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WORLD

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AND MORE

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Q2 2021



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Editor's Words

What story does this tattoo tell? Sure, it's funny that the poor lad started out with a vision for something meaningful and

ended up with a permanent reminder that he should have paid more attention at school. But does that diminish his efforts? If the execution isn't faultless does it render the endeavour moot?

Six months ago I held a meeting with our expert contributors and a few key contacts to discuss the idea for a community awards and fundraising event. I was desperate to do something that would demonstrate the gratitude of our community for the tireless work the NHS has done during the pandemic. As I set out my ambitious plan to get 1,000 ERPers to **Ascot Racecourse** for a day of fun, awards and fundraising, I could see the colour draining from the faces of my audience. One by one they told me that it was too ambitious, that the community wouldn't pull together and urged me, in the kindest terms, not to risk my business on an idea that had the potential to bankrupt me.

A few months later, every ERP vendor and global partner has committed their support to the idea and we have sold more than 1,000 tickets. The response from the community has been phenomenal and on 23rd September we will be hosting a unique event that the whole ERP community can be proud of.

So why am I telling you this? Is it just to blow my own trumpet? Well, a little maybe, but the real reason I am telling this story is because there's an important lesson to be learned about facing adversity, accepting limitations, and still pulling through.

It hasn't all been plain sailing; much like the illiterate, inked illustration of my story, my execution hasn't always been faultless. I've fallen out with people when I've let my passion get the better of me. I've taken blunt positions when I've allowed my emotions to interfere with judgments. And, I've taken setbacks personally which have impacted me away from work.

But, I have maintained a clear vision; my eyes have been firmly on the prize and I told myself from the start that the path to success is often turbulent. Most importantly, I entered this knowing that even if it wasn't perfect, it was worth pursuing.

Success in the face of adversity isn't down to skill. It's a mindset. If you believe in something and can articulate your passion it's possible to overcome most things – and that clarity of vision and unwavering commitment is what is required to transform the way that we work and the purpose behind our endeavours.

As Rachel Head explains later in this issue; change is difficult to achieve. You may not end up exactly where you expected and you will certainly face challenges along the way. But you must retain a strong belief in what you are doing. You must be kind to yourself when things don't go to plan and you should allow yourself the freedom to make mistakes and not let those bumps derail you from your mission.

We all have a lot of changing to do. Virtually every aspect of our lives has been disrupted over the last 18 months and the future is more uncertain now than ever before. But that disruption has also presented us with a golden opportunity to make changes that will begin to undo the mistakes of the past and build a better world for generations to come.

Sustainable business practices and a fair and equitable world for all are tantalisingly within our reach. It won't be easy, but it is possible if we aim for progress over perfection.

Never don't give up.



Paul

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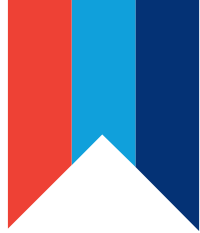
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THE ERP TODAY AWARDS & FUNDRAISER





On 23rd September 2021 more than 1,000 ERPers and technology leaders will take over Ascot Racecourse for the ERP Today Awards & Fundraiser in aid of NHS Charities Together. Tickets are on sale now with all proceeds going directly to the charity. Join us, our partners and the NHS for a day of fun, awards and fundraising. Look forward to seeing you there.

PAUL ESHERWOOD, EDITOR, ERP TODAY



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A high-angle, top-down photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a bright yellow long-sleeved sweater and light grey pants. She is seated in a modern, dark brown leather armchair with a black frame. She is looking down at a tablet computer held in her hands. The background is a light-colored, textured floor. The overall composition is clean and professional.

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SAP lands first RISE customer in UK



SAP has landed its first UK RISE customer in the shape of **Briggs of Burton**, a hygienic process engineering company, based in Staffordshire.

SAP introduced RISE as a packaged service offering to help customers better understand the S/4HANA proposition and to assist with identifying the value case for investment in its newest technologies. The programme was conceived largely to help existing SAP customers move from legacy SAP technology to S/4, but in this case, Briggs is a net new name for SAP.

Briggs' Chinese parent company is a heavy SAP user, so the buying decision was largely driven by that. However, Nathan Beddoe, CIO at Briggs, said that "since being acquired in 2016 the burden of reporting had increased considerably and our existing ERP platform was unable to deliver the kind of insights and analysis that we needed. We could have used our parent company's ERP (R3) but felt that moving to the cloud and taking advantage of the Ariba network and artificial intelligence was a much better option for us."

Briggs is a relatively small business to be implementing S/4 but they have plans to increase their turnover to

£100m by 2025. That level of growth will require materials spending of around £80m per year and the Ariba network will open up a much broader choice of suppliers and provide Briggs with the economies of scale that they need.

Beddoe said that one of the most compelling reasons for choosing S/4HANA was, "because it had a very short implementation period". The timeline for the project is very ambitious; seven months from kick off to go-live. However, given that they will be 'the first cab off the rank' with RISE, both vendor and partner (**Sapphire Systems**) will be hugely invested in making sure the project is a success.

Michiel Verhoeven, managing director, SAP UK&I, said: "RISE with SAP is designed to help organisations who face challenges in migrating from on-premise legacy ERP systems to SAP S/4HANA Cloud, through simplifying, focussing and supporting transformation to a truly intelligent enterprise. Garnering customer input and feedback was vital in the development of RISE with SAP, to help us understand precisely what they really need to drive transformation within their businesses. We look forward to seeing how Briggs of Burton capitalises on RISE with SAP to embrace its own transformational

journey and delight customers with SAP S/4HANA Cloud at the helm."

Ian Caswell, CEO at Sapphire Systems, said: "As a new S/4HANA Cloud customer, as well as SAP's first RISE with SAP win in the UK, Briggs of Burton is demonstrating their intent to accelerate their digital transformational journey and applying intelligence to harness the speed, agility and operational excellence necessary to compete in modern markets.

"A few years ago, the idea of a system on this scale being implemented in a matter of months would have raised eyebrows, but the platform's future-ready architecture and intelligent automation, combined with the depth of experience and expertise of our SAP consulting team, means much faster time to value. Crucially, this means that Briggs can embrace its growth strategy quickly, and with confidence that it has the right platform to drive its performance well into the future.

"Through the breadth, depth and scale of our solutions portfolio, and a sheer dedication to helping our customers to leverage a cloud mind-set to achieve their goals, we are incredibly excited to welcome Briggs to our SAP practice and look forward to a great partnership going forward."

ServiceNow has signed an agreement to acquire VC-backed DevOps observability platform, **Lightstep**. The acquisition, which ServiceNow expects to complete in Q2 2021, will enable the company to help its DevOps engineers build, deploy, run, and monitor the performance of applications. Co-founded in 2015 by Ben Sigelman, CEO, Ben Cronin, COO, and Daniel Spoonhower, chief architect, Lightstep is an emerging pioneer in next generation application monitoring and the trusted observability solution for born-in-the-cloud companies like **GitHub**, **Spotify** and **Twilio**. Its solution analyses system-wide metrics and tracing data in real time to understand the cause and effects of changes to application



ServiceNow enhances IT operations offering with Lightstep acquisition

performance, reliability, and development velocity.

Using Lightstep's capabilities with ServiceNow's IT workflow solutions, customers will be able to monitor and respond to critical signals and indicators of software health, allowing them to detect problems before they have

an impact on large numbers of users.

Pablo Stern, SVP of IT workflow products at ServiceNow, said: "Companies are betting on going digital in order to thrive in the 21st century, but the transition is often challenging to navigate. With Lightstep, ServiceNow will

transform how software solutions are delivered to customers. This will ultimately make it easier for customers to innovate quickly. Now they'll be able to build and operate their software faster than ever before and take the new era of work head on with confidence." Ben Sigelman, CEO and co-founder at Lightstep, added: "Today, observability primarily benefits the DevOps teams that build and operate mission-critical apps. We've always believed that the value of observability should extend across the entire enterprise, providing greater clarity and confidence to every team involved in these modern, digital businesses. By joining ServiceNow, together we will realise that vision for our customers and help transform the world of work in the process – and we couldn't be more excited about it."

Julia White leaves Microsoft to join SAP



**JULIA
WHITE**

SAP has appointed Julia White as chief marketing and solutions officer. White joins SAP after a 20-year tenure at **Microsoft**, where she led product marketing for Microsoft Azure over the past five years. Previously, she was responsible for product marketing for Microsoft Office 365 during the transition to the cloud. Based in the US, White will strengthen SAP's go-to-market approach with a focus on product, industry and digital marketing, as

well as bridging customer and ecosystem needs with product development. "SAP is going through a critical transformation," said White. "It has a unique opportunity to help redefine how successful businesses run, and the leadership team has made bold and courageous commitments to accelerate their cloud innovation to this end. I am excited to contribute to that journey and thank the supervisory board for their confidence in me."



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SUSE GOES PUBLIC

SUSE, the open source Linux and Kubernetes platform provider, has gone public. Despite a lukewarm reception from the Frankfurt market, its debut valued the business at more than \$5bn.

SUSE had hoped shares would trade between €30 and €34 but they opened slightly under the lower limit at €29.50 and, at the time of writing, are being traded at just above €30 per share. Despite the relatively low-key debut the IPO was far from a failure. SUSE and **EQT** sold around 40 million shares for just over €1.1bn which makes it the biggest tech IPO on the German market this year. SUSE CEO, Melissa Di Donato is also the first woman to lead a high-profile IPO in Germany and the listing represents the culmination of her efforts to reinvigorate the company since taking the helm in July 2019.

Founded in 1982 and headquartered in Nuremberg, Germany, SUSE was the first company to introduce enterprise capabilities to the Linux open source operating system. Today, its offering is grouped into two open source software product categories – the SUSE Linux Enterprise product family, which comprises its core Linux operating system offering, and the SUSE Rancher product

family (following the acquisition of **Rancher Labs** announced in December 2020 and completed earlier this year), which comprises its container management and storage offering.

The SUSE Linux Enterprise Server operating system is an enterprise-grade, secure, and adaptable operating system that is trusted by more than 60 percent of the Fortune Global 500 across all industries and geographies. SUSE's container management platform, SUSE Rancher, has been downloaded over 100 million times since its introduc-

SUSE IS 'LITERALLY' AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF MODERN CLOUD ARCHITECTURE

tion into the market, making it one of the industry's most widely adopted solutions for managing Kubernetes containers across any environment.

SUSE was only acquired by EQT three years ago following its sale by **Micro Focus** and even by most PE-backed standards, this is a rapid move from private to public ownership.

So, what has driven the move towards an IPO?

There are three big factors at play here: firstly, virtually all enterprise tech is hot at the moment and PE houses and investors have a huge pot of 'dry powder' to invest in software businesses that

MELISSA DI DONATO
CEO AT SUSE



are not weighed down by legacy technology. SUSE is 'literally' at the cutting edge of modern cloud architecture with its Kubernetes containerisation platform and Edge workload solutions – this

vides this while being underpinned by the industry standard Linux enterprise technologies.

The third factor is their CEO. Melissa Di Donato is a first-time leader who has never worked in open source before. If you met her, you would understand why these factors are no barrier to success. Over the last two years Di Donato has successfully re-energised the company, negotiated and managed the acquisition of Rancher Labs and overseen revenue growth to in excess of \$500m, with particularly strong acceleration in average contract value – meaning they are winning more and more higher value customers.

Di Donato is fiercely ambitious and highly motivated and it's no surprise at all that she has led SUSE into public ownership where it will have greater financial flexibility to take on **IBM** and **Red Hat** in the extremely competitive and lucrative hybrid cloud open source battleground.

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Red Bull Racing Honda chooses Oracle to accelerate F1 data

Red Bull Racing Honda, the four-time Formula 1 world champion team, has selected **Oracle** as its official cloud infrastructure partner.

Through the multi-year partnership, Red Bull will leverage the machine learning, artificial intelligence and data analytics capabilities of Oracle cloud infrastructure to optimise the way data is used across its business, from on-track activities such as car performance to providing more information to the team's fan base.

Christian Horner, team principal at Red Bull Racing Honda, said: "This is a hugely significant partnership for Red Bull Racing Honda. Oracle is a massive organisation that has been at the forefront of technical innovation for more than four decades. As one of the industry's most recognised and trusted names in database management and cloud computing, Oracle brings huge capability, innovation, and expertise

to many of the world's largest and most successful businesses.

"To be able to tap into that exceptional power and knowledge is a major step forward for our team. Oracle's expertise will touch many areas of the business from the development of major fan engagement and brand building mechanisms to providing rich new resources across the team, including within the engineering and design departments."

Oracle is a massive organisation that has been at the forefront of technical innovation for more than four decades.

Ariel Kelman, chief marketing officer at Oracle, added: "This is the perfect alliance of two organisations that share a passion for design, performance, and winning. Red Bull Racing didn't win multiple drivers' championships and constructors' championships in its relatively young existence without pushing boundaries. Oracle is committed to working with Red Bull Racing Honda to discover and create the technologies and designs that will allow it to surpass expectations and set new standards in Formula 1."



CLOUD SALES BOOST MICROSOFT Q3 RESULTS

Microsoft has posted its Q3 2021 results, reporting revenue of \$41.7bn, up 19 percent compared to the same period last year. Once again, Microsoft has seen strong growth in its cloud services and personal computing sales.

Microsoft's net income was \$15.5bn GAAP, an increase of 44 percent from last year. Diluted earnings per share were \$2.03 GAAP, up 45 percent. The company's biggest driver of growth was its Azure cloud division, with revenue for the quarter totalling \$15bn – a 23 percent year-on-year increase.

Revenue in Microsoft's personal computing division was \$13.0bn – a 19 percent rise.

Satya Nadella, Microsoft CEO, said: "Over a year into the pandemic, digital adoption curves aren't slowing down. They're accelerating, and it's just the beginning. We are building the cloud for the next decade, expanding our addressable market and innovating across every layer of the tech stack to help our customers be resilient and transform."

Amy Hood, Microsoft executive vice president and chief financial officer added: "The Microsoft Cloud, with its end-to-end solutions, continues to provide compelling value to our customers generating \$17.7bn in commercial cloud revenue, up 33 percent year-over-year."



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THE BEST RUN



Unit 4 launches ERPx into general availability

It's been a big few weeks for **Unit4** following the announcement at the end of March that it had been acquired by **TA Associates** in a deal that valued the business at more than \$2bn. That news brought an end to the search for a new VC partner that could provide Unit4 with the financial headroom to make acquisitions and ramp up its marketing and new logo activities.

Hot on the heels of that announcement is the news that Unit4's new ERP solution is now generally available following the soft-launch it announced back in October. ERPx is a next-generation ERP suite coupled with a unified cloud platform that is designed specifically with mid-market people and service-based business in mind.

Unit4 has been on a long journey to remodel itself and repackage its solutions since Mike Ettling took over as CEO a little over two years ago. ERPx represents the culmination of the work that actually started several years earlier when Claus Jepsen, CTO, (and team) went all in on Azure and began replatforming the Unit4 proposition into a microservices-based solution that allowed for easy integrations and the development of smart tools to improve experience and productivity.

At that time, Unit4 was one of the very few ERP vendors (if not the only one) that made a genuine commitment to this new type of architecture. While other vendors were hard at work retooling their on-prem apps for the cloud – and largely ignoring the platforms they operated on – Unit4's approach was somewhat different. They got the platform fixed

DMITRI KRAKOVSKY
CHIEF
PRODUCT
OFFICER
AT UNIT4



first and then moved to the application layer and that strategy is already paying dividends.

First mover advantage used to yield rich rewards in the enterprise tech space but not necessarily for those ERP vendors that rushed to get their own next-gen apps to market. As recently as five years ago application function-

ality was the 'be all and end all' for vendors as they concentrated on features and functions to win new business. Today, ERP buyers expect applications to work irrespective of the flavour and rarely make investment decisions based on how an individual application or

module performs. Applications are table stakes – it's platforms, extensibility, low and no-code tools and, above all else, experience that sets one vendor apart from another.

With ERPx, Unit4 has taken their class-leading platform architecture and coupled it with a genuinely modern and

intuitive ERP solution, embedded with ML and AI, covering HCM, core financials, procurement, FP&A and project management. Services are delivered through a powerful people platform integrated with smart automations and collaboration tools such as **Microsoft Teams** and **Slack** – all of which can be operated and managed with voice commands and chatbot technologies via Wanda – Unit4's digital assistant.

Dmitri Krakovsky, Unit4's new chief product officer, said: "With ERPx we are delivering something that customers have been asking for from ERP solutions for decades – the right platform and tools, designed around their specific needs, supporting them to be fast, resilient, adaptable, and light-touch enough to drive employee productivity. We're also giving them the freedom to connect and extend industry-specific online data services and solutions quickly and easily. Together, we will build the digital foundation that ensures that people and organisations achieve their potential. We are very excited that ERPx is now generally available."

Unit4 is 'going-live' with 24 customers already in the bag and signed up to ERPx. That may not sound like a lot given their global aspirations but considering those customers have been acquired in the last three months during the most turbulent time in recent memory – it's a real testament to the strength of the product that any new customers have taken the leap.

It's also a strong endorsement that the customers are not grouped in one geography or vertical; **Americares, Municipality of Alkmaar, Global Banking School, Places for People, Social Work England, North West Leicestershire District Council, The Charity Commission, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, and Werkorganisatie Langedijk en Heerhugowaard**, are just a few of the customers announced so far – they are based in the US, UK and Europe and cover healthcare, non-profit, public sector and higher education.

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EY acquired Pythagoras Communications

EY has acquired **Pythagoras Communications Holdings Limited** (Pythagoras), a leading UK technology company and **Microsoft** Gold Partner. Pythagoras provides professional services and solutions using technology platforms including Microsoft Azure, Dynamics 365, SharePoint and the Power Platform. Pythagoras employs 118 people across the UK and has more than 140 clients. The acquisition supports EY's ambition to increase the range of technology services they already successfully supply their clients. The additional technologies will help clients to operate more efficiently and provide better customer experiences. Benoit Laclau, Ernst & Young LLP managing partner for consulting, UK&I, commented: "The acquisition of Pythagoras enables EY teams to not only advise clients on strategy but also helps them design and provide advanced Microsoft technologies. At a time when many companies are having to adapt and transform to changing customer behaviours, these new capabilities will help support EY clients and develop EY consulting services."

STRONG Q1 GROWTH FOR CAPGEMINI GROUP

Capgemini Group has reported Q1 2021 revenues of €4.27m, an increase of 24 percent year-on-year. Growth momentum improved in all Capgemini Group sectors in Q1 2021, with its manufacturing sector reporting the most significant improvement and making up 25 percent of group revenues. The public sector maintained its strong performance, providing 14 percent of group revenues and reporting double-digit growth. Capgemini Group's

bookings totalled €4.2m in Q1 2021, up 27.3 percent at constant exchange rates year-on-year. Aiman Ezzat, Capgemini Group CEO, said: "We delivered an excellent performance in the first quarter of 2021, with a return to organic growth. Growth was stronger than anticipated and activity even surpassed pre-health crisis levels, reflecting not only a more dynamic market but also the accelerated deployment of our strategy. Performance improved across all our geographies and sectors. We are strongly positioned

in cloud and data, the main drivers of technology and business transformation in the years to come, which fuelled this performance. The first quarter was also marked by a return to large-scale recruitment to meet client demand. In this context, our growth for 2021 should exceed the mid-point of the targeted range." For the full year 2021, the Capgemini Group aims to achieve constant currency growth of 7 percent to 9 percent,

an operating margin at its 2019 level of between 12.2 percent to 12.4 percent and an organic free cash flow above €1.3m.





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Infor appoints cloud veteran to head UK and Ireland

Infor has appointed Anwen Robinson as the new senior vice-president and general manager for UK&I to support the company's continued investment in the UK market.

Robinson joins Infor from **TechnologyOne**, where she was UK&I operating officer and member of the executive leadership team. Prior to this, Robinson spent 18 years at **Unit4** in a number of senior positions, including UK&I managing director. She has an extensive track record in the strategic development of cloud-based enterprise software businesses and deep experience of establishing and overseeing global



partner ecosystems.

An engineer and former lecturer, Robinson is an advocate for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. She is also passionate about the development of girls and young women in order to prepare them to

embrace technology as a career.

Joerg Jung, executive vice-president EMEA at Infor, said: "With her expertise in cloud ERP and channel development, Anwen has the perfect blend of experience to develop our ongoing investment in the UK market. We continue to build momentum throughout the UK and Ireland as businesses look to cloud technologies as part of their digital transformation, and Anwen will play a critical role in this evolution."

Robinson added: "The cloud-first, industry-specific strategy within Infor has gained a lot of traction in the UK. My immediate focus will be building on this early success and demonstrating to businesses throughout the UK and Ireland that modern, cloud-based enterprise software can ensure their digital transformation projects leave them ready for the challenges of a changed world."

IFS reveals multi-year sustainability strategy

IFS announced a multi-year focus on sustainability in a plan to improve the company's operations, enable customers to achieve sustainability goals and influence the industry to improve its accountability to the environment.

The new stepped approach aims to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and is centred around three core pillars where IFS will increase its focus for greater impact. Within its own

business, over the next three years, IFS plans to expand its education programme, which provides scholarships, grants, internships and IT equipment to 150 higher education institutions globally.

IFS is also committing to reducing its carbon footprint through consolidating its real estate and improving the green credentials of its properties, and is supporting the expansion of the IFS Foundation.

Internally, IFS will introduce a framework

to increase employee awareness of the sustainability agenda, with employee volunteering opportunities as well as a continued focus on fostering diversity across the industry, prioritising employee well-being and maintaining policies on human rights and anti-slavery.

Darren Roos, IFS CEO, said: "IFS has a long-term responsible approach to creating value for customers. By considering sustainability as an integral part of our business model we

not only capture value creating opportunities, but we can mitigate risks and stay on course to be successful in our sustainability strategy. The progress achieved over the last couple of years to improve IFS's approach to sustainability has been meaningful, but with the launch of this multi-year plan we are making commitments and make ourselves accountable. This is meaningful to our customers, our employees, our owners and our community at large."

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Oracle has partnered with Premier League football as its official cloud provider to deliver football match statistics, live, during games. Machine learning models will be developed to generate immediate results based on live data streams, real-time tracking data, and facts collected on each of the League's players and from thousands of previous matches.

With the arrival of the pandemic putting an end to spectator sport for a year, fans are undoubtedly looking forward to the 2021/22 season kicking off. To help bolster the excitement surrounding games, Oracle will deliver new in-match statistics that provide a deeper understanding of the live action on the pitch to a global audience of billions each season. Fine margins in top level sport means that teams (and players) are looking for ways to edge ahead of their competitors, as well as to give the fans insights into information that effectively creates personal sentiment out of data. Research has suggested that fans are interested in the integration of match data, player statistics and these insights will help tell more stories about Premier League matches, providing fans with a data-rich experience. Fans will be able to access a range of match information instantly, whether they are watching from home or checking scores on their mobile devices, thereby making the information far more accessible.



Oracle announced as new Premier League signing

The sharing of real-time match statistics is not new to sport, although data collection and analysis thereof is far more advanced than when it first made its appearance. In 2001, Hawk-Eye Innovations completely transformed the world of sport with its development of Hawk-Eye – the tracking system with a camera and speed gun – that was first used as a broadcast tool to analyse decisions in cricket. The system made its debut at a cricket Test match between Pakistan and England at Lord's Cricket Ground, on 21 April the same year. It was first used in tennis at the 2006 US Open and eventually The Football Association intro-

duced Hawk-Eye during the 2013/2014 Premier League season and the later rounds of the 2013/2014 Football League Cup.

Since then, the technology has matured, and the way data is ingested has evolved dramatically. Oracle seems determined to keep adding sporting brands to their list of partnerships, after announcing their partnership with **Red Bull Racing Honda F1** team back in March.

Match Insights – Powered by Oracle Cloud will include:

- **Average formation:** the positions of all players when their team is in and out of possession. The model highlights differences in how teams organise themselves when attacking and defending. During the match,

fans will see how teams react to their opposition's tactics, helping viewers to understand the strategies behind different styles of play.

- **Live win probability:** this statistic tells the story of a team's performance by calculating the chance of a team securing a win or draw by simulating the remainder of the match 100,000 times.

- **Momentum tracker:** this measures the likelihood of the team in possession scoring a goal in the next 10 seconds. The results are based on data from thousands of historical games and the last five events in the current possession. The model incorporates the outcomes of passes, dribbles in possession, tackles and the locations on the pitch where they take place.

As one of the industry's most trusted names in cloud computing, Oracle brings more than four decades of knowledge, experience and innovation to the sports field and with the addition of insights we can expect, the upcoming football season is going to be one of the most exciting yet.

Ariel Kelman, Oracle executive vice president and chief marketing officer, said: "Combining Oracle's machine learning expertise with the Premier League's wealth of football data is a significant merger of technology and sport. The margins for error in the Premier League are very small, so the data is crucial to discovering the meaningful moments and stories of each match. It's those stories that unite fans and ignite their passions for the game."

RESEARCH HAS SUGGESTED THAT FANS ARE INTERESTED IN THE INTEGRATION OF MATCH DATA



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TECH FIRM HCL EXPANDS INVESTMENT IN THE UK

HCL Technologies (HCL) has announced the expansion of investment in the UK with the recruitment of 1,000 technology professionals to support its clients in the UK and around the world.

The company plans to hire the professionals in the fields of digital transformation, cloud, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity for its London, Greater London and Manchester offices.

Present in the UK since 1997, HCL's UK operation currently employs more than 3,500 people across various locations, support-



ing its 50 clients. It was recently recognised as a top employer in the UK for the fifteenth consecutive year by the Top Employers Institute.

The commitment to the UK was conveyed in a virtual meeting to welcome the UK's aid to India by UK

prime minister Boris Johnson in light of the current COVID-19 crisis.

C Vijayakumar, CEO of HCL Technologies, said: "We welcomed the opportunity to speak to the honourable prime minister of the UK, Mr Boris Johnson regarding HCL's vision for the

UK market and thanked him for his country's continued support as India navigates the COVID-19 crisis. The UK has played a key role in HCL's growth and success journey for more than two decades. It is home to some of our most prestigious clients and is a hotbed of IT talent. By creating new local jobs in the region, we want to reaffirm our commitment to catalysing innovation and building competitive digital talent pools in the region."

UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, said: "India and the UK are two countries on the forefront of IT innovation. Thanks to companies like HCL Technologies, we can continue to lead the way together – creating good, skilled jobs and helping both countries to build back better."

RECORD REVENUE FOR RIMINI STREET

Rimini Street has announced strong results for the first quarter, stating it remains on track to achieve its strategic growth plan of reaching \$1bn in annual revenue by 2026. The company achieved record quarterly revenue of \$87.9m, up 12.6 percent year on year, a record active client count of 2,550, up 22.8 percent year-on-year, and delivered a gross margin greater than 61 percent.

Annual recurring rev-

enue was \$349m for the first quarter, an increase of 12.8 percent compared to \$310m for the same period last year, and the company ended the quarter with strong billings growth of 24.2 percent. It continued making investments to take advantage of growing global demand for Rimini Street's expanded breadth of support solutions, including its support, application management, security, interoperability, monitoring and professional services.



Michael L. Perica, chief financial officer at Rimini Street, said: "We further strengthened the balance sheet with record cash of \$153m and generated \$24.5m of operating cash

flow for the quarter. We are issuing guidance for the second quarter ending 30 June 2021, maintaining full year 2021 guidance and reaffirming our continued commitment to the long-term goals of increasing operating cash flow and growing GAAP profitability." Q2 2021 revenue guidance is expected to be in the range of \$88.5m to \$90.5m. The company is maintaining full year revenue guidance to be in the range of \$370m to \$380m.



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US Navy opts for IFS for mission-critical maintenance planning

IFS and global security and aerospace company **Lockheed Martin** have been selected by the **US Navy** to deliver an intelligent maintenance solution that will ensure personnel spend more time focussed on the mission and less on aircraft and ship repairs. Together, they will help the US Navy power its digital transformation of multiple legacy systems into a single, fully modernised and responsive logistics information system. The IFS solution comprises capabilities for planning and executing maintenance, repair, and overhaul of more than 3,000 assets includ-

ing aircraft, ships, and land-based equipment. The Naval Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (N-MRO) solution combines artificial intelligence, digital twin capabilities and predictive analytics to anticipate and react to potential equipment failures before they happen, which will contribute to the enhanced support of maintenance, supply logistics, real-time fleet management and other business functions for more than 200,000 personnel. With the added support of software developer **Beast Code**, the solution will initially be fielded at multiple US Navy sites to help sailors and marine corps maintainers break down opera-

tional silos and work towards a common maintenance workflow across all ship and aircraft platforms. It is hoped that the digital transformation of the US Navy's maintenance systems will lead to increased data accuracy, streamlined workflows and ultimately less asset downtime and fewer unscheduled maintenance events. Scott Helmer, president of aerospace and defence at IFS, said: "We are proud to be part of N-MRO, which will set a new global standard for total asset readiness and the way defence organisations manage asset maintenance and logistics, both ashore and afloat. A&D has been a key focus industry at IFS for decades and this landmark deal stands as testament to the success of our long-term strategy and determination. Working with Lockheed Martin and the US Navy, we are already making great strides and look forward to a long and successful collaboration." Reeves Valentine, vice president of enterprise sustainment solutions at Lockheed Martin, added: "Our goal is to provide capabilities that create real value across the Navy's complex, multi-site operations and optimise its mission-critical maintenance processes. We want to empower Navy personnel with tools that are easy and effective to use with intuitive interfaces, streamlined workflows and timesaving, intelligent features. IFS distinguished itself by providing all of these capabilities through a single, commercial-off-the-shelf solution."

UIPATH LAUNCHES FIRST AUTOMATION SCHOOL IN IRELAND

<p>UiPath has announced the launch of the first automation school in Ireland to educate the next generation of the country's workforce on automation. UiPath has partnered with the ABP School of Automation and Limerick and Clare Education and</p>	<p>Training Board to deliver the robotic software training through the funding of a pilot traineeship. The pilot, which is open to anyone 16 years old or over and those on social welfare, is supported by UiPath via its academic alliance programme, and replicates a successful initiative implemented in</p>	<p>Scotland last year. Mark O'Connor, UiPath public sector director for Ireland, said: "We're supporting the launch of the School of Automation in Ireland to help fill a genuine need for democratising the skills of the future of work. This is a unique, growing initiative to train and upskill</p>	<p>students to create software robots that are becoming ubiquitous in the workplace. UiPath is committed to providing greater access to automation technology that is fundamentally shifting how innovation occurs. This initiative empowers Ireland's workforce to compete in the global technology sector."</p>
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University of Oxford and Oracle partner in identification of COVID-19 variants



Oracle has recently announced undoubtedly lucrative partnerships with **Honda Red Bull Racing** and **The Premier League**. But taking into account where the world finds itself right now, with the emergence of COVID-19 variants threatening to slow the global recovery, Oracle is also taking great strides in the fight against COVID-19.

Oracle is a key sponsor of the **ERP Today Awards & Fundraiser**, an event that is giving back to the community by donating all event proceeds to **NHS Charities Together**. Oracle yesterday announced a partnership with **University of Oxford** in creating the **Global Pathogen Analysis System (GPAS)**, powered by Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI). GPAS combines Oxford's Scalable Pathogen Pipeline Platform (SP3) with the power of OCI. This initiative builds on the work of a Wellcome Trust-funded consortium including **Public Health Wales**, the **University of Cardiff**, and **Public Health England**.

First used in research on Tuberculosis, SP3 has been enhanced with the extensive machine learning capabilities in the Oracle Cloud, where collaborating scientists, researchers, and governments

worldwide can process, analyse, visualise and act on a wide collection of COVID-19 pathogen data for the first time. This includes identifying variants of interest and their potential impact on vaccine and treatment effectiveness. For example, analytics dashboards in the system will show which specific strains are spreading more quickly than others and whether genetic features contribute to increased transmissibility and vaccine escape. Already, Oxford has processed half the world's SARS-CoV-2 sequences, more than 500,000 in total.

This philanthropic partnership will enable global genomic sequencing and examination through a specialist platform developed on OCI to help mitigate the impact of potentially dangerous COVID-19 variants. The platform will be made available for free for researchers and non-profits to use worldwide over a multi-year period.

Dr. Isabel Oliver, director of the National Infection Service at Public Health England, said: "This donation is a welcome boost to the ability to share genomic sequencing data with

colleagues all across the world. Not only are strong genomic examination and widely-available data crucial to our collective efforts to combat the current pandemic, but they will have ongoing benefits to the response to other pathogens in the future. This could potentially have a far-reaching positive impact on international public health and global health security. As new variants of SARS-CoV-2 emerge around the world, it requires a co-operative global effort to respond effectively. Partnerships like this one are absolutely vital to ensuring that we can mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the world's population, and that we

can continue to strengthen our ability to confront emerging threats in the years to come."

Oracle chairman and CTO Larry Ellison said: "There is a critical need for global co-operation on genomic sequencing and examination of COVID-19 and other

pathogens. The enhanced SP3 system will establish a global standard for pathogen data gathering and analysis, thus enabling medical researchers to better understand the COVID-19 virus and other microbial threats to public health."

THERE IS A
CRITICAL NEED
FOR GLOBAL
COOPERATION
ON GENOMIC
SEQUENCING

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Epicor acquires KBMAX a technology leader in the CPQ market

Epicor has acquired configure price quote (CPQ) and visualisation software provider **KBMax**. Financial terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

KBMax software solutions will be marketed under the Epicor brand as a stand-alone module within the company's productivity suite, aligning seamlessly with Epicor's deep expertise in the global manufacturing engineer-to-order space. Epicor's mission is to differentiate themselves from the one-size-fits-all and off-the-shelf ERP solution providers by offering their customers a highly customisable, industry specific one-stop solution that connects their front and back of house.

