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AI ARMS RACE

CNME EDITOR MARK FORKER TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT SAUDI ARABIA'S PROPOSED NEW AI INITIATIVE 'PROJECT TRANSCENDENCE' AND HOW THE PROGRAM IS ULTIMATELY DESIGNED TO OVERTAKE THE UAE AS THE REGION'S AI POWERHOUSE.



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SIMPLY THE BEST

GITEX Global 2024 certainly lived up to its pre-event billing as the world's biggest technology conference.

Over 200,000 people descended on Dubai World Trade Centre for the 44th edition of GITEX.

With over 6,500 exhibitors, 1,800 start-ups, and 1,200 investors from 180 countries, it solidified its standing as the 'No.1' technology conference in the world.

As always, CPI Media Group was on the ground covering every aspect of the event, which was dominated by Generative AI.

The only currency in circulation at GITEX Global 2024, was undeniably Generative AI, as the industry's major tech players scrambled to project their vision and roadmap for infusing and deploying Gen AI within their product portfolios.

Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of November's edition of CNME is packed with post-event GITEX coverage.

We have a whole host of top-class interviews from some of the most prominent technology executives from across the Middle East region.

Thierry Nicault, Area Vice President and General Manager for Salesforce Middle East, sat down with CNME during GITEX to highlight the impact its new platform 'Agentforce' is going to have for enterprises looking to build their own AI models.

The market across the Middle East has been very receptive to the platform since its launch in September, and the primary reasons for that according to Nicault, is the fact it removes the need for businesses to do their own coding and 'democratises' AI for enterprises.

CNME had a brilliant discussion with Phil Lewis, Senior Vice President, Solution Consulting, EMEA & APJ at Infor, who talked about how the global leader in industry-specific enterprise software had undergone its own evolution as a company.

Infor is now labelling itself as a 'industry cloud complete' provider, and Lewis claimed that was a key market differentiator for them.

Ray Kafity, is a veteran of the cybersecurity ecosystem across the Middle East region.

He's now working for US-based ransomware prevention and recovery provider Halcyon.

Kafity has been tasked with leading their growth across the Middle East, and he talked about the economic impact that a lengthy downtime can have after a ransomware attack.

Halcyon are the business of helping businesses 'bounce-back' after an attack, and said that the average ransomware recovery time of 22 days, was just too long.

"When it comes to ransomware recovery, we need to be talking about seconds, minutes and hours, and not days, weeks and months," said Kafity.

There are lots of other brilliant post-GITEX interviews with Cisco, Fortinet, Veeam, Logitech, and Shiva Group.

I also had the pleasure of moderating an exclusive roundtable discussion on behalf of Avaya, during GITEX that examined AI investment strategies across the Middle East.

Patrick Dennis, Avaya CEO led the conversation, and he believes that due to the leadership across the region, and the environment that is in place, makes it highly likely that the 'next big tech unicorn' will come from the Middle East.

The front cover feature is also AI-focused.

I take a closer look at some of the major AI announcements coming out of Saudi Arabia over the last month, which has set the wheels in motion for an AI arms race between the KSA and the United Arab Emirates.

The announcement of a new AI hub between the Public Investment Fund (PIF) and Google Cloud in Dammam was hugely significant – and that was quickly followed by a report from Bloomberg that said the PIF is set to announce a new government-backed AI group with an economic war-chest of \$100bn to invest in AI.

It has been called 'Project Transcendence' and has been specifically designed to establish the KSA as the No.1 AI powerhouse in the Middle East, and a major global player in AI.

Finally, there is also coverage of our Future Enterprise Awards, which we held on Day 1 of GITEX – it was, as always a fantastic event, and a great way for us an organisation to celebrate the trailblazers from the technology industry that are continuing to pursue projects and programs that will transform our businesses and society.

Enjoy November's edition of CNME. 😊

Mark Forker
Editor



With over
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exhibitors,
1,800
start-ups,
and 1,200
investors from
180 countries,
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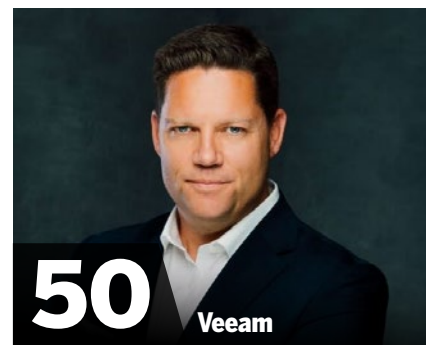
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30 Thierry Nicault, Area Vice President and General Manager of Salesforce Middle East, highlights the unique capabilities of its new 'Agentforce' platform.

44 Phil Lewis, Senior Vice President, Solution Consulting at Infor, discusses how the company has transitioned towards being an 'industry cloud complete' technology provider.

50 Tim Pfaelzer, Senior Vice President and General Manager at Veeam Software, talks about the seismic impact he thinks Gen AI is going to have on the tech sector, and also highlights the significance of their new collaboration with Microsoft.

6 News

CNME rounds up the biggest regional and global developments in enterprise technology, which includes the news that IFS have released a next-gen AI product designed to help companies in the Oil & Gas sector, ServiceNow partners with NVIDIA to accelerate the adoption of Agentic AI amongst enterprises - and e&UAE announces a new strategic partnership with HPE.

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IFS releases next-gen, AI-driven product enhancements to help oil & gas organisations

IFS, the leading provider of enterprise cloud and Industrial AI software, has announced three product enhancements set to reimagine the way upstream operators do business.

First, IFS Energy & Resources, the oil and gas arm and business unit within IFS, unveiled IFS BOLO 15, the latest iteration of IFS BOLO and the next-generation oil and gas accounting solution that possesses the most processing power in the industry to handle any business scenario.

Second, IFS Energy & Resources customers can add new AP invoicing capabilities included with the BOLO 15 release to expand their IFS Excalibur, IFS Qbyte, IFS IDEAS, and IFS Enterprise Upstream investments. The AP invoicing module powered by IFS.ai provides open, cutting-edge automation to improve cash flow by increasing productivity through reduced processing time, improved accuracy, and optimised payment cycles. Additionally, vendor relationships are enhanced with a convenient self-service portal.

Third, IFS is committed to fostering sustainable practices. IFS Energy & Resources' new brine leasing capability, delivered through the combination of IFS iLandMan enriched with IFS Tobin data, streamlines the leasing process and improves operational efficiency for Lithium projects, a critical component in the clean energy transition. This allows existing IFS customers to seamlessly extend their trusted industry solution to their new energies portfolios.

Dale McMullin, Chief Technology Officer at IFS Energy & Resources, said, *"These advancements and achievements are a testament to our product teams' innovation and steadfast development toward stronger and more efficient technology. The investment IFS continues to make in the energy and new energy industries is substantial. We're enabling customers with the tools they need to make an impact in their respective businesses; while also ensuring sustainability is woven into our development practices and the final products we deliver to customers."*



Dale McMullin, Chief Technology Officer at IFS Energy & Resources.

MDS SI Group ranked #1 in UAE and among top 5 in KSA by leading analyst firm

MDS System Integration (SI) Group continues to cement its leadership in the GCC's IT services industry, with the latest IDC Semiannual Services Tracker 2023H2 ranking the company #1 in the UAE and among the Top 5 in Saudi Arabia for 2023 market share.

Reflecting on this remarkable achievement, Wilson Xavier, IDC, Senior Director Research – ICT Services, META Region, stated: "We believe this recognition highlights MDS SI Group's continued success and long-term commitment in the regional IT and Services market, where it has built significant capabilities across multiple segments, including Data Centre & Cloud Infrastructure services, System Integration and Managed services. We also believe the ranking underscores MDS SI Group's ability to deliver a comprehensive range of IT services as a regional Digital System Integrator. These capabilities have played a key role in addressing the needs of businesses in the region as they accelerate digital transformation initiatives".

MDS SI Group holds a commanding 15% share of the IT services market in the UAE, excelling in project-oriented, managed, and support services. The UAE market continues to witness rapid growth, particularly in managed services driven by heightened demand for cloud adoption, GenAI, and data management solutions. MDS SI's leading position reflects its focus on latest technology trends that address the evolving needs of businesses across industries.

A STRONG REGIONAL FOOTPRINT

MDS SI Group continues to lead the GCC's project-oriented services market, with systems integration as a key driver of growth.

By expanding its portfolio through strategic acquisitions, MDS SI Group is poised to maintain its competitive edge and continue delivering innovative solutions that help clients thrive in an increasingly digital and data-driven business landscape.

Sami Abi Esber, President of MDS SI Group, commented on the recognition saying, "We are proud to be ranked as the #1 IT services provider in the UAE and among the Top 5 in Saudi Arabia.



Sami Abi Esber, President of MDS SI Group.

This acknowledgment, coupled with our 20 consecutive years of leadership across the GCC, including Qatar, Oman, Jordan, and Iraq, demonstrates our commitment to excellence. By continuing to invest in latest technologies solutions, and managed services we help our clients succeed in an increasingly digital world".

ServiceNow partners with NVIDIA to accelerate enterprise adoption of Agentic AI

ServiceNow, the AI platform for business transformation has announced a major expansion to its strategic partnership with NVIDIA to accelerate enterprise adoption of Agentic AI.

NVIDIA will collaborate with ServiceNow to map out multiple AI agent use cases. With six years of joint innovation on AI models, along with several previously announced strategic collaborations, ServiceNow and NVIDIA are reshaping how businesses integrate AI into their operations.

“GenAI is a massive tailwind for our industry, and ServiceNow and NVIDIA are bringing the next wave of agentic AI to enterprises everywhere”, said ServiceNow Chairman and CEO Bill McDermott. “The transformative potential of AI is unfolding for



Bill McDermott, CEO at ServiceNow.

enterprises in real time. CEOs are looking to ServiceNow and NVIDIA to modernise their businesses and lead them into an AI powered future. Together, our world class product and engineering teams are shoulder to shoulder, putting AI to work for our customers”.

Veeam, #1 leader in data resilience, enhances Veeam Data Cloud Vault



Niraj Tolia, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) at Veeam.

Veeam® Software, the #1 leader by market share[i] in Data Resilience, recently announced major updates to Veeam Data Cloud Vault, a fully-managed, secure, and cloud-based storage service that leverages the power of Microsoft Azure and simplifies storing backups of mission critical data and applications offsite for unmatched business resilience.

“Given the value of data in a digital world and the growing risks to that data

including cyber-attacks, organizations need a reliable and cost-effective path to data resilience”, said Niraj Tolia, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) at Veeam. “Veeam Data Cloud Vault provides secure and hassle-free cloud storage, eliminating management challenges and unpredictable pricing, and reinforces our strategic partnership with Microsoft. Our commitment to easy, secure, and predictable cloud storage for backups, further solidifies Veeam as the #1 global leader in Data Resilience. Veeam Data Cloud Vault introduces a new groundbreaking feature – predictable, low-cost cloud storage pricing – catering to the needs of Veeam users. With two new editions and seamless integration with Veeam Data Platform, this release further strengthens the partnership between Veeam and Microsoft by leveraging the power, scale and durability of Microsoft Azure”.

G42 appoints Ali Dalloul as Group Chief Strategy Officer

G42, a leading AI and cloud computing company, announced recently a significant addition to its leadership team with the appointment of Ali Dalloul, a seasoned American technology executive.

