

# cnme

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WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEANS BUSINESS

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## RESILIENT LEADERSHIP

Loubna Imenchal, Head of Enterprise Business for AMETCA, at Logitech, outlines her leadership style, her fight to address the underrepresentation of women in the tech industry – and the need for businesses to build robust governance frameworks for Gen AI.

CPI

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**In a candid exchange, Imenchal documented her leadership style, and reflected on her own journey, and the advice she would give her younger self with the benefit of hindsight.”**



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# BUILDING A NEW KINGDOM

What had an incredible experience at LEAP 2025, which took place earlier this month in Riyadh. The event has officially rubberstamped its status as one of the world's biggest technology conferences in the world.

In many ways, LEAP is indicative of the phenomenal transformation that is underway across the KSA. The sheer energy, enthusiasm, and excitement on show at LEAP 2025 was palpable, and the sheer scale of the investments being made in the country is staggering to say the least.

CNME and tahawultech.com were on the ground at the event, and we secured some excellent interviews with ServiceNow and Lenovo, and those conversations are featured in this month's edition of the magazine.

On the front cover, we have the fantastic Loubna Imenchal, Head of Enterprise Business, AMETCA at Logitech.

She has become the face of the Logitech brand here in the Middle East, and under her leadership the company has gone from strength-to-strength and has transformed the workspace solutions marketplace.

However, the topic of our conversation was more personal than professional.

In a candid exchange, Imenchal documented her leadership style, and reflected on her own journey, and the advice she would give her younger self with the benefit of hindsight.

Imenchal is a passionate activist and champion for the inclusion of more women in technology. She highlighted the role played by Logitech's monthly breakfast sessions hosted by her, which are fundamentally designed to help women pursue a career in IT and technology.

There is also a bit on Logitech's strategy in the KSA, but all-in-all, it's a great read, but I know I'm biased, but I do recommend you check it out.

Obviously, a key theme of February's edition of CNME is Saudi Arabia, as LEAP was the standout event of the month.

One of the biggest announcements made was the \$2bn megadeal between Lenovo and Alat.

The partnership was formally announced in May 2024, but in January of this year they got the regulatory green light needed and at LEAP all eyes were on the two companies.

I sat down with Giovanni Di Filippo, EMEA President at Lenovo ISG, to take a closer look at what this collaboration will mean for constructing the infrastructure that is needed to really accelerate the digital transformation of the Kingdom.

Di Filippo as always was in colourful form, and his enthusiasm is infectious.

He covered a lot of bases, but in summary, he really believes that the deal solidifies its transition away from being known solely for PCs.

For Di Filippo, the deal signifies that Lenovo is now a major global player in infrastructure, and it's hard to disagree with that assessment.

ServiceNow are a major global player in the transformation of workflows through the automation of business processes.

I really enjoyed my chat with Cathy Mauzaize, EMEA President at ServiceNow.

She is one of the most respected IT leaders in the industry, and since joining ServiceNow in 2021, she has been a key part in their growth across EMEA.

She outlined the fact that ServiceNow remains the only market player with a fully integrated all-in-one platform really differentiates them from the rest of their competition.

We spoke at LEAP, and ServiceNow have invested significantly in the KSA, Mauzaize is excited about the sheer appetite and demand for innovation across the Kingdom, and echoed the viewpoint that 2025 is going to be the year of Agentic AI.

Following LEAP, we held our inaugural KSA Executive Summit in Riyadh.

The event was a huge success, and a big thanks to our sponsors Hitachi Vantara and VAD Technologies for making it happen – check out the full coverage of that event on Page 48.

We also hosted our annual CIO Leadership Awards, which is always one of the biggest dates in the diary for us at CPI Media Group.

We had a great evening, and you can check out which IT leaders were honoured on Page 36.

In addition to all of the above, we have excellent interviews with Lucidya, Zebra, Cisco and the Minister for Digital Affairs for Estonia.

We hope you enjoy February's edition of CNME. 😊

Mark Forker  
Editor





# Fortify Your Cybersecurity

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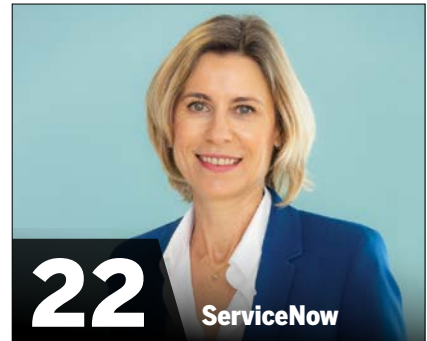
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Cathy Mauzaize, EMEA President at ServiceNow, explains how their significant investment in the KSA reinforces their commitment to the region, and why their integrated platform sets them apart from market rivals.

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Mohannad Alshaikh, Chief Commercial Officer at Lucidya, outlines how the company is delivering seamless customer experiences in Saudi Arabia.

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CPI Media Group hosted their inaugural KSA Executive Summit in Riyadh, which examined the need for greater governance around the ethical use of AI, and the cybersecurity threat landscape.

**6 News**

CNME rounds up the biggest regional and global developments in enterprise technology, which includes the news that SandboxAQ has expanded its alliance with Deloitte for AI simulation software, Gemini for Google Workspace is now supporting Arabic - and Dell Technologies and Emirates Health Services sign an MoU designed to enhance digital infrastructure.

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# Microsoft AI Tour showcases groundbreaking AI innovations for Oman



Charles Nahas, Regional General Manager for Commercial Solutions, Microsoft Middle East.

## Under the patronage of His Excellency

Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Microsoft's global AI Tour arrived in Muscat recently, bringing together industry leaders, developers, and government officials to explore the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in accelerating Oman's digital transformation.

The event featured keynotes by senior Microsoft executives including Samer

Abu-Ltaif, President, Microsoft Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA); Charles Nahas, Regional General Manager for Commercial Solutions, Microsoft Middle East; and Harry Kambanis, Business Group Leader, Business Applications, Microsoft Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa.

In his welcome address, Samer Abu-Ltaif, President, Microsoft Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA), emphasized the pivotal role of AI in shaping Oman's future: "It is a privilege to be here today in Oman, a nation that has long embraced technological progress as a driver of economic growth and national development. Microsoft's presence in the Sultanate spans over two decades, a testament to our enduring commitment to this nation's growth and prosperity. As Oman advances

towards its Vision 2040 aspirations, our mission remains steadfast: to provide world-class cloud and AI solutions that enable Omani organisations to achieve more, fostering a future of sustainable growth and innovation".

Sheikh Saif Hilal Al Hosni, Country Manager, Microsoft Oman and Bahrain, stated: "Businesses in Oman are increasingly recognising AI as a critical driver for innovation, efficiency, and competitive advantage. At Microsoft, we are at the forefront of empowering organisations across all industries to effectively leverage the latest advancements in AI to tackle existing challenges and drive real business impact. Our ongoing collaborations with leading Omani organisations reflect our commitment to equipping them with world-class AI and cloud solutions to shape the future of Oman's digital economy".

6

## "Eventually there will be only two kinds of companies: those that are AI companies, and those that are irrelevant." – Jeetu Patel, Cisco

**A new study from Cisco, the worldwide leader in networking and security, reveals a paradox among CEOs: while 4 in 5 recognize AI's potential benefits, and almost all plan to integrate AI into their operations, many (70%) fear gaps in their knowledge will hinder decisions in the boardroom and stifle growth – risking missed opportunities and falling behind competitors.**

Cisco's Chief Product Officer, Jeetu Patel, underscores the urgency to act: "In a dynamic landscape where competition is fierce, speed decides the winners. Leaders who act decisively today to build resilient, future-proofed networks will be the AI-forward leaders driving real value for their business. Eventually there will be only two kinds of companies: those that are AI companies, and those that are irrelevant."

### CEOS FEAR THE MOUNTING COSTS OF INACTION

Cisco's research shows more than 70% of CEOs are concerned about losing ground

to competitors and missing out on opportunities because of IT and infrastructure gaps – fears that are already translating into real losses. Over half of CEOs (53%) worry that a lack of investment in technology is costing them competitive advantage, while two-thirds are concerned about the opportunity costs of not investing more in technology.

### THE CEO'S BLUEPRINT: PEOPLE, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND CYBERSECURITY

Cisco's research reveals CEOs' plan to turn fear into progress – investing in knowledge and skills, upgrading infrastructure, and enhancing security to prepare for the demands of AI.

Delivering on this blueprint will require decisive technology leadership



Jeetu Patel has called for businesses to adopt a sense of urgency when it comes to their AI strategy – in order to avoid being left behind.

both within the organisation and through trusted partnerships. CEOs are increasingly looking to their CTOs and CIOs, with nearly 80% recognising their vital role in guiding business and investment decisions. More and more, technology leaders are business leaders who

see modern networks and technology not just as tools, but as enablers of growth, resilience, and innovation.

CEOs know they can't deliver on their blueprint without expert support: 96% are turning to trusted partnerships to future-proof their network for AI. With bold technology leadership inside and beyond their organizations, the CEOs have the expertise to navigate uncertainties and translate AI's potential into tangible outcomes.

## SandboxAQ expands alliance with Deloitte to offer AI simulation software solutions

**SandboxAQ announced it has expanded** its relationship with Deloitte to offer SandboxAQ's AI LQM simulation products and solutions along with Deloitte's services capabilities to organisations worldwide.

SandboxAQ's AQBioSim and AQChemSim solutions leverage Large Quantitative Models (LQMs) to accelerate product development across a broad range of sectors, including biopharma. Deloitte will augment these offerings with their data and life sciences experience combined with their deep business and technology acumen. This collaboration will help transform nearly every facet of healthcare and life sciences.

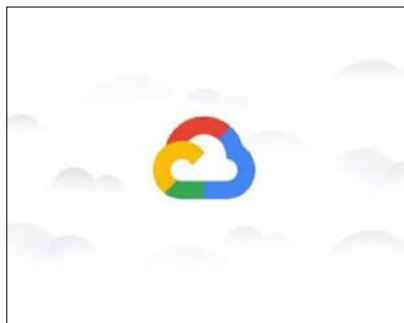
"SandboxAQ is excited to expand its long-standing strategic alliance with Deloitte, whose relationships with some of the world's largest organisations will accelerate the adoption of our



*Andrew McLaughlin, Chief Operating Officer of*

quantitative AI technologies", said Andrew McLaughlin, Chief Operating Officer of SandboxAQ. "AI simulation with Large Quantitative Models represents the next evolution of AI and will have a transformative impact on how organisations create value for their customers in ways that Large Language Models cannot".

