

# CRN

NEWS, ANALYSIS AND PERSPECTIVE FOR TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATORS  
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**Special Focus**



IT Salaries:  
Emerging Trends



## THE SKILL VANTAGE

Channel partners are increasingly focusing on hiring and retaining talent with specific technical skills to grow in a highly competitive market



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# FOR PARTNERS, SKILL ENHANCEMENT SHOULD BE AN INHERENT STRATEGY



**Nivedan Prakash**  
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The changing dynamics of the IT industry in this digital age has not only coaxed the vendor companies to redesign their go-to-market strategy but also made the partner organisations re-look at the way they approach the market or gear up to address the customer requirements. In order to stay relevant in the digital disruption era and sensing the significance of training and enablement, the channel companies of all sizes are putting an increased focus on upskilling and reskilling their resources.

Apparently, continuous enablement has today become one of the top priorities for the solution partners and it is evident with the fact that they have designed enablement classes for their sales and pre-sales professionals, where they run on-demand and online classes, and for more in-depth topics, they organise instructor-led classes with hands-on workshops. To help their partners in their reskilling or upskilling journey, the vendor companies have set up dedicated training team that help them run a very busy training schedule with ongoing classes every week.

For instance, over the past

two years, Jaipur-based ZNet Technologies has heavily focused on upskilling and training of resources, wherein its team has gained a variety of certifications from Microsoft, AWS, Red Hat, Alibaba, Plesk, and others, and over 40 per cent of its team is certified in these technical domains.

On the other hand, many partners are investing in a great degree on recruiting new talents, while reimagining their businesses. Like for example, Gurgaon-based Team Computers has recently undergone a complete makeover - be it at its offices or customer engagements. The company has opened Xanadu, Team Computer's Experience Centre where customers and its partners learn and unlearn the new way of working together.

It cannot be denied that skill enhancement exercises and blending the new talents will raise the competencies, help the resources achieve more specialisation, receive proper recognition, and ultimately, create a healthy knowledge sharing environment. But this has to be a continuous journey, as the partners need to stay focused on upskilling and reskilling themselves.

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# THE SKILL VANTAGE

Channel partners are increasingly focusing on hiring and retaining talent with specific technical skills to grow in a highly competitive market

■ By Sandhya Michu

**I**t is true that digital transformation is revolutionising every industry, business, customer and workforce. On account of this, the business environment is increasingly becoming competitive and businesses are expected to transform themselves in order to stay relevant and profitable for partners. With increased adoption of cloud technology and cut-throat market competition, partners now consider it imperative to employ talent who have the skills and experience to give them a competitive advantage.



The need for skilled professionals, setting up centres of excellence, innovation hubs in key markets and enhanced focus on products and platforms are key investments being done by the partners for digital capabilities and drive greater collaboration across the ecosystem. Overall, partners admit that on an average, there is a sharp increase to 15-20 per cent from previous 5-10 per cent in their budget for skilling and upskilling manpower. Moreover, these investments are centered around advanced analytics and AI followed by hybrid cloud and cybersecurity. Increased focus on skilling and reskilling will be an industry priority as all businesses are dealing with a tech skills shortage.

The pace of change is palpable, but there's never been a better time to work with technology. Especially when you get to see both small and large organisations are making massive strides ahead on their digital transformation journey. With customers going digital, a large section of partners is coping up with attracting and retaining the talent. The noticeable change is stepping up of

budgets on recruiting the right talent at the same improving the stickiness of the resources.

Many partners believe that having a blend of both, bringing in new talents as well as training the existing resources, establishes a balance between the advancement of the existing workforce and encouraging a fresh perspective of the new ones. Companies should push existing people to the leadership position and scale out the team by onboarding freshers.

### Budgets on manpower steps up

Evolving customer needs and changing business climate are forcing partners to constantly look for new talent. Sharing the need for skilling and reskilling, Sabarinathan Sampath, Senior Vice President of Jaipur based ZNet Technologies explains, "It is very important that your personnel is up-to-date with the latest technologies so that they can serve customers in the best way. This will ensure that the customers have the confidence that they are working with a set of thorough professionals who are highly skilled in what they are doing. In fact,

over the last two years, we have heavily focused on upskilling and training of resources. Our team has gained a variety of certifications from Microsoft, AWS, Redhat, Alibaba, Plesk, 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 do cross-deploy resources in other teams to ensure that they get a good sense of what goes into other teams. Our overall training spends has gone up by 70 per cent."

Seconding this opinion, Nazmeen Ansari, director, Matrix 3D, says, "In training and certification our focus is always in the need of upskilling not just on a budget. We don't want to restrict the growth of our team because of the lack of a budget, that being said we have doubled our training budget. Cyber security, IT compliance, AI and ML are the key technologies where we are investing in people."

At the same time, the partners feel it is very important to train existing resources and group them with the new talents as this will create a healthy knowledge sharing environment. It is vital to infuse fresh blood into the organisation and these new resources bring new ideas and skills which could help in the growth of the organization.

Manish Tandon, Managing Director, Questa Software Systems states, "We are in the technology industry and to be in the market, it's very important that we know the upcoming technologies before our clients and competitors. Therefore, we have to learn and train our staff members in newer technologies and also keep infusing the new talent to replenish the team."

On the one hand, partners are investing in a great degree on recruiting new talents, but at the same partners are reimagining their businesses. For example, Gurgaon based Team Computers have recently undergone a complete makeover be at its offices or customer engagements. The company has opened-Xanadu,



"FOR MANAGING THE RETENTION OF TRAINED MANPOWER, WE OFFER VARIOUS PERKS"

**Sabarinathan Sampath,**  
Senior Vice President,  
ZNet Technologies



"IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE KNOW THE UPCOMING TECHNOLOGIES BEFORE OUR CLIENTS AND COMPETITORS"

**Manish Tandon,**  
Managing Director, Questa  
Software Systems

Team Computer's Experience Centre where customers and its partners learn and unlearn the new way of working together.

Ranjan Chopra, MD, Team Computers elaborates, "Customers in the digital age expect personalised experiences and self-service capabilities. Agents demand real-time information access on pending proposals and new products and schemes. Employees demand two-way communication with the organisation and simpler workflows for processes. The systems' modernisation you need today is more than an upgrade; you're playing a new game with new rules, in which you modernise not just the tools and functions, but the way you do it. The vendors are largely the same, but the options and principles of the past no longer apply."

Some companies like Futurenet Technologies invest more on freshers and interns. Ashok Lakshmichandran, Managing Director of the company remarks, "We blend new resources along with existing ones. We have the policy to recruit interns, students and then employ them with appropriate training. So over 50 per cent of recruitment in our organisation are freshers with our internal training."

#### What is calling the shots?

Customer expectations are constantly evolving. It is no longer about managing legacy IT systems, which seemed so capable a few years ago, is rapidly becoming obsolete. Hardware no longer stands alone.

#### PARTNERS ARE LOOKING FOR SKILLS AROUND:

- Cloud (IaaS, SaaS, PaaS) sales
- On-premise to cloud migration skills
- Multi-cloud infrastructure management skills
- Social media marketing, cloud technology, and advanced threat protection



**"I NEVER HAD AN ISSUE OF RETENTION, I FEEL THAT MY DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN FOR THE GUYS WHO WANT TO QUIT. I WILL NEVER HOLD THEM BACK AND WILL LET THEM SETTLE WHERE THEY OPTED FOR"**

**Manasi Saha**  
CEO,  
Macaws Infotech



**"WE BLEND NEW RESOURCES ALONG WITH EXISTING ONES. WE HAVE THE POLICY TO RECRUIT INTERNS, STUDENTS AND THEN EMPLOY THEM WITH APPROPRIATE TRAINING"**

**Ashok Lakshmichandran,**  
Managing Director,  
Futurenet Technologies

Sensors and internet connections are embedded in practically every tool. The software is no longer sold as a package to install. It is offered as a platform, by subscription from the cloud. Hence, with the changing business scenarios partners need to relook into their hiring patterns.

Sharing the dilemma of hiring new talent, Aditya Garg, Founder and CEO, Centilytics shares, "With most current technologies being under a decade old, finding experienced people with the right leadership capabilities is a major challenge. Either someone is young, smart and energetic, but lacks the maturity to run a team or an existing team that is just not equipped with the right skills for the current generation. Also, living in a VUCA world, one's unlearn, and relearn capabilities are a key trait where the best people are not the ones that know the technology you are looking for but are the ones that can quickly pick up whatever is currently new in the market without being impeded by all their existing knowledge."

Suresh Ramani, CEO, Techgyan mentions, "Having the people with the required capability is extremely important considering the leading edge work we do in the area of cloud technologies. The skills needed earlier were more of "break-fix". Now it is more of "consulting" skills. The skilling is shifting to online mode instead of the classroom mode. The whole process of onboarding is such that we find at least 50 per cent of people are not suitable. The single biggest challenge is that we cannot recruit laterally as the skill sets we need are not available. So we have to necessarily train the people before they become productive."

The advent of emerging technologies is forcing partners to add or train the professionals. Shantanu Som, CEO, Som Imaging Informatics informs, "Artificial intelligence, machine learning, Internet of Things and sensor electronics are the areas where the newly inducted employees' skill set in a POC brilliantly delivered much before the expected timeline,



A glimpse of Team Computers' Xanadu in Gurugram

which led us to get the business for an MNC. We have recruited around 15 new persons in the last two years who are working with new technologies. The fresh addition in all areas is around 37."

Finding suitable talent for

emerging technologies is not a cakewalk for the partners anymore. Now, a dedicated human resources department is must have for selecting and training the new talent.

Gurgaon based Centilytics' recruitment is split between lateral

and college hiring. Lateral hiring mostly happens through social hiring (eg. LinkedIn) and portals such as Instahyre. While the company has set up relationships with several colleges for direct campus hiring through 'Tech-Tiger program'. It is also running programs to engage college students to present them as Campus Ambassadors and make them the faces of the brand in their respective colleges. This enables them to learn and grow at a higher rate and helps Centilytics form a community amongst the students.

#### New talent, new opportunities

With the recent findings of Dell Technologies Index II, the lack of the right in-house skill sets is among the top five barriers to digital transformation success in India. Agreeing to the report findings, Som points out, "Finding genuine talent is small in number and difficult. Even found, they are somewhat not always ready to work with SMEs. They often come with some expectations, which are difficult to match."

On one end acquiring of new skills are breaking new grounds for partners. On the flip side, in the absence of required skillset partners are missing



"CUSTOMERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE EXPECT PERSONALISED EXPERIENCES AND SELF-SERVICE CAPABILITIES"

**Ranjan Chopra,**  
MD, Team Computers



"THE ADVENT OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IS FORCING PARTNERS TO ADD OR TRAIN THE PROFESSIONALS"

**Shantanu Som,**  
CEO, Som Imaging  
Informatics

out on business opportunities.

In the case of Questa software systems, the company gets recruitments from referrals, online portals and also from advertisements in local colleges for freshers. The new talent has ushered Questa in a new line of business. With the help of new skilled professionals, it has developed PMS, which is contributing to a large extent. On the contrary, the company had to let go of the FMS opportunities due to lack of manpower. Tandon of Questa is of the view that the cost of trained resources is a major challenge. And when freshers are recruited then the lead time to make them productive is three to six months minimum. This is a very lengthy and continuous process which requires a lot amount of investment in terms of money, time and patience.

Similarly, Techgyan is traditionally focused on few practice areas: communication, collaboration, while infrastructure and security were recently added. Hence, the company had to set up a brand new trained team on relevant technologies. "We recently bagged new business in the area of security where our solution



**"MOST OF THE INVESTMENTS REVOLVE AROUND BIG DATA AND CLOUD. BASICS OF CLOUD COMPUTING IS A MUST FOR ANY SOFTWARE ENGINEER"**

**Aditya Garg,**  
Founder and CEO, Centilytics

## BEST PRACTICES IN SKILLING AND UP-SKILLING

- As more millennials enter and contribute to the active global workforce, their dynamic working styles and work management are also registering its presence amongst organisations. Given this, remote working and work-life balance has emerged as one of the most basic requirements that the present-day employees now demand from their employees.
- Self-learning training modules and open platforms like "Udemy" or "Coursera" and encourage trainees to get certified in focused technologies like AWS (eg. AWS Solution Architect).
- Companies strongly believe in and constantly work towards closing the gender gap, taking into account important factors such as experience, capabilities, past performance, and value-driven vision.
- The biggest buzz and hype in the recruitment industry is the emerging technologies that have come into play. Artificial intelligence is being the trendsetter of all, HR circles are fueled by both the enthusiasm and fear of how it can impact their existing workforce as compared to bringing in new talents.

was pitched against other multi-vendor partners with specialised security solutions. We won on the promise of integrated security and productivity solution," says Ramani.