With three decades of leading and delivering cloud and AI programs at Microsoft, Dalloul brings an exceptional track record that aligns with G42’s strategic objectives to drive growth globally. Dalloul, who previously served as Microsoft Vice President of Azure AI Customer Experience Engineering, brings a wealth of operating experience in AI commercialisation, enterprise adoption, and product strategy.

Ali Dalloul added: “Joining G42 marks an exciting new chapter in my career. I am honoured to be part of a team that is at the forefront of AI innovation, which I have experienced personally over the past year. G42’s commitment to leveraging AI for positive global impact aligns with my own vision of how technology can reshape industries and improve lives. I look forward to advancing this mission together and unlocking the next generation of AI capabilities”.



Ali Dalloul

e& UAE announces strategic partnership with Hewlett Packard Enterprise

e& UAE, the telecoms arm of e& in the UAE, has announced a significant partnership with Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), a leading provider for edge-to-cloud solutions.

This collaboration marks a pivotal step in e& UAE's ambitious business-to-business (B2B) journey. As e& UAE continues to establish a variety of strategic partnerships, this latest

alliance with HPE is set to fortify the company's position in the market, taking another step forward in developing a comprehensive managed service portfolio that responds to market trends and propels it toward embracing emerging technologies. This partnership aligns with e& UAE's commitment to becoming the premier managed services provider in the UAE and the region, as it focuses on delivering optimal business and technology outcomes for customers from key sectors, including Government, Education and Hospitality while addressing key challenges. To cater to the evolving demands of these sectors, HPE and e& UAE will offer tailored networking solutions and comprehensive services, based on HPE Aruba Networking technology.



Mindware expands distribution with Dell Technologies to cover Southeast Africa

Mindware, a leading value-added distributor (VAD) in the Middle East and Africa, is excited to announce the expansion of its long-standing distribution agreement with Dell Technologies to include the Southeast Africa region.

With over 16 years of successful collaboration with Dell Technologies and a network of more than 6,000 channel partners, this expansion marks another milestone in their

collaboration. The strengthened alliance highlights Mindware's continuous growth and Dell Technologies' recognition of Mindware's exceptional performance in delivering innovative solutions across an expanding range of markets. The strengthened collaboration underscores Mindware's ongoing growth and commitment to delivering cutting-edge technology solutions, as Dell Technologies recognizes Mindware's

continued excellence in driving business success across new markets.

"Mindware and Dell Technologies have maintained a successful relationship for over sixteen years", said Nicholas Argyrides, Vice President - Gulf at Mindware. "We leverage our strong operational and technical capabilities to bring the latest products and solutions from the vendor to market and deploy them as quickly as possible. In line with our commitment to driving Dell Technologies' regional business, we are now extending our coverage to Southeast Africa. With a rapidly growing economy and digital transformation initiatives underway across multiple sectors in this region, there is a need for technology infrastructure in both the private and public sectors".

"We recognise the intricacies of solution-selling compared to standard transactional approaches", Argyrides concluded. "Our values align closely with those of Dell Technologies, reflecting a shared commitment to teamwork and a culture of success. This synergy enables our companies to collaborate effectively".



NASA's new Earth Copilot brings Microsoft AI capabilities to democratise access to complex data

Every day, NASA's satellites orbit Earth, capturing a wealth of information that helps us understand our planet. From monitoring wildfires to tracking climate change, this vast trove of Earth Science data has the potential to drive scientific discoveries, inform policy decisions and support industries like agriculture, urban planning and disaster response.

But navigating the over 100 petabytes of collected data can be challenging, which is why NASA has collaborated with Microsoft to explore the use of a custom copilot using Azure OpenAI Service to develop NASA's Earth Copilot, which could transform how people interact with Earth's data.

Geospatial data is complex, and often requires some level of technical expertise to navigate it. As a result, this data tends to be accessible only to a limited number of researchers and scientists. As NASA



collects more data from new satellites, these complexities only grow and may further limit the potential pool of people able to draw insights and develop applications that could benefit society.

Recognising this challenge, NASA embarked on a mission to make its data more accessible and user-friendly. Through NASA's Office of the Chief Science Data Officer, the agency seeks to democratize data access, breaking down technical barriers to empower a diverse range of audiences, from scientists and educators to policymakers and the general public.

Vectra AI promotes Taj El-khayat to accelerate channel success and drive unprecedented growth

Vectra AI, Inc., the leader in AI-driven XDR (extended detection and response), recently announced the appointment of Taj El-khayat as Vice President of EMEA Partner Sales and Alliances.

In this role, El-Khayat will build on Vectra AI's partner-first foundation, delivering increased resources, training, and support to channel partners, Managed Security Service Providers (MSSPs), technology and cloud alliances, and Global Systems Integrators (GSIs). His expanded remit aims to help partners meet the growing demand in EMEA for comprehensive XDR solutions and customised cybersecurity services to address the challenges of today's hybrid attack landscape.



Taj El-khayat as Vice President of EMEA Partner Sales and Alliances at Vectra AI.

This appointment comes following the launch of the Vectra AI Clarity Programme for MSSPs, a new initiative that empowers partners to deliver best-in-class XDR solutions.

Taj El-khayat, VP EMEA Partner Sales and Alliances at Vectra AI, commented: "I'm delighted to expand my role at Vectra AI and accelerate business growth with our partners at this critical time of rising threats and increasing complexity in cybersecurity. Facing a cybersecurity skills shortage, rising AI and cloud technologies, and increasingly complex security demands, organisations are struggling to prevent SOC team burnout and breaches".

Cisco reveals top cybersecurity threats trends ahead of Black Hat MEA in Saudi Arabia

Ahead of Black Hat MEA in Riyadh

from 26-28 November 2024, Cisco, the worldwide leader in networking and security, released insights into key cybersecurity trends that emerged between July and September 2024.

The findings are based on analysis from Cisco Talos, one of the most trusted threat intelligence research teams globally, highlighting a notable increase in identity-based and ransomware attacks.

Ransomware incidents also remained a significant concern, making up nearly 40% of engagements. New ransomware variants, including RansomHub, RCRU64, and DragonForce, were observed this quarter, alongside familiar variants like BlackByte and Cerber.

Salman Faqeeh, Managing Director, Cisco Saudi Arabia, commented: "The mounting trends in identity-based attacks and ransomware highlight the evolving nature of cyber threats. At Cisco, we are committed to supporting our customers in strengthening their digital resilience with advanced security solutions". He added, "Black Hat MEA continues to be a significant platform for us to share latest threat insights and showcase our innovations that prevent identity-based attacks; detect and stop breaches; and close the exploit gap".



Salman Faqeeh, Managing Director, Cisco Saudi Arabia.

AVEVA

LET'S GET 'RADICAL'

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with **Rob McGreevy**, Chief Product Officer at AVEVA, in an effort to better understand how the global leader in industrial software is leveraging Generative AI to solve some of the challenges facing the energy sector, including their approach to accelerating decarbonisation – and why AVEVA is advocating for an approach of ‘radical collaboration’ to really meet global sustainability targets.

Rob McGreevy has spent almost 30 years in the industrial software business, and during that time he has seen many changes and evolutions within the energy sector.

However, the advent of disruptive technologies like Generative AI is drastically changing the landscape across all industry verticals, and the energy sector has certainly not been immune to that.

Over the last decade, the energy sector has increasingly come under pressure from governments and policymakers to decarbonise manufacturing, or the production of energy.

AVEVA has firmly established itself as a global leader in industrial software, and for decades their portfolio of products and solutions have empowered businesses operating in the energy sector to increase their efficiency and productivity.

As a trusted partner, they are now helping businesses to accelerate decarbonisation.

CNME sat down with Rob McGreevy, the Chief Product Officer at AVEVA.

McGreevy is widely regarded by his peers as one of the most effective software business leaders in the energy sector.

He has enjoyed an illustrious career thus far, and prior to joining AVEVA in 2018, he worked for energy behemoths such as GE, Rockwell and Schneider Electric.

AVEVA is at ADIPEC 2024, which kicked off this week in Abu Dhabi.

AI will be a central theme at the conference in the UAE capital, and McGreevy kickstarted our conversation by highlighting how they are leveraging Gen AI to solve complex problem in the Oil & Gas sector.

“We’ve been using a series of different techniques when it comes to AI over the last few decades. We’ve been implementing AI into things like predicative and prescription analytics across the Oil & Gas markets to look at large assets such as equipment, vibration and thermal models, maintenance, and the sustainability for all those assets. What’s new on the AI front, or what I am calling the AI frontier is the generative element, and in particular the use and deployment of LLMs, and that’s been new for us. In general, we’re infusing AI technology across the entirety of our product portfolio, and that’s across the design, build, operate, and optimise lifecycle for Oil & Gas companies. We’re creating more intelligent designs for equipment for offshore oil rigs, FPSOs, and refining processes. You’ll see AI appear in lots of different ways, and we see it as finding the right AI tool for the right job. We look at different techniques for AI and then apply that to our portfolio in order to solve problems that exist in the Oil & Gas industry,” said McGreevy.

Decarbonisation is a huge topic, and it extends beyond the Oil and Gas industry, and with ADIPEC coming up, that subject of decarbonisation and sustainability will be front and centre of that conference.

McGreevy highlighted how the demand for energy is on an upward trajectory, and believes that AVEVA has the breadth and depth of products



that can really accelerate decarbonisation for energy providers.

“What I would say is that the world at large, and our industry has a couple of challenges, and one of which is that the demand for energy is not going down, in fact, it is dramatically increasing. We still have parts of the population that don’t have access to power at all, but simultaneously we’ve got this need to drive decarbonisation across the

energy sector. Technology can help, and the products we have at AVEVA can solve some of these challenges, especially on a capacity side to meet those energy demands for our partners,



We’ve invested significantly in determining how these new AI techniques, particularly Gen AI impact industrial manufacturing and critical infrastructure to solve the challenges that we all know we face in terms of energy sustainability, productivity, and labour changes in the workforce.”

but also at the same time can look at effective optimisation to decarbonise. Across the energy value chain all these energy sources such as water, steam, air, gas and electric are used by manufacturing, and our software has different tools and techniques and capabilities to help reduce that, and sometimes reducing doesn’t sound too fashionable, but it makes a huge, huge impact,” said McGreevy.

AI is everywhere, and the general consensus across the board as that Generative AI has democratised the technology.

However, at the end of the day behind all the noise that comes with AI, you have to see results following its implementation, and McGreevy reiterated how important it is to show positive outcomes and ROI.

“When it comes to AI, it is so important to show quantifiable measurable outcomes and results for customers, because I do think were fast past the fashion era, everybody acknowledges the fact that Gen AI is new and interesting and is going to change the world, but the question for a lot of people is how? We’ve been lasered focus on that, and we’ve invested significantly in

determining how these new AI techniques, particularly Gen AI impact industrial manufacturing and critical infrastructure to solve the challenges that we all know we face in terms of energy sustainability, productivity, and labour changes in the workforce,” said McGreevy.

McGreevy cited three different illustrations of how they dispense AI technology to drive and deliver better outcomes for their customers and partners.

The first example he provided was related to the design and engineering practices internally at AVEVA.

