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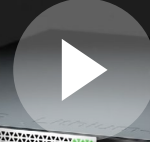
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Offering certainty in a world of chaos

▶ WHILE THE Heathrow Airport power outage blame game continues – there seems little doubt that the business continuity/disaster recovery (BC/DR) plan was not as robust as imagined.

A timely warning to businesses of all shapes and sizes to re-examine their own BC/DR plans and, in particular, to question many assumptions on which it might currently rely – especially when it comes to third party involvement. In particular, risk assessments will need to understand the cost of taking extra measures to remain in businesses set against the, however unlikely, costs of being out of businesses for several hours, if not days. SLAs might need to be gone through with a fine toothcomb – service providers are unlikely to put themselves on the hook for any major compensation.

Fast forward a few days and it seems that significant US government figures were comfortable using a mobile phone app that, regardless of its own security guarantees, was not immune to a classic human error of copying in an individual who had no business to be so included. I suspect most, if not all of us, have done something similar over the course of our careers (the 'reply all' button allied to some disparaging comments about one of the individuals in the group being a classic example of how things can easily go wrong - of which I have been guilty – hence I do now double and triple check who I am actually emailing these days!).

In the US government example, a less scrupulous unauthorised recipient of the conversation trail could have done some serious damage to a military operation with who knows what consequences...never mind the European-directed insults which won't have improved geopolitical relations – all in all, a bit more than a 'glitch'! Nevertheless, this episode is a second timely reminder of just how easily the best laid security and wider businesses rules and protocols can fail to account for human stupidity (let alone maliciousness) – with danger to the organisation where the security breach occurred, along with damage to partner and customer relations.

Whether or not there is a third high profile shambles on the horizon, or maybe has already occurred by the



time you read these words, there can be little doubt that organisations are increasingly looking for help to address their increasingly complex and crucial IT and data centre infrastructure needs. They recognise their own shortcomings and likely inability to think of all the possible threats to their business, but know that, in an increasingly chaotic world, they need to be able to rely on the security, integrity and performance of the applications on which they rely so heavily in the digital world.

The MSPs, MSSPs and other channel companies who can provide this level of dependability will be heavily in demand in the coming months and years. Enterprises of all shapes and sizes are looking for better customer service, more reliable applications and IT solutions, more accountability and an all-round level of professionalism that is, sadly, still all too rare in the business world.

Time to decide whether you want your own organisation to remain in the 'mediocre' middle ground (and mediocre is the norm, so it's not a bad place to be!) or move forwards to become a channel leader.



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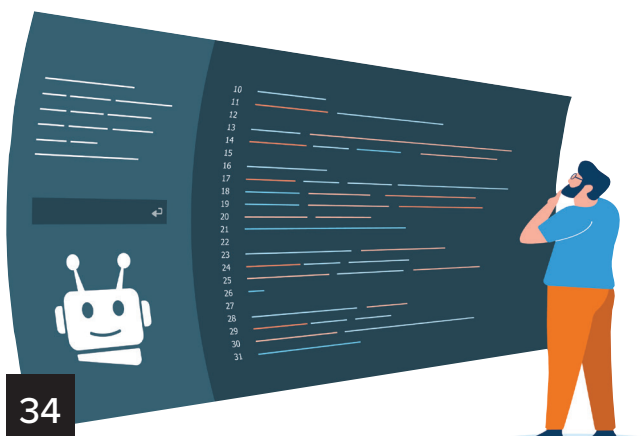
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Current state of workplace IT impedes AI productivity benefits

Workplace research finds employee productivity a top priority, though current systems sorely lacking.

A NEW Lenovo global survey of 600 IT leaders reveals that while 79% of respondents believe AI will allow employees to focus on more impactful work, less than half feel their current digital workplace solutions adequately support productivity, engagement, and innovation. Only 36% believe their systems support employee engagement “very effectively” -- while a staggering 89% say organizations must first overhaul their digital workplace to fully unlock AI’s potential. Reinventing Workplace Productivity explores the opportunities and challenges that Generative AI presents for the future of work, highlighting the urgent need for digital workplace transformation to ensure its successful adoption.



Unlocking AI’s potential for greater productivity and engagement

The report highlights that Generative AI will be a game-changer for collaboration, creativity, and productivity, outlining several key areas where AI can positively impact organizations:

- **Enhanced Collaboration:** AI-powered tools such as virtual co-authoring and real-time translations break down barriers, enabling seamless teamwork across geographies and languages.
- **Creative Empowerment:** By automating repetitive tasks, AI frees

employees to focus on more strategic and innovative work, driving creative problem-solving.

- **Productivity Boosts:** AI-driven insights streamline workflows, improve efficiency, and accelerate day-to-day operations.

Nearly half (49%) of IT leaders surveyed say that creating a productive and engaging employee experience (EX) is their top priority for the year ahead. This echoes IDC research commissioned and published by Lenovo last month – its global 2025 CIO Playbook, It’s Time for AI-nomics, found that improving employee productivity is this year’s top business priority.

Roadblocks: Personalization and adoption barriers

Despite the urgent need to transform the digital workplace around AI, several key challenges remain in its widespread adoption:

- **Personalization Gaps:** While 63% of IT leaders surveyed agree that a highly personalized digital workplace is essential, a lack of configurable devices and applications remains a top barrier. This one-size-fits-all approach leaves employees underserved.
- **Support Automation:** 61% of IT leaders acknowledge the need for AI-driven IT support automation, but many organizations still struggle to integrate these systems effectively.

Lenovo’s vision for an AI-driven future

Entering a new era of Gen AI-powered personalisation, employees need to be able to think, create, and collaborate without disruption. Today’s digital workplace needs to provide hyper-personalized settings catering to the diversity of working styles, enabling companies to make the best use of their talent, while bolstering productivity.

This is not just about devices and software, the IT support that employees rely on should also be tailored to their specific requirements and abilities. To fully leverage AI’s potential, Lenovo advocates embedding generative AI into core business operations as part of a broader digital workplace transformation strategy.

“Transforming your workplace is essential to using AI effectively. Simply automating existing workflows will only yield incremental benefits. AI changes the rules of productivity, but to realize its potential, IT leaders must work alongside their executive teams to rethink how AI can augment their organisation’s value-creation levers and competitive differentiation,” said Rakshit Ghura, VP and General Manager of Digital Workplace Solutions, Lenovo. “AI must be seamlessly integrated into core operations, creating a personalized and efficient digital workplace that enhances the employee experience and drives long-term productivity.”

Core recommendations

The report provides three recommendations for businesses looking to harness AI in the workplace:

- **Simplify and personalize the employee experience:** Tailor tools, workflows, and experiences to individual roles, ensuring maximum productivity and innovation.
- **Automate IT Processes:** Use Gen AI to efficiently manage devices and meet diverse employee needs, freeing up resources for higher-value tasks.
- **Transform workflows for value creation:** Rethink existing workflows and processes to fully capitalise on Gen AI’s capabilities and drive innovation.

Generative and agentic AI set to transform customer service

With less than half of consumers happy with the service they receive and only 16% of agents satisfied with their roles, AI-led transformation can unlock significant commercial potential; but customers still want a 'human factor'.

ALTHOUGH most consumers say customer service is pivotal in shaping their perception of a brand, less than half (45%) express overall satisfaction with the service they receive. This discrepancy highlights a significant opportunity for brands to enhance their customer service and foster greater loyalty. The Capgemini Research Institute's latest report, 'Unleashing the value of customer service: The transformative impact of Gen AI and Agentic AI', finds that generative AI (gen AI) and agentic AI are emerging as key tools for organizations to make a transformative shift, elevating customer service to a strategic value driver.