Garg informs, "Most of the investments revolve around big data and cloud. Today, knowing the basics of cloud computing is a must for any software engineer. This is followed by



**"HAVING THE PEOPLE WITH THE REQUIRED CAPABILITY IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT CONSIDERING THE LEADING EDGE WORK WE DO IN THE AREA OF CLOUD"**

**Suresh Ramani,**  
CEO, Techgyan mentions

capabilities around Hadoop, Hive, Spark or any big data platforms. While still a developing field in India, but one does look for data science and machine learning talent that can help grow product capabilities to a different level. The success of Centilytics is due to big data engineers whom we were able to bring-in very early. We always believed in young talent and most of our senior engineers are relatively younger and are extremely knowledgeable about the cloud and big data technologies."

Another challenge is a lack of practical knowledge. Sampath suggests there should be more IT industry and academic collaboration to train resources on IT coding principles, software engineering, security aspects, etc., to make them industry ready.

N K Mehta, MD, Secure Network Solutions avers, "Since we have been training new talent internally as a continuous process, such situation has not come to us that we lost an order because of lack of talent. We focus on security where technology changed happen very fast and hence we keep building enough talent pool."

In spite of the advantage of getting new talents around emerging technologies, finding the right cultural fit talent is one conspicuous challenge

where most company CEOs find difficult. Nazmeen Ansari informs, "We are always an early adopter of new technologies so upskilling and experimentation with emerging technology are a part of our culture. You don't always get talent that has expertise and exposure to the latest technology, so we have different criteria to recruit people. We look for people who are excited to learn about new things rather than someone who is skilled to do a single job because that job can be outdated next day, but a person who is enthusiastic to learn new things will always be a winner."

#### Combating talent attrition

Retention is a difficult task, but if a company does not create enough talent pool, then the management is not running a sustainable business. Traditionally, the attrition rate always high at SMB companies. To combat this grave issue, many partners have started introducing new policies to lower the attrition speed.

"This is a major challenge being faced by practically every company. New talent wants to quickly learn and jump the gun with a better salary. OEMs also have a tendency to pick up such trained talents from partners. Though its an unethical practice, it keeps happening. Nevertheless, partners are taking serious efforts to overcome the same. "In-house focus on learning and development, it helps to have some stickiness to the company for a few years. I think companies also should accept this fact and keep creating enough talent pool. The older generation has better stickiness in that sense, but they are a bit slow in learning and certification related to newer technologies. But they provide stability to the organisation. We need to have a mix of both generations and keep creating enough trained talent pool," Mehta explains.

Calling it a serious challenge Ramani from Techgyan says, "We usually hire fresh engineering graduates. And we do a lot of training. Within six months one third is asked to leave as we know we cannot expect them to deliver as per our



**"IN TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION OUR FOCUS IS ALWAYS IN THE NEED OF UPSKILLING NOT JUST ON A BUDGET. WE DON'T WANT TO RESTRICT THE GROWTH OF OUR TEAM BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF A BUDGET, WE HAVE DOUBLED OUR TRAINING BUDGET. CYBER SECURITY, IT COMPLIANCE, AI AND ML ARE THE KEY TECHNOLOGIES WHERE WE ARE INVESTING IN PEOPLE"**

**Nazmeen Ansari,**  
Director, Matrix 3D

expectations. And over the next couple of months, one third leave as they get very compelling offers due to our reputation. But one third continue as they know that the quality of training they are getting here is unmatched. So they stick around for a few years and then they get a big jump from MNCs."

"Infant mortality (freshers leaving the organisation) is high. We do our best to work through HR to create emotional bonding with the organisation and managers. We also have a monthly mentoring session to help them in learning and development," Ashok says.

"We have learned over so many years that money is not the only criteria to retain the talent, but if you are able

to provide people job satisfaction and a sense of ownership they try to be with you as long as they can, we try to provide that. We empower them to be your own boss," asserts Tandon.

When asked how ZNet Technologies dealing with this issue, Sabarinathan Sampath, states, "For managing the retention of trained manpower, we offer various perks that help them make good progress and growth in their careers. They need to see a good career path. Our organisation has seen transitioned from being a domain-hosting provider to an end-to-end cloud solution provider over the years. Our core team has been in the thick of this transition. They see the agility, flexibility and the energy in the organisation to adapt with the times. This has helped us to manage attrition better."

Som believes in promoting the talent for longevity. "We have a very clearly defined policy across the organisation for retention of top talents. We give them the freedom to experiment, we recognise their achievement through our half-yearly and annual events, they are sent to higher level training, often sent to overseas projects. For a few extremely talented people, we promote them to be part of the core management team with a shareholder of the company."

For Kolkata based Macaws Infotech, it is a different story. "I never had an issue of retention, I feel that my door is always open for the guys who want to quit. I will never hold them back and will definitely let them settle where they opted for. I also have experienced personally, those who are with me for the last 20 years, some have crossed even 15 years, it depends on the thought process about what they want and who they like," affirms Manasi Saha, CEO, Macaws Infotech.

Emphasising on creating the right culture, Garg says, "Culture is the only key to retain people. One will always find a competitor willing to pay more or offer better perks. It is the bond amongst the team members and meeting their professional growth desire that ultimately drives the stickiness of people."

# IT SALARIES: EMERGING TRENDS

IT salary structures in India are witnessing a shift with companies focused on a smarter, agile and diverse workforce, who are paid a premium for their niche in-demand skills

■ Sudipta Dev

The IT sector has traditionally been known to be among the highest paying, offering premium pay packages to the best talent; and going by the emerging salary trends, it is the most skilled in next gen technologies who will continue to be at the top of the game. Organisations are always on the lookout for an



agile and smart workforce, and those having skills like AI, ML, predictive analytics, cybersecurity are coming to the forefront as the most sought after workforce segment. The salaries which had plateaued in recent years, apart from some instances at the entry level, are witnessing an increase in pay projections. Further, remuneration in the form of ESOPs and phantom stocks are here to stay for CIO/CTOs, who are believed to be the tech visionaries for a company and are important partners in its growth.

### New trends

Domains that have seen a lot of changes in IT salaries are e-commerce (mobile and web applications), pharma, healthcare, medical devices, automotive and financial services. This has largely been due to the advent of AI, analytics, deep learning and RPA. "Amongst all of these domains or industries, e-commerce has really impacted the way salaries are structured. UI and front-end developers, especially with a good understanding of high volume transactions based applications have seen significant increase in salary hikes," says Thammaiah BN, Managing Director, Kelly Services India, adding that earlier compensation would be determined



**"ORGANISATIONS ARE CONTINUING TO PAY FOR PERFORMANCE, AND VARIABLE PAY HOLDS A HIGHER PERCENTAGE IN THE CTC"**

**Manmeet Singh,**  
President of Experis,  
ManpowerGroup India

by the number of years of experience. But now, the dynamics of the market have changed such that candidates who understand niche technologies and are able to move faster between technologies have a greater advantage. Furthermore, now

companies do not necessarily pay more just because a candidate is coming from a bigger brand or college. "Today, it's highly probable that an IIT graduate might be earning lesser than a candidate from a lesser known college, but with a good domain knowledge in cybersecurity. It's no longer a pedigree game," asserts Thammaiah BN.

The workforce is also getting more diverse. In a team of 10, there could be a need to hire at least three women. This means that companies at times are also willing to pay a premium to get women onboard.

In an industry that is divided into two main segments – product based or service based IT companies – the latter are moving to captive models and deploying their employees at end-customer premises which typically is a product organisation. "This is one such interesting pattern which is apparent today. In addition, there has been a surge in demand for both contractual and permanent staffing; thus impacting salaries of the employees working in our Indian IT organisations," affirms Manu Saigal, Business Head – IT Services, The Adecco Group India.

Another important factor is that with the kind of transformation the industry is going through, employers are now looking for an agile workforce that is more adaptable to new-age skills such as robotics, big data, analytics, automation. Manmeet Singh, President of Experis, ManpowerGroup India, shares that as a result, there is an obvious dip in the mid and senior level hiring as people management is no more a sought-after skill. "The average variable pay projection has improved from 15.8 per cent to 16.1 per cent. This clearly tells us that organisations are continuing to pay for performance and variable pay holds a higher percentage in the CTC," he states.

The middle management layer in many organisations is being flattened. Kris Lakshminanth, Founder Chairman & Managing Director, The Head Hunters India, mentions that previously, a project manager would

## SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

Experience: 15 - 20 years

IT Skill Set	Min. Salary (INR per annum)	Max. Salary (INR per annum)
Apps Development	30,00,000	60,00,000
iPhone Developers	28,00,000	60,00,000
Full Stack Development	28,00,000	50,00,000
Microsoft Stack	28,00,000	50,00,000
DevOps	30,00,000	50,00,000
Python	30,00,000	50,00,000
Data Scientist	32,00,000	60,00,000
Big Data, Hadoop	32,00,000	55,00,000
Vision Plus	35,00,000	70,00,000
Microservices	35,00,000	60,00,000
WebCommerce	35,00,000	60,00,000
Supply Chain Management	26,00,000	50,00,000

Source: Kelly Services

be in charge of 20 to 25 people, but now – thanks to robotics, etc – many organisations are able to have one project manager for 100 people approx. For instance, recently, Cognizant Technology Solutions (CTS) let go of about 200 senior employees in an effort to realign its workforce.

Salary increase of IT professionals has been very lean (if at all) in the last three years. "The average increase would be between two to seven per cent. In contrast, in earlier years, the increases ranged from 10 to 25 per cent. Also, automatic promotions, etc, are no longer a norm," says Lakshmikanth, adding that the average Indian software professional has earned less in 2017 compared to the previous year. This is because there is a variable portion of their salary which is directly proportional to their profit centre performance and overall company performance. Since most companies reported marginal growth in sales/profits, there were steep cuts in the bonuses. Sharing the same views, Sudhakar Reddy, Executive Director, Nirvedha, agrees that the greatest anomaly he can observe in the last five years is that salaries of IT professionals got stagnated and there is a lot of churn in the project management roles.

#### **Smarter workforce**

The past five years have also witnessed a sea change in how HR professionals are looking at annual salary increases. "Investing in high potential employees and key talent in terms of skills in emerging technology has emerged as a major trend. The pay-out gap between an average performer and key skills is growing year-on-year," states Singh, reminding that at 63 per cent, this is the highest differentiation India has observed. Additionally, employers are rating top performance employees on basis of parameters defining revenue growth as a result of direct or indirect contribution of the employee and hence the ratings have dropped by close to 30 per cent, implying that organisations are not hesitating to

differentiate sharply on the basis of performance and are thereby compensating these performers adequately.

With organisations looking for a smarter and more skilled workforce, the emergence of GICs in India has impacted the way salaries are determined. Many companies now trust assessment tools to be more scientific. "For every 25-30 candidates taking the assessment, on an average 15-20 per cent clear. The figure is much lower in case of complex technologies like deep learning or RPA. This has resulted in some companies taking assessment scores as a factor while determining salary hikes," mentions Thammaiah BN.

Also, with the greater acceptance of Agile methodology in software development, candidates are



**"AT ONE END, COMPANIES ARE INCREASING THE VARIABLE COMPONENT; WHEREAS, AT THE OTHER END, WE ARE SEEING THEM REWARD THEIR HIGH PERFORMERS IN A NON-MONETARY WAY BY SPONSORING SPECIFIC SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAININGS"**

**Thammaiah BN**  
Managing Director,  
Kelly Services India

expected to perform multiple levels of software development simultaneously. At one side, a candidate might be focusing on software development, the same person might also be involved in testing and writing a script to automate a process. "All of this means that the candidates have to be smarter than before. Companies are essentially relying on lesser talent to get the work done. We have also seen instances candidates being offered 5x or 6x times their salaries," points out Thammaiah BN.

#### **Pay packages**

An interesting aspect is that fresh graduates from some of the biggest and leading institutes like IIT, NIT, BITS, who might have no real industry exposure, are grabbing the remuneration package of over ₹12 lakhs. Abhishek Agarwal, Senior Vice President (Global Delivery), The Judge Group India believes that the changing landscape of training and education in the institutes should be accredited with producing IT professionals equipped with the required skills and knowledge. The new talent further gets the salary hike as soon as they get the work experience of minimum two years and move on to senior positions. While an experienced IT professional earns no less than ₹ 20-30 lakhs a year.

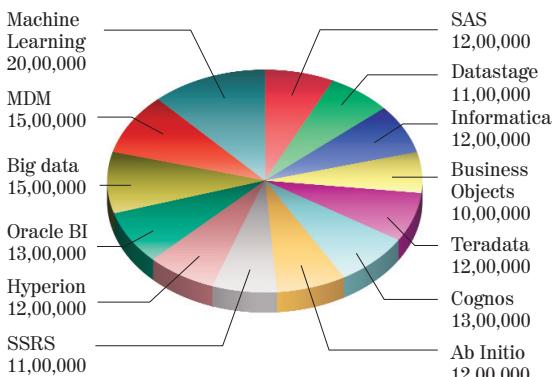
"The annual salary of professionals with a working experience of minimum three-five years in the department of General Management and Operations and Tech Support in an IT company ranges from ₹ 15 lakhs to ₹ 30 lakhs. For software developers and engineers, the salary package ranges from ₹ 12 lakhs and may reach up to ₹ 20 lakhs with the maturity of the career," shares Agarwal.