## Gemini for Google Workspace now supports Arabic



**Google Workspace is expanding** language support to additional languages including Arabic, to help even more organizations work better. This expansion makes Gemini for Workspace increasingly accessible to over 1 billion people whose first language is now supported.

Starting soon, the following new languages will be supported by Gemini in the side panel of Google Docs, Sheets, Drive, and Gmail:

- Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Hebrew, Hungarian, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Swedish, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese.

Whether writing social media copy in a Doc, summarizing details from multiple files in Drive, or catching up on their Gmail inbox, users can do this now in any of these languages within the side panel. Image generation is supported in these languages as well.

This news builds on Google's announcement from last month that they're including the best of Google AI in Workspace Business and Enterprise plans by simplifying plans and pricing to bring the added value of Google AI to all Workspace customers.

## Qme closes \$3 million seed round led by AHOY to advance AI-driven customer journeys in MENA

**Qme, an emerging B2B SaaS startup** based in Egypt, has raised \$3 million in a seed funding round led by AHOY, a multisector technology company, along with a group of angel investors from the GCC.

Qme is an AI-driven platform addressing a critical issue in MENA, where inefficient queuing systems and outdated appointment booking methods cause individuals to lose an average of six months of their lives standing in line. Moreover, the reliance on phone bookings, which account for 92% of appointments in key sectors, leads to a no-show rate of 31%, creating further inefficiencies.

"Our partnership with AHOY is a major milestone, as it strengthens our ability to optimise movement in dynamic, real-world scenarios while transforming customer experiences. AHOY's operational excellence and robust tech stack are invaluable as we scale in vibrant markets", said Maged Negm, CEO and Co-Founder of Qme. "I'm super excited to have Jamil Shinawi, AHOY's CEO, joining Qme Advisors Committee. Our partnership with AHOY marks a pivotal moment in our journey".



*(R) Maged Negm, CEO and Co-Founder of Qme.*



# Help AG's MSS Graduate program paves the way for future experts

**Help AG's MSS Graduate Program**, spearheaded by Sunil Sharma, Vice President – Managed Security Services, aims to bridge the talent gap by equipping young graduates with hands-on experience, industry certifications, and mentorship.

## What do you aim to achieve through Help AG's MSS Graduate Program?

Over the years, I have witnessed a growing talent gap in cybersecurity, both globally and regionally. To address this, we launched the MSS Graduate Program—a structured, year-long initiative designed to identify, train, and mentor young graduates. By aligning their skills with industry needs, we prepare them for full-time roles within our team. The program has received strong industry support and plays a vital role in building a sustainable pipeline of skilled cybersecurity professionals.



*Sunil Sharma, Vice President – Managed Security Services.*

framework. This provides graduates with up-to-date exposure to emerging cybersecurity threats and mitigation strategies. Furthermore, we collaborate with leading vendors to deliver specialized training on the latest tools, technologies, and security solutions. The industry-driven initiatives equip participants with the skills necessary to address current cybersecurity challenges while fostering adaptability for future threats.

## What challenges do graduates face, and how does the program support them?

Graduates often struggle with transitioning from academic learning to industry applications and adapting to the fast-paced cybersecurity environment. To address this, the program offers daily check-ins, weekly evaluations, and mentorship from team leaders. Hands-on learning through simulations and shadowing further bridges the gap between theory and practice.

## What is the significance of hands-on experience, and how does the program facilitate it?

Practical experience is critical in cybersecurity. Help AG collaborates with leading vendors like Immersive Labs to provide trainees with simulated real-world challenges. In addition to internal training, the program supports career placements, allowing graduates to explore opportunities within Help AG and its clients, thereby strengthening the regional cybersecurity talent pool.

## How do partnerships with academic institutions bridge the gap between academia and industry?

Help AG actively collaborates with universities such as the University of Wollongong in Dubai and the University of Sharjah to align academic learning with industry needs. Through career fairs, internships, guest lectures, and curriculum contributions, students gain both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The initiatives ensure a steady pipeline of industry-ready talent equipped to tackle real-world cybersecurity challenges.

## Have any program graduates successfully transitioned into client-facing roles?

The first cohort of the MSS Graduate Program achieved a 100% employment success rate within Help AG. Notably, one graduate led the launch of a new service and became the primary client liaison, earning a monthly performance award among a 550-member team. Such success stories highlight the program's effectiveness in developing industry-ready professionals.

## How does Help AG address gaps in traditional cybersecurity education?

Traditional academia often lags the evolving cybersecurity landscape. Help AG bridges this gap through mentorship, curriculum collaboration, and practical engagements across diverse regions, including India, Oman, UAE, and KSA.

## What advice would you give to future cybersecurity leaders?

To stand out in a competitive job market, aspiring cybersecurity professionals should pursue micro-credentials and industry-recognized certifications alongside their degrees. Certifications like Cisco CCNA, accessible online, demonstrate specialized skills and a proactive learning mindset. Differentiation comes from continuous upskilling, developing niche expertise, and positioning oneself as a high-value professional in the field.

## How does Help AG's MSS Graduate Program facilitate the development of practical cybersecurity skills that can be applied in professional settings?

The program is structured into distinct phases to provide a comprehensive cybersecurity learning experience. The Back-to-School phase reinforces fundamental cybersecurity concepts, ensuring a strong foundation beyond academic studies. Graduates receive specialized training through Udemy, a strategic partner of Help AG, and hands-on simulations via Immersive Labs. Experienced Help AG mentors provide guidance and regular evaluations to track progress. By the end of this phase, they are well-prepared to contribute effectively to projects and the cybersecurity industry.

## How does the MSS Graduate Program remain aligned with the evolving cybersecurity landscape?

To ensure the MSS Graduate Program remains relevant in the rapidly evolving cybersecurity landscape, we integrate the MITRE ATT&CK

# Albania selects Presight for nationwide AI-powered smart city project

Presight, has signed a letter of engagement with the Albanian Ministry of Interior to implement a nation-wide AI-powered smart city project.

The project is set to digitize urban infrastructure, enhance traffic management, and modernize public services, and in doing so elevate Albania to be one of Europe's leading adopters of artificial intelligence and smart nation infrastructure.

The letter of engagement was signed yesterday in Tirana in the presence of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, and His Excellency Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic



His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, flanked by His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania; Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, United Arab Emirates Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology; and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Presight.

of Albania. His Excellency Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, United Arab Emirates Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Presight, was also present.

The smart city initiative is set to cover 20 cities across Albania and will deliver community-wide benefits from reduced traffic and congestion to faster emergency response times. The AI-powered nation-building project is designed to enhance Albania's sustainability and digital transformation agenda, while also introducing efficiencies across public services. The letter of engagement in Tirana was signed during the UAE President's official working visit to Albania. The delegation also included Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Court for Special Affairs; and Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Advisor to the UAE President.

# Emirates Health Services, Dell sign MoU to enhance digital infrastructure in healthcare



Mubarak Mubarak Ibrahim, Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer and Acting Executive Director of the Information Sector, Emirates Health Services, and Walid Yehia, Managing Director – Gulf, Dell Technologies at the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony.

**Emirates Health Services (EHS)** and Dell Technologies have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to drive advancements in digital infrastructure by providing EHS with advanced artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity technologies, paving the way for transformative changes in the UAE's healthcare system.

The memorandum of understanding

was signed by H.E Mubarak Mubarak Ibrahim, Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer and Acting Executive Director of the Information Sector at Emirates Health Services, and Walid Yehia, Managing Director – Gulf, at Dell Technologies.

Ibrahim said: "At EHS, we are dedicated to advancing the UAE's healthcare sector by aligning with

national priorities and visionary goals. By working with Dell, we'll be able to explore new technologies that will elevate service quality and efficiency across our healthcare facilities while also enhancing accessibility to our services. This is part of our strategy to foster a future-ready healthcare ecosystem that promotes societal well-being and reinforces the UAE's standing as a global leader in healthcare excellence."

Walid Yehia, Managing Director – Gulf, at Dell Technologies, said: "AI and cybersecurity are transforming how the healthcare sector operates and delivers critical services. Through our work with organizations like EHS, we strive to empower the UAE healthcare industry with secure, scalable, and cutting-edge solutions to address modern challenges. The MoU sets the stage for scaling innovative solutions that address the evolving demands of the UAE healthcare sector."

Cisco

# NO QUICK FIXES

CNME Editor Mark Forker managed to secure an exclusive interview with **Guy Diedrich**, Senior Vice President and Global Innovation Officer at Cisco, during his recent visit to Dubai. During their conversation, Diedrich offered his perspectives on the results of their Global AI Readiness Index, the ongoing problem of organisations looking for 'quick fixes' to their AI strategy – and their plans for further investment in their innovation roadmap across the UAE and KSA.

**Cisco recently published the results from their Global AI Readiness Index. The results from the UAE marketplace perspective were unsurprising, in relation to the fact that businesses were urgently looking to adopt and integrate AI tools, but many were struggling to both fully leverage the capabilities of AI and get a ROI from those AI investments. What advice can you give to the businesses in the UAE in terms of best practices with AI adoption?**

We recently surveyed 8,000 business leaders globally, including in the UAE, and the results show a strong focus on AI. Notably, 64% of organizations in the UAE have clear strategies for deploying AI solutions, while nearly half allocate 10% to 30% of their IT budgets to their AI journey, and an impressive 99% of companies express an increased urgency to adopt AI technologies.

However, there are still significant gaps to address, particularly in infrastructure readiness and talent availability. To successfully navigate the integration of



AI, organizations should start with strategic planning by developing a clear AI roadmap aligned with their business objectives. This roadmap will ensure that AI initiatives are designed to address specific challenges and seize opportunities.

