THE VOICE OF THE CHAN

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MIDDLE EAST

FCHBRIDG

ONE YEAR OF TECHBRIDGE MEA: FUELED BY BOLD IDEAS & SPANISH LATTES

AS TECHBRIDGE DISTRIBUTION MEA CELEBRATES THEIR FIRST ANNIVERSARY, THE STORY OF THEIR INCEPTION AND THE JOURNEY SINCE THEN UNFOLDS LIKE A COMPELLING NARRATIVE-A TALE MARKED BY INSPIRATION, RESILIENCE AND A VISION TO REDEFINE THE TECH DISTRIBUTION LANDSCAPE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA (MEA). AT THE HEART OF THIS EXCITING VENTURE IS STEVE LOCKIE, THE MANAGING DIRECTOR, WHOSE PASSION FOR INNOVATION AND COMMITMENT TO PARTNER SUCCESS HAVE BEEN PIVOTAL IN SHAPING TECHBRIDGE'S ETHOS AND ACHIEVEMENTS.





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TOP STORIES



News from the channel industry in the region and beyond.

HIGHLIGHTS



28 Mir Sarmad Khero, Director – Enterprise Business Solutions, Raqmiyat LLC tells Anita Joseph all about the dynamics of public procurement.







- Gerard Allison, SVP, Sales 34 EMEA & Jason Ellis, VP Channel Sales EMEA at Sophos, discuss their MDR services, partner program and the MSP Perspectives 2024 Survey Report.
 - Review of the Ring Battery Doorbell Pro which is particularly wellsuited for the UAE market, where modern living demands both innovation and practicality.





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STAYING SUSTAINABLE



s we navigate an era marked by rapid technological advancements and heightened environmental awareness, the need for sustainable practices in the channel industry has never been more pressing. The channel industry, a critical nexus for technology distribution and integration, stands at a pivotal juncture where its choices can significantly influence the broader ecosystem.

The impact of traditional business practices on the environment is becoming increasingly apparent, with mounting concerns over resource depletion, waste management, and carbon footprints. The channel industry, with its complex supply chains and extensive product life cycles, is uniquely positioned to lead the charge toward sustainability. By adopting green practices, companies can not only reduce their environmental impact but also align themselves with the growing demand from consumers and partners for responsible business practices.

Sustainability in the channel industry is not merely about compliance or corporate responsibility; it is a strategic imperative that can drive long-term value and differentiation. Embracing energy-efficient technologies, optimizing supply chains, and promoting recycling and circular economy principles can yield significant benefits-both in terms of operational efficiency and brand reputation.

As we explore the latest trends and strategies in this issue, we highlight the urgent need for industry-wide commitment to sustainability. By fostering a culture of environmental stewardship and innovation, the channel industry can play a pivotal role in shaping a more sustainable future, ensuring that technological progress goes hand-in-hand with ecological responsibility.

We invite you to delve into these discussions, engage with thought leaders, and consider how your own practices can contribute to a greener, more sustainable channel industry.

COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABILITY

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SECURELINK PARTNERS WITH BEAMSEC TO DELIVER ROBUST EMAIL SECURITY AND VULNERABILITY SERVICES TO MEA CUSTOMERS

SecureLink, the region's leading Trusted Risk Advisor announced collaboration with BeamSec, a leading provider of comprehensive cybersecurity solutions against e-mail-based threats and vulnerabilities.

The two organizations will collaborate to enhance BeamSec's geographical expansion across the EMEA region by leveraging SecureLink's expertise in sales and services. SecureLink, being an ideal partner for this initiative, can provide comprehensive sales and post-sales support for the BeamSec portfolio, along with the capability to assist with future customizations and technical integrations.

Commenting on the partnership, Manish Pardeshi, Director, SecureLink



said, "Leveraging SecureLink's established market expertise as a 'Risk Advisor' alongside BeamSec's comprehensive, scalable, and proven technology, we aim to meet customers' cybersecurity needs with the most integrated approach available in the market. There is a massive need for email security in the region and together we look forward to bringing in advanced email security practices to our customers to stay compliant in a rapidly evolving cyber landscape."

"Customer satisfaction is our number one priority," said Murat Guvenc, Managing Director of BeamSec. "What sets us apart is our commitment to understanding the unique needs of our customers and responding to their inquiries responsively

and swiftly. BeamSec's four pillars— Speed, Adaptability, Feasibility, and Expertise—are designed to make our clients feel safe and confident in partnering with us.

GENETEC UNVEILS CLOUDLINK 110, A COMPACT CLOUD-MANAGED VIDEO BRIDGE FOR LOW-DENSITY DEPLOYMENTS

Genetec Inc. a leading technology provider of unified security, public safety, operations, and business intelligence solutions, has announced the launch of Genetec Cloudlink[™] 110, the latest addition to its line of cloudmanaged security appliances. This compact device is specifically designed to simplify video management in low-density deployments, providing a versatile solution that enables customers to transition to cloud or hybrid environments at their own pace.

With a micro form factor, support for



up to eight cameras, and 1 TB of local storage on an ultra-endurance micro-SD card, Cloudlink 110 is designed for smaller sites within larger deployments and locations with limited hardware space.

The Cloudlink 110 enhances video workload optimization and seamless cloud integration, ensuring interoperability between local and cloud environments in hybrid deployments. Supporting both local and cloud storage, it enables efficient communication between satellite locations and centralized headquarters. Its flexible hybrid storage also offers a straightforward transition to cloud or hybrid environments. By enabling organizations to use their existing cameras, Cloudlink 110 reduces the need for significant new hardware purchases.

HEADLINES

MINDWARE SIGNS VAD PARTNERSHIP WITH ASSURED DATA PROTECTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Mindware, a leading value-added distributor (VAD) in the Middle East and Africa, has signed a strategic distribution partnership with Assured Data Protection (Assured), the prominent IT managed services provider (MSP) for cloud data protection



solutions. This collaboration will benefit partners and businesses across the region, providing them with cutting-edge backup and cyber recovery services as managed services at affordable prices.

Through this partnership, Mindware will work with Assured to offer its customers, MSPs, and resellers comprehensive solutions to ensure that businesses can protect and recover their critical data and operations in the event of outages, natural disasters, ransomware, and cyber-attacks. Assured customers and partners receive a fully managed Rubrik service from design and implementation through to recovery and daily proactive support. Rubrik's Zero Trust Data Security[™] helps organizations achieve business resilience against cyberattacks, malicious insiders, and operational disruptions. Rubrik Security Cloud, powered by machine learning, secures data across enterprise, cloud, and SaaS applications.

Ehab Adel, Business Unit Manager at Mindware, expressed enthusiasm about the partnership: "We are thrilled to partner with Assured, the first and largest Rubrik MSP, to deliver an unparalleled 24/7/365

managed service that guarantees robust cyber resilience for our channel partners. This strategic alliance greatly strengthens our data protection and managed services portfolio, reinforcing our position as a key player in helping organizations swiftly recover from cyber threats, including ransomware. With Assured, we can now provide a more flexible and cost-effective approach to deploying Rubrik solutions for businesses of all sizes."

BAYANAT AND VAY ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP TO EXPAND TELEDRIVING SOLUTIONS IN MEA AND ASIA PACIFIC

Bayanat, a leading provider of AI-powered geospatial solutions, and Vay, the provider of automotive-grade teledriving (remote driving) technology, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to advance teledriving technology solutions with geospatial data and AI.

This partnership enables Bayanat to unlock and expand jointly with Vay the teledriving technology into the Middle East, Africa, and select Asia Pacific countries. Additionally, the partnership will see the launch of a joint R&D arm dedicated to the development and expansion of next generation, safe autonomous technology. The partnership will also leverage Bayanat's operational infrastructure, data and AI capabilities,



and Vay's teledriving expertise to drive advancements in autonomous vehicles globally, and address the growing demand for advanced modes of mobility.

Bayanat's smart mobility solutions are powered by its AI-enabled platform, GIQ, which integrates data from space and ground assets to assist with decision-making, enhance situational awareness, and improve operational efficiency. Vay's technology allows professionally trained teledrivers to remotely drive vehicles to the customer's pickup location. Once the car arrives, the user takes manual control and drives as in any regular vehicle. After the journey is complete, the user simply ends the rental in the app without

worrying about searching for parking space, as a teledriver handles parking or drives the car to the next customer. This system offers a sustainable, doorto-door mobility service at half the cost of traditional ride-hailing. Bayanat's AI insights, informed by geospatial data, will improve the remote experience for Vay's trained teledrivers.

