not comparing yourself to others when attempting to forge your own journey – and why she believes the technology industry is the 'best' sector for women to choose as a career.

Maya Zakhour began her remarkable professional career as a software developer with CompuData back in 1998.

Over the last 26 years, Zakhour has established herself as one of the most respected and revered channel leaders in the technology ecosystem across the META region, and is currently the Director for Channel Sales – Eastern Europe, META, Iberia, & Latin America at NetApp.

She joined NetApp from Fortinet in 2017, and prior to that spent the best part of a decade at US technology behemoth Microsoft, where she was the Channel Development Manager for the UAE.

It's fair to say that the technology industry is barely recognisable to the one Zakhour first entered back in 1998.



Zakhour is regarded by many of her peers, as a pioneer, and an inspiration to other women for her phenomenal success in what

is a traditionally male-dominated industry.

There has been huge progress made over the last number of decades, and there's more women than ever now working in the IT and technology industry, thanks to trailblazers like Zakhour.

In a candid interview, Zakhour was in reflective mood, and when asked what advice she'd now give her younger self, she declared it would be to not compare yourself to others.

"I have been in the industry for over 25 years, but I feel as energetic as I did when I began my career back in 1998, and I firmly believe that age is just a number. I still have ambitions and aspirations that I want to achieve, and this motivates and drives me every single day. It's all about drive, and I always had this drive from a very young age. I always wanted to be a leader, and I wanted to be a leader for the right reasons, not just to be in a position of authority, or have a title. What I learned throughout my journey was to not compare yourself to others. Each person has their own strengths and weaknesses, and these strengths and weaknesses are your own, so it's counter-productive to compare yourself to others. You might think your weaknesses will set you back, but they actually shape you, make you learn, make you stronger, and will define your path in terms of what you want to do. It is hard for us not to compare ourselves to others, as we take inspiration from others,

so it is human nature to look at someone, and think I want to be like them. However, as I said earlier, you need to forge your own path, learn from your own weaknesses, solidify your strengths, and pursue your ambitions and aspirations with all that drive you have inside of you,” said Zakhour.

Zakhour added that despite an unwavering self-belief in her own ability, she did have a lot of fear in terms of speaking-up and having her voice heard at the beginning of her career.

“This may sound rather contradictory considering my earlier statement, but when I was younger, despite the fact that I was confident, had courage, and a lot of ambition, I did also have a lot of fear. There were so many occasions where I was afraid to express my thoughts, and I struggled to find my voice to be honest, and that was tough. The culture has changed a lot over the last 25 years, and it’s important we acknowledge that, but at the inception of my career when I reflect back I was definitely reluctant to voice my opinions. However, if you are passionate about something and have conviction about a certain subject then you need to speak up, and earn the respect of the others in the room. In summary, what ultimately defines you is your character, so you have to stay true to yourself, and have the bravery to find your voice, no matter how uncomfortable that might be,” said Zakhour.

A question often asked is are leaders made, or born?

Zakhour appears to have been a natural leader from a young age, but when asked about her own unique style, she insisted that your character defines your leadership style, but stated that to be an effective leader you need to empower those around you, and said the values that guide her leadership is humility and empathy.

“Your character determines what type of leader you are. I have worked with so many different people, and they all had their own unique leadership styles, which were reflective of their own individual character. I think another factor that influences your leadership style is the experiences you encounter, there were so many times when I was told that you won’t suit this role, you come from an engineering background, you don’t have the right skillset, but then a few years later I’d be the perfect fit for the role, so you need resilience. You need to have that inner belief not to be discouraged by the naysayers, and I believe that resiliency is an important component to have if you want to be an effective leader. The way I lead is through humility and empathy. You need to be close to your team, but you also need to be close to those that you want to influence if you’re selling them a specific solution or product,” said Zakhour.



You need to have humility and empathy, and that’s the core principles that inform my own personal leadership style.”

Zakhour added that by being close to your team fosters a better working environment for everybody and creates a fantastic culture within the organisation.

“You need to be close to your people, and I think once you do that then it’s easier for them to get onboard with your vision in terms of what you want to do, because they trust you, and feel part of the entire process, it inspires them to perform because they feel a huge part of the team, which of course they are, but some forms of leadership can alienate people. You need to have humility and empathy, and that’s the core principles that inform my own personal leadership style. You don’t hire people because you know more than them, you hire them for their expertise. You empower them to do their own jobs, you don’t need to micromanage them, you tell them they are leaders in their own right, and again this is an example in my opinion of strong leadership,” said Zakhour.

Zakhour has seen many changes in the IT industry from a technology perspective, but also seen a drastic evolution in attitudes.

Gender equality is a burning topic in multiple industries, and as mentioned earlier, traditionally the IT sector was male-dominated, but that is starting to change across the board.