“Firstly, if we take the design and engineering side of our business, designers sit down and use our unified engineering tools to go and create offshore oil rigs and FPSOs. In the design tools we have used Gen AI to help engineers create the designs that they want, and it enables them to avoid doing manually doing pipe routings, so for example if you have a bunch of tanks, pipes and pumps then you need to stitch those together in order to create a facility. However, by using Gen AI we can connect the end points of those two things and have Gen AI optimise the route based on cost, piping and models for how that plant, or asset will perform and that represents a 20X improvement on productivity. Bottom line instead of having your designers and engineers manually draw this route, we can create scenarios for them in a matter of seconds as opposed to hours of manually

routing them and seeing what the output is,” said McGreevy.

McGreevy also highlighted their success in infusing AI into their predictive and prescriptive analytics solutions, and also pointed to the importance of advising businesses around the changes happening within the labour movement.

“We have yielded huge results using predictive and prescriptive analytics on equipment like turbines and compressors, and we are looking at vibration analysis in order to predict that if this turbine continues in this manner, then it’s going to introduce a wobble, or whatever the issue may be, and we can essentially notify someone to say you better take a look at this asset because it is going to have a catastrophic failure, which could result in a loss of production and downtime. The third example that I’d like to highlight is around consultancy and advising people around the changes occurring in the workforce. Using Gen AI to actually advise people in situ on the job about what to do is incredibly important. We’ve got 50 years of process, production and design information just sitting in there, so we know how equipment and processes behave. If we can provide an interface using Gen AI in a conversational sense, and connect that Gen AI interface directly to our systems then that’s powerful. We know that we have trusted and reliable data, and the Gen AI can kick-

in to begin to advise them on what to do with the data. Those are three ways that we are using Gen AI to provide quantifiable results to our customers,” said McGreevy.

It’s fair to say that the energy sector has traditionally been quite rigid when it comes to change, but as McGreevy pointed out the COVID-19 pandemic actually forced the industry to embrace technology in order to keep the show on the road.

However, he did concede that when it comes to change management in relation to technology it remains a major problem across the board.

“Change management in terms of technology is a huge issue overall, but certainly in industrial markets. We tend to be a more conservative marketplace and that’s born out of not conservatism in sort of thought processes, but more in terms of safety and security, because at the end of the day the things that we do are quite meaningful, and they have safety and environmental implications. I think that’s one of the primary factors as to why as an industry we have been cautious in adopting new disruptive technologies. However, it’s fair to say that things have got better, and dare I say it as a result of COVID-19. The pandemic forced our industry to take a look at technologies and techniques that we would never have done at such an accelerated pace, and that’s opened the door to look at things like AI in a much faster fashion,” said McGreevy.

Echoing his sentiments regarding the implementation of AI, McGreevy said that the quickest way to enact change and remove resistance when it comes to the deployment of new technology is to demonstrate positive results and outcomes.

“Change management and education is definitely an issue, but the fastest way for us to overcome this is to engage with customers on use-cases to show them the results, and thoughtfully answer the concerns and questions they have. We don’t rely on LLMs to provide the process and production answers, we use the LLMs to facilitate the conversation, but when we encounter a question about process, production and design data, at that point we hand off that conversation to the AVEVA software, and it asks the trusted systems that our customers have been using forever to form the response. That means the trust level in the AI that we are implementing is quite high because we are literally using their data verbatim. It is so important that they can verify the veracity of the AI outcomes that we have,” said McGreevy.

AVEVA have talked about 'radical collaboration' to really meet net zero targets and objectives, and the term certainly sounds disruptive, but how do you foster radical collaboration across the energy sector, and what does it actually mean.

McGreevy said that at its core, it’s all about breaking down existing silos in order

to make these functional operating models to be more integrated with each other.

“I really like the term radical collaboration because it sort of evokes you, and just sounds something really disruptive. For us what radical collaboration means is essentially bringing together all the parties in the value chain from industrial engineering, manufacturing and Oil & Gas, which is all the industry verticals that we serve. The reason it is radical is the fact that it hasn’t been done before. All of our collective businesses in this sector are all built around functional operating models, which are quite rigid and siloed. They don’t talk to one another, so breaking down those silos, those organisational, operational boundaries and the business models that we have all grown up is a challenge. To break this down it requires this radical collaboration, and you’re making these functional groups really integrate and operate more cohesively and differently,” said McGreevy.

McGreevy concluded a brilliant conversation by reinforcing that radical collaboration has to happen in order to rethink and reimagine the exiting business models in an effort to build a more safe and sustainable future for the energy sector.

“For us at AVEVA, as a software provider that means that the digital backbone has to be highly interoperable because everything that happens across that value chain has a knock-on effect both upstream and downstream. Radical collaboration leads to hyper interconnectivity across this value chain, and we recognise it’s going to take everyone in the industry, so the partner ecosystem that we have developed over the last 30 years is just going to have to grow because we need more and more people to do managed services. We need tech partners to create very specialised algorithms for looking at those AI use-cases that we described. The way we have been operating these businesses, and the way we’ve running manufacturing and critical infrastructure simply has to change. In summary, as an industry the silos that exist across that value chain have to change because of the nature of the current landscape, and that is what we mean when we talk about radical collaboration. It’s essentially looking at how we have built and designed the value chain and rethinking and reimagining it, and the technology can enable us to make that happen which should result in a more safe, sustainable and use of the world’s resources. [enr](#)”



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Avaya AI Roundtable Report

THE NEXT BIG THING

Avaya CEO **Patrick Dennis** has bullishly claimed that the next big tech unicorn will come from the Middle East region during an exclusive AI roundtable discussion that was moderated by CNME Editor Mark Forker during GITEX Global 2024.



The exclusive invite-only roundtable held at Avaya's offices in Emirates Towers was entitled; **AI Investment Strategies: Maximizing Shareholder Value and Board Alignment** – and the discussions were spearheaded and driven by the incumbent Avaya CEO Patrick Dennis, and his Chief Product Officer, Omar Javid.

Patrick Dennis assumed his new responsibilities as Avaya CEO on September 1st, replacing the outgoing Alan Masarek.

The roundtable discussion took place last month during GITEX Global in Dubai, and was viewed as a great opportunity for Avaya's new



supremo to meet with some of their existing customers and prominent technology leaders from industry verticals such as manufacturing, healthcare and education.

Those in attendance at Avaya’s exclusive roundtable, which was held in conjunction with CPI Media Group included;

- **Major General Khaled Al Razooqi (Dubai Police)**
- **Samer Al Khawajah (Dubai Police)**
- **Matar Al Mehairi (Meerana)**
- **Ray Pang (Supermicro)**
- **Hardy Myers (Cognigy)**
- **Martin Svarc (STRV.Inc)**
- **Zeus Kerravala (ZK Research)**

- **Abid Shah (Saudi German Hospital)**
- **Dr. Jassmim Haji (AI Society Bahrain)**
- **Manish Agarwal (M. H. Enterprises LLC)**

The objective from Avaya’s perspective, and those in attendance was to get a broader overview of the direction of investment in the Middle East when it comes to AI, and to get greater visibility on some of the challenges businesses are hoping AI integrations

and deployments can solve from a cost optimisation and efficiency standpoint.

Avaya’s CEO kickstarted the conversation by documenting his background and hugely successful track record in investment and private equity in the technology industry.

Dennis said that he feels he can bring ‘something new’ to Avaya.

“I think that if you’re new to a role then it’s important for you to sort of reflect and



I would say that there’s not a more GDP level transformative thing that has happened in our collective lifetimes, with the exception of maybe the internet, than with AI.”



ask yourself what can I offer our customers, partners and employees that they maybe haven't had before? I've been doing investment and private equity for quite a while. In my early days in big tech I worked for EMC, which some of you might remember before they were acquired by Dell. That was the moment that I realised that M&A was a big deal, and I'll give you some statistics that most people don't remember. During that time, we bought VMware, RSA, Documentum and Data Domain. VMWare was initially acquired for \$642m, and that investment created well in excess of \$40bn dollars of value over time, and one of the lessons that I learned back then was the realisation that I wanted to have a future in watching how that all works," said Dennis.

Dennis then briefly spoke about how he took his first CEO with a public company, before exiting that to OpenText. He then started his own private equity CEO practice, before selling Aspect

Software and merging it with Nobel Systems in a 1bn dollar transaction, which led to the inception of Alvaria.

He then entered the cybersecurity domain and sold Venafi to CyberArk for 1.6bn in a cash/stock deal.

Avaya's CEO explained that the reason he ran through his highlights reel was to just illustrate that he knows 'how the money works' – and said that for the first time in his career people are coming to the Middle East to raise capital investment.

"Now the reason for that intro and career recap is to highlight that I kind of know how the money works, and that part is fun. I've made a number of observations over the last few years at AVAYA, but it is quite obvious that if you're in private equity

then sooner or later you're going to have to raise money, and not a lot of people have participated in that. There has been a swathe of investments made by this region into private equity, and more and more people are moving their money into private equity, and are looking to have investments made in the Middle East region. For the very first time in my career everybody has come to this region to raise money, and what tends to happen when that goes on is conversations and skills get dispersed in a new place, so I was not surprised by what I saw when I got here," said Dennis.

Dennis said that he was very encouraged by the highly ambitious goal of having 100 unicorn companies in the Middle East region over the next 5 years.

Avaya's CEO believes that the regulatory and government structures in place, especially in Dubai, means it is highly, highly likely that the next Google could be printed in the UAE.

"This region wants 100 unicorn companies over the 5 years, now if you quickly run the math on that, a unicorn is a 1bn dollar company, so if there's going to be 100 of them, that's 100bn dollars of market capital created in this region. In Dubai, they



For the very first time in my career everybody has come to this region to raise money, and what tends to happen when that goes on is conversations and skills get dispersed in a new place, so I was not surprised by what I saw when I got here."

want 33 of those unicorns, and that's a big number. To give you a fast fact on how that has worked in the United States, typically if we made 100 unicorns then we would turn out one trillion-dollar market cap company. That's essentially printing a Google, or an Apple, and certainly I think it's fair to say that this region has churned out big companies over the years, but it hasn't printed out one of those yet. When you think about the level of capital investment that is happening in and around this marketplace, and the commitment that is coming from the government and regulatory structures to make that capital be put to work well, then I believe it is very possible to see the first really, really large market cap tech company in a long time come from here, and it's probably going to be in AI. It is also possible that the first AGI system is built here because some of the partnerships that have happened across the region," said Dennis.

Avaya's CEO declared that in order to get the outcomes you want with AI then you need to be educated on the technology, and he claimed that some have been guilty of thinking it's easier than it actually is.

"Look most of the time when these big shifts happen there is an educational process that has to take place. This one is interesting though because it has moved so fast, and it is so simple in so many ways that there is an assumption from most people

that they already know what it means, and how it all works, and that's not always the case. I think the last time we witnessed something similar was in relation to the cloud. The first step for me is for people to really get educated, and the education matters because I believe that to really do this well it will change the way computer science has worked for the last two decades, and that's not obvious when you say we're going to build an AI system, because sooner or later when you string enough buzzwords together it starts to sound easy, but truth be told there are some pretty fundamental underpinnings in technology that are going to change. So, the first step is education," said Dennis.


Dennis said the next step businesses needed to undertake in relation to AI was to actually try, and stressed that he didn't view failure as a bad thing.