AVAYA APPOINTS FADI MOUBARAK TO LEAD MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA & CENTRAL ASIA



Avaya, a global leader in Enterprise CX, has appointed Fadi Moubarak as Vice President for Sales and Channels in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia.

Based in Dubai, Moubarak is a 34-year IT industry veteran, and has been with Avaya for over 10 years, having previously led the company's channel business in the EMEA and APAC regions. During that time, he successfully evolved Avaya's channel programs and cultivated relationships so that Avaya partners could better serve customers' experience transformation requirements while protecting their own business growth.

With extensive knowledge of the region he now leads, and as part of Avaya's reimagined go-to-market strategy, Moubarak will work with local customers and partners to help them drive business growth through delivering outstanding customer and employee experiences.

"Many of our largest and most advanced global customers are based in this region, and it's been a pleasure to work with them over the past 10 years. I'm looking forward to taking these relationships to the next level, finding creative solutions to drive transformative customer and employee experiences without the disruption of large-scale technology replacements," said Moubarak.

"Fadi has earned the respect of the Avaya team, our partners and our customers, making him the natural leader for the newly formed Middle East, Africa & Central Asia area. Fadi is wellplaced to take the lead on our regional transformational initiatives, as well as the opportunities ahead of us. I look forward to seeing him thrive in this new position," said Cameron Thomson, Group Vice President – EMEA Theatre, Avaya.

ARUBA AND NETAPP PARTNER TO ELEVATE IT OFFERINGS

NetApp, the intelligent data infrastructure company, announced that it has become the preferred data infrastructure provider of Aruba, a dominant contributor for webhosting, domain registration, and email account services in Europe. Together, the companies will leverage each other's specialties to better serve customers, offering new solutions labeled



"Powered by NetApp." As evidence of the elevated partnership, Fabrizo Garrone, Enterprise Solution Director at Aruba will be presenting a session at NetApp INSIGHT 2024: "Aruba builds secure, available, intelligent data infrastructure on NetApp [1702-1]"

Aruba is Italy's leading provider of cloud, data center, hosting, e-mail, domain registration and PEC (certified

> email) services. Aruba has been a NetApp customer for more than a decade, using NetApp solutions behind the scenes to power its services, but is now expanding the cooperation into a formal partnership. By combining forces, the companies will be able to collaborate on strategic goals and synergistic initiatives to be able to provide optimized data center solutions, both from the data server and data management side.

"Aruba's credentials are evident from its long list of top enterprise customers across Europe," said Gabie Boko, Chief Marketing Officer at NetApp. "By using NetApp solutions, Aruba has been passing on the benefits of intelligent data infrastructure to its customers. This partnership makes those benefits more transparent, so Aruba customers know they are getting the best in data security, management, and visibility with the solutions they buy. It also creates new opportunities for joint innovation and development to meet the specific needs of customers across Europe, expanding the reach of both Aruba and NetApp.

"To support this partnership, Aruba and NetApp will work together to provide cutting-edge solutions for customers. Aruba will label its flagship services as "Powered by NetApp" to illustrate that they are using NetApp's powerful data storage and integrated data services. This joint venture will lead to future Aruba flagship products that are "Powered by NetApp."

MICROSOFT EXPANDS GLOBAL ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT CENTER FOOTPRINT TO ABU DHABI

Microsoft Corp. announced it is expanding its Global Engineering Development Center footprint to the UAE. A new development center, which will be established in Abu Dhabi, one of Microsoft's first engineering centers to be launched in the Arab world, joining the company's global portfolio

of development centres across key strategic locations around the world.

Microsoft's Engineering Development Center in Abu Dhabi will be part of a global ecosystem of centers dedicated to the creation of AI innovations, cloud technologies and advanced cybersecurity solutions. The engineering teams at the center will create cutting-edge solutions that will



be part of Microsoft solutions globally. This announcement is the latest in a

series of investments by Microsoft that further strengthens the UAE's position as a global hub of tech innovation and talent. Microsoft's strategic partnership with G42 has been instrumental in establishing a thriving local technological ecosystem, and the new Microsoft Engineering Development Center will build on these efforts by not only creating cutting-edge technologies in the region but also attracting top tech talent from around the world to develop tailored solutions that tackle pressing challenges in critical industries globally.

His Highness Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of

Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, said, "As a hub of innovation, Abu Dhabi is wellpositioned to lead global efforts in AI, championing transformative solutions that benefit both people and the planet. Abu Dhabi's advanced digital and physical infrastructure, combined with the UAE's strategic location at the heart of the world, allows us to drive positive, far-reaching impacts across industries and societies alike."

WESTCON-COMSTOR MOVES TO LARGER DUBAI PREMISES TO SUPPORT GROWTH AND INNOVATION

Westcon-Comstor, a global technology provider and specialist distributor, has announced that it has relocated to larger premises in Dubai to facilitate and support its expansion plans.

The company, which operates in more than 50 countries and employs around 130 people in the UAE, has moved from its previous offices in Jebel Ali Free Zone to a 1,400 sq metrefacility at The Galleries development in downtown Jebel Ali.

Benefits of the relocation include better road and public transport links, improved sustainability through lower electricity usage and a self-imposed ban on all plastic bottles and paper cups, and a modern, open-plan design to promote collaboration.

The move also means all partner and employee training can now take place on-site, while chillout areas offer the opportunity for teams to relax and recharge.

Westcon-Comstor connects the



world's leading IT vendors including Cisco, Palo Alto Networks, F5 and Extreme Networks with a channel of technology resellers, systems integrators and service providers. Global revenue in the company's latest financial year was a record \$3.69 billion, with year-on-year growth across the Middle East and Africa region.

The company said the relocation from its former Dubai offices, where it was based for 15 years, underlined its commitment to the UAE and wider Middle East region while supporting its diversity and inclusion agenda.



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CLOUDFLARE INTRODUCES THREAT INTEL TEAM

loudflare, Inc., the leading connectivity cloud company, announced its threat intelligence team, Cloudforce One, will make its research public for the first time ever as part of a commitment to democratize access to critical threat insights. Combining the expertise of the Cloudforce One team with the power of the company's global network — one of the largest in the world - security teams can now access timely information on the malicious tactics and trends that underpin the 158 billion threats Cloudflare's network blocks daily.

Threat actors are mission driven. Motivated by efficiency and profit, they continuously shift tactics to uncover novel ways to pull off sophisticated and successful exploits. The result is a constantly evolving, complex, and overwhelming threat landscape, reflected by the projection of cybercrime to hit an annual \$10.5 trillion in 2025. As security teams work to juggle and combat the risks that have led to a 72% increase in data breaches over the past few years, access to threat intelligence has never been more critical. It provides clarity around the causes of these breaches and proactive measures to prevent them, so security leaders can make more informed decisions that move the needle towards resilience.

"We believe in helping build a more secure, reliable Internet. But that can't exist unless we disrupt and drain the resources of the hackers who abuse its power for personal or political gain," said Matthew Prince, CEO and cofounder at Cloudflare. "Today, Cloudflare is giving defenders a leg up in the race, by committing to continuously share nuanced threat intelligence that no other company has access to, with the industry atlarge."

Cloudflare's Threat Intelligence Portal provides a centralized view



across the entire threat landscape. Through Cloudforce One, Cloudflare now offers its own experts to help identify and respond to emerging threats, while also providing real-time reconnaissance. Today, the Cloudforce One team published deep insight on:

- A South Asia-focused threat actor targeting governments, defense sectors, and critical infrastructure: Deemed "SloppyLemming," this threat actor has been carrying out attacks predominantly targeting Pakistan. SloppyLemming primarily leverages credential harvesting techniques—e.g., tactics that involve stealing personal or financial data from users—to exploit its targets.
- Increased attacks on the global supply chain – freight fraud is on the rise: Since January 2024, the organizations that connect shippers with goods have seen a sizable uptick in fraudulent attacks. One Fortune 500 food and beverage customer has experienced about 10 of these incidents consistently every month since the start of the year. The most widely used technique to execute attacks on these organizations is "doublebrokering," a man in the middle

method where a threat actor impersonates a transport company to capture payment for deals.