After almost a decade, the IT industry has raised entry level compensation drastically. For the run of the mill software person, big companies are offering ₹ 3.1 to ₹ 3.2 lakhs, a marginal increase of less than five per cent. Lakshmikanth informs that there is a new category of

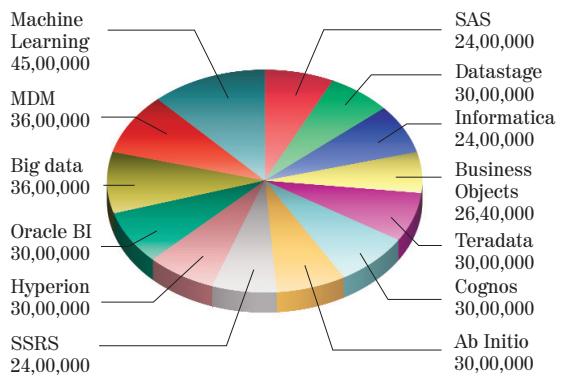
## DATA WAREHOUSING/BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

*Experience : 8 - 15 years*

### IT Skill Set



Min. Salary (INR per annum)

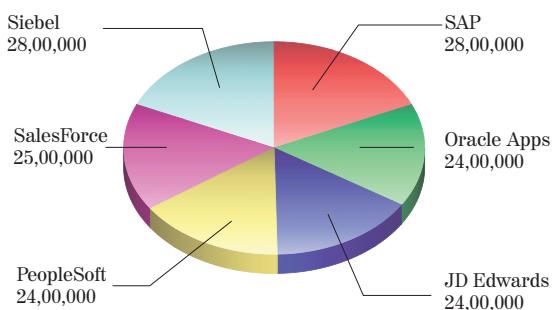


Max. Salary (INR per annum)

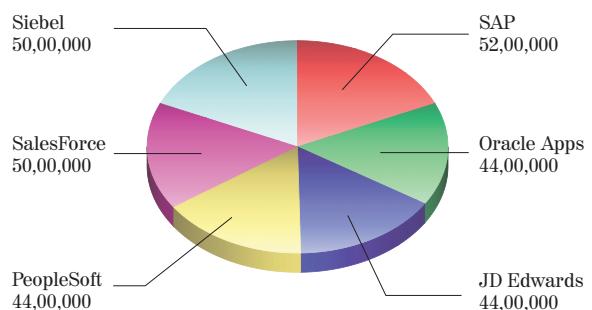
## ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING

*Experience : 15 - 20 years*

### IT Skill Set



Min. Salary (INR per annum)



Max. Salary (INR per annum)

*Source : Kelly Services*

software trainees being recruited by the top 10 companies. They have different names for these employees who are hired at a much higher salary. TCS calls it the Ninja Warriors.

"They have to go through an all India test (multiple tests), hacking competitions, several rounds of face-to-face interviews. The successful people are paid between ₹ 6.5 to ₹ 8 lakhs as CTC. The Ninja Warriors are getting more than double compensation compared to the average intern selected from campus," he adds.

There are, in fact, two types of

companies which offer employment for entry level IT jobs – the mass recruiters and those who have a limited intake for the year. Mass recruiters like TCS, Infosys, Wipro, etc, have almost similar pay.

"Whereas, other organisations who take limited entry level engineers pay higher, based on individual competencies and they can range from ₹ 10 lakhs per annum and can go up to ₹ 100 lakhs/annum," says Reddy, who believes that companies though feel that paying top dollars to entry level engineers would help them retain for a longer period;

however, in truth, young professionals look for those organisations who have a very clear roadmap for learning opportunities to their employees throughout their association.

### CIO / CTO salaries

The CIOs / CTOs are regarded as the tech leaders and important players in the organisation, looking to be key drivers of change in the industry. The salaries mostly range from ₹ 65 lakhs to ₹ 1.5 crore. In some instances, it has also gone up to ₹ 2.5 crore per annum. Financial services,

including banking, top the pack in terms of highest compensation offered to CIOs. "Their tech spends are also the highest. Big industrial houses in India also are excellent pay masters for CIO/CTOs. The range is ₹ 1.75 - ₹ 2.5 crore," says Vikram Bhardwaj, President & CEO, Redileon Partners.

Salaries go up according to the parameters of technological skill sets that each employee possesses and the organisational technology landscape. Saigal observes that many IT product companies, e-commerce and fintech companies are paying well. The compensation depends on the size of the company, industry and also the scope of work. "There is a new animal called the CDO – Chief Digital Officer. He or she occupies in many cases one level higher than the CIO/CTO. Salaries can range from ₹ 60 lakhs to ₹ 200 lakhs," points out Lakshminikanth.

It is true that most senior level talent work with a vision of creating an astounding impact. They look beyond just high salaries.

"Companies/Founders must get creative while offering remunerations to these tech visionaries by offering them decent amount of ESOPs.

ESOPs can prove to be a truly lucrative remuneration strategy for both companies and employees. Firms can offer CTOs a percentage ownership/stake in the company. This approach will provide them with a potentially lucrative tradeoff that encourages big rewards in the future, in addition to their 'cash' compensation," states Roopa Kumar, COO, Purple Quarter, a CTO recruitment firm.

Most tech visionaries appreciate the thought of having skin in the game as this leans towards creating wealth and being associated with the company as a partner rather than an employee. Kumar albeit believes that as per market evaluation and compilation of data, only few companies have employee friendly policies when it comes to stock options viz. high strike price, minimum vesting in first three to five years, etc. There is lack of education



**"THE ANNUAL SALARY OF PROFESSIONALS WITH A WORKING EXPERIENCE OF MINIMUM THREE-FIVE YEARS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS AND TECH SUPPORT IN AN IT COMPANY RANGES FROM ₹15 LAKHS TO ₹30 LAKHS"**

**Abhishek Agarwal,**  
Senior Vice President  
(Global Delivery),  
The Judge Group India

around ESOPs, owing to which talent does not value ESOPs or leave their earned (accumulated) ESOPs. There is lack of trust on stocks as many firms fail to honour them.

#### Skills in demand

The skills demanding higher compensation packages are AI, ML, big data, cloud, predictive analytics, full stack developers, data security, cyber security, robotics, etc. Compensation for newer business lines – and consequent skills and experience such as cloud, robotics, AI, etc – have seen exponential growth owing to their higher margin and profitability contribution while the bread-and-butter businesses have seen tepid growth if at all, points out Bhardwaj.

While it is a known fact that the tech industry is filled with high-paying jobs, it is also an ever-

changing job market. "One day a skill is hot and the next it's not. Roles of data scientists and advanced analysts are among the fastest growing roles and employers are willing to pay premium salaries for professionals with expertise in these areas," says Sailgal.

Job roles like machine learning engineers, data scientists, and data mining specialists, cloud architects and cybersecurity analysts will continue to be at the forefront. Further, industries from logistics to healthcare will be searching for technology professionals with relevant skills, such as digital transformation, data security and cybersecurity.

"Going by the numbers from the technology industry perspective, there will be a 20-25 per cent increase in number of positions in the last 12 months. It is predicted that the average salary increase is 26-30 per cent while shifting jobs, whereas from the digital and analytics arena, there is an increase of 15 per cent in jobs and the average salary increment remains at 31- 35 per cent," says RP Yadav, CMD, Genius Consultants, adding that the percentage of analytics professionals earning more than ₹15 lakhs per annum has increased from 17 per cent in 2016 to 21 per cent in 2017, to 22.3 per cent in 2018. The monetary perk of a career in data analytics is huge. Organisations, irrespective of their industries, are looking for analytics professionals with diverse skill sets.

The new buzzword in the tech industry is data science and AI is at the forefront of the next technological revolution. "The launch of the AI Task Force under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to drive the use of AI for India's economic transformation has added the necessary thrust," states Yadav. Sumesh Nair, Co-founder, Board Infinity reminds that analytics salaries have always commanded a premium and will continue to do so. A lot depends also on the size of the IT company. "Smaller firms are able to attract talent by paying little higher than market averages. An IT

organisation which sells only in the India market, will not be able to afford the same salary for entry level talent as another firm which will be selling primarily in North America market," mentions Nair.

Software product, aggregators, fin-tech and e-commerce will drive the demand for technology professionals with relevant skills such as digital transformation, data security and cybersecurity.

In a recent survey conducted by Experis IT, employers were asked what is the in-demand IT practice area that needs skilled IT talent, and 32 per cent reported web technologies. "Companies are looking for experienced professionals who are focused on and are adapting to advanced technologies such as the IoT, AI, virtual and augmented reality faster than their conventional counterparts," shares Singh.

The startup wave is also a disruptor of sorts, with around two-fold increase in salaries post Indian startup boom which happened in the last few years. Freshers now have a huge number of options in the Indian startup space



**"IN ADDITION, THERE HAS BEEN A SURGE IN DEMAND FOR BOTH CONTRACTUAL AND PERMANENT STAFFING; THUS IMPACTING SALARIES OF THE EMPLOYEES WORKING IN OUR INDIAN IT ORGANISATIONS"**

**Manu Saigal,**  
Business Head – IT Services,  
The Adecco Group India

with competitive market salaries, provided they are able to demonstrate/prove required skillset. "Recently most of the startups started giving competitive salaries to entry level IT professionals along with significant stock options. This was unheard of till a few years ago. These companies are willing to pay high salaries to software developers," says Utsav Bhattacharjee, Co-founder, Reculta (a campus placement specialist). As of now, with more and more startups creating opportunities for employment of skilled individuals, this is one of the best time for software developers who can command premium CTCs.

### Emergence of Tier II

While the metro cities continue to attract the best talent, there has been a change in cities like Bengaluru, Pune and Hyderabad dominating the market with highest paid job offers. According to Saigal of Adecco, Delhi and Mumbai are slipping down, but there has been a significant shift to Tier II cities like Chandigarh, Trivandrum, Noida, Gurugram,

## GIG ECONOMY

**T**he global freelancer market is worth US\$ 104 billion, and growing at an annual rate of 14 per cent. "It is interesting to note that one in every four freelancers is from India. We offer 50 per cent of the global freelancers in solely the IT domain, according to a report from PayPal. The report further reveals that the majority of freelancers are below the age of 40 with an average annual income of ₹ 19 lakhs. Nearly 23 per cent of those surveyed earned annual incomes between ₹ 40 and ₹ 45 lakhs where the top jobs included web/mobile development, web design, data entry and internet research," says Ayush Goyal, Founder CEO, Mission Kya, a fast growing crowdsourced online freelance marketplace.

Artificial intelligence and

automation have been at the forefront of altering job roles in recent times and will continue to have profound impacts on skill requirements. Goyal informs that 22 per cent of HR professionals think that companies will hire freelancers for deep learning and blockchain architecture, while 16 per cent believe that social media/SEO will be the primary recruiters. These are followed by app developers at 12 per cent, finance auditors and content writers/bloggers at 10 per cent, web developers at nine per cent, virtual assistant jobs at eight per cent and graphic designers at six per cent.

While the US holds the pole position with 53 million independent workers, the Indian subcontinent comprising 15 million freelancers is edging closer to them as each year

passes with workers independently contracted in various sectors like IT and programming, finance, designing, marketing and sales, animation, etc.

"The average hourly rate around the world is US\$ 21. However, this number dwindles slightly in India with the average hourly rate at US\$ 19. This can then be divided as 55 per cent Indian professionals charge under US\$ 10 an hour, 29 per cent between US\$ 11 and US\$ 30, and 15 per cent over US\$ 30 per hour. It is also interesting to note that male freelancers charge an average 11 per cent more than women in India," he states.

Delhi-NCR is regarded as the hub of freelancing in India as it comprises 30 per cent of the country's contractual agreements.

Bhubaneswar and Ahmedabad.

In fact, Tier II cities like Kochi and Ahmedabad are slowly becoming good job markets for potential job seekers. Thammaiah BN attributes it to the fact that governments are now focusing a lot on building the infrastructure in smaller cities and creating an environment through education and opportunities, thus catering to both, the supply and demand side.

Low cost of operations is one of the factors drawing organisations to Tier II and Tier III cities. Further, companies are also grabbing opportunities to move into Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Singh points out that satellite cities like Pune and Gurugram are creating more job opportunities with Pune recently taking over the saturated Mumbai from being a better job generating city in India. "In spite of Hyderabad's position in the list, it has perhaps been the most preferred job destination among Indians, alongside Bengaluru," says Singh.

Software development is still concentrated in larger cities. Bhattacharjee acknowledges that though there are a few startups in smaller cities like Jaipur and Indore, 95 per cent of tech startups are still based out of Delhi NCR, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

### **Non-monetary remuneration**

A recent survey done by ManpowerGroup revealed that 32 per cent of employers worldwide are now offering additional perks and benefits, such as increasing vacation and providing new joiner and well-being incentives – as a bait to attract the best talent and to improve employer brand. Singh affirms that we are amidst a skills revolution where talent is of essence as new roles emerge as fast as others become obsolete, employers realise that learnability is more important than existing knowledge in the IT domain. While companies are tackling this shortage by upskilling their own workforce, it is imperative they secure the talent by boosting the employee morale.