"I own a restaurant, and in the kitchen, we encourage mastery, which means people have to do something an awful lot to get good at it, so we don't like to change people around so much because we want them to be masters. So, the second step for me is if you want some mastery in this area then you've got to get some education, and then you have to actually try. I don't see failure as a bad thing, which might sound counter-intuitive, but we have not never got tech right the first time as best as I can remember. If you look at technical history maybe the

failures weren't as widespread as they are these days because we can communicate more effectively these days, but I do know that when the Wright brothers tried to get that plane off the ground, they tried it a bunch of times before flight ever happened. If you want to do something that is truly revolutionary then you've got to get educated and you've got to try," said Dennis.

The final piece of the AI puzzle according to Dennis is to actually start the whole process.

Avaya's CEO said it wasn't an option to sit this one out.

"The third element is the fact that people tend to give up when the prize isn't big enough, but there's not really an option for people to decide that they want to sit this one out. We could debate the finer points in more detail, but I would say that there's not a more GDP level transformative thing that has happened in our collective lifetimes, with the exception of maybe the internet than with AI. I think when you see some failures your instinct is to wait and sit it out, but I don't think that's the right call. In summary, you need some education, you need to try, and you have got to start. I don't think we're in a space right now where we are in a transactional moment just yet, we're in a place where people need to be willing to give it a try, and what I love about this region is the fact that it really wants to try," said Dennis. 

Cisco Talos

IT'S NOT ALWAYS GOOD TO SHARE

Martin Lee, the EMEA Lead for Cisco Talos provides five top tips for mitigating the threat illustrated by a recent Cisco survey, which reveals the surprising number of working parents who share their work devices with children, unsupervised and with knowledge of passcodes.

With organizations in the United Arab Emirates increasingly recognizing the importance of a flexible work model, maintaining consistent adherence to IT and security protocols in such a dynamic environment presents a unique set of challenges.

Being a working parent is always challenging. No parent will be surprised to learn that work devices are sometimes shared with children. The Cisco survey among working parents, in the UAE, revealed that 91% of working parents have shared devices with children during the past six months. Crucially, of those who shared a device, 40% allow unsupervised access while sharing their passcodes, and 54% of those without access to passcodes remain unsupervised.

Of course, any unauthorized access to confidential data constitutes a potential data breach. However, when children gain unauthorized access, there is an added risk of



unintentional submission or deletion of data through an open browser tab or accidental email breaches.

Across the entire employment spectrum there will always be instances where employees will cut corners for their convenience and create threats to security. Insider threats have always been within the remit of

IT security teams, but now we have to add the security issues that arise in chaotic real-world environments.

While we cannot completely eliminate threats or human error, we can surely adopt a zero-trust security strategy to ensure that, as much as possible, the person using the keyboard is the individual authorized to access the system or data.

- 1. Work with rather than against users.** Allow users to create guest user accounts on devices to allow family members restricted use without access to business systems but benefitting from corporate cyber protection. Permitting guest accounts is less than ideal, but it's better than having unauthorised users with full access to a device.
- 2. Implement multi-factor authentication (MFA) or two actor authentication (2FA).** When a user

accesses a new application or system, verify that the user intended to perform the action through an MFA/2FA ping or biometric recognition. A simple additional verification step will almost certainly prevent curious children from accessing sensitive systems.

3. Keep sensitive data protected by a VPN. Not all data has equal security requirements, protect sensitive data so that it can only be accessed via VPN requiring the user to enter their username, password and verify via MFA/2FA.

4. Back-up, back-up and back-up again. The family home environment is hazardous for fragile electronic devices. Spilled coffee, lemonade or paint can easily disable a device, as can falls from height on to a tiled kitchen floor. Ensuring that important data isn't lost and that replacement devices can be easily restored from backed-up data is vital to keeping hybrid workers operational.

5. Educate users about cyber security. Devious users have a nasty habit of finding ways to subvert security protections if they find that these protections get in the way of their goals. Make sure users are aware of the importance of cyber security, the consequences of getting it wrong, as well as common



threats and attacks. Simple policies reinforced with sanctions for transgressions

help users understand what is acceptable and what is not. [enms](#)

Allow users to create guest user accounts on devices to allow family members restricted use without access to business systems, but they can benefit from corporate cyber protection.”

Cisco

AI-POWERED CYBERSECURITY

CNME sat down with **Fady Younes**, Managing Director for Cybersecurity at Cisco Middle East & Africa, during GITEX Global 2024, to get greater visibility on how Cisco plans to utilize AI technology to address the biggest challenges in the global cybersecurity ecosystem.

Analysts have claimed that Cisco's AI-driven, cross-domain security platform empowers organizations to effectively detect and respond to sophisticated cyber threats in real time.

In a candid exchange with CNME during GITEX Global 2024, Younes addressed privacy challenges associated with AI, explaining Cisco's proactive approach to data protection by embedding security controls early in the development process.

Through innovative solutions, Cisco aims to strengthen defenses and adapt to the rapidly evolving threat landscape.

AI is a key buzzword, how is it enhancing threat detection and responses particularly in highly complex network environments?

In today's evolving cybersecurity landscape attackers are becoming a lot more aggressive and sophisticated by leveraging



AI in their attacks across multiple vectors.

Cisco's AI-driven, cross-domain, unified security platform helps organizations protect their users, data, applications and devices. It also helps them detect, respond and recover from incidents at a much faster pace.

AI-driven solutions enable real-time analysis of vast amounts of network data and identifies patterns of anomalies that could indicate potential threats. This process

happens with an exceptional level of speed and accuracy.

AI enhanced systems can also collate threat intelligence data from various sources and eventually use that data to significantly reduce the response time and mitigate the impact of cyberattacks.

How does Cisco balance automation and human oversight in incident responses to avoid potential pitfalls?

Cisco adopts a multi-layered approach to combining advanced automation capabilities with strategic human interventions.

Security solutions from Cisco can leverage automation for repetitive tasks, incident response, threat detection and policy creation while keeping humans around for complex decision making. For example, Cisco XDR (Extended Detection and Response) leverages AI automation for cross-domain threat detection and intelligence gathering while keeping the security teams around to analyse the more advanced issues.

That synergy between automation and human interaction enhances security efficiency without compromising on the quality of incident responses.



How does Cisco address the privacy and security challenges associated with processing sensitive data and using AI within cybersecurity?

Cisco takes data protection very seriously, one of the main pillars of our privacy program is data protection by default and design.

This means that Cisco addresses privacy at the earliest stage in the engineering and development process. We believe that there is an issue with organisations around us adopting AI at too fast a pace.

This is why Cisco decided to acquire a company called Robust Intelligence to enhance our security-for-AI offering.

Our evolved platform

enhances the detection and assessment of risks associated with those AI models during the testing phase, which then helps put a 'guard rail' in the deployment and production phase. Cisco designs, builds and operates solutions with security, privacy control and protection as foundational.

In Cisco's experience, how do AI-driven cybersecurity solutions adapt to evolving threats and zero-day vulnerabilities?



Cisco's AI-driven, cross-domain, unified security platform helps organizations protect their users, data, applications and devices. It also helps them detect, respond and recover from incidents at a much faster pace."

Cisco adopts a multi-layered approach by leveraging multiple solutions. Starting with Cisco hyper-shield, the industry-first AI native security architecture, but also other solutions including secure manual analytics all supported by Cisco Talos.

Hyper-shield provides advanced workload protection through AI-powered autonomous segmentation, which addresses the dynamic nature of applications across the multi-cloud environment preventing any lateral movement by attackers. Hyper-shield also delivers exploit protection.

This proactive approach is crucial considering that vulnerabilities are rapidly emerging but attackers, by leveraging AI, are acting on those vulnerabilities at a record pace. Cisco Talos researchers continuously monitor any unknown vulnerabilities or threats and then perform deep-dive research around some of these zero-day vulnerabilities and threats.

To close, with exceptional innovation powered by AI and supported by Talos Cisco is tipping the scale in favour of the defenders. © 2024

Women In Tech

'MUM'S THE WORD

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with **Mariana Missakian**, mother, best-selling author, TEDx speaker, and a doctoral candidate, to learn more about her mission to make the global IT and technology landscape more 'mother-inclusive' in the latest interview in our Women in Tech series.

Missakian believes that supporting working mothers is not a luxury, but a business necessity.

"The time has come to stop asking mothers to adapt and start asking companies to attract."

But how did she get here, let's go back to the beginning.

At the turn of the millennium, Mariana Missakian was a high-flying technology executive with the world at her feet.

She began her professional career with IBM, before she was recruited by Intel.

She continued to soar at Intel, and was tasked with the responsibility of setting up their operations in Kuwait.

However, as she conceded during our conversation, she had become addicted to the hustle, and one day it dawned on her that she was the only woman in the room.

That set her off on a completely different career path, and today, she is one of the most powerful advocates

for 'mother-inclusive' workplaces in the IT and technology sector.

In a candid discussion with CNME Editor Mark Forker during GITEX Global 2024, she began by highlighting her own journey and how she became completely caught up in what she described as the race.

"I began my professional journey in tech with IBM in 2000, and was responsible for driving the regional channel partner growth of their software business across the Middle East, and into North Africa and Pakistan. I loved the job, and the nature of the IT landscape is so dynamic and fast-paced that you need to have the ability to always adapt and evolve as things happen so quickly in that industry. Due to my work at IBM, I was recruited by Intel, who had recently entered the Middle East marketplace, and at the time were focused on expanding their channel presence in the UAE. During

my time at Intel, I also moved to Kuwait to head up their local channel operations, so it was an incredibly exciting, challenging and rewarding job." said Missakian.

However, as Missakian explains one day everything changed, and it triggered her to completely move the dial on the direction of her life and career.

"IT traditionally, was and still is a very male-dominated sector, and one day all of a sudden just dawned on me that I was the only woman in the room. That sudden realisation for me was overwhelming. When you're in the race you are oblivious to who is in the room as your lasered focus on KPIs, sales, growth and adapting to market demands. One day I woke up and asked myself do I really want to continue being the only woman in the room? I decided that I didn't, and I always say that sometimes you need to ask questions at the right moment to bring you clarity. I believe that's why I'm here today talking to you about my research around making workplaces more equitable and inclusive for mothers." said Missakian.

I started my research, because I wanted to know why there were so few women in IT, and especially at the top levels. I found out that over 60% of women in IT leave their job two years after becoming mothers. And that was my AHA moment, when I realized the leadership pipeline in tech is bleeding mothers, and the industry is losing critical talent because



we have been asking CEOs the wrong question. We were asking them, “Are you hiring women?” when we should have been asking them, “Are you retaining the women you are hiring once they become mothers?”

A negative stereotype that has been levelled at female leaders in the past is that they lead with empathy, and that is seen by some as weakness. The perception amongst some is that female leaders lack the ruthlessness needed to really make tough decisions.

Unsurprisingly Missakian dismisses that assertion, and cites empirical academic data to reject that claim, whilst reiterating her pleas for female leaders to lead authentically through their

womanhood and motherhood. “I don’t want to be pinned down by statistics, but female leadership drives and sustains incredible success, and the data backs it up. Female leadership has been proven both academically and scientifically to enable an environment that drives teams to be more productive, and companies led by women are more profitable. And this is even more true for mothers, as research has shown that



We don’t want mother-friendly environments, what we need is mother-inclusive workplaces, and mother-inclusive workplaces means that companies are actively, proactively, and consciously involving mothers in the leadership conversation.”

motherhood improves our productivity, drive, and commitment and makes us better leaders.”

