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Special Focus

Meet the rising stars
who are redefining the
channel business

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Nutanix's new architectural design
that pairs web-scale engineering
with consumer-grade design is
finding huge adoption among
Indian enterprises



Amarish Karnik
Director – General Business
& Partners, Nutanix

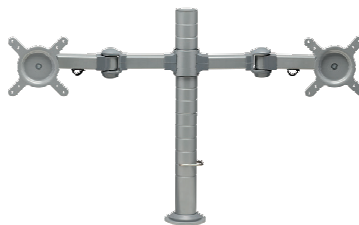
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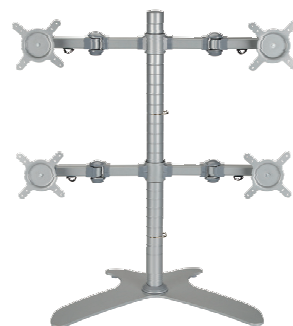
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NEWS STARS SHINE BRIGHTER IN INDIAN CHANNEL GALAXY



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The Indian IT channel ecosystem has seen a sudden influx / rise of emerging players who are taking the industry by storm. In a short span of time, not only have these new age solution partners created a niche for themselves, but are also giving a tough competition to the established players.

While the traditional partners are also transforming with the changing times, the value that these new kids on the block bring, has totally changed the market dynamics. They are the ones who have been in the forefront of latching on opportunities being brought upon by digital technologies. The ease with which these 'born in the cloud' partners address the burgeoning market requirements or the way in which they have build competencies as well as capabilities around the digital technologies, is really commendable.

Their body of work speaks it all. For instance, Mumbai-based BlazeClan Technologies has gained expertise in the areas of multi-cloud, advanced analytics including Data Lake, AI, ML, and Mobility and as a

proof of its success, the company is today serving clients like Aditya Birla Finance, Bajaj Finserv, and Viacom 18, among others.

Similarly, Bengaluru-based data analytics firm, Fragma Data Systems is a cloud first enterprise AI and Big Data solutions provider for companies across all the major industries, helping them to transform their data into insights. Today, it has 22 large enterprise clients from the BFSI, e-commerce, manufacturing and retail sectors across India, the Middle East and Europe.

The same analogy holds true for Chennai-based TheDataTeam as well. One of the strongest partners of Microsoft in the areas of IoT and AI, this solution partner is enabling its customers to achieve digital transformation through innovative solutions built using Robotic Data Science (RDS), a methodology pioneered by TheDataTeam.

Looking at the compelling stories of these new age partners, no wonder industry pundits or to that extent, even OEMs are putting their money on this new 'breed of partners'.

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NUTANIX BETS BIG ON HCI TO CARVE ITS OWN NICHE

Nutanix's new architectural design that pairs web-scale engineering with consumer-grade design is finding huge adoption among Indian enterprises

■ Mohit Rathod

Amarish Karnik,
Director – General Business
& Partners, Nutanix

Amidst the widespread adoption of emerging technologies by Indian enterprises, with data centres being central to digital transformation journeys, HyperConverged Infrastructure (HCI) has placed itself as one of the key components of the overall IT infrastructure story. HCI is rapidly becoming the new normal for modern data centres. While it is being marginally preferred for perimeter workloads, which are non-core for the business, it is also being used extensively where organisations have high scale-out requirements. With scalability and simplicity as the key parameters for customers in India, HCI appliances have placed themselves as a perfect fit among businesses. HCI has been gaining traction to address both, optimisation demands and removing infrastructure management complexities.

According to a recent report by MarketsandMarkets, global hyper-converged infrastructure market is expected to reach US\$ 12,607.4 million by 2022, at a CAGR of 43.59 per cent by 2022. The report also underlined that Asia-Pacific is estimated to be the fastest-growing region in the global HCI market during the forecast period. Significant growth rate of the APAC region primarily owes to the growing demand for virtual environment-based applications, including virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) and server virtualisation, and strengthening software controlled unified system deploying the tasks of server, storage, networking, and virtualisation services.

According to the report, one of the major players in the global HCI market include Nutanix, which primarily specialises in HCI offerings. Providing an overview of Nutanix's presence in this space, Amarish Karnik, Director – General Business & Partners, Nutanix, shares, "The term HyperConverged Infrastructure (HCI), itself is coined by Nutanix. When Nutanix started shipping HCI equipment, primarily to the US markets, there was lack of response from the market. However,

now the same giants are acknowledging HCI as a category and its validity – we have changed the market dynamics and the game with our market leadership in HCI."

According to another report from International Data Corporation (IDC), global converged systems market revenue has reported a surge of 19.6 per cent year-on-year to US\$ 3.2 billion during Q1 2018.

Emergence of HCI

Numerous complexities have been existing in data centres for the last two decades, with negligible development in terms of storage and servers.

"The only new piece we have witnessed in the last 20-25 years is that of virtualisation. However, even with the introduction of the virtualisation layer, the architecture hasn't changed," informs Karnik.

Sharing another interesting observation, Karnik says that customers are not concerned about the brand of hardware or hypervisor; the delivered SLAs and timelines matter the most to customers. Nutanix has pushed the same thought process in the market for data centres well. He says, "We integrated everything, which thereby formed HCI. We also changed the game from a hardware standpoint. For instance, running an entire data centre on a simple node cluster, instead of multiple racks. Customers have started using our solutions more effectively – more than we had thought of. Nutanix did compression of servers and storage, with an option of virtualisation given to customers. Following that, we made virtualisation invisible, like in the case of a public cloud."

Consumer trends

There are various applications of Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in public cloud services. Nutanix has focused on providing the experience of a public cloud, but on-premise. "Any workload which is elastic in nature, should be ideally put on public cloud. Whereas,

ATUL GOSAR, DIRECTOR, NETWORK TECHLAB

“ HCI helps in addressing compute / memory / disk space and network resource optimisation

with simplicity and super scale out architecture. It has multi-fold advantages to solve customer business complexity and also ease running and moving workload from on-premise to cloud and vice versa. We have seen HCI is the right fit and increasing as use cases are tested and made workable. It is our passion to learn new technology to stay ahead of curve and design solutions which help customer to achieve outcomes in a more effective manner. We have invested in training our team on HCI and sharpen its skills in understanding cloud adoption. e-Learning and classroom hand-on trainings have helped the team to be confident and deliver excellence. We are pleased and honoured to work with Nutanix. Its channel program has helped us to gear up fast, and design solution with a consultative approach. Values of Hungry, Humble and Honest have helped to build trust and win together. Initial heavy lifting and continued training and mentoring to build confidence in our team members has helped to build and grow the business. Addition of new solutions by innovation and acquisition by Nutanix is something that makes the team alive for continuous learning and help customers in solving their business complexity and make them more relevant in digital edge."

'HCI AN INTEGRAL PART AND AN EXTENSION OF THE VIRTUALISATION AND CLOUD WAVE'

NewWave Computing has marked significant success in evangelising the idea of HCI in the minds of many CIOs in Southern India, who are looking at data centre modernisation. **Vasudevan Subramaniam**, Managing Director, NewWave Computing, shares more insights

Is the opportunity in HCI as huge as cloud or virtualisation wave?

The opportunity is largely driven by the need for organisations looking to modernise their IT infrastructure to support their fast transforming business environment. Businesses want technology to assist in their business model transformation initiatives, digitalisation initiatives and various other innovations that are key for them to remain competitive and continue to capture markets. This means that there is need for an IT Infrastructure that is easy to deploy, manage, integrate, scale, upgrade, and allows for lower operational costs and footprint, and most importantly delivers superior performance with outstanding IOPS and low latency and agility requirements.

Clearly, the three-tier infrastructure data centres that have been serving this need all this time, will not be capable of meeting the current demands of these modern needs of business. Therefore, HCI as a strategy is all about making infrastructure invisible. HCI is an integral part and an extension of the virtualisation and cloud wave that we are experiencing today.

How much success have you seen in HCI?

We have had significant success in evangelising the idea of HCI in the minds of many CIOs in Southern India, who are looking at data centre modernisation. We have had many successes in building a business case's RoI for organisations to consider HCI. We have had many successes in demonstrating the technology for specific use cases through PoCs that have shown the customer the value this technology can bring to their organisation. Lastly, we have had many significant deployments across industry

verticals which have adopted HCI for building modern data centre infrastructure.

What skill trainings have you undertaken to reap the advantage of HCI?

Skills begin with our organisation's ability to develop strong consultative mindset and competencies within our sales and pre-sales teams to help our customers.

- ▶ Identify unrecognised problems within their infrastructure
- ▶ Provide unanticipated solutions to address challenges
- ▶ Explore unseen opportunities for our clients.

Besides, we have developed deep certified sales, pre-sales and technical competencies to help our customers design, build, operate and manage an HCI infrastructure.

How is Nutanix's channel program helping your growth and creating new revenue opportunities?

Any channel program will succeed only when the OEM is strong in engaging, enabling and exciting channel partners. Nutanix has done an exceptional job in making this the core value by seeding it in every employee within the organisation. We truly identify ourselves, in many ways, as an extension to Nutanix's team. This credit must go to their leadership team for instilling this culture within their organisation.

However, like every OEM, Nutanix also has strong deal registration systems in place to protect partners in opportunities. The partner portal allows us to manage all sales and marketing related information and programs – a strong rebate program designed to reward partners and partner representatives for performance and milestones. Without the right marketing team and strategy in place, it can be very difficult to be fast and first to reach to customers. Nutanix team has demonstrated exceptional support by structuring strong online and offline marketing programs to support partners to leverage and drive pipeline and build brand identity and loyalty. Lastly, the skills development initiatives taken by Nutanix to ramp up certified and validated capabilities across sales, pre-sales and post sales, have been par excellent. All of the above initiatives have certainly been key to our growth and focus in this business.



things such as ERP and email servers should be on-premise. Customers have also started realising this. We have observed that many organisations get attracted to public cloud, because of OpEx; however, every service on public cloud comes at a cost. Upon this realisation, they come back to Nutanix. Polycab, for example, decided to work with us not just for their data centres, but also their warehouses – called Edge Computing,” he comments.

The company has marked significant adoptions by customers. Over 50 per cent of Nutanix's customers have moved to virtualisation for the first time. Customers who have been using standalone servers and storage are moving to HCI with Nutanix as an integrated solutions provider.

A large part of Nutanix's customers saw HCI as a new technology when it was first introduced to them; they

weren't well-versed with it. However, within no time, customers realised the significance of HCI. Some of Nutanix's biggest customers have also set the tone for HCI as a technology that needs to be increasingly adopted in the future. “We have marked two types of customers who have adopted HCI. These include those organisations which are early adopters of every technology; and those organisations which don't possess large IT teams. It is all about customer experience. Following our first deal, the same customer referred HCI to many other organisations. Customers appreciate the agility, when time-to-market is reduced significantly with HCI,” informs Karnik.

Innovations

Nutanix started as an HyperConverged Infrastructure solutions provider, and focused on providing a seamless experience to

customers in a multi-cloud environment, allowing them to move workloads from on-premise to cloud and vice versa. The company's innovation has helped customers to take the HCI approach as a building block in their journey towards a multi-cloud environment.

Recently, Gartner has placed Nutanix as a Leader in the 2018 Gartner Magic Quadrant for HyperConverged Infrastructure.

Partner focus

Amidst widespread adoption by customers, partners have also realised that HCI can be a huge revenue opportunity for their businesses. Not being confined to selling products, partners can also earn by building services around those products; for instance, migration of workloads. However, partners can further enhance the business through application-led



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INDIA'S ESSAR GROUP MINIMISES MANAGEMENT COSTS BY 93%

As early adopters of cloud and virtualisation technologies, Essar has now reached a virtualisation footprint of nearly 70 per cent, with a total server count of more than 800. Essar's IT organisation was having difficulty managing, efficiently scaling, and provisioning resources in its isolated three-tier infrastructure – while also ensuring security and maintaining compliance. The legacy environment consisted of 30 aging, physical servers with built-in HDD, but no redundancy or easy scalability. The infrastructure was being used to support Essar's DMZ landscape, including its critical internet-facing enterprise website, mobility, e-banking, e-bidding, and retail applications.