Steve Murphy, Epicor

CEO says: "Our customers are the essential businesses who make, deliver and sell the things everyone needs. We knew we needed to move fast, to enable them to be able to stay digitally competitive and build out scalable digital commerce capabilities. It's a perfect time for businesses to reach their customers in new and compelling ways. For our existing manufacturing customers who may be using our embedded configurator, this gives them an opportunity for even greater, advanced features like 3D and VR, with the same great integration for CAD automation and BOM generation. We'll be working with our existing customers should they be interested in learning more about KBMax's best-in-class capabilities,



and standard integration will be available in the fall."

With complexity comes the need for real-time, reliable integration between systems, especially CPQ and ERP. Research shows that in 2020 80 percent of B2B buyer journeys took place online. Being able to configure a product in CPQ and instantly get 3D renderings and dimensioned drawings will dramatically reduce the time and cost it takes for Epicor customers to respond to RFPs, getting potential buyers the information they need to make a decision faster than ever before.

KBMax has transformed the buying experience for over 20,000 users and its CPQ software has delivered customers measurable improvements - on average a 168 percent increase in annual sales revenues, 38 percent faster sales cycle and a 35 percent increase in productivity.

CENTRICA NAMES COGNIZANT AS EXCLUSIVE PARTNER FOR SAP BUSINESS PROCESS TRANSFORMATION

Professional services company, **Cognizant**, has been selected by leading international energy services and solutions company, **Centrica**, as the sole technology services partner to manage and transform the **SAP** environment supporting its UK operations.

Centrica provides energy supply and services to 10 million business and residential customers in the UK, making its SAP enterprise system one of the UK energy industry's most substantial SAP deployments.

Consolidating its SAP enterprise system under Cognizant will enable

Centrica to streamline business processes and respond more quickly to market and regulatory changes, improving operational efficiency as well as user experience. Centrica's customers will benefit from upgrades in account management processes, with better insights on energy use and

managing tariffs, highly personalised offers and a smoother onboarding process for new services.

"As an energy services provider operating at global scale, we need agile technologies and an infrastructure that can scale across the business without complexity," explains Darren Miles, CIO, Centrica.

"Cognizant has been a trusted, insightful partner in our journey over many



WORKDAY UNVEILS TALENT INVESTMENT AND EXPANSION PLANS

Workday Inc. has revealed plans to create 2,500 new roles and expand office locations to create new talent pools.

The business announced this week the plans to expand office locations to open up new talent pools, alongside major investment in recruitment programmes and technologies to support the ‘rapid hiring’ for the new roles that will increase its global headcount by more than 20 percent (or 2,500+ hires) across North America, Europe, and Asia.

Workday’s Co-CEOs Aneel Bhusri and Chano Fernandez, explain: “We remain more committed than ever to our core values and plan to increase our workforce by more than 20 percent in our fiscal year 2022. In doing so, we’ll have an even stronger foundation to scale and innovate on our path to \$10bn in revenue. “To help reach this goal, we plan to invest in and expand office locations that will help us open up new talent pools and attract some of the best minds.”



CHANO
FERNANDEZ

Workday’s Atlanta office is set to hire more than 250 roles across customer support, human resources, product, and sales, which will support expansion of its East Coast presence and boost geographical connectedness with its European colleagues, customers, and partners.

Aneel Bhusri and Chano Fernandez say: “In North America, we’ll continue investing in our Pleasanton headquarters and increasing our workforce,



ANEEL
BHUSRI

growing our presence in Atlanta, Ore, Boulder, Colo, Chicago, and Vancouver offices, as well as across Asia and Europe with new roles at our Australia, Japan, and Singapore offices, and the creation of 400 jobs in Dublin.

“As we look to the future of work, we see talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not – and we are committed to closing that gap.

This includes hiring and developing underrepresented talent, with goals to increase overall representation of Black and Latinx employees in the US by 30 percent by calendar year 2023 and double the number of Black and

Latinx leaders in the US by 2023. As well as sourcing external talent, we’re also looking at our existing workforce to identify opportunities for internal mobility and reskilling.”

AS WE LOOK
TO THE FUTURE
OF WORK,
WE SEE
TALENT IS
EVERYWHERE



ROB
WALKER
COGNIZANT

years as we have evolved to improve our business efficiency and transform our customer-facing offerings to deliver more personalised and engaging customer service.”

Rob Walker, managing director, UK&I, Cognizant, adds: “Game-changing technologies and new competition are reshaping the energy industry. The ability to adapt quickly to change and to con-

nect with customers in a meaningful way is key.

“We are pleased to be helping Centrica meet these challenges head-on, drawing on our rich domain knowledge of the energy and utility industry, along with our extensive engineering and SAP expertise.”

The multi-year engagement builds on Cognizant’s long-standing relationship with

Centrica. Since 2005, Cognizant has provided Centrica with a broad range of consulting, data, cloud and digital engineering services. Cognizant will leverage multi-disciplinary teams and its expertise in DevSecOps methodology to consolidate and manage Centrica’s SAP environment, addressing the need for agility, speed and infrastructure security.

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A large, dark blue, stylized letter 'Z' that serves as a background graphic for the top half of the page. It has a thick stroke and rounded corners.

ZAHRA

BAHROLOLOUMI
CEO UK&I,
SALESFORCE

A 22 YEAR VETERAN OF CONSULTING GIANT ACCENTURE, ZAHRA BAHROLOLOUMI - OR Z AS SHE IS KNOWN TO HER FRIENDS - HAS MADE THE MONUMENTAL LEAP FROM CONSULTANCY TO VENDOR AND NOW FINDS HERSELF SITTING AT THE TOP TABLE WITHIN THE WORLD'S MOST PROGRESSIVE SOFTWARE COMPANY – SALESFORCE.

BY PAUL ESHERWOOD



ZAHRA BAHROLOLOUMI

In 2018, Salesforce announced it would invest heavily in the UK market – some \$2.5bn – over the next five years. That commitment was backed up by the announcement of a further \$2bn investment in Ireland along with a pledge to create 1,500 new jobs within the same timeframe. Salesforce, which had always derived the vast majority of its revenues from the US market, was getting serious about the UK.

However, Bahrololoumi isn't the first person to have taken the job on. In 2019 when Salesforce first ramped up its commitment to the UK, it appointed Dame Jayne-Anne Gadhia as the UK CEO. Gadhia was the former CEO at Virgin Money and held a number of government advisory positions. Whilst Gadhia is one of the best-known female leaders in the UK and shares many of the same principles as Bahrololoumi in terms of advocating diversity and equality, they were two very different appointments.

Gadhia arrived at Salesforce as a seasoned CEO with government-backed credentials whereas Bahrololoumi brings a much richer and more relevant toolkit in the form of front-line digital leadership, customer value creation and deep technical knowledge. Gadhia was a statement signing that made sense at the time and gave Salesforce's play some gravitas. Bahrololoumi is an entirely different proposition and provides the hands-on experience that will be needed to guide both Salesforce and its customers through the digital revolution.

22 years at the world's biggest consulting firm (by number of employees) had seen Bahrololoumi rise up the ranks since joining the firm as Andersen Consulting in 1998 through to her departing role as UK&I technology and consulting lead. During her tenure, she gained significant transformation experience with a number of blue-chip clients across several industries including retail, oil and gas, banking, healthcare and telecoms. She pioneered a number of 'firsts' - from convening the UK technology ecosystem at the award-winning Kaleidoscope, to patented uses of cloud technologies. She was also the driving force behind several of Accenture's marquee acquisitions and oversaw the growth of its technology and consulting unit to become the deepest, in terms of talent and expertise, in the UK. She is a former vice chair of the Prince's Trust Technology Leadership board and currently sits on the boards of techUK and Movement to Work.

A long list of accolades and achievements which, I know from our time together, embarrass her as much as they instil a sense of pride.

Bahrololoumi is a well-known and equally well-liked personality within the enterprise tech community. In researching for this article, I couldn't find a single person who had anything negative to say and all who know her describe a fun, energetic, highly articulate and capable leader. Liked by colleagues, customers and partners alike – Bahrololoumi brings something to the world of enterprise tech that is noticeably lacking in many interactions – authenticity. It's a word that is bandied around by corporate PR teams but is rarely evident and Bahrololoumi has it in spades. Her open and approachable manner is perfectly tempered by her indisputable knowledge, authoritative yet calm demeanour and unmistakable passion for doing the right thing.





ZAHRA BAHROLOLOUMI

I KNEW THIS WAS ANOTHER EXPERIENCE TO HAVE IN MY LIFETIME. SO, IT WAS AN EASY CHOICE TO JOIN SALESFORCE, BUT IT WAS LESS EASY TO SAY GOODBYE TO THE WONDERFUL ACCENTURE.



These are all admirable and highly desirable qualities, but as I was driving through rural Northamptonshire on my way to 'Bahrololoumi Towers' for the interview – I couldn't help but keep asking myself the same question: how big of a step up is this job? Sure, Accenture isn't exactly small fry and her role there was very senior – but Salesforce? In a CEO role? Knowing all the complexities that CEOs have to deal with, and understanding the dramatic differences in culture between the two organisations, I wondered – was she going to be up to it?

In late May, as some restrictions to civil liberties were lifted, I popped round for a cup of tea to ask her exactly that and to discuss her heritage, responsibilities, challenges and ambitions as she takes on her new role.

Zahra Bahrololoumi's (from here on, Z) ascension to the role of EVP and CEO UK&I at Salesforce is nothing short of meteoric and is some achievement for a girl who was once told by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) that she couldn't fulfil her dream of becoming a diplomat because her skin was the wrong colour.

Born to Iranian parents, Z's family came to the UK in the early 1970s and the hostilities and hardships endured by her countrymen and women had a profound and lasting effect.

"Conflict was the backdrop to much of my youth. Although I wasn't living in it, I have family there, so it was a reality, albeit a distant one. I felt very passionately about peace, which sounds really naff, but that's how I'm wired. I think I'm a good collaborator and I can see things from lots of different angles. I talked about it quite a lot with my Dad and my dream was to make a career in diplomacy and to do my bit towards bringing peace to the world."

Of course, times have changed and the recruiting

policies of most organisations have improved significantly since the days when an employer could determine your suitability for a job based on where your parents were born. But the FCO's loss was Accenture's (Andersen Consulting) gain and in 1998, Z started her career in technology.

However, she was somewhat of a reluctant employee to begin with: having completed a degree in Management Science at Brunel University it seemed an obvious path to fall into management consulting. A high achiever throughout school and university, Z had all the credentials that the blossoming consulting world was looking for. However, she was adamantly not interested in a career in management consulting and insisted on being employed in a technical capacity, despite having virtually no technical skills.

"When I was interviewing at Andersen Consulting, they offered me a job in what was then change management and is now considered management consulting. I said, 'Thanks, but no. Unless I can join technology, I'm not joining.' And they said, 'Well, you've got no technology skills.' And I'm like, 'Yeah, I know that, but it's the future and I really want to learn.' I knew Anderson would give me a great platform so I took the job and the rest is history."

The following is taken from our Q&A during a COVID-secure interview at her home.

Usually when a person commits two decades to an organisation they are often there for life. Z had served 22 years for Accenture so the two burning questions have to be: 'why leave, and why join Salesforce?'

ZB *"Leaving Accenture wasn't an easy decision because I was really happy. Accenture's a wonderful place, and it still is really close to my heart, but the opportunity to work inside Salesforce was just too compelling to ignore. When I think about Salesforce, it's a leader in its field and it's so purpose driven and value*





led. The values they've got - trust, customer success, innovation and equality - they really chime with me.

"They haven't just pivoted to these values, they were always very purposeful in their leadership and I wanted to experience it for myself. I knew this was another experience to have in my lifetime. So, it was an easy choice to join Salesforce, but it was less easy to say goodbye to the wonderful Accenture."

Everyone likes a bit of gossip, and I guess they'd like to know about how you actually got the job. I'm assuming that you didn't put your CV on Indeed?

ZB *"Ha! Not exactly. I was approached by a headhunter. Initially I was quite dismissive, not because I was dismissive of Salesforce - I really loved the company - I was just very happy at Accenture. I started to have informal conversations with leadership at Salesforce and the only way I can describe it was a very warm, embracing hug. The recruitment process was fascinating. It didn't feel like I was being grilled through a series of interviews. It felt like there was a two-way conversation to allow me to test whether this was the right company for me. I'm extremely loyal - 22 years in one place. You don't walk away from that easily or lightly."*

I mentioned your experience with the FCO in my introduction which must have been an upsetting and disappointing experience. But how challenging was it to break into consulting in 1998 for an Iranian girl, with dark skin and no tech skills?

ZB *"My heritage wasn't necessarily the big thing that was on my mind - it was the lack of technology skills! However, I was one of only two women in my technology start group and there was no one that looked like me! I was the only dark girl in my intake and at the time Andersen Consulting didn't have the kind of policies and outlook that we have today."*

How has your gender and heritage impacted your career? Do you think it's helped or hindered you?

ZB *"I definitely don't feel like I was hindered. Anderson Consulting [and subsequently Accenture] have matured and now they really are world class in terms of their stance and their impact in the space of inclusion and diversity. I've been part of that journey and I feel really proud of what Accenture does today. Even at the start I was pleasantly surprised at how egalitarian Andersen was. You did good work, you proved yourself, you delivered and you were recognised for it."*

What's been the biggest changes you have seen in the enterprise tech world during your 22 years - apart from the technology itself?

ZB *"We were quite constrained in the '90s and we were very formal. You were in suits, there was a certain polish, and I think things relaxed post the dot.com boom. I think that dot.com boom paved the way for people to become more themselves."*



THE MAIN THING THAT FUELLED MY DRIVE, INFLUENCED MY PROGRESSION AND SET ME APART WAS THE INFLUENCE OF MY PARENTS



Yes, suddenly success looked very different – how did that impact you and your career?

ZB *“I still have a slide that I use when I talk to folks about my career journey. It’s from pre 2000 and everything is black and white and sepia, and then literally after the dot.com boom, everything was multicoloured. It’s like the tech world, specifically, moved into colour overnight.”*

What drove you in those early days to become successful?

ZB *“The main thing that fuelled my drive, influenced my progression and set me apart was the influence of my parents. I remember growing up, my parents always said to me, ‘you have to work twice as hard as everyone else; first of all, you’re a woman, and secondly you’re a brown woman.’ My parents sacrificed so much to stay in the UK and help me forge my career – so of course I had to succeed. They never pressured me, not once, but it is my life’s work to prove their decision to stay was the right one and to make them proud.”*

And how did your early career at Andersen progress?

ZB *“I was really fortunate that I got accelerated through pretty much every promotion point. I ask myself, ‘why was that?’ I think my drive and focus, I think anyone will tell you that I haven’t changed in*

22 years. Some of the nicest things that friends and people have said to me that I’ve worked with over that period of time is that irrespective of your role, you’ve been the same Z. And I think that is something I’ve held quite dear.”

You spent 22 years at Accenture and you were head of technology and consulting when you left. You now find yourself with a CEO title. Is this job a big step up for you?

ZB *“Yes and no. If I consider the traditional dimensions of scale and the impact, the roles are quite similar. It was a very large part of the business that I ran and was responsible for within Accenture. The customer accountability that I had and the customer responsibility was very similar.*

“I think the thing that is different within Salesforce, for me personally, is the profile and the responsibility is a step up. There’s a deep sense of responsibility – the stakes that we have in powering the economic recovery – I feel an overwhelming sense of duty. As the face and the most senior individual across UK and Ireland that is very different, that has a different profile for me and I love it. It weighs heavy, but it’s rewarding.”

How different is it being on the other side of the consulting vendor dynamic?

ZB *“I constantly weigh this up and of course you can’t avoid the comparison. I think number one, both Ac-*

ZAHRA BAHROLOLOUMI

centure and Salesforce are very purpose led and value driven. I think that remains the same on both sides.

"I think the key difference is within Accenture you have a customer base that sits within a specific profile. And within Salesforce, what I absolutely love is that it serves so many different types of customers."

You must be dealing with lots of companies that you wouldn't have dealt with before; smaller SMBs, right through to global enterprises.

ZB *"That's it. So that whole spectrum is a massive learning opportunity for me and you get to see different challenges across these different segments of the market. That's been the biggest difference. The pace in each of the segments is so different and I'm finding that really mind-blowing and incredibly dynamic."*

What's the best thing that you've learned about Salesforce that you didn't know before you joined?

ZB *"Oh, so many things. I am blown away by the responsibility that Salesforce takes for enabling cus-*

people respond to you. I could not get that sense for the first couple of weeks.

"However, what really jumped out of the screen was just how alive the culture was. People were reaching out to me and I was given a really warm welcome. My onboarding was unbelievably world class. I'm a structured person but this was on another level."

It hasn't always been a priority for Salesforce has it? The investment in the UK and Ireland is fairly recent and hasn't been a priority market until recently.

ZB *"I think it's always been an important market but the new commitment and allocation of investment is quite significant. There are lots of traditional measures that we'll have to measure our success, but I think there are three key metrics.*

"Firstly, customer success and that's my number one priority. We are supporting our customers through their digitisation challenges and helping fuel the economic recovery. I think if we can do that successfully and I can see that we're delivering the value then that

“IN SALESFORCE THE MISSION IS ABSOLUTELY FOCUSED ON CUSTOMER SUCCESS AND VALUE AND GOOD THINGS COME FROM THAT IF YOU FOCUS ON THE GREATEST NEED.

tomers to be self-sufficient and successful. The whole Trailblazer programme that Salesforce runs, the mentality of making sure that customers are adequately skilled and able to really get the value out of the solution sets, I think has really opened my eyes. The other thing that I didn't really count on was the heartbeat that comes from HQ. I think it is really quite strong and I'm learning so much from that. I thought we would be an outpost, but everybody's so integrated. It's a large company, yet it feels very intimate and accessible."

How challenging has it been coming into this role during a global pandemic?

ZB *"It's a good question, and of course, during my first few weeks I couldn't go and meet anyone, so I did all my first meetings and customer engagements remotely. In those first couple of weeks I felt like I didn't fully understand the context of my role in relation to everybody else. Even though I had the title, you live your role by how you interact with others and how*

is my first and actually my most important measure of success.

"The second thing is upholding and expanding the Salesforce culture. It is such a unique environment with innovation and purpose at the heart of everything it does. So upholding that, ensuring that we have the right impact both internally and externally, is something that I take very seriously as a priority.

"The third thing is something that is actually keeping me quite awake and that is the skilling of people that we need to do within UK and Ireland. The Salesforce ecosystem will create 143,000 new jobs by 2024. You look at that and you think, 'wow, that's really amazing.' But the question is, 'who's going to fill those jobs?' We're not short of people, we're short of skills and I don't think Salesforce is unique in that. We've got this amazing platform called Trailhead. It's a free platform that allows people to skill themselves and get certified. Upskilling, reskilling and making sure we have the talent pipeline to fulfil our objectives is a key focus for us."



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ZAHRA BAHROLOLOUMI

And finally, what milestones have you set yourself to measure your own performance?

ZB *"As a Salesforce CEO, because the chain is quite clear, if we're able to make our customers successful, Salesforce will be successful. And if Salesforce is successful, then personally I'm successful and my teams are successful. In my opinion, that is the correct chain. In Salesforce the mission is absolutely focussed on customer success and value and good things come from that if you focus on the greatest need."*

"It is the one thing I talk to customers about the most - focus on the greatest need. Solve that problem and then move to the next greatest need. It's a common thread through my career. Every career stage or client environment I was in, there was always a big need somewhere. It was either recovery, get this delivered by tomorrow or sell more. If I focussed on that, then the success would follow. That is the key to unlocking customer value and that is the single biggest focus for me, my teams and Salesforce."

So, what did I learn from my time with Z and what are my big takeaways?

There is no doubt that Zahra is a competent, gracious and technically-minded leader. In terms of her personality and character, I can see the fit with Salesforce working hand in glove. She is a strong advocate for many of the values that Salesforce has been built on and the entrepreneurial environment will allow her to flourish to full potential.

The skills shortage is a concern, but the main challenge will be to carve out an identity for Salesforce in the region. Salesforce is a very American company and although there is nothing wrong with that, the new UK&I CEO will need to find a way to put her own stamp on this market and bring the Salesforce brand to life for UK customers.

I have no doubt that Zahra will succeed. As I said earlier, she brings something to a leadership role that very few manage to execute – a combination of authenticity, knowledge, empathy, modesty and purpose. Her relaxed personality should not be confused with being easy going or lax – but who doesn't want to have fun while they are saving the world? Watch this space for great things from Salesforce in the UK and Ireland... ■



A BIT ABOUT SALESFORCE

So, what do we need to know about Salesforce? Well, pretty much everyone recognises Salesforce as a CRM vendor – that's customer relationship management – and companies of all shapes and sizes use their products and services to manage sales, opportunities and marketing activities. Unlike most other proprietary software vendors, the Salesforce offering cuts across geographies, industries and size of customer and boasts more than 150,000 customers worldwide.

Salesforce was one of the original cloud companies, set up by Marc Benioff and a small cohort of software engineers in February 1999. The firm's base of operations was a one bedroom apartment in San Francisco and was launched with the aim of becoming 'a world-class internet company for sales force automation', or to bring about 'the end of software', depending on whether you reference Benioff's original marketing statement or the one currently on the SFDC web site.

Salesforce.com (SFDC) business model was truly revolutionary. The proprietary software industry had been selling business applications as locally hosted products for more than 50 years but Benioff et al conceived a better way to deploy and manage business technology by extending the concept of application service providers to a fully remote provision of applications as a service.

Not only was the technical deployment of these applica-

tions a radical shift from the norm, so too was the pricing model. Benioff believed that subscription billing, which goes up as customers use more and down if they use less, was a far more equitable way to charge for services. Allied to this avant-garde approach to products and pricing, SFDC was one of the first companies to be born out of purpose. From the outset, Benioff and the other co-founders believed in an obligation to develop a company built on principles – what we call today, corporate social responsibility. The founders

the new Cloud Wars Industry Cloud top 10 list and boasts an impressive industry cloud run rate of more than \$2bn, some way ahead of its nearest rivals: Google, Oracle, SAP and Infor. In 2020, Salesforce significantly expanded its industry-specific product portfolio, acquiring Vlocity and adding four more industry products in media, communications, energy & utilities, as well as new public sector solutions.

Our view is that Salesforce will become more dominant and relevant in the near-term as it offers something that very

SALESFORCE, ON THE OTHER HAND, OPERATES IN A SPACE WHERE ORGANISATIONS CAN DIFFERENTIATE THEMSELVES BY BUILDING UNIQUE RELATIONSHIPS

wrote their V2MOM (Vision, Values, Methods, Obstacles, and Measures) strategic plan in late 1999 and was designed to provide employees with a clear vision for the business and align the organisation around common goals. In true start-up fashion, the original draft was written on the back of an envelope and, even today, V2MOM remains at the core of how SFDC runs its business and continues to guide the decisions they make.

Salesforce is the number one CRM worldwide and its focus on industry specific solutions will only solidify its position as the benchmark. It currently offers 12 vertical clouds that provide purpose-built functionality, data models and processes, all designed by industry experts. It ranks as number one on

few other software vendors can – differentiation. No enterprise can carve out a niche through core ERP applications – one finance module is the same as the next and core ERP (other than equally vertical-specific offerings) are soon to become commoditised solutions which add very little in the way of contrast. Salesforce, on the other hand, operates in a space where organisations can differentiate themselves by building unique relationships, delivering personalised services and driving sales with both new and existing customers. As businesses rebound from the last 18 months, the emphasis on growing sales, maintaining customer relationships and delivering unique and personalised services will intensify. Creating seamless experiences and developing new and innovative ways to attract and retain customers will be the number one priority for enterprise leaders and Salesforce is uniquely positioned to capitalise on that.

FROM THE OUTSET, BENIOFF AND THE OTHER CO-FOUNDERS BELIEVED IN AN OBLIGATION TO DEVELOP A COMPANY BUILT ON PRINCIPLES

LOVE

WE NEED TO

IN THE

NURTURE LASTING

TIME OF

RELATIONSHIPS

CORONAVIRUS

IN A TIME OF CRISIS

BY MARK MOFFAT

When Dr Clare Wenham from the London School of Economics was interviewed by the BBC last year about her views on local lockdowns, it was the presence of her young daughter that stole the show. It was a real moment that reflected both the joys and complications of working from home and one that most working parents would have recognised. The challenge of remote communication was laid bare but also the potential. Distance had been conquered, at least technically, but what about emotionally?



MARK MOFFAT

For anyone starting a new job during the pandemic or trying to establish new relationships with suppliers and partners, remote contact has been the default. Has it worked? Almost certainly, to some extent, because it has had to work. But what does that really mean? Have those Zoom or Teams calls managed to establish strong bonds or are we kidding ourselves? Conducting one-off interviews is one thing but maintaining long distance relationships is quite a different challenge altogether.

The book *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel García Márquez poignantly depicts the tensions between love and distance during times of a cholera outbreak and economic crisis in early 20th century Colombia. The relationship between Florentino and Fermina is seemingly real but the distance gives them a false connection. In reality they have drifted apart, which in many respects echoes the problems that we all potentially face when trying to manage long distance relationships with our colleagues, customers and partners.

Having been appointed from my previous role within PwC to CTO and head of tech consulting during the pandemic, I know only too well how strange it is to only meet your new colleagues online. Coupled with long periods of isolation and the increasingly sedentary, bleary-eyed symptoms of virtual working, it is understandable how these could be the perfect conditions for relationships to die, or not even start at all. So how are we expected to ensure relationships with colleagues, clients and vendors are preserved let alone thrive during this time of continued remote working?

A big part of my role is managing our strategic alliance relationships. In my international career of 20-plus years, I have worked on a number of projects with vendors where we came together



to design and deliver the best possible transformational outcomes for our clients, while building trusting, long-lasting relationships along the way. How do we do this working remotely? How can we navigate the complexities of these relationships when the world has just become more complex?

HERE IS WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Be a people person. Focus on what's in front of you.

It may sound a little obvious but focussing on internal relationships makes a lot of sense. Given the complexities of work and the huge potential for distraction, ensuring you have

nurtured strong relationships with colleagues should stand you in good stead. These are the people you need to rely on for support, for ideas, innovation and action. There needs to be mutual trust but that has to be earned.

It's important to establish open lines of communication, a clear definition of roles and set boundaries and expectations. This should go both ways. It's about establishing a team ethic, not a hierarchy. How people want to work together will of course vary but this is about finding common ground and enabling people. While we don't always get it right, it doesn't mean you shouldn't try, continually self-evaluate and look to improve.

An important part of this process is diversity. We have to draw on a breadth of knowledge and experiences, across all social and ethnic groups, to deliver a truly dynamic, modern-thinking and engaging team of problem-solving people. As our own research has revealed, diverse businesses create better outcomes for customers and better business returns, through improved innovation and relevance.

So, take some time to get to know your colleagues and, if you are not already, actively push policies that deliver on diversity, to build a team of people who are proud of the organisation they work for and share your vision. At PwC we have strategists, change managers, innovation thinkers, cyber and risk experts. They are all part of a strong team that empowers us to build external relationships with our vendors. We encourage our teams to bring a fresh and challenging perspective to every engagement, to become independent advocates and partners to our clients.

As I have already suggested, relationships over distance can be difficult. They need time and attention. They need to be nurtured. This doesn't mean you have to set up weekly team games (remote quizzes are not for everyone) but it's important to respect roles and colleagues' professional and

personal challenges as we emerge from lockdowns, opportunities to meet up and cement relationships are opening up. It's important to remember that old wise, if not a little cheesy, saying, 'you are only as good as the people around you.'

JOIN THE CLUB AND GET PERSONAL

Before the pandemic, video calls tended to be rare and a mixed bag, with many attendees not turning their cameras on so they couldn't be seen. It's now pretty much standard and expected. Maintaining face-to-face contact with colleagues is really important to develop relationships, especially while working remotely.

Regular video calls certainly help and are necessary for all those long working sessions when scoping and delivering projects. Whenever the rules permitted, I tried establishing some sort of in-person contact with my key vendor relationships – be it an occasional walk or early morning run – and it certainly worked on so many levels. I'd even go as far as saying some conversations were deeper than your usual informal chats after work. We didn't have nearly as many distractions and conversations were often both personal and business-oriented. It becomes quite simple – we are social animals. We need each other and are stronger together.

With regards to client relationships, it helped that PwC already had experience of working remotely. Not everyone was new to the concept of video calling and remote collaboration. This of course, stood us in good stead when the lockdown came. We already had the infrastructure, technology and training in place so our staff could be agile and adapt. As an example, we were working on a cloud transformation with **Direct**

Line Group and at a critical point in the project the world went into lockdown. Despite all the potential for interruption, it was remarkable how little momentum on the project was lost and we were able to successfully transform their finance capability, all enabled by **Oracle Cloud**.

BE LOYAL BUT OPEN TO CHANGING NEEDS

Technology can be a complex and unforgiving landscape. For one, it never stands still and will leave behind those that don't look ahead or look to embrace change. Our vendor relationships by definition become

born Yacht during Oracle Openworld 2020. This year, as I sat in front of my laptop, with my VR headset on attending our virtual event, understandably thoughts centred on the value of human interaction and the role this plays in client engagement. The subtleties of speech, the nuances, the asides.

Technology will have to increasingly enable smooth online communication but culturally we also have to adapt to accept remote relationships as part of the mix. For many that may mean investing more in home-enabling the workforce, ensuring the best possible internet speeds and secure connections. It will also demand discipline.

Above all we have to find sustainable paths of engagement with clients and vendors. There will be no one-method-works-for-all approach, so we will have to be agile in our work and how

**“TAKE SOME TIME TO
GET TO KNOW YOUR
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‘polygamous’. Both parties understand that's the nature of the business landscape, so if we are all to continue to move forward and collaborate, we all need to ensure we understand the evolving role of technology and what we can bring to the party for our clients.

Maintaining ongoing relationships with vendors is essential, but it is also important to be constantly on the lookout for new relationships. As the pandemic revealed, there is a thin line between making it or breaking it for both new and established relationships. It all comes down to trust, transparency and communication but that doesn't just happen. It needs constant attention, development and re-evaluation.

I vividly remember the last in-person event we hosted with over 400 clients and partners aboard the Sun-

we communicate and collaborate. Using a mix of virtual and in-person approaches, we can hopefully stave off the fear and anxiety of separation.

As we emerge from lockdowns into increasingly hybrid working worlds, this will become apparent. Perceptions of loss of control may force some to return to old habits using new tools. But times have changed. We have to adapt, look after our colleagues and partners and move forward together in order to collaborate and deliver customer satisfaction. As Márquez once wrote, “no medicine cures what happiness cannot.” ■

—
Mark Moffat is CTO and head of tech consulting at PwC UK & EMEA



NO SPORT IS MORE CLOSELY INTERTWINED WITH

THE WORLD OF TECHNOLOGY THAN FORMULA 1.

EVER SINCE THE GLOBE'S PREMIER MOTORSPORT

SERIES WAS FIRST STAGED IN 1950, TEAMS HAVE

PUSHED THE BOUNDARIES OF INVENTION TO GAIN ANY

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGE ON THE TRACK.

BY STEVE McCASKILL



HOW

**TECHNOLOGY
IS DRIVING**

THE

NEW

**ERA
OF F1**

FORMULA 1

W

HEN JUST A FRACTION OF A SECOND CAN BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WINNING AND LOSING, NO STONE IS LEFT UNTURNED IN THE PURSUIT OF SPEED. MANY OF THE SAFETY AND PERFORMANCE FEATURES OF MODERN ROAD CARS THAT WE TAKE FOR GRANTED, SUCH AS STEEL DISC BRAKES, ACTIVE SUSPENSION, AND EVEN REAR-VIEW MIRRORS, OWE THEIR EXISTENCE TO THIS FIERCELY COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT.

In the modern era, data-driven innovation is the name of the game. A common expression within the paddock is that Formula 1 was doing big data before the term was coined as teams have been collecting, processing, and analysing huge amounts of information to inform car design and race strategy for several decades.

"I was probably part of the first generation of engineers to work with this level of data back in the 1990s," says Rob Smedley, a former race engineer for several teams and now head of data systems at F1. "You've got to get the value out of it as fast as possible and that requires a complex but user-friendly data architecture."

As teams seek to squeeze as much out of this data as possible, they have more recently turned to enterprise technologies used in other industries, such as cloud computing, business software, and analytics.

The world of F1 provides vendors with an extreme, high-profile showcase for their wares and relationships have transitioned from mere sponsorships and customer arrangements into genuine partnerships that influence the development of business technologies for everyone.

GETTING MORE OUT OF THE DATA

Each Grand Prix is the final stage of a development cycle lasting months. Every year, teams attempt to design the best possible car within the con-

straints of certain specifications and rules known as the 'formula'. This is an iterative process, with engineers providing upgraded components throughout the season to make the car go as fast as possible.

The 2022 regulations (delayed from 2021 due to the pandemic) include a new car design, complete with a new front wing shape, simplified suspension, new rear-end layout, underfloor tunnels, and wheel wake control devices. The car will also run on 18-inch wheels with low profile tyres for the first time.

The greater volume and variety of data that a team has at its disposal, the better. Each car produces millions of data points that are harvested in testing, races and in wind tunnels. But it's no use collecting this data if it isn't

useful. Teams need rapid, high quality insights to inform car development and to optimise race strategy.

As McLaren's principal digital architect, Ed Green is responsible for the team's end-to-end data architecture. This covers everything from trackside servers and high performance compute (HPC) environments that power virtual wind tunnels enabled by computational fluid dynamics (CFD), to the device applications used by engineers.

"With the new regulations coming in 2022, you want to be as efficient as possible," he says. "You need to make sure you're not wasting any more time than you need to, so the faster we can get the data from the CFD, the wind tunnel and track, the faster you can make the car."