"Threat intelligence is a nonnegotiable when it comes to tipping the scale back in favor of defenders. And with Cloudflare's global network as our foundation, Cloudforce One identifies and defends against attacks with an arsenal that is unmatched," said Blake Darché, Head of Cloudforce One at Cloudflare. "In this new era of threat intelligence, Cloudforce One is perfectly positioned to detect and degrade today's threat actors who erode trust and wreak havoc."

To keep up with ongoing threat intelligence released by the Cloudforce One team, subscribe to updates on the Cloudforce One Threat Intelligence website. Existing Cloudflare customers will have access to new Cloudforce One intelligence through their Cloudflare security dashboard.

Cloudflare's mission is to help build a better Internet. And a better Internet can only exist with forces of good that detect, disrupt and degrade threat actors who seek to erode trust and bend the Internet for personal or political gain. Enter Cloudforce One - Cloudflare's dedicated team of worldrenowned threat researchers, tasked with publishing threat intelligence to arm security teams with the necessary context to make fast, confident decisions. We identify and defend against attacks with unique insight that no one else has. The foundation of our visibility is Cloudflare's global network - one of the largest in the world - which encompasses about 20% of the Internet. Our services are adopted by millions of users across every corner of the Internet, giving us unparalleled visibility into global events - including nefarious activities. This vantage point allows Cloudforce One to execute real-time reconnaissance, disrupt attacks from the point of launch, and turn intelligence into tactical success. 🝩



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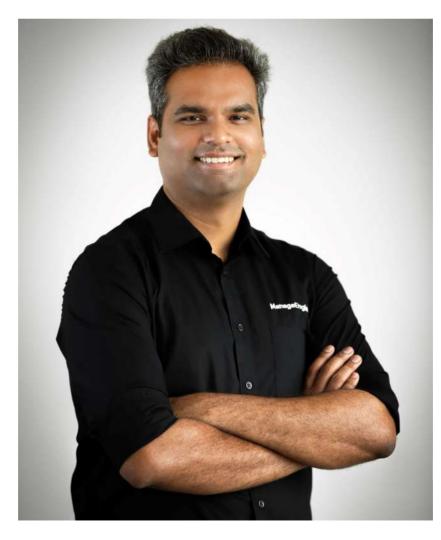
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ManageEngine rolls out first-ever decision intelligence platform for enhanced it operations



anageEngine, a division of Zoho Corporation and a leading provider of enterprise IT management solutions, today announced a significant upgrade to its flagship IT analytics solution, Analytics Plus. Version 6.0 introduces Spotlight, a contextual recommendations engine powered by AI, designed to identify key inefficiencies in IT operations and suggest corrective strategies.

The 2023 State of Analytics Engineering report found that time to business insight is the biggest challenge for nearly 50% of surveyed directors. Spotlight dramatically reduces the time IT managers and CIOs spend analyzing various IT metrics and coming up with remedies to fix structural fault lines in operations. By incorporating decision-intelligence capabilities, Analytics Plus now facilitates contextual decisionmaking, addressing a crucial gap in traditional analytics software.

For instance, Analytics Plus can analyze correlations between the age of IT assets, their frequency of failure, and the mean time to repair. Based on these parameters, it suggests the optimal time frame for asset replacement. This approach ensures that organizations neither dispose of assets prematurely, losing usable value, nor retain them for too long, negatively impacting employee productivity. With the introduction of Spotlight, ManageEngine reinforces its commitment to enhancing IT operations through intelligent, datadriven solutions.

"While traditional analytics tools excel at providing a platform for analyzing any type of data, they often lack the necessary context of the data they are analyzing. Deriving meaningful and context-specific insights is becoming increasingly challenging due to a significant disconnect: the people performing the analysis are skilled at mining data but often lack the IT context, making it difficult to translate findings into actionable business decisions," said Samantha Hall, Service Delivery Manager, Leathams Ltd., a UK-based food supplying company.

Analytics Plus' built-in AI engine is programmed to study common IT processes and identify solutions to achieve desired results more quickly. Spotlight acts like an assistant, constantly monitoring for bottlenecks or operational inefficiencies and offering tips for corrective action. By bringing in IT context and leveraging AI capabilities, Analytics Plus ensures that organizations can address issues more effectively and efficiently.

"Organizations no longer want to spend hours mining data for actionable insights. They require ready-made strategies that they can implement immediately to see rapid results," said Rakesh Jayaprakash, product manager and chief analytics evangelist at ManageEngine. He added, "There are sufficient tools in the market that promise automation and remediation for day-to-day network and application failures, but there's a lack of focus on strategic decision-making. This is the gap Spotlight aims to bridge."

Root Cause Analysis

Quick decision-making is only half the journey; IT managers and CIOs also need a way to backtest their decisions to ensure a new strategy or model will achieve the desired results. In addition to decision intelligence capabilities, ManageEngine is introducing the Root Cause Analysis feature, which automatically identifies the top factors contributing to a particular trend. This feature allows IT managers and CIOs to verify whether their changes or decisions are having a positive impact.

For instance, if tools are implemented for auto-remediation of L1 network issues, Root Cause Analysis can look at the increased uptime and highlight the reduction in L1 network issues as the major contributor to better network uptime.

No-Code Auto-ML for Deep Analysis

The new version of Analytics Plus empowers IT teams to create custom machine learning (ML) models without writing a single line of code. Traditionally, developing and deploying ML models was restricted to experts. However, Analytics Plus' no-code ML platform democratizes this process, allowing IT managers to develop ML models directly on the data they are familiar with.

With this capability, IT managers can build ML models for prediction and classification, such as a predictive model to derive the probability of ticket escalations

ANALYTICS PLUS' BUILT-IN AI ENGINE IS PROGRAMMED TO STUDY COMMON IT PROCESSES AND IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS TO ACHIEVE DESIRED RESULTS MORE QUICKLY. based on various factors or related events. This approach ensures the development of highly specific and accurate models because they are built on the organization's unique data and validated by the very people who use it daily.

Unified IT Metrics Library

Analytics Plus serves as a command center and decision hub for IT by contextually analyzing all IT data, enabling organizations to crosscorrelate metrics and identify interdependencies. Analytics Plus version 6.0 introduces the Unified IT Metrics Library, listing all KPIs from an IT environment in a single view, effectively acting as a comprehensive directory of metrics. This makes searchability and reusability easier, breaking down silos created by various IT tools and serving as a single source of truth for any metric that IT teams need to track.

"Traditional IT data analysis is often confined within individual tools. For instance, resolution time of incidents is limited to ITSM while mean time to repair a device is restricted to IT operations management. This inhibits cross-correlation and prevents organizations from obtaining a complete picture of their IT infrastructure. By analyzing all these metrics together in a centralized platform, organizations can unlock significant value," said Jayaprakash.

The Unified IT Metrics Library democratizes data by making a catalog of KPIs readily available for technicians to conduct their analyses, which can also be consumed by other IT applications for contextual integration. This comprehensive approach enhances governance and ensures that all relevant metrics are easily accessible and managed effectively, driving quick decisionmaking.

In addition to these key features, Analytics Plus version 6.0 includes a range of productive enhancements such as multivariate forecasting, workflow charts, support for distributed processing (on-premises) and more than 10 new integrations with popular IT tools.

ONE YEAR OF TECHBRIDGE MEA: FUELED BY BOLD IDEAS & SPANISH LATTES

As TechBridge Distribution MEA celebrates their first anniversary, the story of their inception and the journey since then unfolds like a compelling narrative-a tale marked by inspiration, resilience and a vision to redefine the Tech distribution landscape in the Middle East and Africa (MEA). At the heart of this exciting venture is Steve Lockie, the Managing Director, whose passion for innovation and commitment to partner success have been pivotal in shaping TechBridge's ethos and achievements.

n Conversation with Steve Lockie, MD of TechBridge MEA

"I'm convinced we're the reason Spanish Latte became the must-have craze in Dubai when it first launched!" chuckles Steve Lockie. The newest kid in the IT distribution scene in the region just celebrated their first birthday and unlike most one-year-olds, they skipped crawling altogether.

Instead, they have not only laced up their running shoes but is sprinting ahead! This one-year-old is audacious, bursting with energy and is completely unstoppable.

You might be wondering (and rightly so) what Spanish Lattes have to do with a Technology Distribution company.

Well, it all started at RAW Coffee...

Sounds like TechBridge is one of those classic 'started in a garage' kind of an origin story, was it?