"We faced all of the native challenges of poor performance that come with 3-tier infrastructures. Ongoing management was a costly affair, along with the necessary investments in rackspace, power, and cooling for all of the separate components. We want IT to be seen as a business enabler for our company, and hence it was important for us to not only optimise and improve system performance, but to do all of that while decreasing overhead," says Gaurang Doshi, Head – IT Infrastructure and End User Systems at Essar Group.

Solution

Essar enlisted the help of Creative Infotech, a Mumbai-based IT technology partner, for the infrastructure upgrade. Creative Infotech recommended

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud OS Software with AHV hypervisor to Essar's IT team. "Given Nutanix's maturity and leadership in the hyperconverged and enterprise cloud space, it became the natural choice for our upgrade," says Doshi.

Essar purchased its first three-node Acropolis cluster, with SSD and built-in data management and protection capabilities, earlier this year. Essar's IT team has already migrated 27 of its physical servers to Nutanix Enterprise Cloud. All of the Nutanix systems were deployed in less than 60 minutes. They are now using Nutanix Prism to manage the hyperconverged environment. By moving to Nutanix, Essar has lowered its ongoing maintenance overhead by 93 per cent.

By moving to Nutanix Acropolis and AHV, system downtime due to hardware failures in the three-tier environment has been mitigated. Essar has obtained significant performance improvements across all its business-critical workloads, enabling the company to increase business efficiency and end-user productivity by 94 per cent. Essar Group was also able to obtain significant savings in rack space, power, and cooling by converging all applications from 32u in the three-tier environment to just 2u rack servers with Nutanix.

Essar is now looking at using the Nutanix platform for its Citrix VDI deployments and moving additional tier-1 applications over to Nutanix Enterprise Cloud OS Software with AHV hypervisor.

discussions with customers. Nutanix has been helping partners to initiate application-centric talks with customers.

Nutanix is now moving to a subscription model. For instance, Nutanix's acquisition of Mainframe2, Inc validates this, offering Desktop-as-a-Service (DaaS).

Karnik says, "Partners play the most important role for Nutanix, in India and globally. Our partner ecosystem is geared up for the foundation, deployment and building of services around HCI. The next challenge for us is to develop the DevOps, automation and subscription practices for them. We are addressing this through more expansion and engagements."

Recently, Nutanix has announced the launch of its new channel charter, Power to the Partner. The charter stands out from traditional channel

programs by providing a unique emphasis on partner investments in Nutanix rather than solely on revenue targets. Further, the charter focuses on empowering Nutanix partners with the tools they need to support their customers in adopting next-generation data centre technologies. As a result, partners will gain further avenues to grow their businesses with Nutanix and will be enabled to achieve ongoing, predictable success.

The new channel charter is all about educating partners on the complete Nutanix story; it's about the overall stack, not just standalone solutions.

"We have two categories of customers: enterprise, commercial and mid-market, and SMB. The enterprise segment is largely led by Nutanix; whereas, the commercial, mid-market and SMB space is entirely driven by our partners. Our customers'

success defines our partners' success.

As customers put more and more workloads on Nutanix platform, it becomes easier for them to expand later. Under our program, we drive two things – partner advocacy and customer success," he says.

Initially, Nutanix focused on making the infrastructure invisible, hence required partners from the infrastructure space. This was followed by the focus to make the data centre invisible; this is where partners in the DevOps space play an important role. Whereas, the third set of partners – born-in-the-cloud – helps Nutanix in making cloud invisible.

"Each and every partner has to build a different practice. For example, making infrastructure invisible requires different skill sets. Partners need to reskill themselves, create separate business units in their company, and up the game. Today,

separate teams of partners sell infrastructure and cloud. For measuring success of our partners, their bottomline is crucial. Value is equally important for partners. For instance, when partners sell Nutanix solutions, they open doors for many more opportunities from customers," explains Karnik.

The Nutanix Velocity program includes accelerated selling processes, incentives and marketing investments for strategic, mid-market focused channel partners. The Nutanix Velocity channel partner program offers partners more incentives and opportunities to provide the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud OS software to customers in the mid-market segment. Through this new program, Nutanix is enabling partners to demonstrate to customers in the mid-market how hyper-converged infrastructure can help provide a solution to their needs without the cost and security challenges they may face with public cloud-only models.

Alongside its network of focused partners across India, Nutanix drives some of the business – especially in Tier 2 markets – through distributorship. "Our Velocity program is completely based on distributorship, wherein distributors lead the conversations with customers with partners' help. About 8-10 per cent of our business comes from this segment. We have around 30 active partners across the country. In terms of rebates, we have been running multiple programs on front-end back-end rebates," he says.

Accelerating growth

Multi-workload provides stickiness to partners. Whereas, multi-products will provide more pipeline to partners. "We have built multiple products, but HCI remains our bread and butter; and we are committed to do excellent work in this space. We will expand our team, along with our channel ecosystem. Recently, we have been identifying and generating business from areas where we weren't present before – we are also focused on building that, and are encouraging our partners to tap these opportunities," adds Karnik.

POLY CAB WIRES MARKS 70% INCREASE IN APPLICATION PERFORMANCE

Polycab Wires was finding plans for future growth hindered by the limitations of its existing IT infrastructure. Comprising a mix of Cisco UCS servers and NetApp storage, lack of performance and scalability were real concerns along with management and support issues inherent to the three-tier data centre infrastructure approach. CIO of Polycab Wires, Udit Pahwa was keen to upgrade the existing hardware to virtualise and consolidate workloads but, at the same time, realised a whole new approach was required to underpin the planned digital transformation of Polycab's data centre. In addition to a more scalable and easy to manage platform for existing applications, the company wanted to start building the foundation of an enterprise cloud to, ultimately, deliver scalable on-demand IT services to users across the business.

Solution

The Polycab team decided that HCI would best meet both its immediate and longer term requirements and started to evaluate products from leading vendors. Nutanix quickly rose to the top of the list due to the completeness of its Enterprise Cloud Platform. In particular the team was impressed by the Nutanix AHV, enabling virtual machines to be deployed and managed from the same Prism management console as physical compute and storage resources.

"The fact that the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform came with its own hypervisor was a real plus. Having Nutanix AHV integrated as part of the platform allows us to manage all of our physical and virtual resources together as well as saving money which would otherwise have gone on hypervisor licensing," explains Pahwa.

Initial installation took just four hours, following which Pahwa and his team were able to virtualise five physical hosts running critical SQL Server databases and associated applications, consolidating them together on the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform with minimal disruption. All of the business critical applications using these servers were also migrated to the Nutanix platform as part of the process including Cable Builder, a key business tool used to produce custom 2D/3D cable designs to customer specifications.

Post migration, Polycab has halved its SQL Server licensing overhead and experienced an immediate 70 per cent boost in database performance. This greater efficiency is particularly evident when running the Cable Builder application which now completes the design process in under three minutes compared to over 15 minutes using the legacy infrastructure, significantly enhancing engineering productivity.

By consolidating five servers and associated NetApp storage arrays the company has also saved considerably on datacenter space. This has led to a reduction in power and cooling, slashing the use and associated cost of these resources by an estimated 60 per cent. Beyond these performance and resource saving benefits, the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform has also driven greater efficiency amongst the internal IT team, empowering staff to focus on the applications that power the business rather than time-consuming maintenance and management. The time required to manage the IT infrastructure has been slashed by a massive 98 per cent. Polycab has already seen a 45 per cent return on its investment in the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform.

MEET THE RISING STARS WHO ARE REDEFINING THE CHANNEL BUSINESS

■ By Nivedan Prakash, Sandhya Michu and Rachana Jha



As Gartner predicts, “When it comes to cloud computing, CEOs are speaking with their wallets. This represents the ‘cloud gold rush’, and this period of rapid expansion will be followed by a massive consolidation period after 2020 until 2023.”

With more and more customer services going digital for organisations like banks, retail, automobile companies, the role of channel partners gets more crucial as the major focus of these companies is on enhancing the customer experience and not the technology. Today, the majority of the channel partners are so focused on technology that they leave aside customer experience. With apps, mobility, and bots driving the business, innovations will drive the wheel of fortune.

New age partners or the so called “Born in the Cloud” partners are not only redefining the rules of the game, but are bringing a disruption in the business of traditional set of large

companies and are also changing the IT needs. Today, most of the CIOs’ problem statement is not around technologies like IoT or VDI, they are looking for solutions where they can monetise the data points that they generate every single year.

One of the recent research studies presented a fact that 300 channel partners in India are having a one-man show, one product and making one million dollars every year. A whopping 300 million dollars are being made by these new age partners and it can be seen as a missed opportunity for the traditional channel partners. Channel partners must hence should start building new capabilities around AI and ML, and understand new age business metrics like MDM and MVP. In this special edition, CRN has made an effort to highlight an emerging new breed of partners who have been doing fantastic work around new technologies and carving their own niche.

Enabling global enterprises to become intuitively digital

With cloud computing being considered as the mainstream technology for majority of organisations, new opportunities have emerged for cloud service providers like BlazeClan. Mumbai based BlazeClan, an AWS Premier Cloud consulting partner and Microsoft Gold partner, is focused on enabling global enterprises to become intuitively digital by leveraging the power of cloud as part of a foundation to derive new insights, redefine their business and build new models for creating richer, more meaningful customer experiences.

Digital transformation

BlazeClan's expertise in multi-cloud, advanced analytics including data lake, AI, machine learning and mobility, helps enterprises achieve agility, automation and enhanced user experience, as well as ensures large enterprises to embrace the digital transformation journey with greater ease.

"Infrastructure has become only a small part of our overall service offerings. With organisations graduating in their cloud journey, CSPs like us provide value-added services to customers. By offering these expanded services, we are able to drive additional consumption, increase revenue and serve as trusted advisors," informs Deepak Kagliwal, Director and Head, Sales & Marketing, BlazeClan Technologies.

BlazeClan feels migration and consultation services are growth opportunities, while serving some of the largest conglomerates in niche cloud verticals like BFSI where compliance expertise is required to meet the industry specific regulations.

"Our AWS Financial competency, and ISO certifications underline our dedicated focus on this sector. With expertise in both AWS and Microsoft Azure, we offer a robust end-to-end



Deepak Kagliwal,
Director & Head, Sales & Marketing,
BlazeClan Technologies

TOP PROJECTS

► ABFL Direct platform was always envisioned to be a customer-centric platform that automates all critical and time consuming steps in the process to reduce TAT (turn-around time) for loan applications while reaching out to a new un-served customer segment. BlazeClan has been providing 24/7/365 proactive DevOps based managed services, monitoring of applications, and support for AWS services, resulting in making the platform highly available to its customers with zero down time. ABFL Direct is now amongst the youngest, fastest to scale and top five fintechs in India.

► A leading content and consumer group in Malaysia and Southeast Asia required a unified single customer view to analyse heterogeneous nature of data coming from more than 150 data sources and personalise future customer interactions. BlazeClan implemented its AWS Data Lake in a Box solution to achieve this business objective.

portfolio of cloud services, network, connectivity, security and managing best of both the clouds," he highlights.

BlazeClan tops up its enterprise clout with big name use cases. Some of the enterprise customers include the likes of Aditya Birla Finance, Bajaj Finserv Direct, MediaCorp, Dominos Malaysia, Mondelez International, Viacom 18, etc.

The company earns around 25-30 per cent profitability. As new technologies emerge, BlazeClan is investing in upskilling and has designed programmes to help employees keep pace with changes. Cloud native, automation, AI and related technologies are the way forward and must be embraced by employees, irrespective of their role or job level.

"We are looking into the future and identifying strategies to come up with a structured plan for the skills needed in the years ahead. From there we can fill the gaps with reskilling, upskilling, recruiting and retaining key talent," Kagliwal says, adding, "With over 120 certified cloud expert professionals, we ensure customers are provided with optimum level of support and service from our end."

Future road map

Moving forward, BlazeClan is focused on accelerating secure enterprise cloud adoption across multi cloud environments and strengthening its ability to manage, monitor and operate traditional applications as well as emerging workloads in advanced analytics. Moving and managing data and applications across environments requires careful orchestration through a unified cloud platform. With cloud adoption continuing to rise, BlazeClan is committed to focus on shaping the future of digital transformation with innovative solutions.