However, whilst virtual agents are favored for their speed and convenience, consumers overwhelmingly prefer human agents for their empathy and creative problem-solving skills. This indicates that the future of customer service will require a strategic blend of human and virtual agents, enhanced by gen AI and agentic AI.

Customer service remains one of the most powerful tools for driving purchases, encouraging loyalty, and shaping brand perception. In fact, according to the report, almost 60% of consumers view customer service as extremely important in shaping their perception of a brand. However, there's a need to overhaul the function as both consumers and customer service agents are currently dissatisfied, with only 16% of agents reporting overall satisfaction with their roles, and a majority (65%) of executives admitting low operational efficiencies. "With over half of consumers prepared to leave a brand due to poor customer service, even if their purchase is good, business leaders now recognize that exceptional customer service

is no longer a luxury but a strategic imperative," said Franck Greverie, Chief Portfolio & Technology Officer and Group Executive Board Member at Capgemini. "Organizations are navigating multiple headwinds, including a lack of call center agent engagement, poor coordination between departments, and outdated legacy systems. Reimagining customer service with gen AI requires businesses to transform their digital solutions, operating model and data foundations; leaders who embrace this change will not only enhance customer satisfaction and operational efficiency but also unlock commercial opportunities for competitive edge in the market." Most organizations have implemented or are exploring gen AI and it's already a gamechanger

According to the research, 86% of organizations have already implemented gen AI, initiated pilots, or started exploring its potential in their customer service functions. The report states that this transformative technology will be key to overcoming multiple challenges, including addressing key customer pain points, improving agent experience and enhancing operational inefficiencies. Notably, most consumers place a high priority on effective and speedy issue resolution, yet a significant number feel they do not regularly receive it. Prompt responses are also important but often lacking. Among the organizations using gen AI, almost 9 in 10 are either already seeing improved first contact resolution rates or expecting to see this benefit in the future. Similarly, most (89%) are seeing or expecting faster response times, as well as benefiting from or expecting higher agent productivity (85%), and similar proportions are experiencing or anticipating reduced operating costs.



Together, human and virtual agents could provide a seamless blend of empathy and efficiency.

According to the report, most consumers (71%) feel that chatbots have improved in quality over the past 1–2 years. With the rapid acceleration of gen AI, there are notable advancements in understanding context, human emotion, and responding with empathy. Whilst chatbots are valued for speed and convenience, over 70% of consumers prefer human agents for empathy and creative problem-solving. However, this preference varies by age, with younger consumers showing greater inclination towards chatbots and older consumers preferring human agents. Consequently, the traditional customer service function is expected to evolve into a CX center, operated by hybrid teams of human and AI agents. Less than half of organizations are fully prepared for AI-powered customer service.

Despite its strategic importance, only 49% of organizations consider themselves prepared for offering AI/gen AI-powered customer service, indicating the need for a critical shift in operating model, transformation of digital solutions and uplift of their data foundation. Without these building blocks in place, organizations could fail to fully leverage AI as a key transformation lever concludes the report.

Talent shortage concerns drive shift to skills-based strategies

Workday has released “The Global State of Skills”, revealing a pressing challenge for businesses worldwide: More than half (51%) of business leaders are worried about future talent shortages, and only 32% are confident their organisation has the skills needed for long-term success.

As AI transforms industries, the skills required to thrive in the workforce are evolving fast. However, many organisations lack visibility into the existing capabilities of their people – only 54% of leaders say they have a clear view of the skills within their workforce today.

This growing uncertainty is exposing the limitations of traditional talent management approaches that focus on job titles, degrees, and previous companies worked for. In response, organisations are accelerating a shift to skills-based talent strategies, which prioritise an individual’s capabilities over traditional credentials and provide a more agile, data-driven approach to hiring, developing, and deploying talent.

Key Findings:

- Skills-based strategies are no longer a “future of work” concept – they’re a competitive advantage. 81% of leaders agree that adopting a skills-based approach drives economic growth by improving productivity, innovation, and organisational agility.
- The movement is already underway. More than half (55%) of organisations worldwide have begun the transition to a skills-based talent model, with an additional 23% planning to start this year.
- Beyond business impact, skills-based strategies can help close opportunity gaps. Leaders cite increased access to job opportunities for employees (82%), higher workforce equity (72%), and lower unemployment (61%) as key benefits.

AI boosts the shift to skills-based talent management

AI is both a catalyst for and an enabler of this shift. While the rise of AI is

transforming jobs, it is also helping organisations build more agile, skills-driven workforces. According to the research, AI is playing a pivotal role in the transition by:

- Streamlining routine and repetitive tasks (52% of leaders agree)
- Enhancing decision making with data-driven insights (52% of leaders agree)
- Personalising learning and development programmes (47% of leaders agree)
- Predicting future skills needs (45% of leaders agree)

“At Ferring, we are committed to a culture of continuous learning where employees can connect with new skills, opportunities and projects that align with their ambitions,” said Lynn Van Oossanen, Global Head of People Solutions, Ferring Pharmaceuticals. “With AI-powered technology, we can now identify skills gaps in real-time, enabling employees to seek out growth opportunities while helping managers connect with the right talent more effectively.”

AI is accelerating, but human skills remain irreplaceable

While technical skill sets are in high demand, today’s research highlights an equally critical need for uniquely human skill sets. Social skills like communication and teamwork, and individual skills like resilience and creativity are listed as the most impactful skill gaps in organisations today, followed by digital fluency, including AI and software proficiency.

This aligns with findings from Workday’s “Elevating Human Potential: The AI Skills Revolution” report, which found that relationship-building, empathy, conflict resolution and ethical decision-

making are critical for success in an AI-driven economy.

“AI is reshaping the workplace, but the human element has never been more essential,” said Chris Ernst, Chief Learning Officer, Workday. “Organisations that embrace a skills-first mindset will not only unlock AI’s potential but also harness human ingenuity in new and transformative ways.”

challenges to adoption – and the path forward

- Despite the momentum behind skills-based strategies, business leaders cite several key challenges:
- The time required to reskill employees (43%)
- Resistance to change (38%)
- Lack of infrastructure to support skills-based talent management (28%)
- Inadequate skills measurement tools (28%)

Technology alone isn’t the solution, the research finds. Overcoming these challenges requires a shift in mindset – one that includes clear communication of the benefits (48%) and effective change management (48%) to drive adoption across organisations.

The future of talent is skills-first

For years, skills-based talent strategies were seen as an aspiration. Today, thanks to AI and data-driven insights, they are a business imperative. We believe organisations that embrace this shift will not only outmaneuver the competition but also future-proof their workforce in an era of rapid transformation. As the relationship between AI and human talent deepens, the skills movement will only accelerate, creating a smarter, more resilient and more inclusive world of work.

Significant growth opportunity for global MSPs with cybersecurity leading the way

Research highlights key disruptive trends including the buildout of true cyber resilience, as well as compliance, co-managed, and AI.

N-ABLE has published its second annual MSP Horizons Report in partnership with leading channel analyst firm, Canalys. The report—which summarizes the top findings from research with MSPs across the globe—reveals a sharp projected uptick for managed services growth driven by a number of key factors, including the maturity of cybersecurity services. The increasingly successful “MSP 3.0” model underscores the importance of focusing on long-term opportunities vs. short-term wins to drive both scalability and profitability.