What I learned throughout my journey was to not compare yourself to others. Each person has their own strengths and weaknesses, and these strengths and weaknesses are your own, so it's counter-productive to compare yourself to others."

However, Zakhour insisted that the only currency worth anything in the technology industry was meritocracy, and that gender didn't matter, as long as you perform.

"I've worked with some very large multinational corporations during my career, and there is no denying that the landscape has changed. I'm thankful for the experiences I have had, good and bad, because as I stated earlier they help shape you as a person. If the climate was as bad as some have suggested then I wouldn't have progressed, or stayed working in this industry. The technology industry today is a great place for women to work, and there are huge opportunities for personal and professional growth within the sector. There can be issues around subjective judgement when it comes to gender in certain industries, but I firmly believe that the technology industry is a great place to work in. Our model at NetApp is based simply on your predetermined KPIs, and once you achieve them then you'll yield the rewards, in the tech industry success is based on meritocracy, and that is the mantra that we adopt at NetApp. Success is not subject to your gender - it is based on your ability to perform," said Zakhour.

Zakhour believes that due to the flexibility provided within the tech industry, and the work/life balance in play, it is the one of the best careers for young women to pursue.

"I think it's also important to highlight how good a


sector it is for delivering that work/life balance that we all search and strive for. The IT and technology industry allows a greater deal of flexibility than any other industry, so it creates an environment that is conducive to striking the right work/life balance. You're able to work from home, and in many cases can create your own schedule for work, and that is another example of being empowered. Women who want to start a family, will not see their own professional career hampered as a result, which was often the case in other industries, but certainly not in the technology industry. I didn't have that luxury of remote working in 1998, so it was a struggle for me, but I was lucky that I had great support, and good managers. However, that isn't an issue anymore in the technology industry, so again, in my opinion it is the best industry for ambitious and aspirational women to choose as a career," said Zakhour.

Since the advent of ChatGPT by OpenAI, the industry has been awash with Generative AI.

Undoubtedly, the fact it has been democratized

and made accessible to millions has been game changing, and the opportunities are vast. However, there are valid ethical concerns in relation to hallucinations, biases and data privacy.

NetApp has been praised for their ethical approach to AI, and Zakhour stressed the need for the technology to be used ethically.

"Everybody is talking about AI. From a channel perspective, we have a partner program and they have different competencies, and one of them is on AI. We educate our partners on what we are doing with AI in terms of the solutions that we provide. Essentially, AI is a process that will deliver outcomes without a human interface. However, when you boil it all down AI is all about data, and having the right access to that data. If you don't use it ethically then you won't get the best results. When using AI, it's all about yielding the right outcomes, but to do this you need to have an ethical approach, and the ethical approach is driven by humans. That's why our role is so important, to ensure that when we are assessing this data and providing it for a process, we determine it is the right data, and will drive at the very least ethical results," said Zakhour. 



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BORN TO LEAD

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down for a candid exchange with **Sakkeer Hussain**, Director – Sales and Marketing at D-Link, to reflect on his 25-year professional career, what he believes defines an effective leader, his views on Generative AI – and how D-Link has sustained its success over such a long period of time.

Sakkeer Hussain has established himself as one of the respected sales leaders in the IT industry across the Middle East over the last 25 years.

Hussain began his career with Aptec Gulf in 1998.

After a decade with Aptec Gulf, he made the move to D-Link in 2008, to take on the role of Regional Channel Manager.

In 2014, he was appointed as Director – Sales and Marketing, and has spent the last 10 years helping solidify D-Link's position as a market leader in innovative networking solutions.

During his quarter of a century in the IT industry, Hussain has seen drastic changes to the landscape, both regionally and globally.

Hussain has been described by his industry peers as a leader with a visionary mindset, and the strategic direction he has charted for D-Link has yielded great results for the company.

However, the sheer scale of digital transformation over the last number of years across the Middle East has been unprecedented globally – but Hussain has demonstrated strong

leadership, and has played a key role in diversifying D-Link's product offering.

As someone who always has to look forward in his day-to-day role at D-Link, we began the conversation by taking a look back to when he began his career in 1998.

When asked what has been the most valuable thing he has learned in his 25 years in the industry, and what he would tell his younger self now, Hussain said it would be to not shy away from challenges, and to never underestimate the power of genuine connections.

“Interesting question, I would tell my younger self to not shy away from challenges. When I think about it today – taking calculated risks have led me to significant rewards and personal growth. And one of the most valuable lessons I've learned throughout my career is the power of building genuine connections. Networking isn't just about exchanging business cards;

it's about forming authentic relationships that can open doors to unexpected opportunities and lasting friendships. Remember, the people you encounter on your journey can become your most trusted mentors, supporters, and collaborators,” said Hussain.