Cirrologix's end-to-end solutions help clients reduce their sales cycle

Sustainable growth is among the biggest challenges for companies. Scaling the business is a difficult task and requires considerable effort. But, when it is a company like Cirrologix, which has a clear vision and commendable effort, it's easier to create products and services of value. Established in 2012, Cirrologix Technologies is a global company working on principles of promoting cloud based technology and limiting carbon footprints by business applications. This Bengaluru based company is dedicated to environmental and sustainability issues, offering viable and scalable technology.

Tailor-made application development

Cirrologix develops software products and offers services of integration, implementation, migration, re-engineering, adoption, training and consultation. It helps companies in extracting the most of Salesforce features. Govind V Rajulu, Director, Cirrologix Technologies says, "As a company, we are in the cloud computing domain. From the first step of deciding on the licenses to the cloud completely, we provide tailor-made application development services, crafted according to the client's need. We customise Salesforce CRM application according to client requirements and help from conception to operationalising the solution. We provide an end-to-end solution and help clients to reduce their sales cycle."

Going paperless with "employAstar"

The company has its own end-to-end recruitment product, called "employAstar" that helps to automate the recruitment process



Govind V Rajulu,
Director, Cirrologix Technologies

by sorting resumes, screening them based on keywords, resume parsing, job posting and interview scheduling, timesheets, invoice module and P&L module, making the software reliable. Communicating with candidates, entering data, handling their interview process and other administrative duties like a timesheet, invoice, etc, helps reduce costs through a paperless recruitment process using the internet.

Advantage cloud environment

Rajulu states, "The cloud environment enhances an organisation's working efficiency, offering seamless collaboration and communication between employees, customers, and third parties—the cloud computing model provides all players access to data so that they can work simultaneously on projects. The cloud boosts flexibility, enabling employees to become more productive. Users can access

business data off-site and work from home, a client location, or anywhere else. This boosts both productivity and employee motivation. Cloud adoption makes it easy for businesses to scale up or down according to their operation and storage requirements. It eliminates the need to upgrade resources as these are provided by the hosting service, easing the process of scaling."

"Another crucial cloud benefit is data security. The cloud handles enterprise data securely, keeping it safely backed up and fully recoverable to ensure business continuity in the event of a disaster. Cloud computing reduces infrastructure costs considerably as it eliminates the need to purchase expensive equipment and systems, maintenance and IT upgrade, consultant fees, energy consumption costs, etc. It also reduces delays as any issues related to these services are resolved quicker. Moreover, the pay-as-you-go model is more cost-efficient. The cloud enables greater business agility as it offers a perfect platform for rapid development, distribution, deployment, and experimentation of new technologies. Enterprises enjoy immediate access to the latest innovative business strategies," Rajulu adds.

Rajulu explains that they adapt according to their client's requirement. Following the agile approach, they improvise continuously in accordance with the current standards. They believe that technology is constantly improving and will continue with time only to get better.

Key challenge

Reminding that the initial consultation process is a key to a seamless project implementation,

Rajulu points out that many times the customer's key resources change midway and new thought process is brought into the mix by a new person, which delays the implementation. "Many clients are not as much involved during consultation, but start imposing changes once the project starts," he remarks.

Rajulu mentions, "Out of experience, we try and pre-attempt some of these foreseeable problems and bring them up during the investigative stage itself and get the clients to concur on the same. Delayed involvement of the customer during implementation extends the project time and hence costs, this

becomes a sore point towards the end of the project. So we try and constantly remind of the cost overruns on an ongoing basis and keep all key people informed in writing from time to time."

Upgradation of skills

Rajulu believes that constant upgradation of skills at all levels is of utmost importance. The company constantly encourages its teams to gain as much exposure as possible to develop new and relevant skills. "Upskilling always brings additional revenue to the company and also delights the customer. We constantly have training programmes to upgrade skills and encourage

employees to take up certain programmes," he adds.

Future road map

In the last few years, the company has been able to achieve many important milestones. Being associated with over 40 new clients in a span of two years is the highlight of its growth. With new technology driven projects, on an average Cirrologix sees 40 per cent profit margins. In the future, it is moving more towards a product based company. "We feel that offering a product to resolve a business problem will enable long-term engagement with a client," states Rajulu.

Evantage completes complex and large projects with many Fortune 500 companies

Beginning its journey in 2014, today Evantage IT Consulting Services is a well-established technology enabler in the space of IT services and solutions. In a short span of time, the company has proved that it is capable of carving a niche in a highly competitive business environment. The focus areas for the company are: IT enabled services, financial services, manufacturing, media, telecom, engineering, government and the public sector.

Data storage management, data protection and virtualisation

The company has been focusing on data storage management, data protection and virtualisation for a long time. "We have substantial expertise and skills around these technology practices. In the last few years, we have completed complex and large projects with many Fortune 500 companies and other big customer organisations in these technology areas. We are also looking at hyper



Sanjiv Khushu,
CEO, Evantage IT Consulting Services
Pvt Ltd

convergence as an important growth area among the infrastructure technologies. It is already substantially adding to our revenue along with all

flash storage," says Sanjiv Khushu, CEO, Evantage IT Consulting Services. "Also, over the last two years, the company has diversified into emerging technology areas like analytics, mobility and cloud. "We expect to do a substantial investment in these areas so that in a short span of time at least half of our revenue is generated from these newer areas," adds Khushu.

Evaluation of newer technologies

The company sees opportunity in quickly adapting newer technology areas. Khushu mentions, "All of our customers are investing in cloud, analytics, mobility, etc, from either digital transformation perspective or infrastructure transformation perspective. These are the two areas we are focusing on and are helping our customers within these two growth areas. Our job is to quickly help customers evaluate newer technologies, help them deploy solutions and derive a faster RoI from digital transformation initiatives. We

see opportunity in quickly adapting newer technology areas and integration of lot of products and solutions in these emerging areas."

Certified and trained personnel

At Evantage, it is ensured that people working on a project are certified and trained. Affirms Khushu, "We ensure all the people working on a project are certified and trained by the respective OEM. We also try to give a full life cycle exposure of a project to our engineers under managerial supervision before allowing them to work on a project independently. The KRAs and goals of a project are charted out with the customer before the start of the project and the goals are well defined."

Skilled resource pool

Khushu acknowledges that acquiring new skills is a challenge. The company has to go through the entire life cycle of training the staff and giving them live exposure on projects. "As there is a shortage of skills in these areas in the market, we have no other choice but to go through this long cycle of creating skilled resources pool. The other issue is that sometimes customer

expectations from a partner are not well defined. Too much overarching creates a lot of pressure on our technical staffs to handhold the customer through all aspects of the project, even if some of it may not be a part of our KRA in that project," states Khushu. He further adds, "We also focus on up-skilling and re-skilling of our internal team. We invest substantially in this area as we believe that this gives our technical resources areas of growth, while also helping our customers to consolidate their connect with the same technical personnel across multiple areas. It helps the customer to consolidate the consulting advice given by our technical resources across a broad spectrum of technologies."

OEMs, integral to business

Khushu points out that OEMs are integral and vital parts of their business. Being a key partner along with highly skilled and certified staff on a particular OEM's products substantially helps the company achieve a good blended margin in a deal because of the consulting and services capabilities. "We are always seeking enablement from our OEMs for our technical and sales staff. We also look forward to a clear cut opportunity

registration process. Once the opportunity is locked with us, we seek complete collaboration from the relevant account manager and pre sales manager so that a concerted proposal is given to the customer in the shortest possible time. We also look forward to a quick pricing support so that we are able to respond the competitive scenario with a quick TAT on prices," he mentions.

Future road map

The company intends to hugely invest in emerging areas of mobility, cloud, hyperconvergence, all flash, data protection, analytics, IT automation, application security and cloud middleware. "We expect that in next two years more than half of our revenue will come from these areas. We will be building consulting, solutioning, integration services and skills in these newer areas," asserts Khushu, adding that in the last two-three years the growth has been unprecedented. "We have doubled our revenue year-on-year basis, only because we have aligned ourselves with emerging technology areas where the growth has been unprecedented. We expect the pace of growth to be similar in the coming few years," he concludes.

Matrix3D Infocom is early adopter of new tech to provide the best user experience

Matrix 3D helps organisations transition towards a digital future. The Mumbai based company offers real world solutions by aligning and automating processes through technology. The clientele is not just in India; the company has also worked on projects in Asia and Europe.

Digital transformation for clients

Nazmeen Ansari, CEO, Matrix3D

Infocom, says, "To infuse digital transformation in the organisation, we focus on IT infrastructure optimisation, cloud computing, cyber security and workflow automation. We utilise the cloud platform for collaboration, disaster recovery and building business automation tools quickly. Information managed as per business needs help in informed decision making and business

intelligence."

As a solution provider, Ansari thinks that Industry 4.0 opens areas where they can directly bring down the cost of technology, reduce manpower, overcome human dependence and improve efficiencies. "We have been able to drive technology and accomplish digital transformation for our clients using emerging technologies. We work with

SMBs who would like to bring down their infrastructure and facility management costs through cloud solutions and digital helpdesk. A larger risk to information management and government initiatives have kept us busy with information management, fraud detection and compliance audits. Bringing down costs of operations is a critical need and by using the Microsoft platform for workflow automation and business intelligence tools, we help our customers to get business insights. We have brought in new business opportunities for them," says Ansari.

New opportunities

While most IT companies have been focusing on offering solutions on OEM products, Matrix 3D has been able to develop functional consulting as a large part of its service offerings. "This has completely changed our equation of revenue and profitability. Our push on services and focus on best-of-the-breed platforms and solutions have been able to drive us to a new level of service delivery," mentions Ansari.

"Use of emerging technologies to bring to the market concepts of collaboration, workflow automation, cyber security with a focus on business email compromise investigation, has been able to bring in new opportunities for us. I would like to mention that not just new technologies, but also technology awareness, increasing cyber threats, and most importantly, compliance and governance put in by statutory bodies, has helped us to serve our clients to have an urgency and implement holistic solutions," she adds.

Best practices

Mentioning some of the best practices the company follows while implementing solutions around next generation technologies, Ansari states, "We have a strong and rigorous product development cycle. Our biggest differentiator is that we have functional experts in our team who



Nazmeen Ansari,
CEO, Matrix3D Infocom



WE ARE FOCUSING ON BIM AND COLLABORATION FOR OUR FAVORITE VERTICAL, ARCHITECTURE AND CONSTRUCTION (ARCON). WE WILL BE SURELY INCREASING FUNCTIONAL CONSULTING IN ALL THESE AREAS WITH ADDITIONAL DOMAIN EXPERTISE

have worked hands-on in the industry. This gives us an understanding of on-ground challenges and unbiased user inputs as they first start using the system in their day-to-day lives."

"We believe that for effective utilisation of technology, user adoption is one of the important areas. Our focus is to bring a change in users' lives and the organisation using technologies. That's why we tweak our solutions based on the business

vertical. Not all standard practices are best for all business," she explains.

Up-skilling and re-skilling

Up-skilling and re-skilling is an ongoing process at Matrix3D. The company is focused on new technologies all the time, and makes sure that the team is ready to deliver the solution before they offer them to their partners. It encourages and empowers its team to learn and understand. When required, the right skilled people are hired.

Many challenges

Handling People, remarks Ansari, is the first challenge they face while introducing new technology at a partners' place. Besides, the biggest hurdle in digital transformation is always to bring in the change of culture in the company. The company makes sure that its team works with the users on a day-to-day basis and gets involved with them on their existing projects and drive adoption.

Future road map

In the last two-three years, there has been a strong growth in cloud computing and emerging technologies. "We are always the early adopters of new technologies to provide best user experience to our clients. We have brought about digital transformation by improving the efficiencies of our clients using advanced tools for collaboration, analytics for decision making and automation to speed up the processes," asserts Ansari. In the future, NBFC and healthcare are going to be their focus for IT infrastructure and digital transformation services. "We are focusing on BIM and collaboration for our favorite vertical, Architecture and Construction (ArCon). We will be surely increasing functional consulting in all these areas with additional domain expertise," she adds, reminding that on the technology front, the focus on business intelligence and workflow automation will grow further.