With the new generation looking at compensation differently, non-monetary benefits are also becoming important. These could range from learning opportunities to complimentary meals, creches and memberships to health clubs. "At one end, we are seeing companies increase the variable component; whereas, at the other end, we are seeing companies reward their high performers in a non-monetary way by sponsoring specific skill development trainings," remarks Thammaiah BN.

The importance of non-monetary remunerations cannot be overlooked. Agarwal explains why, "It becomes

important for employers to keep the hard-working and self-motivated employees engaged and rewarded in order to retain them as they often seek a way out of a monotonous and stagnant situation. Monetary rewards and increment, most often, do not work in such a case. On the other hand, non-monetary remuneration can back up the worst of such cases." These include gift cards, discounts on parking, allowance of work from home a week, and sponsored movie shows. Non-monetary remuneration is in fact considered a great source of motivation and employee loyalty program by both employers and employees.

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Date : 1/3/2019

sd/-  
**Vaidehi Thakar**  
Publisher

# LENOVO TARGETS STRONG GROWTH IN DATA CENTRE BUSINESS

While Lenovo continues to disrupt the data centre market with its customer-centric solutions, it is undertaking a differentiated approach to empower partners, which will help them tap new markets and unlock the underlying opportunities

By Nivedan Prakash & Sandhya Michu

In order to compete with heavyweights like Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) and Dell Technologies in the data centre business, Lenovo has formed a new business unit, Lenovo Data Center Group (DCG). This division within Lenovo is a year old. The initial focus has been on defining the strategy and the funding for the development of new hardware and software products.

In India, the group is headed by Vivek Sharma who took over the role of Managing Director in April 2017. The company's channel business is being led by Ashish Taneja. With the formation of this new entity, the company has been putting its strong go-to-market strategy, both for end customers and partners. Eyeing a strong growth in the data centre business in the India market, Lenovo DCG has taken a partner-focused approach and is going to announce a slew of channel enablement programs in 2019.

As part of its offerings, the company focuses on areas like HCI, hybrid cloud, and software-defined storage. It is even moving into Edge computing. The company is positioning itself as a more consistent provider of services, rebates, programs, etc, for its channel partners. Lenovo has opportunity to grow its data centre hardware installed base. Lenovo has alliances and supply chain processes in place as well as a

technology vision that will help it capitalise on this opportunity.

Speaking exclusively to CRN India, Ashish Taneja, Channel Head, Data Center Group, Lenovo India, says, "Lenovo DCG is working like a startup. Before taking a channel route, we first established our customers' stories. The idea was to present a complete spectrum with customer preferences before the partners. We are the dark horse and a small player, so we are very agile and nimble. The partners we pick and choose have shown strong business appetite and want to scale up. We will remain partner focused as our blueprint and strategy doesn't hinder our partners which provides us with a different edge than the others. Currently, we are working with more than 350 value and volume partners."

## Taking differentiated approach

For driving the partner's business, Lenovo DCG is building a partner program covering the important aspects including market, technologies, profitability and simplicity. "In my opinion, there's no perfect partner program across markets for one company and there's a certain bit of adaptation always required. The partner program simply runs around ease of business and its profitability, there's no third thing. You can't have too many tenants in a program. The program is relevant to a partner if he

can quickly align and is comfortable – these are the only two requisites, nothing else," he affirms.

With the new team and defined strategies for partners, the company is doubling its partner base every quarter.

From a channel perspective, it is investing in initiatives such as launching more formal certifications, including through the Lenovo Data Center Sales Professional and Lenovo Data Center Technical Sales Professional programs. It is also facilitating more consultative engagements with customers by offering partners deeper training around industry-specific IT trends and customer requirements.

Enhancing and restructuring its go-to-market initiatives more closely align Lenovo's selling model with customer demand for longer term, transformation-centric and project-based relationships with their data centre infrastructure providers.

Taneja asserts, "Our GTM strategy is relevant to our size and scale of business. We are a 100 per cent partner driven organisation. In India, we have a compelling partner story in place. While all the businesses are essentially led by partners, there are certain HPC businesses where we have to work directly with the organisation because of the nature and demand of the business. Barring this, all other focus verticals including government, upper

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OUR GTM STRATEGY IS RELEVANT TO OUR SIZE AND SCALE OF BUSINESS. WE ARE A 100 PER CENT PARTNER DRIVEN ORGANISATION. IN INDIA, WE HAVE A COMPELLING PARTNER STORY IN PLACE

ASHISH TANEJA,  
CHANNEL HEAD, DATA CENTER GROUP,  
LENOVO INDIA



mid markets mid market, and SMB are all addressed by our partners."

"Our channel business is doubling every quarter and the way business is growing, it looks like that in the coming quarter, we will doubling it as well. We are growing small and in limited ventures, as we are taking the right and firm steps. We are hand picking, choosing and growing with our partners," he emphasises.

The company is conscious about two things in its infancy stage of growth. Firstly, it wants to keep the channel conflict to the minimum. This means doing more with less. All accounts have been mapped to channel partners. "So, when channel partners engage with any customer, we know exactly which account which partners are looking into. And this is proactively done by our partners. Partners feel confident in this structured approach and they come in with requests of the account they want to work on. Generally, most of them go to the vendor companies and ask what can we do for them; but in our case, we approach partners with the accounts, ask them to pick and choose, and give them the first right to refusal. This is the kind of change of taste that we have brought for partners from what they have been used to, and this opens a lot of doors for us. Then we back it up with the entire program of deal generation,

demand generations, partner led events and whole gamut around it," explains Taneja.

#### **Channel integration post-Netapp alliance**

Lenovo has signed a storage alliance with NetApp, in a bid to challenge the market dominance of Dell EMC and HPE.

Lenovo DCG has made its offerings stronger with its partnership with NetApp. As the company had a relatively small portfolio in storage, this partnership with NetApp and its extensive portfolio provides much bigger access to 90 per cent of this market. "The partnership with NetApp demonstrates the company's commitment to deliver the best storage and data management offerings to its customers. Our story of server-storage as a spectrum completes 70 per cent of it. We are not competing with them. We have our own box and we sell it to our partner sets. NetApp also has its own boxes which they sell to their partner sets without any overlapping," he informs.

#### **HCI and AI – big focus areas**

With new alliances, such as that with NetApp and new products, Lenovo DCG has its sights set on a successful 2019. Doubling the

hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) business; that takes the form of Nutanix today. It's an area where there's a lot of headroom to grow in the market.

HCI and AI are the two big focus areas for Lenovo DCG and the company is ensuring readiness and strong pre-sales as well as process support for its partners. "HCI makes sense for the partners as we see increased growth opportunities. We have the most diverse portfolio of ways to deliver that technology to our mutual customers. With our agreement with NetApp and our new storage line, we can penetrate the broad storage market, over 80 per cent of it, and we see it as the next area of growth for us and our partners," adds Taneja.

Apart from HCI, AI is gaining momentum among partners. However, Lenovo feels it is at the evaluation stage because very few customers have embarked on the journey. "We've invested some couple of billion dollars into AI and having dedicated teams in the world talking about how to monetise this for customers. We have set up labs wherein we invite customers and partners to experience the AI journey. The entire program has been encapsulated into 10 steps and we are exploring new areas of AI applications," he concludes.

# 'THE INDIAN MARKET IS VIBRANT AND EAGER TO ADOPT NEW TECHNOLOGIES'

As a pioneer in the open-source space, Red Hat is looking at different solution practices and the partners associated with these practices, shares **Neeraj Bhatia**, Director – Commercial & Partner Sales, Red Hat, in an interaction with **Mohit Rathod**

## **Amidst digital transformation, how are you capitalising on opportunities which have come up with this changing market?**

A recent industry report stated that almost half of the Fortune 500 companies that existed in the year 2000 have now shut down. There is a huge transformation of business happening at every level; not just related to IT. Earlier IT was getting transformed, but the new digital wave and automation is creating challenges for businesses today. The core part of transformation is innovation and we believe innovation is being driven by open source. Cloud and containers came out of open source, whose base is Linux, which is where Red Hat started. We have mastered the technology and are providing our customers a seamless experience with the Red Hat Enterprise Linux, both on premise, in-cloud and also in a hybrid environment, whether that is between cloud service providers or on your own data centre with a virtualised infrastructure.

A single operating system operates across and that provides our customers the possibilities and the opportunities to move their workloads across these three different paradigms and be able to choose one against the other. With the latest advancements in Red Hat Enterprise Linux, a workload which is only running on data centre on RHEL

can easily be moved with other tools that we have. This, in our view, is digital transformation. The base of all of this is the operating system at Red Hat Enterprise Linux, coupled with OpenShift platform, which is a Platform as a Service (PaaS) technology.

The operating system of the data centre, with the latest advancements in the operating systems of the cloud and also OpenStack, is enabling customer and service providers to give the best experiences and technology in an Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) model to the users, which include new-age technology companies, telcos, governments, banks, manufacturing companies, etc. By offering the Red Hat Enterprise Linux with OpenShift, OpenStack, we are at the centre of the digital transformation.

## **With customers adopting cloud technologies, how has been Red Hat's growth in the Indian market?**

In India, the biggest advantage is the government's decision to embrace open source. India is a nation of developers, who are working on proprietary technologies and driving innovation. From that perspective, there is a positive sentiment around cloud and digital transformation in India. Red Hat is well poised to take advantage of this environment. We

have a partner-led model. While we have business units that engage with the customers directly like telcos, banks and governments, a large part of our engagement is driven through our partners. Partners are enabled and invited to build their services capabilities around the technology and deliver a complete outcome to customers as opposed to simply selling a piece of software.

That is our model which gives us an added advantage to every IT company, from hardware technology providers, software providers, services companies, re-sellers to cloud providers; they are all our partners. This is how Red Hat is riding the digital transformation wave and the cloud wave in India. On cloud itself, we are witnessing healthy growth with all the service providers. We partnered with AWS, Google Cloud, Alibaba, IBM Software.

## **What's your observation of hybrid cloud adoption?**

Hybrid cloud allows customers to use the best available technology and uses the elasticity of what the hosted environment can provide. When a customer decides to move a specific application to cloud or part of it, they look at cost, total usability and public interface. If there are individuals and other businesses who interacting with

their business using an app or interface, they also take into consideration how secure the environment is or how easily it is available to them. This has positively driven customers to move to the hybrid environment.

We have ensured security in the Red Hat Enterprise Linux which is the operating system that's powering data centre and the cloud now. As customers gain more trust on cloud, they are moving their applications on to a hosted environment. Further, technologies like OpenStack allow customers to build their own in-house cloud offerings. As all of these areas continue to grow, we will have customer applications move across data centres and private clouds that need a lot of tools for automation and management, to identify and allocate resources to manage workloads. That's the big value that Red Hat brings. We have the entire management tool for hybrid cloud environment and the automation tool to make customers' applications more automated and more manageable. That's how we participate in the hybrid cloud environment; we call it 'open hybrid cloud'.

#### **How critical has been the role of your partner ecosystem in driving success? Please elaborate on your efforts on channel programs and partner enablement initiatives**

We have a partner program called 'Partner Connect', which has its own partner tiers that allow partners to sign up with Red Hat, get trained and develop joint business plans. The essence of partnership at Red Hat enables partners to offer their services around our technology. Our partners have not just brought our technology to the customer, but they have also built on top of it and delivered the outcomes that customers seek.

We have embarked upon a journey with two advanced partnership programs. One is the OpenShift Partner Builder Program which addresses the whole momentum around markets. We started on this journey around three or four quarters ago, when we identified



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**THE PARTNER CONNECT PROGRAM HAS THREE TIERS. THE BASIC TIER IS CALLED THE 'READY BUSINESS PARTNER' AND IS A FIRST LEVEL TIER WHERE ONE MAY GO TO THE WEBSITE, SELF-CERTIFY AND SIGN UP**

**NEERAJ BHATIA,  
DIRECTOR - COMMERCIAL & PARTNER SALES,  
RED HAT**

partners, put together a business plan, carried out an assessment of which partners fit into the OpenShift Partner Builder Program and launched the same. We have about half a dozen partners participating in the program, who are building their own services and offerings for customers. The program takes care of the training at sales, resales and delivery stages. It enables partners to put together business plans in specific industries that both the organisations now work on. The goals that are set for that program are a combination of the partner services bookings and the Red Hat components. We have made sure

that our goals are aligned with our partners', thereby increasing their profitability, their skill in the game and their value to their customers.

Another program is around automation, which is built on Ansible. We are in the incubation stage of this program.

#### **Please elaborate on the partner accreditation structure followed at Red Hat**

The partner connect program has three tiers. The basic tier is called the 'Ready Business Partner' and is a first level tier where one may go to the website, self-certify and sign up on the basis of the basic check on the back-end. The next tier is called 'Advanced Business Partner' which provides an increasing set of benefits for building Red Hat business plans, focusing on growing both renewals and identifying and closing new opportunities. Advanced partners enjoy enhanced benefits and access to additional resources designed to help them build enterprise open source practices and increase revenue. The final tier is known as 'Premier Business Partner' which is more global in nature. We work with these partners in two or three different regions and require a much bigger force of people who are certified with Red Hat in various technologies and solutions. They receive the highest level of visibility at Red Hat. A partner in India will get the similar engagement and program from us and even if he signs up in any other country.