"Well, not quite a garage—though that would've been a good story—but it all started in a café! We set up shop in this unassuming little spot called RAW Coffee in Al Quoz, Dubai.

I remember those early days vividly. We were a small group, fueled by a lot of coffee and creativity, bouncing ideas off each other. Our vision was clear: we wanted to be a different kind of distributor, one that genuinely adds value to its partners and is brilliant at the basics.

Those casual brainstorms turned



into serious roadmaps and before we knew it, we were knee-deep in building what TechBridge MEA is today.

In June 2023, we officially kicked things off with full-fledged operations up and running from our logistics base in Jebel Ali Free Zone. In February 2024 we had registered TechBridge Distribution LLC and opened our second office in Oud Metha, Dubai.

It's funny looking back, but those wonderful open café conversations really laid the groundwork for where we are now!"

But come on, Steve, do we really need yet another tech distributor in the region?

"AHA! I'm so glad you asked! And trust me, we asked ourselves the same thing over and over again. There were a lot of sleepless nights around that one! Was there genuinely a gap in the market for yet another distributor? It wasn't something we took lightly. We dived deep into the numbers, analyzed the market from



every angle and had pretty heated debates about it.

Here's the thing: the market was full of Tier 1 VARs pushing Tier 1 tech, even though they knew margins were shrinking and vendor loyalty was fading, they stuck with it because it was familiar. But the market was craving something fresh, something beyond the usual offers of discounts or better credit terms—that's just oldschool thinking. What we saw was a real gap—not just in mid-market

CVAD: CHANNEL FIRST, VALUE ADDED DISTRIBUTION. IT'S AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO and new logos, but in the fact that distributors weren't going beyond the basics. They weren't offering more than financial perks. There was a need for something truly value driven.

Mid-market partners and newer vendors, those playing on the same field as the big names, were being overlooked. They needed a platform that offered the same level of support, visibility and opportunity as the heavyweights.

That's where we saw our opportunity. We weren't just here to add another name to the list; we wanted to fill that gap. And that's really one of the cornerstones of TechBridge—empowering those who've been underrepresented."

So, you're like the Robin Hood of Tech Distribution?

"Haha, yes, you could say that! It's actually a bit of an inside joke around here. We do like to think of ourselves as leveling the playing field—bringing opportunities to the underrepresented. It's a fun way to look at it but there's real conviction behind that mindset."

Tell us a bit more about CVAD—that's a cool term. How did you guys come up with it?

"CVAD! Yes, it's got a nice ring to it, doesn't it? It stands for 'Channel Value Added Distributor.' Here's the thing, despite the fact that over 90% of global tech spending flows through channels, those channels are often underutilized and undervalued. We're a VAD for sure, but we wanted to make a bold statement—one that really champions the channel and highlights its potential.

In today's tech distribution landscape, supporting the channel can almost feel like a contrarian move, but we saw it differently. CVAD came from that passion; channelfirst, value-added distribution. It's at the heart of everything we do at TechBridge, from providing top-tier technical support to making sure partners aren't left scrambling when something major happens, like the VMware acquisition challenges for the channel and end-users. We saw a lot of partners left in the dust trying to pick up the pieces. That's when we knew we needed to double down on the CVAD mission empowering the channel to thrive no matter what's happening around them."

Most tech distributors seem to follow a standard playbook sales support, training, solutions selling—are you following the same formula or doing anything differently?

"Great question! We don't believe in reinventing the wheel when it works, but we're not stopping there. We take the proven formula and build on it to make it our own. Yes, we've got the fundamentals down, but we're definitely doing things differently and I think that's been a key to our success."

Building a Community:

"As tempting as it might be, our focus isn't just quick sales. We are consciously building a community where everyone succeeds sustainably in the long term. We don't just offer solutions—we're a strategic partner, whether it's pre-sales support, technical training, or joint marketing campaigns. Our recent Healthcare campaign is a good example that opened up new revenue streams for our partners and deepened relationships across the sector."

LAERL Consultative Selling Strategy:

"A big differentiator for us is our LAERL strategy. We guide partners through every step of the sales





lifecycle: Landing the deal, Adopting the technology, Expanding their footprint, Renewing the solution, and at the end of the product Lifecycle, lead them to new tech solutions.

For instance, after Broadcom's VMware acquisition, we helped partners navigate the uncertainty and adopt new solutions. This forwardthinking approach keeps our partners ready for whatever's next—that's CVAD in action."

We've noticed your marketing really stands out—everyone's talking about your posts on LinkedIn! Is that a big focus for TechBridge?

"I'm glad you noticed! I'm a huge believer in the power of marketing.

It's not just about building a company; it's about creating a brand that people connect with. From day one, we made marketing a core part of our strategy—it's never been an afterthought.

One thing I'm especially proud of is how we used the 'Campaign in a Box' concept. We wanted to make life easier for our partners, so we gave them ready-touse marketing assets.

It's like, 'open the box, and you're good to go to market!' Our brand is fun, fresh, and bold —and it's resonating. With the help of a fantastic marketing team, we've built a voice that stands out. Less than a year in, we have won the Outstanding Partner Marketing Award from Newland, which was a proud moment for us. It's proof that we're not just creating waves, we're making an impact!"

Tell us about your team and the culture at TechBridge MEA. "I'm really proud of the vibrant, agile startup culture we've built at



TechBridge MEA. Our team spans Sales, Marketing, Pre-Sales, Solution Architects, Logistics, Operations, Finance and Tech Support. It's not just about processes—it's about creating an environment where everyone feels inspired to share ideas and take initiative.

We've laid a

solid operational foundation while keeping that energetic startup vibe. Every team member has a voice, and that dynamic is what keeps us responsive and moving forward. The energy is contagious, and I know that this culture is a big part of why TechBridge is thriving!"

It sounds like you had a lot of fun over the past year—surely there were some hiccups along the way?

"You know, when I look back at the past year, I can't help but think it's been quite the rollercoaster! Of course, every startup goes through its share of challenges, and God knows we have had a few of those. Each obstacle taught us something invaluable and really helped shape our strategy and direction. From grappling with regulatory complexities to fine-tuning our goto-market strategies and the long frustrating wait for contracts to get signed—all of those insights have been crucial-mainly in hindsight (laughs). It's been a wild ride, but I don't think we have many regrets. We are still here and raring to go!"

On a personal note, what do you do to unwind?

"I love spending time under and on the water. When not SCUBA diving, we are fortunate to have a sailing vacht and we love spending time on our 'floating caravan'! It's my go-to for unwinding and getting some fresh air. I recently took a trip to the Kerala backwaters with my wife, and it was incredible. The peaceful vibe, the scenery, and of course, the spicy food—I'm a big fan! Taking those breaks is so important. Whether it's a quick getaway or just some downtime, it really helps me reset and stay inspired. I have learnt that it's all about finding balance, even when things get busy."

Thank you, Steve. Really appreciate your time!

As TechBridge MEA celebrates their first anniversary, it's remarkable to see how far the company has come



IT'S ALL ABOUT FINDING THAT BALANCE

in just a year. It's no wonder they're earning a reputation as a 'Rock Star' distributor.The recent flurry of partnership announcements, including the latest with Check Point



Roberto Schiavo VP Sales, Newland EMEA "As one of TechBridge's earliest partners,

I have been a witness to their growth over the past year. Their innovative marketing campaigns, including standout launch events and the creative use of our assets has been exceptional and truly deserving of the Newland Outstanding Partner Marketing Award." shows that Team TechBridge is doing everything right.

Yet this is just the beginning, with a year of valuable insights and achievements under their belt, TechBridge is gearing up for even more growth. Lockie emphasizes their enthusiasm, stating, "We're hungry, agile, and excited about what lies ahead. Unburdened by legacy systems, we're free to innovate and disrupt the market."

Looking ahead, TechBridge MEA is laying the groundwork for future initiatives that will further enhance their CVAD model. Plans are already in motion for launching an innovation lab focused on collaborative solution development and expanding digital platforms to provide real-time analytics and support for partners. Lockie envisions a dynamic ecosystem where everyone can thrive, reinforcing that "Our commitment to our partners' success is unwavering. We are in this together and our future initiatives will reflect that commitment."