Mastering the art of cloud service delivery

Established in 2016, Jaipur based RackNap has seen 100 per cent YoY growth since its commercial launch. RackNap has customers in mature cloud markets like the US, the UK, Australia, UAE and also in other emerging cloud markets like India, Indonesia, Chile, Brazil. RackNap is a cloud brokerage platform enabling billing and provisioning automation for Cloud Solution Providers (CSPs), hosters, data centres, telcos and subscription service providers. RackNap helps these service providers to increase their revenues and decrease their operational costs with automation, thereby running a profitable business.

Bouquet of cloud services

The company offers a bouquet of cloud services and support like Microsoft Azure, Office 365, Dynamics 365, AWS LightSail, IBM Cloud, Acronis Cloud Backup, etc. It also supports delivery of traditional web services like domains, web hosting, VPS, dedicated servers, SSL certificates, etc.

"Today, we see automation at the forefront of running an efficient business, and this need for automation and cloud services presents a big opportunity to us. We want to tap this essential need/opportunity to help service providers in delivery of cloud services as per their needs. IoT is fast picking pace and we have a roadmap to integrate IoT based services with RackNap, so that can automate delivery and management of those services," informs Guruprit Ahuja, CEO, RackNap.

The company started its journey with a solution for cloud service providers to help them deliver cloud services with automation for billing and provisioning, and managing their business operations from a single panel. Earlier, CSPs had manual processes for provisioning and managing billing of cloud services. "This used to consume a lot of time and



Guruprit Ahuja,
CEO, RackNap

resources and CSPs were also lagging to meet the demand in time for cloud services. After adopting RackNap, there is no need for manual processing and work of multiple personnel is done with automation. This has helped them to drastically reduce dependency on human resources, operational costs and deliver almost 10X more services in the same time," he says.

Focused strategy

Today, it is integrated with major technologies that are in high demand like Azure cloud, Office 365, Amazon Web Services (AWS), IBM Cloud, Acronis, etc. Cloud services are becoming commoditised and there are relatively mid to low margins with them. However, the company feels with the lack of skilled manpower to offer Cloud Managed Services, it sees good profitability in this business. "With RackNap being an own IP, there is potential for good profitability too. Also, we have more demand for integrating some more in-demand technologies with RackNap and that would surely help increasing the

customer base and the profitability," Ahuja adds.

From the customer's need and base, each one of them has unique needs and challenges such as resistance to change, fear that new technologies could take away their jobs, security concerns and offshoring work. In spite of these teething problems, RackNap team has worked towards alleviating their concerns by re-emphasising the fact that technology is an enabler for business change. "We had to demonstrate with evidences (such as case studies, video testimonials, etc) as to how the deployment of RackNap for others is very successful and how they can also benefit from the same," he remarks.

It is essential that customers have the confidence that they are working with a set of thorough professionals who are highly-skilled in what they are doing, points out Ahuja, adding, "Our team has a variety of certifications from Microsoft, AWS, Redhat, etc and over 40 per cent of our team is certified in these technical domains. We have internal KPIs for our teams to ensure that they do additional work/get trained in other domains too. We cross-deploy resources in other teams to ensure that they get a good sense of what goes on in other teams."

Future road map

In the future, the company has plans to integrate many more technologies into RackNap. "In our immediate road map, we are working on integrating Google cloud platform, G-suite, Dropsuite, Zabbix. This will make RackNap a very robust and more useful platform for CSPs, MSPs and other service providers. We have plans to venture into the IoT segment and we strongly believe there is huge potential for this segment, considering that the world will be a fully 'connected' place in the near future," concludes Ahuja.

New tech bring many opportunities for Silicon Netsecure

Silicon Netsecure is a Mumbai based information security services provider and partner. The company specialises in information security, storage and backup solutions, DR, virtualisation, business continuity and emailing solutions.

Main focus

Silicon Netsecure mainly focuses on data leakage prevention, encryption, SIEM, IPS, Firewalls, APT, MDM, SLB and GSLB solutions, IAM and PIM solutions, and cloud solutions. Tushar Parekh, Managing Director, Silicon Netsecure, says, "Our focus has been on networks and information security solutions. Our clients gain from this specialisation as they attempt to measure and manage information risk in an increasingly complex business and operating environment. Our customer-centric strategic business units are consulting, technical services, managed security services and implementation, and product services."

The company is committed to continuous customer-centric innovation. It develops its innovative network security and cloud solutions on the fundamental belief that customers need converged, easy to manage, and reliable solutions that provide them with the capacity and security to maximise business opportunities. "As a practice, we have started deep selling in our strategic accounts with a focus on recurring revenue product lines. Our primary focus has been on cyber security practice. With the current onset of ransomware issues, we have gained a lot from client consulting services. We have also started our own private cloud infrastructure as one of the solutions for our clients. This has helped us provide business continuity solutions to new and existing clients and also generate good recurring



Tushar Parekh,
Managing Director,
Silicon Netsecure



OUR CUSTOMER-CENTRIC STRATEGIC BUSINESS UNITS ARE CONSULTING, TECHNICAL SERVICES, MANAGED SECURITY SERVICES AND IMPLEMENTATION, PRODUCT SERVICES

revenue," shares Parekh.

New technologies bring opportunities

Today new and emerging technologies bring a lot of opportunities to the IT sector and Silicon Netsecure is not an exception. Parekh acknowledges, "As security has become the main trend in any customer scenario, these new technologies help us in getting many

opportunities for upgradation at clients' place on their security front, starting from machine learning to deep learning on AV/anti ransomware products and so on. In the web world, connecting the periphery, security is also important; especially as mobility as smarter devices are coming in the customer needs to keep investing on security and hence it's a big opportunity for a security-focused partner like us. The core focus has been on products with recurring revenue and managed services. It is a huge service opportunity and hence the profitability is very high," he remarks.

Transformation and evolution

Silicon Netsecure believes that transformation and evolution are necessities. Parekh mentions, "We feel that with the right approach and customer landscape understanding, we can yield better RoI for customers." The strategies that have helped the company are:

► **Best-of-breed solutions:** Based on the client's requirement, the company offers the best solutions suiting their needs. Silicon Netsecure focuses on the client's requirement and deployment scenario and only then the right product is suggested.

► **Architecture level discussion with customers:** The company only employs senior resources so when they interact with customers, they are able to pitch the right solution. All of the support staff gets trained and certified for all the products pitched across to clients. This helps the client to have the exact product required for their network and meet the expected RoI.

► **Application aware sales:** Silicon Netsecure understands customer application deployment scenarios best. How customers want to deploy their applications and yield RoI on maintaining their application

ecosystem securely is what it does the best.

► **Demand generation engine:** The company has its own demand generation engine which generates new leads within existing clients and new clients.

► **Internal processes and enablement:** It has implemented CRM for last seven years, which helps in tracking sales and support staff's activities and also customer support tracking. This helps in calculating the RoI of each resource and clients support cost as well.

► **Proactive support:** The customer

support is proactive rather than reactive. This boosts the client's confidence and helps the support renewals as fixed recurring revenue.

The biggest challenge

Parekh points out that the biggest common challenge is budget from the customer and the roadblock is that it is driven from the top. "If we do not have connection there, then we miss the opportunity. So the sales shift has to be done from CIO to CXO level for businesses," he remarks. The company has also heavily invested in up-skilling, especially on pre-sales

and thereon commercially to retain those skills. So, the whole team including sales, pre sales, and post sales have to be well trained in technologies, the business challenges and entrepreneurship.

Future roadmap

In the last two-three years, the company has witnessed 35 to 40 per cent of growth year-on-year. In the future, Parekh wants to create equity as a security partner and add more products in the portfolio and go deep with the ISO accreditation on security platform.

Tekzee Technologies migrates workloads of over 100 customers from different verticals

Tekzee Technologies one of the leading cloud services providers in Central India, based in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The company's growth in this sector has been rapid and notable. It specialises in cloud solutions, web/app development and enterprise solutions.

Extensive customer base

Tekzee Technologies has more than 100 customers from different verticals. Saurabh Mehta, Director, Tekzee Technologies, says, "We have migrated workloads of over 100 customers from different verticals such as travel, media, finance, e-commerce, lifestyle, telecom, and education. Our team has executed traditional lift and shift migrations as well as helped clients in re-engineering their application architecture so that their applications can support anything, from real-time analytics of internet-scale data to applications with unpredictable traffic from thousands of connected Internet of Things (IoT) or mobile devices. Our deep technological expertise in cloud computing technologies helps us in architecting and building cloud native solutions, be it mobile or web



Saurabh Mehta,
Director, Tekzee Technologies

applications; optimised for speed, performance, agility, high availability, and scalability. Many of our clients are serving millions of users daily with the help of our highly scalable and agile solutions."

Rapid migration to cloud

Global availability and virtually

unlimited capacity make cloud the first choice for many industries as well as government bodies. Mehta states, "Putting in capital expenditure in the procurement of hardware resources and operational expenses for maintaining a fully fledged data centre is far greater than maintaining a cloud environment, hence the industry is rapidly migrating workloads to the cloud. Now, in order to execute the complex and risky process of migration successfully, systematic planning and strategy is required. Our team specialises in executing such migrations end to end. We take care of planning, procurement, deployment, optimisation, and maintenance for our clients, thus creating a real value." Mehta adds that the technological segment that they work in is very niche. Cloud consulting requires a specialised skill set and exposure to successfully execute the projects. "We observe good recurring profits in this line of business," he reveals.

Implementation of best practices

Mehta lists the best practices the company follows while implementing solutions around next

generation technologies:

- **Scalability:** Systems/applications are expected to grow over time, and need to be built on top of a scalable architecture. Such architecture should support growth in terms of users, traffic and data size with no drop in performance

- Fail safe and auto recovery to improve stability and efficiency

- **Loose Coupling:** As application complexity increases, a desirable attribute of an IT system is that it can be broken into smaller, loosely coupled components. This means that the IT systems should be designed in a way that reduces interdependencies—a change or a failure in one component should not cascade to other components

- Removing single point of failure by introducing redundancy

- Optimising the cost by provisioning right-sizing, elasticity, and scaling.

Lack of awareness - a challenge

The setback of working with next generation technologies is the lack of knowledge about those technologies. Mehta points out, “Lack of awareness about the current technologies and unclear requirements are two key challenges that we face today during most of our projects. At Tekzee we keep a consulting approach from the very first interaction with clients. We try to educate our client and give them knowledge of how exactly things work. This helps in building trust and confidence with the client and aids in the identification of key pain points and their resolutions with the help of our services.”

“We are living in a technological revolution; technologies and business models are radically changing. It’s really hard to keep up with all the latest technologies. We believe in constant and continuous learning and improvement. Internal teams are

facilitated, encouraged and challenged to learn something new,” he adds.

Future roadmap

The company is seeing multi-fold growth in offshore development projects. Its client base has expanded by five times in the past two-three years. In the future, Tekzee aims to provide consulting services in the domains of public cloud, private cloud, and engineering of cloud native applications. “Today the market demands agility and the demand of systems is changing radically. The demand of migration and re-engineering of legacy systems to next generation technologies such as cloud is increasing day-by-day. We are seeing adoption of cloud technologies not only in the private sector, but public sector as well. We see tremendous growth opportunities in these domains in the coming five years,” explains Mehta.

Druva registers 35% Q-O-Q growth in APAC

Druva is a born-in-India product startup, formed in 2008 with the founders having worked at Veritas. The company began operations by launching a product for global deduplication to reduce the data that travels across the network and gets backed up. Laptop backup was the most relevant use case at that time. The potential was to move the data across networks while it is accessed on the laptop of employees who are on the move. Druva garnered many customers for the offering.

“However what really changed for us was our partnership with AWS. In 2011, a project along with AWS was undertaken to build a cloud version of a backup product from the ground up, keeping the CIO requirements in consideration. It wasn’t just about hosting the product from a VM, but based on platform and APIs,” says Pete Yamasaki, Regional VP, APAC, Druva.