#### **Do you follow best practices of other SAARC markets in India and vice-versa?**

The philosophy is the same; we lead with the values and the ability of the partner to deliver, understand technology and talk our language to the customers. We are seeing that in the SAARC region, while other countries are smaller, they have partners focused on customer segments and the horizontal segments they want to deliver to. We had a positive experience in those countries, but for us, SAARC countries are

partner-led only, so we don't have direct sales force in those countries. We recently appointed Ingram as our distributor for the SAARC countries and Ingram has dedicated resources for Red Hat for market engagements. We also have India-based resources in the team who manage the SAARC region. We are receiving a positive response for open source and various technologies in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. Governments there look up to how the Indian government has taken up digital transformation and how we are partnering with them.

#### **Amidst emergence of born-in-cloud companies, do you see the traditional partners evolving as well?**

Our focus is equal for on-premise, hybrid and cloud, along with the application area as that is a critical part of what we do. The traditional partners still continue to have a large footprint in the market. The born-in-the-cloud partners are acting more as influencers and consulting organisations. As they work in the area of applications, there is no infrastructure to sell; they are enabling customers to move to cloud or build their application on the cloud. Our interaction with born-in-the-cloud partners is to an extent wherein they talk to their customers and enable the customer's transformation onto the cloud. As they start modifying their applications, we engage with them. It's an evolving partnership module and as a lot of them are new and small. It's an interesting area and I think it will have a positive impact in the next 12 to 24 months and we are investing with them. A large part of our focus with them include Azure and AWS, because they predominantly lead that ecosystem.

We have partners who have taken businesses out of large SIs. We have partners who have taken large outsourcing deals away from traditional SIs in India and are delivering to customers. These customers are not small – these are business houses, insurance and banking service providers.

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#### **THE SUBSCRIPTION MODEL IS HERE TO STAY; THE NEW TREND IS THAT EVERYBODY NEEDS TO MOVE TO A SUBSCRIPTION MODEL. SUBSCRIPTION IS THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN HOLD YOUR CUSTOMERS FOR LONG**

#### **The partner ecosystem is still in the evaluation stage in terms of emerging technologies like AI, IoT and ML. Being a global giant, how are you building the confidence, capabilities and competencies among partners?**

We don't address AI or IoT as application areas. The underlying operating system in all of these areas is the Red Hat Enterprise Linux. All of these initiatives are born out of the open source movement, where we invest and put in a lot of R&D efforts. From that perspective, we don't directly play in the market, but we are working with partners for defining their strategies around these technologies and IoT is a big part of it. We think that businesses will have to evolve to create those devices that are intelligent and an integral part of the whole IoT wave. On the automation side, we have fair bit of technology with us. Most of the SIs are on their way in building their practices around automation, which will then lead to AI and bots and other innovations.

#### **Do you think the services model is the way ahead for the partners?**

We created the subscription model almost 19 years ago, but what we bring to the customer today is a service subscription model. The subscription model is here to stay; the new trend is that everybody needs to move to a subscription model. Subscription is the only way you can hold your customers for long.

#### **Do you have a Centre of Excellence, where not only the**

#### **partners, but also the customers can experience the innovation being done by Red Hat?**

This is an area which we are transforming. We have innovation labs in Singapore and the US, where we take customers to the lab. We get experts from across the world to pitch, depending on the requirements. We also invite the customer's resources to participate. Together, a team is formed where we have resources from Red Hat and customers who meet at a location. It is a four-eight week residential program where we pick up a process or particular aspect that the customer desires to focus on. We ideate, look at different technologies, create prototypes and test them. We involve and enable the customer's resources to present the prototype to their organisation, further to which, we either continue on that journey or make changes accordingly. This is a unique experience we offer to our customers where they identify business needs and we help address them.

#### **What are your expectations from partners; and how crucial is their success for Red Hat?**

Our partners' success is critical for us. We are releasing programs where we are measuring ourselves on their success. We are not omnipresent and are not a services-organisation, as a result of which, we don't compete with our partners. It's important that our partners succeed and every part of Red Hat is charted to identify those partnerships – whether it is for specific solution areas or specific verticals – and build a program to create GTM strategies with them. We are also looking at different solution practices and partners associated with solution practices, and are investing in them. We run many training programs at no cost to partners, except the cost of participation, where they send resources into our facility to be trained. We understand that partners may not be able to travel, so we get trainers to India and we run 8-10-day programs every quarter around these advanced technologies.

# QLIK AIMS TO ADDRESS DATA LITERACY GAP

The company is undertaking a data literacy campaign, with the intent to enable organisations to take advantage of the next wave of the analytics economy

**By Sandhya Michu**

Seeing the quantum jump in voluminous of data being analysed and large organisations becoming more digital and agile, Qlik India, a data analytics and business intelligence platform, sees data literacy among the large companies as a big gap. The company has started working towards bridging the gap of data literacy and enhancing data literacy skills in people working in various industries. The company believes that data literacy is a crucial element that can render efficiency of employees in areas such as data reading, data analysis, data compilation, data management, among others; hence helping them retrieve maximum benefits from the huge pile of data.

Speaking exclusively to CRN India, Arun Balasubramanian, Managing Director, Qlik in India, says, "Today, be it small or large organisations; everyone understands the value of data and storage of this data. But translating this data into business still faces a big challenge. Some of the large technology giants don't have the right resources to convert the data into meaningful business in the absence of data literacy. With the effort of the data literacy campaign, our intent is to enable organisations to take advantage of the next wave of the analytics economy."

Qlik is a noted data analytics and business intelligence platform, used extensively by various large customers across the industries. Some of the leading names include Baidu, Bajaj Auto, BlueStone.com, Decathlon,



**ARUN BALASUBRAMANIAN,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, QLIK IN INDIA**

Hafele India, HDFC Life, Just Buy Live, Lazada, Lupin Pharmaceuticals, Magma Fincorp, Mahindra & Mahindra, Mercedes-Benz India, Micromax, SAB Miller India, Sitel, TCS, United Nations, Wipro and Wockhardt Hospitals.

The company has been working to form a consortium for data literacy and have an alliance with large solution providers like Accenture, Deloitte, Capgemini, KPMG and TCS. Qlik has strong traction in sectors like healthcare, pharma, banking, insurance, PSUs, manufacturing, supply chain, BFSI, amongst others. "Our solutions appeal to large customers more beautifully. We have customers who have been buying and refreshing technologies as they grow in

their businesses. We see that companies are investing not only in storing the data, but also in analytical tools, as they are embarking on digital transformation. Recently, we along with our partner Accenture, analysed seven petabytes of data – unheard of volume of data at Bank of Baroda. We have been resolving cases with such large volumes of data with the influx of IoT and machine learning. The scope for our solutions is tremendous," he says.

In terms of expansion, Qlik is planning to open its R&D centre in Bangalore. The company is on a hiring spree for the same. Apart from the R&D centre, it will continue to add capabilities like augmented intelligence and hybrid cloud to its existing tools.

The company's vision for the future is defined by three core pillars of innovation – Data, Platform, and Analytics, and around three big ideas that will ensure the company continues to lead and disrupt the data analytics market. It has recently acquired CrunchBot AI-powered analytics bot. This acquisition will help Qlik to introduce new features like augmented intelligence and machine learning capabilities for enhancing business productivity.

When asked about the major concerns of CIOs, Balasubramanian replies, "Today organisations understand the art of acquiring and storing the data. However, the CIOs or CDOs want to unleash the potential of this data and are looking for more possibilities with this analysed data."

# CROWDSTRIKE TO ACCELERATE CUSTOMER MOMENTUM, EXPAND GLOBAL FOOTPRINT

Founded with a vision to revolutionise security approach of organisations, CrowdStrike is bullish on expansion, leveraging its innovations. In an interaction with **Nivedan Prakash, Jagdish Mahapatra**, Managing Director – Asia, CrowdStrike, shares more details

## How has been the growth journey for CrowdStrike so far? Please shed some light on significant milestones

When George Kurtz and Dmitri Alperovitch founded CrowdStrike in 2011, they started the company with a mission to revolutionise the entire approach that companies take to security. They saw the inefficiencies and shortcomings of the established products and solutions dominating the cyber market and decided to disrupt the status quo by building an entirely new approach. They envisioned a way to better stop breaches and effectively combat the cyber threats by harnessing the power of the cloud. At the time, the security industry thought he was "crazy" as no one leveraged the cloud to host security data – it was perceived as far too risky and disruptive. With relentless drive to innovate and steadfast commitment, CrowdStrike pioneered the first endpoint security platform that is fully cloud-based to break the vicious cycle of ineffective protection and continuous hacks that many businesses and government organisations struggled with.

This innovation disrupted the multi-billion dollar endpoint security market with innovative technology, services delivery, and intelligence gathering. CrowdStrike's technology ensures that organisations can not only defend

themselves, but also do so in an efficient and future-proof manner. Today, the company continues to drive major innovations around AI/machine learning, behavioural-based prevention and detection, etc, to stay ahead of adversaries.

While many companies fell victims to the massive WannaCry and NotPetya attacks, CrowdStrike customers remained protected with the company's technology.

There is no shortage of validators for CrowdStrike's success, including explosive global growth with nearly 500 per cent growth in new endpoint protection platform (EPP) subscriptions, year-over-year, and the company being called in to investigate the biggest hack in American political history – the DNC attack prior to the 2016 election.

In the 2018 Gartner Magic Quadrant, we were positioned highest for the ability to execute and furthest to the right for the completeness of vision in the Visionaries quadrant.

## What efforts are being put to build a strong business for CrowdStrike in the Asian region in 2019 and beyond?

On the heels of massive demand for our platform, CrowdStrike has experienced rapid growth, adding new customers across the region. The company has expanded presence and

the growing team will support and accelerate the substantial market demand for the CrowdStrike Falcon platform, threat intelligence, and response services.

## Looking at the changing cyber security landscape and the way organisations are riding on the digital wave, how is CrowdStrike making the digital transformation journey safe and secure?

Financial institutions are often a target across the globe. Despite pouring billions of dollars into security, financial institutions continue to be the number one target of cybercriminals. The digital transformation undertaken by the financial services industry is contributing to this challenge. It has opened new doors for attackers, making customer data management and protection increasingly difficult. In addition, tighter regulatory compliance adds more pressure to already stretched financial services security teams.

## What sort of competitive advantage CrowdStrike enjoys in this region; how are you leveraging the power of emerging technologies like AI & ML?

The promise of AI and ML is that you can automate the detection of a never

before seen threat. The idea here is that you don't rely on signatures; ML will look at techniques and attack types that have been used previously and you predict with confidence a new attack based on math algorithms. Making AI work is all about the data. We train our algorithms on one trillion events a week, one of the industry's largest threat telemetries, enabling AI's efficacy. Because of our cloud native architecture, we are able to crowdsource protection to our entire customer community as soon as a threat is detected.

**With your focus on providing next-gen cyber security solutions to enterprise customers as well as government, what sort of innovation is being brought into your offerings?**

In December last year, CrowdStrike completed its second evaluation by MITRE's ATT&CK evaluations program. The CrowdStrike Falcon platform was evaluated for its ability to detect attack techniques employed by GOTHIC PANDA (also known as APT3), a sophisticated adversary affiliated with the Chinese government. CrowdStrike is the first endpoint protection company to integrate the MITRE ATT&CK framework into its product and has been participating in this evaluation since its inception.

Every aspect of CrowdStrike's business – from the cloud-based architecture of the Falcon platform to the company's approach to uncovering the adversaries – is rooted in innovation. CrowdStrike continues to set a new standard in endpoint security, including the application of AI/ML for unmatched prevention of malware and malware-free attacks. The company remains true to its founding mission – change the status quo, replace the old AV behemoths that can't stand up to modern threats, and drive the next-generation of security practices to market. CrowdStrike has earned leadership rankings from the top three analyst firms – IDC, Forrester, and Gartner, including being named a Visionary in this year's Gartner Magic Quadrant on Endpoint Protection Platforms.



**JAGDISH MAHAPATRA,**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR – ASIA, CROWDSTRIKE

**We are witnessing new levels of sophistication being displayed by cyber criminals and security challenges faced by the cloud generation. Are you re-looking at security architecture?**

A big concern is with the industry; we all talk about malware, but we don't talk about what happens when the attacker doesn't use malware. If an attacker steals credentials, it won't be detected as they're looking for malware. We need to understand the requirement to prevent malware, but also understand the requirement to have a very strong detection architecture in place, so that you know what's going on in the network. We have to ensure basic hygiene, making sure that the machines are patched. Moreover, we also need to use the right security product.

**In your bid to build strategic alliances, have you adopted any specific go-to-market strategy that is aligned with the company's business objectives?**

CrowdStrike has over 50 integrations with strategic technology alliances. The company will continue to further accelerate its customer momentum and the rapid development of its partner ecosystem to meet the spiking demand for its next-generation endpoint

protection technology, intelligence and services. We will continue to expand our international footprint, heavily investing in partnerships and alliances in critical regions such as the UK, Germany, Benelux, India, Singapore, Japan, etc.