As TechBridge MEA marks their first year, their journey stands as an inspiring reminder of the power of innovation, collaboration and empowerment. Under Steve Lockie's leadership, the company is not just changing the distribution landscape; they are building a community of partners ready to flourish in the fast-paced IT market. With a clear vision and steadfast dedication to their partners, TechBridge MEA is more than just a distributor; it's a transformative force paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future in the MEA region. The next chapter of this journey is just beginning, and it promises to be as thrilling as the first.

TechBridge Distribution MEA is a premier technology distributor and the leading Channel Value-Added Distributor (CVAD) for Mobility, Cybersecurity, Infrastructure, Virtualization, and Networking, with its regional headquarters based in Dubai, UAE.

COVER STORY // TECHBRIDGE MEA



Andy Dankevich CMO DerSecur

"Our partnership is already setting the pace for advanced application security in the region, leveraging DerScanner's unique ability to proactively identify vulnerabilities and ensure compliance".



Harshit Sawhney MD - ME SUNMI

"Their young, dynamic team has demonstrated exceptional commitment in bringing SUNMI products and solutions to the market."



Thamer Nouri BDM - ME Brady Corporation

"Our partnership with TechBridge MEA has been fantastic, thanks to their regional expertise and supportive team. We look forward to many more milestones together"

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: TECHBRIDGE MEA VENDORS AND PARTNERS REFLECT ON THEIR FIRST-YEAR HIGHLIGHTS



Finn Yang Country Manager Sangfor

"Our partnership has proven to be incredibly successful, and we look forward to further enhancing our Middle East footprint in collaboration with TechBridge MEA"



Abu Amir CEO Missan Group

"Collaboration with TechBridge has been amazing. Their visionary approach and unwavering support empower us to elevate experiences for our clients" Ahmed Shawki Reg. Sales Manager - MEA TSC

"TSC is excited about TechBridge MEA's commitment to eco-friendly solutions, which also aligns with UAE's emphasis on sustainability."



Anson Peter General Manager Mega Impex Software House

"As proud partners in mobility solutions, we deeply value your team's unwavering support and dedication to achieving sales success."



Manish Singh Sales Director Zerone Business Solutions

"We have had an amazing collaboration with their team particularly on some cool marketing initiatives and look forward to continued growth"



Sonn Joy Sales Manager Infra & CyberSec Pinnacle Smart Technologies

"As a strategic partner in cybersecurity, we've experienced firsthand their collaborative approach and unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional customer experiences."





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AT THE FOREFRONT OF GROWTH AND INNOVATION

Anita Joseph caught up with **Cameron Thomson**, Group Vice President for the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) theatre, including Turkey and Pakistan and **Fadi Moubarak**, Vice President, Sales & Channels – Middle East, Africa and Central Asia, Avaya.



n June, Avaya appointed Cameron Thomson as Group Vice President for the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) theatre, including Turkey and Pakistan. It was the latest executive appointment over a twoyear period that has seen the company successfully recapitalize and reset its value proposition to customers and partners. Appointments like Thomson's are to make the transformation stick, enabling, Avaya says, a more effective leadership structure to bolster the company's revitalized culture and stay closer to its most important global customers.

No industry newbie, Thomson joins Avaya off the back of extensive success in regional CX leadership as the company asserts itself as the global leader in Enterprise CX. Having served in leadership positions at Alvaria, he has extensive knowledge of the theatre, and his remit is to support customers and partners to drive business growth through delivering outstanding customer and employee experiences. Upon the announcement of his appointment, Thomson directly called out the Middle East and Africa as exciting for Avaya, referencing "the emerging, large-scale customer-centric CX projects we're seeing" across the region. And during his first visit to the region, we caught up with him, along with Fadi Moubarak, Vice President – Middle East, Africa and Central Asia, to learn a little more about the dynamism he's seeing in this market, and how he'll approach the region's channel community.

Let's delve into the MEA market and discuss the direction of your channel program. What are your thoughts on the importance of the MEA market, and what strategic plans are in place for the future?

Thomson: The MEA market is significant for us. Our business is segmented into three operational areas: APAC, EMEA, and the Americas. The MEA region contributes substantially to our EMEA revenue and global presence. And it's pivotal due to its leadership role in digital technology adoption and its emphasis on placing citizens at the center of development initiatives. For instance, Dubai's top-down approach to prioritizing citizen needs presents a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase our capabilities on a global stage. So, in short, the MEA market is crucial to our business strategy.

Can you provide an update on the latest developments in the channel program? What are the new features or changes?

Thomson: We have a robust ecosystem of distribution and technology alliances. Moving forward, our focus will be on deepening our relationships with key partners and customers. We recognize that our largest and most complex customers tend to drive more of our revenue, and the same applies to our channel partners. Therefore, our strategy involves getting closer to these key partners and understanding their needs better.

We're also making changes to help shape our product roadmap to align with the requirements of our major



partners and customers.

Additionally, the MEA channel will now report directly to the regional lead, Fadi, integrating both the operating business and the channel under one umbrella. This centralized approach aims to enhance our focus on the channel and improve our effectiveness in this region.

How does Avaya plan to integrate technological advancements like AI into its channel offerings, and has this impacted your view or operation of the channel?

Thomson: AI is indeed a hot topic, and while many customers are eager to adopt it, there's often uncertainty about its practical applications. I recall when IVR technology first emerged everyone wanted it, but its uses were often unclear. AI is at a similar stage today.

Our role is to provide thought leadership and guide our partners and customers on how AI can be effectively utilized. For example, during a recent event I attended, an expert discussed AI applications and highlighted that while AI can be used for tasks like cross-selling and upselling, it must be carefully deployed in sensitive areas like empathy, where missteps can be more detrimental to the experience.

Our approach involves integrating AI insights into our product development and channel strategies, ensuring that our offerings remain relevant, cutting-edge and safely and ethically



deployable. Our voice-of-the-customer and -partner programs will help us prioritize and adapt our product roadmap, including our use of AI, to meet emerging needs.

What opportunities do you see in the MEA region, and how do you plan to capitalize on them? Moubarak: Growth is the key

Moubarak: Growth is the key opportunity in this region. The MEA area is dynamic and rapidly evolving, with cities like Dubai continually pushing boundaries. We want Avaya to be at the forefront of this growth and innovation. We are seeing substantial progress in Africa as well, where we're establishing strong connections with telcos and anticipating similar customer-centric developments as in the Middle East.

In addition, there is a growing demand for advanced emergency services in regions like South Africa. We plan to replicate our successes for these kinds of customers in the UK,



THE MEA AREA IS DYNAMIC AND RAPIDLY EVOLVING, WITH CITIES LIKE DUBAI CONTINUALLY PUSHING BOUNDARIES. US, and India in countries like Ethiopia and Rwanda. Our goal is to provide cutting-edge, fit-for-purpose solutions in critical sectors like public safety.

Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond, what are Avaya's strategic priorities?

Moubarak: Our transformation strategy focuses on becoming more customer-centric and operationally efficient. This involves retaining our current customer base and exploring growth opportunities through crossselling, upselling, and acquiring new business. And this will be made easier by the exciting roadmap we have pinned on the Avaya Experience Platform.

We're also working on operationalizing our transformation efforts to ensure we are agile and efficient in the market. We aim to leverage our strong brand and enhance our operational practices to stay relevant and competitive.

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OPINION // NUTANIX

WHILE IDENTIFYING AND REMEDIATING SKILLS SHORTAGES ARE A CONSTANT ISSUE, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, INFRASTRUCTURE MODERNISATION IS KEY.

AI IS STRAINING AGING IT INFRASTRUCTURES

Reshma Naik, Director, Systems Engineering, Emerging EMEA, Nutanix

t's been just over a year and a half since the launch of ChatGPT and vet generative AI is now on the lips of most business execs. GenAI has been what Forrester CEO George Colony referred to as "the most important technology thunderstorm of the last 40 years," and tech leaders across the EMEA region seem to agree. AI is now a priority for 90% of IT, DevOps, and platform engineering decision makers, at least according to the Vanson Bourne and Nutanix State of Enterprise AI Report. But as with any rapid advance in technology, questions start to be asked of the existing IT infrastructure and its ability to cope. Are current systems really up to the demands of an AI gold rush?

The short answer is no. To begin with, we have an energy efficiency problem. This is something Gartner warned about back in December 2022, saying that by 2025 "AI will consume more energy than the human workforce, significantly offsetting carbon-zero gains." Also a study called the Growing energy footprint of AI, suggested that the AI industry could consume as much energy as a country the size of the Netherlands by 2027.