Robin Ody, MSP Analysis Practice Lead, Canalys (now part of Omdia) shared, “The IT managed services market is expected to be worth an estimated US\$610 billion by the end of 2025, with channel partners contributing approximately 98% of that revenue. Managed service providers are operating at a time of significant change, both in the demand from customers and the competition from fellow channel partners. This is having a big impact on the managed services business model, affecting the services partners provide and the ways they package these capabilities.

The forward-looking partner today is focusing on those specializations that will provide the most value to the customer and help them remain competitive: cybersecurity, cloud, AI, risk management, compliance monitoring, and vertical capability.”

Key Findings Include:

- Growth outlook overwhelmingly positive for MSPs
- 59% of MSP respondents expect to grow overall revenue by 20% or more in 2025.

Almost 40% of respondents expect more than 20% managed services profit

growth in 2025. Key growth factors include a bigger focus on endpoint, powerful cybersecurity and compliance tailwinds, co-managed expansion, and automation levers—including AI.

The top challenges to growth include new customer acquisition and upskilling staff.

- Cybersecurity force factor continues to strengthen
- Cybersecurity managed services sales growth is expected by 90% of respondents in 2025, up from 80% in the previous year’s report.

Security-related services represent the top four most important contributors to managed services revenue over the next three years, with third-party MDR topping the list of new services MSPs are planning to add. The most in demand future managed backup and disaster recovery services are SaaS application backup (53%) and AI-powered backup and recovery (51%). Cyberthreat complexities, compliance requirements, and data breach liability concerns by partners and customers top the list for fueling cybersecurity growth.

“A central theme of this year’s report is cyber resilience and a constant trend remains: cybersecurity is a key revenue driver,” said John Pagliuca, N-able President and CEO. “Conversations with MSPs worldwide make it clear that the line between IT operations and security operations has blurred. The leading MSPs differentiate themselves by addressing security across the entire attack lifecycle: from protection and detection to response and recovery. When it comes to cybersecurity, ‘good enough’ is no longer good enough.”

- AI adoption is maturing with more attention to governance and risk management
- Only 6% of respondents are not



using any generative AI.

- 40% have generated data governance rules and designed guidelines for human oversight.

The biggest AI use cases are for building workflow automations and automating the sales and ticketing process. M&A is now back on the agenda 90% of those surveyed are interested in M&A, with specific growth tactics (acquiring new skills and/or regions) the main motivator—up from 44% last year. M&A drivers include the determination to improve competitiveness via expansion into new regions, verticals, or other niches.

Cloud modernization is in full swing

On-premises will always have a place but modern MSPs are cloud-first for software and infrastructure according to the findings.

However, concerns remain with security/compliance cited by 40% and cost control by 38%.

“There is all sorts of value in the MSP Horizons Report,” said John Joyce, Owner, CRS Technology Consultants. “I feel that we have a pretty good sense of what’s going on in the industry. But to see things distilled down to numbers and to see the feedback from the sample group reflecting what we’re seeing is a powerful validation.”

IT professionals suffering from burnout

Almost three quarters (73%) of European IT professionals have experienced work-related stress or burnout.

THE WELLBEING of European IT professionals is at risk, as almost three quarters (73%) have reported experiencing work-related stress or burnout. That's according to new research from ISACA, the leading global professional association helping individuals and organisations in their pursuit of digital trust.

This work-related stress is manifesting in different ways, with three in five (61%) citing a heavy workload as a contributor, as well as tight deadlines (44%) and lack of resources (43%). Nearly half (47%) found that difficult or unsupportive management were impacting workplace wellbeing. Alongside these internal issues, external challenges including the wider skills gap in the sector mean that more work is being placed on the shoulders of existing staff.

Nearly half (45%) of European IT professionals decided to pursue a job in the sector because they enjoy the problem solving and creativity aspect, and 47% choose to remain in their current job because they find it to be interesting. Working in IT also offers good career development, with over two thirds (68%) of professionals surveyed having had a salary increase or promotion within the last two years. But for those looking to enter the sector, it can prove difficult - 30% of IT professionals said that specialised skills required for specific IT areas is the third highest challenge in Europe.

Chris Dimitriadis, Chief Global Strategy Officer at ISACA, said: "With skilled employees in such high demand, it is in companies' best interests and simply the right thing to do to make sure the tech workforce feels supported, motivated, and invested in. Younger IT professionals are switching jobs at a much higher rate, highlighting the need for better retention strategies, including clear career growth pathways



and a focus on work-life balance. At the same time, experienced professionals must be given the support they need to stay engaged and continue contributing their expertise. A balanced, well-supported workforce is key to sustaining the industry's growth and innovation."

Another frustration for a quarter of IT professionals (24%) is a lack of mentorship or guidance when entering the sector. Only 15% of European IT professionals have a mentor at all. This is despite over three quarters (76%) feeling that good mentors or role models are important to them. That's not to say that progress hasn't been made in the sector more broadly. European IT professionals recognise the benefit of qualifications in furthering their development - 90% have participated in certifications to advance their career, and almost three quarters (74%) said that their employer provides or pays for certifications as part of their career development.

Although these are steps are in the right direction, for as long as the cyber skills gap continues to create wellbeing issues, hiring the right staff and providing mentorship and career development opportunities will be key to building a productive and satisfied workforce.

Sarah Orton, UK and Europe lead for ISACA's SheLeadsTech initiative, said: "It's clear that those working in the IT

sector enjoy their roles but are being stretched to their limits by the persistent skills gap, underfunding, and a rapidly evolving and demanding sector. "There are practical steps businesses can take - by creating mentorship programmes, investing in training and certifications, and establishing more accessible entry-level programmes, they will relieve common pain points and improve areas of employee fulfilment and satisfaction. With this kind of support, businesses can build a more motivated, productive, inclusive and equitable workforce - in turn building cyber resilience."

UK SMEs will increase reliance on Managed Security Services Research reveals and ranks the top reasons SMEs are purchasing cyber security services. These include the need for specialist support to manage increasingly complex cyber security solutions and the requirement to demonstrate legal, industry-specific and regulatory compliance.

UK SMEs are set to increase their reliance on managed security services during 2025, according to independent research from Six Degrees, the secure, integrated cloud services provider. Two-thirds said they will be more reliant over the next 12 months - with 80% stating this is a good thing. Just 13% said they would be less reliant, while 19.5% said they would maintain the same level of reliance.

Findings from Mapping the UK SME Cyber Security Landscape in 2025 go on to show the country's SMEs are most likely to purchase managed security services because they lack the specialist skills to manage increasingly complex cyber security solutions (37%). That's followed by the requirement to meet compliance directives, industry regulations and/or legal requirements (36%).

IT Trends Report highlights the rise of the IT generalist

78% of IT professionals report work stressors prevent them from upskilling; integrating AI and automation seen as critical to attracting, supporting, and retaining IT talent.

AUVIK has released the results of its 2025 IT Trends Report, an annual analysis of the current state of the IT sector based on feedback from internal IT and MSP professionals surveyed on top trends and challenges impacting IT teams. This year's survey - titled "Why IT is long on challenges but short on time," reveals that stress and burnout are approaching all-time highs amidst the Baby Boomer retirement era, underscoring the critical need for AI and automation solutions and giving rise to the IT generalist.