**Any specific partner program being run that focuses on building capabilities and competencies of partners, so that they can address customers' complex digital challenges?**

CrowdStrike continues to evolve its Elevate Partner Program with new categories in MSSP, cloud-workload procurements, and OEM/embedded partnerships. CrowdStrike works with its partners to enable a "whole-ecosystem" approach based on six paths to partner engagement and profitability:

- **Channel:** Reselling through a rich program that focuses on the product first
- **Technology alliances:** Providing out-of-the-box integrations between the CrowdStrike technology and other innovative technologies to create complete customer solutions
- **MSSPs:** Delivering value-added services to customers with CrowdStrike as an enabling technology
- **OEMs:** Embedding CrowdStrike technology into third-party hardware, software, and service solutions
- **CrowdStrike platform:** Building applications that based on data from the Falcon platform deliver high-value insights to customer environments
- **Cloud procurements:** Leveraging CrowdStrike to empower security teams with improved visibility and control for cloud-based infrastructure and workloads.

**What's your outlook for 2019 and beyond?**

Looking back at 2018, too many organisations have been getting breached. This won't slow down in 2019, so we need to challenge traditional thinking which clearly isn't working. We'll continue to see ransomware and supply chain attacks and traditional AV technologies won't be able to stop them. It's clear that a new set standards for endpoint protection is needed.

# CRAYON SOFTWARE FOCUSSES ON DEEP-SELLING AS ITS STRATEGY FOR 2019

Having captured a significant market share in a span of over four years, Crayon Software is now focusing on deep-selling, as part of its GTM strategy this year. In an exclusive interaction with **Nivedan Prakash** of CRN India, **Rajesh Thadhani**, Sales Director, Crayon Software, shares more details

## How has been the recent years for Crayon in terms of business?

Started in 2002, Crayon is a Norwegian company. The company's initial focus was on software asset management, which still remains a key practice for us, followed by licensing, and subscription-based licensing. In India, we are the largest partner of Microsoft; we are the only partner of Red Hat, VMware, Veeam, Citrix, etc. Nobody else does subscription-based licensing for them in India. Another pillar of our business includes the consulting arm for solutions. In the Indian market, we have all the four pillars of our business running. Moreover, in India, we are also a distributor for AWS. We are both, direct and indirect sellers; we are uniquely placed in India. We are also undergoing a process for managed service providers for software asset management. We forayed into India in August 2014, and the country has been a fast-growing market for us.

## What have been the major growth drivers for the company in India?

When we entered the country, there was clear mandate that we won't do deployments. We created a 'co-sell' model, wherein we created a dashboard of deployment partners. We introduced



**RAJESH THADHANI,  
SALES DIRECTOR, CRAYON SOFTWARE**

these partners to the customers; this became our GTM strategy. This model proved very effective for us. From overall business perspective, 70 per cent of our business comes from cloud. Our strategy include advisory, co-selling and deployments through partners. We work with about 90 solution partners, who are our 'co-sell alliance' partners. We have about 200 partners in the cloud space. We have a huge partner ecosystem; and we have also built a significant customer ecosystem of close

to 600 customers. This year will be crucial for us to acquire more large enterprise customers.

## What are your efforts to strengthen your place among enterprise customers?

In 2019, we will have a different strategy altogether. Since 2014, we have put a lot of efforts in customer acquisition; whereas this year, we will focus on deep-selling. Our teams are now aligned to this, and we have also set up value teams. Now we are strengthening our teams with pre-sales insights. As part of our efforts, we are not focusing on specific industry verticals, because cloud is today spread across verticals. Furthermore, for our entire co-sell strategy, every vertical is important for us. We have partners catering to various industry segments. Lately, we have also been getting into the education vertical.

Recently, we organised a Digital Transformation Drive – EXCELLERATE 2018, in eight cities to help enterprises reshape the work processes for future. Top industry leaders gathered for in-depth discussions around digital and cloud transformation, the challenges involved and the future of the digital era in Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai, New Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Pune.

The eight-city EXCELLERATE 2018 focused on digital innovations in all aspects, be it technologies, strategies or business opportunities. With an agenda, which was packed with presentations, debates and networking opportunities, the event drew big names to the speakers' pool as well as the attendee list. No longer just a buzzword, DX is a key strategic priority for companies today. According to recent reports, most of the companies either have a digital transformation strategy in place or are working on one. Such findings indicate a growing enterprise demand for digital ecosystem to support new business initiatives. As a global leader in IT and DX services, we understand customer behavior, preferences and use different methodologies and tools to enable our customers work smart and accelerate their digital transformation journey.

Reaching out to more than 250 organisations across India within a span of 45 days was a phenomenal achievement. We believe that Crayon's value proposition was well received by the technology leaders, which will help pave the path for a more meaningful dialogue between us and thus resulting in progress in the Digital Transformation journey for the technology leaders.

### **What's your assessment of the digital disruption happening across industries?**

According to some reports, 70 per cent of companies have already started their cloud journey. For instance, the PoC for voice-based assistants started between 2007 and 2008. Digital disruption has been going on for a long time now. One of the recently introduced technology, which is yet to get matured, is virtual reality. Furthermore, according to reports, organisations that have already made investments in cloud, are expected to invest more in cloud.

### **How is Crayon helping customers to address the complex digital challenges?**

Today, the CIOs have become like

partners for CEOs; CIOs are no longer confined to management of IT. The CIO is now the backbone for the business. Crayon is well positioned to support CIOs in their business, with our strength, expertise and partnerships.

### **What is your unique value proposition?**

Software asset management is one of the major differentiators for Crayon. We can help companies build SAM practice, policy practices for software assets, and consistency in their systems. Our teams continuously work with customers to give them the right reports, guide them on how to save money in terms of consumption, etc.

### **Apart from cloud, how do you see the scope for emerging technologies such as AI, IoT, etc?**

What's going to dwell now is Industry Cloud. In the future, cloud will take shape of an industry. Every cloud player is trying to build services that can be used as APIs. In the upcoming year, with SaaS, we will witness more and more companies adopting SaaS as it helps in legacy application migration to the cloud. Most of the companies will be turning to cutting-edge SaaS powerful tools. Why not? Their operations will no longer depend on legacy systems as most of the performance apps say 70-80% will be hosted and maneuvered in cloud. It will benefit the companies in terms of financial savings, productivity and of course it's easy to use.

We will see 'cloudification of storage', which typically means that we need to get the right type of storage for the specific job. In 2019, companies will start utilizing storage based on the purpose/requirements. We will witness that IaaS, storage and databases will become intelligent and rule the market. Storage and the data it houses are the two main components of every business foundation. When we cloudify the storage it gives us the freedom of data - a valuable asset -- being available, accurate, reusable and secure.

Artificial Intelligence itself is a vast and deep subject. AI has already paved its way in most of the industries. In the

future, AI and big data will offer powerful tools to streamline business processes, get rid of legacy systems, simplify operations and expedite processes. AI will be the key enabler in innovating new products and understand the customers better to deliver the best. The future holds more disruption from AI, not less.

IoT is not a new thing. Soon, there will be thousands of devices connected from one individual, generating enormous amount of data. To leverage value out of that data is through AI tools.

What's the role of your partners in driving the company's growth? Please elaborate on your efforts to upscale and re-skill partners.

Partners have contributed in a large way in customer acquisition, with their skill sets and relationships with customers. Our partner ecosystem includes various large SIs and Tier 1 partners. We adopted two mandatory sessions internally, which will be now extended to our partners and customers as well. One of the sessions is titled Cloud Business Intelligence; we may conduct webinars on based on this session. Whereas the other session is based on use cases; this session is now being participated by ISVs as well.

Crayon will also focus on on-boarding hosting partners, value added resellers (VARs), and local ISVs, and help drive coverage and scale in the mid-market space, predominantly comprising of small and medium businesses (SMBs).

### **What will be the company's key thrust areas for 2019 and beyond?**

We change our GTM strategy every year. This year's strategy is focused on deep-selling. We have increased our team size and we are strengthening our approach. We are now geared up for value-selling. Alongside, new partner acquisitions will also happen. Thirty per cent of our business happens through 10 customers, and we want to build this set of customers in every line and every region of our business. We are also increasing our market reach with the inclusion of new geographies. Following a hub-and-spoke model, we cater to about 22 cities in India.

# 'WE WANT TO REACH OUT TO RELEVANT TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS'

The company looks to leverage existing partnerships while offering maximum value and also bring new breed of partners in the ecosystem

**By Salvi Mittal**

**M**ark Fong looks at Channels and Alliances as a brand new department, and wishes to go back to basics, ensuring channels continue to be an integral part of Commvault's DNA. He is accountable for building a strong foundation for partnership, as Commvault goes through reinvention. Despite having a new CEO on board, the company aims to focus on building the partner ecosystem by ensuring market relevance and focusing on the existing partners. For him, it is all about going back to basics.

"We have been working with partners ever since we started the company. We are not brand new to partners, but we want to now get back to the basics and set up a strong foundation for any partnership. We want to ensure that we have the right partners, right offerings and programs for partners. We want to ensure complete relevance and build a symbiotic relationship. There is no point in signing up a thousand partners and have low volumes of transactions. It is all about getting the hygiene and basic foundation right," says Mark Fong, VP – Channels & Alliances, Commvault.

## Re-strengthening relationship with existing customers

While Commvault continues to

engage with new partners, it also aims to dive deep into the existing partner relationships within the company and optimise their relationship. To keep partners at the heart of its business, Commvault follows a partner-first approach by building a symbiotic relationship and keeping a pulse on the demands expected by them. "People use terms like partner-centric and partner-focused; but for us, it is all about having a partner first approach. This program focuses on stepping into the partner's shoes and understanding their expectations from Commvault," he adds.

## Values to customers

The company looks to leverage existing partnerships, while offering maximum value and also bringing new breed of partners in the ecosystem. He further adds, "We are aiming on the core as well as the new breed of partners. Commvault ensures a focused approach instead of a wider approach to the market."

The company has streamlined its product portfolio and launched a new price book which keeps them in true to its core. Commvault's objective is to offer the solutions in the way customers want it and treat the problems of the consumers.

From a channels perspective, the company is offering cheaper products and higher rebates. "We have a simple approach. We don't wish to go wide. We want to focus on going deep enough, having a focused approach towards our partners. This helps us to do justice to our partners and offer a qualitative service," he says.

Further, Fong highlights the key differentiator is how the company leverages the existing partner ecosystem. "We don't cherry pick. We just look at the top 10 partners or resellers and decide on whom to focus on, in terms of investing more time and resource. We want to ensure that we build a strong relationship and help them to get more customers through Commvault," states Fong.

Commvault has simplified its pricing and licensing and now has four key products which focus on a defined segment and enrich the partner experience and add value to their businesses. When it comes to products, Fong doesn't like anything radical. The company has spent time in simplifying its licensing, enhancing partner programs, and incentives. The objective is to simply tighten the existing systems and become more relevant to partners.

## Strategy for 2020

Commvault aims to focus on building a deeper relationship with its distributors and resellers. Some of the big bets would be building on the alliances with Hitachi, HP, and Cisco. Existing partnerships help Commvault to offer the complete solutions to solve the customer problems where technology, storage, back-up is provided. For this, the company will offer combined services with the help of its partners, which helps them to offer a complete package for the consumer.

In the last few months, the company has been largely aiming at simplifying product offerings and licensing procedures. The idea is to have a constant approach by tightening and simplifying existing programs.

The first line of support, Partner Success Desk (PSD), set up in Bangalore is a large investment by the company. The on-demand service centre for partners around the globe provides 24-hour assistance on RFP response questions, and technical questions through every step of the sales process. The Partner Success Desk provides partners with easier and faster access to Commvault's support and resources.

A simplified partner program helps to bring inclusion of expanded business development funds. It is available for partners to help scale their businesses and grow their new customer opportunities by promoting and selling Commvault solutions. "A completely repackaged and simplified product set by Commvault, brings together comprehensive back-up and recovery, and data management, including storage infrastructure, service delivery orchestration and data governance. Commvault's newly packaged product set has been simplified and consolidated," Fong points out while discussing Commvault's strategy.

Talking about the strategy to strengthen the reach in the Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets in India, Fong says, "We are focusing on the existing customers and even bringing new customers in Tier 1 markets, before we start thinking about Tier 2 markets. Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore markets have a lot of scope when in terms of potential



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WE HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH PARTNERS EVER SINCE WE STARTED THE COMPANY. WE'RE NOT BRAND NEW TO PARTNERS, BUT WE WANT TO NOW GET BACK TO THE BASICS AND SET UP A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR ANY PARTNERSHIP

MARK FONG,  
VP – CHANNELS & ALLIANCES,  
COMMVAULT

customers. So I would want to focus on these markets first."

### Expansion

While the partnerships complement the existing portfolio, Fong states that the key challenge was coping with changes happening within the company and ensuring consistency has been the key. The company has

re-aligned its business with Netapp and wants to focus on Australia, India, and Singapore markets.