It is also crucial to make infrastructure investments by allocating resources to build a robust AI infrastructure, which includes the necessary hardware and software to support scalable AI solutions. It is also vital to engage in continuous evaluation

by regularly assessing AI implementations to measure their return on investment (ROI) and making data-driven adjustments as necessary.

Last but not least, organizations must focus on talent development by investing in the training and hiring of skilled professionals, thereby bridging the talent gap and effectively managing AI deployments.

This is a global problem, according to The Transformational Opportunity of AI on ICT Jobs report, 92% of jobs analysed are expected to undergo either high or moderate transformation due to advancements in AI. In today's rapidly progressing digital landscape, if we want an equipped workforce to handle the evolving needs, we must prioritize building the skills of tomorrow.

**Are too many organizations guilty of looking for a quick fix with their AI strategies? How important is it that first invest in the required infrastructure and talent in order to seize on the capabilities presented by AI?**



A successful AI strategy requires more than quick fixes; it demands foundational investments in infrastructure, security, and talent. The Cisco AI Readiness Index indicates that only 7% of UAE organizations are classified as Pacesetters in infrastructure readiness.

Without the right infrastructure, robust security measures, and skilled personnel, AI initiatives are likely to underperform.

**Are the problems you see in the UAE quite consistent with what you see in other marketplaces that you surveyed in your AI Readiness Index – and how does the UAE compare on whole compared to other markets when it comes to AI adoption and readiness?**

The challenges observed in the UAE mirror global trends identified in the Cisco AI Readiness Index. Many organizations worldwide face hurdles in infrastructure readiness and talent acquisition.

However, the UAE exhibits a strong strategic commitment to AI, with 17% of organizations recognized as Pacesetters in strategy readiness, surpassing the global average of 15%. This indicates a proactive approach in the UAE towards AI adoption, despite existing challenges.

In general we're seeing a global trend, our most recent CEO study shows clearly that skills shortages, implementation challenges, AI-ready infrastructure, and



cybersecurity are top concerns for IT teams and leaders across industries.

**Can you tell our readers about Cisco's plans for future innovation across both the UAE, and in KSA, where the sheers scale and breadth of transformation is unprecedented at a global level?**

We recognize the rapid digitization in GCC countries, which are increasingly prioritizing technology adoption to diversify their economies away from oil and gas dependence. This transition brings significant opportunities, such as increased ICT investments, smart city developments, a stronger focus on AI for improved efficiency, and a

strong focus on cybersecurity.

To meet these evolving needs, Cisco is aligning its technologies with the demands of the AI era, focusing on developing AI-ready data centers, future-proof workplaces, and enhancing digital resilience through security and observability.

Over the past four decades, Cisco has played a crucial role in building the internet; now, we are laying the network foundation necessary for AI. We firmly believe that AI cannot exist without a robust network, which is also instrumental in enhancing security—if it's connected, it's protected.

For more than 25 years, Cisco has been engaged in boosting the region's digitization, through the Cisco Country Digital Acceleration (CDA) program, which fosters partnerships and key national projects in countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar.

Moreover, we are committed to developing digital skills through Cisco Networking Academy, with a focus on Cybersecurity, Networking, and AI. In fiscal year 2024, we trained over 1.1 million students across more than 2,000 academies in the region, contributing to the upskilling of over 4.4 million learners overall. [CMAA](#)



**A successful AI strategy requires more than quick fixes; it demands foundational investments in infrastructure, security, and talent.”**

OPSWAT

# ROBUST ZERO TRUST

CNME Editor Mark Forker moderated a roundtable discussion that was hosted by **OPSWAT**, in conjunction with CPI Media Group, as part of their campaign to project their message that implores enterprises to secure their critical environments by adopting a robust zero trust model across all their operations.

OPSWAT, a market leader when it comes to protecting the world's critical infrastructure held a brilliant roundtable conversation at the fabulous Taj Exotica Resort and Spa on February 17th.

The event was organised in conjunction with CPI Media Group, and was moderated by CNME and tahawultech.com Editor Mark Forker.

The roundtable was held just prior to the CIO Leadership Awards.

The roundtable attracted prominent technology leaders and cybersecurity



practitioners from a whole range of industry verticals, which included healthcare, education, government and manufacturing.

Rami Nehme, Regional Sales Director at OPSWAT,

and his colleague Saif AlRefai, Regional Solution Engineering Manager at OPSWAT, jointly delivered a presentation entitled; Securing Critical Environments through a Robust Zero Trust Model.

Both presentation styles complimented each other, and that lended itself to a hugely interactive session, which engaged attendees.

Nehme began the presentation by defining critical infrastructure, and he outlined in detail some of the pressing challenges faced by C-Level executives across industry verticals when it comes to the task of 'fortifying' these industries.

"The cybersecurity landscape is becoming increasingly complex, and the threat landscape is constantly evolving. However, we believe that OPSWAT's Cybersecurity and Advanced Threat Protection Platform can equip enterprises and governments with the tools they need to protect their critical infrastructure and assets. MetaDefender layers an array of market-leading technologies to protect critical IT and OT environments, shrinking the overall attack surface





by detecting and preventing sophisticated known and unknown file-borne threats like advanced evasive malware, zero-day attacks, APTs (advanced persistent threats), and more,” said Nehme.

Saif AlRefai approached the topic from a more technical standpoint and examined the rise and growing phenomenon of AI-powered threats attacking critical infrastructure globally.

AlRefai pointed out that as organizations rush to integrate AI into their systems, the rise of AI-powered threats to critical infrastructure has become an urgent concern.

He took a closer look at some of the emerging risks and shared insights on how businesses can better protect themselves.

“OPSWAT has a comprehensive suite of cybersecurity solutions, including MetaDefender Core, MetaDefender MFT, and

Netwall. These products are designed to provide robust protection against AI-enhanced threats by using MultiScanning technology, Deep Content Disarm and Reconstruction (CDR), and cross-domain security solutions. OPSWAT offerings like MetaDefender Email Gateway Security and the MetaDefender Kiosk can also demonstrate the power of OPSWAT’s unique, flexible security architecture, which is another key market differentiator for us,” said AlRefai.

AlRefai also highlighted how OPSWAT’s portfolio of products are designed to repel file-based attacks from entry

points such as web traffic, and most common of all, email.

“As an expert in Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP), OPSWAT’s products are built to defend against file-based attacks across various entry points such as USBs, web traffic, storage, and email. Unlike traditional cybersecurity vendors, OPSWAT offers purpose-built solutions for both IT and OT environments, including OT Security innovations that are tailored to protect industrial networks,” said AlRefai.

Both OPSWAT executives were pressed hard by attendees who wanted to know about these products, and how these technologies can really help them to enhance their own cybersecurity posture.

The exchanges were robust, but again hugely insightful, informative and impactful.

CNME Editor Mark Forker then brought an end to the session following the end of the scheduled 90-minute session, although the conversations continued long after the curtain was pulled down on the event, which only served to further indicate the appetite and demand to know more about OPSWAT’s cutting-edge portfolio of solutions. [CME](#)



**MetaDefender layers an array of market-leading technologies to protect critical IT and OT environments, shrinking the overall attack surface by detecting and preventing sophisticated known and unknown file-borne threats like advanced evasive malware and zero-day attacks.”**



Zebra Technologies

# ASSISTED INTELLIGENCE

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with **Lorna Hopkins**, International Marketing Manager at Zebra Technologies, to talk about how technology is completely redefining and revolutionizing patient care in the healthcare industry, in an exclusive interview with tahawultech.com.

**The report compiled by Zebra Technologies, rather unsurprisingly reached the conclusion that hospitals need to have access to the real-time availability of medical assets in order to deliver optimal patient care. However, can you explain to our readers why hospital leaders in both the UK and US appear to prioritize the digitization of inventory management solutions?**

In today's healthcare environment, hospital leaders in both the UK and US are increasingly prioritizing the digitization of inventory management solutions for several key reasons. Firstly, these digital systems significantly enhance efficiency and reduce operational costs by streamlining the management of medical supplies and equipment.

This not only minimizes waste and reduces human error but also ensures that hospitals maintain optimal stock levels, avoiding the issues of overstocking or understocking.



Moreover, effective inventory management directly impacts patient care. By ensuring that necessary supplies and medications are always available, hospitals can prevent treatment delays and focus more on delivering high-quality care.

The majority of our respondents agreed that integrating an automated and digitized systems for tracking anything administered or used with patients at the point of care is a priority for their organization. Barcode

scanning helps reduce or eliminate never events. When a product selected is incompatible with the procedure to be undertaken (for example a right knee for a left knee operation), warning messages can be issued in real-time to ensure accuracy and help avoid patient harm. Recovering 100% of recalled or expired items or supplies can also be a challenging task. Introducing barcode or RFID technology help enhance risk management and add a layer of governance. Warning flags can be set and notifications triggered, empowering staff to quickly quarantine recalled stock.

Compliance with regulatory standards is another critical factor. Digital systems offer robust tracking and documentation, helping hospitals meet stringent regulations related to medical supplies and pharmaceuticals.

Furthermore, the data analytics provided by these systems enable hospital leaders to make informed, data-driven decisions. They can analyze usage patterns



and supplier performance to optimize procurement strategies and enhance supply chain resilience—a need that became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, digital solutions often integrate seamlessly with other hospital systems, such as electronic health records, improving overall operational efficiency.

Lastly, by optimizing inventory management, hospitals can align with sustainability goals, reducing waste and contributing to environmental efforts.

Overall, digitizing inventory management is a strategic priority that supports efficiency, cost-effectiveness, patient care, compliance, and sustainability in healthcare operations.

**We know that Zebra is a global leader when it comes to empowering businesses and industries to operate more intelligently by connecting data, assets and**

**people - but can you tell our readers more about how you are leveraging your broad portfolio of solutions to really equip the healthcare industry to transform the way they dispense care?**

Zebra Technologies is at the forefront of transforming healthcare delivery by leveraging its broad portfolio of innovative solutions. One of the key ways Zebra is impacting the healthcare



**Zebra Technologies is at the forefront of transforming healthcare delivery by leveraging its broad portfolio of innovative solutions.”**

industry is through real-time tracking and visibility solutions, such as RFID and barcode scanning. These technologies ensure that the right patient receives the right care at the right time, enhancing both patient safety and operational efficiency.