Rise of the IT Generalist: IT pros asked to do more

IT teams continue to navigate challenges associated with a shortage of skilled workers, giving rise to the "IT generalist" – IT professionals who must possess knowledge across a very broad range of IT functions due to the talent gap, tool sprawl, and evolving technology. According to survey respondents, the heaviest burden of work is currently falling on the most senior employees. IT professionals with more than 10 years of experience and the Baby Boomer generation experience the longest work weeks. A generational disparity in the workload is rapidly exacerbating issues around burnout, since as many as 10,000 Baby Boomers will turn 65 and retire every single day between now and 2030, leaving even more work for remaining IT employees.

Already, 60% of IT professionals expressed feeling burnt out by their work, and 78% said that stressors at work are preventing them from upskilling. Contributing to the stress is the high volume of reactive and time-sensitive tasks on IT professionals' plates. 58% of IT professionals shared that they spend half or more of their work week on tickets resolving end-user requests. Another 44% said the

burden of work is outweighing their ability to be productive.

"The IT generalist is arising out of necessity," said Doug Murray, CEO, Auvik. "The vast majority of IT professionals manage mixed vendor environments. MSPs, who typically manage the most mixed vendor environments, wrangle the most tool sprawl, with nearly 50% of them reporting more than 10 network tools in use. And more tools are being added to their workflows without their OK – 47% noted they are frustrated by not being consulted earlier in the tool procurement process. With a continuing talent gap and increasing tool sprawl, IT professionals don't have the bandwidth to develop deep expertise in any one area of IT. They must be able to manage a broad range of tools and IT functions, while relying increasingly on AI and automation to complete the more menial, routine tasks that historically have been major time commitments."

AI and automation: potential path to sustainable workloads

To support the remaining IT workforce and attract new talent, organizations will need to evolve to integrate AI and automation into their daily operations. These tools are integral to tackle current challenges like growing workloads, complex and hybrid networks, and poor documentation hygiene.

However, the successful adoption of these tools must start at the top. In general, 84% of IT professionals are highly satisfied with corporate management's support for IT initiatives, except when it comes to their understanding of AI and security risks. According to report data, 20-24% of respondents are not satisfied with the current incorporation of AI policy. Additionally, 34% of respondents don't yet have a policy in place to tackle AI



concerns, and 36% don't feel confident they would be allowed to experiment with new technology, such as AI and automation tools.

These sentiments are in sharp contrast to the desires of IT professionals to work more with AI and automation, recognizing its potential to free up massive amounts of time to focus on more strategic initiatives. When asked about wishlist items for desired network-related activities, 39% of IT professionals surveyed put researching new technology at the top of the list, but not enough time (32%) and not enough team members (28%) were reported as the main impediments. "Business leaders must lend support to their IT teams in pursuing AI and automation tools," continued Murray. "Although 70% of respondents expect growth in their IT budgets this year, this number is actually down from the 86% who saw budget increases last year.

With the talent shortage only worsening amidst mass retirements of Baby Boomers, automating certain IT tasks is the only way these critical teams can continue supporting their organizations without falling even further behind. Already, 75% of IT teams update documentation monthly or more often, while 61% report changing their network configurations on a weekly basis or more often. Automation is a simple and highly necessary solution for alleviating this burden, and many others like it within the IT function."

Channel partners eye cloud growth but must upskill to seize opportunities

Survey of nearly 900 Westcon-Comstor partners across eight countries reveals a desire to develop cloud capabilities amid strong customer demand.

CHANNEL PARTNERS want to develop their cloud capabilities but nearly half feel they lack the technical skills to meet customer needs, according to new research by Westcon-Comstor.

The global technology provider and specialist distributor surveyed almost 900 partners across eight countries for its Mastering the Maze report and found that 85% see developing a cloud practice as a priority.

This desire to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the rapidly growing cloud market is consistent across all markets where the research was conducted: Australia, France, Germany, Indonesia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa and the UK.

More than two thirds (69%) of partners said their customers are looking for specialised cloud skills, but only 57% are confident in fulfilling this demand – with the remaining 43% describing skill shortages as a challenge.

Indeed, a lack of technical skills and FinOps expertise – along with associated hurdles around hiring and talent – emerged as one of the main obstacles facing partners as they strive to meet end-users' cloud requirements.

Partners' concern over their own cloud technical skills was strongest in New Zealand, where 49% of respondents flagged this as a challenge. Partners in France are most confident in their own skills.

Leveraging cloud provider programmes to full effect is another major challenge for partners, with 58% highlighting this as one of the biggest barriers they face when advising their customers on cloud cost optimisation.



Meanwhile 56% pointed to issues around understanding cloud pricing models, with the often complex nature of these models making it hard to give customers certainty over costs.

Other barriers to cloud success include meeting customers' cloud security needs and fending off fierce market competition, with 40% of partners highlighting the pressure to outperform rivals by delivering better, faster solutions.

The research also reveals that: Partners say half (50%) of customers are choosing hybrid cloud solutions, with 27% pursuing full migration amid a cautious approach to migrations overall.

A quarter (25%) of partners describe themselves as born in the cloud, while 23% say they are developing a cloud practice having previously been focused on on-prem solutions; and Nearly half (46%) highlighted training and enablement when asked how distributors can support the development their cloud capabilities.

Meanwhile, 75% of partners see cloud hyperscaler marketplaces as an opportunity rather than a threat and are actively using them.

The publication of the research comes as Westcon-Comstor doubles down on its cloud strategy. In late 2024 it

became an authorised Amazon Web Services (AWS) distributor for Europe, adding to an existing distribution agreement in Asia-Pacific.

That followed Westcon-Comstor's acquisition of specialist AWS consultancy Rebura and the launch of the distributor's AWS Marketplace programme, which is designed to accelerate AWS Marketplace growth for partners and vendors.

"Our research shows that the channel is poised to grasp the huge growth opportunities presented by the cloud market, but is facing certain gaps around skills, capabilities and expertise," said David Grant, CEO at Westcon-Comstor.

"Partners around the world are at different stages of their cloud journey, but there is a common thread in their desire to expand their cloud capabilities and meet their customers' needs. It is incumbent on distributors to support, enable and empower partners in pursuit of these aims by harnessing and deploying their own cloud expertise."

"Embracing the cloud is a springboard for innovation, growth and productivity gains for partners and their customers," said Aaron Rees, Founder and CEO at Rebura, a Westcon-Comstor company. "The channel, however, still has some way to go on its journey to mastering the cloud, with many partners still developing their own skills as they work to satisfy customer expectations."

"Our findings suggest that partners know where they need to develop their cloud capabilities," said Jacquie Young, Managing Director, Cloud, APAC at Westcon-Comstor. "The challenge is finding the right support to help plug those gaps."

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Total Experience one year on: the wins, challenges and lessons



There are a lot of acronyms and jargon in the channel and Total Experience or 'TX' may sound like another buzzword to add to the mix. Perhaps that is partly the problem – we've become so immune to corporate lingo that we don't fully digest what it really means and whether it should be on our radar.

BY SARA WILKES, CEO AT AGILITAS IT SOLUTIONS

IN NOVEMBER 2023, CRN found that only 13% of surveyed organisations were implementing a Total Experience approach. Is that because it was an unfamiliar term and respondents were unaware of it, or is it the case that Channel leaders don't see the value of a Total Experience approach?

Leading an organisation that implemented a Total Experience strategy over a year ago, I've witnessed first-hand the benefits it can bring. Encouragingly, Gartner has revealed that an estimated 60%

of businesses will be utilising a TX strategy to transform their business and achieve world-class customer and employee advocacy levels by 2026. However, there are still many obstacles facing business leaders looking to integrate a Total Experience approach. Attempting to align the same experience across different departments, especially in large organisations can be difficult.