Pete Yamasaki,
Regional VP, APAC, Druva

A product was launched in 2013 viz InSync cloud, the on-premise version of

which was already in the market. It was a turnkey, no-hardware-to-be-maintained product, which lessens the TCO, and is all elastic. The response to the product in the first year was tepid. The upward cycle of adoption came in the second year. “In the first year, 90 per cent of the customers bought the on-premise version, but since then 98 per cent of the customers are on cloud. In India, in the last half of the year, 90 per cent of the new businesses acquired in India was all on the cloud model,” informs Yamasaki.

Druva was heading in the right direction. It’s important to note, in the early days, the company rejected a lot of offers from Managed Service Providers (MSPs), who offered to use their cloud platforms. “It’s turning out to be the smartest decision, because it gave us an opportunity to partner with AWS. We are the only, true SaaS platform that’s on cloud,” claims Yamasaki.

Other traditional players in the data protection and backup space have a cloud story, but it's only a cloud bucket, which has not fundamentally changed from the ground up. For example, hosting archives on cloud, which amounts to hosting a traditional software aboard a VM, which doesn't offer the benefits of a true cloud platform. This is the difference between what AWS has built versus the traditional service providers, which is to have an infrastructure way beyond VMs. "Our performance speaks for itself. We have seen a growth of 35 per cent, Q-o-Q, in APAC," says Yamasaki.

Opportunity for extended offerings

The platform built with AWS also opens the door for Druva, in terms of extending the offerings – data backup is just one area. The customer data with Druva is not sitting on a disc, tape or silos that don't have pools. It resides atop a cloud, which makes available all the compute at the disposal; all on one platform, which can be used for other offerings like data analytics, data governance, etc. It enables employees to search data for auditing and e-discovery. These features are showing wide acceptance in the pharma sector because of compliance needs. "Hitherto, what took days to pool the data off the tapes, can now be done in

minutes. The companies that require to run Personal Health Information (PHI) and Personally Identifiable Information (PII) search, can now do it more cost effectively," says Yamasaki.

Druva has scaled a solid platform for companies to find new opportunities to interact with data. Enter: opening up the platform for other companies to build tools over the platform. Result: there is a platform on top of a platform.

Apart from laptops and mobile devices, the InSync Cloud can also take backups of devices like servers – traditional and virtual machines; applications and connected applications too. "We are also on the list of the first set of companies to be certified to backup VM workloads running on VMware – we see this as a huge opportunity. The DR backup capability is already in our kitty, which ties well in our DR story too," says Yamasaki.

All in all, the company is not only giving enterprises the benefits of cloud based backup, but also congregating all enterprise IT resources on a common platform and giving them visibility of their assets and access to them at ease. They don't have to be accessed individually.

AWS helps Druva in its growth story

Without AWS, Druva wouldn't

have been able to build the product that it did. The India team of Druva played an active role in this tight integration. AWS' focus towards allocating dedicated resources, time, effort gave what the company needed to establish a product of this kind.

The business partnership has also been running well. "It's very synergistic in the sense that our success is their success too, because if we get a customer, the resources consumed belong to AWS," adds Yamasaki.

A SAAP programme is run by AWS for independent software vendors (ISVs) like Druva. Customers are buying licenses for the turnkey solutions built by the company. It works both ways and is mutually beneficial for both the partner and AWS, because every partner is incentivised equally, irrespective of whether the end user is building an independent solution and sets up independent resources with the partner or if they buy services from a company like Druva.

Druva acquired a bunch of aviation companies as customers last year. Many insurance and healthcare, pharma companies also hire services from the company.

Driving insightful analytics from data for enterprises

Fragma Data Systems is a cloud first enterprise AI and Big Data solutions provider for companies across all major industries, helping them to transform their data into insights. The company was launched in 2015 by Varun Reddy B and Raja Reddy K, with a mission to simplify and provide insightful analytics from data to large and medium companies.

"We started with a team of passionate data engineers, data scientists along with domain experts with wide industry experience. Today, Fragma is one of the few Gold Partners in India for Microsoft Azure Data Platforms and have been growing at a rapid pace. We strive to be the best cloud based data and analytics consulting firm in the industry," says Varun Kumar



Varun Kumar Reddy B,
CEO, Fragma Data Systems

Reddy B, CEO, Fragma Data Systems.

Currently, this Bengaluru based data analytical firm has 22 large enterprise clients from the BFSI, e-commerce, manufacturing and retail sectors across India, the Middle East and Europe. Fragma clocked a turnover of about ₹ 30 million in the previous year, ending March 2018 and has already clocked a revenue of ₹ 25 million in June 2018 with a pipeline of ₹ 60 million till December 2018.

In a recent case study of India's leading financier, the prime objective of developing an advanced multi-variate time-series-based customer segmentation model on SAS to run monthly campaigns and risk policies smoothly remained unfulfilled. Since

the SAS model was not able to scale with large volumes of data (>500GB) (550cr+ records) crunching, it was took almost 24 days to run each campaign, which put a damper on campaign success.

To help the customer win the challenge, the team of Fragma Data Systems deployed the Spark model on Microsoft Azure HDInsights, which effortlessly supported the scale and flexibility. Following the implementation of the solution, the overall processing time came down from 24 days (on SAS) to 25 minutes (on Spark/HDInsights), paving the way for the team to run monthly campaigns within the stipulated time to drive US\$ 100 million revenue.

"The success of this project has established us as a preferred data and

AI partner and win against our competition, which in turn helped us massive business growth as we started getting continuous projects from the client," remarks Reddy B.

Future roadmap

The applicability of Fragma solution has a wide potential across industries and customers. "We have deployed similar solution for banking customers and are going strong in the data analytics practice to create an impact of US\$ 500 million while driving consumption of US\$ 10 million. The opportunity size is over US\$ 1 million per annum for each account on an average and this is just the tip of the iceberg that we call success," sums up Reddy.

Mukesoftware plans implementing IoT and Big Data projects in next one year

The business challenges are significant in the fast growing technology market.

Organisations like Mukesoftware have not only consolidated their position in the market but have also grown by focusing on right planning, skills and technologies. Mukesoftware IT Consultants is one of the fastest growing software development and consultancy organisations providing comprehensive solutions to businesses.

Tailor-made solutions

The company specialises in providing custom-made eCommerce solutions, strategy consulting, web application development, Rich Internet Application Development, Search Engine Optimisation, system analysis, design and development, system integration, software testing, Quality Assurance services, and many more. According to Vishal Mehta,



Vishal Mehta,
Director, Mukesoftware IT Consultants

director, Mukesoftware IT Consultants, "We are experts in mobile app development and managed cloud

hosting. We believe in upgrading our team with the latest technologies and trends. We just don't provide a product or service; we provide the best available solution for the functional requirements. We have developed mobile apps for Android, iOS and Windows platforms for different industries like restaurant, telecom, and social networking, etc. We are the partner with AWS Cloud hosting from last five years and delivering solutions to the client on latest technologies."

Today new and emerging technologies are rapidly advancing and changing the way companies work. These changes are creating new opportunities for businesses that are willing to embrace new skills. "It helps us explore and expand faster as compared to traditional solutions. We as solution provider being in the IT industry have to keep upgrading with emerging technologies," explained Mehta.

Speaking about one of the cases where Mukesoft has made a difference to its customers, Mehta states, "One of our customers from the US came up with an innovative idea for the hospitality industry, to make a change in the way the industry works. We being an IT company work as technology partner to the customer and provide complete technology solutions under one roof - from creative design, logo, cloud hosting, website, admin panel to managed business, business intelligence report, mobility solutions and IoT implementation."

Skill enhancement and upgrading

In order to implement solutions around next generation technologies, the company organises knowledge sharing sessions to address next generation technologies. "We invite friends and consultants working in next generation technologies to our company and arrange to meet with existing teams, making them aware of and motivate them to adapt to new technologies. Skill enhancement and upgrading is a key to success in implementing next generation technologies," he states.

Highlighting the challenges, he says, "We face challenges in finding

the quality resource with skill upgrading attitude."

Upskilling and reskilling of the internal team is an important activity for the company. "Upskilling and reskilling is a continuous process and we do evaluation of the internal team. Going for certification for upgrading skills helps," says Mehta.

Future road map

In the last few years, Mukesoft has added three enterprise customers and the business has been growing in a healthy manner. The future plans include implementing IoT and big data projects in the next one year.

TheDataTeam: Thriving on IoT, AI potential

TheDataTeam, established in 2015, is one of the strongest partners of Microsoft in the areas such as IoT and AI. It has a vision to become the trusted advisor for all things data to companies in Asia Pacific market. Given the previous experience of serving clients in this geographic region, there was a palpable need in the market for helping clients derive value from data using data science and AI. Each market in this region has its nuances and local needs. Traditional approaches to such problems have been software-centric, whereas using recent cutting-edge developments in the field of AI, it has taken a data-centric approach to designing solutions.

Over the period, it has built its capabilities around artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data technologies, data analytics and giving services to 30 plus customers across industries in BFSI, manufacturing, heavy industries, retail, telco and eCommerce.

Digital transformation for customers

Speaking about the digital transformation journey at the



Rangarajan Vasudevan,
CEO and Co-Founder, TheDataTeam

customers' end, Rangarajan Vasudevan, CEO and Co-Founder, TheDataTeam says, "We are enabling our customers to achieve digital transformation through innovative solutions built using RoboticDataScience (RDS), a methodology pioneered by TheDataTeam. RDS automates data-

driven decision-making process across enterprise verticals. Interesting solutions built using RDS on top of MS Azure stack, enabled our clients in bringing transformation across their processes and achieve operational excellence."

An example of a recent completed IoT project at one of the retail outlets - the project allowed the client to automate their geographically distributed retail outlets across India by providing live data to the operations team which enabled quick decision-making on the operational activities of the corresponding outlet. This enabled the operations team to monitor and manage the retail outlets seamlessly ensuring transparency and a better customer experience.

"The completed phase of the project achieved the targeted rollout to 80 retail outlets and better consumer engagement improved operations. Going by the phenomenal results, the organisation is now underway to extend this project to all its outlets across India," he informs.

Prior to this project, reporting of retail outlets failure used to take

two-three days leading to shut-down the outlets. Since the data provided by retail outlets are live now, the operations teams can access specific data from the outlets and act on it accordingly. Besides, the operations teams are now equipped enough to plan proactive maintenance of the outlets so as to avoid interrupted working.

Building an expertise of a strong knowledge of data sciences and models is necessary in choosing a good data strategy partner. Keeping pace with the newest developments and approaches in the field of data

sciences as well a technology is clearly an advantage. Additionally, deep knowledge and expertise in respective functional areas like marketing, risk, finance, operations, etc., projects from various industries including retail, banking & financial services, insurance, manufacturing and telecommunications would help immensely.

Future road map

According to Vasudevan, the potential for IoT to disrupt traditional industries in India is immense. Coupled with the right use of AI,

businesses can benefit from practical solutions deployed on the cloud without needing a large budget outlay while delivering fast innovation-driven RoI. Also, it is extremely important to choose the right problem statement to tackle with the business stakeholders to have tangible benefits.

With presence in Singapore and India, the company enjoys strategic partnerships with major technology companies such as Microsoft, Google, Cloudera, AWS, Hortonworks and MapR, and serves clients across Asia Pacific.

I-Tek Logics closely works with the govt on many central projects

I-Tek Logics Pvt Ltd has established itself as an important player in the industry segment it operates in, within a short time. Gurpreet Singh Jolly, Managing Director, I-Tek Logics Pvt Ltd says, "Today's technologies are blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres of industrial production systems. We are a group of professionally managed people helping our clients to bridge the gaps and optimise their production capabilities by using technology acceptable to the lowest level of their work force. Our expertise is in solutions related to production optimisation, security, retail, etc. We are currently engaging our team to gather expertise in IoT to help our customers to get more optimisation from their existing systems."

Jolly believes that emerging technologies are bringing them closer to their customers. "Traditionally we were only seen as an IT hardware/software supplier dealing with IT departments, but with the emergence of new technologies we are consulting with more than 60 per cent of their departments, be it finance, marketing & sales,



Gurpreet Singh Jolly,
Managing Director, I-Tek Logics Pvt Ltd

production etc.," he explains.