YOU'VE GOT TO GET
THE VALUE OUT
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A COMPLEX BUT
USER-FRIENDLY
DATA ARCHITECTURE



ROB
SMEDLEY



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FORMULA 1

ED GREEN
McLAREN


THE FASTER WE CAN GET
THE DATA FROM THE CFD,
THE WIND TUNNEL
AND TRACK, THE FASTER
YOU CAN MAKE THE CAR

Since 2018, McLaren has partnered with **Dell Technologies** to transform its workspace and server infrastructure, and now the focus is on performance. For practical and regulatory reasons only a fraction of the team travel to each race. Instead, two IT engineers and a tech kit described as a third car containing equipment such as hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) are deployed on site.

Advanced networking and cloud applications are essential to send this data from the pit lane back to McLaren's Woking HQ, but some workloads must remain as close to the car as possible. Latency-sensitive functions remain close to the point of collection, while less time-sensitive data is sent back to the team base. In this regard F1 is a perfect example of the benefits of edge computing.

"You have latency challenges when you're at a circuit in the middle of no-

where and if you send that back then you're making decisions based on where the car was, not where it is," Green explains.

Dell says many of the challenges that McLaren faces, such as security and data governance, are the same as those faced by firms in other industries but that the extreme conditions and speed required are unique. The company says lessons learned can be applied across its offering to the benefit of all its customers.

"McLaren push us and if I can get the technology to work in the pit, then I can get it to work in a traditional environment," adds Dayne Turbitt, SVP and UK GM at Dell Technologies.

The need to extract maximum data as quickly as possible is why **Williams Racing** has turned to **KX**, a data analytics firm that built its reputation in the financial sector. Both sides saw how the collection of rapid, accurate information for trading could be ap-

plied to F1 and KX's database is so lightweight that it can be deployed on almost any device. This lends itself well to edge computing and increases the amount of real-time data that can be fed into Williams' applications.

"Ultimately what the KX technology brings is speed and efficiency – not just in terms of how we can process live data but the turnaround time for our other processes," says Barney Hassell, head of vehicle dynamics at Williams Racing.

"The ability to query large datasets and examine trends in car performance that the human eye can't see – at least in any reasonable timeframe – is significant. If we need to decide on gear ratios for next year's car then we can look at our historical data but if this is stored in various log files, this would take ages. We can also kill off wind tunnel simulations if they are pointless and if we are making good progress, we can identify it quickly and continue."

PROFESSIONALISING THE BUSINESS

Aston Martin is one of the most famous names in the car industry but its F1 team is actually the newest on the grid after it rebranded from Racing Point in the close season. The team is ambitious, as demonstrated by the signing of former world champion Sebastian Vettel and the plan to create a new state-of-the-art, sustainable factory by 2022.

Technology is a critical part of this strategy and **Cognizant** has been signed up as both a title sponsor, reflecting the commercial value of F1 for the IT industry, but also as a key partner.

"Cognizant is helping us to develop and improve the technology that is collating and analysing our data," explains Otmar Szafnauer, Aston Martin CEO and team principal. "This is vital because we simply generate so much data, whether it's from the sensor technology on the cars, the powertrain, our tools that help to make the car go quicker, CFD, or even our wind tunnel.

"Cognizant's data scientists will then analyse all of the data that is gen-

F1 teams go to great lengths to shave even a millisecond off their times. It's the difference between winning and losing



DAYNE
TURBITT
DELL

*MCLAREN PUSH US AND
IF I CAN GET THE TECHNOLOGY
TO WORK IN THE PIT,
THEN I CAN GET IT TO WORK IN
A TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENT*

erated, which ranges from information on speed and acceleration, to engines, rpm, and the slipstream, to help us find any areas for improvement on the car, including improved efficiency.

"We'll be able to efficiently analyse all of this data and make better, more informed decisions. This will enable us to go quicker around the track this year, but also help to identify areas for improvement and modifications that we can start thinking about for next year."

The use of enterprise staples like ERP and CRM software provides further evidence that F1 is not too dissimilar from other industries. Aston Martin is also using **IFS Cloud**, a platform typically used in asset-intensive

industries like logistics, mining and oil and gas to make sure its components are in the right place at the right time and to manage costs so it can confirm it is meeting regulations.

LOOKING FORWARD

And like any other business, F1 has customers. The more fans a team has, the more eyes it has on the car, and the more it can earn from sponsorships. **Red Bull's** partnership with **Oracle** not only gives the team access to tools that can drive performance, but also cloud marketing applications that will enable new ways to drive engagement. Red Bull hopes to provide fans with data-driven insights and experiences that bring fans closer to the team wherever they are in the world.

Digital capabilities are also important. McLaren is also using **Cisco's** Webex to power 'Slipstream', a live streaming service for its partners to gain behind-the-scenes insights into the team, and Aston Martin hopes Cognizant's augmented and virtual reality (AR and VR) capabilities could eventually lead to road car sales.

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML) and simulated wind tunnels raise the possibility that car design could one day be completely automated. But those within F1 believe the role of technology within the sport will continue to be one of enabling engineers, strategists and drivers to achieve their full potential.

"AI is already a reality but it's aiding the decision-making process rather than making decisions on our behalf", says Green. "When you've got just three seconds for a pit window, your strategy can be disrupted if you make the wrong call. AI gives our team the right information at the right time -



FORMULA 1



OTMAR SZAFNAUER
ASTON MARTIN

COGNIZANT IS HELPING US TO DEVELOP
AND IMPROVE THE TECHNOLOGY THAT IS
COLLATING AND ANALYSING OUR DATA

either on the pit wall or in the factory designing parts. But we need to make sure we're giving the AI the right data."

"The most accurate model available is still the car on the track and physical modelling is still giving us better results than the simulated environment in certain conditions," adds Smedley. "But CFD is so much more precise now and what we do would be very difficult to do in a physical wind tunnel.

"Will the simulation environment ever match the physical environment? The answer is yes, but not yet."

HOW F1 IS USING CLOUD TO MAKE THE SPORT MORE EXCITING

By its own admission, F1 was a bit behind the times when it came to its digital strategy before **Liberty Global** took over the sport in 2017. But since then, digital has been a major focus for the organisation as it seeks to build and engage its fanbase.

Enhanced broadcast presentation, a revamped social media presentation, and eSports have all formed part

F1's digital strategy includes
a revamp of social media presentation
and a wide-ranging cloud partnership
with Amazon Web Services





of this strategy, as has a wide-ranging cloud partnership with **Amazon Web Services (AWS)**.

As part of the deal, Formula 1 has migrated its systems to the cloud and is using AWS's capabilities to make the sport more appealing through new regulations that will be introduced next year.

"Our fan survey showed they didn't necessarily want more overtaking, but closer, more exciting wheel-to-wheel racing," Smedley said. "When we started digging into the reason why races weren't closer, we realised it was a legacy of aerodynamic performance. When a car is following another in front it loses up to 40 percent of downforce. That's a lot of performance and lap times were being affected."

The answer was to run simulations in a virtual wind tunnel, but

this is a hugely compute intensive, time-consuming process when using on-premise equipment. AWS's high-performance compute (HPC) capabilities to run a huge number of concurrent simulations until they had finalised a design meant cars didn't suffer such a loss in downforce when tailing the car in front.

The design is now part of the 2022 regulations and it's up to the team engineers to find additional performance within the framework that will result in closer racing.

F1 is also using AWS's ML capabilities to find ways that it can combine its huge historical database with real-time data collected from the cars to make the sport more exciting for viewers.

"I use my experience working for teams and try to create a technical so-

lution that my colleagues in the media department can turn into something usable and entertaining," explains Smedley. "Analysing our database is a hugely complex modelling and algorithmic problem that lends itself well to machine learning."

The result is F1 Insights – statistics that appear on television graphics and digital channels, hoping to provide additional context for seasoned viewers and explain concepts and events to newer fans. These include predicted pit stop strategy, tyre performance and corner performance, but also evolving stats such as car and team development over the course of a season.

"We hope these insights tap into a younger audience that wants more data, they're more immersive and help get the message across," says Smedley. ■

JON ROSKILL

Digital transformation is not a magic wand

IT'S A POWERFUL WAY TO REIMAGINE BUSINESS

BY JON ROSKILL

Digital transformation has become a popular tech trend. Businesses aiming to succeed in today's digital economy are shifting manual, analogue processes and systems, and transforming them with modern technology. While the goal of streamlining and updating systems and tools may be what attracts decision makers to digital transformation initially, many don't consider the deeper level of investment required to create a truly connected business.

Instead, they have been led to believe that digital transformation is a magic trick where they simply wave a digital wand to change a process or two. Poof! Their business is revolutionised.

Though the digital aspect is an important part of transformation, businesses that view digitisation as a one-step process miss several components that are required to make the transition truly successful.

Benefits of digital transformation

Digital transformation isn't just about modernising tools and processes, it's about gaining an edge in the marketplace. A report from **Gartner** notes that two-thirds of business leaders say they need to digitise to stay competitive. Below are some of the broader business outcomes that digital transformation can support.

- **Increased efficiency:** digital ap-



proaches such as automating business processes reduce redundancy and increase efficiency across a company – helping workers tackle tasks accurately and rapidly.

- **Deeper insights:** in addition to improving manual tasks, digital transformation also provides business leaders with invaluable insights through real-time data from across the company that might otherwise be siloed. This gives companies comprehensive, actionable information, which helps serve existing customers and advance business objectives.

- **Greater innovation and agility:** digital transformation allows companies to let go of slow, outdated legacy sys-

tems. In turn, they can be more flexible and responsive using new cloud-based systems. Businesses that adopt new digital tools gain a chance to develop practices that keep pace with market demands.

- **Greater profit:** **Deloitte** reported that digitally mature enterprises see industry-leading revenue growth and profit margins – demonstrating the power of digital transformation as a true differentiator.

With the notable benefits of digital transformation, it's easy to see that it's an essential element of meeting the demands of today's economic climate.

Companies with the most successful transformations have gone well beyond simply implementing new technologies.

They've also adopted a different mindset about what digital transformation actually means. These companies see it as a long-term process that involves each person at the company – not just the primary decision-makers.

Digital transformation is a mindset, not a magic trick

Though digitising processes and systems is certainly an essential element of modernising a business, it doesn't solve the whole problem. The core technology purchase is only the first step. The real work of digital transformation is its full implementation, user buy-in and training, and subsequent application integrations.

This process involves a critical mindset shift that business leaders need to

adopt to reap the benefits of their new technology investments. They must understand that digital transformation should be considered a way of life – not a one-and-done system upgrade.

As an **MIT Sloan Management Review** and Deloitte's global study showed, digital transformation isn't really about technology. It's about how companies integrate technologies to understand and transform the way they work. In other words, the transformation is ongoing, well after new tools have been introduced. According to **McKinsey & Company**, 70 percent of digital transformations don't achieve their desired goals. In order to ensure a transformation is successful, it's important to think about it as a continuous process, not a one-time change that occurs over a single weekend.

The human component of the shift cannot be underestimated either. According to a Gartner survey, the top internal roadblock to a business's successful digital transformation is to overcome 'culture challenges to accept change.' All employees, from the front-line to the C-suite, must understand the reasoning behind transformation and how it will improve their roles within the company. In other words, the transformation won't be as successful if the people affected by the changes don't understand the 'why' that's driving it. As the **Harvard Business Review** stated, "To harness people's full, lasting commitment, they must feel a deep desire, and even responsibility, to change."

Culture and technology are one in the same in digital transformation. A company's workforce must play an active role in driving progress and innovation after new technologies are rolled out. Everyone must see the transformation as an ongoing, systematic solution that drives greater transparency, agility, and growth. Achieving these goals is no easy feat, but there are a few best practices that can help business leaders set themselves up for success as they plan their digital transformations.

Ensuring success with digital transformations

Taking a phased approach to digital transformation is one of the surest

paths to success. The future effectiveness of the project often hinges on the stages before the transformation begins, which include winning buy-in from key leaders and creating a clear plan to communicate the changes ahead. In addition, transforming the business in phases can be helpful. For example, the company could start with updating financial systems, then move to other areas, such as distribution, once the first is well underway. The following can be used as a high-level guide for ensuring effective transformations.

- **Win executive buy-in first:** without a C-suite champion for the changes, the project might wither on the vine or lack the support and visibility needed to pull it off.

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- **Gain broader leadership support:** although leaders sign off on the funds to initiate the project, true digital transformation won't happen without the drive and excitement from leadership throughout the entire organisation.

- **Prepare the path with a culture of change:** internal communication around digital transformation is critical. Be sure to secure the perspective of employees on the front lines and share the vision and goals of the changes. In addition, discuss how the changes will benefit the organisation as well as deliver on specific employee needs.

- **Preview the changes ahead:** explain that beyond using new tools or processes, digital transformation will change the way a company manages data, how it sets and reaches goals, and ultimately how decisions are made. Establish that the transformation will usher in a new approach to work, individually and collectively.

- **Synchronise records, data sources, and systems:** the goal of digital transformation is to streamline operations and communications. If an organisation comes through the process with data silos intact, then it has missed one of the larger benefits of the process.

- **Make consistent enhancements:** technology is always evolving, meaning IT leaders must regularly integrate new capabilities to future-proof the company. After initial implementation, the company may also learn what they want to tweak or adapt to better suit their needs. Having flexibility to do so will ensure the transformation is customised to the company's evolving needs.

The idea of an overnight, effortless digital transformation does not exist. To truly transform, companies must consider the process as a shift in the way the company works. To do that, the transformation will require a whole-hearted approach that drives interest and buy-in for the project at every level.

Leadership support from the outset will provide the foundation and vision for the work ahead, while obtaining input from employees who will be using the new systems and technologies can inform the changes as well as how and when implementation unfolds. This will impact how well the new approach is adopted and how it drives employee satisfaction at the same time. Companies that see digital transformation as an ongoing process of reimagining their business will reap its full benefits and be well positioned to succeed in the marketplaces of tomorrow. ■

—
Jon Roskill is CEO at Acumatica

Why is a remote delivery model

BETTER THAN BOOTS ON THE GROUND?

BY STEVE PULLEE

So, what have we learned from this pandemic in our modern era of programme delivery?

Whilst many areas of our business world have felt a significant impact, those in the ERP and digital transformation sector have certainly managed to adapt and in many cases improve their efficiencies in delivering significant programmes remotely.

In many cases, having a cloud platform was a necessity for organisations both in the public and private sector to operate with a flexible, remote workforce. Hence prioritising a cloud ERP implementation in the stack of business transformation projects became the number one requirement.

So, let's reflect back to before the pandemic. In many of the larger delivery programmes, most of the top tier consultancies operated with a significant on-site presence. This was often used to justify the significant costs and expenses. In fact, this was not only recommended by the consultancies, but it also became the norm for customers to demand this from all parties involved in the delivery.

Add to this the misconception that ideas can only be fostered and shared effectively when people are in the same room and you can see why this often led to a sense of comfort while resources were on-site and a fear that if people were working remotely, no progress was being made. We all have seen this in the past, with requests to have resources onsite with no real business need other than to satisfy the perception that 'if they're not here, they're not being productive'.



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Over the past year, we have all been forced to embrace new technologies – hands up if you had not used **Zoom** before March last year – and exploit its capabilities to the full. An impromptu meeting, called at short notice, with everyone able to see and share the same information on the screen in front of them is now taken for granted. Contrast that with attempting to corral and then squeeze twenty people into a ten-person meeting room (if you can find one available) and have everyone peer at a laptop screen or projector.

So, if we fast forward to where we are today, the argument that there is lack of productivity with remote working simply isn't borne out by the evidence, as demonstrated by the significant number of programmes delivered throughout the pandemic. I'm sure many programmes have had their 'moments', however it has proven that with willingness, sponsorship and a good quality workforce, these programmes can be delivered with equally good efficiency and with much lower costs, both from a bottom line but also from an environmental perspective. This is factoring more and more in the customers' psyche, ensuring efficiency in all aspects of delivery, including the often unnecessary travel associated with hundreds of resources all over the country like driving, flying, boarding a train just to sit at a desk on the customer's site for eight hours a day, repeated five times a week!

There are great benefits for our employees too; there have been many studies to suggest that efficiency in delivery, when people have the flexibility to work remotely, increases significantly. The days of default requests of resources to be

on-site every day of the week look to be a thing of the past.

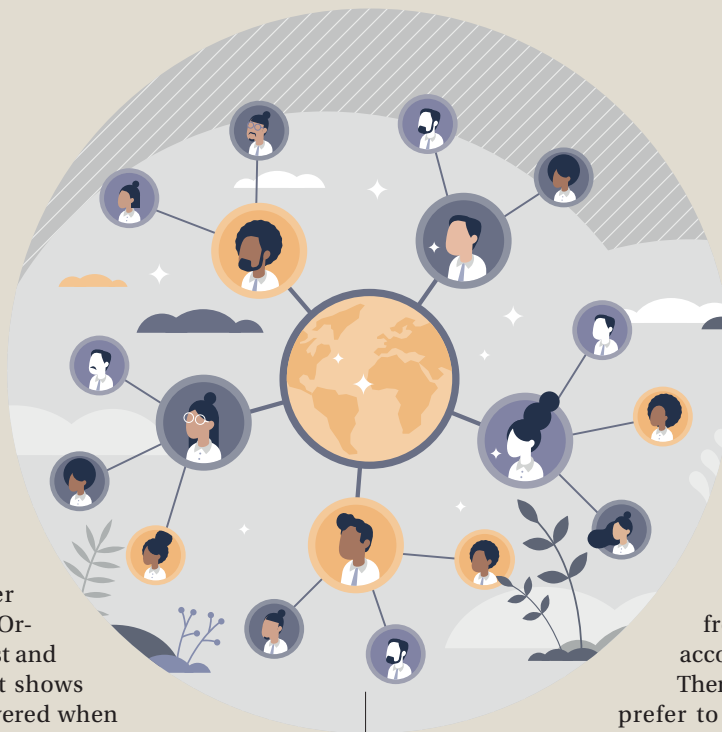
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the entire population to start working differently, we have all had to adapt and overcome obstacles with no real option other than to deliver remotely. Organisations have more trust and can see the evidence that shows that projects still get delivered when you are not on site... and often with a happier workforce!

As we (at time of going to print) approach the pivotal June date when we will be allowed to return to the office, there is a groundswell of opinion that remote working will remain a viable option for a large number of companies. Indeed, many companies have stated that working from home, either full-time or for a significant part of the working week, will become the norm. A recent **BBC** poll of 50 of the UK's largest employers found that 43 of them do not plan to insist on staff returning to the office full-time. If remote working had caused detrimental impact on business, then I very much doubt that so many would hold this opinion.

Mandatory working from home has certainly not resulted in a reduction in the appetite of organisations to initiate ERP implementations, quite the opposite in fact, with the increase in requests for cloud data migration services over the last year showing that the move to cloud ERP is thriving, despite the inability to work in the traditional manner.

So, have we redefined programme delivery for the future?

Not completely, although it does dispel some of the myths for expensive resources to be on



the ground five days a week in order to be successful. There will always be aspects and phases of programme delivery where face-to-face contact is highly advantageous to provide efficient outcomes, but surely these can be defined from the start and planned accordingly?

There will always be people who prefer to either work on-site and/or have their suppliers working on-site. Conversely, there will be those that embrace the completely remote working model having seen that succeed. In reality, I see the new normal being a hybrid approach, where the majority of on-site activity will take place only in the early stages of a project, where face-to-face interactions to build relationships and agree the key components and project phases will be advantageous.

It's certainly a positive thing to control these critical phases with in-person workshops and face-to-face sessions. The 'quick question' or the 'not sure I fully understand' scenario in these early project phases tends to play out better face-to-face, reading body language and having personable conversations to ensure customers and project stakeholders are completely comfortable with what the project is aiming to achieve. This is undoubtedly beneficial. A more remote working model following on when relationships are in place will likely become the industry accepted way that we deliver successful programmes.

The key ingredients to any successful programme still override whether resources are needed on the ground or based remotely. These comprise of good customer sponsorship, clear governance and planning, a robust, achievable business case and a knowledgeable, dedicated team. ■

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Working from home has certainly not resulted in a reduction in the appetite of organisations to initiate ERP implementations



HR





SPECIAL REPORT

human resources

LOVE / LEADERSHIP / HUMAN-CENTRICITY / HCM VENDORS / HYBRID WORKING



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The key HR solutions enterprises need to consider

Global HR analyst Josh Bersin
says the HR tech market has never
been more diverse and exciting



Technology has kept many businesses running throughout the rollercoaster ride that has made up the last 16 or so months. Technology has helped employees stay productive and connected regardless of their working locations. Technology is currently being used to create safe workplaces and support returning to work processes. To address critical hiring needs, technology is also being used to revamp recruiting and onboarding.

In addition to reinforcing our reliance on technology, this last year has also shown the importance of tearing down functional siloes and working across the enterprise to take full advantage of technology innovations and investments, to provide more holistic employee experiences and to use comprehensive analytics to guide and expedite workforce-related decisions.

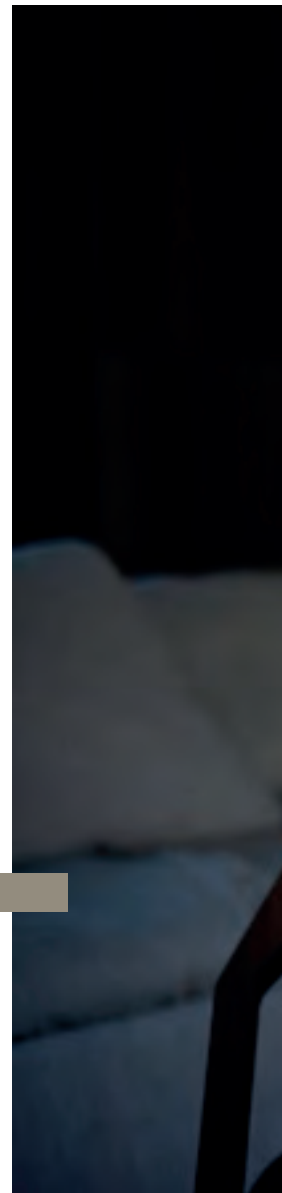
HR tech vendors are moving from systems of record to systems of design

The last year has proven the importance of adaptable technology. Companies have had to come up with solutions to unanticipated needs in days or weeks, not months or even years. HR organisations, in particular, have faced unprecedented challenges. Those solutions that are easy to implement, customise and use have been big winners. In fact, HR investments are rapidly moving away from systems of record (think learning management systems and human resource management systems) to systems of design. New offerings from **Microsoft** (Viva), **ServiceNow** (Quebec release), **Workday**, **Oracle**, and **SuccessFactors** are

in response to HR's demand for tools that give them the ability to rapidly adapt to ever-changing workforce needs and to provide highly personalised and relevant employee experiences.

Microsoft's entry into the HR market has the potential for massive disruption

It's hard to think of a technology vendor that isn't impacted by this year's introduction of Microsoft Viva, an employee experience platform that integrates with Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Teams and brings together communications, knowledge, learning, resources and insights. Learning





platform vendors will have no choice but to integrate with Viva Learning and Microsoft Teams. Content companies are building Viva-enabled search and discovery. Communication, productivity, and wellbeing tools are developing plug-ins.

Microsoft Viva is meant to solidify Teams as a central hub for work, taking on communication and collaboration rivals such as **Zoom**, **Slack** and **Google** while expanding its productivity technologies further beyond the core Microsoft Office suite.

Microsoft has about a 47.5 percent market share worldwide for office productivity software, so this is a new

offering that can't be ignored by the business world; it promises to have a massive impact on the HR tech market.

Skills engines and internal talent marketplaces are rapidly being adopted

Coming out of nowhere, these technologies are now available from most ERP and HCM vendors as well as new market entrants. These solutions look to identify and catalogue employee skills, help employees grow their careers and look for new opportunities,

and identify employees with skills to take on new projects or new jobs.

The learning experience platform (LXP) market is now the most important design centre for corporate training, and every LXP has its own built-in skills engine. Many companies are looking for integrated skills technology, enabling newer vendors like **Gloat**, **Hitch**, **Eightfold**, **Fuel50**, **Workday**, and others to disrupt the market.

We've talked with leaders from companies such as **SAP**, **Pepsi**, **Allianz**, **Standard Chartered**, **NetApp**, **Verizon**, **Citibank**, and **P&G** – all of which are piloting skills taxonomies and talent marketplace platforms. With the

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talent shortages we've recently been seeing, implementing these solutions is becoming critical.

ServiceNow, employee portals and service-delivery platforms are white-hot

As we enter a world of hybrid work, companies need systems to schedule desks, monitor safe workplaces and manage travel, location and system access (the average large company has around 120 employee apps). Employees want self-service tools and workflow management platforms for their day-to-day routine and career

sized vendors are revolutionising the world of employee voice. For instance, Microsoft Viva Topics can identify experts in the company from their documents and activities, and Microsoft Viva Insights can help managers see when employees are over-worked. We now have an entire industry of survey feedback, listening and crowdsourcing tools in the market, many of which are worth millions of dollars because of their growth. ServiceNow and Oracle are also getting into this space.

While most companies now have HR data lakes and data warehouses for storing people-related data, there is now a need to store data from employee feedback and experiences. Vendors like Medallia and Visier are working on this,

flow of work. Nearly every learning tech vendor now offers skills-based learning, recommended content and soon-to-come integration with Microsoft Teams. In the not-too-distant future, we'll see streams of learning in the flow of collaboration, communication and project management. **BetterUp**, the AI-based coaching platform currently valued at around \$1.7bn, is also looking to get into this space.

Other areas to watch

Also likely to impact the HR tech market is the emergence of graph database technology (**Neo4j** is a hot company); the increasing use of organisational network analysis tools; and the demand for dedicated DEI analytics tools. For instance, **NASA** has built an entire skills-analysis system for its 15,000-plus engineers and scientists based on a graph database. In doing so, it discovered big skill gaps that could hinder its mission to explore Mars.

Wellbeing-related solutions like **Castlight**, **Limeade**, **Virgin Pulse**, and **meQuilibrium** continue to grow. But a new, more integrated model for managing health and wellbeing is coming. **League**, a platform vendor positioned as 'a health operating system', has built a solution focussed on managing all aspects of health and wellbeing. League, which is partnering with Workday, could start to redefine this fast-growing market.

In summary, innovations in HR tech will allow companies to reinvent and radically improve the employee experiences, boost employee productivity and collaboration, and offer more meaningful and business-aligned employee development. But, gone are the days when HR tech was the concern only of the HR organisation; these benefits can only be achieved through strong cross-functional partnerships. ■

Josh Bersin is an internationally recognised analyst, educator, and thought leader in the global talent market. He is the CEO and founder of joshbersin.com and founder and dean of the Josh Bersin Academy.

"In the not-too-distant future, we'll see streams of learning in the flow of collaboration"



journeys. The ERP vendors have not focussed in this area until recently (**Ultimate** acquired **PeopleDoc** in 2018), opening the door to ServiceNow, Microsoft Viva, and solutions such as Embark from **Willis Towers Watson**. Oracle is also looking to be a big player in this space.

ServiceNow is becoming a platform for citizen developers with functionality that enables teams to build employee apps without learning how to code. One reason I think ServiceNow is so disruptive is due to its strong ties to IT. We are now in a world where HR tech, work tech and messaging and communication tech are all integrated. That means no one should buy HR tech without partnering with IT.

Employee listening tools are becoming essential to enterprise infrastructure

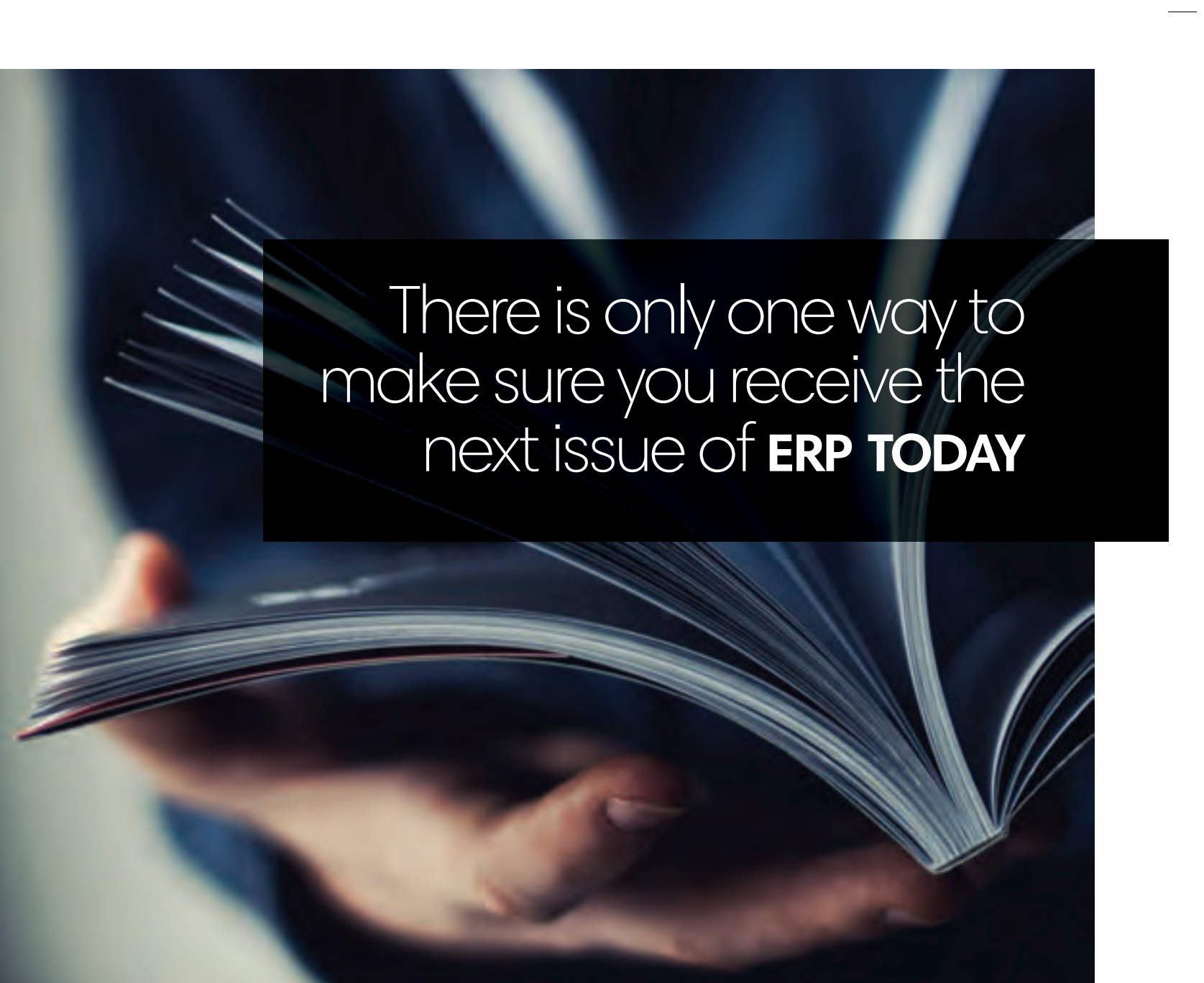
Vendors like **Qualtrics**, **Medallia**, **Glint**, **Peakon** (Workday), **Perceptyx**, **Culture Amp**, and dozens of mid-

and ultimately this feedback data will be as well organised similarly to CRM customer data. (Workday Prism Analytics is one solution.) There is a scramble for the front-end tools market, as survey vendors grow and expand. Microsoft could make a big move with Glint here, but players such as Qualtrics, Medallia, and Workday will ensure there is more disruption to come.

The corporate learning market continues to grow

The pandemic and its after effects continue to fuel the \$240bn market for employee development. Content companies like **Skillsoft**, **LinkedIn Learning**, **Udemy**, **O'Reilly**, and **Pluralsight** are growing at double-digit rates. **Degreed** and **EdCast** are taking over as centre stage systems for employee learning, with LMS platforms being pushed to the back office. The mid-market LMS market is growing rapidly again, as vendors like **Fuse Universal**, **Docebo**, **Totara**, and many others continue to grow.

But the big story is learning in the



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Employee Expectations

rule in a post-COVID world

A REPORT FROM WORKDAY AND PEAKON

2020 was the most disruptive year we've seen in recent history for both organisations and their employees when the global spread of COVID-19 completely changed the way we live and work. COVID-19, together with the wave of awareness that flooded the globe through the Black Lives Matter campaign, shone a spotlight on systemic inequality. **BY DEBBIE WALTON**

In the last year, diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I); health and wellbeing; flexible working and growth were the key themes that have been front of mind not only for employees but for employers too. This year's Employee Expectations Report offers insights into employee expectations around career growth, as well as the uncertainties they are faced with in light of cost-cutting measures organisations have had to implement because of the arrival of the pandemic.

These findings are taken from a report that was compiled from more than 150 million employee survey responses and 30 million employee comments.

1 DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION During the last year, even though there has been a massive increase of comments regarding race inequality, focus remained on gender inequality in the workplace as well.

A breakdown of the comments reveals distinct sub-themes:

- 43 percent of comments on DE&I mentioned leadership or management

- 25 percent of comments mentioned race or minority backgrounds, with one in 10 from non-minorities expressing resistance and their own feelings of discrimination
- 18 percent of comments explicitly mentioned gender
- 7 percent of comments mentioned the LGBTQ+ community.

Unfortunately, the initial enthusiasm for tackling employee concerns head on slowed to plateau during the second half of 2020. This served to highlight a failure in organisations to embed sustainable change in DE&I thinking while they instead reacted to public events with one-off initiatives to appease employees in the short-term. Organisations need to implement long-term change strategies.

How organisations can support meaningful change in DE&I

- **Embed accountability:** without accountability, successes and failures will fall by the wayside when priorities change or deadlines loom. This accountability and responsibility should sit with the organisation's C-suite lead-

ers; and business objectives must encompass DE&I goals.

- **Measure inclusion and diversity:** in today's economic landscape, measuring inclusion and diversity goes without saying and organisations should use demographic representation as measures of success. Primary focus should be on talent acquisition and the promotion process, while measuring inclusivity and a sense of belonging are equally important.