Additionally, Zebra's mobile computing devices are pivotal in enabling healthcare professionals to access and update patient information directly at the point of care. This mobility reduces errors related to manual data entry and enhances workflow efficiency, ultimately improving patient care.

Accurate patient identification is another area where Zebra excels, with their wristband printing solutions playing a crucial role in reducing medical errors and ensuring patients receive the correct treatments and medications.

In the realm of specimen collection, Zebra's mobile printing and scanning solutions ensure precise labelling and tracking, minimizing the risk of mislabelling and improving the reliability of laboratory results.

Furthermore, Zebra's inventory management solutions employ barcoding and RFID technology to effectively track medical supplies and medications. This helps hospitals maintain optimal inventory levels, reducing waste and preventing stockouts while ensuring regulatory compliance.

For temperature-sensitive

items like vaccines, Zebra provides temperature monitoring solutions that safeguard product efficacy by recording and maintaining the appropriate conditions.

Zebra also enhances staff collaboration through devices that support secure messaging and information sharing, improving team coordination and patient outcomes.

Barcoding and RFID Technology also support materials management workflows throughout the hospital. The use of barcodes helps to streamline the receiving, sorting and storage of assets and supplies, and lessens "stock hoarding" with reliable inventory counts. In providing real-time locations for key equipment that constantly moves around the hospital, RFID technology helps minimise disruptions or delays in procedures.

Finally, Zebra's data analytics solutions enable healthcare organizations to derive actionable insights from collected data, driving improvements in efficiency, patient care, and resource allocation.

Overall, Zebra is empowering healthcare organizations to become more connected, efficient, and data-driven, significantly enhancing the quality and safety of patient care.

**The report showed that there is overwhelming support from clinicians and hospital leaders to adopt cutting-edge technologies to transform the sector, especially in relation to inventory**

**management. So, what is preventing the digitization, is there a cost aspect, is there a lack of understanding as to how they can achieve the digitization required to overhaul the system?**

Digitization in hospitals faces several key challenges that can hinder its progress. Firstly, the high cost of implementation is a significant barrier. Many hospitals operate under tight budgets, and the initial investment required for digital infrastructure, software, and training can be substantial.

Secondly, there's the issue of interoperability. Hospitals often use a variety of legacy systems, and integrating new digital solutions with existing technologies can be complex and time-consuming. This lack of seamless integration can deter hospitals from adopting new digital tools.

Another challenge is the resistance to change. Healthcare professionals may be accustomed to traditional methods, and there can be apprehension about transitioning to digital systems. This is often compounded by concerns over the learning curve associated with new technologies and the potential disruption to established workflows.

Data security and privacy are also critical concerns. With digitization comes the increased risk of cyber threats and data breaches, which can have serious implications for patient confidentiality and trust.

Additionally, regulatory and



compliance requirements can pose challenges. Healthcare is a heavily regulated industry, and ensuring that digital solutions comply with all relevant standards can be a complex process.

There's the challenge of ensuring that digital solutions genuinely improve patient care and outcomes. Hospitals need to see a clear return on investment, not just in terms of financial savings but also in improved patient experiences and outcomes.

Overall, while digitization has the potential to significantly enhance hospital operations and patient care, these challenges must be carefully managed to ensure successful implementation.

**AI is undoubtedly the future, and that can be seen in the AI Arms race that is currently playing out between the US and China. Hospital leaders believe in AI to improve accuracy. However, despite the undoubted benefits of AI, there are many ethical and data privacy concerns, especially with Gen AI. What impact in the short-term do you see AI having on the healthcare system, and are there concerns over the misuse of patient data, and the heightened cybersecurity threats posed by the introduction of AI into existing processes and systems?**

In the short term, AI is poised to have a transformative impact on the healthcare system in several ways. Firstly, AI can significantly enhance diagnostic accuracy

and speed. For example, AI algorithms are increasingly used to analyze medical images, such as X-rays and MRIs, to detect anomalies that might be missed by the human eye. This can lead to earlier and more accurate diagnoses, improving patient outcomes.

AI also holds great promise in personalizing treatment plans. By analyzing vast amounts of data from patient records and clinical trials, AI can help healthcare providers tailor treatments to individual patients, increasing the effectiveness of interventions.

Furthermore, AI can improve operational efficiencies within healthcare facilities. From optimizing scheduling and resource allocation to automating routine administrative tasks, AI can help reduce the workload on healthcare professionals and lower operational costs.

For budget holders and from a planning and operational point of view, predictive analytics help to get a consolidated view of asset usage rates and expiry dates, tied off with historical and future patient throughput. Data-driven dashboards empower staff to make informed decision making to reduce stock value and make substantial cost savings. Instead of

“Artificial Intelligence” we like to refer to AI as “Assisted Intelligence”, augmenting people’s roles, but not replacing the human function.

However, the integration of AI into healthcare also raises important concerns, particularly around data privacy and cybersecurity. The use of AI requires access to large datasets, which often include sensitive patient information. This raises the risk of data misuse, either through inadequate data handling practices or unauthorized access.

Moreover, introducing AI into existing systems can increase cybersecurity threats. AI systems can be targeted by cybercriminals, potentially leading to data breaches that compromise patient confidentiality. Therefore, it’s crucial that healthcare organizations implement robust cybersecurity measures and ensure compliance with data protection regulations.

Overall, while AI offers significant benefits, it is essential for healthcare providers to address these concerns proactively. This involves investing in secure data management practices, educating staff about cybersecurity risks, and ensuring that AI systems are transparent and accountable in their operations. ©IMA



**Instead of “Artificial Intelligence” we like to refer to AI as “Assisted Intelligence”, augmenting people’s roles, but not replacing the human function.”**

Lenovo

# TAKING THE NEXT 'LEAP'

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with **Giovanni Di Filippo**, President of EMEA, Infrastructure Solutions Group at Lenovo, during LEAP 2025 in Riyadh, in order to better understand the sheer significance of its \$2bn megadeal with Alat – and how the partnership reinforces the fact that Lenovo is a major player in the global infrastructure space.

In May 2024, Lenovo formally announced that they were entering into a \$2bn strategic partnership with Saudi-based conglomerate Alat.

In January 2025, the necessary approvals needed to rubberstamp the project were signed, sealed and delivered, which paved the way for one of the most significant projects announced in recent years in the KSA.

The sheer scale of transformation underway across the region is unprecedented globally, and the appetite and demand for disruptive technologies has been kicked into overdrive.

The leadership of Saudi Arabia have high expectations for their country, as they look to turn the country into a knowledge-based economy, the guiding template for them is their Vision 2030 program.

However, they know they can't go it alone, they need to import expertise and knowledge for these large-scale infrastructure projects.

Enter Lenovo.

The fact that Lenovo remain the only vendor that PIF have invested in for infrastructure only serves to highlight the huge confidence they have in the Lenovo brand.

Giovanni Di Filippo has been the driving force behind the phenomenal growth of Lenovo's ISG business across the EMEA region.

## PROVEN TRACK RECORD

During LEAP, CNME spoke to Di Filippo, who couldn't hide his excitement about the partnership with Alat, and reiterated that the reason Lenovo was selected was the fact that they could 'get it done'.

"Look, it is a major, major announcement, and that was signified by the presence of

our Chairman and CEO Yang Yuanqing here in Riyadh. He was joined on stage at LEAP by Alat CEO Amit Midha, and the whole megaproject has really captured attention. There are a lot of businesses pledging investment into the region, but they are long way off commencing these projects. However, our project has been given the regulatory approvals needed, and we are ready so start building the infrastructure the Kingdom needs to meet its Vision 2030 objectives. The Kingdom has major expectations, they are attracting huge projects and deals, they have secured the World Cup, EXPO and the Asian Games, and all these events require infrastructure, and as one of the global market leaders in infrastructure they want us be part of this. Lenovo were selected by PIF, because they know we can do it," said Di Filippo.

## MADE IN SAUDI

One of the aspects that stood out between the partnership between Lenovo and Alat, was the 'Made in Saudi' promise.

Di Filippo expanded on the meaning of that concept, and said products made in the Kingdom will be off the assembly line come 2026.

"We're going to build a factory that will produce the 'Made in Saudi' products and



**When they did an assessment on which vendor they would like to partner with, they quickly understood and realised that Lenovo is the only company that is serving all customer segments."**



services. This was extremely important to them, and was one of the prerequisites of the deal, the products have to be made in the Kingdom, 'Made in Saudi' is not just a soundbite. We are also building an R&D centre, which will include a customer experience centre and an innovation centre, and they will provide the building blocks for the 'Made in Saudi' vision. We also want to always understand the needs of the Kingdom in order to build specific products that will help the country transform and these centres will help us in that regard too. We are going to start with desktops,

notebooks and servers, and these will be up and running by 2026, because as we all know in the current climate, and looking to the future, compute is so important," said Di Filippo.

#### **ON THE JOB**

There are so many parts of this deal that stand out, but the fact that it will create around 60,000 jobs is hard to ignore, aside from the economic benefits that will bring from a GDP perspective, as Di Filippo points out, it has real societal benefits.

"We are a market leader when it comes to the global supply chain. We have 30+

manufacturing sites all over the world, and our next one is going to be strategically located in the Kingdom to serve the Kingdom first and also the wider Middle East and Africa region. The manufacturing facility will be based next to the airport, and we want to make sure that our time to market is fast, so if we need to ship to Jeddah, Dammam etc, then being based at near the airport was a strategic decision to ensure that our time to market will be fast. Obviously, this project with Alat will create jobs, and we will directly create 15,000 new jobs, and 45,000 indirect jobs. We need to build an ecosystem of partners for the supply chain, but we are very proud of the fact that we will be helping to create 60,000 new jobs across the KSA, because outside of all of the above, it's good for society across the KSA and supports the 2030 vision.

#### **THE CHOSEN ONE**

It goes without saying that the competition to win the tenders for these megaprojects is fierce to say the least.

The assessments conducted are robust, and of course they need to be, when you consider the sheer scale of investment between Lenovo and Alat.