The need to address, or at least the need for ESG reporting considerations to be addressed, was highlighted in the State of Enterprise AI Report. Today most AI/ML model inferencing and training is conducted on highperformance GPUs, which are supported by equally high-performance memory and storage. Combined, these solutions consume significant amounts of electricity and require additional power to actively cool within a private or public data centre.

The report also identified additional challenges around skills. Gaps in AI capabilities, as well as ESG, are big concerns. Over 40% of EMEA respondents in the report claim they lack GenAI and prompt engineering skills, and desperately need data scientists. This will inevitably impact organisations' ability to meet their own expectations with AI projects.

This becomes even more pronounced when considering other major factors such as managing data and scalability in back-office functionality. Skills shortages and a need to modernise systems do not go well together, so addressing skills is important in meeting the on-going demands of infrastructure change.

This is the modern world

AI will only add pressure to existing systems, so there is also growing recognition of the need to address the managing and support of running AI workloads at scale. In fact, EMEA respondents ranked this as the number one challenge over the next two years. In addition, respondents also cited security, reliability and disaster recovery as important considerations in their AI strategy.

With infrastructure modernisation and data security outranking cost (the third-lowest consideration for EMEA organisations running or planning to run AI workloads), there is a clear indication within the region that organisations recognise that to really benefit from AI they have to get their infrastructure house in order.

This is further illustrated by the report, with over 90% of EMEA respondents agreeing that their IT costs and cloud spending will both increase due to AI applications. In short, EMEA organisations are showing a willingness to spend in support of their AI initiatives. The challenge is where and how to spend it wisely.

It will come down to prioritisation.

While identifying and remediating skills shortages are a constant issue, especially when it comes to emerging technologies, infrastructure modernisation is key. AI applications and services have a symbiotic relationship with their underlying datasets, models, and infrastructure. This is something the report shows that enterprises are acutely aware of, so the challenge is how to develop data security and quality strategies to make their AI technology as reliable and resilient as possible.

Inevitably, the gold rush nature of GenAI adoption will lead to some short-term over-spend to plug skills gaps and deliver infrastructure capabilities. However, a longer-term modernisation plan is needed to really benefit from the technology, to ensure scalability and intelligent workloads that optimise costs and energy use. This will mean effective implementation and management of data across multiple environments data centre, cloud, and edge – as each will play a critical role in supporting an end-to-end AI workflow.

This data management should also consider security, data quality and data protection. Given data sovereignty requirements, especially in the EMEA region, this should be a core tenet of any AI strategy. Of course, this is all a work in progress. Organisations are still trying to work out how best to use GenAI but use it they will. Inevitably, there will be early adopters, accelerating adoption and making mistakes along the way but for the majority there are some fundamentals here. Existing infrastructures are not enough. They will creak and fail under the strain of AI, if not physically then almost certainly in terms of capability and governance. Thankfully, on that score, for most organisations, AI will be a marathon, not a sprint. 📟

FOCUS // ZOHO

ZOHO OPENS FIRST OFFICE IN QATAR

oho, a leading global technology company, announced the opening of its first office in Qatar in Doha, following substantial growth in the country. The company marked a 29% surge in revenue and a 50% expansion of its channel partner network in 2023. During a press conference at Zoholics Qatar 2024, Zoho also unveiled findings from its latest survey exploring the trends in productivity and collaboration among businesses in Qatar.

Zoho's Growth in Qatar

Zoho's significant growth in Qatar demonstrates a strong demand for its comprehensive cloud-based business applications, driven by a commitment to providing innovative and localised solutions. To better serve the Qatari market, this year Zoho has opened a new office in Doha, hired locally, and expanded its network of local IT service providers and resellers. This strategic move enables the company to deliver bespoke services, build stronger customer relationships, and launch new features and solutions that meet the specific needs of businesses. Zoho's top selling products in Qatar are Zoho One, Zoho Books, Zoho People, Zoho Creator, and Zoho Expense. Zoho recorded revenue growth of 27.5% through channel partners in 2023.

"We're thrilled to witness our company's continued growth in Qatar, a market that has consistently demonstrated a strong appetite for innovative technological solutions. The vibrant business environment and forward-thinking approach of the local ecosystem have created a fertile ground for our expansion. As Qatar continues to embrace digital transformation, we remain committed to providing cutting-edge solutions that address the evolving needs of businesses and contribute to the nation's economic prosperity," said Hyther Nizam, President Middle East and Africa (MEA).



Productivity and Collaboration trends in Qatar

The findings of the study shed light on the significant challenges and opportunities facing workplace collaboration. The study, which surveyed 3301 employees across various industries and work environments across Middle East and Africa (MEA) and 396 employees in Qatar, uncovered key trends and insights into the factors hindering effective collaboration.

Key findings:

Despite post-pandemic workplace shifting companies towards hybrid and remote work arrangements, the survey revealed that most businesses have returned to the office, with 60% of respondents working fully on-site and 32% adopting a hybrid model. Only 8% were working fully remotely.

When it comes to technology usage, respondents relied heavily on digital tools. While 51% used 1-5 apps daily, 31% used 5-10, and 18% used more than 10. The ability to track tasks in a unified view was crucial for many, with 76% of those using it reporting time savings of up to 3 hours. However, 77% of those manually tracking tasks or not tracking at all saw similar potential time savings with a unified view. Information accessibility was a challenge for many, with 25% reporting limited or no access and over 24% needing occasional assistance. Despite this, respondents expressed confidence in their companies' resilience and a desire for improved collaboration practices.

The study revealed a disparity in the perceived need for improvements in communication and collaboration tools. Only 8% of remote workers identified areas for improvement, while 32% of hybrid workers and a substantial 60% of fully on-site workers expressed a need for changes.

"Our enterprise collaboration platform, Zoho Workplace, pioneered the unified experience way back in 2017. Our vision has been validated with the survey results that have highlighted the lack of access to necessary data, challenges in tracking tasks, and difficulties in communication within the organisation. Moreover, as we build apps for various business functions and understand how they interoperate, we have created a communication layer across our offerings to foster contextual collaboration," said Nizam.



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INTERVIEW // RAQMIYAT

STREAMLINING PROCUREMENT

Mir Sarmad Khero, Director – Enterprise Business Solutions, Raqmiyat LLC tells Anita Joseph all about the dynamics of public procurement

ow has digital procurement transformed procurement processes in the public sector, and what are some notable benefits that have emerged from

its implementation? Public sector procurement differs significantly from that of private organizations due to the involvement of multiple stakeholders and various stages in the process. Public entities must adhere to federal procurement laws and maintain transparency throughout their operations. Automating this process can enhance efficiency, reducing procurement cycle times by at least 40%, increasing visibility, and ultimately eliminating the need for paper documentation.

Can you share some examples of how companies are utilizing auctions to bring down procurement costs, and what best practices they should follow to maximize savings?

There are several strategies for utilizing auctions to optimize procurement costs. At Ragmiyat, we have assisted numerous organizations both globally and regionally in streamlining their procurement processes through auctions. Our clients utilize English, Dutch, and Japanese auctions to maximize savings. We advocate for auctions as they provide a fair opportunity for all qualified suppliers, enabling customers to secure the best market prices. It is best practice to conduct auctions with similar specifications to ensure an equitable comparison; it is essential to avoid comparing dissimilar items.

How crucial is end-to-end visibility into procurement spend for an organization, and what tools or technologies are most effective in achieving this transparency?

Achieving visibility into organizational spending is essential for effective procurement performance evaluation. Insight into spending behavior—such as identifying top suppliers, key buyers, category-specific expenditures,



and overall consolidated spending enables informed decision-making. This can be accomplished through the implementation of spend visibility tools that seamlessly integrate with any ERP system.

What steps can organizations take to transition to a paperless procurement office, and what are the key advantages of adopting such a model?

Shifting organizational mindsets is crucial, as organizations must develop trust in technology. Many have successfully transformed their procurement processes through automation, significantly reducing paper use within their departments. I have observed procurement offices evolve from resembling post offices to fully digitized operations. The primary advantage of this transformation is increased efficiency, providing immediate access to information and preventing issues such as missed contract expiry deadlines that often arose from managing physical documents.

In what ways can digital procurement solutions enhance collaboration with suppliers, and what impact does this increased collaboration have on the overall supply chain efficiency?