Ongoing challenges for Channel leaders

An Internet search for Total Experience

will give you a definition of acronyms nested in acronyms! But simply put, Total Experience is all about improving the experience for everyone involved – employees, customers and users.

By bringing people together, rather than working in silos, everyone has a more positive and connected experience overall.

This strategy has become a crucial step forward for Channel leaders looking to upscale their organisations. A TX strategy doesn't just act as a pillar

for growth but is said to outperform competitors by 25%, allowing Channel businesses to remain consistent across the board.

A successful TX strategy incorporates the needs of not only the customer but also the employees. However, this does not come without its issues. If not approached with caution, there is a risk that a strategy can begin to break down.

Therefore, to deliver an exceptional strategy, building effective communication from both sides will be key in ensuring an engaging experience for everyone.

Building a cohesive experience

A TX strategy is only successful if Channel leaders treat it as a priority. A successful strategy starts at the top, as CEOs and CPOs need to work together to find areas of improvement. This involves engaging with employees across all levels to create an environment built on respect, whilst encouraging collaboration and innovation.

Furthermore, collating with teams can open opportunities to share knowledge and ensure employees are fully equipped with all the tools they need to succeed. This can be by providing project management tools, training sessions or promoting a TX-centric culture that sets the standard for productive teamwork and communication.

Ultimately, this has a knock-on effect on customer satisfaction as improving employee confidence can harness high-functioning operational output. Employees who thrive in an organisation have the potential to become active campaigners, creating positive customer experiences from committed and satisfied employees.

Driving success for customers

By taking the time to build on employee culture, areas such as customer experience (CX) can thrive. From a CX perspective, Channel businesses should focus on building trust with their customers, with 73% of consumers revealing that they would go with a competitor after one bad experience with a brand.

A TX that encompasses CX and employee experience at its core can leverage growth opportunities. A key element of a TX strategy is for business leaders to know and listen to their audience. Therefore, taking the time to map out the customer journey should coincide with how an organisation strives to meet these practices when trying to understand their employee's needs.

The fundamental success of our TX strategy is based on the calibration of our culture, that is, but not limited to a customer-first mentality. We have incorporated a Voice of the Customer programme to challenge the sole use of traditional SLAs and metrics to bring

meaningful value to our customers. This programme aims to create collaboration between customers and teams, delivering superior customer service while promoting innovation.

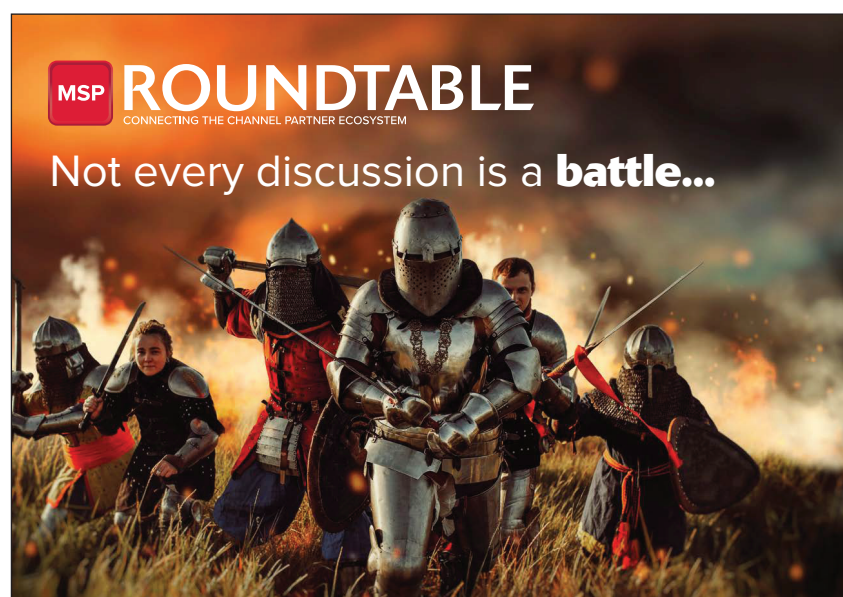
The impact of a TX strategy

In promoting a TX-centric culture, driving an optimal customer journey alongside experience-led KPIs is important to ensure measurable excellence for your people and customers.

One example of this is the recent launch of our new My Carbon Journey digital dashboard. The dashboard looks at service through a sustainability lens calculating the carbon associated with logistics and the repair of products. It highlights improvements to reduce carbon, which often also address efficiencies, improving cost and customer experience.

We continue to prioritise our commitment to working closely with our Channel partners to provide sustainable transport and in-house repair capabilities. But it is not just carbon reduction in isolation. With TX in mind, everything is linked - positive action in sustainability ultimately affects all other areas of the business.

This further demonstrates our ethos in harnessing a high-functioning operational output that is used in our processes and adapted to create positive experiences for all of our stakeholders.



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ANGEL EVENTS



The standards advancing NTN to 5G and beyond

The benefits of non-terrestrial networks (NTNs) range from connectivity for rural and isolated regions and better disaster response to new consumer, industrial, and scientific applications.

BY NANCY FRIEDRICH, MARKETING MANAGER FOR RF AEROSPACE DEFENCE PRODUCTS, KEYSIGHT TECHNOLOGIES

BY TRANSMITTING and receiving more information via satellite for communications and data transfer, NTNs enable new capabilities and features in machine-to-machine (M2M) applications such as agriculture, transportation, environmental monitoring, and asset tracking.

For cellular networks, the integration of satellites supports direct-to-device capabilities and services. As NTNs connect the earth with space across populations, industry standards set up precedents for performance and interoperability on a national through international level. By uniting

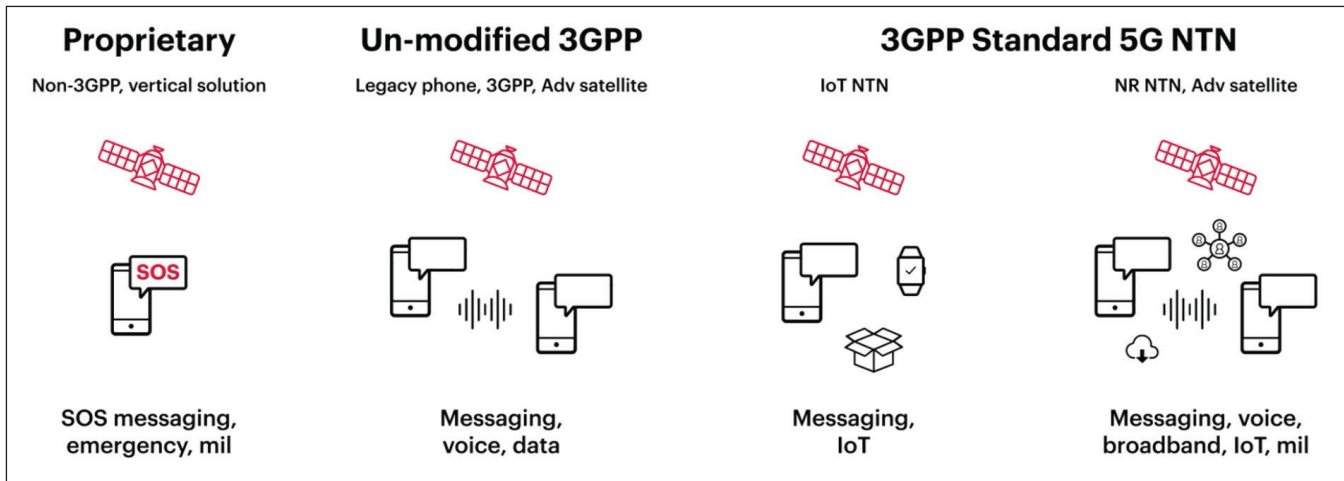
development and deployment efforts, these standards empower the industry and the world to accelerate adoption and leverage NTN advantages.