- **Systemic change is needed and not just personal:** processes and policies must be reviewed and amended to ensure that they are created with everyone's success in mind. It's important now that businesses are mindful of removing the exclusion that forms part of the foundation of many systems already in place.

2 HEALTH AND WELLBEING In the midst of a global pandemic, there has never been more focus on health while employees have been faced with a myriad of health and wellbeing concerns. Data from the 2020 Peakon Heartbeat survey shows comments regarding wellbeing increased by 46 percent. Comments related to three aspects of wellbeing (mental, physical and financial) have steadily increased during the first and second waves of the pandemic.

Physical health may seem like a main concern when dealing with a highly contagious virus, however as the pandemic progressed, talk on mental and financial health dominated the conversation during 2020.

The compounding effects of lockdown have left little separation between work and home which has taken a toll on family and work life. Studies of previous viral outbreaks (SARS and Ebola) have shown that even if COVID-19 were to disappear overnight, the negative psychological effects can last for up to three years post-pandemic.

How organisations should support health and wellbeing in 2021

- **Provide accessible and affordable options:** it's important that employers

provide affordable wellness options to their employees.

- **Offer a holistic solution:** during the past year we have been in a constant state of change and organisations need to adjust resources according to those changes. It's important that employers offer a wide variety of options to their staff to support them on their health and wellness journeys. For example, initiatives should include access to mental health support, fitness, nutrition and more as part of their employment contracts.

- **Create a culture of wellbeing to increase productivity:** it's important for employers to provide wellness offerings, certainly, but it's just as important to embed health and wellness into the culture of the organisation. Overall health and wellbeing directly contributes to staff productivity, which emphasises the importance of an organisation's investment into the wellness of their staff.

3 FLEXIBLE WORKING Flexible working has become the latest buzz phrase in the last year with large consultancies already announcing the change in their work policies to incorporate flexible working opportunities for their staff. The implementations of worldwide lockdowns meant that organisations had to quickly shift office-bound workforces to work-from-home workforces in a matter of days. This led to the proportion of employee comments concerning flexible work in 2020 increasing by 125 percent compared to the previous year.

The comments covered a wide range of topics, from how to maintain a healthy work-life balance, to concerns about how companies were monitoring employees. But across all respondent replies, there was one theme that stood out from the rest and that was increased caring responsibilities. Both men and women talked about the increase of caring responsibilities as a result of the pandemic which included comments about parenting, childcare while working from home with schools closed and looking after elderly relatives, partners or spouses.

How organisations should approach flexible working

- **Implement parent-friendly policies:** being able to work from home doesn't mean much for parents if they still have to adhere to strict working hours of 9 to 5. Organisations should implement flexible hours, compressed work weeks and shorter day policies as all of these can improve productivity and reduce the risk of burnout.

- **Focus on output and not hours:** it seems a big concern for managers is ensuring people are working when they can't physically see them. This can lead to an unhealthy obsession with the number of hours worked and can lead to micromanaging, which is stressful for both employee and employer. Studies have shown time and again that working long hours doesn't make you more productive. Rather, companies need to implement more effective ways to measure output in the form of project-based work and contribution to company goals.

- **Make an effort to build trust:** remote working may not affect productivity, but it can affect trust between employees and employers. Uncertainty can also hinder trusting relationships in the work environment, and this can lead to high levels of anxiety. Organisations need to address this anxiety through ongoing communication about goal setting and strategy.

4 GROWTH Companies around the world have had to respond to largely unstable economic conditions by streamlining their operations. Even those industries able to avoid redundancies have had to implement hiring and promotion freezes and quash learning and development budgets. This obviously limited growth opportunities and also contributed to a climate of uncertainty, making employees less willing to discuss growth with their managers.

What is certain, however is that businesses cannot afford to respond to uncertainty by standing still. If organisations want to keep their people engaged and productive, it's impera-

tive that they are offered genuine opportunities for growth.

Those employers that do empower their people will be remembered by employees once the world returns to some level of pre-pandemic normalcy. Meanwhile, the companies that allow their people to stagnate during the pandemic are likely to face an exodus of talent as soon as new opportunities reappear.

How organisations should approach growth in 2021

- **Develop manager coaching skills:** the best leaders know how to empower their team members through mentoring, but very few leaders are mentors inherently. Coaching enables managers and employees to work together in a way that produces opportunities for growth and career development. Now is the time to nurture your team – especially during a time when most promotions and pay rises have been put on hold while the economy recovers.

- **Support more virtual peer-to-peer learning:** despite lack of promotions, organisations can still support employees' skills development programmes that will benefit them in their future careers. Virtual learning while we're all living online is very accessible and affordable.

- **Outline a clear post-pandemic recovery plan:** it's essential to provide high performers with a development plan as the world begins to return to some sense of normality. Failing to offer this kind of support will result in a massive loss of talent and high staff turnover which is very costly to any organisation.

IN CONCLUSION it seems obvious to say that employee expectations and experiences are enmeshed with current global affairs and are largely influenced by the moral social climate that surrounds us. The only way to ensure people are able to produce their best work and thrive in their career is to ensure that employers understand the full scope of their employees' expectations. Addressing ED&I, health and wellbeing, flexibility and growth are simple, morally sound ways to meet and exceed staff expectations thereby guaranteeing business success. ■





The state of leadership in 2021



LEADERSHIP HAS NEVER BEEN AN EASY TASK and in times of turmoil, mankind always looks to strong leadership for guidance. One can argue that apart from more localised natural disasters such as tsunamis or earthquakes, the COVID-19 pandemic has put the world's leadership to its biggest test, certainly since World War II. Never have people been faced with such impactful changes to the three fundamental spheres of interaction, which are: family, work and social. These spheres need leaders to function well, but leaders have been affected by the pandemic too and have been challenged by its changes as much as their teams. These, however, can be small changes, like a family deciding what colour to paint the living room (there can very well be passionate debates on this), a people leader deciding who works when and for how long (this decision is not to be taken lightly as it impacts many lives) or a decision on how to spend the surplus budget of a social club (believe it or not, clubs have disintegrated during these debates). There is no change that is too small to be trivial and meaningless. Because humans think differently to each other, this could easily mean they don't agree with the leader's decision and therefore challenge them on just about any topic at hand. It's imperative therefore that the leader in question focusses on the one constant: the bigger picture.

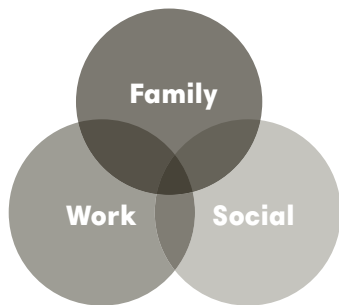


BY HOLGER MUELLER

HR TECH | VENDORS | PEOPLE | LEADERSHIP

C OVID-19 has shown leaders the bigger picture and as such disrupted the social fabric of the three basic spheres of interaction – family, work and social.

Fig 1/ The three universal interaction spheres



Human shortcomings limit modern leadership

If we boil it down, humans can be described as walking, mostly water-based, fast 3D processing computers. Our ability to process our environments in combination with our brain, has put homo sapiens on the apex of current evolution on planet earth.

But with our 3D processing capabilities, we still lack the ability to think of our world as a multi-threaded, multi-person, highly situational operating model of the real world. People cannot fathom what their closest partners are doing once they leave the line of sight. We lack the ability, despite our phenomenal brain capacities, to imagine where another person is, what they experience and what they feel in the very same moment. In person however, when a person is in our line of sight, we are very good at this, or at least can be very good at this if we want to be.

We are also very aware of our need for self-preservation, which still prompts the fight v flight reaction when we process some information, even though for all practical purposes, neither of those reactions are applicable in all but the most extreme circumstances. In daily life situations, we need to moderate our primal reactions often.

Moreover, we have numerous personality profiles and depending on the topic at hand, we tend to simplify them into two categories: extroverts and introverts. Explicit ways of communication rule most of our interactions, favouring the extroverts, and often ignoring and overlooking the introverted members of an interaction sphere.

Finally, especially in challenging times, we have the ingrained desire and wish to look for the 'strong' leader. Luckily in 2021 we are past gender stereotypes (wait – really?) looking for that leader. It simply is our programming from the most defining years of homo sapien development, where the small hordes needed leadership to survive. Like it or not the desire for the strong leadership is most prevalent in tumultuous times like ours.

What are the key change drivers for 2021 and beyond?

Remember when the biggest challenge of leadership was the multi-generational workforce co-existing in the same office? Longer working careers is just a mathematical coincidence when we have three or four generations in the same workforce. Instead, we talk about resilience as we realise that families and work – and hopefully social aspects too – need to keep going, no matter what, and have to become more resilient.

So, what has changed? And what is testing leaders right now?

• **People and families are struggling:** most people work to live and their family is the ultimate priority, not work. With families battling to meet material challenges, quarantines, home schooling and more, people are struggling, and successful leaders need to recognise that.

• **Working from home has changed the workplace fundamentally:** work used to be this quasi-ceremonial process of commuting, working, meals and returning home, maybe via a pub. This ritual has imploded and no longer exists for most people. Leaders see their proven leadership skills become obsolete in a day and it takes months to come up with new and successful leadership skills and strategies.

• **The social fabric is brittle – and definitely different:** humans need personal and social interactions to thrive. These have never changed so dramatically and abruptly as during the last 15 months.

• **Business processes have changed:** enterprises needed to reinvent themselves and find new ways to operate. Leaders often had to implement new processes at a massive rate of change, but often had to lead the experimentation of new ways to operate.

• **New tools have become essential:** all physically interactional spheres have changed, moving to digital and remote, bringing along a new set of tools to master. Equally, new business processes require a period of un-learning, re-learning and new learning.

• **Work/life balance has shifted:** with work being only a few steps away, uncertainty on enterprise and personal prospects, people have moved towards working longer, putting their work/life balance out of sync. Maintaining this long-term will only drain their energy reserves in all spheres of their lives.

Fig 2 / The key changes of 2020+

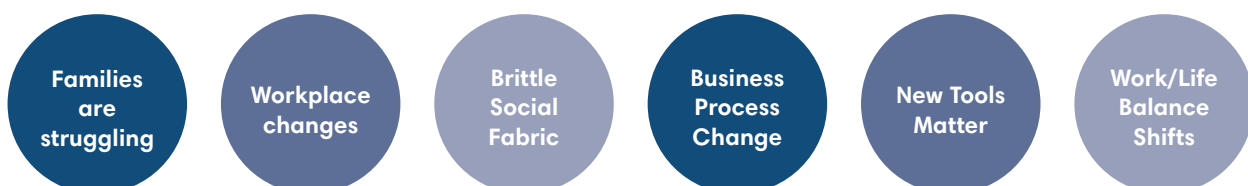




Table 1 / The top response action for leaders to deal with key pandemic challenges

	FAMILY STRUGGLES	WORKPLACE CHANGES	BRITTLE SOCIAL FABRIC	NEW BUSINESS PROCESSES	NEW TOOLS	WORK / LIFE BALANCE
ROLE MODEL	Reflect	Lead	Respect	Coach	Coach	Foster
RELATIONSHIP BUILDER	Reflect	Lead	Innovate	Lead	Adopt	Respect
PROBLEM SOLVER	Foster	Lead	Reflect	Lead	Adopt	Foster
BETTERMAKER	Reflect	Foster	Respect	Coach	Coach	Foster

The pandemic challenges shift the universal leadership characteristics

There are many leadership skills and traits which can be combined into four universal leadership characteristics, defining leaders as:

- **Leaders as role models:** good leaders are honest, show integrity, are confident, have expertise, are reliable and stable, demonstrate accountability, are motivated, positive, excel at working with people and lead their teams with inspiration and by example.

- **Leaders as relationship builders:** the better leaders build relationships with their team members through effective listening, empathy for their situation, respect for their feelings, are self-aware and generously show gratitude.

- **Leaders as creative problem solvers:** successful leaders find new and better solutions where their people get stuck, even if it requires taking a risk, but they will manage to deliver success with their people.

- **Leaders as bettermakers:** truly great leaders make the people in their teams better. They are great delegators, foster creativity and act as team builders and mentors. (Table 1)

There are seven actions leaders can

take to deal with new situations. They can be taken in various combinations to tackle a leadership challenge (in alphabetical order):

1 Adopt: leaders will identify a new challenge and adopt new ways to understand it and master it. For example, use new tools to build relationships with the team (e.g. **Slack**, **Teams** etc.) and adopt new problem-solving techniques (e.g. using **Slido** for polling of a remote team).

2 Coach: leaders will coach their people as needed. For instance, leaders will coach team members on new processes and new tools, both being a role model and a bettermaker.

3 Foster: leaders will foster the situation of their people, for example to the struggles families go through or foster the work/life balance challenges of team members when it comes to how problems are solved.

4 Innovate: leaders will serve as innovators, for instance, how to build relationships in times where traditional social fabric is failing, e.g. as people cannot physically attend a sports event, watch it together as a team via video conferencing apps.

5 Lead: to lead is evidently the core action of a leader that most prominently must be displayed during times of workplace change. A leader should be both a role model in the way he/she builds relationships as well as how problems should be solved.

6 Reflect: leaders need to reflect on the situation their team members find themselves in, for example when it comes to struggles in the family life of a team member, or when it comes to understanding how the brittle social fabric affects the ability of their people to be part of problem solving.

7 Respect: leaders need to respect their team members. For example, when it comes to understanding their views for work/life balance when building relationships and their brittle social fabric when it comes to the role of bettermaker. (Fig 3)

The takeaways

Leaders of today face their biggest challenges on how to lead their people due to the changes the global pandemic has brought about. They need to lead their teams through challenging and daunting times, with no hesitation and a steadfast approach that gives their people a sense of success at work; all the while satisfying their primal need for a strong leader in tumultuous times. But leaders by themselves are challenged by the changes the pandemic has brought along as well. They therefore need to process and reflect these first in order to become that enterprises need to find the path to enterprise acceleration in these unprecedented times. There are many reasons why enterprises need to treat their leaders in middle management better than ever before. ■

Fig 3 / The seven universal leader actions





We look at how HR can support
and enable the transition to remote
working and a distributed workforce

BY CHRISTINE HORTON



THE NEW ERA OF

HYBRID WORK

COVID-19 has in many ways irrevocably changed the way we work. Almost overnight, organisations were forced to establish a new remote workforce. Kitchen tables became desks, and in-person meetings were replaced by video calls.

Now, more than a year later, most organisations accept that remote working is here to stay in some form. In fact, according to a **Gartner** survey in 2020, 82 percent of companies said they intend to allow employees to work remotely some of the time going forward.

Human Resources (HR) departments have been given the enormous task of supporting this new way of working. Here we look at the key challenges that HR teams have faced during the pandemic and at the technologies and services that have underpinned the shift to remote working.

BIGGEST WORK SHIFT IN A GENERATION

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, recently said that “hybrid work represents the biggest shift to how we work in our generation.”

He cited Microsoft research that says 73 percent of workers want flexible remote work options to continue, while more than 65 percent are craving more in-person time with their teams. To prepare, 66 percent of business decision makers are considering redesigning physical spaces to better accommodate hybrid work environments.

HR TECH | VENDORS | PEOPLE | LEADERSHIP

Some large employers, such as **JP Morgan**, have said they intend to bring most employees back to the office soon. While others – most notably the big tech firms like **Amazon**, **Facebook** and **PwC** at a UK level – are envisioning a world of hybrid working. As such, they have opted for a much slower return to the office with far greater flexibility for employees to choose when and how they work.

Prasun Shah, partner, human sciences and future of work technology leader at PwC UK, says it has been easier for tech firms to pivot to ‘the new normal’ than others with more traditional operating models. They were already using technology to enable a hybrid operating model that included remote working, collaboration at scale, and the use of location-agnostic talent.

“Whilst the initial focus has been on the operating model and location choices, increasingly we are seeing technology organisations take the lead on employee wellbeing and the creation of a preference-based model,” he said.

Indeed, organisations now need to adapt employee-led ways of working. According to recent research from **Topia**, a software vendor that specialises in managing mobile workforces, 91 percent of employees now say they should be able to work from anywhere so long as their work gets done. The ability to work remotely is now also the second-highest-rated feature that attracts employees to a company, behind only high pay.

“COVID has created a big shift in how work gets done and organisations are now forced to adapt to this shift – either embrace it or risk potential consequences, such as employee attrition,” says Steve Black, co-founder and chief strategy officer at Topia.

CHALLENGES FOR HR

Nevertheless, these seismic changes to the way we work have seen HR venture into uncharted territory in some cases. Certainly, they are facing some significant challenges when it comes to supporting employees in the new working environment.

Jasmin Mantel, HR director at **SAP UK** says the company has tried to enable and support everyone with their individual sit-



“We are seeing technology organisations take the lead on employee wellbeing and the creation of a preference-based model”

PRASUN SHAH
PwC UK



“Organisations are now forced to adapt to this shift – either embrace it or risk potential consequences, such as employee attrition”

STEVE BLACK
TOPIA

uations, while paying close attention to life balance and mental wellbeing.

“We have encouraged open dialogue between people leaders and employees at all levels, offering flexibility around people’s working patterns to help them manage their personal situations,” she says.

Mantel says ongoing communication is imperative in understanding what support our employees need, when they need it and how it should be delivered.

“Throughout the pandemic, we have focussed on understanding how all our employees are feeling through regular employee surveys to gauge sentiment, check-ins and monthly all-company update calls with the leadership team. This has helped us quickly unearth any concerns and enabled us to communicate and make decisions that are empathetic to everyone’s personal circumstances.”

RECRUITMENT

Another area where HR has been forced to adapt to new processes is hiring and onboarding new employees.

“Recruitment has changed massively in the last year. With the introduction of video interviews, the time to hire has dropped considerably, and in a period when businesses are in desperate need of the skills to help them bounce back, I think they could remain a feature of the hiring landscape,” says Zoë Morris, president at IT recruitment firm, **Frank Recruitment Group**.

“That means the way you recruit needs to be smarter. Your preference may be to interview someone in person, but they’re likely to be much more in demand now and waiting until they’re available to come to you could mean missing out on the best candidate.”

However, Morris says this is only half the battle. “Once you get quality professionals through your door, you need to focus on what makes them stay. In a post-pandemic world where the footfall into city centres may not be as great as it once was, that goes way beyond the perks you can offer such as on-site food or discounts on gyms or car parking,” she explains.

Frank Recruitment itself has 1,800 employees, and Morris said, like SAP, the issue that quickly came to the forefront and has

remained front and centre throughout the last year, is employee wellbeing.

"At first, it was a case of supporting staff at what was a worrying time for a lot of people on a very personal level. Different restrictions came in that affected people's lives in a number of ways and it was important for us to be as empathetic to individual circumstances that came up.

"Those situations also forced employees to take a step back and re-evaluate what was most important to them. For many, the extra time spent at home and the flexibility it allows to achieve a better work-life balance was precious. Moving forward, we want to continue this and have introduced a number of initiatives to ensure our staff are happy and engaged," she says.

LESSON LEARNED

So are there any lessons learned by HR teams that can be carried over, beyond the extent of lockdown, to deliver a better way for employees to feel valued and productive?

Mantel believes that whether employees are working remotely, on site, or a combination of both, delivering experiences that keep them engaged is critically important.

"A hybrid workplace model challenges HR teams to not only keep people connected, engaged, empowered and healthy, but also analyse data-driven insights to understand and improve the workforce culture, to deliver business outcomes and employee experiences that matter," she says.

"With the hybrid work model here to stay, it is increasingly important that employees feel connected, informed and with access to the tools and resources they need to be productive from any device or location."

Mantel believes there are several key lessons HR has learned that should be applied well beyond the pandemic.

Human connection and empathy are more important than ever, she says. Fostering a caring culture in which people can stay healthy and balanced is important to make employees feel valued and helps drive business success.

Continuous learning is essential to help people acquire new skills, understand constantly changing regulations and be agile to



"With the hybrid work model here to stay, it is increasingly important employees feel connected"

JASMIN MANTEL
SAP



"Once you get quality professionals through your door, you need to focus on what makes them stay"

ZOË MORRIS FRANK
RECRUITMENT
GROUP

adapt to the changing environment. In addition, learning new things and skills keeps you motivated. Post-pandemic learning will continue to be a critical strategy to help employees reskill and upskill and for organisations to retain talent but also to strive and be successful.

And of course, technology has a huge impact on employee experience. People need intuitive technology that allows them to easily find what they need, be productive and collaborate with others.

NO 'ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL' APPROACH

However, in terms of big moves that support and enable the transition to remote working and a distributed workforce, there appears to be a clear realisation that this is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

"Choices and individual preferences will play a key role," says Shah, especially in relation to tech firms. These, he says, have been used to a culture of employee activism and citizen-led design.

"This will turn into a competitive advantage as the use of data and behavioural science can play a key role in helping design this hybrid work paradox by taking an outside-in lens. Digitisation, big data, the use of behavioural science, and a culture of rapid experimentation (fail fast) are all critical to designing for a distributed workforce, and technology organisations are really well placed to drive this."

This is evidently the case with PwC, with the firm recently announcing organisation-wide changes to allow greater flexibility for post-pandemic working for its 22,000 employees.

More companies are likely to follow PwC's lead. **McKinsey** notes that more than 20 percent of the workforce could work remotely three to five days a week as effectively as they could if working from an office. If remote work took hold at that level, that would mean three to four times as many people working from home than before the pandemic.

This means HR will need to adapt to these changes, embracing technology, and ensure that employees are still best placed to do their jobs – regardless of their location or circumstances – in the new hybrid world of work. ■

the state of the human-centric enterprise

BY HOLGER MUELLER

For a long time enterprise leaders have been postulating an enterprise model where people make a difference and are at the centre of the value creation of the enterprise. The core belief is simple: a more human-centric enterprise will make people happier, and happier people make happier customers. Happier customers buy more, spend more, return often and so on. This in itself makes the enterprise more successful, allows it to listen and invest more in its people. The logic is convincing, it is a flywheel trend that can be started and keeps going. **So why are so few enterprises becoming more human-centric?**





The universal enterprise model

In order to understand how enterprises operate, let us look at a universal model that is common for all enterprises. At its core, enterprises fall into three different functional chains with the value chain pertinent to the enterprise being the defining one.

- **The core of the enterprise:** the value chain. This is where the key ideas are and where the magic happens. The enterprise creates something that its customers value from the supply that it has procured to create the value.

- **The supply chain defines the possible:** the procurement of necessary materials defines the potential of the value creation. Timeliness, quality, cost etc all determine the space in which the enterprise can create value.

- **The demand chain is where success is determined:** getting customers to use and pay appropriately for the output of the value creation process creates the financial room in which an enterprise needs to operate.

In the mainly capitalistic world that enterprises operate in, they need to create profits in order to invest further in the capabilities of their value chain to build up a separate value chain and a diversification strategy.

At the centre of each value chain though, are people who make decisions that affect the value chain, who operate the key steps in the value chain and who enable the success of the supply and demand chain. People are central to the success of any enterprise. Why have enterprises not become more human-centric?

Why enterprises keep failing

There are numerous reasons why it is hard for enterprises to become human-centric. Here are the most prominent reasons for failure:

- **Shareholder value as the only management goal:** the optimisation of enterprise outcomes does not have to, but typically does stand in the way of creating a more human-centric enterprise. 'Hitting the numbers' is more important than 'caring for people'.

- **Atomic chain optimisation in functional silos:** all too often corporate leaders tend to optimise their area of responsibility, often creating unfavourable human outcomes for the other value chain operators. 'We sold less to give our people a better work/life balance' is unheard of in businesses today.

- **Human ingenuity and adaptability 'will sort it out':** humans are incredibly smart and adaptable. Leaders typically leave it to middle and low-level managers to sort things out. Leaders fail to realise that they set the

framework for lower-level managers determining the degree of humanity in their teams.

- **The failure of talent management:** the human capital management (HCM) category that was supposed to deliver better people outcomes has over promised and under delivered. If performance management is broken, talent management is broken.

- **The fear of investment failure when it comes to your people:** people are expensive. People are fickle. Investing in people has uncertain outcomes and requires intestinal fortitude from leaders. But if buying a machine has a higher chance of delivering a return on investment than an investment into human centricity, many leaders will unfortunately lose good people.

A little help from a pandemic

Often portrayed as a joke, but realistically, COVID-19 has done more for digital transformation than many years of strategic projects. Enterprises have been largely able to deliver and grow, despite shut down offices. Anybody remembering the work-from-home debate from a few years back, knows that there is now a clear outcome. And while we may debate if working from home is more human than working in an office, we certainly know that the commute is not human at all. The pandemic has also forced enterprises to rethink their value chain and with

The Universal Enterprise Model



that their supply and demand chains. Successful enterprises have done that with a focus on more human outcomes, starting with their customers, focussing on the quality of the working conditions of their people, and lastly also considering the supply side of human experience. It's necessary to rethink all processes of the enterprise due to the pandemic, and it's been a massive opportunity to redesign the operation of the enterprise in a way that delivers more human outcomes along all its functional chains.

Four strategies to become human-centric

Here are the top four strategies for an enterprise, from a team and enterprise, as well as an internal and external perspective:

Deliver more human outcomes

With a human-centric approach, teams can be more successful. Focus on what makes customer experience and outcomes better, enable people to foster and deliver better outcomes in the value creation and give people leaders the leeway to create more of a human supply chain.

Reimagine processes with a human first mentality

On an enterprise level, more human-centric processes need to be created and implemented which can only happen with a shift towards human-centricity for the overall enterprise goals and values.

Empower people leaders to deliver more humanity

Make it clear to people leaders that they have the tools and freedom to experiment, validate and implement more human-centric processes for their teams. Team goals need to reflect the more human-centric goals and people leaders need to be empowered to lead the change one team at a time, and thus the whole enterprise.

Four strategies to become more human-centric



THE HUMAN-CENTRIC ENTERPRISE

Create a human-centric operating platform

Infrastructure, tools, processes and remuneration need to be changed from the shareholder model to a human-centric model. Smart CxOs will be able to align both, and thus ensure the necessary shareholder buy-in and backing for a more human-centric enterprise.

being and creates better customer experiences. But it can be done, otherwise we would not see investments into customer relationship management (CRM). And on the supply value chain, more human-centricity will help to make the supply chain more resilient, with suppliers and the enterprise supply chain delivering on better supply chain outcomes.

How to make it work

Change is always hard, and it almost always involves risk, making it even harder. So, for change agents who want to transform their enterprise to become more human-centric, it is key to argue along well understood costs that can be used to convince the numeric minds that are likely to question the move.

The number one people cost, which is hard to plan and affects the bottom line, is the cost of attrition. Not only is there a cost for talent acquisition by itself, but there are follow up costs in the sense that teams with new members need time to get up to speed. Being able to reduce attrition with a more human-centric enterprise is likely the biggest tangible financial number to justify a portion of those savings to establish a more human-centric enterprise.

More challenging are the attempts to put a growth number to being a more customer-centric enterprise, that focusses on the customer as a human

The takeaways

The pandemic has forced enterprises to rethink all its three key value chains. Smart enterprises have redesigned them to become more human-centric and are benefitting from this by more satisfied and loyal customers, more motivated and dedicated suppliers, and most importantly, have boosted employee morale and retention with more human-centric operating platforms, and by empowering people leaders to lead their teams in a more human way to better outcomes. For enterprises that do not see the signs, and who do not want to be the drivers and disruptors through adoption of a more human-centric enterprise, there is always the option to be forced by competition to get there, while labouring through higher attrition and fear of overall enterprise disruption. There are exciting times ahead for people across all industries and the pandemic has paved the way for a far more human-centric way of working. ■



Why the Mid-market



The ERP industry can no longer overlook the potential of the mid-market

The mid-market could be forgiven if it suffers from middle child syndrome.

Underserved and ignored by the industry for years, mid-market firms have historically been forced to compromise when it comes to sourcing ERP software.

is now fertile ground

BY CHRISTINE HORTON

Can your ERP remind your people why they love their job? Ours can.

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MID-MARKET

Having outgrown their small systems, mid-market firms were faced with few choices. They could opt for a highly specialised solution from a niche vendor, or they had to invest in large corporate ERP systems. This might involve reverse engineering systems to fit, or spending huge amounts of money for functionality they didn't need.

Phil Lewis, VP of solution consulting at ERP vendor **Infor** describes those customers as being caught between a rock and a hard place.

"The common problem is that neither of these options enable growth – the specialised systems hit issues of scale and the monoliths become so customised that any upgrades become unwieldy IT projects in their own right," he says. "Both approaches are also expensive as businesses must track down ever-decreasing numbers of specialists that can manage the systems, and all too often the slower pace of change means missed opportunities."

Steven Wright, chief commercial officer at specialist systems integrator, **Sapphire Systems** agrees, noting that what "mid-market companies ended up with was a relatively poor time to value and a modified solution which did not provide much agility and became expensive to maintain and upgrade. This means that the solution quickly became out of step with the changing needs of the business."

Mid-market: a fertile ground

Failing to recognise the importance of the mid-market means ERP vendors will miss out on valuable revenues. Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of

mid-market companies expect to be thriving by the end of 2021, according to research by accountancy and advisory firm, **BDO**. Moreover, 59 percent plan to increase IT spending, and 54 percent plan to invest specifically in new finance and accounting technology.

"Middle market companies will prioritise technology in 2021 as they ensure their ability to meet changing demands, bolster security and safely enable work-from-anywhere eligible employees," notes BDO.

The good news is that mid-market businesses usually mean high growth businesses that are still able to experiment and innovate at a faster pace than a lot of their enterprise contemporaries.

"Mid-market firms – especially those in sectors such as manufacturing or food and beverage – are always looking to find the next source of competitive advantage and to disrupt the market," says Lewis. "This means that they are fantastic partners for vendors, both commercially and in terms of input into the software."

Another reason why the mid-market should be im-

portant to ERP providers is that over time the large enterprise market has become fairly static. Most of those organisations standardised on the stack of a major vendor and once committed, would very rarely change, notes Wright.

"The mid-market has seen a large volume of new projects and therefore new client acquisitions for the vendors and most have amended their strategy to engage with this segment of the market. The mid-market ERP space

Mid-market firms – especially those in sectors such as food & beverage – are always looking to find the next competitive advantage



PHIL
LEWIS
/ INFOR

is very interesting as it is comprised of steady growth and high growth businesses, divestments from large enterprises and subsidiaries of large enterprises, all of which have unique characteristics but the one thing that they share is the need for rapid time to value, high agility and scalability."

Wright says that vendors now realise that the mid-market is fertile ground for net new names. It is therefore essential to cultivate a partner network that can offer the value, scale and transformational experience required at the appropriate level of investment.

Blurred lines

One thing worth noting is that what defines the mid-market is now somewhat blurred. Often when we talk about the mid-market, we mean companies which are fast growing, or have established themselves fully and have ambitions to expand.

"Turnover and employee numbers, which define the segment, no longer reflect the type of ERP capabilities which are likely to support their journey," says Dan Clibbens, operations director at cloud-based finance software provider, **Percipient**.

"In reclassifying what the mid-market actually means, scale for growth, and flexibility to adapt to new opportunities are paramount. The new breed of cloud ERP systems deliver the capabilities for the modern enterprise, offering quick deployments, often in weeks rather than months, and easy integration with other systems to maximise visibility, insights and quick decision-making. Crucially these systems mean that there is no longer a compromise to be made on cost or being overburdened with complexity."

Clibbens points to the fact that the younger generation have been brought up "on a diet of technology that simply works". Therefore, systems which don't reflect this expectation simply won't be tolerated and will quickly become redundant.

"Dedicated cloud-native systems, which are intuitive and designed with

Mid-market is fertile ground for net new names.

It is therefore essential to cultivate a partner network that can offer the value



flexibility and agility at the forefront, have finally reached the mid-market, and proving to be game changers in both the perception and the value of ERP," he says.

Intelligent buying

There are other trends within the mid-market. Chris Richards, regional president UK&I, at ERP vendor **Unit4** believes we're now seeing more intelligent buyers who expect greater things from their ERP systems. At the same time, there are additional decision-makers involved in choosing which system to purchase.

"Traditionally, it might have been left to the MD or finance director to buy the software and other functions would just have to rub along with whatever decision was made. Now we're see-

ing disciplines, such as HR, having more of a voice," she says.

Richards says this is good, because it shows mid-market organisations are maturing in their understanding and application of ERP systems.

"For example, there's a clear recognition that mid-market organisations need to do more to engage their employees to offer them different experiences. This is symbolised by the change in job title for many HRDs as they become more people-focussed and there's a clear push to improve HR systems as mid-market companies feel they are behind larger enterprises in enhancing user experiences to attract and retain top tal-

ent. Consequently, they are becoming more involved in decision making. HRDs want ERP systems to enable them to be more agile and help them to communicate better with employees while offering staff the flexibility of self-service."

We're also seeing increased demand for more integrated single platforms as organisations understand that having integrated finance and employee data is critical to making important decisions for the business.

As such, Richards says we're seeing a move away from the individual best-of-breed applications to more consolidated platforms to avoid the cost and complexity of running multiple systems.

Even at a high-level, mid-market businesses are looking to leave be-



CHRIS
RICHARDS
/ UNIT 4

tomers that they don't really have a voice unless they can find the budget and resources to purchase the full enterprise version of the vendor's products.

She observes that just because mid-market firms may not have deep pockets, "it doesn't mean they don't expect to have the functionality for their specific business needs."

"Ultimately, as a vendor you have to be honest with customers that they have to go on a journey with you to reap the benefits of innovation. If you have these standardised foundations, it will be much easier to extend

hind an on-premise, legacy mindset and continue their journey to the cloud. This now extends beyond conversations of cost savings, to automating existing processes and uncover new revenue opportunities.

Personalised for the mid-market

So how can ERP providers best serve their customers in the mid-market moving forward?

The simple answer, says Wright, is by listening and providing a personalised application of technology and services to identify and achieve revenue and cost improvements.