Digital procurement enables suppliers to connect with buyers in a more

systematic manner. By shifting all communication to a centralized system, the reliance on emails and phone calls is significantly reduced. This facilitates tracking of current and upcoming procurement opportunities for both parties, allowing suppliers to plan accordingly. As a result of this digital process, both buyers and suppliers have the same visibility into current and future needs, which minimizes the likelihood of miscommunication.

How can digital procurement contribute to sustainability goals within organizations, and what specific strategies can be implemented to ensure more sustainable procurement practices?

A sustainable supply chain is vital for competitiveness in the postpandemic era, were risks and volatility shape corporate strategies. Procurement, as a strategic asset, requires a shift from traditional mindsets to focus on "lowest total cost" instead of just "lowest purchase price." Adopting this approach enables companies to effectively manage procurement costs while fulfilling their social responsibility for sustainable development. Procurement professionals are essential in advancing organizational sustainability initiatives and promoting responsible practices. Sustainability is an ongoing journey, requiring continuous efforts for lasting impact. 📟

SPOTLIGHT // WERIDE & UBER



WERIDE AND UBER PARTNER TO BRING AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES TO THE UBER PLATFORM, BEGINNING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

eRide, a global leading autonomous driving technology company, and Uber Technologies, Inc. the world's largest mobility and delivery technology platform, has announced a strategic partnership to bring WeRide's autonomous vehicles onto the Uber platform, beginning in the United Arab Emirates.

The partnership is expected to launch first in Abu Dhabi later this year. A dedicated number of WeRide vehicles will be made available to consumers using the Uber app. After launch, when a rider requests a qualifying ride on the Uber app, they may be presented with the option to have their trip fulfilled by a WeRide autonomous vehicle. The partnership does not contemplate any launches in the United States or China.

The partnership agreement was signed by Andrew Macdonald, Senior Vice President of Mobility & Business operations of Uber, and Hua Zhong, Senior Vice President of WeRide. Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi and WeRide Founder and CEO Tony Han witnessed the signing ceremony of the agreement.

WeRide currently operates the largest robotaxi fleet in the UAE, where residents can access its robotaxi services through the TXAI app. In addition, in July 2023, WeRide was granted the UAE's first and only national license for selfdriving vehicles, enabling it to test and operate its autonomous vehicles on public roads across the entire country.

Tony Han, founder and CEO of WeRide said: "We are honored to partner with Uber to continue to bring our technology to global markets. Together, we aim to combine our collective experience and expertise to deliver much needed, affordable, sustainable and safe mobility solutions to a global audience."

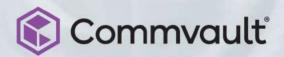
Dara Khosrowshahi, CEO of Uber said: "Uber is very excited to partner with WeRide. It's clear that the future of mobility will be increasingly shared, electric, and autonomous, and we look forward to working with leading AV companies like WeRide to help bring the benefits of autonomous technology to cities around the world."



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WORKPLACE MORALE HIGHER Among Manufacturing Leaders VS. Workers: Epicor



ccording to Epicor's new "Future of Work in Manufacturing" report, a significant gap exists between how manufacturing managers and frontline workers perceive workplace morale. In 2024, 57% of managers rated their morale as high compared to only 45% of workers, highlighting a potential disconnect in understanding and addressing employee engagement.

Bridging this morale gap to ensure alignment between managers and workers is especially critical given the projected 3.8 million manufacturing employee workforce shortage, and the need for leaders to address current challenges and prepare for future demands.

Separately, the report found there is a disconnect in upskilling efforts, with 91% of managers but only 70% of workers recognizing it as a priority, highlighting the need for enhanced communication and implementation.

Epicor surveyed more than 1,400 manufacturing leaders and 1,200 manufacturing workers worldwide to uncover critical trends and strategies that will shape the industry's future. These findings are meant to inform and guide C-suite leaders, operations managers, manufacturing supervisors, IT leaders, and HR leaders in creating and implementing strategies to successfully scale their manufacturing operations.



Key Findings:

- Technological Gap: While 52% of managers considered their workplace very modern in 2024, only 39% of workers agreed, suggesting a mismatch in perceptions of technological advancement.
- Sustainability Priorities: Only about half of the companies prioritize sustainability, with 61% of managers and 45% of workers viewing it as crucial, pointing to the need for stronger, more visible sustainability initiatives.
- Supply Chain Challenges: Despite 75% of managers recognizing the critical importance of

supply chain resilience and sustainability, issues like cost, regulatory hurdles, and technological shortcomings remain obstacles.

- Automation's Impact: A growing awareness of automation's role shows 73% of managers and 53% of workers expect job changes due to automation, with decreasing immediate concerns among workers.
- Turnover Trends: Workerreported turnover dropped by 6% in 2024, while manager-reported turnover rose by 25%, reflecting varying experiences and viewpoints on workforce stability.

Strategic Insights for Leadership The "Future of Work in

THE REPORT FOUND THERE IS A DISCONNECT IN UPSKILLING EFFORTS, WITH 91% OF MANAGERS BUT ONLY 70% OF WORKERS RECOGNIZING IT AS A PRIORITY. Manufacturing" report offers strategic recommendations for manufacturing leaders, emphasizing the importance of:

- Enhancing employee engagement and morale through better communication and recognition programs.
- Accelerating technological modernization to remain competitive in a rapidly changing industry.
- Implementing robust upskilling programs to prepare workers for the future of manufacturing.
- Prioritizing sustainability to meet growing ESG requirements.

"Manufacturers are navigating an era of significant change and challenge," said Kerrie Jordan, Group Vice President of Product Management at Epicor. "Our latest report provides actionable insights that can help organizations align their people, processes, and technology to fine-tune their operations. By gathering and analyzing perspectives from both workers and leaders across the globe, we've gained robust insights that guide us in crafting strategies to enhance operational efficiency and embrace future opportunities."

EMPOWERING THE PARTNER ECOSYSTEM

Anita Joseph caught up with **Gerard Allison**, SVP, Sales EMEA & **Jason Ellis**, VP Channel Sales EMEA, Sophos to learn more about their MDR services, partner program and the MSP Perspectives 2024 Survey Report.



an you elaborate on the new partner features or initiatives that have been launched recently and their

impact?

Gerrard: We introduced a new support system about four or five months ago, which has been very well received. This system has significantly

improved response times, allowing our partners to quickly address their customers' needs and enhance their overall service. We've been working diligently to encourage as many partners as possible to adopt this system, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. My team has been quite busy promoting and supporting this new initiative, and we're very pleased with the results so far.

Can you share some insights from Sophos' MSP Perspectives 2024 Survey Report?

Jason: As Gerrard mentioned, our MSP program has been highly successful. We've had a robust MSP platform for about nine years, and it supports around 3,500 MSPs across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. These MSPs offer a diverse range of solutions built on our technology, including pay-asyou-go services and enhanced MDR (Managed Detection and Response) offerings. This enables them to provide 24/7 managed services, freeing them up to focus on other IT needs while we handle security tasks like threat hunting and analysis. We notify MSPs of any incidents requiring their attention, ensuring a seamless integration of our services.

Could you highlight some of the key reasons partners choose to work with Sophos?

Gerrard: Many MSPs and valueadded resellers face difficulties in keeping up with the myriad of cybersecurity products available and maintaining the required level of expertise. By leveraging our MDR service, MSPs can offload some of their security responsibilities to us, allowing them to focus on other aspects of their IT services. Our MDR service provides comprehensive monitoring and incident response, which is crucial given the global shortage of cybersecurity professionals.

Can you tell us about the findings from the Sophos Cyber Insurance Report and what it reveals about the current state of cyber insurance?

Gerrad: The Sophos Cyber Insurance Report highlights that cyber insurance is becoming increasingly prevalent among both large enterprises and SMEs. However, the cost of cyber insurance can be quite high, and many organizations struggle with budgeting for it. Our MDR service helps companies improve their cybersecurity posture, which in turn can lead to better insurance policies and discounts. The report indicates that 76% of companies with MDR services have seen improvements in their insurance positions, emphasizing the value of demonstrating robust, 24/7 monitoring to insurers.

Given the evolving cybersecurity landscape, how do you see the business roadmap for this region?