When asked why Lenovo was the 'chosen one'.

Di Filippo cited a number of factors, but ultimately he believes it comes down to the fact that they are the only vendor that has a complete end-to-end portfolio.

"When they did an





assessment on which vendor they would like to partner with, they quickly understood and realised that Lenovo is the only company serving all customer segments, hyper-scalers, international accounts, public sector and SMB, so from a customer perspective, we are serving everyone. We are the only vendor in the market that has an end-to-end portfolio, desktops, mobile, workstations, compute, storage and AI products. People tend to forget sometimes that we have been doing high-performance

computing for 12 years. When they did their due diligence on us as a company, they also understood our patents, and that ultimately, we have a long journey of building next-generation products across multiple lines of business. I think when they took everything into consideration, they obviously determined we were the best fit for them,” concluded Di Filippo.

#### **NOT PC**

Di Filippo concluded a brilliant exchange by reiterating that this deal in

particular really cements their status as major, major global infrastructure player.

“I told you in our interviews in the past, we are so much more than just a PC company, but it can be hard to shift perceptions. I also told you we wanted to replicate our global success in the PC space in the infrastructure market, and I think it’s safe to say we did that. We are no longer just a PC company, and this deal with Alat shows that we are one of the world’s best when it comes to infrastructure,” said Di Filippo. **enr**

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SCAN TO GET INVOLVED

ServiceNow

# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with **Cathy Mauzaize**, President of EMEA at ServiceNow, to discuss the impact Agentic AI is going to have on the global IT landscape – and why she views the great expectations and appetite for rapid transformation across the KSA marketplace as a great opportunity, rather than a challenge.

LEAP 2025 was a hotbed of innovation, creativity, technology, investment and entrepreneurship.

The list of superlatives that one could use to describe the energy of LEAP is boundless.

In many ways, LEAP is indicative of the transformation that is underway across the KSA, the sheer scale of transformation is hard to comprehend and the mega investments being made are jaw-dropping.

ServiceNow is one company that has put its money where its mouth is when it comes to Saudi Arabia.

12 months ago, they announced hugely significant investments and partnerships in the region, and at this year's edition of LEAP they reinforced their commitment to the KSA.

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with Cathy Mauzaize, President of EMEA at ServiceNow, to take a closer look at its strategy for the KSA.

Mauzaize has enjoyed a decorated career in IT, spending over 13 years at Dell EMC, whilst she also had spells at SAP and Microsoft before joining ServiceNow in 2021.

#### AT YOUR SERVICE:

Mauzaize kickstarted our exchange by stressing their commitment to the KSA region, highlighting the phenomenal appetite for transformation.

“This event is hugely important for ServiceNow, due to the phenomenal momentum happening here in the KSA. The Vision 2030 program is the vehicle driving that momentum, but the sheer appetite and demand for transformation is quite staggering across the country. It's very hard

not to be captivated and drawn in by that energy for transformation, and it is very evident to see the appetite for greater innovation across the KSA, which is again all sustained by the Vision 2030 program, which is a sort of guiding light for organizations across the board. ServiceNow has to be at LEAP, and obviously 12 months ago we made a very significant investment into the KSA, through datacentres, people, and developing the skills needed to drive these programs of transformation across the board. I think these investments only serve to reinforce how committed ServiceNow is to helping the Kingdom achieve their aspiration to be a global leader for technological innovation and progress,” said Mauzaize.

Mauzaize added that LEAP also provides us with a platform to reiterate their commitment to its customers and partners here in Saudi Arabia.

“At LEAP, we are demonstrating the new innovations that we have



**ServiceNow are the only company that has an integrated platform and we're the only market player that can do end-to-end.”**





infused into our platform, and it won't come as a surprise to you that it is all under the umbrella of AI. We are the only AI platform for business transformation and the message that we are trying to project here at LEAP to our Saudi-customers is how they can leverage the best of our technology such as Agentic AI, data and workflow all in the one platform in order to accelerate the transformation required," said Mauzaize

**ALL IN ONE:**

In terms of market differentiators, ServiceNow has many, but the fact they remain the only market

player with a fully integrated platform naturally sets them apart, in what is a saturated marketplace.

"ServiceNow are the only company that has an integrated platform and we're the only market player that can do end-to-end. My CEO would say we can do North, South, East and West, because we can touch every corner of the organization, of course we started in IT, but when you have this very clear pane of glass that you can put on top of a 20th century system and connect them and automate the workflows then that ultimately sets you apart, and we are the only ones that can do that. We are uniquely positioned to accelerate all the transformation in demand across the marketplace by leveraging Gen AI and all our other innovations that are embedded into our platform," said Mauzaize.

**USE YOUR IMAGINATION:**

Some have suggested that speed at which the KSA is transforming means that managing expectations can be difficult, however, Mauzaize sees this as an opportunity as opposed to a challenge.

"I think it is an opportunity rather than a challenge, because the customer is leading. You see customers like STC and Salem, and they are driving conversations, it makes it easier. The transformation journey becomes much easier because they are pushing it, it's not a hard sell, so the dynamic

is refreshing. We recognise that we need to create more skills in the country and we need to invest in our partner ecosystem across the KSA, and we have done that through our partnership with Saudi-based solutions by STC and global systems integrator Customizo. The only limit is our imagination and the only limit is our capacity with the skills in the Kingdom, and that's why we are doubling down with our customers and partners to create academies designed to foster the skills needed to accelerate the transformation. The customers are incredible to work with, they want to be the best, they want to be leading when it comes to the innovation, and again that type of mindset creates a dynamic that is exciting as opposed to seeing those lofty expectations as a negative, or a challenge. In some cases, they are creating things from scratch, there is no legacy, and when you are starting things from scratch and you have the 2030 Vision as a framework to work off then you can create incredible projects and we are here to help drive the transformation across the KSA," said Mauzaize.

**LET'S WORK TOGETHER:**

Many analysts and tech leaders are predicting 2025 will be the year of Agentic AI.

ServiceNow, with their Agentic AI offering are expected to play a big role in the adoption and acceleration of the technology in the next 12 months.



“It’s going to be a big year of disruption, and innovation is coming very, very quickly when it comes to Agentic AI. We see the world of today as a world where human and AI agents work together. We view Gen AI as augmenting humans. We see the world of today and the future as humans and AI agents collaborating and working together. You will have business leaders having a team of agents working together to solve issues, provide insights and create innovation. In fact, that isn’t even a scenario of tomorrow, that is happening right now with our ServiceNow platform. At ServiceNow, we will be playing the role of the service engine and orchestration across all the various agents working together with humans to provide workflows, actions and insights. That is so important because with the proliferation of innovation you will need to have some

sort of governance to really understand how the data is being used, where do you need a human touch, where will the agents be deployed and so, it’s all collaboration, this is a new frontier that we are driving,” said Mauzaize.

#### BE BOLD:

Mauzaize concluded a brilliant interview, by declaring her delight at the progress that is being made in terms of levelling the playing field when it comes to women pursuing careers in IT across the Kingdom.

She has called for that momentum to continue, and said her advice to aspiring young women looking at a career in tech to be bold and brave.

“I’m very impressed by the momentum here in the KSA. There are so many

female talents emerging here year-on-year, and that is hugely encouraging. I see these talents, but my advice to them is that they need to be bold and fearless. They need to take to the stage, the technology is only as good as the talent behind it, there is going to be a shortage of tech talents, so there are huge opportunities to be capitalised on for women that want to pursue a career in technology. I’m very proud of our team here at ServiceNow in Saudi Arabia, we have an amazing diverse team, with a lot of extremely talented young women and they are doing a great job. My advice to the others would be, be bold, take the stage and jump on the incredible opportunities coming out of this region,” said Mauzaize. [@mauzaize](#)



**It’s going to be a big year of disruption, and innovation is coming very, very quickly when it comes to Agentic AI.”**

# LEAP

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# CONNECT, ELEVATE, AND INSPIRE

CNME Editor Mark Forker sat down with **Loubna Imenchal**, Head of Enterprise Business for AMETCA at Logitech, to learn more about her approach to leadership, why she remains wholly committed to addressing the underrepresentation of women in the IT industry – and why Logitech is perfectly-positioned to capitalize on the burgeoning opportunities emerging out of the KSA.

Loubna Imenchal has become the face of the Logitech brand across the Middle East region.

Under her tutelage the company has gone from strength-to-strength.

Her passion, energy and enthusiasm about the portfolio of cutting-edge solutions and products Logitech has to offer their end-users is palpable.

However, outside of her day-to-day role at Logitech, Imenchal is using her platform as one of the most prominent, revered and respected technology leaders in the region to elevate others to follow her lead.

She wants to ensure that the path that she walked to get where she is today, will be a less bumpy one for the next generation of female leaders looking to pursue careers in the technology industry.

Her zest and zeal for the technology industry never seems to waver, and it's almost infectious to the point that you become captivated by her messaging.

She's an excellent

communicator, that there is no doubt.

With International Women's Day just around the corner, and our Women in Tech Awards coming up on March 5th, we felt that Loubna was the ideal candidate for our front cover interview in February's edition of CNME.

Our Women in Tech Awards is designed to foster an environment in which we can continue to break down barriers and make the technology industry a more diverse, inclusive and equitable one.

## **THE POWER OF DIVERSITY:**

We kickstarted the conversation by discussing leadership.

Unfortunately, there remains some outdated negative stereotypes towards female leaders, with some suggesting that they have too much empathy, and as a result find it difficult to make tough decisions.

Imenchal outlined her leadership style, which she

declared was 'rooted in the power of diversity'.

"My leadership style is rooted in resilience and a strong belief in the power of diversity. I reject the notion that empathy is a weakness, in fact, it is a cornerstone of effective leadership. It allows for deeper understanding, fosters stronger relationships, and ultimately drives better decision-making. I believe in creating a culture where diverse perspectives are not only welcomed but actively sought out. This leads to more innovative solutions and a more engaged workforce. By advocating for a gender-balanced leadership team, we unlock a wealth of varied experiences and skills, which are essential for navigating the business landscape of today," said Imenchal.