"This probably boils down to major authors concentrating on the core ERP solution, using their experience

If your ERP vendor's heritage is large enterprise software applications, there's a danger they will treat all customers the same

and knowledge to provide a range of industry and process best practice to make core adoption easy and instantly impactful," he says.

The role of the system integrator is then to add to the core through personalisation, automation, insight and enhanced user experience. This, says Wright, provides "a constant path for improvement and enhancement with minimal disruption and incremental cost. A great partner will manage your digital transformation and ensure adoption and value at each point in your technical evolution."

However, Richards warns that if your ERP vendor's heritage is large enterprise software applications, there is a danger they will treat all customers the same. This has historically manifested itself as the bigger vendors selling 'lite' versions of their products to the mid-market with scaled back functionality. However, this sends an awkward message to cus-

your ERP system and integrate innovation that will give the customer the future-proofing they need to respond to changing market opportunities."


Even though it is easier for the purposes of discussions like this to refer to 'the mid-market', it is important not to put all firms in the same basket. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. However, it is becoming clearer that investment in digital transformation over the past several years is now paying off, and mid-market customers want to focus on sustaining agile growth.

Eighty six percent of UK mid-tier businesses are looking to recruit more staff over the next six months, with more than half (54 percent) planning permanent appointments. The companies will be increasingly focussed on workforce optimisation, flexibility and efficiency. From automating back-office finance processes to elevating customer service to building more agility into workflows - the ERP industry can no longer afford to ignore the mid-market. ■



STEVEN
WRIGHT
/ SAPPHIRE
SYSTEMS

Reclassifying what the mid-market actually means, scale for growth, and flexibility to adapt to new opportunities are paramount



Our cloud
business system
is flexible. Our
promises aren't.

“Acumatica provides our employees and management with **actionable data** at their fingertips.”

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A BLUEPRINT FOR

A New Era OF COMMERCE

Designing a blueprint for a successful enterprise is no simple task. It's not that the issues are complex in their own right, but simply that most businesses have years of inherent complexity woven into their fabric.

The principles of success would be simple to adopt if it wasn't for the decades of unsustainable practices, narrow-minded thinking and a lack of diversity.

Fairness and equality would be the standard if it were not for a long history of bias and prejudice. Experience would be embedded in internal and external culture had we realised its importance before it became a buzz word. Trust, openness and transparency would be foundational pillars of all business interactions. And, sustainability and environmental consciousness would be commonplace had economics not outweighed protecting our planet for far too long.

Over the course of the next 14 pages, five of our expert contributors set out why all businesses should consider embedding these fundamental tenets within their organisation with a final commentary on 'mindset' as the foundational pillar on which all business decisions rest.

As we move forward into a new era of commerce – in a post-pandemic world with all the battles scars of lockdown behind us – it will become clear that although some habits are hard to change, and we are already slipping back into old ways – some changes will endure.

Those changes that stick will see a new breed of enterprise thrive. Whether you are a retailer, manufacturer, service provider or utilities company – the successful will share some common DNA. That DNA will be rooted in fairness, experience, sustainability, trust, and above all else, a mindset that is open to the art of the possible.

Reaching for Gold

IN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE TECHNOLOGY

BY MARK SWEENEY AND LIBBY MASON

Double trouble this issue so I thought I would pull in some additional expertise. Please welcome Libby Mason, a recognised organisation and change management expert as co-author of my column.



Let's imagine we live in a world where we have an unlimited budget and the world is our oyster. So what would the gold standard in employee experience technology look like?

The algorithm of business - experience economy nirvana

Achieving the gold standard in the experience economy is truly mastering the equation of fully integrated and seamless business execution through the eyes of the user. Technology evolution means that this panacea is within reach allowing organisations to drive experiences that are multi-dimensional and changing constantly over time. Our future digital nirvana equation will comprise the following variables:

- **Pro-active technology individually personalised to me:** the technology will serve us. Technology will know the individual, not only in regard to our role within the workplace but also how we are best engaged based upon our needs, our work pattern, job location and behaviours. Individual personalisation that intelligently connects data across different systems, recording patterns

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There will always be a point where we don't want to interact with a machine

in work habits and preferences is the norm. The technology enables us to always operate both efficiently and effectively but in a way where we control delivery of the work. Consequently, the technology is pro-active as it comes to us, rather than we go to it to execute a transaction.

- **Immersive experiences driven by digital workflows:** our experiences will be immersive underpinned by digital workflows that spread across an organisation's entire enterprise, no longer pigeon-holing the user into legacy ERP functional silos. Things that were once seen as gimmicks will be mainstream as chat bots and self-directed workflows are standard and expected. User interface of choice will be a combination of voice and retina, facilitating the practical use of virtual reality through glasses creating immersive experiences in the moment.

- **Holistic experiences incorporating macro events:** Macro-economic events in a fast changing world can have real impact so being constantly informed of real-time events that are relevant to me at work will ensure the business remains relevant in an operating context.

Any business that loses relevance to its marketplace can become lost. Experiences are now so much more than just what is going on at a micro-level within the organisation.

- **Enhanced decision-making:** advanced features that support decision-making by AI, machine learning and predictive analytics into understanding and presenting scenarios, rather than simply presenting a flat set of choices, will be the norm.

- **Immediate access to human contact if needed:** the ability to reach out immediately and contact face-to-face human assistance via video, as part of any transaction whether it is to collaborate or just request further assistance or guidance will be normal. There will always be a point where we do not want to interact with a machine or something impersonating a machine.

- **Ability to feedback so the organisation can continually learn and evolve:** everything needs a feedback loop that can be executed quickly. Being able to measure constantly, gain insight through analysis if something isn't working ready for experience and process correction is a fundamental pillar in reaching for gold.

- **Enhanced capabilities monitoring personal health at work:** even gold standard experience-driven technology is not a silver bullet for addressing workplace wellbeing, however the technology will be able to detect patterns of behaviour and enable value added strategies to help support a pro-active approach. For example, the ability to restrict contact out of working hours, monitoring and flagging line managers when our behaviours through our digital responses become erratic, or diverting workloads seamlessly. Connecting to personal devices like smart watches also allows for engagement around fitness and

activities which can be gamified to increase awareness around the impact of physical activity on wellbeing.

The human dimension – great technology is only one half of the equation

There is a strong psychological human behavioural and cognitive element to the employee experience nirvana. It is this that needs to be understood as part of any design.

People want to be connected with a purpose and companies need to find new ways to engage their workforce, communicating and engaging with that purpose and freeing people up to deliver it. Empowerment is the name of the game.

Those that embrace this mindset will come out ahead in the competition for talent as job seekers and employees become more demanding about not just their role but the experience they have at work. Benefits include, but are not limited to:

- **Increased brand loyalty:** a positive experience supported by the right technology creates a positive connection with the organisation and its stakeholders, creating an environment for more meaningful engagement.

- **Increased productivity:** giving time back by the application pushing the relevant information, event or required action to the individual at the point in time thereby delivering enhanced service.

- **An informed workforce:** ensuring the workforce is constantly made aware of external events that are relevant and accurate to their role making the organisation more effective.

- **Promote inclusion and democratise happiness:** shared experiences encourage participation in the organisation and help build and maintain company cul-



ture; removes access barriers and promotes equality, builds engagement with everyone being equal and part of something through shared experiences; provides a platform to demonstrate that the organisation cares about the individual by enabling them with the right technological tools.

- **Human psychology and providing real-time feedback on the organisation:** amplifies the employee's voice so they can be heard; facilitates an ability to determine an employee's value of connection to the organisation through measuring their active participation.

- **Enhances skills and improving employee impact:** employees can shape the direction of the company and their role in it, creating enhanced career pathways and ability to invest in new skills and roles which are shaped by the demand of employees, they are closest to the customer or citizen which they serve and they often have a better understanding of what is required.

Who is leading the way?

Done correctly, gold standard successful organisations focus on business outcomes; break down delivery silos; create positive employee experiences free from frustration and perceived bureaucracy and consider human behaviours alongside technology fit, all with the goal of delivering exemplary customer experience. No-one has reached nirvana today, but there are organisations that excel around the different variables.

From the human perspective one company stands head and shoulders above the rest – **Disney**. Disney exists to deliver fantastic customer service every moment of the day. How do they do this and more impor-

tantly how do they sustain it? The foundation is their culture of empowering their employees and ensuring they are equipped with the right skills to deliver excellence. Its investment in the customer facing technology MyMagic+ ensures their customers have a seamless experience when engaging with them. No doubt how they continue to evolve with their employees in the same way will remain a core focus.

Organisations who get it wrong

We won't name and shame anyone here but the consistent theme we saw in studies around employee experience is a failure to address the culture and behaviours of leadership in implementing new ways of working. CX and EX platforms and strategies become enablers, but in the absence of visible leadership commitment and an organisational culture that values and leverages the benefits of these strategies they will fall flat.

Achieving gold

The bottom line in achieving the gold standard is the combination of both human and machine. We can have great technology at our fingertips but if we have not got the human side of the business operation right the experiences become meaningless.

The technology experiences we create can contribute to driving positive social behaviours, but it is still up to us as humans to remember that it is always the people who are the heart of any business and not the machine. Walt Disney once said, "You can dream, create, design, and build the most wonderful place in the world... but it requires people to make the dream a reality." ■

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Mark Sweeny, founder de Novo Solutions
Libby Mason, founder Alluvion Consulting

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THE IMPORTANCE OF Trust in a Digital World

BY WAYNE LLOYD

The pandemic has been the catalyst for the rapid acceleration of digitalisation for almost every business, in every industry sector around the world. Whilst this explosion of new digital products and services has demonstrated value to businesses and society as a whole, enterprise leaders should be mindful of underestimating just how fragile people's trust in the digital world actually is.

This article will discuss the current state of trust in the digital world and offer some key considerations that enterprise leaders need to think about if they are to meet the new standards of openness, transparency, control and trust that society now expects from the organisations they engage with.

For this article, 'trust' is defined as having the firm belief in the integrity, ability, reliability or character of a person or thing (Mayer et al 2005). An enterprise leader is defined as an executive 'who is successful at serving the needs of the enterprise and does so at the expense of personal success' (Ready & Peebles 2015). The Digital World refers to the availability and use of digital tools to communicate via the internet, digital devices and other technologies.

Any aspiring or current enterprise leader should be mindful that in order to effectively build trust into their digital products they must fully understand the digital world they compete in. Research from Douglas et al (2020) found that 82 percent of people they surveyed believed leaders in the digital world need to be 'digitally savvy' yet less than 10 percent felt that their organisations 'have leaders with the right skills to



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Today, it is unrealistic to expect an enterprise leader to know about all things at all times

thrive in the digital economy'.

Today, it is unrealistic to expect an enterprise leader to know about all things at all times; therefore, enterprise leadership requires you to pull together an aligned team of individuals that can help to shape and inform effective decision making. They must also be willing to listen and learn from their teams and create an environment where ideas can be put forward.

To achieve this, organisations need to foster a culture that ensures mistakes and knowledge gaps are seen as 'learning opportunities rather than a cause for embarrassment or punishment' (Gino & Statts 2015). A failure to do so fosters a 'fixed mindset' rather than a 'growth mindset' (Haslin 2012) and this could be a derivative of fostering

unethical behaviours that have a detrimental impact on the wider enterprise.

With the emergence of algorithmic led decision-making tools that use AI or immutable work-flow management platforms that use blockchain and smart contracts, enterprise leaders should be mindful that internal behaviours might be inadvertently hardcoded into the way these technologies are designed to function across the organisation.

For value-led organisations, consideration must be given as to whether these algorithmic behaviours represent those values, whilst an enterprise leader must also ensure the same standards are applied in ways that allow them to maintain these values across products and services. 'This can only be achieved through strong internal governance' (Tiell 2019). Organisations are now beginning to see the impact of getting it wrong.

The 2021 **Edelman Trust Barometer Report** highlighted that society's trust in technology has been declining around the world, hitting all-time lows in 17 of 27 countries, with the UK, US, Canada and China seeing double-digit declines.

This also correlates with a lack of trust over how organisations manage and process data. In 2020 the privacy-based search engine **DuckDuckGo** registered more than 100 million searches in a single day for the first time in its history, whilst the privacy-enhancing **Brave** browser doubled its number of monthly active users in a single year, from 11.6 million to 25.4 million. Tens of millions more moved over to **Signal** and **Telegram** and away from **WhatsApp**, over concerns its users had about how their data might be used. This fundamental shift in consumer behaviours towards wanting to use service providers that prioritise privacy should be at the forefront of the decisions of every enterprise leader. If they are not, they place the future of the organisations they represent at risk.

Enterprise leaders must be willing to gain a deep understanding of why their people do or do not trust the digital world that they are asking them to participate in and accept that these metrics of trust will continually change. Integrating next generation trust tools that allow the enterprise to capture this information in real-time, across all areas of their business, will ensure this can be a proactive process instead of one which is reactive. Organisations cannot wait to be told that they have broken someone's trust – they must continually look to manage it.

It must also be considered that trust is not a one-

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**Excessive
work
monitoring
risks breaking
that contract
of trust,
leading to a
disengaged
workforce**

size-fits-all, as 'Trust varies depending on your perspective, priorities and local context' (Chakravarti et al 2021). Therefore, understanding the geography of digital trust across your enterprise is essential if you want to raise the standards of trust and sustain them, particularly for global organisations and those that use algorithmic decision-making tools and platforms.

Furthermore, distrust in technology and how data is being shared and used is a feeling that might also be a concern of your workforce as much as your customers. According to **PwC's** Hopes and Fears report (2021), six-out-of-ten people worry that automation is putting jobs at risk, whilst 39 percent fear their jobs will be obsolete in five years. This is exacerbated by how technology is being applied by organisations that are coming to terms with how best to manage their predominantly remote workforce.

The introduction of productivity measuring applications that are used to track the performance of the individual within the privacy of their own home, for example, may serve to undermine trust or exacerbate fear the workforce might already have. According to Seidman (2020) 'trust is the only legal performance-enhancing drug. Whenever there is more trust in a company, country or community, good things happen.' An enterprise that implements excessive work monitoring 'risks breaking that contract of trust, leading to a disengaged workforce, focussed on meeting the desired statistics' rather than the things that really matter (Shield 2020). ■

Wayne Lloyd, CEO, *Smarter Contracts*



Fair Pay

THE BLUEPRINT FOR A FAIR FUTURE OF WORK

BY DR ZARA NANU

It has been just over a year since the global pandemic began and the nature of the workplace as we knew it has shifted rapidly. Many of us have had to adjust to remote working. Gone are the days of commutes and water cooler conversation, now all we have to do is roll out of bed and switch on our laptops if we are amongst those who are able to work from home. Starting new roles remotely has become the norm, rather than an exception.

While it has certainly been a challenge, for both businesses and employees, it is uplifting news to hear that we can return to the office soon. The pandemic has also given us a unique opportunity to re-evaluate how we operate so that we can shape a new future of working, one that champions equity and inclusion. What would the nature of a business look like if we were building it from scratch, post-pandemic?

At Gapsquare, equality is our main motivator rather than a mere box-ticking exercise. We provide innovative solutions through our analytics software, consultancy and research to help companies create fairer workplaces and work towards eradicating pay gaps caused by structural inequalities. Our vision of the future of working is one where work is inclusive, where pay meets value and diverse talent thrives.

We already know that 69 percent of millennials and Gen Z are more likely to stay for five years or more if working for an employer that recognises the value of diversity. Numerous studies have proven over and over again that diverse workplaces outperform their competitors, encourage



innovation and create an overall more satisfied workforce.

“There is no quick fix for achieving equality in the workplace but there are plenty of good practices that can contribute to moving the needle,” says Johannes Smits, director of **PwC**. “Firstly, organisations need to understand where the pipeline for diverse talent is leaking or blocked.”

So how can we re-imagine a fairer world of working? Let’s find solutions to common concerns both established companies and start-ups have tried when it comes to tackling the task of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and set out a roadmap for a fair future of work.

Solution 1:

Accountability against inequality

The black lives matter protests in 2020 were instrumental in creating more open conversations around the subject of race including how we can create more equal opportunities for people of colour within the workplace. However, it is easy to make hollow statements and not back them up with direct action. Some companies even go as far as stating that they have already arrived and the way they are operating has always worked for them. In the experience of the team at Gapsquare, the belief that the job is done is often a sign that you haven’t yet started.

One company which is doing the very opposite of this is **Hilton Hotels and Resorts**, recently ranked number one on The Top 50 Companies for Diversity list and has been featured on the list for the seventh year running.

Showing an ongoing commitment to going



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above and beyond for D&I, they recently announced set goals to improve gender and ethnic diversity in leadership roles, as part of their post-pandemic recovery.

Hilton plans to achieve gender parity in leadership roles around the world by 2027 and have 25 percent ethnic diversity in US leadership roles within the same time frame. The company will hold itself accountable with a public dashboard updated annually to report on hiring, as well as tying executive compensation to how much progress is being made.

They believe that by fostering diversity, they can provide more meaningful experiences for guests and create a positive impact on communities. This hands-on approach is what is needed when it comes to tackling the ethnicity pay gap and creating a fairer world of work for our diverse teams.

Solution 2: Equality integrated into policy

These days we'd like to believe we are all equal. After all, women and people of colour can gain meaningful employment these days, seemingly without any overt barriers. However, this doesn't mean that barriers don't exist within the workplace itself, even manifesting as early on as the hiring process.

Tackling structural inequality requires constant commitment to improving the workforce and remaining adaptable to the challenges that come along with trying to achieve this goal.

Research reveals that nearly 80 percent of global organisations do not prioritise female advancement in the workplace and do not have any formal policy in place to support this, despite studies proving time and time again the benefits of women in leadership positions.

To achieve true equality, Smits firstly suggests businesses conduct "thorough data analysis, in the moment and over time. Secondly, have an open dialogue with staff to understand how people experience fairness, belonging and trust when working in your organisation."

In addition, gender and other forms of equality must

be seen as a business priority and implemented into business goals accordingly. For businesses just starting out, the earlier this is implemented, the easier it will be in the long run and the benefits will be obvious. The statistics speak for themselves, as research shows that all companies with 30 percent or more women in executive roles outperformed those with smaller percentages or no women executives at all.

Solution 3: Flexible working options

Flexible working is the future. It encompasses a variety of options that are particularly helpful for those with childcare or caring responsibilities, such as blended working, compressed hours, part-time hours and term-time working arrangements.

A 2013 study found that 72 percent of workers reported that productivity is a direct result of flexibility, amongst other benefits such as higher quality decision

making and utilising time more effectively. This is likely linked to the mutual trust built between employers and employees and a greater sense of autonomy felt by employees which leads to a more satisfied workforce all round.

The pandemic has shown an increase in the popularity of flexible working. Our reports show that 73 percent of fathers said they would like the option to work flexibly post-pandemic. This in itself suggests a cultural shift in the conversation surrounding flexible working, which has been previously discussed largely on the basis of gender. Those who refuse to adapt will increasingly seem outdated and also miss out on the benefits of flexible work options.

We see companies returning to the office every day, despite the general consensus that adapting hours and having at home working as an option is an effective and productive strategy.

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Research reveals that nearly 80 percent of global organisations do not prioritise female advancement

Solution 4: Acknowledging intersectionality

When it comes to dealing with disability pay gaps and employment gaps in the workplace, companies have got





away with side-stepping the issue up until recently. With working from home now the norm as a result of the pandemic, and previously closed doors opening for some with mobility issues in particular, the conversation about how to accommodate employees with disabilities has once again been raised to ensure a fairer future of work.

Those with disabilities benefit from working from home for a myriad of reasons, such as difficulty with the daily commute, as well as office environments often lacking the adaptations and accessibility needed for those with physical disabilities and neurodiverse individuals.

A survey carried out by **UNISON**, found that 73 percent of disabled staff felt they were more productive or as productive working from home compared to when in the office. 54 percent felt they would benefit from working from home in the future.

Technology has allowed both non-disabled and disabled individuals to carry out their jobs remotely – better still, they have permitted us to do so socially, equally, and with adjustments to different types of workstyles and locations. We can't underestimate how revolutionary this has been, and should continue to be.

Whilst it is true that ending disability-based pay inequity and lack of workforce opportunities can require more in-depth knowledge of your employees' experiences than tackling gender or ethnicity, it's completely doable and highly valuable. Around 15 percent of the world's population have a disability – depending on how you measure this, the number could be significantly higher. The data can be challenging, due to the



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vast range of disabilities and how they are defined but employers are more than up to the challenge.

Examples to look at for those just starting out: companies like **HSBC** which have built 'ability', one of its eight global networks focussed on D&I in the workplace, **Uber** which has done similar work and our clients **Accenture**, which has championed disability data collection and developed this research on embracing disabled employees in the US.

To quote our partner Lord Shinkwin, a strong advocate for disability D&I in the workplace, "We've had mandatory gender pay gap reporting since 2017. It is the law for organisations to report where they are on this under threat of sanction. So why can't there be a read-across for disability?"

We are passionate that the journey to fair and thriving workplaces should be simple and stress-free. That's why we enable companies with fair pay and inclusion data analytics. The pandemic has given us an incredible opportunity to re-write the script for the future of working – it is up to us to take it.

"Define your vision complete with objectives for which you will hold your leaders accountable," Smits lastly recommends, "Finally, build your D&I roadmap with clearly defined initiatives and allocate the resources that are required to succeed. Then comes the hardest part – execution. But there will be progress."

If you don't, you might find your company is left way, way behind. ■

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Dr Zara Nanu is CEO of Gapsquare

WHY GREEN IS The New Blueprint

From pandemic reset to green revolution, sustainability is growing in importance and deserves its place at the heart of your operations. But how do you go about that?

BY MATTHEW BELL

While 2020 will always be the year of the pandemic, 2021 may yet be remembered as the tipping point in corporate and global action on sustainability. In recent months, we have seen an unprecedented amount of activity on climate change as governments jostle to demonstrate leadership and a host of corporates announce their pledges to achieve 'net zero' in the lead up to **COP26** in Glasgow. Multiple stakeholders are now pushing organisations to care more about sustainability: pressure from young people – who move to hold companies accountable for their impacts; from regulators – who seek to expand reporting on sustainability performance; and from institutional investors and the banks – who are 'baking in' environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors into their valuation and investment models.

This represents the culmination of growing support for embedding sustainability or ESG into business activities and an increasing focus on the importance of creating long-term value. At the risk of hyperbole, this trajectory appears to be unstoppable. Many predicted that the economic pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic would slow down the sustainability agenda, but the opposite appears to be true.

On a more direct level, the realisation that factors, from environmental pollution to human rights abuses, can topple CEOs and dramatically impact on share price has woken up even the least progressive leaders.



The impact on operations

So, given this growing interest and imperative, what changes do businesses need to make to their operating models and ERP systems?

The short answer is 'a lot' because sustainability impacts every area of operations.

Yet many businesses are not yet able to monitor, measure and manage the sort of non-financial factors that are critical to their sustainability performance. One example is the supply chain. Typically run on the basis of cost and time optimisation, supply chains now need to incorporate new measures, checks and balances that provide clarity around factors such as human rights and environmental performance. Without these measures,

organisations leave themselves exposed to – and held responsible for – the actions of third parties.

So, the carrot for these changes is better risk management and a stronger story for customers and investors in a world where stricter legislation on everything from wildlife crime to human rights abuse will make it not only a 'nice to have' but a business necessity. At a fundamental level, companies risk – literally or effectively – losing their licence to operate. If that sounds overly dramatic there are plenty of cases where it has already happened – from energy companies who damage the environment, to retailers selling clothes made by child labour, or gambling companies which fail to protect the vulnerable.

Here we see the fallacy that there is a trade-off between doing good and delivering good business performance.



In fact, they closely align around a common goal of long-term value creation.

Rewiring ERPs for sustainability

By now it should be clear that if your operating model, and indeed ERP system, is built purely around financial profit and loss, it will need some rewiring to adjust to this new world.

One significant challenge still facing many companies is their ability to monitor and measure the aspects most critical to their sustainability performance. Such gaps in understanding leave them ill-equipped to make informed decisions that will steward their companies towards long-term performance. Changes in what data is captured, as well as how it is interpreted and communicated, will be needed to drive decision making and satisfy the needs of all stakeholders, including investors.

New KPIs are going to be needed to help direct your efforts. They will not only need to target new non-financial metrics but will also be tilted towards driving long-term value. Once you begin to think it through, virtually every aspect of the modern enterprise becomes impacted. Is, for example, your senior management team being properly incentivised? Or do their targets need to incorporate sustainability outcomes?



Many businesses are not yet able to monitor, measure and manage the sort of non-financial factors that are critical to their sustainability

In short, if you're going to change your practices to reduce emissions, shake up your supply chain to promote sustainable behaviours and re-focus your internal reporting to reflect new priorities, it's likely that your ERP system will need a few tweaks at the very least.

Designing from scratch versus retrofit

Tempting though it is to take up the **ERP Today** editor's invitation to create a blueprint for a new fictional organisation, I'm going to show you one that Elon Musk made earlier.

What I believe all his companies have in common is that they're trying to solve a complex problem facing humanity, whilst also capitalising on the inevitable business opportunity. In **Tesla's** case, it's to accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy, addressing the automotive sector's need to decarbonise quickly.

What's interesting here is that, until relatively recently, its business model was doubted by investors and became a target for short-sellers, many of whom preferred to back legacy auto companies developing their own plans for the future of mobility.

That picture has now changed. Not only have investors been forced to reconsider their positions, recognising that national governments are phasing out combustion vehi-



cles, but that some legacy companies are now paying Tesla for ‘vehicle regulatory credits’ – to meet electric vehicle targets and regulations.

The moral of the story is that if you’re designing something from scratch, you have the advantage of aligning everything towards your sustainability goals from day one. But even if you’re going for a retro fit, like the legacy auto industry which has made huge progress in reducing emissions and adapting to electrification, you can still make it work.

The future is green

As we emerge from the pandemic, ESG issues are not going away and are likely to remain essential to resilience and long-term recovery.

Government responses to COVID-19 in many countries include large stimulus packages tied to ‘green outcomes’, with specific focus on accelerating the transition to a zero-carbon economy.

There have also been other, more targeted, government interventions. The European Commission’s €750bn fund to help the bloc recover from the pandemic came with a requirement that 25 percent be set aside for climate change mitigation.

Another example is the ‘Build Back Better’ movement, which saw a coalition of CEOs publish an open letter calling for the creation of a post-COVID-19 global economy that boosts society, the planet and shareholders for future generations. The CEOs want to promote ‘purpose-first’ businesses as a fourth sector of the economy to join the existing public, private and non-profit sectors.

The growing significance of ESG issues to investors can be seen in the 2020 EY Climate Change and Sustainability Services (CCaSS) Institutional Investor survey. The survey found that, of the 98 percent of investors surveyed who assess ESG, 72 percent carry out a structured review of ESG performance, compared with just 32 percent in



Climate change is not the only challenge businesses face in an increasingly disruptive world

the previous survey conducted two years earlier. Moreover, many of those who currently use an informal approach, plan to move to a more rigorous regime (39 percent).

In the report, one institutional investor, Vincent Triesschijn from **ABN AMRO**, sums up the views of many investors: “It is our conviction that companies that perform well on ESG are generally less risky, better positioned for the long term and possibly better prepared for uncertainty.”

Seizing the opportunity ahead

But there’s one other huge incentive. As ERP Today readers will know only too well, climate change is not the only challenge businesses face in an increasingly disruptive world. Yet, with a great deal of information readily available it could be argued that climate change presents a better understood set of challenges and opportunities than, say, the future of digital innovation or even mobility in a post-fossil fuel world.

Yet we are already seeing huge ‘bets’ placed in those areas while many businesses wait for greater clarity before investing in decarbonisation. This creates a great opportunity for first movers. By seizing it, supported by governments and investors ready to help, companies can create value to all their stakeholders. For those who don’t take the opportunity, the speed and volume with which investment is shifting away from high carbon activities means that capital may be very hard to come by.

To be on the right side of that line, make sure that sustainability is a part of your business and not apart from it. ■

Matthew is a partner at EY, leading its climate change and sustainability practice across the UK&I. All views are his own.

Mindset

CHEAT SHEET

BY EMMA SINCLAIR

There are thousands of books, podcasts, blogs and coaches dedicated to the mindset that business leaders need in order to succeed. But is there a set of common skills that leaders must embrace, regardless of size and scale, in order to succeed both personally and for the organisation around them?

Here is my mindset cheat sheet that combines all the advice I have assembled and why these skills ensure businesses maintain the competitive advantage. Regardless of the size of the organisation, these four pillars are the common ground that I believe equal success: excellence, agility, communication and courage.

Excellence

In my experience, success comes from an obsession with excellence. This obsession must start at the top of an organisation and embed that behaviour firmly in company culture. Tom Peters, one of my favourite business management thought leaders and bestselling authors, talks about this in his recent book *Extreme Humanism*. (I don't want to brag but I even have a signed copy of this, his nineteenth publication!)

Peters has interacted with thousands of organisations and individuals over 43 years and believes that excellence is not just a message or way of doing some things but rather the way of doing everything. Service is key: service to one's teammates and colleagues, service to one's customers and vendors and service to our communities.

With a drive for excellence comes the compelling need to question everything – people, pro-



Success comes from an obsession with excellence - this obsession must start at the top of an organisation

cesses and technology – and replace any mediocrity. This is a key tool to strike down slow corporate processes that hold back progress in business operations and the technology that underpins it.

Agility

No business leaders including big corporate ones can opt out of an agile future. And frankly, it's about time!

Nespresso was a skunkworks project at **Nestlé**, so it's not only small businesses that innovate fast, however, this is often the exception and not the rule. The pace of embracing innovation is a challenge in every large enterprise I've encountered.

Is it mindset? Is it accepting dated processes for decision making? In some cases, yes, it is. It's a mixture of complacency, for example: 'it will never catch on', or 'we don't need this to be successful'; legacy tech being costly and time consuming to replace and a 'better the devil you know' attitude often wins. Equally, there is an understandable need for standardisation and risk management in corporate enterprises. Running 1,000 pilots adds complexity to big corporates needing to manage consistent service and risk, in particular, reputation around investing in something that could fail. That, to my mind, is still a mindset issue because it can be just as damaging not to try that innovative, new technology as it is to try it and fail.

Communication

It is vital to be able to present well, be structured in the way you work and be analytical in the way



you think. Leaders need to be able to communicate to employees, customers, the media and investors. Einstein-esque visionaries in any size organisation often lack commercial flair and communication skills that isolate them from those they need to effectively communicate with. So not only is the ability to communicate well essential, but so is the desire to be communicative essential.

Courage

Continuous learning, and applying that knowledge to courageous decision making, can combat the laborious processes that often slow organisations down. As is perpetually discussed, large enterprises often have challenges with embracing agile technology, whether that's because of a fixed mindset that ignores new ways of working, or slow and laborious processes making progress glacial. Too often, enterprises buy tech from the mega vendors because they are pre-conditioned to do so. Again, is this a mindset issue?

What about the differences in mindset between leaders of different sized organisations? Is identifying those differences seen as important when laying out a blueprint for success? Melissa Morris, CEO of **Lantum**, a workforce management platform used across thousands of **NHS** organisations from large hospitals to integrated care systems, believes scaleup leaders have a lived reality that lends itself to having a different type of drive. Founders and CEOs of scaleups have to be paranoid given that they are competing with a vast number of incumbents. Growing a company is often akin to the David vs Goliath scenario, where founder CEOs have a very big incentive to make the business work, often with their whole identity tied up in the success of a business, Morris told me.

On the other hand, large organisations have executive and non-executive boards, experienced leadership



Establishing the right mindset is the first piece of that puzzle and one that all business leaders should consider

teams and many more resources at their disposal, so success is rarely on the shoulders of just one person. The pressure is different, and the different mindsets are different as a result.

Conclusion

Clearly there is no one-size-fits-all in business, with the mindset required of a FTSE 100 CEO different to that of the mindset of a scale-up leader. But to my mind, regardless of the size of the business, there is a blueprint to the perfect mindset and that lies firmly in the characteristics of striving for excellence, being agile, being a great communicator and being courageous. These identifying characteristics can be applied across geographies, industries and different scales of organisations. They should form

the foundations of any business that wishes to succeed and are unlikely to be absent in any successful start-ups or scale-ups. Yes, there will be exceptions – many large enterprises display none of the attributes on my list and yet are hugely successful. But, they became successful in an era when there was far less of a focus on the kind of differentiators that stand one new business apart from another. Could those global entities stand toe-to-toe with a modern, more nimble competitor if they didn't have decades of success behind them. Perhaps not. Whilst defining a blueprint for success that cuts across all types of businesses maybe a challenge too far, it is almost certain that those which do succeed will share some common DNA. Establishing the right mindset is the first piece of that puzzle and one that all business leaders should consider if they hope to prosper in the new era of commerce.■

Emma Sinclair MBE, co-founder of EnterpriseAlumni



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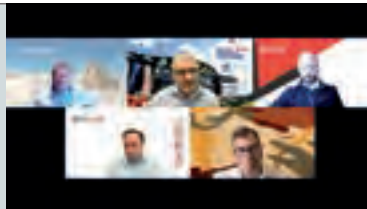
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ORACLE'S MODERNISED PARTNER NETWORK

Historically ERP vendors sold licences and left their partners to worry about the success, or otherwise, of the implementation thereof. In the old world, when projects took years to complete and value was an immeasurable notion, the relationship between vendor, partner and customer was disconnected and the idea of an equitable collaboration with accountability between all parties was inchoate, at best. Customers bought a product from a vendor and a partner implemented that product, tailored to the customer's specific needs. When things went wrong the customer was caught in the middle of a dynamic which benefitted the vendor and partner far more than it did the buyer. Projects were conceived and built around the need for technical upgrades and were rarely seated on a business case that clearly defined what, how and when, the project would deliver value.