Gerrard: Over the past two years, I've observed significant development in this region. Customers increasingly rely on analysts like Gartner to guide their security product choices. However, the challenge remains in managing and monitoring these products effectively due to a shortage of skilled personnel. The introduction of MDR services has been a gamechanger, providing a solution that addresses these challenges. Our local team and partners are well-positioned to enhance customer security by leveraging our advanced threat detection and response capabilities.



The frequency and complexity of threats are increasing, and our ongoing efforts are crucial in helping partners deliver superior security solutions.

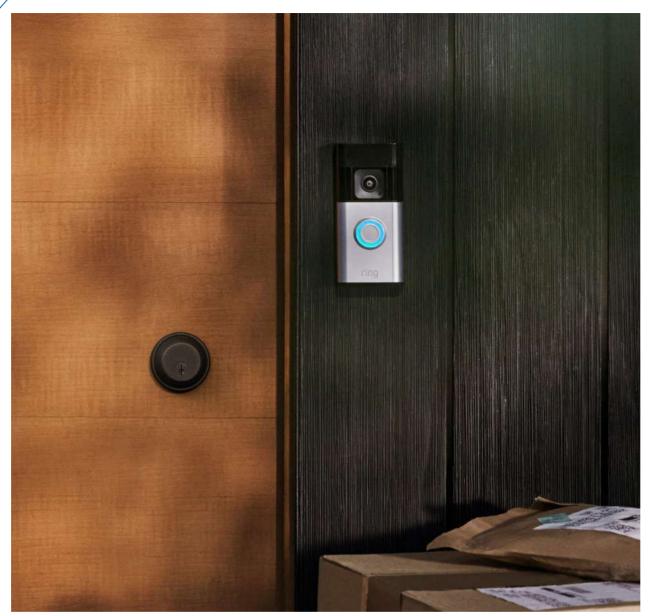
How is Sophos empowering its partner ecosystem to handle evolving cyber threats?

Jason: We offer extensive training to our partners and are currently in the midst of a major roadshow series, reaching out to around 2,500 partners. This initiative focuses on market trends and shifting business models towards service-oriented approaches. We emphasize the

WE ARE COMMITTED TO EXPANDING OUR NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIPS AND KEEPING OUR PARTNERS INFORMED ABOUT NEW DEVELOPMENTS. importance of integrating our serviceled solutions, like MDR, into their offerings. Partners are receiving training on how to utilize MDR effectively, whether they have a SOC or not. This support helps them better manage and secure their customers' environments.

What are some of Sophos' key partner initiatives this year?

Gerrad: We've launched several key initiatives this year, including partnerships with Tenable and Veeam. These collaborations enhance our ability to provide comprehensive solutions across various service areas without requiring partners to invest in new products. We are committed to expanding our network of relationships and keeping our partners informed about new developments. These efforts are crucial in helping our partners manage their customers' networks effectively and stay ahead of emerging security threats.



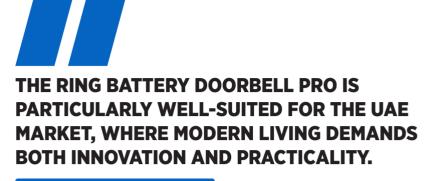
RING BATTERY DOORBELL PRO: ADVANCED PROTECTION, CLEAR PERSPECTIVE

he Ring Battery Doorbell Pro is a cutting-edge smart doorbell designed to enhance your home security and communication capabilities. By leveraging Wi-Fi, it enables you to monitor your property and interact with visitors via your phone or desktop. This model introduces several key features, including the Bird's Eve View for an aerial overview of your surroundings, pre-roll footage, and dual-band Wi-Fi support, all of which contribute to its robust functionality. The Ring Battery Doorbell Pro enhances the concept of smart living by integrating advanced technology and automation features that seamlessly fit into a modern, connected lifestyle.

Benefits for the UAE Market

The Ring Battery Doorbell Pro is particularly well-suited for the UAE market, where modern living demands both innovation and practicality. Its advanced technology aligns with regional preferences and needs, offering several advantages:

- **High-Definition Video:** Equipped with a 1536p camera, the doorbell provides clear, fulllength video footage with color night vision, ensuring you capture every detail around your home.
- Customizable Alerts: The doorbell excels in motion detection, notifying you of movement or package deliveries even if the doorbell itself isn't activated. This feature enhances security and convenience by



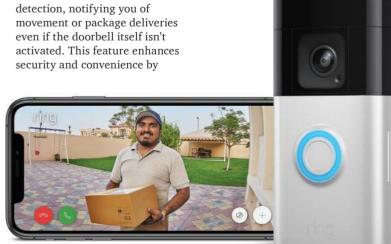
allowing remote communication with visitors.

Advanced Features: The Bird's Eye View overlay tracks detected motion and provides an aerial perspective of activity, while the pre-roll footage feature gives you context by showing events leading up to an alert.

Features and Installation

The Ring Battery Doorbell Pro is a sleek, lightweight device (weighing only 240g) that includes several key features.

- **Audio+:** Enhanced microphones and speakers ensure clear, twoway communication.
- Low-Light Sight: Advanced imaging sensors improve visibility in low light, reducing glare and



compensating for reflections through glass.

Installation is user-friendly, thanks to the included angled mounting bracket and extra screws. The device comes with a Quick Release Battery Pack, USB charging cable, and installation tools, making setup straightforward. After mounting the doorbell, simply download the Ring app, create an account, and add your device using the pairing code found on the box, manual, and the device itself.

The app allows you to view live feeds, engage in two-way audio, and configure motion and privacy zones. The HDR and color night vision features are turned off by default to preserve battery life but can be adjusted as needed. The full-view capability ensures comprehensive monitoring of your entryway and surroundings.

Subscription and Integration

To fully unlock the Ring Battery Pro's capabilities, a Ring Protect subscription is required. For those with a Ring Protect plan, the subscription cost is minimal. The doorbell integrates seamlessly with other Ring devices and Alexa, and can also connect with thirdparty systems like Homebridge for a unified smart home experience.

In conclusion, the Ring Battery Doorbell Pro offers reliable performance, ease of installation, and flexible use. It provides an excellent balance of advanced features and user-friendly operation. If you value performance and convenience in your home security system, the Ring Battery Pro is a compelling choice. 📟

M&A // BIDZI

BIDZI LAUNCHES IN UAE, REVOLUTIONIZING M&A MARKET FOR SMES

31021

s the UAE's small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector experiences unprecedented expansion, Bidzi, an all-in-one M&A solution, has unveiled its innovative platform designed to streamline the mergers and acquisitions (M&A) process for this vital segment of the economy. Bidzi offers a comprehensive solution that simplifies and secures the transaction process, addressing significant gaps in traditional M&A services. With the UAE's SME sector expected to reach 1 million SMEs by 2030, Bidzi's entry into the market is pivotal.

Bidzi is set to transform the M&A landscape with its platform that integrates a full suite of services into a single, user-friendly interface. The platform provides end-to-end solutions, including business valuations, marketing, buyer matching, due diligence, legal support and secure closings facilitated through trusted escrow services. By consolidating these services, Bidzi addresses common challenges in the M&A process such as high costs and fragmented service models, offering SMEs a streamlined and cost-effective alternative.

"Our mission is to make the M&A process accessible and efficient for SMEs, which are crucial to the UAE's economic vitality," said Akshay Dosaj, Co-Founder and CEO, Bidzi. "Bidzi's platform removes the complexities and barriers traditionally associated with M&A transactions, providing a transparent, secure, and seamless experience that empowers businesses to make informed decisions."

Bidzi's platform features a userfriendly design that simplifies the transaction process, ensuring a smooth experience from start to finish. With enhanced security measures, including anonymous



Bidzi's launch is expected to significantly impact the UAE's M&A market, particularly for SMEs. By aligning with national economic goals and addressing the specific needs of this growing sector, Bidzi is well-positioned to support the UAE's vision for a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem.

"Bidzi is committed to driving the next wave of business growth and investment in the UAE," added Asif Rashid, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer at Bidzi. "Our platform not only supports the SME sector but also aligns with the UAE's strategic economic objectives, paving the way for a more efficient and inclusive M&A environment."

Bidzi's entry into the UAE market represents a major advancement in the M&A sector, offering a streamlined, secure, and user-centric solution for SMEs. As the UAE continues to grow and diversify its economy, Bidzi stands poised to play a key role in facilitating successful business transactions and supporting the country's ambitious economic goals.

WHAT'S THE BEST CYBERSECURITY EVENT? \downarrow \bigcirc



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