Fifth-generation cellular (5G) NTNs draw many features from 5G terrestrial networks and face many of the same challenges, adding higher reliability expectations compared to earlier SatCom networks.

Base stations, which are normally a terrestrial network comprising towers on the ground, will be moving to the air and space. The 5G core network is called the next generation core (NGC).

A 5G NTN comprises user equipment (UE), which consists of a mobile device like a cell phone or sensor. If needed, the UE communicates with base stations, each called a gNodeB.

The introduction of 5G NTNs disrupts the traditional 5G terrestrial network architecture. Many alternatives exist for satellites and high-altitude platform systems (HAPS) participating in gNodeB and radio access network (RAN) domains, some with multiple satellites in the chain scattered across miles. 5G NTNs draw many features and face many of the same challenges as their terrestrial network counterparts, adding



➤ Figure 1. Application domains for NTN system direct satellite.

higher reliability expectations compared to earlier SatCom networks. Not all NTN solutions and services will operate within the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) standards (Fig. 1). Many vendors outside 3GPP already rely on proprietary waveforms, with more in development. For instance, DVB-S2X offers alternatives to wideband data transfer via NTNs.

Video broadcast

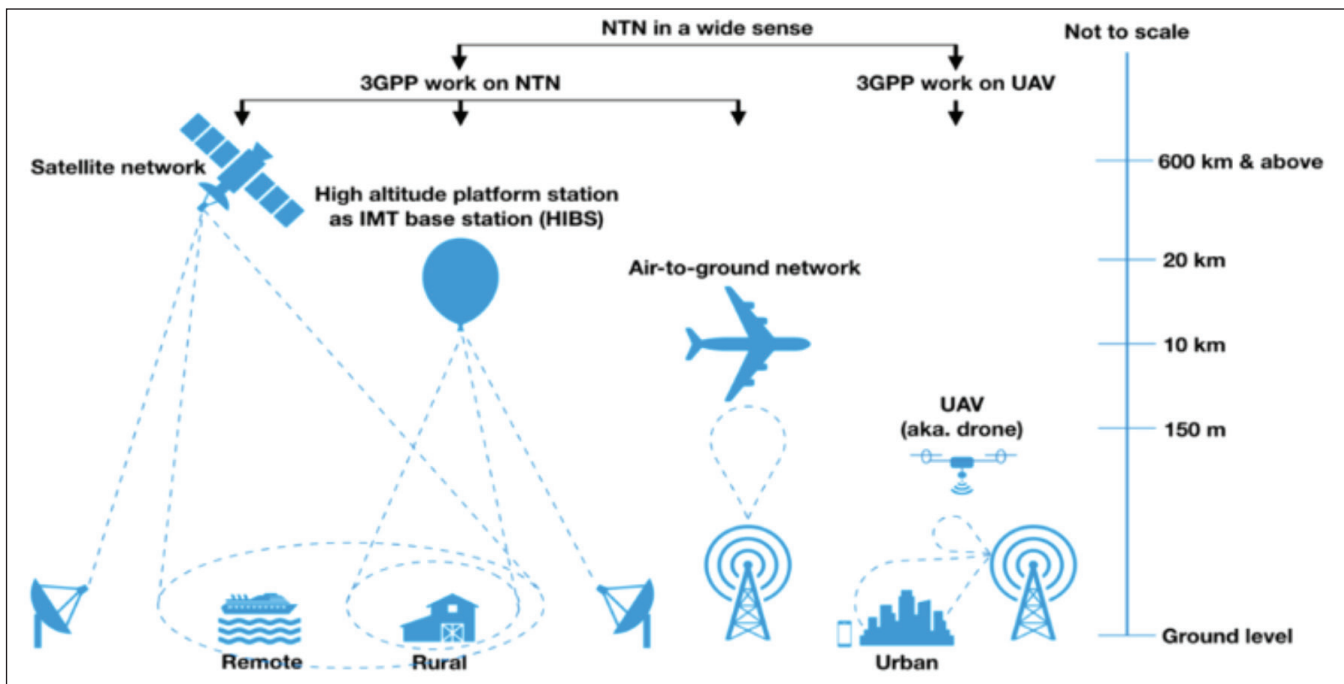
The Digital Video Broadcasting (DVB) specifications define digital broadcasting using DVB satellite, cable, and terrestrial broadcasting

infrastructures. These specifications have been standardised, mostly by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), and are promoted for international adoption and utilisation:

- **DVB-S:** Originally, the Digital Video Broadcasting-Satellite (DVB-S) standard defined satellite framing structure, channel coding, and modulation. DVB-S was published in 1994 as a single carrier quadrature phase shift keying (QPSK) modulation with Reed-Solomon and convolutional coding. Features include a roll-off to $\alpha = 0.35$ and

support for a single MPEG transport stream for standard TV.

- **DVB-Satellite Second Generation (DVB-S2):** This second generation, released in 2005, offers many improvements over the first generation including adaptive code modulation (ACM), more modulation formats such as 8, 16, and 32 amplitude and phase-shift keying (APSK), and tighter rolloffs to $\alpha = 0.2$. DVB-S2 was designed for standard and high-definition television (HDTV) and interactive services including internet access.
- **DVB-Return Channel via Satellite**

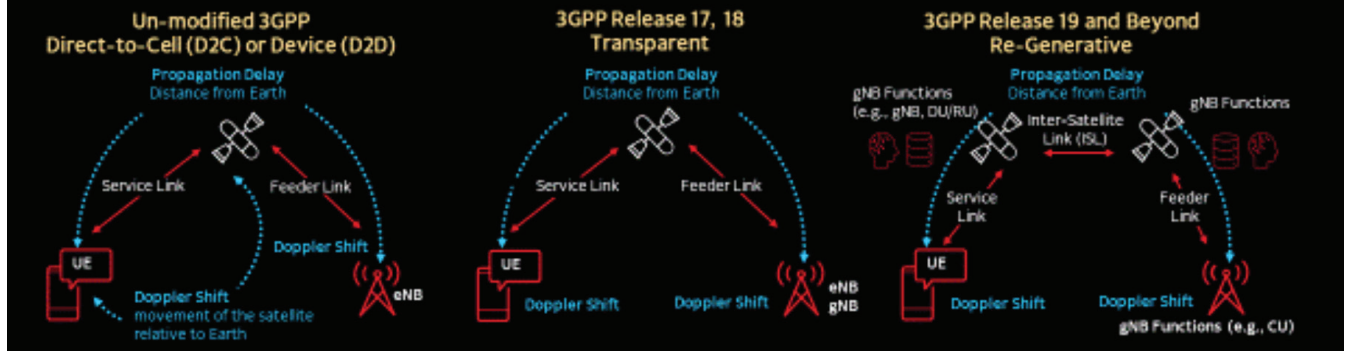


➤ Figure 2. Shown is the non-terrestrial network ecosystem, illustrating the aspects included in 3GPP standardisation efforts. (Image courtesy of 3GPP).

Satellite Communications – 3GPP NTN Architectures

Space to Earth – Satellite Options

Common Challenges: round-trip delays and frequency shifts due to the movement of the satellite relative to Earth (doppler shift)



➤ Figure 3. Examples of 3GPP NTN architectures for space to earth communications.