"Also, we are closely working with the Government on a number of central projects, helping them with achieving the efficiency required to serve the people of the country by providing services online. Our solutions are helping in making people's life easy," adds Jolly. He points out that initial profitability with new technology driven projects is not

very high, being in a seeding period. But once these technologies reach some maturity, the profitability increases multi-folds.

Focus on training

The company's best practices around next generation technologies include training its people on that particular domain and giving them time to practice the same in their own labs. Upskilling and reskilling of the internal team is an important aspect for the company, to address the customers' current and future needs.

"We receive very good support from our vendors. By offering different programs/trainings they enable us to do more by ourselves, hence increasing the bottomline of the company," states Jolly.

Lack of capital is sometimes a challenge though, he indicates.

Future road map

The company has witnessed growth of more than 30 per cent year-on-year, in the last two-three years. In the future, Jolly and his team are focused on continuing the growth pattern and remaining ahead of the technology curve.

Focused on ruling cloud business by 2020

Mumbai based Shivaami Cloud Services is a premier partner for Google Cloud. Shivaami resells cloud products and services to its client, in particular G Suite and Office 365. The company has deployed G Suite for many organisations, which were using legacy messaging system on their premises and a number of hosted applications on their servers. Shivaami has deployed and streamlined the workflow by implementing G Suite in these organisations and overcoming the entire problem that they face. The company has helped many clients move to the cloud without investing in hardware.

Punit Thakkar, founder and CEO, Shivaami Cloud Services, reveals that the cloud business has grown rapidly in the last two years. A couple of years ago Shivaami had forty employees and now it has more than a hundred staff members. The company has a strong base of 7,000 plus customers. It has partnered with many other cloud solutions to be the one stop provider for its customers.

The top verticals contributing to Shivaami's revenues are IT/ITeS, hospitality, manufacturing and retail/utilities. He gives the example of Amkett Analytics, which had

inadequate infrastructure for messaging and collaboration, leading to hindrance in smooth operations within the organisation. Department heads had difficulty in monitoring emails from a widely dispersed audience and many other challenges. Shivaami enabled Amkette implement G Suite for users across its multiple operations. Freshdesk helped in generating tickets. Compliance setting enabled department heads to monitor mails. G Suite facilitated email access on multiple devices with POP connection using recent keywords. Google mobile management enforced policies on employee mobile access. G Suite was easy to set up and was operational in a very limited time. Gmail made communication easier and more streamlined.

Some of the common challenges that the company faces during any project are legacy migration, mobility management, communication within the organisation and coordination. Shivaami overcame these challenges with the help of its well trained services team and G Suite adoption best practices developed over a period of many years.

Future road map

Thakkar, who has big plans for the



Punit Thakkar,
Founder & CEO, Shivaami Cloud Services

future, says, "We have a 1000 days vision which ends on January 26, 2020. The entire organisation is working hard on accomplishing the goal to take leadership position in the cloud market, 210 team members, 22,270 active customers and US\$ 22,22,00,000 of profit."

Cloud security is the next destination for Shivaami as it has started practice and R&D in this space.

Carving a niche in cloud management

Centilytics is an intelligent cloud management platform (CMP), which helps organisations using public clouds to manage, secure, and optimise their entire cloud under one roof. It builds a meaningful picture of their entire infrastructure and breaks down the

complex cloud billing into actionable insights. The company's expertise lies in cloud computing, big data analytics and AI/ML.

A StatX accelerated company, the core team includes Aditya Garg, Najmul Hoque, Shruti Agnihotri, and Henry Wilkinson. Currently, it is

based out of the US and has an R&D Center in India, covering the US and India markets. The company has won large projects and some of its major customers are Lenovo, NASSCOM, WittyFeed, The Wire, Cigniti, etc.

Centilytics has an all-in-one analytics console which helped a media giant fine-tune its cost allocation process and gave it complete visibility into its cloud infrastructure. Apart from this, an advisory giant was able to save 20 per cent of its cloud expenditure in

the first three months, with its intelligent reporting and resource tracking systems. Centilytics helped a software company reduce its cloud costs by 30 per cent with RI planner and resource rightsizing. Another recent win was when a large internet media company improved its security posture with comprehensive set of best practices, compliance recommendations, security audits and advanced reporting.

Speaking about the growth, Aditya Garg, CEO and Founder, Centilytics, says, "We have seen 10X growth in the last two years where we sky-rocketed from just a four-people startup to a 30 plus workaholics/workhorses organisation, now managing over 10 million of cloud consumption for our customers across the globe."



Aditya Garg, ,
CEO and Founder, Centilytics

Sharing the initial hiccups during the formation of the company,

Najmul Hoque, Strategy and Alliance head, Centilytics, says, "It just takes the right amount of hype to set a trend without deep diving. Though cloud is the new normal for everyone, cloud management platform is something new in the head space of IT decision makers/influencers. Establishing Centilytics as a go-to-brand in such a scenario is a challenge."

Future roadmap

Moving forward from a technical standpoint, the company is introducing Google Cloud Platform (GCP) and VMware. As part of the growth vision, Centilytics has set a plan to be participating in events this year for branding.

ZNet Technologies: Big strides in cloud solutions

ZNet Technologies has been in the space of IT and cloud solutions provider to over 100K plus customers across the globe. ZNet has been working closely with Microsoft, AWS and IBM on cloud technologies and enterprise solutions in India. All solutions based on leading technologies are built in-house by ZNet's development team. The business units of ZNet include ZNetLive (domain registrar and provider of cloud and web hosting services), RackNap (cloud delivery platform for cloud solution providers, datacenters and telecommunication services providers), ThemeChilly (WordPress and Joomla themes provider) and TrustP (a platform for domains and hosting resellers).

Emerging technologies have fundamentally changed the lives of individuals and have brought with them new revenue generation opportunities for service providers when enterprises and SMBs undergo



Munesh Jadoun,
CEO, ZNet Technologies

digital transformation. "Most enterprises and SMBs assume that the migration and management of processes, especially associated with the adoption of new technologies, will

be difficult for them. However, we have found that the transformation is easier and remains within budget, if enterprises don't do all by themselves. The technological advancements can be handled easily by going to specialists – the managed services providers – service providers like us, who understand the nitty gritty of it all and have the technical competence, much needed years of expertise, along with technically trained resources," says Munesh Jadoun, CEO, ZNet Technologies.

Sharing an experience of how Netleon Technologies increases profitability and drives customer satisfaction with ZNetLive managed cloud services, he explains, "Netleon Technologies started experiencing issues related to hosting their website and MIS solutions. With the number of users of their software and applications running in millions, and with handling crucial government projects, Netleon couldn't afford any

downtime. They also needed 24/7 availability of their hosting provider's technical support staff." Millions of users accessed Netleon's developed apps and software at the same time, so the company also needed scalable resources.

"Our sound technical team helped them get to the core of the problem, by understanding their programming language or sometimes, coding and guiding them accordingly. They also needed scalable resources that allowed them to optimise their

resource usage and pay for the resources only that they used," states Jadoun.

The team at ZNet Technologies has wide ranging certifications from Microsoft, AWS, Redhat, etc., and over 40 per cent of the team is certified in these technical domains. "We have internal KPIs for our teams to ensure that they work/get trained in other domains too. We do cross-deploy resources in other teams to ensure that they get a good sense of what goes into other teams," adds Jadoun.

Future road map

ZNet Technologies is having a consistent growth YoY. With 100K plus customers across the globe, the company has been experiencing quick growth and recognition from leading brands, like Microsoft (CSP), AWS (Channel Reseller Partner) and to more recently becoming an authorised Plesk distributor in India. "In the future, we have plans to introduce more products, based on new technologies, to our customers," concludes an optimistic Jadoun.

Charting a new path in electronic security systems

Bangalore based Ameya InfraTech has been in the business of system integration and solution providing. The prime focus of the company is electronic security systems, automation and cloud. "New solutions provide great opportunities to us. Our approach is typically need analysis, solution design, integration, implementation, configuration, testing, training and handling over. This is nothing but project management process cycle. While implementing the IT solutions, both ESS and automation demands similar kind of approach to implement. By adding ESS and automation, it gives great advantage of being a single window solution provider to the client. It helps in better control of the systems, seamless integration across the solutions, technical cohesiveness and price advantage," says Anil Kumar Tallam, CEO, Ameya InfraTech.

The company offers a combination of hybrid solution in terms of implementing on-premise and cloud, together to provide an immense techno-commercial advantage to the client. In terms of recent projects wins, the company has been part of highway surveillance. "The edge we had to get this project was, our project management integrated expertise and knowledge of both networking, IoT and



Anil Kumar Tallam,
CEO, Ameya InfraTech

surveillance. The important factor in this solution was the wireless solution that has to be integrated with surveillance. We are happy that we executed the requirement to its perfection and we too were instrumental in serving the social cause," he elaborates.

Giving details of another recent project Tallam explains, "There is an international motivational speaker and business coach company. The company was looking for complete

video storage and relay solution as a significant segment of the business model uses videos of various speakers. It provides training too, through webinars. The company had video conferencing requirements too. The challenge was that the storage space required was huge. We successfully managed to fulfil their requirement by providing combination of both on-premise and cloud hybrid model."

To address customers requirements, Ameya InfraTech is engaged in continuous training from various OEMs on their solutions, both on sales and services front. "We strongly believe that 'sharpen the axe' is an important element in business to serve the client better. Along with technology trainings, soft skill trainings too help us a lot to handle the clients and their requirements," he says.

Future road map

The company has witnessed 20 per cent to 30 per cent growth in the last two-three years. It has registered over 30 per cent profits with the new technology driven projects. Tallam believes that the company will double its turnover by 2020 through its IT, ESS, automation, cloud and IoT solutions by engaging with PMCs, architects, interior designers and contractors across India.

'We are looking at geo-expansion with support from AWS'

Currently catering largely to the manufacturing sector, Minfy Technologies is aiming at the global business pie, with the support from AWS. The company is making inroads into India's government sector, co-working with established SIs in the country. **Vijay Jain**, Sales Director, Minfy Technologies, shares the company's roadmap

When the company started, was it directed at the cloud services businesses?

Minfy Technologies was started in 2014 from Hyderabad; then we were looking at cloud as an emerging area. Over the last three years, we have evolved across different areas and expanded our business across different regions – Bengaluru, Kolkata, Delhi NCR and Mumbai.

What were the key learnings from your transition and growth phase?

The customer will not start spending from the first day itself. You need to be part of the customer's journey. We have seen that customers are now increasingly comfortable with cloud – this has also helped us grow.

Do you see more deployments happening; are certain customers still in the evaluation stage?

Our primary customers are from the manufacturing sector. One of our core competencies lies in the area of SAP and HANA. We interact with many CFOs and business owners, and we have experienced that businesses have invested in infrastructure such as SAP and critical ERP. Manufacturing customers are thrilled by CapEx and OpEx. However, some customers are interested in scaling their businesses to server-less models.

How does the AWS team support, in terms of sales pitch, go-to-market strategy or lead generation?

AWS has multiple programmes which are publicly available. Programmes on training and



Vijay Jain,
Sales Director, Minfy Technologies

certifications have helped us immensely. These programmes – partially or fully funded – have helped us retain talent. Amazon's solution team also works closely with our team. Their PoC programmes also help us experiment.

How is Minfy positioned in comparison with traditional partners?

We are working with many big system integrators and traditional players, in the government sector. These players have an established connect with this sector; hence, we leverage each other's strengths. The market is so huge that we can easily co-exist.

Moreover, we are building skills internally. For example, currently we are working on a machine learning

project. We lack substantial skills in machine learning, but we are building that through a consultant from Singapore. In the area of AI, we are working with one of the leading schools, using Alexa. The school is trying to integrate the school management system with Alexa device. We are also working in the smart cities space, which is expected to be completed in the near future.

Besides manufacturing, which are the other focus verticals for the company?

We also have our own solutions catering to the media industry, and web and mobile workloads for the internet and e-commerce domain. These are followed by the government sector, wherein we work with SIs.

What's your plan for business growth, what are expectations from Amazon?

We expect Amazon to help us expand beyond India. We are trying to understand the key factors for setting up our international business. Instead of adding more services in a limited geography, we aim to deepen existing skills and undergo geographical expansion. Currently we are clocking a revenue of ₹ 18 to ₹ 20 crore; and we have set target to achieve ₹ 50 crore revenue by 2020 – geographical expansion will be a key driver in this. Furthermore, the government vertical will also help in scaling our business. The SIs working in this vertical are looking at deep skills like ours, and flexibility. This forms a major part of our inroads into the government sector.