“Women leadership, and especially in IT, is viewed through the prism of KPIs, sales targets, or titles, but I want it also to be viewed through the prism of womanhood, and motherhood, because ultimately that is who we are, and by leaning into our strengths as women and mothers is what has gotten us to this position in the first-place. Let’s normalize the role of motherhood in leadership. We need female CXOs to highlight the fact that being a mother is playing a key role in their continued success, and we need to see motherhood being highlighted in their leadership journeys.” said Missakian.

There is an old saying in business that the numbers don’t lie, and that certainly rings true in relation to some of the research that was conducted by Mariana.

However, these numbers don’t reflect positively on the IT industry.

Staggeringly, an overwhelming number of women in IT leave their job on average around two years after becoming a mother.

A grim statistic that should



force the IT sector to act, especially that replacing women costs Silicon Valley \$16 billion per year.

Missakian believes that mother-friendly workplaces are no longer enough to sustain a gender balanced leadership pipeline, and it's time to shift the conversation to mother-inclusive workplaces.

"The corporate world has constructed motherhood to be very clearly separated from leadership and the workplace, and that shouldn't be the case, and that is what we need to change. I'm arguing against that every day. There

shouldn't be a separation, or even a balance, there should be an integration, and I'm making the case that the future of leadership is motherhood, because women will lead when mothers lead. The majority of working women will become mothers, and the data indicates that women in IT leave their jobs two years after they become mothers. Companies need to recognize the strategic value of mothers in leadership, and create environments where mothers are an integral part of the business success." said Missakian.

When asked what advice she'd offer to young women started out in their careers in IT, Missakian highlighted that you should never try to emulate somebody, but conceded that when you are young that can be a difficult thing to avoid.

"When you're young and starting out on your professional career then it's fair to say that we are all quite impressionable. We automatically want to mirror the person at the top in order to replicate their success, whether we do it consciously, or unconsciously

it happens and that's the reality. But we should never try to emulate, or imitate. We need to stay true to ourselves and lead with our own authenticity, and our own unique personality, character, and identity. I fell into that trap, of following the system that was in place, in order to climb the corporate ladder, but when it suddenly dawned on me that it wasn't my race I was running, it was a sort of eureka moment. However, it allowed me to hit the reset button, and actually take a step back and look at what the big picture actually was." said Missakian.

Missakian did acknowledge that more and more women were getting into STEM-related fields across the Middle East, and especially in the UAE. "It's so exciting to see so many women in IT now. The industry has come a long way" she said, reflecting on the positive changes she's witnessed in recent years. However, she questioned whether the landscape in terms of female role models at the top, has changed all that much since she entered the IT domain back in 2000.

"In the UAE, the number of female graduates in STEM related fields is double the global average, so that is fantastic, but who are these women looking up to? Who are they seeing at the very top? Is the industry insightful and intuitive enough to be able to provide these fresh graduates with women role models in top leadership positions who are leading with their womanhood? The first

step in solving any problem is actually acknowledging that there is a problem in the first place. There are not enough female leaders in the technology industry full stop. In fact there are very few. There were 400,000 people globally who lost their jobs in the IT industry over the last few years, and 60% of them were women, and more than half of that 60% will be mothers. So it's very highly unlikely that any significant progress will be made at the top without the support of mothers, and as an industry we need to sit down and accept that there is an issue and recognise that the future of women in leadership is rooted in motherhood." said Missakian.

Missakian concluded a wonderful interview by stressing that organisations need to realise that being 'mother-friendly' is simply not enough in the current climate.

"We don't just want friends. We need allies, and sponsors and a clear path to leadership. I have been lucky to work with inspiring women managers, but individual support alone isn't enough, and fixing the system isn't on women and mothers alone. It's about creating a structured framework that supports women at

every stage of their careers, and through pregnancy, motherhood and beyond. These cosmetic and tick-the-box policies that businesses do to create mother-friendly environments is not enough anymore, and will not foster the change we need. How are companies supporting and retaining mothers after maternity leave? Are they actively attracting, hiring, and promoting mothers? How are they creating structured and sustainable paths to keep mothers in the leadership pipeline?"

What I have been saying for the last number of years is that we don't want mother-friendly environments, what we demand is mother-inclusive workplaces, and mother-inclusive workplaces means that companies are actively, proactively, and consciously involving mothers in the leadership conversation. It's all about culture, are organisations going to create an environment where there are opportunities for mothers to thrive? That's the question. There needs to be a mindset shift across the board as an industry from the top down to really drive change, and I will continue to shout, fight and advocate for a more inclusive work environment for mothers in the IT sector." concluded Missakian. [enms](#)



IT traditionally, and remains to this day, a male-dominated sector, and one day it all of a sudden just dawned on me that I was the only woman in the room. That sudden realisation for me was overwhelming."



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THE BIG 'PROJECT'

CNME Editor Mark Forker examines the major AI announcements made by both the **KSA** and **UAE** over recent months, which has triggered a tug-of-war between the two nations as they seek to become the dominant AI leader in the Middle East, with the proposed \$100bn dollar Project Transcendence seen as a potential game-changer in the race.

Over the last decade there has been a whole host of technologies that have been labelled as the 'next big thing'.

But time after time the hype around these technologies completely dissipate, and the most recent example of this is in relation to the Metaverse.

The narrative around the Metaverse was driven by Mark Zuckerberg, and such was his confidence in the technology, that he rebranded Facebook to Meta in October 2021.

Fast-forward to 2024, and the Metaverse appears dead in the water.

AI is not a nascent technology, in fact, it has been around for decades.

However, Generative AI is new, and it feels totally different. Since the advent of ChatGPT by OpenAI in November 2022, Generative AI has become the talk of the town, and in many cases it has become unavoidable.

What is different about Generative AI compared to some other technologies is the fact that it has transcended the IT and technology

domain, and is now a key priority for governments on a global scale.

That only serves as a further testament to how Generative AI really is changing the world.

A perfect example of how Gen AI is now the underlying current in the economic future of many nations can be best seen in the Middle East.

There is ongoing power struggle ensuing between the region's two prominent economic heavyweights in the form of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

The power struggle is in relation to AI.

THE UNIVERSAL BLUEPRINT FOR AI

In April 2024, the Dubai government launched the 'Dubai Universal Blueprint for Artificial Intelligence', which

is designed to accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) applications.

Dubai is currently the world's top location for attracting FDI in AI as a percentage of GDP and ranks seventh globally in readiness for adopting AI applications.

Dubai is the headquarters of eight technology unicorns, which have leveraged the economic and investment opportunities provided by Dubai's technology sector and large-scale digital transformation projects.

The Blueprint is aimed towards achieving the targets set under the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 by contributing AED100 billion annually to Dubai's economy and increasing productivity by 50% through the implementation of innovative digital solutions.

It is clearly evident that



Bloomberg has reported that Saudi Arabia is planning a new government-backed AI group, with funding of up to \$100bn, and is code-named Project Transcendence."

the leadership of the Dubai government view AI as the key pillar in their economic future.

At the launch of the Universal Blueprint for AI, Sheikh Hamdan warned that nations that were not able to keep 'pace' with the evolution of AI would be 'left behind'.

"In 1999, Dubai commenced its journey towards the future by launching its digital transformation venture, which has continued to achieve major milestones leading to the recent unveiling of the Dubai Digital Strategy last year. In recent years, the evolution of artificial intelligence has accelerated, presenting numerous opportunities for nations and governments adept at utilising it, while posing challenges to those unable to keep pace. This has necessitated swift and adaptive action plans responsive to rapid changes in technology and artificial intelligence," said Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Executive Council.

In June 2024, the Dubai Municipality launched an '*Artificial Intelligence Roadmap*' designed to boost efficiency across multiple industry sectors.

His Excellency Dawoud Al Hajri, Director General of Dubai Municipality, said that the AI roadmap would create a more sustainable future for all citizens and residents in Dubai.

"Through this Roadmap, we seek to leverage all technological developments and accelerate the integration of AI in all assignments supervised at the emirates

level in alignment with its ongoing efforts to create a robust digital system and offer an innovative system that ensures readiness to meet future needs. Furthermore, it seeks to deliver a dynamic environment elevating the emirate's resilience and contributing to making it more sustainable, pioneering and appealing while providing the highest quality of life for the population," said Al Hajri.

In October 2024, during GITEX Global, US technology behemoth Microsoft announced that it would provide AI upskilling and training to over 100,000 government employees in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah, as part of their AI National Skills Initiative.

In addition to this, Brad Smith, Vice-Chairman and President of Microsoft, announced that they would upskill 1 million UAE residents in AI by 2027, following a meeting with Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Executive Council during the UAE Government Annual Meetings 2024.

These partnerships and programs left the UAE in rude health when it came to solidifying their quest to be a global hub for AI.

However, Saudi Arabia has ambitious intentions of their own when it comes to AI.

PIF PARTNERSHIP WITH GOOGLE CLOUD

One of the first significant announcements made by Saudi Arabia in relation to their AI aspirations was

the landmark partnership between the state-owned PIF (Public Investment Fund) and Google Cloud.

In October, the PIF and Google Cloud formally announced its plans to create a new global artificial intelligence hub in Dammam, which is located in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province.

The partnership is designed to firmly establish Saudi Arabia as a global hub and top AI destination for local and global enterprises and start-ups.

The partnership aims to develop the Saudi workforce through AI programs for millions of students and professionals, supporting the national objective of growing the information and communication technology (ICT) sector by 50%.

The partnership, which is subject to obtaining regulatory approvals, will feature joint research on Arabic language models as well as Saudi-specific AI applications.

Enabled by Google Cloud's years of investment and leadership in custom silicon, this high-performance, purpose-built infrastructure will include the newest tensor processing unit (TPU) and graphics processing unit (GPU) accelerators as well as the Vertex AI platform – Google Cloud's specialized development platform that enables customers to build generative AI applications.

"We are delighted to welcome this new Google Cloud AI hub to Saudi Arabia. This partnership demonstrates PIF's dedication to fostering

an AI-friendly environment through investments in human capital and technology, upskilling thousands with cutting-edge tools to support our sustainable and innovative infrastructure goals. Saudi Arabia is a prime location for global tech partners as PIF brings both sector expertise and a long-term approach to investment,” said H.E. Yasir Al-Rumayyan, Governor of PIF.

His sentiments were echoed by Ruth Porat, President and Chief Investment Officer of Alphabet and Google, who said the collaboration would serve to accelerate the adoption of AI in local languages across key industry verticals in the Kingdom.

“This strategic partnership will accelerate adoption of AI in the local language and across industries — including healthcare, retail, financial services and more — for enterprises and startups in Saudi Arabia, across the Middle East, Africa and around the world. As part of Saudi Arabia’s rich technology ecosystem, we aim to create highly-skilled jobs for Saudis and opportunities for global businesses to fuel growth through cloud adoption,” said Porat.

PROJECT TRANSCENDENCE

Bloomberg has reported that Saudi Arabia is planning a new government-backed AI group, with funding of up to \$100bn, and is code-named Project Transcendence.

It is believed that the AI group will be formed by the Public Investment Fund, and would be comparable in terms

of scale with that of Alat.

Some industry watchdogs have claimed that Project Transcendence might adopt a similar mandate to that of UAE AI behemoth G42.