That model existed for decades and rather suited both vendor and partner for obvious financial reasons.

However, the emergence of cloud technologies has seen a dramatic shift in the expectations and tolerance levels of most ERP buyers. Having been burned several times in the past and wearing all the scars to prove it, CIOs simply won't abide anything short of demonstrable value delivered co-operatively by both vendor and partner.

This shift in buyer expectations, coupled with a slightly more benevolent

"WE SUPPORT PARTNERS WHO BUILD SOLUTIONS AND BUILD IP THAT SOLVES CUSTOMER PROBLEMS; WE ALSO SUPPORT PARTNERS WHO SELL THOSE SOLUTIONS"

JAVIER TORRES

attitude from some vendors has seen huge strides taken to ameliorate the relationship between ERP purveyors and ERP buyers. And none more so than within the Oracle ecosystem.

The success of any vendor is most often determined by the strength and

commitment of its partners and it's important that this partnership is an equitable one from the start of the relationship in order to maximise the success of any project.

Oracle has one of the richest pools of supporting partners made up of

global system integrators, independent consultancies, ISVs, and a whole load of niche players that sell, implement, optimise and manage its products and services.

It's recently invested heavily in modernising its partner network that is focussed on certification and customer feedback and has put immense thought and effort behind supporting third party organisations that form the backbone of their customers' successes. They've moved from a product-centric method of delivery to a customer-centric journey that aims to enhance the way they engage with their partners throughout their relationship.

Everything in the world is different and now it's anybody's guess whether or not life will return to normal. The societal and financial repercussions of the pandemic will be felt for years to come and it's imperative that businesses focus and refocus their plans as the surrounding environments change and adapt. Oracle's deep investment in their partners' successes and commitment to supporting their customers throughout every step of the transformation journey is a welcome change to the historically 'hands off' reputation of the ERP community.

Paul Esherwood spoke to Javier Torres, the exec responsible for Oracle partners in EMEA and three key partners about the Oracle Partner Network and its focus on customer-centric solutions.

He is joined by Paul Gillott, chairman at **Symatrix**, Richard Eltham, CTO at **Namos**, Andy Bird, CEO of **Inoapps**.

PE: What are the key things that Oracle has done to modernise its partner network?

JT: We modernised our partner networks more than a year ago and it has the customer at the centre. We realised that in the new era of cloud and SaaS

models, we had to put the customer at the centre of it all. We took customer feedback into consideration and realised we needed a modular approach about following the customer journey. We support partners who build solutions and build IP that solves customer problems; we also support partners who sell those solutions. And then also we support partners who provide services either to implement or to manage, operate and optimise those solutions. During the entire journey we will ask for customer feedback and look forward to getting it.

PE: Andy, could you tell us what these changes have meant to you as a partner, and what your involvement has been from your position on the advisory board.

"WHAT WE APPRECIATE ABOUT THE MODERNISED OPN IS THE FACT THAT IT DOES PUT THE CUSTOMER AT THE CENTRE OF THE JOURNEY"

—
PAUL GILLOTT

AB: Fortunately being a partner of the advisory board, we learned about the programme quite early through workshops with Javier that Paul was involved in as well. We were able to give our input into the programme.

One of the things I specifically like about the programme is the certification. That evolved from the specialisation from the last programme, but really ensuring that all of the consultants' applications, technology, all the way through the services are certified. That really means quite a lot to the quality of the services that the global partner community deliver and a way of ensuring that the quality is there across the board

going forward. That really is about putting the customer first.

PE: Paul, you were involved in those early discussions as well. What do you feel the key changes in the new modernised partner network mean for customers?

PG: Symatrix has been an Oracle partner now for 21 years, so we've seen the certification and the partnership model change quite dramatically over the years. I'd very much echo Andy's point. What we appreciate about the modernised Oracle Partner Network (OPN) is the fact that it does put the customer at the centre of the journey and gives them the confidence in knowing the organisations that they're dealing with. But more importantly, the



individuals that they're going to be dealing with on their journey are genuinely certified, know the product and know the very latest capabilities of the product, and are therefore able to deliver the very best solution for the customer. So it really plays back to Javier's point, which is putting the customer at the centre of the journey and ensuring that we, as Oracle partners, can enable and engage with the client on that journey and help them deliver success.

PE: Andy, I know you were involved with those very early discussions, but from my understanding, Namos beat you to the punch and managed to

ORACLE PARTNER NETWORK

become the first certified organisation globally.

Richard, were you involved in that process and what does that mean to you?

RE: Very much so, Paul. Working with Oracle on all the partner programmes and the requirements needed to implement the solution is very close to us. We were certified on the modernised partner programme back in November 2019, immediately as it came out. So we've already gone through the annual renewal.

It is very customer-centric now rather than product-centric around specialisations, and certifications. I agree with Andy wholeheartedly, the certifications are so important, and the consultants want to do them as well. With Oracle Cloud the technology is changing so fast, the consultants need to keep up to speed with their training. And one point of that is ensuring the certifications are there, but that enables the customers to actually recognise that you do know what you're doing and you're trusted by Oracle to implement their solutions. But there's a whole raft of other things available with the modernised programme to enable that specialisation.

Oracle sends out surveys directly to your clients after every single go live and then annually after that for all managed service customers. Customer success is key and what we're all talking about. It's important to maintain that customer advocacy, and that makes sure that you're always on top of your game.

PE: Do you think there's much more accountability under the new framework than there was before?

AB: We've all talked about certification. One of the things that we have to be thinking about, especially at the speed of the growth that Oracle is achieving, is the skills gap that leaves behind. And one of the things that we

have been working on at the advisory board is what to do about that across the EMEA region – because we can't just have everybody stealing from each other's resource pool. We have to find new ways of growing talent to meet the demands that are coming up.

PE: I want to go back to the earlier point about putting customers at the centre of the journey. Do you think that is just a natural progression because the offering has changed? It's gone from being product-orientated to being service-orientated and that just demands more customer centrality. Or do you think that customers are more demanding now and you've just got to take more notice of what they want?

JT: I think customers are more demanding because the new technology allows them to be more demanding. We've moved from multi-year projects to deployments of big transformational projects in just a few months. Customers have big expectations.



"IT IS VERY CUSTOMER-CENTRIC NOW RATHER THAN PRODUCT-CENTRIC AROUND SPECIALISATIONS, AND CERTIFICATIONS".

RICHARD ELTHAM

But for me, it's also the speed of innovation, and that's why it's important for us to work closely with our partners, who are implementing the project and providing the managed services.

PE: Those innovation cycles are an opportunity, but also a challenge, because the opportunity is there to

have innovation updates at regular intervals. That puts more pressure on the partner ecosystem to ensure that the customers benefit from it.

Paul, in your experience, how well-equipped do you think the partner ecosystem is to manage those quarterly cycles of innovation updates? Do you think that is a challenge that can be met?

PG: It's a challenge that can be met, but I'd actually argue that it's a challenge that has to be met. We all recognise that the customer has an opportunity to step away from the service on a typically three-yearly basis. So if we're not driving value out of the service that's being provided and if we're not helping them drive value out of the services being provided, they have the opportunity to walk away and do something else. It's beholden to us as Oracle partners and to Oracle to help the customers drive increasing amounts of value out of the service that they're procuring.

The expression I've heard and I quite like is evergreening. It's keeping the product permanently fresh, giving the customer the opportunity to take advantage of the new functionality that's coming out, but also not losing sight of the fact that the customer may have adopted some manual work around because the solution didn't fit exactly what they needed at the time.

PE: Andy, you've been an Oracle partner for 15 years, do you think that there's been a fundamental shift in the dynamic in the

relationship between Oracle and its partners in general, aside from the new framework and the modernised partner network? Do you think partnerships are more equitable and really focus on that word 'partnership' rather than just being a partner?

AB: The entire outward focus of Oracle has changed in the last three years

to customers and partners. On the partner journey, do I think that we are there yet? No, I don't, but Oracle has made significant strides to get there and we're on that journey to transform and to change. But there's still more that we can do and we work with Oracle and Javier to do more and to better ourselves for our customers and to better the relationship with Oracle. Just like with the software changing every 90 days, the relationship's going to evolve as the market evolves.

"WE ALSO HAVE GOOD FUN. PART OF WHAT WE DO HAS TO BE FUN, AND WE'VE HAD A LOT OF FUN OVER THE YEARS AS PARTNERS"

ANDY BIRD



There is also the centre of excellence course boards that we sit on and feedback from those boards is fed back into Oracle development. Then there is Customer Connect. Oracle customers and partners and even Oracle employees themselves can submit ideas on the portal to get

what they want first time round and ensuring that we are even better than the competition.

PE: Paul, historically the relationship was either owned by the vendor or owned by the consultancy, and that can sometimes create some difficulties. I know that the relationship is much more harmonised now, but do you see that as being a good evolution for the way that vendors and partners work together?

PG: We use the word 'partner,' we use the word 'partnership,' and it's important that we don't just use those words; we have to live by what they mean. And what that means is that we go hand in glove with Oracle, as Andy said, with the best solution for that particular client; that we're joined at the hip for that client – because the solutions we're offering these days are increasingly complicated. There are an increasing number of additional products and services that can sit round them and need to sit round the SaaS offering. Therefore Oracle understanding the power of their partner network, which has the capability to deliver the services that the client needs, is really key. It's important that we can go together to the customer and deliver the best solution to them. And as Andy said, knock the competition out of the park.

PE: There is something slightly different about the OPN and Oracle partners. I'm not quite sure what it is, but if I look at the way the ecosystems around the other vendors work, it doesn't seem to be quite as cohesive.

AB: As Paul said, we've been friends, competitors, and with the same majority of the partners for 15 years. Part of what we do has to be fun, and we've had a lot of fun over the years as partners. That helps build that relationship too.

PE: Richard, we haven't touched on the technology roadmap. In your capacity as a CTO, I'd like to understand how far you can influence Oracle. How close can you get to that technology roadmap and what kind of influence can partners leverage?

RE: There are a few angles. I'm on the Oracle CTO Partner Advisory Board and we meet up once a quarter to discuss roadmaps among other things.

voted on. Once 20 votes from different organisations are received, it gets sent off to product development. So 85 percent of new features in the SaaS products have actually come from customer ideas and requests. The products are always evolving based on what people need; it's a very connected process.

PE: Andy, you've said that there have been great strides made over recent years, but that there is still work to do. What is that going to mean for partners? But more importantly what does that mean for customers if the partner network advances even further than where it is today?

AB: Obviously I don't know exactly how things will evolve, but what I'm pushing for is a much closer go-to customer experience. Just as Javier said, to go back and listen to what the customer really wants, putting the right team together to get them exactly

PE: Javier, what's next on the partner network innovation? What are you working on and how can we expect to see the OPN evolve over the next 12 months?

JT: We're becoming much more industry-focussed. And if you look at our partner network, all the customer expertise is around geographical location and the specific solution. We are working from a go-to-market perspective, and it's better to include the industry expertise. We find a consistent go-to-market per region solution and then target the industry. For example, if Andy has a specialism in construction or if Paul has the expertise on financial services or specific sub verticals within public sector, those skills we can really include as part of our go-to market strategy and further accelerate. ■



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GLOBAL CONSULTANCIES

ARE THEY ALL THE SAME
AND HOW ARE THEY MEETING THE GROWING
DEMANDS FROM CUSTOMERS?

When we hosted a similar session with three ERP vendors, it was quite easy to identify their different strategies, products and road maps, but of course when we're talking about a service orientated offering, it is harder to pinpoint exactly what makes one provider different from another.

Brand values and culture are two obvious ways to separate one consultancy from its competition, but how important are these factors when it comes to buying decisions? Do tech buyers really care about diversity, equality and sustainability or do they simply want to hire the outfit that can deliver the best results at the best price?

ERP Today Live! hosted a session with three senior execs from three leading global consultancies to find out.

Each of the panellists had the opportunity for a short elevator pitch to set out their USP before answering a series of questions posed by our readers. Here's what they had to say:



LUCY ROSEMONT

Partner at **EY** from their consulting and technology practice

"I think there are three things that differentiate us at EY and I believe we have a unique proposition. Firstly, our culture and values - we are truly purpose led. Our global method puts humans at the centre of what we do with technology at speed and innovation at scale. I've had really recent feedback from clients and from candidates in our recruitment process who've said they notice a real difference in the culture and the style of EY. We listen and we care about our people, we care about our clients and the business we do together. And doing the right thing is really at the heart of how we operate at EY.

"Secondly, I'd say our position in the market is unique. We're growing, we're confident, we're excited about the market opportunity. We're still agile and innovative. When I joined our advisory practice 11 years ago we were just starting out, and during that time we've really grown. We've built our brand, our reputation in the market. And for the last five years we've seen a real focus and investment in technology and technology consulting.

"And thirdly, we partner. ERP related work is not made successful by technologists alone. We have a relentless focus on delivering business value for our customers, and we recognise this is best achieved by joining up with other expertise sometimes. So, whether that be our business or our people consulting colleagues at EY, our tax, transactions, or our assurance colleagues, to bring the best of what our firm has to offer."



DUNCAN PRIOR

Head of ERP advisory services at **Capgemini**

"Number one, and not surprising we hear, is people. We allow them to flourish, they come together, they form teams, they deliver value with clients and it's creating that environment for people to deliver.

"Number two. We're either unique, or maybe one of two at knitting together end to end and top to bottom. We've combined the whole services from top line advisory right through to transactional delivery, support, maintenance, and we're delighted we've bought a 40,000 people business

called Altran, with the full R&D scale so that the full spectrum of services with the business particularly focussing on adding value.

"Thirdly, slightly tongue in cheek, but we're European. All the other large consulting firms are US-based. Our reward structure is different, our work values are ever so slightly different and over 130,000 of our people are in Europe - it does drive a subtly different behaviour and I think that comes out.

"One big difference is that we're modest. We don't plaster our achievements all over the place. We're a little bit more understated, a little bit too much perhaps. So, people, end to end and top to bottom, and a certain degree of modesty - even me!"

JEMMA INGHAM

Managing director and tech delivery lead at **Accenture**

"Our key differentiators are that we have the most advanced technological skills in the marketplace. The breadth and depth and global reach of our technology team and how we organise ourselves is quite unique. In terms of that innovation and technological advancement, we have over 7,000 patents and patents pending globally.

"The deepest relationships with the platform partners right from the top with our CEO Julie [Sweet] downwards, we have very strong relationships with those platform partners. And in certain client circumstances that we'll talk about later, that really makes a big difference. And we think we have the breadth and depth of industry insights and how functions need to evolve their own purpose within every business in those industries.

"So, we bring those three key differentiators together. Our role is to accelerate the path to value for clients and we do that by bringing together our intelligent platforms and human ingenuity to drive that positive change."



PE: I'm not going to ask you all to come back on each other's pitches, but I am keen for either Jemma or Lucy to say something about the difference in the European versus the US culture. Do you feel that's something that plays with UK or European customers?

LR: I don't view EY as an American partnership. We're a set of member firms so we have some strategy that's driven at a global level, actually most of our global EY team, or many of them, sit in London. We are a truly global firm, but there's no feeling that there's anything from the US that's being pushed or made us an American firm. I'm a partner of the UK practice and I help to run the UK business.

Ji: It surprised me to hear Duncan say that actually. I have a background in the 'big four' as well and working in those partnerships definitely didn't feel like working in US firms, whereas Accenture, which I came to a couple of years ago, does. But mostly that difference is it's a shareholder business, there's a different global P&L focus. There's a different kind of vibe that way, but I've not had any clients have an allergic reaction to our Americanness at all.

PE: One of the things that I hear the big consulting firms talking about is around brand values. How important do you think those brand values are when it comes to buying decisions. You're unlikely to find a consultancy that would say, 'We're not interested in sustainability. We're not interested in diversity.' So given that everybody's saying it, how do you then use it as a differentiator?

DP: Well, first of all, you're right. You're never going to win it by saying, 'We believe in sustainability'. While you might rely on your competitors strangely denying their American roots, for example, no one's going to go in saying, 'we don't believe in sustainability. We're sceptical about climate change.' You can't do that.

I think it comes down to the team you put in front of them, I really do. Do

GLOBAL CONSULTANCIES

they reflect your values and diversity and all of the different dimensions to that? Are they able to get across their beliefs in sustainability, and so on.

PE: Jemma, what's your view on the importance of brand values and how much they actually impact customers buying decisions?

JJ: Like with Duncan, I'd say we probably all have a similar set. I had to look ours up. So client value creation, one global network, respect for the individual, best people, integrity, and stewardship, those six.

PE: I think the question is though, who's not going to say that?

JJ: I don't think any of the organisations that we compete with or partner

field the right team in terms of matching their culture, matching what suits them from a diverse or sustainability perspective.

I'd also say that we need to live our values. It's not enough to have them. I could recite ours as well. I could recite the Accenture ones as well because I spent many years at Accenture, and they haven't changed. But I would say that it's really about living them and making sure we can look at this and say, yes, that is what I do every day and encourage our teams to do the same.

DP: Two things that are interesting at the moment – the environmental element of sustainability and the personal impact of a better work life balance. We're all so used to work from home now, gone are the days of consultants haring down the motorway on a

JJ: Yes, and also think matching your team and behaviours and what you're suggesting as your approach to the size of the client and their own identity. So back to the point about being an American or global type firm, where I've personally had more of a challenge is sometimes the analyst reports saying, "Well, Accenture don't work with small and medium sized enterprises." I'll go into a smaller size client, and I don't even know they've got that perception before we even start to engage with them.

PE: So you have to almost be a bit of a chameleon in a way?

JJ: Yes, and the right team that is winning in one client is not necessarily the same team that would go and win with a completely different client.

"FIRSTLY, OUR CULTURE AND VALUES - WE ARE TRULY PURPOSE LED. OUR GLOBAL METHOD PUTS HUMANS AT THE CENTRE OF WHAT WE DO WITH TECHNOLOGY AT SPEED AND INNOVATION AT SCALE." **LUCY ROSEMONT**

with would disagree with any of them. So, it is about the quality of the people in front of our clients. I think you do get some clients with very strong sustainability views themselves who call you out for turning up with a pile of printed out proposals. You can trip up on those things really inadvertently.

Similarly, you can be embarrassed by having a non-diverse team walking into a room where the client does have a much more diverse looking team than the one walking in front of them. I think there might be more things that really switch a client off in an unexpected way rather than the positive influences. I think they can trip us up.

LR: I agree. It's important every consultancy has a set of values, and people are going to be at the centre of those values. I think the best way to find out what it is the client wants is to build those long lasting relationships. And so the longer we spend with our clients, the longer we spend understanding their needs and their requirements, the more likely we are to

Monday morning and being away from home for five days a week

It's surprising the number of clients that are much more open to that conversation. Not only do they get to see a saving on expenses, but it's a better message for them and they're now used to that kind of working. And the second thing you bring in is if you're working with clients in consumer products and so on, you will need to illustrate that your proposition helps them reduce their packaging or use of plastic and you're really sensitive to it or recycling and stop stuff being scrapped. So, it does come up a lot, but you need to be specific and illustrate positively what you're doing about it.

I also agree with Jemma's point; there are little things you can trip on as well if you're not careful.

PE: Do you think in terms of winning over a new customer then, the art is pulling out the right tools from the bag to marry up with that customer expectation because different customers will have different expectations.

LR: I think you're right. Also, ERP transformation is not an easy thing. There hasn't been one in the history of any of our careers that's gone totally smoothly, without bumps in the road, without needing to pick up the phone and put in an emergency button or pull the team together and get through something tricky. And clients know that, they've been through this journey before. Many of them have done a large ERP transformation before and they want to work differently, and they want to work together with a team that's going to be in it together with them – remotely or not. So they're placing more value now I would say on what that team looks like, are they the right people to partner with them? Is that culture the right fit? Are we going to speed the path for them as we work as a team together on some of these big transformation journeys that they're on?

PE: Given that all three of you are almost in agreement on this idea of marrying the team to the custo-

mer where does that leave the huge amounts of money that are spent on global advertising and promoting these brand values?

LR: The brand values are important. Our talent and the people that they're bringing into this business care about this a lot. People look it up in advance, they want to understand what's at the essence of what it means to be at EY. If we're going to attract the top talent, we want the people that get that and understand it and form part of our teams going forward.

DP: I think that's a good point. A lot of the corporate values and branding, it has more of an impact on recruitment than anything else.

I just want to go back on something else, which is the little thing about the

up against quite often because of course, working for a global consulting firm you will be very progressive, forward thinking, and very considerate of all these things. Whereas a lot of end users, the customers you go into, may be far more traditional businesses that haven't fully embraced a lot of those values.

DP: That's my point. And you know what? Sometimes it can be rewarding, because at the end it all worked out. You've changed people's perceptions a wee bit positively. Not overnight, but positively.

PE: In terms of the technology vendors that you work with, how important are those relationships and how much does the strength of those relationships influence a customer?

years is two things. One is the hyperscalers, and the fact that where SAP have positioned themselves as well. So you're trying to help the client leverage the advantages of the hyperscaler, and you're helping the client perhaps alter their perceptions of SAP or Oracle that they've had over the years, because they've changed.

The second bit I would say is, it's not one partner in many of these dynamics? It's really bringing it together so the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. And it's our job to knit that together.

PE: Do you think that having the third dynamic of the hyperscalers has changed the ownership of the customer relationship? The hyperscalers are driving the cloud agenda, and then the consultancies are predomi-

"ONE BIG DIFFERENCE IS THAT WE'RE MODEST. WE DON'T PLASTER OUR ACHIEVEMENTS ALL OVER THE PLACE. WE'RE A LITTLE BIT MORE UNDERSTATED, A LITTLE BIT TOO MUCH PERHAPS. BUT A CERTAIN DEGREE OF MODESTY - EVEN ME!" **DUNCAN PRIOR**

corporate values, and it slightly ties back to the previous question. You mentioned being a chameleon, Paul, and you're kind of right but I think it's an important thing and I feel quite strongly about this. There is a social obligation on us. We know, as recent years have shown, values in Britain are divided and we're quite a divided society. So we've got to be careful because it's our job to offer a safe, diverse place for our employees. And if that means working at clients that are perhaps, not fully on the curve on this, it is our job for our teams to gently challenge that preconception. It's totally inappropriate for us to think about some clients that we may see as conservative and say, "Oh, who do I put with this lot because they are like..." That's absolutely inappropriate on so many levels. And part of our job is gently persuading and challenging that kind of behaviour otherwise it damages so many things on so many levels.

PE: That's an interesting point, and it must be something that you come

LR: They're immensely important. You'd expect me to say that! We all have the same alliance level relationships but the personal in-depth relationship with the vendors are very important. Something we found has really helped was the acquisition of AgilityWorks 18 months ago. The level of personal in-depth relationship with SAP, for example, that they brought has really further enhanced that partnership.

JI: I agree. Every client I've talked to in the last couple of years has been interested in how the three-way model works between customer, vendor and partner. I think where the depth and breadth could really help is, we have clients in the ERP space who are looking at multi-cloud environments now. And so it might be our relationship with a partner that is a hyperscaler, that helps solve a particular problem, not simply the ERP relationship.

DP: It's a key factor since I've been in it and I think just to build on Gemma's point, I think the change the last few

nantly driving process engineering and business remodelling. Do you think that leaves ERP vendors in a slightly difficult position as far as the customer relationship is concerned?

DP: I'm going to say something bold. Process re-engineering is dead. Long live data, analytics and intuition. I think gone are the days of lots of junior consultants wading through ARIS diagrams, and this sort of thing. I mean, it should never have existed and I think this is a really rich opportunity.

A client recently gave us a challenge to come back and explain how we would knit together the ERP in a particular hyperscaler, and we gave them what they felt was a good story. And I think again it plays to our creativity, rigour and expertise, because they're looking for the flexibility of a hyperscaler with microservices and so on and integration with that core data and core processing and solidity of an ERP and it's not like it was 10 years ago. Let's cram it all in the ERP, and we end up with a beast that we can't upgrade.

GLOBAL CONSULTANCIES

The demand has changed and I personally find it far more rewarding than the old process stuff. That's why I was shaking my head.

LR: I think you're right and our job is to bridge the gap. I don't think it puts ERP in an awkward position. There's still a clear role to play there.

JJ: I think the hyperscalers are driving the agenda at the moment, and they are doing deals that are opening clients' eyes to what they could do – the art of the possible. I do think that's changing the dynamic of where is data? Where is the balance of power and ownership of enterprise data?

Certainly there is competition now in terms of analytics and the insight and where you're driving that from and how, but the ERP platform vendors

touched on sustainability, and everyone's going to say, 'Yeah, we're interested in sustainability.' I think one of our core things that we're going to focus on in the next... we're focussing on it now in the coming months and years is how sustainability can be at the heart of your enterprise model and how the data and analytics and robustness of your financial data can help you make real decisions about what to do in sustainability for organisations.

DP: I think it's the art of the possible. I think our job – be it on a small scale, is to illustrate the art of the possible, to help them imagine and visualise what the future can be.

It's the old Henry Ford syndrome. It's showing them the motor car sometimes.

and managed well because it helps you deliver on expectations and great customer service.

PE: Lucy, what's your view on ROI based project fees?

LR: I would say first of all, our clients' expectations have changed in terms of how these programmes are run. I think your first question was something about what the customer believes they're going to get out of it. Gone are the days where we'll do as Duncan said, lots of ARIS maps, a long list of requirements gathering, and go away for seven months and come back with 'ready for you at UAT'. That's not how it works any more. We're far more likely to offer a kind of functional programme, where we say, 'let's go and open a value case. Let's bring the organisation together, business and IT.

"OUR KEY DIFFERENTIATORS ARE THAT WE HAVE THE MOST ADVANCED TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS IN THE MARKETPLACE. THE BREADTH AND DEPTH AND GLOBAL REACH OF OUR TECHNOLOGY TEAM AND HOW WE ORGANISE OURSELVES IS QUITE UNIQUE." **JEMMA INGHAM**

are not well equipped at the moment to compete. I think they've got a bit of a threat there that they've not yet... They don't quite know the rules of that game.

PE: What do you see changing in the consulting landscape in the near term? What are the big moves that large consulting firms can make to accelerate the transition to a fully digital economy and to deliver on all of the digital projects that are needed in a short term window?

JJ: I think it has to be investment in our talent and treating our talents. It's not just about attracting and retaining that talent – it's about that personal growth as well.

LR: I think talent is crucial. Listening and putting the customer absolutely at the centre of what we do, whether that means saying no to some business ourselves, joining up with other people to do it, or making sure that the answer is right. And I think we've

The following is a Q&A with questions submitted by our readers.

PE: One of the things that was recurring in several questions, and we probably had 20 people with varying versions of this: "should consultancies be more accountable and take greater responsibility for projects that don't deliver?" There's a follow on question: "why aren't projects costed on an ROI basis? If the project meets or exceeds expectations, then the consultancy gets their full fee. If it runs into problems and doesn't deliver value, they get penalised."

JJ: Quite often we have clients who don't quite understand their value case, or start coming up with one half-way through, and then you don't meet expectations. So there is effort involved in having a really great value case and tracking to it and managing to it. And I would say that effort pays off. And I think we're all up for commercials that tie us to them if they are measurable

Let's understand where there's real value for this, and then prioritise what we want to do with you.

Step two, we've focussed on where there's value. Let's go and deliver something. But we'll show it to you as we go. We'll show you and we'll agree what's right, we'll do an out of the box, where we can fit the standard, so you can see what you're getting. It's just the commercial aspect is, we're all up for taking some level of risk reward where that's a right way to do it. But I think the way that you chunk up these programmes now is really important so that there are fewer surprises, so that our customers can see what they're getting along the way, and they can make decisions about their priorities that are going to deliver the right value for them.

PE: Duncan, penalties for not delivering on the business case. Are you up for that?

DP: Well we already do it. I think it's partly because we've got a very healthy balance sheet so we're able to model

it and estimate it. If I'm honest, I don't see the demand for it particularly growing. I see the same pressure that Lucy talked to chunking things up so you can measure benefits on the way.

PE: How can big consultancies compete with independent firms, many of which are sizable businesses in their own right, when pure plays have very specific product knowledge, lower overheads, and possibly more incentive to deliver for their customers.

LR: It's a big healthy market at the moment and I think everybody's got something to offer. We talked at the start about all of our unique propositions and if more of them were on this session they would have their own unique proposition too. So there's

I'm going to keep my analogy going in the lava lamp - but bits will peel off and take shape again.

I think demand is outstripping supply at the moment and that will continue for the next few years. So, it's incumbent on us all to make sure the talent quality is still there. I think clients are encouraging us to partner with others so I think the collaboration will only grow, and how we manage that is going to be interesting, but I think the trend will continue and we've just got to watch as these different shapes take place over time.

PE: What are large consultancies doing to fill the skills gap? There aren't enough consultants to deliver projects, and smaller customers are either left with poor quality resources, or none at all. Whether

PE: Lucy, from EY's point of view, how well-equipped do you feel your firm is to meet the skills requirements in the short term?

LR: We are recruiting heavily, as I'm sure most are, and also investing in our graduate and training programmes to help develop our workforce of the future. We are planning to grow a lot in the next three, four or five years to meet that skills gap. I'd echo as well that if the last year or so has taught us anything, it's taught us that global working is less binary now in terms of onshore/offshore with a bit of near shore in the middle. It doesn't work like that anymore - we've gone live with people sitting in their homes in India, in Manila, in the UK and in Spain. We have a global workforce that can operate from anywhere, and we prove that we can do that with-

"OUR JOB - BE IT ON A SMALL SCALE, IS TO ILLUSTRATE THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE, TO HELP THEM IMAGINE AND VISUALISE WHAT THE FUTURE CAN BE. IT'S THE OLD HENRY FORD SYNDROME. IT'S SHOWING THEM THE MOTOR CAR SOMETIMES." **DUNCAN PRIOR**

space to compete. Our clients look to us to bring together the things I talked about - the tax element, transactions element, they're partnering with other smaller firms or pure plays and that ability to have a multi-vendor selection process, multi-vendors working with our clients, I think they're looking for that as well.

We've all got unique offerings and we're also up for partnering with the right people, so it's a busy market. There's plenty out there for everybody.

PE: Duncan, do you think that the market's pretty saturated at the moment? That there's opportunity for everybody? Or do you think that the move towards consolidation and you guys buying up those smaller pure plays is going to continue?

DP: It's a lava lamp, isn't it? It shades in form; move away from the heat and bits spin off, new ones are formed. It's a constant evolution of companies spinning off. I think at the moment a number of large blobs are forming -

it's SAP or Salesforce, there's a huge demand for their services. I was talking to Salesforce just yesterday, and they said that their own ecosystem is going to create 150,000 jobs in the next three years. The question is, where are those people going to come from? What are the big consulting firms doing to make sure that you've got the right skills to deliver for all of your customers' needs?

JJ: I'd have to start with our global workforce strategy, that talent doesn't necessarily have to all be here in the UK. We have brilliant delivery centres that I've worked with in India and in the Philippines, which is broader than I've worked before in terms of global teams. We invest in our teams with their own certifications and their own experiences. We're all recruiting madly to try and fill that gap with our global teams behind us. And I would hate for any of our clients to think that they get the B team, there's a sadness that that question brings actually.

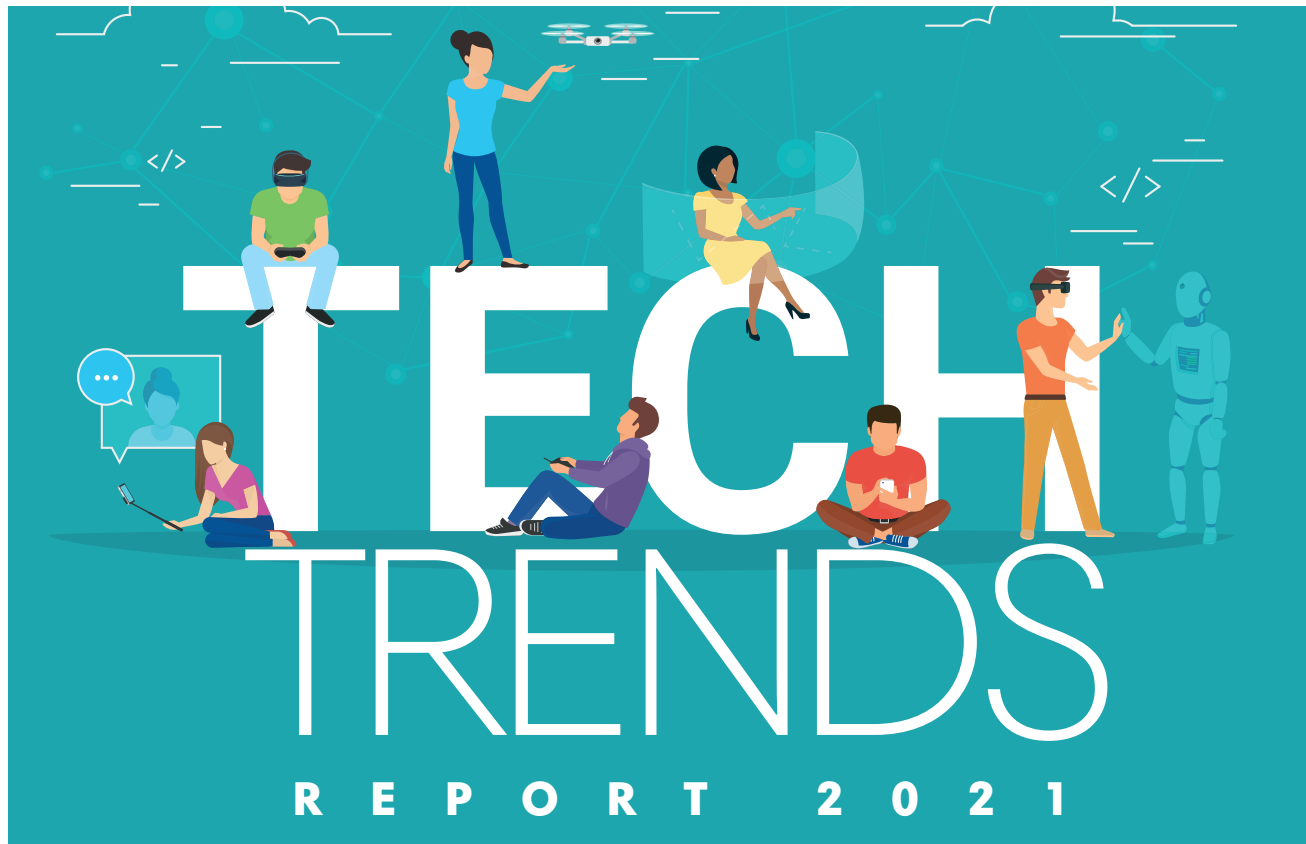
out all needing to be in the same place.