She added that the viewpoint that women make better leaders isn't about superiority, but instead is a simple recognition that diverse leadership produces better results

"The idea that women

"make better leaders" isn't about inherent superiority, but rather recognizing the unique strengths that women often bring to the table. In a world increasingly focused on collaboration and emotional intelligence, women's natural inclination towards these areas can be a significant advantage. The truth is, the value of gender diversity transcends mere inclusion. It directly impacts innovation and market relevance. With women comprising over half the global population and wielding significant purchasing power, their representation in product development and decision-making is vital. Ultimately, it's about recognizing that diverse leadership leads to better outcomes, and that's something we should all strive for," said Imenchal.

#### **CONNECT TO ELEVATE:**

As aforementioned in the introduction, Imenchal uses her voice to raise the issue regarding the underrepresentation of women in technology.

She does that by hosting a monthly breakfast series that is designed to inspire, connect and elevate women in leadership.

She explains the concept and the primary objectives behind the project in more detail.

"LogiConnect, or Connect to Elevate, our monthly breakfast series, is a passion project born from the need to address the underrepresentation of women in the tech industry. It's a dynamic platform

designed to inspire, connect, and elevate women in their leadership journeys. We recognized that while talent exists, systemic obstacles and societal norms often hinder women's professional advancement. In regions like the Middle East, traditional gender roles, restrictive maternity leave policies, and societal stigmas create significant barriers. LogiConnect was created to counter these challenges by providing a supportive environment where women can share experiences, aspirations, and challenges. The initiative is rooted in Logitech's commitment to diversity and inclusion; we aim to understand the unique challenges women face in each market and tailor our support accordingly. Currently launched in Dubai, we aspire to expand LogiConnect across the GCC," said Imenchal.

Imenchal added that they gather feedback through surveys to offer tailored support, and acknowledged that a huge challenge was trying to overcome the lack of self-confidence and imposter syndrome that many women have when entering a male-dominated industry.

"A core challenge we address is the lack of self-confidence and mental barriers rooted in stereotypes. Women often internalize the

belief that tech is a male-dominated field, leading to self-doubt and imposter syndrome. LogiConnect provides a space for women to share their experiences and overcome these limiting beliefs, helping women to become more confident and empowering them to pursue leadership roles. By addressing these psychological barriers and providing practical support, we are seeing a tangible impact on women's career growth and their ability to achieve sustainable leadership," said Imenchal.

#### **TRUST YOURSELF:**

During those monthly breakfast seminars Imenchal dispenses knowledge on how women can achieve their goals and overcome the obstacles in front of them, but when asked what she would tell her younger self, she stated that she would remind herself of the importance of 'self-trust'.

"If I could speak to my younger self, I would remind her of the importance of self-trust – it's the bedrock of any successful career. Learn to discern between constructive criticism, which helps you to grow, and destructive feedback, which often reflects the speaker's limitations. Don't let others define your potential; trust in your abilities and pursue



**My leadership style is rooted in resilience and a strong belief in the power of diversity. I reject the notion that empathy is a weakness, in fact, it is a cornerstone of effective leadership."**





your goals with unwavering determination. I would also encourage myself, and all young women, to ignore the stereotype that the IT industry is a closed shop for women. Many women hold back from applying for roles or pursuing leadership positions due to this misconception and it's simply not true. While challenges exist, especially compared to other sectors, they are surmountable," said Imenchal.

#### **EMBRACE THE CHALLENGE**

When asked what type of advice she gives to young

women looking to follow her path into the tech sector, Imenchal said that she stresses the need for them to see that it is not a closed shop and an exclusive club for men.

You need to believe in yourself and embrace the challenge.

"To young women aspiring to a career in tech, I would say: the technology sector is not exclusively for men, so don't be deterred by male-dominated environments. Focus on developing your skills, delivering results, and building strong social

connections. While technical expertise is valuable, the combination of hard and soft skills is what drives leadership. Today's tech culture values collaboration and adaptability, and influence often carries more weight than authority. Look at the women who have broken through—Marissa Mayer, Cheryl Sandberg—their success proves that it's possible. Coding geniuses will always have a place, but it's those with well-rounded, interpersonal skills who lead teams and drive innovation. Believe in yourself, embrace challenges, and don't be afraid to assert your presence. Your perspective and skills are needed in this industry," said Imenchal.

#### **THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY:**

Logitech is transforming workspace solutions with its portfolio of technologies.

The business transformation taking place across the KSA is unprecedented in terms of scale.

Imenchal highlighted their market visibility and presence in the Kingdom, and believes they are very well-positioned to capitalize on those opportunities.

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is a pivotal market for Logitech, particularly given its ambitious Vision 2030 and the rapid digital transformation underway. We recognize the immense potential in the KSA, as businesses across all sectors are modernizing their operations and

embracing new technologies. This transformation aligns perfectly with Logitech's mission to provide innovative workspace solutions that enhance productivity and collaboration. With organizations across Saudi Arabia investing heavily in infrastructure, smart cities, and digital services, the demand for innovative and adaptable technology solutions is soaring. Logitech is incredibly well-positioned to capitalize on these opportunities. Our comprehensive portfolio of products, from video conferencing tools to ergonomic peripherals, address the evolving needs of the modern workforce. We are committed to building strong partnerships with local businesses and government entities to ensure our solutions are tailored to the unique requirements of the KSA market. Our focus on delivering high-quality, reliable, and user-friendly technology makes us a trusted partner in the KSA's journey towards digital excellence. We are dedicated to supporting the Kingdom's vision by empowering businesses and individuals with all the tools they need to thrive in the digital age," said Imenchal.

Imenchal was a recent panellist at our CIO Leadership Awards, and she always make a phenomenal guest, because she never sits on the fence, and always expresses her beliefs and opinions in an unfiltered way.

The panel was focused on Gen AI and the challenges



facing businesses when it comes to ethically and responsibly deploying Gen AI solutions and products.

Imenchal conceded that the potential of Generative AI is undeniable, but its ethical and responsible deployment is paramount.

"Firstly, establishing

a robust AI governance framework is essential. This framework should balance innovation with rigorous risk management, ensuring that AI development and deployment align with ethical principles and regulatory requirements. Transparency and accountability are equally



**Our monthly breakfast series, is a passion project born from the need to address the underrepresentation of women in the tech industry. It's a dynamic platform designed to inspire, connect, and elevate women in their leadership journeys."**

crucial – AI decisions must be explainable and free from bias, and continuous monitoring is necessary to prevent model drift and security vulnerabilities. Adopting a responsible AI approach means prioritizing ethical and inclusive AI development, avoiding biases that could negatively impact user groups. Educating employees on AI governance is vital, as AI represents a cultural shift that requires organization-wide awareness and training. Engaging with external AI experts, including researchers, regulatory bodies, and industry leaders, ensures adherence to best practices. Security and compliance, particularly with regional regulations like the PDPL in Saudi Arabia, must be a top priority. Finally, businesses must view AI as a long-term investment, focusing on sustainable value rather than short-term gains,” said Imenchal.

We concluded what was a fantastic exchange by returning the conversation to the topic of Logitech.

During LEAP 2025 in Riyadh, I caught up with two of Loubna’s colleagues in the form of Holly Zhou and Nuna Becic.

However, when asked what product was capturing the imagination of the marketplace, Imenchal said the Rally Camera Streamline Kit was really standing out.

“At LEAP 2025, while we showcased a range of innovative solutions, the product that truly captured the attention of our customers and stood out as a flagship



offering was the Rally Camera Streamline Kit. This solution addresses a critical need in today's hybrid-flexible (hyflex) learning and modern workspace environments, particularly in the rapidly evolving Middle East market. The

Rally Camera Streamline Kit, built around our renowned Rally Camera, is designed to provide seamless lecture capture and collaboration experiences. We've observed a significant surge in demand for solutions that simplify hybrid interactions, whether it be educational institutions striving for engaging lecture capture or enterprises looking for effective remote collaboration. The kit's appeal lies in its user-friendly design and adaptability. With intuitive controls for switching between preset camera views, it empowers presenters to manage their narrative effortlessly, ensuring an engaging experience for both in-person and remote audiences. The streamlined installation and troubleshooting process, along with its compatibility with popular video collaboration platforms, further boost its attractiveness. With this in mind, the Rally Camera Streamline Kit is a testament to Logitech's commitment to delivering innovative, accessible, and high-quality solutions that meet the evolving needs of our customers. It represents the future of hybrid learning and professional collaboration, and it's clear that it resonated strongly with attendees at LEAP 2025,” concluded Imenchal. ©2025



**Businesses must view AI as a long-term investment, focusing on sustainable value rather than short-term gains.”**



Lucidya

# AI-POWERED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

**Muhannad Alshaikh**, Chief Commercial Officer at Lucidya, tells CNME Editor Mark Forker, about the phenomenal growth of the company over the last few years, and why AI-powered customer experience is the only show in town during an interview at LEAP.

Muhannad Alshaikh is one of the most respected IT leaders in Saudi Arabia.

He has enjoyed a remarkable career, one that has seen him work for tech behemoths such as Cisco and Microsoft.

In June 2021, Alshaikh was appointed as the Chief Commercial Officer at Lucidya, and he has been the central driving force behind the rapid growth of the company across the KSA.

From our conversation, you get a real sense that Alshaikh fully believes in the mission statement of Lucidya, and is excited at the challenges that are present in Saudi Arabia, as the country continues to embark on a dramatic transformation away from an oil-based economy to a knowledge one.

During our exchange, which took place at LEAP 2025 in Riyadh, Alshaikh documented the vision of Lucidya, how its experience platform is changing the customer loyalty landscape



in the KSA – and what differentiates the company from its market rivals.

Alshaikh highlighted the AI that is infused into their product portfolio, but stressed that a management platform is



**Our mission is to empower businesses with AI-driven data analysis to improve their go-to-market strategy.”**

a necessity in the current digital climate.

“Lucidya is a customer experience management platform powered by AI. We allow our clients to have access to AI enabled data-driven insights which aid in business development and improving client satisfaction. Our mission is to empower businesses with AI-driven data analysis to improve their go-to-market strategy. Our platform comes ready to be used, however let’s backtrack to how customer experience impacts businesses. In order for brands to understand how to engage with their clients and anticipate their needs, a management platform is a must-have,” said Alshaikh.