Again, as aforementioned there has been no official announcement from the Saudi leadership in relation to Project Transcendence, but Bloomberg have claimed some of the early detail of the program was confirmed by confidential sources.

Some analysts have pointed to the need for Saudi Arabia to have this type of entity similar to G42 in the UAE, as the country doesn’t have a track record of building their own AI products and services.

The Kingdom’s leadership believe that Project Transcendence could pull together the expertise, technology and investment required to galvanise the country’s AI resources, in order to become a leader in creating new AI products, solutions and services and overtake the UAE as the major AI leader in the Middle East.

The \$100bn war-chest is seen as a complete gamechanger in the AI arms race between the UAE and KSA.

Some of the key points outlined in Bloomberg report include that Project Transcendence will invest in data centres, start-ups


and other infrastructure to develop AI products and solutions, and will partner with global tech players.

The AI announcement between Google Cloud and PIF is seen as a precursor to this project.

Bloomberg also reports that the new AI group will 'ultimately include multiple government bodies', perhaps hinting at a plan to aggregate existing AI development, infrastructure and services resources under one roof.

With unparalleled resources and access to government technology projects, Project Transcendence would be able to create joint ventures and technology projects together with global technology firms – and as a leading future national industry group, Project Transcendence is, of course, also planned to create new jobs for Saudi citizens, develop local talent and help grow the country’s talent pool for AI and related technologies.

It is a seismic program, which again, has not officially been announced, but it is surely only a matter of time before the green light is given on the project.

And when it does it will turn the dial in favour of the KSA in their battle for AI dominance over the United Arab Emirates. 



One of the first significant announcements made by Saudi Arabia in relation to their AI aspirations was the landmark partnership between the state-owned PIF (Public Investment Fund) and Google Cloud.”



AGENTS OF CHANGE

Thierry Nicault, Area Vice President and General Manager of Salesforce Middle East, outlined the impact their newest transformative tools Agentforce and Data Cloud will have for organisations across the region, describing it as the ‘democratisation’ of AI in the enterprise space during an interview with CNME Editor Mark Forker at GITEX Global 2024.

When you think of Salesforce Middle East, you think of Thierry Nicault.

He has been the driving force behind the growth of Salesforce across the Middle East for the best part of a decade, and has become the face of the brand in the region.

Nicault has enjoyed a stellar career thus far in IT and technology, and spent a large part of his career at SAP.

However, his career has reached new heights at Salesforce, and when you speak to Nicault his genuine, sincere passion for their products is palpable, and that was certainly the case when CNME caught up with him at GITEX Global, to learn more about Agentforce.

Agentforce was launched by global CRM leader at their annual Dreamforce event in San Francisco.

Nicault said the key focus for Salesforce during GITEX was to showcase the capabilities of Agentforce.

“A key focus for us during GITEX Global 2024 was Agentforce, which is a new AI offering that we have launched. We are looking to roll that out across the Middle East region, and we believe that GITEX gives us a great platform to demonstrate the capabilities of Agentforce. Agentforce was officially launched at Dreamforce in San Francisco, back in September. At GITEX, we are reinforcing the AI investments that we have made, and we are pitching to customers operating in the enterprise space to adopt Agentforce into their day-to-day business operations. Agentforce is the next-generation of AI, we have had predictive AI, and Generative AI, and we are introducing



Agentforce is an autonomous AI agent that is ultimately designed to augment the capability and capacity of your employees within the enterprise.”

what we would call Agent AI into the marketplace,” said Nicault.

Nicault highlighted many benefits presented by Agentforce.

Some of those benefits include the fact that Agentforce removes the need for enterprises to do coding when building their own AI models.

“Agentforce is an autonomous AI agent that are ultimately designed to augment the capability and capacity of your employees within the enterprise. We are doing that by using an Open LLM program, but customers can use whatever LLM that they want, we have our own, but we give customers the autonomy to choose the LLM model that they want to use. Agentforce is democratising AI within the enterprise space, and it’s very similar to what we did in the cloud over 20 years ago. The concept that we are pioneering is to democratise the AI usage to enable customers to jump into it without needing to code. There are lots of customers who have invested millions into building their own AI, but what we are saying to our customers is maybe you can do something that is more realistic and smarter and that allows you to use AI in a way that will enable you to build without



having to do coding and this what Agentforce is all about,” said Nicault.

According to Nicault, the response from the marketplace since Agentforce became available has been ‘immense’.

There has been a clamour from a whole host of enterprises across the board to adopt Agentforce, and Nicault highlighted how popular the platform was when unveiled at Dreamforce.

“We meet with a lot of CIOs and CEOs in the region, and when we presented them with Agentforce all of them universally said that they wanted to be the

first company to adopt and integrate Agentforce into their operations. During the four days of our Dreamforce conference in San Francisco, we invited customers to come and build their own Agentforce for their own company, and over the course of the four days we



There are lots of customers who have invested millions into building their own AI models, but what we are saying to our customers is maybe you can do something that is more realistic and smarter, and that allows you to use AI in a way that will enable you to build without having to do coding, and this what Agentforce is all about.”

built 10,000 agents on the platform. Agentforce is not a buzzword, it is a component that is available across the platform, and you can have a sales agent, a service agent, and a marketing agent and so on and so forth, and the personalisation aspect of it is another powerful element of the platform,” said Nicault.

Nicault concluded by outlining how Agentforce was ultimately defined by three key principles, and reinforced that removing the need for enterprises to do their own code was a big selling point.

“Agentforce allows you to define three things mainly, and they are the role, the data, and the action that the agent can take, because the difference between Generative AI and Agentforce is the fact that Agentforce has the ability to make actions. In summary, we have a lot of features available, and we can help customers to have a realistic AI implementation without the need to code and train big LLMs, and that’s one of the unique selling points of Agentforce – and why there has been such a clamour from the C-suite across the region and beyond to adopt Agentforce,” said Nicault. CRM



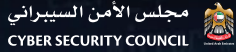
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GOOD COP BAD COP

At GITEX Global 2024, **Joe Sarno**, Executive Vice President of International Sales at Fortinet, spoke to CNME, to share his insights and perspectives on the constantly evolving threat landscape within the cybersecurity sector. Interestingly, he highlighted how Gen AI is a double-edged sword from the fact that whilst it can equip security professionals with the tools to fightback, it can also empower adversaries to launch sophisticated cyberattacks.

What are the most common cybersecurity challenges that organizations face today - and how do Fortinet leverage their product portfolio to help them address these challenges?

There's a lot of challenges related to cybersecurity today.

Fortinet has been developing cybersecurity technologies for over 20 years, the company was founded in the year 2000.

Today we are facing a challenge that is unprecedented, in the terms that AI is being used as a tool for the bad guys to really accelerate the cybersecurity threats across the landscape. We know that it can be a tool that can help us, but it really is a double-edged sword.

As a company we have also been adopting AI for many years, Fortinet has been using AI for the last 10 years or more within our technology.

Fortinet is committed to



using GenAI technology to help to enterprise world mitigate and safeguard their data.



Fortinet is committed to using GenAI technology to help the enterprise world mitigate and safeguard their data, but we're cognizant of the fact that the cybersecurity landscape is complex.

What role does innovation play in your companies' approach to cybersecurity?

We have been following the consolidation and convergence of networking security over the last 20 years.

Since the first day, our vision has been the convergence between networking and security. Today, we're seeing the evolution of this convergence happening.

Gartner states that by 2030 we will see networking as a bigger part of our IT domain. This convergence is happening, companies and enterprises are looking at how to use the convergence between cybersecurity and networking in a more powerful manner and we have been developing this technology for many years.

At GITEX we are showcasing three strategic pillars.

One is network security that is our core business, the other is SASE which is for service edge cybersecurity and the last is security operations whereby we integrate GenAI within the SecOps environment and utilise that technology to help understand quicker and faster where the threats are really coming from and how to mitigate them in the shortest time possible.



How should businesses prioritise their cybersecurity efforts into a landscape of ever-evolving threats?

As I mentioned before, enterprises should utilise the new tools and technologies that companies like ourselves are developing and have been developing over the years, regarding AI tools and how GenAI can help mitigate these ever-more sophisticated threats that we are seeing nowadays.

infrastructures that we need to protect.

This is where we are seeing a higher uptake in threats coming from threat actors within those realms. I would say a lot of focus on the R&D side for operational technology and critical infrastructure and that's where we are seeing huge interest from the UAE government.

Do you think the UAE is at the forefront of adopting the latest cybersecurity solutions, what has been your take when you have observed the UAE as a nation where digital transformation is so prevalent?



How has the cybersecurity sector evolved in the UAE as digital transformation remains a top priority?

The UAE is a technology and digital transformation test bed for the whole world. What this country has been able to do over the last 10-15 years is incredible.”

I've already touched upon part of that question, but I would like to add that one of the areas where we are seeing a big interest is within operational technologies and critical infrastructures.

So, Fortinet has been investing, over the last 10 years, in research and development to mitigate and help protect operational technology environments and critical infrastructure environments.

This is especially important in the UAE, having many areas like new manufacturing plants, oil and gas or transportation, these are all critical

Absolutely, the UAE has been at the forefront of utilising AI technologies.

I remember my first interview was, maybe five or six years ago, where AI still was just a buzzword to many nations, but the UAE was looking at how AI could be implemented within various areas and verticals of the country.

The UAE has always been a growth driver with all kinds of new technologies.

The UAE is a technology and digital transformation test bed for the whole world. What this country has been able to do over the last 10-15 years is incredible. **enno**

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Infor

INDUSTRY CLOUD COMPLETE

Phil Lewis, Senior Vice President, Solution Consulting, EMEA & APJ at Infor, sat down with CNME Editor Mark Forker, to discuss the evolution the company has undertaken in its transition towards being an 'industry cloud complete' technology provider.

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Infor is a global leader in cloud-based, industry-specific enterprise software, but as Phil Lewis, their SVP of Solution Consulting for the EMEA & APJ region declared, the company is now moving away from that to be more a 'industry cloud complete' company.

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to Phil Lewis during GITEX 2024, to find out more about the evolution.

"Infor has always been an industry-specific technology provider, and we've been doing that for over 20 years. However, over the last few years we have moved away from being industry-specific to what we call being 'industry complete'. We now look at ourselves as industry cloud complete. We have industry-specific ERP's that are purpose built for process manufacturing and service industries, so essentially those industry-specific ERPs are then surrounded by industry-specific best-in-class applications, such as warehouse management, supply chain management



and product lifecycle tools that are specific to the industry,” said Lewis.

Lewis highlighted how its ERP technology and its industry-specific applications all sit on its Infor OS platform.

That is the foundation for the fusion and application of cutting-edge technologies for their customers.

“You have got the ERP and the industry-specific applications, and they all sit on a common technology platform. This common technology platform is called Infor OS, and that’s where we really start to add cutting-edge digital capabilities that are customers can really benefit from. However, we’re not just adding technology for the sake of it, we’re deploying AI that is purpose-built for a food and beverage company, enterprise automation that is purpose built for an automotive company, hyper productive experiences that are just for distributors. When you put all that together and combine all those technologies that’s what we mean when we say industry cloud complete, and that really is a huge differentiator for us,” said Lewis.

Lewis also talked about the importance of driving key business outcomes for his customers, and declared that its ability to engage in value engineering, which actually measures the ‘value’ they generate for their customers was another key market differentiator for Infor.