PE: Duncan, finally to you: with your SAP hat on, there's a real pinch on skills, particularly if you look at the timeline for delivering all these S4 projects, which SAP are insisting on. Where are you going to get the resources from?

DP: I agree with the previous comments. I'd add just another couple. One is training. I think it's very important, training people up is a big part of our ethic and something in the downtime of COVID my team worked on an enormous training course that's being rolled out globally.

Number two is augmented consulting. Using digital databases of practice and ideas and so on and so forth around the world. We've done that a lot. And the third, actually which is just as important, is avoiding burnout. Our resources get pulled all over the place and we've got to make sure that doesn't happen and that's harder with remote working because you can't see the signs so well. ■

SPECIAL REPORT



The Deloitte Tech Trends Report is in its twelfth year and looks at current, emerging and future technology trends. It's essential reading for any digital leader considering it's widely regarded as one of the most comprehensive and thorough reports of its kind. The production of the report is led from a UK perspective but is run on a global scale by a team of researchers along with input from Deloitte's global digital network of clients.

The report is a true collaboration between Deloitte and their clients based on customer case studies, early adoptions and meaningful conversations with their readers. This year's report focussed on nine key trends that the global research team deemed ones to watch, a summary of which can be read below:

STRATEGY ENGINEERED

Technology today more than ever is a source of new competitive advantage for some organisations and, as

Technology trends are always front of mind in the ERP industry, especially when technologies are evolving at a rate of knots

COVID-19 has proved, a threat to the ongoing survival for others. Because of this, the line between corporate strategy and technology strategy is blurring. Savvy corporate strategists are looking beyond their organisation's current tech capabilities and competitive landscape to consider a broader range of future possibilities about how technology can expand their operations. The complexities around the growing number of uncertainties and possibilities are often too much for the human brain to comprehend and that's why strategists are turning to strategic tech platforms that are equipped with advanced analytics,

automation, and AI. Organisations are using these tools to continually identify internal and external strategic forces, inform strategic decisions, and monitor outcomes.

CORE REVIVAL

Modernising legacy enterprise systems and migrating them to the cloud may help unleash an organisation's digital potential. Until recently, the move to the cloud could also obliterate the organisation's digital transformation budget. For many, the cost of cloud migrations and other core modernisation strategies can hinder a transformation. But this is about to change. Deloitte recognises as a growing trend that some pioneering companies are beginning to use clever outsourcing arrangements to re-engineer traditional business cases for core modernisation. Likewise, some are exploring opportunities to shift core assets to increasingly powerful platforms, including low-code options. Finally, many are advancing their platform-first strategies by ad-

addressing technical debt in ERP systems and migrating non-essential capabilities to other platforms. These innovative approaches for squeezing more value from legacy core assets could soon become standard components of every CIO's digital transformation strategy.

SUPPLY UNCHAINED

Supply chains are moving out of the back office and into the value-enabling front lines of customer segmentation and product differentiation. Manufacturers, retailers, distributors and others who are looking to the future are exploring ways to transform the supply chain cost centre into a customer-focussed driver of value for the business. They are getting more value from the data they collect, analyse, and share across their supply networks and using it to make better decisions. The kind of disruption we have seen with COVID-19 could well become the norm. When the next global event hits, technology and supply chain leaders won't be able to say they didn't have time to prepare.

ML OPS: INDUSTRIALISED AI

Sophisticated machine learning models help companies to discover patterns, reveal anomalies, make predictions and decisions, and generate insights and are increasingly becoming key drivers in an organisation's performance. Enterprises are realising the need to shift from personal heroics to engineered performance to efficiently move ML models through the business landscape (production to management). But, many are hamstrung in their efforts by clunky, brittle development and deployment processes that stifle experimentation and hinder collaboration among product teams, operational staff, and data scientists. As AI and ML mature, a strong dose of engineering and operational discipline will help organisations overcome these hurdles.

MACHINE DATA REVOLUTION: FEEDING THE MACHINE

With machine learning on the brink of overhauling enterprise operations and decision-making, a growing number of AI pioneers are realising that legacy data models and infrastructure could be a roadblock to ML success. In response, these organisations are taking steps to disrupt the data management value chain. As part of a growing trend, they are deploying new technologies and approaches including advanced data capture and structuring capabilities, analytics to identify connections among random data, and next-generation cloud-based data stores to support complex modelling.

ZERO TRUST: NEVER TRUST, ALWAYS VERIFY

Sophisticated cyber attacks and shifting enterprise environments have undermined the traditional castle-and-moat approach to cyber security. Zero trust is rooted in the concept that modern enterprise environments necessitate a different approach to security: there is no longer a defined perimeter inside which every user, workload, device, and network is inherently trusted. In zero trust architectures, every access request should be validated based on all available data points. The automation and engineering required to properly implement zero trust security architectures can help strengthen security posture, simplify security management, improve end-user experience, and enable modern enterprise environments.

REBOOTING THE DIGITAL WORKPLACE

As the world's largest unplanned work-from-home experiment continues, many business leaders are asking: when the dust settles, will remote work become the rule or the exception? Companies may be able to overcome the digital workplace's uncertainties by

embracing more of its positive aspects, including the data generated by workers' tools and platforms. This will help organisations optimise individual and team performance and customise the ever important employee experience. As onsite workspaces and headquarters evolve, organisations can use this data to create thriving, productive, and cost-effective offices that are seamlessly interwoven with the remote experience.

BESPOKE FOR BILLIONS: DIGITAL MEETS PHYSICAL

When we look back, 2020 will likely be the turning point when most of the population adapted to digital interactions to conduct their everyday lives, whether working from home, online schooling, or ordering groceries. Yet the prevalence of digital interactions has left many of us pining for the days of in-person interactions. As we look to the future, we expect consumers will no longer be satisfied with distinct physical or digital brand experiences; they will expect a blend of the best of both. In the next 18 to 24 months, we expect in-person and digital experiences to become more seamless and intertwined.

DEI TECH: TOOLS FOR EQUITY

Organisations are embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion as business imperatives, with a growing number adopting holistic workforce strategies that address biases and inequities to enhance enterprise and employee performance. While HR professionals often lead DEI strategies, technology leaders play a critical role as a strategic partner by designing, developing, and executing tech-enabled solutions to address increasingly complex DEI workforce challenges. Deloitte believes that over the coming months, we can all expect enterprises to adopt new tools that incorporate advanced analytics, automation, and AI, including natural language processing and machine learning, to help inform, deliver, and measure the impact of DEI. ■



Few would disagree that change is a constant, whether in our professional or personal lives. For businesses and society to improve and evolve, change is a necessity. In the world of ERP and the change that it brings, a lot of us bear the scars from past implementations and have had valuable lessons, especially around change and business engagement. **BY RACHEL HEAD**



SEARCH STORE

PHILIPS

ALTER
TRANSPARENCY

RESET

RECORD

ITR

make

TIMER

DOWN

UP

HS

MAKE
CHANGE
PERSONAL



RACHEL HEAD

W

hen I started out in business change and training 22 years ago, change was often seen as an additional cost when investing in new pieces of technology. This often

led to the perception that change was not central to a programme's success leading to underestimating the effort required to deliver the adoption promise. More recently, however, this is changing, in part due to lessons learnt but also to the increasing use of SaaS products which drive change and compliance through unsupported products.

Still, getting change right remains a challenge. It is all about getting the balance between 'turn it on, they will use it and there will be consequences if they don't' (enforced compliance) to 'wow... you've spent millions on all this fancy engagement, education and training and they're still not using it'; and there is no 'one-size-fits-all' answer that guarantees success.

Understanding what success looks like

For me, the starting point is framing the end game and understanding what success looks like to the organisation and to the individuals. For example, when I join **WW**, success for me is losing a few pounds over three months and investing £36 pounds to get there. For others in my group, for their £36 investment they expect a return of several fit point treats and losing at least a stone.

Understanding what success looks like is the first step and it isn't easy, but the real challenge lies in building awareness and a will to change. Dr John Kotter, an influential thought leader, in his book *Leading Change*, also identi-



fied eight key steps for successful change, also known as Kotter's eight steps. A key initial step is to create a sense of urgency, where we must help others see the need for change, or in other words, showing them why they should care.

Ken (my dad) and his love of household tech

As a kid in the 80s, some of my most nostalgic memories are of Friday nights jumping into Ken's **Citroen** BX and heading to the local video rental shop with him to grab one of the latest releases. This was an almost holy Friday night ritual for the whole family, sitting in the living room with our fish and chips and our smug grins watching the latest releases.

Ken was so keen to own a DVD player when they were released in the mid-1990s. However, as a family we could not afford one and had invested in so many VHS videos that Ken made the prudent decision to wait to see if DVDs were reliable and not just a 'craze' as some speculated.

Moving to DVDs remained important to Ken, and one day in the late 90s, my mom came home with a Heinz 57 puppy and Ken retaliated with a DVD player. It took us time to build our DVD collection, but it did mean we no longer went to the video shop – a significant change to our Friday night rituals. Nevertheless, Ken's DVD collection was in pride of place on the dark mahogany display cabinet alongside our favourite family photos.

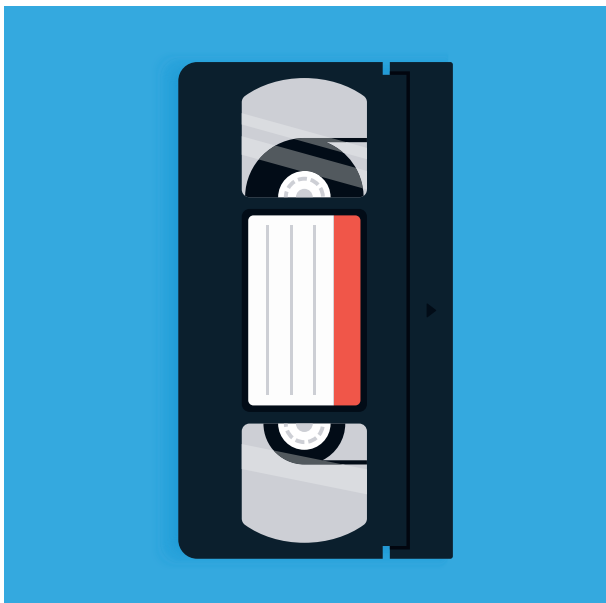
Ken always had a desire and will to change to keep up with the latest technology, and this continues today with Alexa and **Hive**. Ken wasn't the first to bring these new devices into his home, but he wasn't far behind. He knew why he wanted to change and the people around him were able to show him what the new world was like. When he could afford it, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the latest trend.

Ken's response when a new system was introduced at work was, however, a world apart...

Ken's struggle with new tech at work

Ken spent most of his working career as a body shop manager at a Citroen garage. After he was made redundant in his 60s, he moved to work in Birmingham as a car insurance valuator – he'd go out and assess car insurance jobs. He loved his job until a new mobile device and software was introduced.

Ken found out about the changes from a colleague. He'd told him that the business was implementing the new solution so they could track employees and see how many mistakes they were making. This was not exactly the motivation for change the business was aiming to create.



His return home that evening was something like this – “if they think they want me to carry one of those new devices around with me so they can track my every move and make me do this new training so I become a robot that doesn’t need to think, I will leave.” Mom’s look of horror said it all.

When he arrived at work next day, a post-it note on his desk told him he needed to attend training on the other side of the city with little notice. His mind was made up, and that same evening he wrote his resignation.

Ken’s fear

At the time, my young mind found it difficult to understand what was going on, other than Ken was having a difficult time at work. Years later I remember asking him why he wrote that resignation letter that evening. He admitted it was mainly about the surprise element, but also feeling like his job was being turned upside down after years of hard work and learning how to do it well. Being faced with similar challenges with my clients, I have asked him: what would he have wanted to happen back then? I got a single

THE STARTING POINT IS FRAMING THE END GAME AND UNDERSTANDING WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE TO THE ORGANISATION AND TO THE INDIVIDUALS

sentence back: “I wanted my manager to speak to me and tell me what was happening, and what it meant to me”.

It sounds so simple when Ken says it, and it has really formed my own motto around change today. For me, it is about always being clear about the ‘why’ and making sure every individual is considered when thinking about change. When I mean every individual, I mean that enough care and thought has gone into understanding why they should change and what’s important to them, to see how we would craft a meaningful change journey that resonates.

In my experience, no one resists change through bad intent. Instead, I tend to find that it is when individuals do not understand the ‘why’, or through fear, lack of support, change support, or because they feel excluded from the change. I also prefer to frame resistance as the starting point for engagement. After all, it gives you a view of how people feel and helps us understand the challenges ahead!

Ken was experiencing many of these thoughts and emotions. What would have happened if he understood the reasons for him and the organisation to change?

Ken’s happy ending

The evening after Ken wrote his letter of resignation, he came home with an inscrutable expression on his face. We all waited to see mom’s reaction while he shared what



had happened that day – she always looked intimidating slicing onions with her huge knife while wearing swimming goggles.

Ken recounted his conversation with his manager that day. He said his line manager was puzzled as to why this was all such a big deal, he went on to explain it was a small change and that Ken would get lots of support. Ken explained it wasn’t small to him and was fundamental to his day-to-day. The line manager apologised and asked what he could do to make Ken reconsider his resignation.

Ken needed this, he needed to know his manager cared. He wanted to hear from management, rather than feeling that the new insurance evaluation tool was a dark secret. Indeed, according to **Prosci’s** 2020 Best Practices in Change Management business leaders are the preferred senders of organisational messages. Like Ken, 70 percent of employees prefer personal impact messages to come from their line managers.

Long story short, Ken did not hand his notice in that day because that conversation with his line manager spun into the ‘why’ and built his awareness and understanding of the change. Unknowingly that day, Ken was the catalyst for change. His line manager went on to brief the teams, quash the rumours, educate, and train. He also asked Ken to join a network to help him understand more and he naturally started talking about it to his colleagues. Ken went on to be the ‘go to’ person for the new insurance tool.

This is why I am passionate about change. Even though it takes a lot of hard work to understand, plan, execute and monitor readiness to successfully drive adoption, it is not a dark art. It starts with the skills most of us already have in our locker: the ability to care, listen, hear, understand, and have conversations. It is the ability to stand in Ken’s shoes and think, how would Ken feel, what would Ken want? ■

Rachel Head is head of employee experience and inclusion, Capgemini



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QUANTUM ERP

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‘SUPERPOSITION’
FOR THE FUTURE



QUANTUM ERP

Although still largely in its early stages of development, quantum computing could represent significant advancements for the way we operate and run the ERP systems of the future. But before we get to a 'superposition' in business with quantum ERP, we need to figure out just exactly how we will use 'quantum superposition' to reposition our ERP position.

BY ADRIAN BRIDGWATER

QUANTUM ERP

**EVEN THE MOST TECHNOPHOBIC
BUSINESSPERSON HAS PROBABLY
COME ACROSS THE BASIC NOTION
OF BINARY SYSTEMS.**

This is the foundation we use to run traditional computers.

Built using binary code composed of just two values: 0 or 1, patterns of binary numbers are commonly known as 'bits', which themselves form the basis of the way we build with data in the modern world.

BY ADRIAN BRIDGWATER



Using just the basic tools of binary, we have been able to build hugely powerful and complex computers up to now. But even with the progress we have made so far, a new era of computing lies in wait where the hugely powerful becomes the massively powerful – and where the complex, becomes the infinite edge of reasoning.

A QUANTUM SHIFT TO SUPERPOSITION

Where binary machines work with numbers and strings composed of 0 or 1 values, quantum computing shuns bits in favour of qubits. A qubit can have a 'quantum state' (also known as a superposition) made up of two or more values simultaneously (called a superposition), which means that the scale of any computing engine built with a quantum foundation has exponentially greater power.

To put it another way, quantum qubits can be 0, or they can be 1, or they can be somewhere in between. Further, their value can change depending on the direction in a computer system that they are viewed from. In the simplest terms possible, quantum computing allows us to create more numbers out of our previous pool of

numbers – and with more numbers comes more power.

Although some working machines have been built by organisations including **IBM** and **D-Wave**, quantum computing is still largely in the project and prototyping phase. Logically then, quantum ERP is also still only at an elemental conceptual level; how we apply quantum mathematics to the types of calculations needed in a modern ERP system is yet to be deduced.

But as embryonic as quantum ERP is, we can still think about how we will use this massive surge in power and intelligence as we design future system architectures today. We could be working with ERP financial software

suites that run at an order of magnitude more quickly. More real time business processing could be enabled for ERP systems; and transactional and analytical data workloads will dovetail and speed forwards in unity.

BEYOND OUT-OF-THE BOX ERP

The use of quantum entanglement could lead to massively tougher security controls, meaning customers could more readily and more directly place additional mission critical ERP services in public clouds served by quantum accelerators and toolsets.

"Current state-of-the-art cloud-based computing may be safe for the moment, but it could become infinitely more vulnerable when more powerful quantum computers take hold," wrote **SAP**



CURRENT STATE-OF-THE-ART CLOUD-BASED COMPUTING MAY BE SAFE FOR THE MOMENT, BUT IT COULD BECOME INFINITELY MORE VULNERABLE

SUSAN GALER / SAP

multimedia spokesperson, Susan Galer, in a 2020 blog posting. What Galer says is true, so for every vulnerability quantum power increases, we must ensure that we redress the balance with quantum-powered security. "For example, quantum-safe cryptography is central to preventing corporate data espionage around everything from proprietary ingredients and formulas to differentiating processes and valued business relationships," added SAP's Galer.

Eyeing the future then, we could be driven to work with far more complex and powerful software tools from the start. What we might call the 'core elemental' pieces of ERP (such as inventory management, performance metrics, sales quoting, order fulfillment dashboards etc.) will be assumed to be standard out-of-the box functionality. In this future, ERP customers will start to demand markedly more complex and more widely integrated technical capabilities of their ERP systems.

BASIC CLOUD IS A LEGACY MINDSET

VP of product management at Infor, Rick Rider, says that what quantum computing further represents is a continued movement away from expectation and reality of technology experiences as we know it. From Rider's perspective, when talking to customers, he feels that there is a general consensus that moving to the cloud is a positive, but - for the most part - conversations have stayed in the ballpark of 'lower TCO' and 'no more upgrades'.

"However, even now that's a legacy mindset. Technology will continue to push the envelope and it's early adopters who will reap the benefits of being aggressive with their goals and expectations. The majority of ERP is becoming commoditised and it's developments like quantum computing



**TECHNOLOGY WILL
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RICK RIDER / INFOR

that sharpen this commoditisation drive by providing new ways to solve

seemingly complex problems. Most importantly, it's something to trust and not overcomplicate despite its sci-fi appeal," said Infor's Rider.

"While still early on, what this movement highlights is that CIOs and CTOs can put further emphasis on real-time insights and can begin to aggressively pursue ML-based simulations to create more effective or efficient products. Discovering new ways to pivot business models and processes to match previously unknown outcomes. Quantum will encourage and eventually demand tech leaders to continuously ask more of their systems, rather than facilitating the present," he added.

So through quantum on cloud, we will ultimately witness a democratisation quantum power. Through quantum-powered

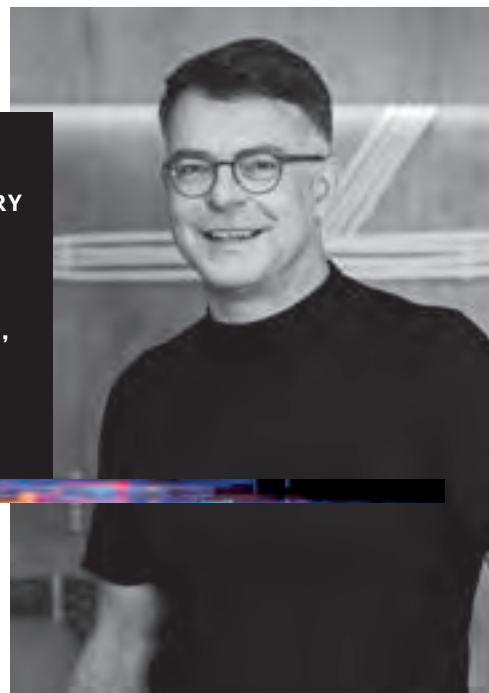
cloud services, every company will be potentially able to gain access to quantum computing. This could be the point at which quantum ERP flourishes and we drive towards massively more complex analytics and scenario planning/modelling, a key benefit (and use case) for ERP systems.

FROM OPERATIONAL ERP TO ANALYTICAL ERP

There's an additional leap to be made here. Given a

quantum boost, we can move from operational-ERP to deeper use of analytical-ERP. We will shift from using ERP technology to drive, manage and maintain operations - and we will leap forward and onward to wider-ranging and deeper level analysis to control and direct business decisions with greater accuracy and with more automation.

"The agenda ahead for the industry looks interesting, covering the latest advances in reinforced learning, deep learning and quantum computing. The advances in AI-powered language recognition are particularly exciting, but I would be more guarded about when we can expect to see quantum ERP applications. In reality we don't even need to use supercomputers for ERP applications, because we can get enough processing power from the



**THE AGENDA
AHEAD FOR THE INDUSTRY
LOOKS INTERESTING,
COVERING THE
LATEST ADVANCES IN
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HOPE

cloud-based systems we have today (and are continuously improving in terms of performance and scalability), said Claus Jepsen, chief technology officer, **Unit4**.

Jepsen points out that, in practical real world terms, we would need to refactor and custom-code our software to run ERP on today's already present supercomputers – all making it difficult to justify the business case. This would most likely be the same for quantum computing. But he says, in the future, there could be a couple of scenarios where quantum visibly improves ERP in specific areas such as facilitating more advanced human-like problem solving.

“For example, in machine learning where you are running massively parallel tasks I could envisage a scenario where quantum computing dramatically increases the sophistication of the problem-solving and would lead to a dramatically different user experience. Quantum computing is often linked to the concept of artificial general intelligence (AGI), but if we could make the costs reasonable it would be possible to envisage AGI-like interactions between users and ERP applications far beyond what is feasible even today,” he said.

Looking ahead, Unit4's Jepsen thinks that justifying the business case for quantum computing could make the argument for 'quantum services' even stronger. It would dramatically improve the performance of enterprise applications and create an infinitely more scalable environment for users to access applications, but users could manage costs on a subscription basis.”

A TOUGH COMPUTATION

It's important that we're not fooled into the wider vendor messages emanating in this space. Every enterprise tech platform company will want a 'share of voice' in the quantum discussion and, perhaps all too often, they

**LET'S REMEMBER,
QUBIT COMPUTING
IS A DIFFICULT
MATHEMATICAL
ENGINE TO APPLY
TO THE MAJORITY
OF WHAT FALLS
UNDER THE ERP
UMBRELLA**

**BRYAN BETTS / FREEFORM
DYNAMICS**



will aim to placate us, the great unwashed, with positive platitudes and upbeat promises of a super-charged computing future. The practical reality of quantum in the ERP space may be a far rounder peg to fit into what is an essentially square hole.

“My expectation is that quantum computing will have little fully-deployed short to medium-term impact on ERP. Let's remember, qubit computing is a difficult mathematical engine to apply to the majority of what falls under the ERP umbrella today,” said Bryan Betts, principal analyst at **Freeform Dynamics**.

“Further challenges exist due to the fact that the timescales involved in ERP aren't your normal business IT ones i.e. ERP is embedded in organisations, it's the foundation they build their operations on, so it runs to longer timescales – and right now, many organisations will already have their hands full migrating their ERP to next-gen platforms.”

Betts does see a couple of bright spots for a quantum ERP future. One is the potential uses for quantum-type work in areas such as route optimisation for logistics and transportation. This area does hold some promise, although it's worth noting that this is only a small part of the overall ERP puzzle. Betts advises that for many

organisations in the logistics sector - except perhaps the largest courier/delivery groups - the high cost of quantum would not be justifiable, so there is work to do in terms of how far quantum cloud services can bring that down.

“Another possible area (although it's only a glimmer so far) is the evolution of 'quantum-inspired computing' as it's known. This is the implementation of concepts such as quantum superposition either in software or in normal silicon - though in specialist chips, naturally. This might overcome the cost issues around niche uses such as quantum route optimisation, say, but it's still not a general solution for ERP in these early days,” added Betts.

In reality, the majority of us will consume quantum power as a quantum cloud service. Where we draw the line between the speed of our web connections to the cloud and the raw backbone of quantum power that lies ferociously gurgling beneath has yet to be fully worked out. Once ERP and its associated business disciplines really start to plug in to quantum, we will know more.

Before we get to a super position in business with quantum ERP, we need to figure out just exactly how we will use quantum superposition to reposition our ERP position. ■

Products are dead Long live Products

WHY SERVISITISATION COULD BE KEY TO POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY

BY MARC AMBASNA-JONES

Manufacturers, such as **Rolls Royce**, which took a reported £4bn hit in 2020, have long been big advocates of servitisation, a process that focusses on selling preferred outcomes, as opposed to individual products. It's a model that has been around for a while but has only really taken off in the last few years. Technologies such as sensors, data collection and analytics have been the catalyst for that increased adoption, with predictive maintenance through machine learning enabling service providers to set outcome targets and meet those goals, delivering in the case of Rolls Royce, engine up-time hours and not just engines.

However, for aerospace firms the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly difficult. Recent financial results from the likes of Rolls Royce, **Pratt & Whitney** and **GE Aviation** paint a grim picture but as Sumair Dutta, industry analyst and director of digital transformation at **ServiceMax** points out, the pandemic has also proved to be a stress-test for servitisation models.

"When demand for travel and engine hours was high, this worked well," says Dutta. "With COVID-driven travel re-

strictions, those models have seen the opposite impact. While the risk transfer has helped the customers, it hasn't necessarily helped the aircraft engine manufacturers. Therefore, there is greater visibility into the risk associated with outcome-based models and safeguards that need to be put in place to allow for the management of that risk."

For those organisations already invested in servitisation models, this is perhaps not such a bad thing. The very nature of servitisation is to play the

long game, to build business around lasting, mutually beneficial relationships rather than just the shorter-term buyer-seller relationship. Any insight into potential risk can be managed and as organisations look to navigate any sort of recovery in the months ahead, this will no doubt help to strengthen the model.

As Sven Denecken, COO S/4HANA and head of product success at **SAP SE** says, more organisations should be looking at servitisation now to improve agility and develop stronger customer ties. Changing business models, which have accelerated as a result of the pandemic are the biggest threat to their business according to Denecken.

"Servitisation can be an effective strategy to prevent companies and their products becoming a commodity and losing relevancy in a more service-led economy," he adds, claiming it can also help to drive differentiation in a competitive marketplace and make it more challenging for competitors to replicate service offerings.

Examples of this include **Philips'** Signify, a holistic lighting solution it calls "light-as-a-service" which includes the conceptualisation, installation, and maintenance of a lighting

SERVITISATION

system, and comes with guaranteed SLAs and cost reduction for electricity. Another example is **Oki's** Managed Print Services and Document Solutions, which includes planning, installation, maintenance and operations. Customers pay for the number of printed pages and archived documents (pay-per-use).

Cultural challenges

For Dutta, the advantages for keeping faith with servitisation are clear, although he admits it may not be for everyone. He says that the real challenge in accepting servitisation comes from within. Can organisations stomach the short-term drop in capital revenue for a longer-term, more assured revenue stream? It requires, he adds, a very mature commercial mindset to accept this switch, which is sometimes referred to as 'swallowing the fish' – a model that outlines the longer-term financial benefits of servitisation. This, of course, may fly in the face of more traditional sales people, for example, who are fed and watered on maximising short-term revenue.

Internal structures based on legacy IT and processes and a more traditional mindset towards product sales and customers' relationships may not be the best breeding ground for servitisation. But this could change. Customers may start demanding it, especially following the COVID-19 experience.

"For the customer, there are several factors that draw them to the servitisation model," says Dutta. "There is often no large capital expense associated with the upfront purchase of equipment and theoretically there is an easier financial relationship where you have an agreement on the payment per



SUMAIR DUTTA / SERVICE MAX

set and the subsequent price of service and parts. Ease of business is a major factor that makes the outcome-based model lucrative to the customer."

It's a view supported by Colin Elkins, VP, Manufacturing Industries at **IFS** who says that one of the key barriers to servitisation is mindset.

"There is often a 'why change' attitude from those that believe they're making a healthy profit today, so why take the risk? This will take some time to overcome, for the most part, because they haven't yet taken the time to analyse and understand where their 'moments of service' are, and therefore where the untapped value in their business is."

Elkins adds that in many cases, this is also combined with a lack of data needed to calculate the 'real' costs, since in a servitisation model the maintenance and repair costs of the product move from the customer to the supplier.

"Legacy IT can make this a very complex issue," adds Elkins. "Organisations are increasingly looking for 'composable' or modular technology that can flex as their business changes and

There is greater visibility into the risk associated with outcome-based models and safe-guards that need to be put in place

outcome. Therefore, there is less negotiation and back and forth between purchasing and the sales organisation around the price of the as-

provide the visibility and capability needed to capitalise on this untapped value, creating new revenue streams through servitisation."

It is the agility that is increasingly attractive to both service organisations and customers, especially those left a little exposed by the pandemic. The key is finding where an outcome-based deal can work best. As Dutta suggests, it doesn't have to be an all or nothing. Organisations can identify an area where servitisation may hold better value and less risk.

"Depending on the asset, or the customer preference, a traditional service model might make more sense, whereas for other customers, an outcome-based model may be preferred," says Dutta. "As customers look to inject a little more flexibility or agility into their business processes and their risk exposure, these models do hold longer-term promise."

Technology change

Of course, as Elkins suggests, the underlying infrastructure within an organisation could make this difficult. If a business really wants to benefit from servitisation, it may mean a complete re-design, in terms of how the business is planned, run and transformed – and that includes how it organises its technology too.

Denecken at SAP breaks it down into three key areas; system scale and performance, billing system upgrades and intelligent data analytics which encompass areas such as IoT and predictive maintenance. There are, he adds some fundamental questions to ask.

"Is the ERP system able to manage the significant increase in the amount



SVEN DENECKEN / SAP SE

Servitisation can be an effective strategy to prevent companies and their products becoming a commodity

of data and transactions that come with a service-based business model?" asks Denecken. "Can analysis/reporting be done quickly and, on the fly, to minimise risk and take action quickly at service level agreements?"

Denecken also talks about the explosion in invoicing volumes due to a service/subscription-based model and asks whether current billing systems can cope with the need to scale? But for most organisations, it is the foray into intelligent data analytics that will demand significant change.

"There is a need to consume, monitor, analyse and predict the large volumes of IoT data from connected products, in order to offer a compelling service-based approach and for the model to be commercially viable," he says. "Naturally this has a significant impact and challenge for the IT teams to manage. The more customers can automate their business processes the better they are able to drive efficiency in their businesses. This also ties into the ability to offer more creative and differentiating services."



COLIN ELKINS / IFS

There is often a 'why change' attitude from those that believe they're making a healthy profit

Circular economy

From a tech point of view, these are not insurmountable challenges but as Dutta at ServiceMax suggests, delivering

outcome-based services requires "a significant integration of incentives, measurements, and operating models across business functions, something that is very difficult to achieve."

Getting the organisational mindset right is essential and there will always be those organisations where old habits die hard but servitisation can give organisations new impetus and direction, something which many may need following the pandemic. This also feeds into thinking around sustainability, building more responsible business models, reducing waste, energy and carbon impact.

As a **World Economic Forum** report on how servitisation could help save

the planet suggested last year, the servitisation model "strongly incentivises the equipment owner – that is, the service provider – to think long-term when designing and selecting the technology. By offering state-of-the-art maintenance, the provider can minimise operating costs, in particular energy use, which is the largest cost component over the life cycle of the equipment."

It should, in theory, lead to better products and services, improved brand reputation and closer relationships with customers. Interestingly, it's the thinking behind Rolls Royce's TotalCare servitisation programme, to 'close the loop on material usage.' As the poster child for servitisation, it will be interesting to watch over the coming months, to see how it helps the business recover and of course, to see whether other manufacturers and suppliers are inspired to change their approach to selling products. However, for the moment at least, servitisation is still some way off being the new normal. ■

What impact will right-to-repair legislation have on servitisation?

Later this year, governments across Europe and the US will start to implement regulations compelling manufacturers to provide maintenance information for products (at this time the regulations are focussed primarily on white goods), so that customers can carry out their own repairs.

Aimed at reducing landfill waste and increasing the length of product lifecycles, the 'right-to-repair' regulations will, for the moment at least

be limited. As Elkins at IFS says, "the immediate impact on servitisation will be zero, as in a servitisation model, the suppliers are selling an outcome/service not a product, so they are responsible for the equipment upkeep not the customer/consumer."

However, Dutta at ServiceMax points out that this could open up the market and actually help accelerate a shift to outcome-based models. He says that customers want to increasingly pick from a range of

service providers based on the cost and speed of service and this could lead to a shift in mindset towards traditional product selling.