Leadership comes in many different forms.

When asked about his own leadership style, and the characteristics required to be an effective leader in the current digital economy, Hussain declared that it was critical to have a flexible mindset amidst the backdrop of rapid technological development and innovation.

“To lead effectively in today's digital age, you need a solid grasp of technology, a data-driven mindset, and the flexibility to adapt to rapid change. As you know change is the only constant. It is also important to have core values like integrity, resilience, curiosity, and collaboration.



To lead effectively in today's digital age, you need a solid grasp of technology, a data-driven mindset, and the flexibility to adapt to rapid change.”

I believe these values have been instrumental in my own success and in leading my team to achieve our goals,” said Hussain.

In my capacity as a technology journalist I have covered AI extensively, but never to same extent as the last 18 months, since the advent of ChatGPT by OpenAI.

AI is everywhere, and businesses are scrambling to harness the capabilities of the technology in an effort to gain a market advantage and stay relevant to their customers.

Hussain has seen first-hand how the UAE, and in particular Dubai, has been transformed due to the visionary leadership of the UAE Government.

The announcement of the Universal Blueprint for AI has only served to further illustrate Dubai’s aspirations to become a global hub for AI.

Hussain believes Dubai’s ability to foster an environment that allows innovation and creativity to flourish, is what makes it such a unique place to do business.

“Dubai’s got that visionary leadership, a great location, and a business-friendly vibe that attracts top companies. The UAE is investing in research in AI, partnering with the best, and even creating a supportive environment for AI development. It’s got what it takes to be a major player in the AI game. With continued investment and focus, Dubai could really make a name for itself as a global AI leader. It’s also important to acknowledge and recognise

that the World’s first Minister for Artificial Intelligence was appointed in the UAE,” said Hussain.

Remaining on the topic of AI, the advent of ChatGPT by OpenAI has democratised Generative AI and made it more accessible to millions of people.

It represents huge opportunities, but there are valid ethical concerns with hallucinations, bias, and data privacy when it comes to Generative AI.

Hussain described Gen AI as a ‘double-edged’ sword, and said robust regulations and frameworks need to be established around the technology.

“Like most technologies, Gen AI too is a double-edged sword – it can do amazing things, but it can also be used to spread fake news and create deep fakes. We need to be careful about how we use it. We need rules to protect people’s privacy, make sure AI is fair, and stop people from stealing ideas. It’s like any powerful tool – we need to use it wisely. It will be helpful to have more regulations around it,” said Hussain.

Hussain has spent 16 years at D-Link, and has witnessed the company go from strength-to-strength, when asked what differentiates them from their market rivals, Hussain said he believes that

their products genuinely improve people’s lives.

“There is a reason why D-Link is a market leader for more than 2 decades – we care about our customers and create products that genuinely improve people’s lives. We enable and empower our channel partners. We have distinguished ourselves by focusing on the SMB market, offering competitive pricing, user-friendly products, a diverse product range, global reach, strong channel partnerships, a commitment to innovation, and exceptional customer service,” said Hussain.

Hussain concluded a brilliant discussion by expressing his excitement at this year’s GITEX 2024, which he described as an opportunity to explore potential collaborations.

“While we do not have a physical stand at GITEX, our entire team will be on the ground networking and seeking out new opportunities. It’s the perfect chance to connect with existing partners and customers and explore potential collaborations. At the show, our conversations will revolve around our latest innovations in networking, security, and cloud technologies. It’s always a phenomenal event, and this year’s edition promises to be the biggest ever,” said Hussain. 



There is a reason why D-Link is a market leader for more than 2 decades – we care about our customers and create products that genuinely improve people’s lives.”

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Yango Middle East

AI-POWERED SMART HOMES

Rami Abu Arja, Senior Innovation Marketing Manager Yasmina, at Yango Middle East, has penned an exclusive op-ed for October's edition of CNME, where he explains how AI-powered smart homes are now becoming the norm in an increasingly interconnected world.

AI-POWERED SMART HOMES: WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEETS COMFORT

In the highly technological world of today, our smart homes are becoming increasingly intelligent, intuitive, and interconnected. With a growing number of smart devices available on the market, we can control nearly every aspect of our household life. Gone are the days of questions we asked ourselves so often as we left the house. "Did I forget to lock the door?" — just check your smart door lock through an app. "Is the stove off?" — turn off the smart plug remotely.

What used to be merely a sci-fi movie plot, has become reality — and quite tangible reality indeed.

With an array of smart devices, from smart thermostats to coffee machines, your home can now adapt to your needs and make your routines easier and more enjoyable. But as more and more devices enter



the market, managing them can be challenging without a centralised control system.