(DVB-RCS): This generation was the first to support data throughputs beyond 4G and two-way interactive satellite communications. It was published in 2001 while DVB-RCS2 – or Return Channel via Satellite second generation – was published in 2011. That second generation provided improvements such as high efficiency modulation and forward error correction (FEC) formats, adaptive coding modulation, and improved bandwidth efficiency.

- **DVB-Satellite Second Generation Extensions (DVB-S2X):** Released in 2014, this standard extends the second generation with the dual goals of enhancing performance in core markets [direct to home (DTH), very small aperture terminal (VSAT), and digital satellite news gathering (DSNG)]. At the same time, it aims to expand the range of applications in emerging markets, such as mobile, interactive, and broadband use cases. DVB-S2X's key technical improvements include higher modulation schemes like 64, 128, and 256 aperture phase shift keying (APSK).

Interoperability standards

The DIFI Consortium provides an open, interoperable digital intermediate frequency / radio frequency (IF / RF) standard for communication on ground systems. Analogue IF systems, with their inflexible chain of hardware, are difficult to scale and complex

to operate. They struggle to handle today's capacity and cannot scale to meet tomorrow's needs. According to the consortium, the satellite industry is solving these challenges by inserting IF converters as close to antennas as possible to create a digital IF packet stream that can be transported and processed digitally. But unlike analogue IF, there is almost an infinite number of ways to encode digital IF bits into a standard IP packet.

Cellular standards

One of the primary reasons to include NTN in Third Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) standards is the ability to access satellite networks with existing, unmodified 5G and Long Term Evolution (LTE) devices. The 3GPP considers LTE NTN synonymous with IoT NTN. Both narrowband IoT (NB-IoT) NTN and enhanced machine-type communication (eMTC) are subsets of IoT NTN. The 3GPP originally defined NTN for 5G before prioritising IoT NTN, as it presented less challenges. The resulting timeline put the arrival of 4G NTN in parallel with 5G, as it was a late addition to the 4G 3GPP standard.

3GPP Release 17: The First Wave

Release 17 was the first release to account for ground-based terrestrial networks and NTN platforms in 5G or any previous 3GPP cellular specifications. As defined in the release, these NTN platforms include multiple

types of satellites, specifically non-geosynchronous orbit (NGSO) and geosynchronous orbit (GSO, which includes geo-stationary orbit, GEO). Originally, the 3GPP referred to LEO and GEO, but it then opted to generalise to NGSO and GSO. As shown in Figure 2, these are the elements of NTN defined by the 3GPP, but proprietary NTNs outside of 3GPP also include HAPS and crewless aerial vehicles. They have a separate work item in the 3GPP.

Release 17 introduced support for two types of non-terrestrial networks: 5G new radio (NR) and narrowband-IoT (NB-IoT) and eMTC. 5G NR NTN supports satellite network access to handsets in the Frequency Range 1 (FR1) band for use cases such as voice and data transmission in geographic areas not served by terrestrial networks. NB-IoT NTN supports access to IoT devices directly from satellites for agriculture, transportation, and other applications.

Release 17 non-terrestrial updates address the technical hurdles inherent in communication between handsets, IoT devices, and satellites to enable NTN support. These challenges include propagation delay, Doppler shift, and the difficulties associated with satellite communications.

3GPP Release 18: Enhancing performance

Release 18 enhancements related to LTE NTN focus on mobility

management, throughput, power-saving and discontinuous coverage enhancements. For example, improving NTN mobility includes the integration of time-based and location-based measurement triggers so the UE can initiate neighbour cell measurements before the UE loses coverage due to radio link failure.

This required the addition of the signalling neighbour cell ephemeris data for eMTC and NB-IoT. To advance overall NTN throughput performance, Release 18 LTE NTN includes features disabling HARQ feedback to mitigate the impact of stalling on UE data rates.

Release 18 enhancements for NR NTN include uplink coverage and NTN-TN and NTN-NTN mobility and service continuity enhancements. The release enables the network to verify UE location as per regulatory requirements and the opening of frequencies beyond 10 GHz. (Ka band is being enabled only for NR NTN but not enabled for LTE NTN.) The 3GPP defined other new frequency bands below 3 GHz: extended L-band (for LTE NTN only) or a combination of bands L and S (for both LTE and NR NTN).

3GPP Release 19: Increasing capacity

The 3GPP is currently defining Release 19, with finalisation slated for late 2025. Much of the satellite industry's attention focuses on approaches to direct-to-handset communications, as depicted by some illustrations in Figure 3. Although the 3GPP has limited the number of overall enhancements in this release, several proposals are under consideration:

- Specify the TE-emulated channel model with varying Doppler and delay shifts for NR-NTN and IoT-NTN in the FR1-NTN bands and the corresponding LTE bands for NGSO satellites.
- Specify NR NTN requirements for channel bandwidths below 5 MHz.
- Specify high-power user equipment or UE (PC2, PC1.5, and PC 1) for NR-NTN and IoT-NTN in FR1-NTN and LTE NTN bands for the single uplink carrier scenario.
- Support regenerative payloads for both IoT-NTN and NR-NTN.
- Support Rel-17 RedCap and Rel-18 eRedCap UEs with NR NTN operating in FR1-NTN bands.
- Define Ku bands.

Ka-band covered 17 to 30 GHz, but a new portion of spectrum is now being slated for use by the 3GPP. According to the current standard scope, the downlink for Ku-band for GSO and non-GSO from 10.70 to 12.75 GHz for ITU Regions 1 and 3. Uplink will span either 12.75 to 13.25 GHz or 13.75 to 14.5 GHz. With a drop in frequency from 10 to 14.5 GHz, this is a totally new section of frequency between FR1 and FR2.

On the downlink, this will range closer to 7 GHz. In ITU Region 2, expect the downlink to span 10.70 to 12.70 GHz while uplink ranges from 12.70 to 13.25 GHz and 13.75 to 14.5 GHz.

Frequency C bands are likely to be added in the Ku-band for NR NTN. Satellite providers are pushing for these to optimise spectrum, although details like carrier aggregation still need to be resolved. Release 19 also includes additional capacity enhancements, such

as enabling multiplexing of multiple UE in a single subcarrier.

With this latest release, the 3GPP hopes to reduce NTN's dependence on GNSS. Enhanced GNSS operation includes UE pre-compensation for uplink time and frequency synchronisation in case of GNSS availability decline.

Additional support targets NTN discontinuous coverage for IoT NTN, making data gathering via these networks more resilient. The 3GPP will continue to guide the progression of NR and IoT NTN, with the Technical Specification Group Service and System Aspects Studies for 3GPP Release 20 scheduled to be completed by June 2025.

As NTNs and their services increase, standards will continue to evolve to ensure their interoperability, compliance, and performance. Though the use cases and features for those future standards are not set, 5G (and eventually 6G) NTN is clearly on the path of communications transformation.

As communications providers incorporate NTNs, pushing beyond terrestrial-based infrastructure, they will enable immersive experiences like the metaverse while transforming industries, spanning manufacturing through climate monitoring to healthcare.

Expect the pathway to this technology future to be clearly laid out by standards bodies providing use cases and capabilities that will transform lives worldwide.

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Protecting IoT networks from privilege abuse by criminals and malicious insiders

As the Internet of Things (IoT) grows to an estimated 55.7 billion devices next year, according to IDC, the range and extent of cyber threats has grown correspondingly. IoT environments now represent an expanding and poorly secured attack surface. Many rely on legacy operational technology (OT) and devices that lack strong defences, which together present high levels of vulnerability.