"For the service provider, the move to an outcome-based model theoretically eliminates most of the competition as the delivery of outcomes could be contractually tied to the exclusive service relationship between the customer and the service provider," says Dutta. "Any handling of the asset by non-approved parties would lead to a

breach of agreement or penalties for the customer. In a way, the customer is now locked in with the service provider. Where it gets extremely interesting is the impact of these servitised models on the areas of self-service and remote-assisted support, areas that have seen a great deal of investment in the last year. Servitised models will also drive service organisations to formalise their network of 'approved' service partners to ensure the efficient delivery of outcomes."

A HOSPITALITY

TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY



INTO THE UNKNOWN

BY DEBBIE WALTON

After a year of virtually no international travel, the government has finally lifted restrictions and implemented a traffic light system for UK travellers to use at their discretion. Within hours of the announcement, thousands of Britons took to the web to book holidays to the only feasible 'green list' destination – Portugal. News outlets reported that 5,000 British travellers were leaving for Portugal every day, chasing the long-awaited sunshine and freedom to travel. But what is waiting for hotel guests on the other side of the channel remains to be seen. With the arrival of the pandemic and stringent social distancing measures still very much in place, hotel stays as we know it could well be a thing of the past.



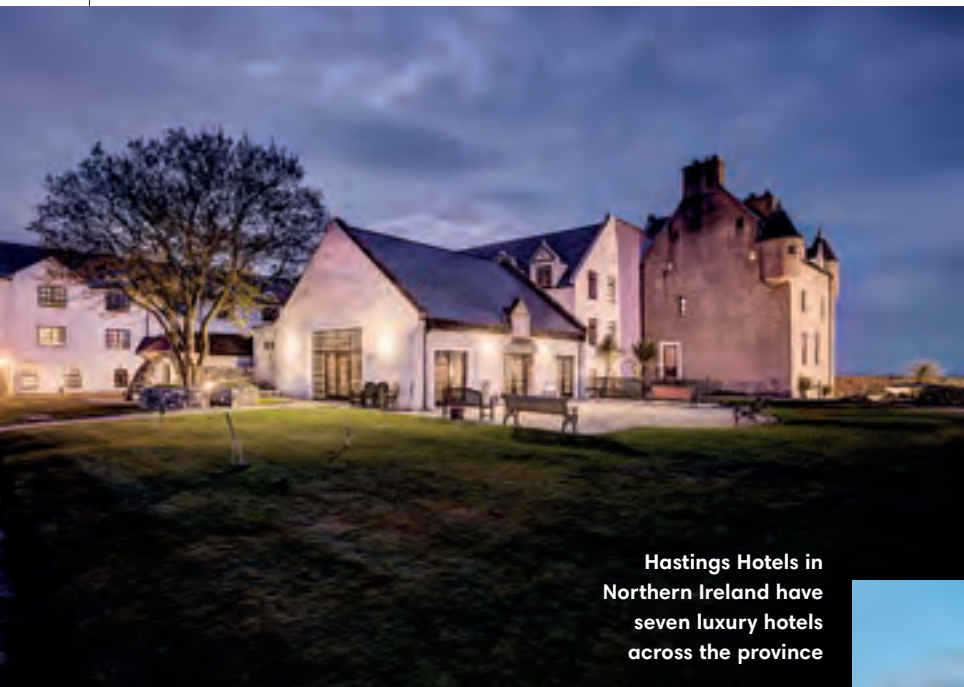
As we emerge from the pandemic, we can expect that the tourism industry won't be business as usual, but through a combination of re-imagining, redeployment and resilience, the hospitality industry has been slowly working towards its anticipated reopening and finally welcoming guests again.

According to Chris Stock at **Percipient**, remote working proved to highlight out-of-date finance solutions and a lack of high-level data that can be used to directly enhance the guest experience. Whilst forced closures were undoubtedly a massive stress for the industry and its staff, it proved to be the perfect time to implement new and robust ERP solutions, supporting a move towards paperless and automated back office systems in a number of Percipient's hospitality clients.

Hastings Hotels is one such example, but while their digital transformation wasn't driven by the arrival of COVID-19, it certainly has prepared them for the reopening of the industry. At the beginning of 2020, Hastings Hotels, the largest independent hotel group in Northern Ireland embarked on a mammoth overhaul of their existing back office systems and processes which involved manual paper-based processes. Paper-based? All financial and HR systems were handwritten in ledgers, cheques were used to pay for all goods and services and all procurement was done via handwritten orders!

Hastings embarked on an in-depth review of the market and selected **Sage Intacct** because of its flexibility, ability to integrate with online banking, property management, procurement, HR/payroll systems and superior management insights. Its ability to scale to support Hastings' business growth was also key to the decision. "We needed a

HOSPITALITY



Hastings Hotels in Northern Ireland have seven luxury hotels across the province



solution which would provide the business with access to in-depth management information in a timely and user-friendly manner, to enable faster, more informed decision making within the business, something which is absolutely crucial in responding to the challenges we face in the current environment. From the outset, Sage Intacct not only met all our core requirements, but it also fulfilled all of our 'nice-to-haves' which is rare in any tender process," said Peter Gibson, finance director, Hastings Hotels.

With much improved visibility and accessibility to better quality data and information, the way the hotel group supports its staff and serves its customers in a post-pandemic environment will only add to the level of service, manageability and profitability.

Gibson explains: "We can slice and dice the data according to hotel or department and identify trends and anomalies across, say food and beverage, housekeeping, spa services or customer service. The availability of these insights on an intuitive dashboard means that minimal skills are needed, but that everyone has up-to-date information from which to perform their role to the best of their abilities. Planning for the future can be tricky at the best of times, never mind in the midst of a global pan-

demic, but through having a clear, accurate picture of our current position, and the ability to be agile and make decisions quickly, we are confident that we're in the best place to plan effectively."

Digital transformations that change the face of hotel stays

Digital transformations across hotel groups since the start of the pandemic have been two-fold. Hotels have identified their shortcomings in terms of back office functions when work-from-home orders were issued; and large hotel groups saw the need to prepare for reopening when guests were allowed back, at limited capacity. Since the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions allowing travel locally and abroad, there has been an uptick in the demand for hotel bookings. With social distancing rules still firmly

in place, what can guests expect during their stay?

According to Calum McIndoe, sales director UK&I at Infor, hotels have offered guest rooms as office space and provided frontline workers with rooms to cut down on their commute times. But many hotels used the downtime to take stock of their current technology, explore new technology and migrate to the cloud.

In October 2020, **Apex Hotels** invested in Infor technology to create a standard platform across its entire property portfolio. The hotel group op-

erates 10 sites across the UK. The project was delivered completely remotely, with no staff on site, whilst being accelerated to beat deadlines before the property had to close temporarily under UK government COVID-19 guidelines. The platform, which comprises Infor Hospitality Management Solution



**WE NEEDED
A SOLUTION
WHICH WOULD
PROVIDE THE
BUSINESS
WITH ACCESS
TO IN-DEPTH
MANAGEMENT
INFORMATION**

PETER GIBSON
HASTINGS HOTELS

(HMS) and Infor Sales and Catering, delivers cloud-based architecture that replaced a legacy system that frustrated the group's plan for growth. Whilst the pandemic flattened the hospitality industry, it also proved perfect timing to stand up unique solutions in a changed service landscape.

Guest and hotel staff safety needs to be front of mind and guest expectations have obviously changed and will change again. These changes will be supported and enabled by investment in emerging technology that will focus on hygienic environments, cloud technology to standardise operations, as well as contactless experiences empowered by mobile solutions such as check in/out, room service, restaurant reservations, and others – all of which can be managed from guests' mobile devices.

"The entire guest journey has changed with a move entirely to mobile devices. Hotels have adopted the 'airline model', for example, where guests will be sent an email with a 'please check in here' format just like airlines do. Similarly in food and beverage, there'll be no ordering from a menu. Because of hygiene concerns – we can't all touch menus now – all ordering of food and drinks will be done on your mobile phone," says McIndoe.

We're familiar with this technology as many pubs and restaurants in

THE ENTIRE GUEST JOURNEY HAS CHANGED WITH A MOVE ENTIRELY TO MOBILE DEVICES

CALUM MCINDOE
INFOR

the UK, for example Fuller's chain of pubs and restaurants have already adopted contactless food and drinks ordering apps. What does this mean for staffing? It's a concern that for now, while the hospitality industry is slowly brought back to life, that government mandated reduced capacity in hotels will mean less staff is



needed. This will unfortunately result in temporary unemployment, but McIndoe believes that this will only be a temporary phenomenon and that the tangible, face-to-face interactions we know and love in the hospitality industry will most certainly return with time.

But it can't be denied that contactless processes have made for a somewhat easier hotel stay for business

travellers and are set to remain. McIndoe says: "Mobile check-in/check-out, digital keys, and the ability to order room service via one's own device perfectly suits the thousands of business travellers who frequent hotels as their guest journey is different to those who are looking for that complete hospitality interaction."

With guest and hotel staff safety in mind, Infor Hospitality Cloud Solutions are designed to address hotel operational needs and while personalisation is important, it is also evolving, and guests are used to relying on their mobile devices to manage their personal experiences. According to McIndoe, hospitality organisations have realised that personalisation is also about managing data

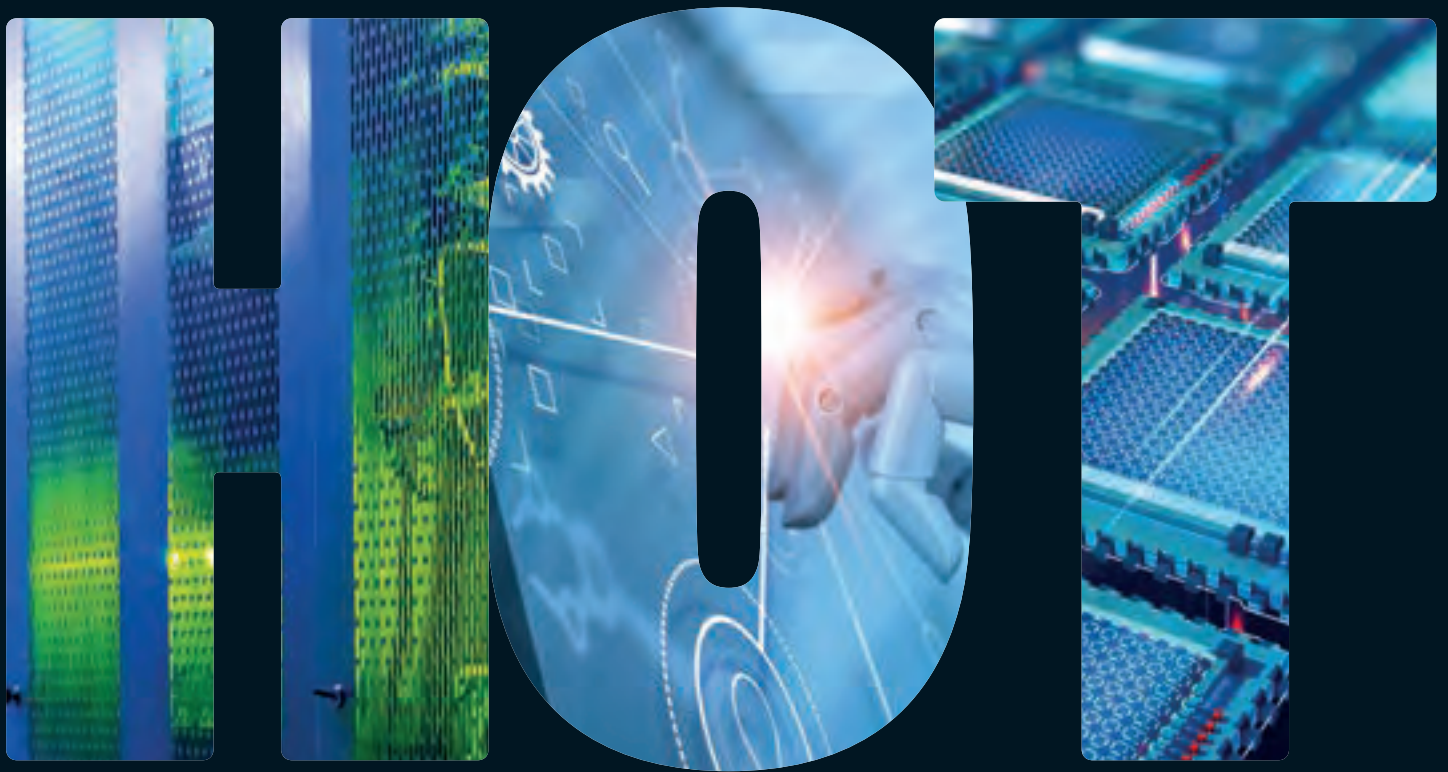
better and turning that data into intelligence to provide services that appeal to an individual's unique needs. Using business intelligence to strengthen customer relationships can only positively impact the bottom line.

COVID-19 has dragged the hospitality industry forward in terms of digitisation and while the pandemic has had a negative effect on it in the last year, the changes being implemented now, although ever-evolving, will be around for some time but promise to bring positive experiences to the guest journey. ■



Restaurants and bars won't operate at full capacity.

AN ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY



FOR 2022

TOP TRENDS LISTS COME AND GO LIKE THE WIND. NO YEAR IS COMPLETE WITHOUT A RAFT OF FUTURISTS AND EVANGELISTS TRYING TO TELL US WHICH NEW BLOCKS OF TECHNOLOGY WE'LL NEED TO FIT INTO OUR STACKS NEXT. SO RATHER THAN PROVIDING YOU WITH A LIST OF USUAL SUSPECT CLICKBAIT TRENDING ITEMS (DID YOU KNOW HYBRID CLOUD AND OPEN SOURCE IS QUITE POPULAR?), ERP TODAY HAS SCOURED THE TECH LANDSCAPE FOR AN ALTERNATIVE LIST OF THE SEVEN 'OTHER' HOT TECHNOLOGIES EVERY GOOD IT PRACTITIONER SHOULD BE CONVERSANT WITH ON THE ROAD AHEAD.



BY ADRIAN BRIDGWATER

HOTLIST

A typical 'what's hot' in the technology industry list would of course include cloud computing, mobile ubiquity, big data analytics, blockchain, robotic process automation (RPA) and perhaps the touchy-feely world of user experience (UX). Let's leave all those items aside as we consider a slightly tangential take on how and where the industry is shaping itself next.

1

HEADLESS TECHNOLOGY

Headless technology is a key driver for the next era of systems development. Not to be confused with a headless system in the traditional sense (that's a computer without a monitor in some form of an embedded system, or a blade server in a rack), headless technology describes a software system where the front-end presentation layer is individually built to exist in separation away from the back-end data and functionality layer.

Headless software could potentially apply to a variety of use cases, but its primary application thus far is in the area of headless content management systems (CMSs). In a traditional CMS, the 'body' is the content repository, and the 'head' is the presentation layer, which is typically a web page. In a headless CMS, the body and head are separated until conjoined via an application programming interface (API) connection for display on any device.

Now that organisations need to deliver content on a wider range of surfaces, a headless approach makes a lot of sense. Users now want content on their smartphone, laptop and tablet, but they also want it on their smartwatch, television, on an in-store kiosk and perhaps soon from their smart toaster too. Headless also has the potential to make ecommerce connections between omnichannel content and online stores more easily, the implications for ERP development are direct.

2

EVERYTHING-AS-AN-API

Widely popularised and discussed, but oft-misunderstood, APIs are the 'glue' that joins different application components to other application services or operating systems. APIs have a required syntax and are implemented by function calls composed of verbs and nouns. API management, integration and development is becoming

a sub-genre all of its own in IT and it is leading us towards the notion of Everything-as-an-API, or EaaAPI if you prefer.

Key target disciplines for API elevation include privacy. The notion of Privacy-as-an-API (PaaAPI) sees software developers provided with a means of bolting on functions such as data privacy vault (that part of an ecommerce application where sensitive user identity, payment transaction and password details might be kept) delivered as an API. Clearly useful for fintech ecommerce applications, PaaAPI means software engineers can focus on app functionality without having to worry about cumbersome and difficult-to-integrate security and compliance functions.

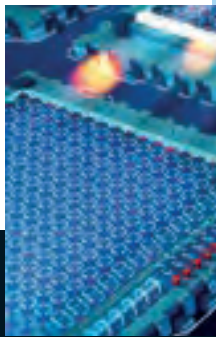
Application security tokenisation, polymorphic encryption and data governance engine management isn't simple at the best of times, so being able to call on those functionalities via an API is the technology proposition at hand here. Onward (or perhaps downwards) from privacy, is where databases go next with APIs. We can already use an API to request records, fields and values from a connected database, but some in the industry want to turn this idea on its head and talk about data as an API. It's a still-nascent area for sure.

3

SERVERLESS TECHNOLOGIES

In the always-changing world of cloud computing, applications need to be eminently flexible. As workload requirements change in line with shifting business demands, applications need to be capable of moving between different cloud instances, each of which may be provisioned and optimised differently. One cloud might be fine-tuned for high volume transactional throughput with gleaming input/output (I/O) credentials, while another might be optimised for storage, memory, core processing functions or big data analytics.

This smorgasbord of infrastructure variety means that software developers need to be able to build cloud-native applications to work on a specific type of cloud backend if they want to achieve optimal performance. Turning the tables on this notion is serverless computing, a software precept where applications are not necessarily provisioned to work on any given server. In a serverless computing deployment, developers and operations teams just build an application 'as is', without worrying about tuning and scaling the



TREND#

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app to a certain heartbeat, because the backend is all taken care of by the cloud services provider.

The rise of serverless, which is sometimes known as Backend-as-a-Service (BaaS), works well in some cases and not in others. It is best suited to applications like single-page web applications on desktop or mobile that need to draw upon large-scale cloud databases and related backend infrastructure services.

mean a whole lot more than programmed alerts, auto-filling forms and saved user or enterprise system preferences. Today we are taking automation from the user interface level down the lower substrate levels of our databases and back up again.

Looking at databases as a case in point, the rise of the autonomous database is not a database that automatically calculates results based upon pre-programmed controls. We are, thankfully, past that point already. Instead, an autonomous database can perform all the self-healing mechanisms it needs in order to keep running 24/7 without the need for human intervention.

The use of autonomous control at the database level means that maintenance tasks such as patching, updates, upgrades, de-duplication and defragmentation can all happen according to a schedule. This reduces the likelihood of human error and opens up human workflow capacity so that data engineers can spend more time on value-add analytics functions and focussing on the minutiae of difficult new integration projects and so on.

As noted, the momentum behind the notion of autonomous everything comes full circle. It extends upwards from the database back through the breadth of our applications layer to enable every technology service we use to adjust its kilter, rectify its balance and normalise its performance based upon defined and codified best practices that form its own programmatic DNA.

TREND#

4

AUTONOMOUS EVERYTHING

In technology circles, automation is evidently key to the way in which applications, data services and higher-level platforms are developing on an annual basis. But automation has come to

HOTLIST

TREND#

5 OBSERVABILITY

Cloud computing is responsible for a plethora of sub-genre trends that have shaped the way the IT industry has evolved over the last couple of decades. Because our cloud resources are essentially virtualised and abstracted away from us, the need for observability technology has grown exponentially.

Rather more than just a sub-genre, observability encompasses everything from monitoring to distributed systems tracing and the alerts functionality needed for users to be able to monitor observability outputs. It is a measure of the internal state of the IT systems that we build based upon a measure of the external outputs that those systems generate.

Actually, emanating from control theory, the observability and controllability of a system are mathematical duals i.e., one is an (approximate if not sometimes exact) equal and opposite function of the other. Because cloud systems are live and typically always-on, observability is an important means for organisations to gain an understanding of the 'in-flight' requests that are happening throughout the live operations of any system in question.

Observability often employs the use of log file analytics. All software creates log files in order to perform the functions it is programmed to execute, so being able to track, aggregate and analyse log files provides us with a clear window into the observability *we need*.



Computational storage is still storage, but it is data storage that has compute CPU processing power located more closely to it. The **Storage Networking Industry Association (SNIA)** defines computational storage as computing architectures that provide computational storage functions (CSF) coupled to storage, offloading host processing or reducing data movement.

This approach is argued to be well suited to Internet of Things (IoT) devices and applications. If we build remote sensors to store data and empower them with the ability to perform computing functions on that data, then we can get even smarter results and functionality back from these smart devices as we build them.

For ERP systems focussed on factory and site facility operations, this technology could provide a boost. But computational storage won't suit all application deployment scenarios, even the ones heavily populated with remote devices. There is increased network complexity to architect, there's the need to create new and updated API connections to some of these devices and there is the need to refactor existing software code to suit this technique.

TREND#

6 COMPUTATIONAL STORAGE

As data becomes an increasingly strategic part of the way businesses operate and manage their ERP systems and wider IT stacks, the question of how and where that data is stored often comes into question. But over and above the need to assess data storage security and robustness, there is now also a question surrounding the characteristics and capabilities that any given chunk of storage is afforded. This is why computational storage is on the rise.

7 PLATFORM ENGINEERING

If you want to look for signs of when the next big thing is about to shake up our technology stacks and drive a new wave of so-called digital transformation, then look at the software engineering job post boards. When you see a new job title that appears to describe a function and role that you didn't know had been established and formalised, then that's a good sign that the tech team is already thinking about it.

But to do this, you'll need to look closely. Beyond the programmer, tester, database operations, sysadmin and even comparatively newfangled DevOps roles, there is a new discipline emerging. This is not the stuff of UX specialists, although that role is also fairly fresh, if not possibly sometimes flaky at the same time. The rise of the 'platform engineer' is here.

Sometimes subsumed into a DevOps role but now increasingly demarcated as a discrete function in and of itself, the platform engineer's role has been fuelled by the advent of microservices, containers and the orchestration engines we use to corral and manage these more precisely definable compute resources.

Among the key roles undertaken by the platform engineer are cloud migrations from on-premise 'server rooms' to cloud service provider (CSP) data centres. This illustrates why platform engineers are not just DevOps professionals; platform engineering means building IT systems that will create platform-level resources for DevOps teams to build and run applications and data services upon.

As the use of APIs and the wider implementation of infrastructure as code continues, platform engineering will continue in the essentially cloud-native form that it was born out of. We have perhaps gone from the PC is the computer, to the network is the computer, then to the web and the cloud is the computer, before finally reaching the point where the platform is the network... and the computer itself is now just a keyboard and screen interface.

So, there you have a selection of killer-app style next-generation emerging technologies. If you want to know what's around the next corner, take in all of the above and then grab a look at the job ads. If your boss sees you, tell them you're doing R&D, they like that kind of thing. ■



The Student

[e]Xper

in Higher Education

Last year in March, ERP Today editor Paul Esherwood wrote a critical article on the dismal attempts at digital transformation in higher education (HE) facilities. Who was to know that a few days after that was published in ERP Today, that the world would be sent into varying degrees of lockdown because of the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that lightning fast digital transformation would be a necessity for most businesses across the globe?

BY DEBBIE WALTON

much like schools and businesses, many universities had to move from in-person to online learning in a matter of days. This happened via **Zoom** and **Microsoft Teams**, like it did in every organisation in the world, including those universities that had not historically promoted or prioritised digital transformation. But for some, however, online learning, student support, and cloud-based back office functions are actually the norm and the student learning experience was largely uninterrupted.

But it's worth defining what exactly is seen as the 'student experience' because it can be viewed in two ways. By and large, the student experience is campus life. It is the way students interact with each other, play sports, have parties and learn. For all intents and purposes then, the student experience of the last year was non-existent. However, considering that the generation of students (customers, in fact) live their lives through mobile devices online, a large part of the student experience has to be about a student's digital experience.

Undoubtedly, COVID-19 has been an accelerator for digital growth, but many highly ranked universities were still teaching in lecture halls with digital learning a mere afterthought. Those universities with commitments to academia and research (often top ranking HE institutions) had little commercial interest in digital transformation – their commitment is to research, not the student experience.

The arrival of COVID-19 though has served to accelerate the transformation of back office systems and purpose-designed curriculums in those facilities that had already begun their transformation implementations; and for those who have been caught holding the bag. It's also cracked open the vendor competition because now HE facilities are jumping on the transformation band wagon because of the obvious commercial opportunities digital transformation can bring to the institution.

But the focus here really should be on those universities that have taken great strides in transforming the outdated and clumsy systems that take manpower away from serving actual customers – the students.

One such university is the **University of Greenwich**. Well-

ience



HIGHER EDUCATION

known for being a World Heritage Site and housing architecture by Christopher Wren, Greenwich should now be known for their partnership with **Namos Solutions** and implementing **Oracle's** Human Capital Management system in 11 months – on time and on budget. With 2,900 members of staff and 40,000 students, Greenwich prides itself on being forward thinking and ambitious. As we know, many ERP projects have been plagued with high costs, missed deadlines and some even complete implementation failure. Higher education digital transformations have also fallen victim to old school legacy leadership that have neither the inclination nor the know-how to stand up technical systems. But not Greenwich. They had buy-in from the top, where it counts, and believed that the key success factors were simple: a trusted implementation partner in Namos Solutions that shared the same values of professionalism and expertise, and a 'one team' approach to overcoming challenges together.

"Like many organisations, The University of Greenwich had developed their existing HR payroll system over a number of years. The existing system, Oracle E-Business Suite had a wealth of data, a plethora of customisations and a host of dependent systems. However, unlike the maritime wonders that Greenwich is so associated with, this system had become a 'creaky ship' under the weight of that history," said Richard Clayton, Namos managed services director.

What Greenwich really needed was a complete HR solution that would provide a manageable and intuitive user experience that would streamline and systemise to eliminate time-consuming manual

processes and one that would increase insights into the workings of the university and its business. The benefits of the project were aligned to the mission of the university, and that was to transform staff and student lives through inspired teaching and research.

By migrating its current HR systems to Oracle HCM Cloud, Greenwich believed it would be able to transform processes and in doing so, inspire enhanced employee and student experience and empower its human resources team. Slicker systems equal faster administration processes.

But how do enhanced HR and payroll systems better the student experience? The indirect link here is that a more streamlined back office system frees up the time and energy of support staff and allots more time to the service of their customers – the students – instead of fumbling through data



RICHARD CLAYTON
NAMOS
SOLUTIONS

They had buy-in from the top, where it counts, and believed that the key success factors were simple: a trusted implementation partner that shared the same values of professionalism

and manual registration, application and financial systems.

There is a direct link too. Sponsored students who work for the university are managed through the student worker/job portal and the new HR implementation underpins the management thereof, including UK visa laws. The HR system has streamlined this process and ensures that students are paid on time and that they are legally allowed to live, work and study in the UK.

What seems to be a major drive for digital transformations here in the UK is their commercial value – not what they cost, but how much revenue they can bring into the institution. Vendors aren't making a beeline to HE institutions because here there are only around 160 institutions to target

whereas across the pond in the United States there are more universities than you can shake a stick at. America is always bigger and better and while **Barton Community College** in rural Kansas isn't huge (they have around 7,000 students) their digital footprint is enormous!

"We're in the middle of nowhere and we really have to be creative in terms of how we draw in our students!" says Michelle Kaiser, assistant dean of information services.

barton Community College is the poster child for digital transformation and student experience in that they were business as usual in the harshest of COVID-19 restrictions. Because of the layout of their state-of-the-art tech-infused classrooms, in-person learning was able to continue throughout the pandemic in the active learning class-

rooms, and learning pods because of their fusion learning ideology. Barton, and their chosen cloud infrastructure partner **Ellucian**, based in San Francisco, has had a long-standing and fruitful partnership for 27 years. Ellucian cloud solutions for HE introduce new innovations regularly and believe in walking side by side with their partners.

"Ellucian pulls us along in terms of digital innovations, but they're also willing to collaborate with us. For example, we needed to run important updates to the online learning portal and Ellucian informed us that they'd run the updates on a Friday afternoon. Based on data we have been able to gather from cloud analytics we were able to tell them that the best time to run updates is when students aren't

Based on data we have been able to gather from cloud analytics we were able to tell them that the best time to run updates is when students aren't online – and that's a Saturday night

MICHELLE KAISER
BARTON
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



online – and that's a Saturday night and early hours of a Sunday morning!" says Kaiser.

Barton's custom-designed self-service banner on their desktop and mobile apps epitomise the digital student experience. The dashboard includes access to check exam and test results, class schedules, quick educational videos, and provides the ability to communicate with lecturers and instructors through an online portal.

This is the kind of mutually beneficial partnership that all ERP vendors should have with their customers. It will certainly contribute to the success of difficult and often traumatic digital transformations.

Mid-market sized business is HE business

Universities are commercially considered mid-market ERP enterprises and for this reason Unit4's next-generation intelligent ERP solution that is built specifically for mid-market, people-centric organisations, suits HE institutions. The complete product suite, including ERPx supports organisational growth and delivers automation and control across the entire student lifecycle. It's purpose-built and agile;

it's a responsive cloud platform that promises to optimise the flow of information throughout the institution, enabling staff to spend more time focussed on

delivering high quality education and student services.

As mentioned previously, there are universities that are academically committed and not commercially committed to the student experience. In a world where Generation Zs live almost completely digitally, one has to wonder if old, stuffy institutions whose degrees some covet are truly committed to education. How are they connecting to their students if they don't give them access to a digital experience on campus? **Global Banking School (GBS)** is not one of those schools. GBS is a higher education provider offering a range of industry-focussed courses across six campuses in London, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds. They work in partnership with several leading UK universities to deliver vocational, undergraduate, and postgraduate programmes. In April of this year GBS selected Unit4's complete product suite, including ERPx to digitally transform their existing solutions.

GBS needed a new digital platform with industry-native functionality and the ability to reflect changes quickly and effectively to future-proof (pandemic-proof) the school while catering for their expected large increase in students.

By implementing Unit4's modern ERP and integrated systems, GBS will benefit from a wealth of modern, future-proofed and purpose-built solu-

tions that will span the entire institution. The suite will include the opportunity to greater personalise and digitise student and teacher services and what's more, the entire stu-

dent lifecycle from admissions to academics and finance and billing, will be automated and improved.

"Education is a right for all who seek to learn a new skill or specialist trade, and now more than ever it is important that institutions are enabled with the tools they need for student success," said Chris Richards, regional president, UK&I, Unit4. "We live in a fast-changing world, and higher education organisations such as GBS are under pressure to deliver everything from a seamless student experience to demonstrating value and providing transparency, at the same time as reducing administration. With a purpose-built higher education solution, Unit4 is the ideal partner to help GBS transform and modernise their operations, add strength and agility to their planning processes and help them to grow and be successful."

More good news

There is suddenly an uptick in online programme management companies that assist universities to produce quality online content, help them take it to market and therefore increase commercial potential for their partners.

The arrival of COVID-19 has lit a fire under those HE institutions who are behind the curve – and there are a lot of them. But the intent is there and whether they're only one step into the journey of transforming their digital student experiences, they're one step closer to success. ■



CHRIS RICHARDS
UNIT4

Education is a right for all who seek to learn, and now more than ever it is important that institutions are enabled with the tools they need for student success

On Today's Menu

MY RECIPE FOR SUCCESSFUL ERP AND OUTSOURCING

BY HUGH SCANTLEBURY

It might sound strange at first, but I'd say when you're thinking about the best way to integrate ERP as part of your business' broader strategy, it's worth taking a leaf out of a top chef's recipe book. Look for an ERP solution that will blend with your other systems and complement your business's different aspects. Read the menu carefully, check for allergens like low R&D, poor client management and off-target KPIs.

Like the best cooking, ERP solutions should deliver on fusion and balance, not confusion and discord! Give some thought to the fact that when planning to implement an ERP solution, just like baking a loaf of bread, you have to get the science and the maths right before you can start thinking about being creative, trying new shapes and flavours. And just like cooking — it's always easier to begin cautiously if you're experimenting with different flavours and textures. Delia Smith's adage about salt and seasoning, "you can always add more but can't take it out," holds true when we're talking about ERP too. Be careful what you throw into the mix because it can be hard to untangle unwanted ERP technology from your wider IT set up if it doesn't ultimately fit the bill.

My advice has always been to carefully consider your product and supplier in terms of their implementation methodology. Don't try and do everything. Thinking again about the cookery metaphor — sometimes just a couple of well-chosen spices can make a dish sing. By contrast, throw in half your spice drawer, and you could end up with a very bizarre concoction.

Don't get side-tracked and imagine that ERP isn't relevant if you're adopting a cloud-first strategy. ERP is as important today as it's always been, but its deployment has evolved. While the more traditional practice of operating on-site, single, monolithic ERP platforms for several tasks is still very much used by large corporations, the last decade has seen the introduction of a more decentralised approach to ERP software. **Gartner** first coined



Don't get side-tracked and imagine that ERP isn't relevant if you're adopting a cloud-first strategy

the phrase 'Postmodern ERP' to define this more flexible technology infrastructure. I tend to think of it like more informal dining! While primarily driven by the advent of cloud computing, you can host postmodern ERP systems on-premise, in the cloud, or hybrid environments. It all depends on your organisation's needs.

Consider whether outsourcing, insourcing or shared services are best for your business. Do you need to hire a chef to cater at home for your big celebratory meal, should you go to a restaurant, or do you have what it takes to accept the challenge yourself? There are no wrong answers here, and neither are there when thinking about ERP. This will very much depend on what the business need is and your skillset. Outsourcing to consolidate multitudinal low cost and low-risk processes, for example, can be a good thing. So long as your outsourcing partner offers the opportunity to work with capable providers that can deliver a tangible benefit.

Don't underestimate the importance of finding an ERP partner that fits your company's culture and strategy — and understands the market in which you operate. Ask them about their partners so you understand the complete IT ecosystem in which they operate — and the experience they can pull in as they grow and develop. These days, very few people would go to a restaurant without reading at least a couple of online reviews. One can usually swat up the individual chefs at your chosen restaurant too — many of them have their own **Instagram** and social media channels! Take a few moments to learn about their signature dishes and decide if they'll be able to cater for your tastes before you take that all-important first bite. And while we're talking bites — remember to take things at your own pace. Don't bite off more than you can chew and leave yourself with ERP-induced indigestion. ■

Hugh Scantlebury, CEO and co-founder, Aquila

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