Yasmina is a human-like AI assistant powered by a large language model (LLM) that can maintain engaging and fun conversations in both English and Khaleeji Arabic."

SMART HOME IN AN ERA OF AI ASSISTANTS

With an AI assistant, such as Yasmina by Yango Group, you can control all your connected devices from one convenient hub. Here are some key interesting ways AI assistants are transforming smart home management:

1. **Centralised control:** AI assistants provide a unified platform to control various smart devices. You can easily adjust settings, monitor device status, and automate routines from a single mobile app.
2. **Voice activation:** One of the most appealing features of AI assistants is voice control. This hands-free interaction allows you to perform tasks effortlessly, whether it's dimming the lights, setting the thermostat, or playing music. [GMS](#)



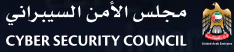
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3. Seamless device

integration: Certain AI assistants can integrate with a wide range of devices from multiple global smart home brands. The mobile app for managing your smart home will allow you to check the status of devices, such as whether windows and doors are closed, if the bedroom socket is turned off, or how hot it is in the living room. Alternatively, simply ask the AI assistant, and it will provide you with all the information you need.

4. **Perfect climate:** AI assistants maintain the perfect home temperature by automatically adjusting devices like humidifiers and air conditioning to achieve ideal temperature and humidity levels.

5. **Enhanced security:** AI assistants can significantly enhance home security by integrating with smart locks and turning off your devices when you leave your house. If you are at home, you can ask your AI assistant to check the doors, sockets, and other devices. While away, you'll receive push notifications from the smart home mobile app, notifying you if there are any issues at home, such as if a door opens unexpectedly or there is a leak.

However, Yasmina goes beyond this range of functions and transforms your home into a truly intelligent and personalised space.

One of the features that distinguishes Yasmina is the



ability to create personalised scenarios and schedules, whether it's dimming the lights for a cosy movie night, or scheduling the coffee maker to start brewing before you're even out of bed. Once you set up a morning scenario, you can just say, "Yasmina, start my day."

Yasmina has another

is designed to be a true companion for users in the UAE. For instance, you can integrate the assistant with other smart home devices, such as smart light bulbs, and enable a scenario specifically designed for prayer time. This way, you can use a single command, such as "Yasmina, it's time for Maghrib," or



Smart homes are rapidly becoming the new standard of living, where advanced technology caters to our every need."

impressive feature: it understands you even if you don't say things perfectly. You can use simple, customised commands like "Yasmina, I'm off" to turn off all your devices and secure your home, ensuring energy savings and safety.

THE AI ASSISTANT THAT MAKES YOUR SMART HOME SMARTER

Yasmina is a human-like AI assistant powered by a large language model (LLM) that can maintain engaging and fun conversations in both English and Khaleeji Arabic, offer personalised entertainment experience, and act as a smart home hub.

With its deep cultural understanding, Yasmina

"Yasmina, set the mood for Fajr" to dim the lights, creating a serene atmosphere for your prayer. Please note that the prayer time reminders and mood setting are separate features that you can customise and set up independently.

CONCLUSION

Smart homes are rapidly becoming the new standard of living, where advanced technology caters to our every need. With an AI assistant at the helm, our homes can offer more than mere functionality and become our true companions, reflecting our spiritual beliefs, maintaining a comfortable climate and atmosphere, and ensuring maximum safety. [cmm](https://www.cmm.com)

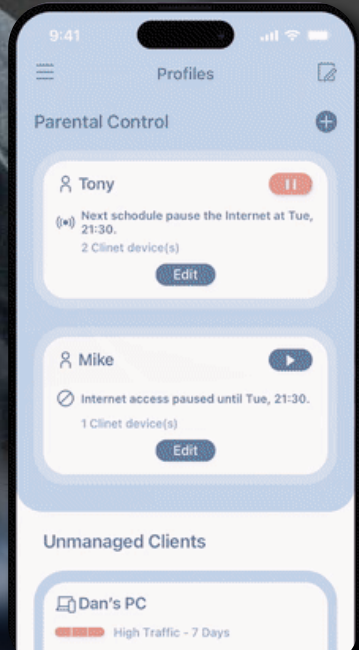
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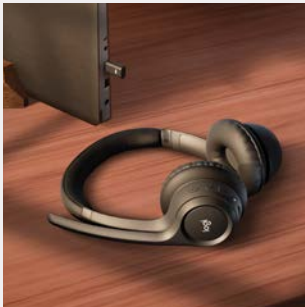
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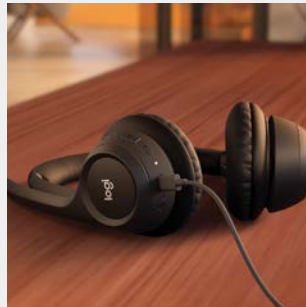
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