ALIBABA CLOUD IDENTIFIES SMB MARKET AS A MAJOR GROWTH DRIVER IN INDIA

With its recent foray in the India market, Alibaba Cloud is bullish on establishing itself strongly in the country. In line with its continued focus, the company, along with HCL, will train 1,000 professionals by March 2019

By **Mohit Rathod**

Alibaba Cloud was founded in 2009 and started the service for external customers in 2013. Starting from 2014, Alibaba Cloud decided to go abroad to serve those Chinese companies who do business overseas and help foreign companies to do business in China. Alibaba Cloud has taken the leadership in China, with a strong market share of 47.6 per cent. "According to the latest report from Gartner, Alibaba Cloud is among the top three players in the world," says Alex Li, General Manager, Alibaba Cloud Asia Pacific.

In terms of India business, the company launched its first data centre in January 2018. Thereafter, Alibaba Cloud has spent significant amount of time to build up the team, process, and the partner ecosystem in India.

"Today, we have a strong commitment to the India market. For the initial few year, one of our focus is on digital transformation. We devised the solutions from our own business transformation, because Alibaba has invested in many areas including retail, logistics, entertainment, etc. We want to put out best practices for our customers; and they are very appreciative of that," says Li.



Strategic intent

Alibaba Cloud aims to help traditional as well as internet companies to be more competitive. Furthermore, Alibaba Cloud has invested heavily in latest technology. For example, Alibaba Cloud announced a strategic partnership with Siemens for the Industrial IoT (IIoT) business, wherein Siemens will place all its IoT services on Alibaba Cloud platform.

Li informs, "This is definitely a huge thrust for our service. Similarly, we provide a lot of digital technologies in Blockchain, Machine Learning (ML), etc. Ecosystem partnership is also a key focus area. We believe that we need to partner with local players to drive digital

transformation, including sales and training. We announced our strategic partnership with HCL Infosystems, wherein we appointed HCL as our value added distributor in India."

With partnership with HCL, Alibaba Cloud expects that HCL can help in improving coverage in the country with localised service route. Alibaba Cloud has also announced its training programme, wherein it has decided to train more than 1,000 professionals in this fiscal year, by the end of March 2019. Li adds, "This is also a commitment to the market because we want to make sure we educate the market enough."

Elaborating more on training, Li says, "One is the sales professionals and the other is technical professionals – this will also include the education part. This is our short term strategy, but if we want to go further, and we will also continue to invest in this market to improve the network, coverage and bring more new products and solutions."

Business opportunities

For Alibaba Cloud, the India market is highly strategic in terms of market size, market potential, and talent. Citing the latest report from Gartner, Li adds that the market size for Alibaba's cloud service is around US\$ 2.5 billion. Alibaba

Cloud has identified several opportunities in the market, including SMBs. A major proportion in the SMB space includes cloud native companies, because they don't want to invest in hardware by themselves and they don't need to hire professional IT managers.

"We want to offer our service to those companies to help them grow further. The startup ecosystem is very active in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Mumbai. In line with this, we also have a programme to help Indian startups to compete with their international counterparts. Under this programme, we will select the best performer in India to compete globally," he informs.

Another area of opportunity for Alibaba Cloud is the internet and media industry. Internet-based companies also demand good solutions, because they want to be competitive in areas like Big Aata and AI. Hence, cloud-owned solutions will be critical for their processes. This also signifies that IoT is a big area of opportunity. Being heavy users of networking and storage, these companies are also Alibaba's target to gain market share in the country.

"Furthermore, we will be focused on the traditional industries. Alibaba Cloud has launched the ET Brain, its big data solution, combined with AI and IoT. We have launched the product in Macau and Malaysia for City Brain, a smart city product, which will help government officials to manage cities much better. For example, improving transportation and traffic," comments Li.

Similarly, the company is also carrying out significant work in the retail sector – such as new retail and finance solutions, and manufacturing solutions. In the retail sector, Alibaba processes 100 million packages successfully per day. The company has more than 800 million active users globally for Ali Pay.

Commenting on business opportunities in India's public sector, Li explains, "We focus more on enterprises and SMEs, because the market is big enough and we are still setting up the business foundation. We are ready to serve any customer including the public sector. We will enable our partners to serve those products for the public sector. We have

also seen a big opportunity in government initiatives."

Market scenario

Following its interactions with IT decision makers of India Inc, Alibaba Cloud has observed that more than 84 per cent of CTOs have a plan to switch from on-premise to cloud. The company has also seen a clear trend where CIOs and CTOs are more involved in bigger business decisions.

Li explains, "In this age, CIOs and CTOs have to work with their business leaders closely to bring the latest technology to drive business growth and improve profitability and customer experience. CIOs and CTOs are more business oriented now; they are working with CMOs, COOs or CEOs to drive business growth."

Alibaba Cloud is still considered a newcomer in the market. Whereas, other players are already established for years. However, Li remarks that the growth of the established players has happened in the past one to three years. Prior to the launch of its data centre in India, Alibaba Cloud already had a lot of Indian customers, receiving products and services from Singapore, the US or Middle East, etc.

Speaking on the differentiating factors, Li says, "Alibaba Cloud has a strong presence in Asia Pacific, particularly in China and South East Asian countries. In China, our market share is the highest, and we enjoy the second largest market share in Indonesia. In Malaysia, Alibaba Cloud is the only global service provider to setup a data centre. In Japan, along with India, Hong Kong, and Singapore, we have large infrastructure and comprehensive product portfolio to serve our customers. For those Indian customers who want to do business in China, Asia Pacific or the Middle East, Alibaba will be a good choice. In terms of products and solutions, we have unique solutions like ET Brain. We have the latest technology for IoT and Blockchain. Those solutions are popular among Indian customers as well. We want to be the most friendly vendor for our ecosystem of partners. We are working towards building a competitive channel structure along

with good incentive programmes to ensure our partners' profitability."

Partner focus

Asia Pacific, being a large geography, different countries vary in terms of business strategies. For instance, in Singapore and Hong Kong, the market is relatively smaller in terms of the territory. Thus it will not be fruitful to invest in a distributor in such markets. "We normally develop system integrators to help us. We have many service partners who can help us work with customers for migration, new solutions and making a structure, etc. India has a vast geography and the market is scattered. Hence, in order to cover the growing segments, we have to develop different go-to-market strategies, which is the reason we have a distributor in India. Additionally, we also need specialised consulting companies like KPMG who can work together with us. All of our channel and go-to-market strategies will stem from the customer's requirements. We need partners to help us with system integration," he says.

Alibaba Cloud requires their partners to have a strong cloud background; the company looks at whether the partners have a practice, customer base and the required techniques.

Li states, "Digital transformation is not only for customers; it is also for partners. For example HCL Infosystems, three to five years ago, was absolutely strong in hardware, IT products and after-sales service. In the past two years, HCL has transformed to cloud as well. HCL not only caters to traditional partners, but also has a lot of cloud-native resellers under the system."

Aimed at training and enablement of partners, Alibaba Cloud has been running programmes for solutions like Big Data.

"We have launched incentive programmes to win partners who have been working with other players, but at the end, it is the partner's choice. Alibaba Cloud will be the best choice if they want to win together in the future. We will add value to our partners and their customers. We also look at multi cloud service," he concludes.

'WE HAVE POLISHED AND MASTERED THE ART OF OPEN SOURCE TECHNOLOGIES'

In an interaction with CRN, **Rajarshi Bhattacharyya**, Country Head at SUSE, describes how open source is gaining popularity these days, how the market in India is different from other countries and how SUSE is playing its role. Here are some edited excerpts ...

Open source acceptance has gained momentum in the past few years in the India market. What are the reasons that are backing up its popularity; what role is SUSE playing?

If we look into the past, we will realise that the efforts to increase diversity in open source aren't new. It's just that the companies have started embracing open source technology now. Probably, because of the positive results they are leveraging from it.

Positive results are not just restricted to the fact that code is available and is free of cost. Many businesses and Indian government organisations using open source softwares such as Linux, makes it clear that free and open-source software (FOSS) holds plethora of other compelling advantages, apart from low cost. Here are some benefits that are backing up the popularity of open source and helping in gaining momentum.

We've been witnessing in the past few years businesses are not on open source. Businesses relying on commercially supported Linux systems will have access to every available security fix, unlike Windows, where we need to depend completely on the response of one company to provide timely security fixes and updates. As a lot of developers/code maintainers are involved, they ensure that Linux is up-



to-date and must keep system secure and protected. Open source is not dependent on a single company/developer/coder with closed source code. Instead, it allows access to the worldwide community to get the best security fix available. Linux offers regular updates (kernel) to an almost daily list of security patches to provide strong security and enhanced system for its users.

Businesses have started realising the risk of lock-in that comes with proprietary packages, which is not the case with open source. When businesses turn to open source software, they free themselves from the severe vendor lock-in.

Today, the organisation looks for a

solution provider who doesn't create dependency. Having mission-critical systems and data at the mercy of a single vendor's product road map and licensing strategy restricts/limits customers' vision, requirements, and priorities for the products they're paying for. By locking business on a single platform, a monopolistic vendor is capable of placing systems at risk and not getting updated beyond a point.

With FOSS, on the other hand, users/businesses are in control to make their own decisions and to utilise the software the way they want. Additionally, they also have the support of a worldwide community of developers and users at their disposal to help, in case required. Besides, proprietary vendors tend to stop development of a product after a few years. In such cases, open source lets you retain the right to use the solution you already have. Compared to proprietary software, open source software is much less resource-intensive and can run on an older hardware as well. It's up to the user--not some vendor--to decide when it's time to upgrade.

Customisability — can change according to a customer's or user's specific need — isn't that what modern era of IT world requires! Open source allows business users to use as it is,

tweak or modify the code to add the functionality that suit their needs. Does proprietary software give you that "choice", the answer is big no! The philosophy behind open source is all about sharing and interoperability with other systems. It is about sharing the source code and not sharing your private data. As a business, your organisation should not be limited by a proprietary vendor's idea of what you need. Most proprietary vendors do not customise solutions according to business needs, while open source vendors can easily tailor their solutions for the way you do business.

We are not a new comer to open source technology. We have polished and mastered the art of open source technologies with every passing year. We're passionately engaged in numerous projects, initiatives and standards where we represent the needs and requirements of our customers and business partners. We embrace and believe in the open source innovation model and the open source business model. And together with our communities, we continuously advance state-of-the-art, open source technologies to meet demanding business requirements.

As a company, our efforts are to ensure the best technology possible through:

- ▶ Simplicity to develop and deploy applications
- ▶ Enterprise grade cloud infrastructure
- ▶ Software-defined storage
- ▶ Operating system level virtualisation
- ▶ Operating systems for mission critical use
- ▶ Software-defined networking
- ▶ Infrastructure services
- ▶ Open platforms

How is the Indian open source market different from other countries; what significance it holds in Digital India, and how is SUSE contributing to it?

Open source is not restricted to India. Businesses across the world are leveraging open source benefits and it has already gained momentum in the past few years.

A lot of initiatives have been started by the Indian government towards

making a "Path to New India". From "Make in India", to "Skill India", "Digital India" and what not. People have different perspectives, when it comes to Digital India. But for us, the most important aspect is policies related to open source.

We are glad that apart from private organisations, now even the Indian government is leveraging open source. Department of Electronics & Information Technology (DeitY) of Ministry of Communication & Information Technology released three major policies related to open source. These policies act as potential game changers in the IT industry. They have been introduced to promote and foster the adoption of FOSS. FOSS comes with own benefits, from interoperability, flexibility to freedom to customise the software based on requirements. These initiatives will help India in strengthening their position in IT and bridging the digital divide with significant cost savings -- facilitating the creation of a knowledge society.

SUSE has recently partnered with growth investor EQT. How do you think it's going to impact SUSE strategy and product expansion?