"Netapp is one such example, but we have a number of other partners too. Namely, Hitachi, HP, Cisco, Huawei – we have strong OEM partnerships. These companies are an easy blend to our business. They help in maximising our value offerings to our customers," Fong adds, while discussing Commvault's partnership with Netapp.

However, with Netapp, one of the challenges was with their own internal changes. Commvault has initiated a few changes recently which had slowed down the company. But after four months, both companies understood each other, and have decided to focus on key markets – India, Australia and Singapore – where Commvault works closely with Netapp. "We're in the process of realigning our priorities and by March or April, we should see enough demand generation through Netapp," he adds.

### Moving beyond existing OEMs

Commvault aims to touch maximum relevant technology partners. While Cisco, HP, Huawei, Netapp continue to be key alliance partners, Commvault's objective is also to build deeper relationships with partners like AWS, Hitachi and Microsoft. "Commvault has always believed in keeping the customers at the heart of all its business operations. The idea is to use its own expertise to help customers manage their data efficiently, and become experts at managing their own data," says Fong. Since the offering of storage and backup goes hand-in-hand and is the easiest to sell, the company's focus would also be on re-education of and maximising the reach to different technology providers.

Fong explains, "From a channel perspective, we're going to be focusing on partnerships and distribution. We want to tighten our partnership with players like Netapp, Cisco, Hitachi and HP; these are our four big bets. The customers will buy complete solutions from us, which will be provided by partners like Cisco, Hitachi."

# 'WE ARE THE MOST DOMINANT PLAYER IN THE MANUFACTURING SEGMENT'

Looking at the vast potential of the India market, SUSE aims at expanding its business here by more than 10 times in the future. In an interaction with Rachana Jha, **Phillip Cockrell**, Worldwide Vice President – Alliance Sales, SUSE, delves deep into the company's market positioning, partner ecosystem and more

## What are the hiring trends with respect to India? Do you have any skill set in mind?

Earlier we had a program where we focused mainly on training the individuals, but of course, with so many people it was very difficult to efficiently train them all. Now the program focuses on creating more trainers inside the large system integrators. We align our trainings with the solutions we've built with those integrator partners and they are trained on all the components that are underneath that. Those trainers that we train can then take that information and give it to the delivery teams and the practice teams inside of those organisations, whether in India or in other parts of the world.

In the past, we were doing more hand-to-hand training, but now we take a really large strategic view to create more skills in those organisations. The idea behind this is that we want to build the skill sets that are easier for the end customers to consume and make it smooth to deliver. It's also about raising the awareness of SUSE in the market.

## What are your partner strategies for India?

Ninety-five per cent of our revenue is

**WE ARE WORKING ON DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS WITH PARTNERS AND WITH STRATEGIC CUSTOMERS AND WE ARE MAKING IMMENSE CONTRIBUTION IN DEVOPS. WE ALSO HAVE A SOLUTION IN THE MARKET, CLOUD APPLICATION PLATFORM, WHICH IS BASED ON THE CLOUD FOUNDRY PRODUCT AND IT SUPPORTS OUR PHILOSOPHY OF BEING THE OPEN, OPEN-SOURCE COMPANY**

produced by partners. So, we are a partner centric organisation. For the GSIs, we're focusing on a couple of key areas. SAP is very important to our business and we look at how customers are consuming SAP solutions in the market. This is because SAP implementations continue to get more complex that increase the risk, which means that customers want to leverage SIs to implement those

projects. From a strategy perspective, we want to make it easy for our SIs to include our technologies in those offerings that they give to customers, that they sell to customers. That's why we need to train them.

The other areas where we're focusing with our SI partners are around the software-defined infrastructure and then also application delivery and development. For example, for several years now, we've been working with TCS and recently we made announcement that SUSE OpenStack Cloud has been adopted by TCS for TCS Cloud.

This type of implementation with those partners is part of our tagline – "we adapt you succeed", which means we work very closely with the partners, so that we take the open-source technologies and help the partners deploy and run that. This is efficient for their customers. This is exactly what we did with the TCS Cloud. It's now powered by SUSE OpenStack Cloud, so the result is that now when TCS brings more customers, they can easily and quickly deploy an entire cloud to a new data centre. As such, the expansion of that over the last couple of years has just been explosive. It grows more than 50 per cent year-on-year.

**What are the key trends that you see in India in terms of channels?**

India is a 100 per cent channel driven market. I would summarise this into three categories. The first that I noticed is that all the partners in India and all of the people that are working in those partner organisations are hungry to learn. They are interested in learning new technologies, working with open source, and because they're young people, that also helps SUSE in the long run because then we've got very young energetic people who are going to help us together improve and contribute to the open source community.

Secondly, our channel partners in India help to improve our products because they sell to very complex customer organisations. So, if you think about our global system integrator partners, they're going into very complex customer organisations with very complex use cases. What this means is that we can find ways to optimise and improve our products that make it easier for us to go and then replicate those types of deals and ultimately grow our business in other regions.

The last one is not completely unique to India, but is definitely something that I have seen here - partners are focused very heavily on customer experience. When they focus on customer experience and we are there, we can learn as an organisation from them and also help to improve customer's perception of SUSE. And when we deliver a good customer experience, partners will then want to grow their business with us over time.

**What are the various projects you're working on in terms of digital transformation?**

We are working on digital transformation projects with partners and with strategic customers and we are making immense contribution in DevOps. We also have a solution in the market, Cloud Application Platform, which is based on the Cloud Foundry product and it supports our philosophy of being the open, open-source



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**IN THE PAST, WE WERE DOING MORE HAND-TO-HAND TRAINING, BUT NOW WE TAKE A REALLY LARGE STRATEGIC VIEW TO CREATE MORE SKILLS IN THOSE ORGANISATIONS. THE IDEA BEHIND IT IS THAT WE WANT TO BUILD THE SKILL SETS THAT IS EASIER FOR THE END CUSTOMERS TO CONSUME AND MAKE IT SMOOTH TO DELIVER**

PHILLIP COCKRELL, WORLDWIDE VICE PRESIDENT – ALLIANCE SALES, SUSE

company. For some customers, if they want just one stack, we containerise Cloud Foundry and then that can run on top of OpenStack or on bare metal. The other thing that we do because we believe in being open and creating opportunity for our partners is that we run our Cloud Foundry without our container piece. So, we can run that on containers that are provided by our partners, and examples of that could be in EKS on Amazon Web Services or AKS on Azure.

**Five years down the line, where do you see SUSE in India?**

In India, we are looking for minimum

10 times more business than today. The amount of business which can be found in India is enormous. The acceptance of SUSE as a brand is continuously increasing. We are the most dominant player in the manufacturing segment. So, our competition has lost a lot of ground in powering the mission critical applications like SAP in the manufacturing space. On the BFSI front, we are increasingly getting traction in all the greenfield projects. We are also presence in government projects and initiatives. India's largest insurance system, which is Employees' State Insurance Corporation, it was powered by SUSE.

# 'OUR SOLUTION CAN SAFEGUARD DATA FROM RANSOMWARE ATTACKS LEVERAGING ON AI'

Acronis, a global leader in cyber protection and hybrid cloud solutions, recently made its entry into the cybersecurity market in India. Sea Infonet has been appointed its national distributor as part of its channel business. **Maxim Mitrokhin**, General Manager of Channel Sales in APAC, Acronis, shares with **Sandhya Michu**, the way forward and business opportunities

## **What kind of business opportunities do you see in the security market in India?**

As ransomware is rising in India and more businesses are getting affected by it, Acronis has a solution to safeguard your data from ransomware attacks leveraging on artificial intelligence that proactively prevents ransomware by suspending it and reverting encrypted files into the original state. Apart from that, Acronis Notary is able to ensure the authenticity of files by leveraging blockchain. Acronis Notary computes a cryptographic "fingerprint" hash of each file that is unique to that file. This hash algorithm produces the same output given the exact same input file every time, regardless of circumstance. Any change in the input file, however slight, results in a dramatically different fingerprint. The hash algorithm is designed to work in one direction – making it impossible to determine the original file inputs from the output alone.

## **What are your major plans for the Indian channel market?**

Since Acronis is 100 per cent channel driven vendor, our distribution and channel partner network is the only vehicle that helps deliver our products and solutions to customers. While the



Acronis team interacts widely with the industry, our revenue route lies solely through the network of Acronis authorised partners. Acronis places major emphasis on partner training and certification through our world-class training programs which ensure Acronis partners have the best possible sales and technical enablement. This serves to help our partner network stand ready to handle the most pressing needs of customers in India.

In addition to this, Acronis also has a strong partner program which provides marketing and sales tools to help increase reach and expansion into the market place for our partner network,

coupled with campaigns and reward structures to provide revenue and profitability growth for performance.

## **Specific to your solutions, what are your targeted segments?**

Any user or businesses that requires data protection. For consumers with personal data on their laptops or mobile devices, we have Acronis True Image cater to backup personal devices to local storage or to Acronis Cloud. For SMB and large enterprises, we have Acronis Backup, Acronis Files Advanced, Acronis Storage. For service providers, Acronis has the Acronis Data Cloud providing multi-tenant, white-labeling with multiple solutions within the platform to offer to their customers.

## **What are your sales and growth plans for the India market?**

Acronis' goal is to take a leadership position within our addressable space in the India market in the next two years. Our product lines are designed for simplicity, ease of use while providing the best possible price/performance ratio for Indian consumers. Acronis' product range also incorporates standout features and USPs designed to address critical customer requirements across a wide range of use cases. In 2019, our focus on

a holistic cyber protection stance will make Acronis an undeniable proposition for our customers.

Acronis addresses the five vectors of cyber protection — safety, accessibility, privacy, authenticity, and security (SAPAS) — and offers easy, efficient, and secure products to customers of any size. Our solutions protect all data, applications, and systems at a low and predictable cost. Our new hybrid cloud architecture is designed to deliver greater flexibility and data privacy, as well as a host of innovative features that make cyber protection easier and more complete for our Indian customers. Our AI based anti-ransomware protection and blockchain based data authentication features ensure our customers are enabled with the most secure backup available in the market today.

#### In terms of your operation scale, what are your plans?

Acronis today works across more than 145 countries and through a



**ACRONIS PLACES MAJOR EMPHASIS ON PARTNER TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION THROUGH OUR WORLD-CLASS TRAINING PROGRAMS WHICH ENSURE ACRONIS PARTNERS HAVE THE BEST POSSIBLE SALES AND TECHNICAL ENABLEMENT. THIS SERVES TO HELP OUR PARTNER NETWORK**

MAXIM MITROKHIN,  
GENERAL MANAGER, CHANNEL SALES  
IN APAC, ACRONIS

partner base of 500,000 organisations. India is a powerhouse economy and has possibly the fastest economic growth rates in the region. Our plans for India are ambitious and we will work through a strong partner base, covering every major state and city in India, providing the best sales and technical coverage for Indian customers. In a short time, we have penetrated multiple key target verticals – a push that will only increase and grow over the next few quarters.

#### Please explain your partnership with Sea Infonet and further plans for channel expansion

We have a strategic alliance with Sea Infonet in India for distribution of Acronis products and services. SEA Infonet will be responsible for promoting and distributing the complete range of Acronis' on-premises, cloud-based, and consumer cyber protection solutions through their strong partner network in India – and also provide them with the best possible training and support.



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# TRIPWIRE FOCUSES AGGRESSIVELY ON PARTNER ECOSYSTEM

With renewed focus after its integration with Belden, Tripwire's customer base is growing beyond traditional IT infrastructure and expanding into cloud and OT

**By Nivedan Prakash**

Tripwire has been in the industry for more than 20 years in compliance and policy side of security business. Belden, a heavy channel user company working extensively with distributors and partners, acquired Tripwire about five years ago. When Tripwire was acquired, the company didn't have the best partners to align with. The company was following a direct model, while catering to the client's requirements. However, post this acquisition, it was realised that this model was not viable anymore.

Now, Tripwire has started integrating the channel into its business model. Tripwire has created a channel program that allows the company to leverage itself globally. The company follows a channel-driven sales model and has built the channel strategically. Tripwire believes that by leveraging the channel ecosystem, it can grow significantly across the globe.

## Channel integration

During the integration of Belden and Tripwire, the major challenge was to convince partners about the channel journey that the company was embarking on, as all these years Tripwire had followed a direct model. With the integration, Tripwire was able to leverage some of Belden's distributors as well as partners. Since then, the company has been trying to validate and remain true to the channel model in order to build confidence

among partners.

Tripwire has been driving training in all the regions for the partners, so that the channel partners from the Belden ecosystem can also think in the same way as partners in cyber security domain do. This can open the doors and initiate conversations. Tripwire's partners have a strong presence in the IT space. Whereas, Belden partners are strong in the OT space. Tripwire aims to enable these partners to be able to cross-sell.

In the initial phase post-integration, Tripwire signed partners in big numbers. The company had to end some of the existing partnerships. This is the kind of transition that happened in the last six to nine months.

## Boosting digital transformation

In more than 20 years of its market presence, Tripwire has witnessed multiple technology trends that have shaped industries. The core capabilities that Tripwire offers remain foundational to a secure business, regardless of the technology deployed. Customers who rely on legacy technology, and those who are at the bleeding edge of cloud, need the visibility that Tripwire provides.