One other key feature of their dynamic AI-powered platform is the fact that it is designed to understand 14 dialects of Arabic.

“We at Lucidya are offering an AI-powered platform that understands 14 different dialects of Arabic in addition to other languages. This platform will help clients to understand their customer’s needs and adapt their strategies accordingly – and this is another key market differentiator for us,” said Alshaikh.

One other market advantage it has over other vendors looking to penetrate the KSA marketplace is the fact that Lucidya intrinsically knows the needs of customers across Saudi Arabia.

However, Alshaikh conceded that educating clients on how

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IN THE REGION

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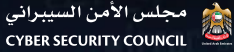
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the platform operates is a high priority.

“Being based in the region has given us a head start on understanding and anticipating our client needs. We designed the platform around them to better assist with the onboarding process. However, we are constantly adapting our process. This year, instead of giving them a lot of product choices we changed our offering into three or four main solutions, like monitor, support and growth. We saw this as making our solution industry or use-case specific,” said Alshaikh.

The scale of transformation in Saudi Arabia is quite simply off the scale, and is unprecedented globally.

Alshaikh could hardly contain his excitement at the opportunities for further growth for Lucidya, and declared that he firmly believes that the KSA will become the frontrunner in AI innovation globally.

“We’re seeing amazing

examples of digitization and transformation happening here powered by the government's bold 2030 Vision. Within the next 12 months I believe Saudi Arabia will emerge as a world leader in AI and innovation. The population here are young, digital natives and we believe they are eager to create and innovate. Saudi Arabia is the place to be over the next five years for technology and innovation,” said Alshaikh.

When pressed on what ultimately differentiates Lucidya, Alshaikh paused in order to process the question.

He said there were a number of key features that set them apart from their market rivals, but when asked for one area, he said their ability to offer 14 different dialects

of Arabic as a key selling point.

“The founders of Lucidya witnessed the niche needs of our customer base as there was a lack of Arabic dialects being used in social media. We created a locally developed AI model because we understood those languages and from there evolved according to the market needs. In Saudi Arabia and the region as a whole we have enjoyed great success and are neck-to-neck with some of our biggest competitors. We’ve even expanded to 11 countries outside of the region which was not part of our initial plans. We want to continue growing at a steady pace to reach a strong platform to better serve our clients,” concluded Alshaikh. enms



**Lucidya is a customer experience management platform powered by AI. We allow our clients to have access to AI enabled data-driven insights which aid in business development and improving client satisfaction.”**



# OUTSTANDING EXCELLENCE

CPI Media Group and tahawultech.com hosted their annual CIO Leadership Awards, which celebrated the outstanding excellence demonstrated by IT leaders from multiple industry verticals across the UAE over the last 12 months. The awards were hosted by Laura Buckwell, whilst CNME Editor Mark Forker moderated a panel discussion that examined the challenges facing enterprises looking to adopt Gen AI into their business processes.

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AL NASSR FC

# PUTTING FANS FIRST

**Faisal Khan**, IT Director, at AL NASSR FC, outlines the ways in which football clubs can leverage data to create rewarding fan experiences in this exclusive article for February's edition of CNME.



Football fandom has evolved beyond the traditional matchday experience. With the rise of digital technologies, clubs are no longer competing for on-field success—they are vying for attention in an always-connected world where fans demand seamless, hyper-personalised interactions.

The future of fan engagement lies in data-driven personalisation, gamification, and stadium innovations powered by AR, VR, and smart infrastructure.

A club's ability to leverage data and technology to create immersive, interactive, and rewarding experiences will determine its success in building lasting fan loyalty and unlocking new revenue streams. Modern football fans don't just want to watch the game; they want to be part of the experience, whether online, in-app, or inside a state-of-the-art stadium.

## **PERSONALISATION: TURNING FAN DATA INTO MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT**

Football fans expect clubs to understand their preferences, behaviours, and interests. The shift toward AI-powered fan analytics allows clubs to go beyond generic engagement strategies and offer hyper-personalised experiences tailored to each supporter.

By analysing data from ticketing platforms, social media activity, e-commerce transactions, and in-stadium interactions, clubs can create targeted content, offers, and exclusive experiences that

resonate with individual fans. Personalised engagement could include:

- Customised content recommendations based on a fan's favourite team, players, and historical interactions.
- Dynamic ticketing solutions that offer real-time upgrades and last-minute discounts based on stadium occupancy.
- Loyalty-driven merchandising, where AI-powered insights suggest products based on past purchases and browsing history.

The ability to deliver real-time, relevant, and personalised engagement strengthens fan loyalty, increases revenue potential, and enhances the overall matchday experience.

## **GAMIFICATION: TRANSFORMING PASSIVE FANS INTO ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS**

Gamification is redefining fan engagement by making interactions more immersive, rewarding, and competitive. Today's football fans crave interactivity and exclusivity, and clubs are increasingly using gamified experiences to drive participation, loyalty, and social engagement.

A well-structured gamification strategy can include:

- Fantasy football leagues integrated with official club platforms, allowing fans to draft teams, compete in challenges, and win rewards.





- Matchday prediction games where fans earn points for guessing lineups, scorelines, and player performance metrics.
- Digital collectables and NFTs, offering exclusive ownership of club memorabilia, historical moments, and player cards.
- Interactive social challenges, rewarding fans for engaging with branded content, attending games, or sharing their matchday experiences.

By incorporating interactive and reward-based mechanisms, clubs can extend fan engagement beyond matchdays, ensuring year-round digital interactions that deepen emotional connections with the brand.

### **AR, VR & SMART STADIUMS: THE NEXT EVOLUTION IN MATCHDAY EXPERIENCE**

While digital engagement is growing, the in-stadium experience remains at the heart of football fandom. The future of smart stadiums is centred around immersive AR/VR experiences, real-time fan analytics, and next-gen infrastructure that enhances convenience, entertainment, and engagement.

Innovative stadium experiences powered by AR and VR include:

- AR-powered live match stats, allowing fans to scan the pitch with their phones to view real-time player performance insights.
- VR stadium tours, giving global fans access to behind-the-scenes areas such as dressing rooms, tunnels, and VIP sections.
- 360-degree virtual streaming enables remote fans to experience games as if inside the stadium.

## **Modern football fans don't just want to watch the game; they want to be part of the experience, whether online, in-app, or inside a state-of-the-art stadium."**

- Personalised in-seat experiences, with bright screens providing multilingual commentary, tactical insights, and exclusive content.

Smart stadium infrastructure is also revolutionising how clubs optimize operations and fan engagement. Features like AI-powered crowd management, 5G-enabled digital experiences, and contactless transactions create a seamless and connected matchday journey. Integrating eco-friendly, energy-efficient stadium designs is also becoming a key priority for clubs aiming to enhance sustainability while improving the overall fan experience.

### **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS: EXPANDING THE FAN ECOSYSTEM**

Football loyalty no longer exists in isolation; it is deeply connected to lifestyle, entertainment, and commerce. Clubs that form strategic partnerships with brands, retailers, and digital platforms can unlock new engagement opportunities and deliver added value to their supporters.

Potential loyalty-driven collaborations include:

- Retail and e-commerce partnerships, offering exclusive discounts and personalised shopping experiences for club members.

- Media and streaming integrations provide fans with behind-the-scenes content, player interviews, and club documentaries.
- Technology and partnerships enable frictionless travel, hotel accommodations, and VIP matchday experiences.

By building an interconnected loyalty ecosystem, clubs can ensure that fan engagement extends beyond matchdays, strengthening brand affinity and maximising commercial opportunities.

### **THE FUTURE OF FAN ENGAGEMENT IN FOOTBALL**

Football fandom has entered a new era where digital connectivity, immersive experiences, and personalized interactions define brand loyalty. The clubs that embrace data-driven strategies, gamification, and next-gen stadium innovations will set global fan engagement benchmarks.

The modern football fan doesn't just want to watch—they want to experience, interact, and belong. By integrating cutting-edge technology, strategic partnerships, and AI-driven personalization, clubs can transform their engagement strategies and ensure that their fan base remains passionate, engaged, and loyal for years to come. 

LEAP 2025 Interview

# OPERATION TRANSFORMATION

CNME Editor Mark Forker spoke to **Liisa-Ly Pakosta**, Minister of Justice and Digital Affairs for Estonia, at LEAP 2025 in Riyadh, to find out how the countries are partnering to support their own journeys of digital transformation – in a joint-effort to future-proof their growth of knowledge-based economies.

The Estonian government, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has officially adopted a policy for this area. We see this region as digitally like-minded to Estonia.

The Vision 2030 initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is highly ambitious, and we share their vision of leveraging innovation to offer better services.

So, it's quite logical that our companies, which have already successfully provided numerous services here, will continue on a larger scale. Estonia is the world's leading digital country—100% of government services in Estonia are digitalized, and now we are incorporating more and more artificial intelligence to provide even smoother, more personalized, and proactive services.

We have extensive experience in how digital governance truly works, how to build an efficient government, how to develop services that gain public



trust, and how to use data for governance and economic management.

Additionally, cybersecurity in these fields is not something that a country can manage alone—you need partnerships. The partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is very important for Estonian companies.



**The Vision 2030 initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is highly ambitious, and we share their vision of leveraging innovation to offer better services.”**

**Can you tell me about some of the major collaborations private sector companies from the ICT industry have with entities in the KSA, and can you provide more information on the mResidency program, which is designed to attract global investors and entrepreneurs to Saudi Arabia?**

Last year, we established a business council—a central organizing body co-chaired by both countries. The purpose of the business council is to bring more and more companies from both sides together, allowing them to identify mutual interests. Whether it's one selling and the other buying, or both collaborating, we have already signed contracts between companies during this visit.

Again, there are different ways to cooperate, but of course, collaboration only happens when both sides can generate profit. That's the essence. However, it's not just about profit—it's also about innovation. Estonia brings extensive experience, and both Estonia and Saudi Arabia

share high ambitions for digital transformation.