It's indeed a big positive change for SUSE. EQT investing in SUSE is recognition of our value and potential. We believe the acquisition is well timed as the market driven need for digital transformation, built on open source software-defined infrastructure (SDI) and application delivery technologies, is increasing. Organisations are invariably increasing their focus on open source technologies and solutions to transform their businesses.

Partnership with growth investor, EQT, will help us to continue the momentum, strategy execution and product expansion as an independent business. With this partnership, we expect to be equipped to further exploit the excellent market opportunity both in the Linux operating system area as well as in emerging product groups in the open source space.

Further investment and support will enable SUSE's continued expansion and advance innovation to drive growth

in SUSE's core business as well as in emerging technologies, both organically and through add-on acquisitions.

In keeping with its 25 year history, SUSE intends to remain committed to an open source development and business model and actively participate in communities and projects to bring open source innovation to the enterprise as high quality, reliable and usable solutions.

What is SUSE's focus area?

SUSE has evolved and expanded from an enterprise Linux vendor to become a provider of enterprise software-defined infrastructure. SUSE's overall strategy provide enterprise-grade, open source, software-defined infrastructure and application platform solutions. OpenStack has significant momentum and offers tremendous value to enterprises. We believe it will continue to do so for years to come as it becomes an important foundational platform for software-defined infrastructure innovation. Similarly, the PaaS market is poised for rapid growth, and Cloud Foundry is quickly becoming the trusted open source platform for cloud-native application development. We will leverage the Cloud Foundry PaaS assets to accelerate our entry into the PaaS market and deliver a certified Cloud Foundry distribution.

Our vision is a convergence between the best of container and orchestration technologies with the best of PaaS technologies that will create innovation that matters to our enterprise customers and partners. We have a good presence in India and our open source software offering remains a popular choice among our customers and partners.

How SUSE sees it in the long run?

SUSE provides and supports enterprise-grade Linux and open source solutions with exceptional service, value and flexibility. With partners and communities, we innovate, adapt and deliver secure Linux, cloud infrastructure and storage software to create solutions for mixed enterprise IT environments.

'WE WILL KEEP A RAZOR SHARP FOCUS ON PROFITABILITY'

Thus far, while ASUS' focus has been on selling motherboards, it will now have a renewed focus on selling other high margin components in South Asia, discloses **Vinay Shetty**, Regional Director- India and South Asia, ASUS

By **Abhishek Raval**

Vinay Shetty, before becoming the Regional Director at ASUS, had worked through the rank and files in the company and graduated his way upwards over the course of 13 years. Other than him, the only person heading the country operations, who was not a Taiwanese, was a Russian. Along with the experience that he had gathered, it was interesting when he sat down with the ASUS leadership to decide on how the South Asia operations will be anchored by him.

The leadership team in Taiwan is very collaborative while charting the strategy. As Vinay Shetty, Regional Director - India and South Asia, ASUS, aptly puts it, "They don't believe in backseat driving." They have complete confidence in the plan of action prepared and get involved in the discussions without putting any targets related pressures. An ample amount of operational independence is given to achieve the targets. "Nonetheless, the initial target given to us was achieved in nine months," he adds.

Shetty decided to leverage this independence to diversify the businesses which existed, but were not tapped to the extent that they should have been. The focus during 2010 - 2012 was on the numbers. The company was always behind selling more motherboards, which never allowed the other product suites to perform. It did

not get the room to grow. The company was successfully achieving the numbers. Shetty decided to change gears and widen the net of the products that ASUS was marketing in the country. "We decided to change the strategy. We realised that to survive and sustain, it is important to expose other innovative product suites out of ASUS' kitty, to pursue profitability rather than just achieving volumes," mentions Shetty.

The thrust on many other suites began, be it graphic cards, optical drive, sound cards (operating only in the high margin 119 decible and above cards), Xtion PRO sensors, (devised only for developers), car cameras, servers, wireless offerings, etc. "No one in the enterprise or channel space knew we are doing it," says Shetty. In the monitor space, most of the peers are in 18.5, 19, entry level because they want to play a volume game, however Shetty's strategy was to play in the 22 and above range because of higher margins. "The volume is less but the profitability is good," he says.

From doing a volume business, the objective was to turn the South Asia business profitable and self reliant. Hitherto, the challenge was to achieve the numbers, but no more. "The top leadership was confident about us achieving the targets, but they believed in giving a free hand to do it, and hence the step to branch out into newer

areas," he says.

While the the matured products category still holds a key position to achieve profitability, most of the time that Shetty spends is on growing the emerging products portfolio. "The channel quality and number has dropped, which requires us to make channel partners undergo rigorous training," he says, pointing out that there are times, when the company has to kill certain offerings. "We are literally sitting in a 28 country scenario. Every state has a different thought process," states Shetty. The challenge is always to find the next best fit for various regions. The conventional 80:20 ratio works well for ASUS. "Sixteen cities in India give ASUS 72 per cent of the business, and we also have a district wise evaluation in terms of which region is doing well and which products are doing how much," informs Shetty. The intent is to reach out to other cities and offer other products that ASUS has started focusing on.

Highlighting how the company is planning to synergise the successful products with others, where the focus has shifted, Shetty says that efforts are on to synergise, but the channel partners do not have expertise in every segment. For example, a channel partner doing good in the business of motherboards, will not be as good in selling 'AiMesh'. There are not many

partners who have adapted to meet the market demand and there are only a few such partners who have successfully reshaped and aligned to remain in sync with the technology evolution. To synergise with value adders is easier. "They proactively suggest us ideas about new offerings," he mentions.

The way forward now is to create an ASUS brand. On the back of the brand recall that ASUS has because of motherboards, it is natural to think the other product suites will also be of a similar quality. End users and channel partners are being convinced to rely on the brand reputation because of motherboards, to cross and upsell other products. An ecosystem is being created. Parallely, Republic of Gamers Global (ROG) - ASUS is operational. "We are planning to have gamers as opinion leaders and influencers," he says, because when they recommend, it becomes a trend. Gamers use a lot of ASUS products and understand the technicalities more clearly. The dealers and partners are apprised about this, so they can accordingly convince the customers.

ASUS' channel strategy

ASUS offers multiple schemes to channel partners. "The schemes should not be used as a loophole to discount the product, which is found many times in the market scenario," he comments. ASUS provides loyalty programmes. The partners who perform and achieve the business will automatically not offer discounts, which can backfire the market in the subsequent year as it will result in an overall reduction of prices.

The company identifies the partners who are the next best players to raise themselves to the advanced stage from being a distributor, sub distributor, etc. "We encourage them to keep as many products of ASUS as possible because the profit margin ranges from product to product and ASUS also has innovative offerings, which can also give better margins along with significant value proposition to their customers," says Shetty.

AiMesh

ASUS is strongly focusing on AiMesh,



WE ARE TARGETING THE SI COMMUNITY TO MARKET THE AIMESH, BECAUSE THEY ARE MORE AWARE ABOUT THE CHALLENGES BEING FACED BY THEIR CUSTOMERS ON THE CONNECTIVITY SIDE

VINAY SHETTY,
REGIONAL DIRECTOR - INDIA AND
SOUTH ASIA, ASUS

which is ASUS Multiple Access-Point System. The core of the offering is to combine ASUS powerful routers to form a whole home coverage Wi-Fi system with centralised control. However, there might still be some dead-zones in specific environments (concrete wall or large yard), so a powerful software (Firmware) upgrade has been designed for ASUS router buyers. By upgrading, customers can combine more than one ASUS performance routers to form a Wi-Fi system.

The product was launched in March 2018. The existing users of ASUS can also buy AiMesh. Previously, with just the Mesh offering, the customer would

have to buy an entire kit, but with AiMesh, the current users who are already using the Mesh product, do not have to buy a separate bundle, thereby saving costs. "Currently, we are targeting five to seven per cent of the total market for AiMesh," informs Shetty. The target market for AiMesh would be end users and Small Office Home Office (SOHO).

With other whole-home Mesh Wi-Fi systems, customers were limited to using matching hubs — often available only in multi-hub packs — and the old router does not work with these systems. Whereas, with AiMesh, the existing routers can still be used along with the Mesh router. AiMesh supports separate Wi-Fi name (SSID) for 2.4 GHz or 5 GHz band. This is an advantage compared to rival Mesh routers. Also, AiMesh can create a single, house-wide network name so there is no need to constantly switch between networks, no matter where it is being accessed in the home. AiMesh keeps an eye on the signal strength to the device, and switches it seamlessly to another source, if necessary. Also, the network strength and connection is not affected in case if a device gets disconnected. The other devices take over, and the connection is seamless. The ease of setting up the AiMesh and the connectivity it provides is the biggest USP. The product can be set up within a minute. Moreover, ASUS has partnered with TrendMicro for security. It is a lifetime AI protection facility for any internet threats. The software updates are done swiftly and are delivered to the users, so the security is well taken care of.

The partner community is also trained on AiMesh. The approach taken is to reach out to 10 to 15 partners on a regular basis and explain and orient them on the product. Instead of giving a presentation with hundreds of partners, where the feedback loop is weak, it is better to engage with a smaller number, take feedback and then keep fine tuning.

"We are targeting the SI community to market the AiMesh, because they are more aware about the challenges being faced by their customers on the connectivity side," shares Shetty.

MAKING DATA COMPLIANT

Neeraj Dotel, MD, India & SAARC, SAP Concur highlights how organisations can reduce the challenges of protecting data

The Breach Level Index reveals that roughly 57 data records are stolen every second. That is equal to nearly five million data records being stolen worldwide every single day. High profile data thefts are becoming too commonplace with worrying frequency. We saw instances of data pilfering in India, where a popular airline sued a former employer. Similarly, a leading FMCG conglomerate recently accused three former employees for allegedly stealing confidential information.

As these examples show, company data is extremely vulnerable and safeguarding data is the current buzzword that has led to companies and CIOs are losing sleep. Whether accidental or otherwise, data theft is a major cause of concern for any organisation today. As per the 2017 Cost of Data Breach Study from the Ponemon Institute, the global average cost of a data breach stands at a whopping US\$ 3.6 million.

So, what should an organisation do to prevent the risk of data thefts?

Start with a good security programme; one that not just prevents data thefts, but also trains people on how to act during a suspected data breach. According to the Ponemon report, an incident response team can reduce the cost of a breach by up to US\$ 19 per record. Therefore, if the global average cost stands at US\$ 3,600,000, or US\$ 141 per data record, a response team can help save up to US\$ 485,106. A concrete response plan that helps companies take the right action quickly is essential.

The program should take the following recommendations into consideration:



IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT COMPANIES TAKE CONSCIOUS STEPS BACKED BY CLEAR PRIVACY AND PROTECTION LAWS TO MITIGATE SUCH THREATS

► Know where the data is at all times:

IT teams need to be aware of answers to some crucial questions - like what data lives in what system, who owns it, who has access to it and who is actually accessing it? This can only come from accurate data mapping. Organisations need a central database with a list of all applications, the backend technology, owners, basic description and purpose

and any relevant integrations. An effective data map will use the database and also assess the security levels and threats. Thus, companies will be able to catch any mishap or theft faster and prevent misuses.

► Clear policy and compliance

structures: A regularly updated compliance policy that sets out clear corporate standards for the entire organisation. Within the policy, specific employee guidelines stipulating what can or cannot be shared and the penalties associated; and finally, departmental procedures to oversee policy adherence.

► Automation and technology

integration is key: No matter how many policies are put in place or how many trainings employees go through, without adequate technology support, leakages are still likely to occur. Automating as much as possible is one of the best ways to prevent data thefts. For instance, automating travel expenses and capturing all T&E related activities can help companies reconcile what was booked with what was actually expensed. If anything doesn't match up, it will be instantly detected. This stops employees from committing fraud or entering incorrect data. Similarly, there are monitoring, auditing tools available that organisations can utilise to stop data from being externally transported.

It is essential that companies take conscious steps backed by clear privacy and protection laws to mitigate such threats. Else, as digital transformation grows, it's going to be difficult for any organisation to compete in the global sphere, with this threat of data breaches hanging on its head.

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*The State of Endpoint Security Today survey was conducted by Vanson Bourne, an independent specialist in market research. This survey interviewed 2,700 IT decision makers in 10 countries out of which, 300 respondents were from India, based in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Kolkata and Chennai.



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