Alex Bagwell, Global Channel Director, Tripwire, says, "The ability to identify risks, prioritise actions and integrate with established processes is key to Tripwire's success, and the key to our customers' continued operations. In recent years, Tripwire has expanded

to support industrial customers and new cloud capabilities, matching the pace at which our customers are expanding their digital footprint. The evolution of our partners is around how they will become more integrated and an extension of Tripwire in the market place. We see our partners playing a larger role not only around advocating and selling the product, but offering services both professional and MSSP on behalf Tripwire."

## Partner focus

According to Bagwell, the key competencies for Tripwire's partners will always surround their ability to understand not only a single product, but the entire breadth of the portfolio and how they integrate together. He comments, "One major issue I often hear is around resources and the struggle that customers have to staff internally the resources needed to manage their complex systems. Moving forward, customers will be looking at not just the partners, but vendors as well, to offer managed services like Tripwire ExpertOps to take strain off in-house teams, while still maintaining critical security controls. Our partners have been key to assisting Tripwire in navigating the complex landscape – our global customer base. The channel is what will drive the business growth globally through strong partnerships that are equally recognised by the customer."

For the company, the role of its partners is critical, as they understand

customers' needs and trends in the market place. "Our partnerships and ongoing open dialogue with our partners allow us to keep our roadmap aligned with the market needs. This is a critical part to Tripwire's growth, in being a technology leader, and our partners allow us to get that information in real time," he adds.

### Accelerating growth

Explaining how Tripwire's broader offerings and increased incentives will accelerate business growth of partners worldwide, Bagwell says that Tripwire's ability to be ahead of technology trends, either through technology partnerships or in-house technology, allows Tripwire to offer a strong portfolio to its global customers. The company's customer base is growing beyond traditional IT infrastructure and expanding into cloud and OT. Tripwire has strong offerings and solutions that work across physical, virtual, cloud, and OT environments, which is allowing the company to accelerate its business growth.

Elaborating on the company's go-to-market strategy, Bagwell informs, "We want to be aligned with the partners that see true value in what Tripwire brings, not only in our products and services, but in our relationships as well. We are not looking to be slightly important to many, but very important to a select few."

### India market

After a brief hiatus, Tripwire is coming back strongly into the India market. In countries like Australia, the company had legacy partners who were associated with Tripwire for 8-10 years. However, India's story differs from other markets. Sharing more on the same, Saagar Gadhok, Business Manager – APAC, Tripwire, says, "When the integration happened, we invested heavily in building collaterals, partner training, and going on sales calls together as well as closing deals. We have continued the momentum and have started building relationships. For instance, we have jointly created business objectives for 2019-20, working on the GTM strategy, and ultimately, addressing the market



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WE ARE INVESTING FAR MORE IN INDIA THAN OTHER REGIONS TO GET THE INITIAL PUSH OFF THE GROUND AND GET US IN LINE WITH THE COMPETITION

SAAGAR GADHOK,  
BUSINESS MANAGER – APAC,  
TRIPWIRE

“

OUR PARTNERS HAVE BEEN KEY TO ASSISTING TRIPWIRE IN NAVIGATING THE COMPLEX LANDSCAPE – OUR GLOBAL CUSTOMER BASE. THE CHANNEL IS WHAT WILL DRIVE THE BUSINESS GROWTH GLOBALLY

ALEX BAGWELL,  
GLOBAL CHANNEL DIRECTOR, TRIPWIRE

requirements. We are making a lot of investments from marketing and enablement standpoint. If you embed the certification within the channel, the whole approach will drive itself. It's all about creating the ecosystem and maintaining it, so that the channel can derive value from it."

In India, Tripwire largely follows the global channel program. The only difference the company sees is that a lot of hand-holding is required in India vis-a-vis other markets where partners just go online for training and get certified at a particular cost. Training and enablement is one area that Tripwire has changed in India specifically,

wherein the training of partners is done together as a unit.

"Secondly, in terms of incentivising and rebates, the program that we run in other regions doesn't fit in India. If a partner is happy selling a particular product, we allow him to stick to it rather than jumping to other product lines. This helps him understand the value of associating with Tripwire. And this is just for the initial traction, as once it starts picking up the pace, this can be further accelerated. We are investing far more in India than other regions to get the initial push off the ground and get us in line with the competition," mentions Gadhok.

# ISODA TS9: CATALYST FOR GROWTH

The 9th Tech Summit witnessed a participation of more than 85 leading software partners from India. Touted as the 'business edition', the conference provided a platform for ISODA members to network with top Qatari IT companies and over 30 Indian IT companies in Doha

**By Nivedan Prakash**

The annual flagship event of Infotech Software Dealers Association (ISODA), Tech Summit – coded as TS9 – served as a focused platform, not only for the participating software partners from India, but also for the supporting sponsors. Organised from January 31 to February 3 this year in Doha, Qatar, TS9 Business Edition had an enhanced format to provide maximum value to both sponsors as well as participants.

Highlights of the conference include two business transformation workshops that focused on how can partners sustain and scale up their business in the competitive landscape. The first workshop, 'Creativity Unleashed – Workshop on Innovative Thinking', was conducted by Shankar Subramaniam, Founder and Principal Consultant of Ninedots (an organisation that specialises in innovative consulting and training on creativity and lateral thinking). The second workshop, 'Managing Business for Exponential Growth', was conducted by Prof Parimal Merchant, Director – GFMB, S P Jain School of Global Management.

Apart from these, Sudarsan Ranganathan, an ISODA alumni and Regional Directo - South at Hitachi Systems Micro Clinic, shared the motivational 'The Cockroach Story' while emphasising on two aspects of life i.e. adapting is reactive, adopting is proactive and how adaptation has been the cockroach's supreme characteristics for survival. He also touched upon the learnings and best practices for creating a great organisational culture.



P Kumaran, Ambassador of India to the State of Qatar

Another founding member of ISODA, Vishal Bindra, CEO of ACPL Systems and Klassify (a cyber security startup) chose the occasion to share the growth story behind Klassify that has emerged as a fast-growing indigenous company that provides data classification solutions to enterprises.

## Opportunities in Qatar

Keeping its promise of providing new business opportunities to Indian software partners, the association also organised a networking session with Qatar business fraternity. Azim Abbas, President of IBPC Qatar (Indian Business and Professionals Council) talked about the business opportunities for partners in Qatar and how IBPC can help them set a foothold in the country.

"This will mark the beginning of exploring business climate between ISODA members, local Qatari IT companies and Indian IT companies in Doha. We intend to offer bouquet of business, trade expansion as well as mutual investment possibilities. There are vast opportunities for foreign



Dr R Seetharaman, CEO, Doha Bank

investment and joint ventures, as Qatar has a friendly, efficient and conducive investment environment," pointed out Abbas.

Furthermore, Jahangir Burhonov, Vice President – Business Development, Qatar Financial Centre, highlighted how QFC as one of the world's leading and fastest growing business and financial centres, offers its own legal, regulatory, tax, and business environment.

To forge a strong relationship, the association took a first-of-its-kind initiative to host a joint business networking dinner, in partnership with IBPC on January 31. Explaining the reason for holding this networking dinner on the sidelines of ISODA Tech Summit, L Ashok, Chairman, TS9 – Business edition and Founder and CEO of Futurenet Technologies, stated, "Doha is the most happening place in the business and ICT sectors in the country, with a string of world technology giants setting up their R&D centres, incubation wings and production bases, taking advantage of the state's proactive policies."



This year's summit had several new facets keeping in view the focus laid by the government to usher in a digital revolution in India. "The two-day summit enabled ISODA members to diversify into new and emerging global markets and also assess the changing trend in the global market place and adapt to situations to be in the traction," asserted N K Mehta, Chairman, ISODA, and CEO of Secure Network Solutions.

The Indian Ambassador to Qatar, His Excellency P Kumaran graced the occasion with his esteemed presence. In his keynote address, Kumaran said, "Firstly, we are very elated with the fact that an IT association from India chose Doha as the avenue to organise its annual tech summit. Today, Qatar National Tourism Council has prioritised India as a major market for promotion of Qatari tourism. We have about 700,000 Indians here and base level of tourism from India visiting their families and relatives is quite high. At the top of it, the Council is looking to promote some kind of specialised tourism and MICE tourism like conferences and events is definitely one of the strategies. So, when ISODA came to us, we were glad to offer all the support in terms of providing concessions in immigration, customs facilitation, and discounts at venues for such conferences."

He commented, "Apart from this, ISODA will certainly help us project ourselves effectively as an IT power in the world. We already have a reasonable presence of IT companies here in Qatar. All these will help us showcase the range of skillsets that our IT companies possess and the kind of value we can bring to our partnerships with various

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- ▶ **Business Excellence**  
Secure Network Solutions India

companies in different parts of the world. You will effectively underline the fact that we have skills in different areas, how you leverage each other to provide value to your clients and this is very interesting for the markets that don't understand or know us very well. Qatar is an upcoming IT market and technology is being increasingly valued in different industries – be it banking, financial institutions or fintech companies."

In a special address to the august gathering, Dr R Seetharaman, CEO, Doha Bank, spoke about the changing dynamics impacting economies and technologies. He said, "In my message to software professionals, I would like to state that the solution to promote global growth and bring financial inclusion lies in the fourth industrial revolution. Global sustainability can be augmented by virtual and technological realities and can be redefined by digital transformation. This is the biggest

opportunity we all have in front of us."

He further added, "Convergence of technologies has totally transformed the banking sector. In fact, every industry is getting completely redefined by digital transformation and institutions need to embrace these technologies in the total terms. Going forward, technology can be a big enabler for us to become prosperous. Every country has to factor the digital advantage while framing any policy."

K Gunasegharan, Director, eCaps and President of ISODA expressed confidence on greater collaboration in the field of ICT. He said, "The future co-operation between the two countries would aim at promotion of peace and stimulation of greater investment through IBPC. ISODA would focus on increasing business with local Qatari companies and forge joint partnerships to take business relations to newer heights."

### Recognising excellence

On the sidelines of the event, the association also presented ISODA Award for Business Excellence. Selected by a jury which comprised of Devesh Aggarwal, Kavita Singhal, Nandini Sharma and Hiren Shah, the award was given to software partners who were rated the best in terms of business performance, business practices, and innovations during the last financial year.

The sponsors for this year's summit included Microsoft, Lenovo, Citrix, Kaspersky Lab, Tripwire, SOTI, Sophos, Red Hat, ForcePoint, Tech Data, Magic Box, Everest IMS, ST Electronics, Efficient IP and Qatar Tourism.

# CMDA B2B IT EXPO GIVES FILLIP TO BUSINESSES

Computer & Media Dealers' Association (CMDA), one of the premier associations of IT dealers and resellers in India, organised its flagship CMDA B2B IT Expo 2019, in Pune  
**By Mohit Rathod**

**T**hemed 'Business Transformation Together', the two-day flagship event of CMDA focused on newer business opportunities and improved channel access. In a first, the 21st edition of the expo was focused on B2B trade. Diego Utge, SVP and Chief Country Executive, Ingram Micro India graced the event as the Chief Guest; whereas, Kailash Katkar, Managing Director, Quick Heal Technologies was present as the Guest of Honour. Alongside, the event was inaugurated by Vivek Ashturkar, President, CMDA; Satyan Shah, Vice President, CMDA; and Rahul Hazare, Secretary, CMDA.

In his special address, Utge said, "India is transforming with new technologies, and CMDA is helping vendors and partners leverage this opportunity. The country provides many opportunities for the IT channel industry. It's a complex market, but this complexity brings in various opportunities as well – we need to identify and tap them. Apart from running our business, we need to have a strategic mindset. In the future, the industry will see consolidation, but there will also be emergence of new partner ecosystems. Partners need to develop new skill sets in order to grow further."

On the occasion, CMDA also launched an Expo Directory.

Katkar, who has been associated with CMDA since its inception, shared how the association has grown over the years, serving as a platform for channel partners across Maharashtra. He said, "This year's edition is unique than the previous ones. CMDA is working hard to ensure lively business for partners and vendors. This B2B event was the need of the hour due to growing competition in



the market. Channel partners have already established significant connect in the industry, but they need to work on new ideas such as the services segment. Partners should build their own identity with their services; this will definitely help them grow."

Today, CMDA has over 370 members, who serve almost 90 per cent of the computer hardware and consumables business in Pune region. Over the years, the IT expo gained in size and underwent a lot of changes.

Speaking at the event, Ashturkar said, "We have achieved various milestones in our journey, and many more will come in the future. This has

been possible with the support of our more than 370 members. Today, we are at the peak of our success. CMDA has been providing numerous opportunities for its members and this expo is our flagship effort in this direction."

Adding to that, Shah stated, "This year's B2B theme was in line with the changes in business trends and new innovations. We have exhibitors showcasing diversified solutions. This creates a win-win situation for both, channel partners and vendors."

In his concluding address, Hazare thanked all CMDA members, guests, sponsors, exhibitors, and channel partners.

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