“It’s one thing being industry-specific, but it’s another thing being business

We have a saying, which is part of our corporate vision, and that is we succeed, when our customers succeed.”

outcome specific. For years, we’ve gone through a process with our customers that we call value engineering, and what that means is essentially understanding their business, joining the dots between their requirements and what we can do, and then converting that into a business outcome. We need to determine how we are going to improve their business and impact what they do every single day. We then validate what the outcomes are with the customer, and we work with them hand-in-hand to deliver on those objectives. We identify value from a sales perspective and we ensure in fine detail that we actually turn up and deliver that value – and we have capabilities that are built into our product that enables us to measure whether we have delivered on the desired impacts. That’s a key market difference for us, as so many people sell on value, but many of them don’t necessarily realise that value and that creates something that we call the ‘value void’.

According to Lewis, the value void is a huge problem within the industry, and again

it’s all based upon managing expectations and delivering business outcomes.

“The value void is where you have this massive expectation at the point where you sign a contract with a software vendor, but what gets delivered is a fraction of that expectation, and that gives you this value void. However, we adopt a scientific process where we ensure that we meet these expectations and avoid the value void. We want customers to say Infor did exactly what they said they were going to do,” said Lewis.

Lewis concluded a great exchange by declaring that at the heart of everything they do is delivering results for their customers.

“We have a saying, which is part of our corporate vision, and that is we succeed, when our customers succeed. In summary, value is really important, and not just in terms of making sure our customers are successful and we improve the performance of their business, but also it is our guiding light on what we need to build moving forward in the future. We are building this content built on cutting-edge technology, and all of that is encapsulated through AI, automation and other disruptive technologies into something that we call Value Plus. Value plus is content based on cutting-edge technology that is available to our customers immediately – which enables them to apply technology to their business with minimal to zero changes to your configuration,” said Lewis. enme



Over the last few years we have moved away from being industry-specific to what we call being ‘industry complete’. We now look at ourselves as industry cloud complete.”

Shiva Group of Companies

BUILDING REAL BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

Naresh Perwani, CEO and Founder of Shiva Group of Companies, sat down for an exclusive interview with CNME Editor Mark Forker during GITEX Global 2024, in which he detailed his plans to drive further growth within their distribution network, its increased focus on technologies such as Generative AI – and why he believes cultivating and maintaining relationships is the key ingredient in driving business success.

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Shiva Group, a multifaceted enterprise with expertise in distribution, services, and retail, is showcasing its innovative AI-driven products and solutions.

With an ambitious growth strategy, the company is poised to leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to streamline supply chains, enhance customer satisfaction, and drive business success.

At GITEX Global 2024, the company's visionary figurehead Naresh Perwani spoke to CNME, in a candid exchange, in which he articulated his vision for their continued growth amidst a backdrop of a constantly evolving technology landscape and competitive marketplace.

Perwani kickstarted the exchange by declaring Shiva Group's unwavering commitment to fostering and

developing AI solutions within their product portfolio.

He highlighted how the implementation of AI solutions was providing them with the ability to project more accurate sales forecasts.

"We are committed to providing the best solutions to our clients, and our focus on AI is enabling us to improve our supply chain efficiency. AI helps us forecast sales, understand customer needs better, and resolve queries faster, boosting overall customer satisfaction," said Perwani.

The emphasis on AI from Shiva Group aligned itself with the overall theme

of GITEX, which was fundamentally constructed to highlight the pivotal role AI plays in modern technology.

Shiva Group's adoption of generative AI positions the company as a leader in supply chain management, where AI-driven insights are revolutionizing operational efficiency.

emphasized that AI is not just a trend but an essential tool for future growth, urging other businesses to embrace the technology.

However, as AI evolves, concerns about data privacy and ethical use continue to arise.

Perwani acknowledged these challenges, likening



Our vision for 2025 is clear. We aim to grow our distribution network, bring more AI-related products, and deepen our relationship with both customers and vendors."



them to the vulnerabilities of any new technology.

“Every technology has its advantages and disadvantages. Like installing an antivirus on your computer, you need to understand AI thoroughly before implementing it. Responsible usage is key,



and we still need to establish clear rules, regulations and guardrails to really accelerate the deployment of Gen

GITEX is the world’s leading tech event. It’s a meeting point for industry leaders, where we gain valuable knowledge and learn about new products that shape our roadmap.”

AI, because at the minute there are blurred lines, but there’s no denying it has the capability to change the world,” said Perwani.

Looking ahead to 2025, Shiva Group boldly plans to expand its distribution network across the UAE and internationally while also increasing the range of AI-powered products in its portfolio.

“Our vision for 2025 is clear. We aim to grow our distribution network, bring more AI-related products, and deepen our relationship with both customers and vendors. Strong relationships drive business success,” said Perwani.

GITEX serves as an essential platform for Shiva Group’s growth, offering the company valuable insights into emerging technologies. The Shiva Group CEO highlighted the importance of the event, saying,

“GITEX is the world’s leading tech event. It’s a meeting point for industry leaders, where we gain valuable knowledge and learn about new products that shape our roadmap.”

As Shiva Group continues to build strong relationships with vendors and clients, the company’s commitment to AI and strategic growth is paving the way for a successful future in the global tech landscape. [GMS](#)

Logitech

LET'S 'MEETUP'

CNME caught up with **Holly Zhou**, Head of Product Marketing, Team Workspace Solutions at Logitech, during GITEK 2024, to discuss the solutions, services and products they are showcasing that are empowering their concept of the 'New Logic of Work'.

Can you outline to our viewers what solutions, services and products you're showcasing and demonstrating at this year's GITEK 2024?

This year marks Logitech's second major presence at GITEK, and our theme revolves around what we call "The New Logic of Work."

So, what does that mean? In this post-COVID world, people are working from various locations—whether it's from home, on the go, or in offices and training rooms.

The new logic of work is about enabling seamless collaboration for everyone, no matter where they are or what space they're in.

At GITEK, we're excited to showcase solutions that support this evolving work dynamic. We're not just focused on video-enabling large, premium spaces; we're also committed to empowering smaller office spaces where team meetings happen.

One highlight is the MeetUp 2, the next-generation version of our bestselling conference camera, designed specifically for small huddle rooms.

Another key product is

Logitech Extend, which offers a single-cable BYOD connection, allowing users to bring any meeting platform into a room effortlessly.

Our goal is simplicity and ease—helping people stay connected and collaborate in all types of spaces. This is the essence of our approach to the New Logic of Work at GITEK this year.

Can you tell us how Logitech's MeetUp 2 caters to the needs of smaller meeting spaces, and what are the key features of MeetUp 2?

MeetUp 2 is the next generation of our bestselling MEETUP camera, and we've enhanced it with a strong focus on AI-driven, intelligent experiences.

The future of video collaboration is all about creating more engaging and human-centred interactions, and that's what we've achieved with MeetUp 2.

The camera now features AI that intelligently frames and focuses on people, ensuring clear visuals and highlighting what they say and their facial expressions, making meetings more interactive and engaging.

We also made it easier for IT managers by designing MeetUp 2 to be simple to install and manage. It features built-in cable management to keep setups clean and organised, and it includes a versatile mount that can easily be placed on top of TVs, bookshelves, or credenzas—making it ready to use right out of the box in any small meeting room.

Beyond installation, MeetUp 2 is built for long-term efficiency.

With Logitech Sync, IT managers can effortlessly deploy updates and configure settings, ensuring the camera remains optimised and up-to-date.

This makes managing small



MeetUp 2, like the rest of our conference cameras and video solutions, is certified with all the major video platforms. It's certified for Microsoft Teams Rooms on Windows, Zoom Rooms, and Google Meet on Chromebooks."



and huddle room setups simpler and more convenient over the years. In short, MeetUp 2 delivers smarter, easier-to-use solutions for smaller spaces.

Can you tell us about the AI technology in the MeetUp 2, particularly about the auto-framing and audio enhancement, and how does this feature improve the overall meeting experience?

In small meeting rooms, typically designed for four to five people, we've grown used to the post-pandemic "Hollywood squares" experience, where everyone's face is clearly framed and positioned, making it easy for remote participants to see and hear everyone.

We want to bring that same high-quality experience into these smaller spaces.

With the MeetUp 2 camera, we've introduced intelligent features that automatically focus and frame on the speaker or participants in the room, ensuring that remote attendees can see and engage with everyone clearly. We've also upgraded the audio system to deliver powerful, room-filling sound, so that even in smaller spaces, everyone can hear remote participants with clarity.

This enhanced audio quality also supports technologies like transcription and meeting summaries offered by our video platform partners.

By capturing voices more clearly, we help enable accurate, real-time transcripts and detailed meeting summaries, improving the overall collaboration experience.

How does the MeetUp 2 ensure compatibility with popular video conferencing tools such as zoom?

MeetUp 2, like the rest of our conference cameras and video solutions, is certified with all the major video platforms.

It's certified for Microsoft Teams Rooms on Windows, Zoom Rooms, and Google Meet on Chromebooks. Additionally, it functions as a BYOD camera, meaning that if a company hasn't standardised on a single video platform, they can still use it in USB mode by simply connecting it to any computer.

This flexibility allows businesses to deploy MeetUp 2 across various platforms while maintaining seamless compatibility with leading partner platforms on PC-based setups. [enms](#)

Veeam Software

CHANGING THE WORLD

Tim Pfaelzer, Senior VP and General Manager, at Veeam Software, spoke to CPI Media Group's Sandhya D'Mello, during GITEX Global 2024, in which he explained how Generative AI is making the world change at a rapid pace, and insisted that the data protection leader will continue to harness the capabilities of the technology in its strategic collaboration with Microsoft.

Tim Pfaelzer is a hugely respected technology leader in the Middle East IT ecosystem.

The charismatic German kickstarted his career at US behemoth Apple, and prior to joining Veeam in July 2021, he has worked for major industry players such as Dell Technologies, Salesforce, Conscience and AutoDesk.

During GITEX 2024, CPI Media Group's Sandhya D'Mello, spoke to Veeam's Tim Pfaelzer, for a better understanding on what they are showcasing at GITEX.

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Pfaelzer highlighted how the company recently celebrated a big milestone, but insisted that whilst it has evolved over the years, its commitment to protecting their customers has never wavered.

“Last week, we celebrated our 18th anniversary as a company, and our mission from the beginning of our story has been to back-up the data of our customers, and if something happens that data then we can help them recover very fast. Now, that is still the core of the story, but it has evolved massively over time. The landscape is so different now, our customers collect, manage and store their data differently, so we’ve had to evolve as a company to meet market demands. However, we want to leverage our solutions to make our customers as resilient as humanly possible to make sure that whatever happens, they’ll be in a position to be able to quickly access their data,” said Pfaelzer.

The theme of GITEX 2024 is undeniably AI.

Pfaelzer said that Gen AI had changed the world, and stated that Veeam was infusing AI into their suite of products to enhance the security provided to their customers.

Veeam has earned a reputation over the last number of years as a global leader in backup and disaster, and its in the company’s DNA to continually look to infuse disruptive technologies in order to enhance the

We signed a partnership with Microsoft, and this collaboration was designed with the intent to make sure that everything Microsoft 365 in their environment can be protected by Veeam. We also agreed that we will deliver the next version of products together with Microsoft’s CoPilot.”

quality and efficiency of its broad suits of solutions and products.