When we combine these ambitious visions, and with the Estonian government supporting innovation among our companies, I have seen many fantastic Saudi ministers who are very eager to support development and innovation projects. This collaboration is not just a case of “one plus one equals two”—it’s something far greater.

One of the key topics under discussion here is how to facilitate mutual investments and protect them. At the same time, Estonia has a unique e-Residency program. It does not mean that you can travel or live in Estonia with these documents, but it provides a way to be part of Estonia’s digital ecosystem.

Through e-Residency, you can establish a company in Estonia, meaning you can start a business in the European Union without ever physically visiting Estonia. This program has proven very successful. It brings companies and investments into Estonia, allowing entrepreneurs worldwide to manage their businesses remotely.

I have met entrepreneurs in Canada, for example, who have never visited Europe or Estonia but have successfully run their businesses thanks to e-Residency and the access it provides to Estonia’s digital services.

Starting a company in Estonia is very easy. We are one of the least bureaucratic countries in the world, and we continue working to reduce bureaucracy even further. The process is quick and smooth, providing full legal access to bank accounts and everything else needed to start a business.

Of course, there are security controls in place to maintain a trusted environment. But despite these measures, e-Residency has been a major success story.

**The sheer scale and breadth of transformation underway across the KSA is unprecedented globally. How exciting are you about the opportunities that exist for Estonia in the KSA marketplace, and how can these collaborations ultimately benefit your own country?**

Estonia began its digital transformation after regaining independence from Russian occupation. We took an entirely different approach—we digitalized all our services to ensure transparency and eliminate corruption, providing world-class services to our citizens.

However, we started this journey in the 1990s, and technological advancements have accelerated significantly since then. When you start digital transformation later, you often have the advantage of adopting the latest technology from the outset. That’s why we can learn from each other.

Our solutions have been tested and trusted, and we continue to develop new solutions based on our existing infrastructure. We have extensive experience, and our companies have significant expertise.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is approaching digital transformation with fresh

ambition, launching new developments and starting many initiatives from scratch. This presents new opportunities for innovation—opportunities that may not be as readily available in Estonia.


By combining our strengths—Estonia’s ongoing innovation and Saudi Arabia’s ambitious plans supported by strong government backing—we can achieve great things together.

**As aforementioned above, the scale of transformation, not only in the KSA but all over the Middle East, is off the scale. What can Europe learn from the Middle East?**

So many people have told me that Saudi Arabia truly believes in what it is doing—and does so with immense enthusiasm. The energy I witnessed at LEAP was incredible.

Coming from a Nordic country, we are sometimes quite humble when talking about ourselves. But I believe this is an important lesson we can learn from your side—to have confidence in what we are doing and to take pride in our achievements.

The energy at LEAP has been truly inspiring. Since Estonia also organizes digital events, I took many notes on how we can improve by learning from your LEAP experience.

Above all, I would highlight the enthusiasm and belief in innovation that is so strong here in Saudi Arabia. It’s something that stands out and is worth learning from. 



## Chainalysis

# DON'T COUGH IT UP

**Jacqueline Burns Koven**, Head of Cyber Threat Intelligence at Chainalysis, claims the tide is starting to turn when it comes to ransomware payments, citing a sharp decline of 35% in the last 12 months – as she dissected the findings of their 2025 Crypto Crime Report.

After ransomware gangs extorted a record-breaking US\$1.25 billion in 2023, and the value stolen in the first half of 2024 rose 2.38% year-on-year, cybercriminals seemed poised for another record payday. However, a sharp pullback in the latter half of 2024 radically changed the year's outcome, instead resulting in overall ransomware payments seeing a sharp and encouraging 35% decline.

This is according to findings from the Chainalysis 2025 Crypto Crime report, which also noted that the US\$813 million attackers extorted from their victims last year included a record-breaking outlier in the US\$75 million paid by an undisclosed victim to the Dark Angels group.

“For years now, the cybersecurity landscape seemed to be hurtling towards a so-called ransomware apocalypse, so this sharp decline, to levels even lower than those in 2020 and 2021,



speaks to the effectiveness of law enforcement actions, improved international collaboration, and a growing refusal by victims to cave into attacker's demands,” said Jacqueline Burns Koven, Head of Cyber Threat Intelligence at Chainalysis.

Another positive trend is the widening gap between the amounts demanded by

bad actors and the actual payouts made by victims — in H2 2024, there was a 53% difference between the two.

Moreover, despite the number of ransomware events actually increasing in the second half of 2024, the number of on-chain payments declined, suggesting that while more victims were targeted, fewer paid. In cases where victims did pay attackers, on average, the final amounts for these ransoms typically ranged between US\$150,000 to US\$250,000, regardless of attackers' initial demands.

For attackers who received payments, Centralized Exchanges (CEXs) were a preferred means of converting their crypto gains into fiat currencies. Consequently, actions such as the sanctioning of Russia-based exchange, Cryptex, and the German Federal Criminal Police (BKA)'s seizure of 47 Russian language no-KYC crypto exchanges — both in September 2024 — have impacted the ability of ransomware actors to launder their illicit earnings. Chainalysis data shows that substantial volumes of crypto funds extorted by ransomware groups last year continue to be held in personal wallets.

“Ransomware operators, a primarily financially motivated group, are abstaining from cashing out more than ever. This potentially indicates a fear of being traced, identified, and prosecuted by law enforcement agencies, made



possible with the help of crypto investigation tools such as those provided by Chainalysis,” added Koven.

While these developments bode well for businesses that have long battled the threat of ransomware, Chainalysis warned against complacency. “Today, 7-8 figure ransoms have become the outliers, as the ransomware actor landscape is dominated by groups extorting low- and mid-value payments,” Koven explained. “With smaller businesses also in the crosshairs, protecting

these organisations is critical to economic resilience as in the UAE for example, the country’s over half a million SMEs contribute as much as 63% of the nation’s non-Oil GDP. It will take sustained

collaboration and innovative defences to build on the progress made in 2024, and ensure organisations across all segments stay protected against the threat of ransomware.” cyber



**For years now, the cybersecurity landscape seemed to be hurtling towards a so-called ransomware apocalypse, so this sharp decline, to levels even lower than those in 2020 and 2021, speaks to the effectiveness of law enforcement actions, improved international collaboration, and a growing refusal by victims to cave into attacker’s demands.”**

KSA Executive Summit

# AI NEEDS GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

CPI Media Group and tahawutech.com hosted their inaugural **KSA Executive Summit** in Riyadh, following the conclusion of LEAP 2025. The conference was hosted and moderated by CNME Editor Mark Forker, which featured keynote presentations and two panel discussions with some of the most prominent technology leaders from across the Middle East region.

The KSA Executive Summit was held in the VOCO Hotel in the heart of the Kingdom's capital, and gathered technology leaders and cybersecurity practitioners from across the Middle East for a conversation under the theme of – AI, Cybersecurity and emerging technologies.

The event was moderated by CNME Editor Mark Forker, but the first keynote presentation of the day was delivered by Ian Winfield, Chief Technology Officer EMEA – AI and HPC Solutions at Hitachi Vantara.

His panel focused on the need for robust frameworks and governance in order to ensure that AI is used both ethically and responsibly.

He pointed out that despite the fact AI is the centre of attention globally when it comes to large-scale investments and organizations future strategies, there is lip service being paid when it comes to ethics and governance.



“AI was the most used word in 2024, but there was no mention anywhere of governance of ethics, and this is a major problem. At Hitachi Vantara, the four core pillars of our AI strategy is transparency, fairness, privacy and security, and accountability. There is the need for clear explanations of how AI systems work, unbiased decision-making,

protection of user data, and assigning responsibility for the actions of AI systems,” said Winfield.

CNME Editor Mark Forker then took to the stage to moderate a panel discussion on Ethical AI and Governance, in which Ian Winfield was a panellist, and he was joined on stage by Tahir Latif, Expert AI Regulatory Advisor at Dubai International Financial Centre.

Both men shared their dismay at the decision by the US and UK governments to opt out of signing up to a global governance framework for AI, at the Global AI Action Summit, which was held recently in Paris.

Latif said the decision was a major blow to getting a universal framework for regulating AI, and said



**Cybersecurity has to be a state of mind, it's not just about technology” – Wolfgang Kroj, Hitachi Vantara**





the stance particularly from the US was unlikely to soften under a Trump administration.

“The UK opted not to join citing security concerns, and that decision is going to be a big blow to his UK AI Action plan, whilst the US said it was going to stifle innovation around AI. You can see under the Trump administration that AI is a big priority for them, and he has that go it alone attitude, so I can’t see him coming to the table anytime soon to sign up to these universal set of rules and guidelines on AI,” said Latif.

However, both Latif and Winfield agreed that the Middle East, and the UAE and Saudi Arabia in particular, with the capital they have can





become a real global leader when it comes to AI.

We then had another brilliant keynote presentation, this time from Ahmad Halabi, Managing Director at Resecurity, who also looked at the impact AI is going to have from a cybersecurity ecosystem.

His panel was the perfect pre-empt to our next panel discussion entitled: Cybersecurity – Safeguarding the New Technological Frontier through an AI-enhanced Cyber Resilience.

The panellists were Mandar Patil, Senior Vice President

– International Market & Customer Success, Cyble, Mayuresh Kothari, Technical Director, Secureworks, a Sophos company, Eng. Naveed Ahmed, Cybersecurity Risk Expert, Saudi Data & AI Authority (SDAIA), Wolfgang Kroj, General Manager – Sales – Middle East and Africa, Hitachi Vantara and Salman Mushtaq Qureshi, a leading Cybersecurity Expert based in Saudi Arabia.

The insights and perspectives shared by all panellists ensured a robust, enlightening, educational and hugely informing conversation was had.

One of the statements that

really seemed to strike a chord with the audience, and other panellists was the claim from Hitachi Vantara's Wolfgang Kroj, that when it comes down to it cybersecurity is a mindset.

“Cybersecurity has to become a state of mind, you can't just throw money at technologies and hope everything will be OK, that's naïve, it's not practical. It has to become a state of mind. I always say the same thing about AI, despite what people say, it will always come back to people and processes,” said Kroj. [cmm](https://www.cmm.com)

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