It is taken a similar approach when it comes to Generative AI.

Pfaelzer makes no qualms about the impact he believes Generative AI can have, not only on the IT and technology sector, but on society in general.

He said despite the infancy of the technology it is already having a huge impact across a range of key industry verticals.

“Generative AI is making the world change at a massive pace, and at Veeam, we need to keep up with the change as well to make sure our products are meeting market demands and requirements. In addition to this, we are also embedding AI into our products, and are continuously looking at how we can develop AI within our suite of solutions, services and products to enhance the experiences and outcomes for our customers,” said Pfaelzer.

Pfaelzer concluded the interview by highlighting the partnership it signed earlier this year with US technology leader Microsoft.

Again, the partnership has AI at its core, and will ensure that everything related to Microsoft 365 will be protected by Veeam.

“Earlier this year, we signed a partnership with Microsoft, and this collaboration was designed with the intent to make sure that everything Microsoft 365 in their environment can be protected by Veeam. We also agreed that we will deliver the next version of the products together with Microsoft’s CoPilot, which as we know is an AI-tool. Outside of that, our regular products will always carry AI elements. We will embed AI in everything that we do in the future in order to make it easier for our customers to administrate the data, and free-up resources. So, in summary, AI is going to be a massive component of ours going forward,” said Pfaelzer. 



Generative AI is making the world change at a massive pace, and at Veeam, we need to keep up with the change as well to make sure our products are meeting market demands and requirements.”

Pure Storage

YOUR AI JOURNEY – HAVE YOU PACKED EVERYTHING YOU NEED?

Omar Akar, Regional VP, CEE & META, at Pure Storage, has penned an exclusive op-ed for November's edition of CNME, in which he stresses that enterprises need to design an AI journey that fits their own unique business model in order to fully capitalize on the opportunities presented by Gen AI.

The GCC has been experimenting with, piloting, and adopting artificial intelligence technologies for some time. Saudi Arabia has the National Strategy for AI and Data, Qatar has an Artificial Intelligence Committee, and the United Arab Emirates was the first nation to establish a ministry dedicated to AI. All this government apparatus was in place before generative AI arrived, which, in many ways, redraws the roadmaps.

In a region where governments and businesses are focused on issues such as health, public safety, sustainability, and economic stability, AI has a powerful pitch to make.

It can accelerate time to market and time to value; it can enhance efficiencies from the back office to the factory floor, and from the warehouse to the field. It can alleviate risk by making market volatility, cyber threats, and

even ROI more predictable. It can speed up R&D. AI is set to be the new standard foundation of competitiveness for enterprises everywhere.

It is understandable to be inspired by AI's seemingly endless possibilities. But it is in the implementation that value can become elusive if the right upfront investments are not made in resources and technology.

The GCC's focus on sustainability and societal enhancement also means that organisations must pay due attention to the environmental impact and energy strain associated with AI, especially the large-language models found in GenAI. However, hope lies in some research that suggests AI may be an important tool

in reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by up to 10% by 2030.

So, enterprises must design an AI journey that adds the right value for their unique business model in a way that is measurable and therefore able to justify past and future budgets. And they must invest in the infrastructure that will allow them to offset carbon emissions to meet regulatory requirements.

THE RIGHT FOOT FORWARD

The transformative benefits and value of successful AI projects far outweigh the challenges. Most industries are still in the early stages of adoption, but implementation is gathering steam as new use cases are defined and we



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move beyond the conservative thinking that prevails within many organisations. In preparation for this shift, regional enterprises must start thinking about what is required to ensure solid foundations are in place for an AI-based future.

To ensure the success of the AI, journey, here are the key issues organisations must address:

ACCESS TO GPUS

Supply chains must be assessed and factored into any AI roadmap from the outset. Access to GPUs is critically important as without them, AI projects cannot succeed.

As regional AI adoption soars, the already significant demand for GPUs will affect the supply chain, and some organisations planning AI implementations may need to look to service providers for access to the technology.

POWER CONSUMPTION AND SPACE IN DATA CENTRES

Successful AI projects need massive datasets, which creates challenges for already stretched data centres, particularly in relation to power consumption.

Modern AI implementations can demand power densities of 40 to 50 kilowatts per rack — well beyond the capability of many data centres. AI is a game changer for the network and power requirements of today's data centres. A much higher density of fibres is required, together with greater, higher-speed networking than traditional

data centre providers can deliver.

Power- and space-efficient technologies will be crucial to the success of AI projects. Flash-based data storage can help mitigate this problem, as it is considerably more power- and space-efficient than HDD technology and requires less cooling and maintenance than traditional hard drives.

Every watt allocated to storage reduces the number of GPUs that can be powered in the AI cluster.

MODEL VARIANCE

Unlike other data-based projects that can be more selective in the storage and access of data, AI projects need extremely large data sets to train models and extract insights to fuel new innovation.

This presents major challenges, especially when it comes to fully understanding AI models and predicting how the introduction of new data may change outcomes. AI professionals are still grappling with the issue of repeatability but a best practice to help understand data models and very large datasets is to introduce “checkpointing”.

This ensures models can be easily returned to earlier states, thereby facilitating a better understanding of the implications of data and parameter changes. The ethical and provenance aspects of using data from the Internet in training models are also yet to be sufficiently addressed.

The same goes for the possible impacts of removal of selected data from an LLM or

RAG (retrieval augmented generation) vector dataset.


SKILLS GAPS

Any GCC organisation will face talent shortages on its AI journey. There is a worldwide shortage of data scientists and other AI professionals. As a result, AI-skilled people are difficult to secure, and command premium salaries.

This is likely to remain a significant issue throughout the coming decade. So, organisations will need to not only invest heavily in talent through recruitment, but also upskill or reskill their existing workforce.

The GCC shows remarkable maturity in its AI journey, including its identification of use cases, its recognition of the need for infrastructure investment, and its prioritisation of the skilling and upskilling of its workforces.

Progress has been made in part through identification of a fundamental truth — that the AI journey is best taken in allegiance with others. Whether for skills, infrastructure, or consultation, partnerships can be the difference between success and failure.

Across the region, cloud service providers, managed service providers and others have an opportunity to step forward and join hands with AI innovators to make their journeys smoother. In collaboration, partners in AI can build the future for the region — insights-driven, sustainable, and globally competitive. 

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Halcyon

TIME IS MONEY

Ray Kafity, Vice President, META at Halcyon, sat down with CNME Editor Mark Forker, to explain how their cybersecurity platform is reducing the average ransomware recovery time from 22 days, to minutes in a fascinating exchange that was conducted during GITEX Global 2024.

Ray Kafity is undoubtedly one of the most respected cybersecurity practitioners in the Middle East.

Kafity has worked for some of the world's largest technology companies such as IBM and Cisco during his long and distinguished career to date.

Over the last 15 years, Kafity has emerged as a prominent figure in the world of cybersecurity and has worked for companies such as FireEye, Attivo Networks and Xage Security.

In May 2024, he was appointed as the Vice-President, Middle East, Turkey & Africa at Halcyon.

Halcyon was founded in 2021, and is headquartered in Austin, Texas.

The US cybersecurity platform is on a mission to stop ransomware attacks, and its mantra is to eliminate ransomware, prevent downtime and recover instantly.

Kafity has been hired to lead the company's growth across the META region, and during GITEX Global 2024, he caught up with CNME Editor Mark Forker to explain in more detail what differentiates them from other companies

that operate in ransomware prevention.

Kafity kickstarted the exchange by providing some broader context around the exponential growth of ransomware globally, and highlighted how their technology is designed to get businesses up and running ASAP.

“If you classified ransomware as a country in terms of the size of its GDP then it would be the 3rd biggest after the United States and China, so that perfectly illustrates the sheer scale of the challenge enterprises and governments face when it comes to ransomware globally. Ransomware is not on the decline, despite the perception that it is slowing down, in fact, it is the opposite, as ransomware is continuing to increase in volume and voracity. The agonising aspect in relation to ransomware, is the fact that if you get attacked and encrypted, how long will it

take to resume your business operations? That is the critical question that enterprises need to ask themselves now, and not after they have been attacked,” said Kafity.

Kafity said that Halcyon is in the business of prevention, but conceded that if an attack does happen the technology that they deploy can really mitigate the damage done, but most importantly can get the lights back on for businesses and significantly reduce their downtime, which inevitably would offset the excessive cost of not operating at full capacity.

“Enterprises need to implement a security architecture that enables them to get their business back up and running in seconds, minutes and hours as opposed to days, weeks and months. The average recovery period after a ransomware attack is 22 days, but in some cases, it can go up to 6 months and longer, now can you imagine your business not operating fully for that period



Enterprises need to implement a security architecture that enables them to get their business back up and running in seconds, minutes and hours as opposed to days, weeks and months.”





of time, the cost of that could potentially in many cases bankrupt your business. That is where Halcyon enters the conversation, and primarily that is what we are all about,” said Kafity.

Kafity added that their product portfolio has the agility needed to give businesses both the resilience, and ability to recover quickly from a ransomware attack.

“We want to equip enterprises with a business resilience solution that enables them to recover quickly from a ransomware attack. However, it’s important to note that we want to prevent ransomware attacks, but if your organisation is breached, our solution can mitigate the damage caused by an attack by significantly reducing business downtime. You need a tool that can give you the agility to get back on your feet, and Halcyon has the solutions that can

allow businesses to fightback quickly,” said Kafity.

Kafity highlighted some of the unique capabilities of its anti-ransomware platform, and highlighted how its ‘agent’ worked effectively on endpoints and complimented the strengths of other technologies on the endpoints such as XDR, or EDR.

“In my experience in the cybersecurity market, once a threat becomes an enormous challenge in terms of its impact and voracity it warrants having a specific, focused approach and platform to address the challenge head on. Halcyon is an agent-based solution, which essentially means that it is an agent that sits on the endpoints, and works complimentary to the current tools that are already on the endpoint such as EDR, or XDR. It compliments their functions and works seamlessly together. It scans for what we would label as ‘ransomware behaviour’ and our solutions

has multi-level capabilities and can prevent ransomware at pre-execution, execution and post execution level, and that’s the uniqueness of our platform,” said Kafity.

Kafity concluded a brilliant interview, by also outlining how the company is utilising AI to enhance its anti-ransomware platform.

“It covers the prevention and protection cycle across the behaviour of the ransomware attack within a certain organisation. We deploy a lot of sophisticated AI models that infuse intelligence into the analysis of ransomware attacks, and ultimately that gives us a lot of intelligent data on ransomware attacks that equip us with the tools to really provide our customers with the robust resilience that they need to protect all their key assets, and that’s a key differentiator for us in the cybersecurity marketplace,” said Kafity.

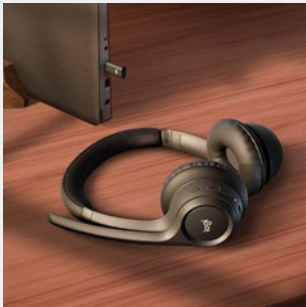
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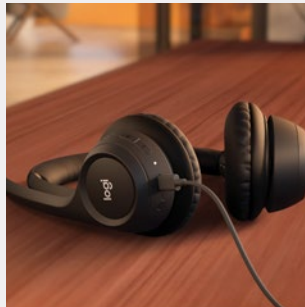
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