BY DARRON ANTILL, CEO, DEVICE AUTHORITY

MANY DEVICES have no management at all. A study by network security firm Byos found 73% of OT devices are completely unmanaged, which is a critical weakness in industrial systems. Devices frequently have default passwords that attackers can easily break.

Encryption of transmitted data may also be absent, exposing it to interception or tampering. Many manufacturers fail to provide timely security updates to their devices in the field, leaving them vulnerable to the latest threats. Visibility is another problem as established IoT networks grow and change over a period of years. As complexity develops, successive admins can easily lose track of the security status of devices.



This is exactly what a threat actor like Water Bargest is looking for. Using automation it identified and compromised 20,000 devices in minutes, turning them into residential proxies it offers for sale to other cyber criminals. It created a botnet featuring devices from some of the best-known device manufacturers which were infected with Ngioweb malware.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive overhaul of device security by extending the principles of privileged access management (PAM) used in IT systems into IoT environments, creating a unified approach. In IT systems, PAM enables organisations to manage and secure privileged accounts, ensuring only those with

the appropriate credentials have access to perform critical functions within the infrastructure. The same approach must be extended to IoT networks.

The steps towards strengthening IoT access management

While PAM offers a framework for the management of secure privileged accounts across IoT ecosystems, there are particular challenges because many devices lack the capacity for manual credential rotation. This is why automation is essential, ensuring rotation of passwords and their deletion when no longer legitimately required.

It is vital that security integrates automated identity authentication of each device. With more advanced platforms, IoT device certificates can now be securely generated, signed and managed through policy-driven automation.

The benefits of integrating PAM across IT and OT are in streamlined processes for device and credential management, as well as a significant elevation of control and oversight. Malicious insiders, for example, are always threats that are easy to overlook amid the justifiable attention given to ransomware and nation-state-affiliated groups. An integrated platform will provide effective real-time oversight using behavioural analytics, which is more likely to flag up suspicious activity by malicious individuals with inside knowledge.

Implementation of PAM across IoT

PAM implementations in IoT networks should follow what have become best practice guidelines. This begins with an audit of all access privileges and accounts associated with IoT devices. It is common for privileged accounts to outnumber employees by a factor of three or four, which complicates management.

Automated password generation and rotation is essential so that organisations can increase device security without heaping greater workloads on their IT teams. Passwords need to be updated regularly and stored securely.

User activities need to be tracked in real time and audited, which is important for fast responses when incidents occur and for any subsequent forensics investigations. This is also extremely useful for compliance with GDPR and other standards such as NIST and HIPAA in the US. Detailed logs make it far easier to supply the necessary information to regulators in the event of an attempted breach.

The next step is to enforce consistency. Rigour is required to enforce the principle of least privileged access. Organisations should adopt role-based access control methodologies to assign different levels of access based on responsibilities. Temporary access privileges can be granted for specific purposes but should be revoked immediately after a task is completed.

Among best practices is the use of multi-factor authentication (MFA) to strengthen the protection for all accounts by requiring multiple forms of verification. As PAM evolves, technologies such as biometric authentication and OTP tokens (which dispense with passwords) are becoming part of the overall approach.

The many benefits of PAM in IoT

The benefits of PAM are in reduction of risk from credential theft – reducing the likelihood of unauthorised access and the creation of botnets or lateral movement from IoT into sensitive IT systems and data.

The simplification of compliance through automated maintenance of detailed audits enables organisations to meet their legal obligations and avoid penalties – especially beneficial in areas such as healthcare. For hard-pressed IT or security teams, the unified approach to PAM and implementation of automated credential-management and session-monitoring means they are not spending large amounts of time on manual oversight and administration. For their organisations this reduces errors.

With machine identities outnumbering human equivalents by a factor of 45:1, the scale and complexity of IoT demands its protection is fully integrated with IT, using the principles of zero trust and least privileged access in an automated, unified approach. Continuous assurance, threat validation and lifecycle management should be integrated with PAM, alongside policy-driven data encryption and continuous, automated monitoring.

This is the comprehensive approach that will ensure best possible protection for the mushrooming IoT networks on which so many industries, utilities and public services depend.





The endpoint management challenge in higher education

The rapidly increasing number of endpoints across universities presents significant opportunities for improved learning experiences, but also presents new challenges for IT teams.

BY ANDRE SCHINDLER, GM EMEA AND SVP GLOBAL SALES AT NINJAONE

THE EDUCATION sector evolved rapidly following the pandemic, where remote access to classes and resources became fundamental to day-to-day learning. And the technological advancements haven't stopped since then. Universities continue to flourish in this era of education, with students benefiting from more accessible learning experiences, smart campuses, and more.

New technologies undoubtedly offer more varied and engaging learning experiences but also present enormous challenges for IT teams responsible for managing and securing an increasing number of endpoints (i.e., laptops, tablets, and mobile phones). In the face of hybrid work and learning models and an exceptionally increasing number of endpoints, IT teams that are often left with limited resources need modern ways to keep networks operational and secure that keep up with their university's speed and scale.

Thankfully, solutions like automated endpoint management can help higher education IT leaders

become more efficient, and their organisations more productive and a secure, as they navigate a challenging landscape.

The expanding IT ecosystem in education

In recent years, the number of endpoints in higher education has soared, fuelled by the rise of remote learning, the internet of things (IoT), bring your own device (BYOD) policies, and widespread cloud adoption. IT ecosystems are expanding rapidly, and these technologies are now viewed by both students and faculty as essential in creating more interactive and flexible learning environments.

This boom in digital technology holds the key to campus-wide innovation. Universities are incorporating more IoT devices and automation into their IT infrastructure and building management, optimising energy use, enhancing efficiency, and reducing costs. Remote learning and flexible working options broaden opportunities, allowing universities to attract students from further locations



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As universities continue to undergo digital transformation over the next decade, it will be vital for organisations to adopt cutting-edge solutions, like automated endpoint management, to support their IT teams

and enabling staff to have more flexible work arrangements. Moreover, the move to hybrid and multi-cloud environments offers IT teams a secure and cost-effective way to store student data, documents, and recorded lectures while easily scaling to meet fluctuating demands for network access and IT services.

With all these advancements, IT leaders are tasked with managing and securing this increasingly complex landscape, ensuring that higher education's tech-driven future continues to thrive.

The complexity of IT landscapes at universities

Although these innovative technologies bring unparalleled benefits to the higher education sector, they also create a new set of challenges for IT teams in managing and securing sprawling endpoints. With the rapid increase in devices, software-as-a-service (SaaS) applications, and hybrid or multi-cloud environments, traditional IT management methods are no longer sufficient to meet the needs of today's modern higher education institutions.

Universities, often spread across multiple campuses, cities, or even countries, present a complex landscape for IT teams who cannot be everywhere at once. The diversity of server and networking devices – each with different operating systems, hardware, and software – complicates endpoint management. The surge in technology, while a driver of progress, is one of the most significant learning curves IT teams have ever faced.

Although demands on IT services grow, budgets are shrinking. Many universities have understaffed IT teams meaning each technician is responsible for managing thousands of endpoints. This makes

effectively managing and securing a vast IT ecosystem increasingly difficult, even for seasoned IT leaders.

This is where automated endpoint management steps in to provide a streamlined, effective approach.

A simpler approach to IT operations

Automated endpoint management is a powerful solution that enables IT teams to monitor, secure, and control every endpoint – regardless of location or device. By centralising IT operations and cybersecurity measures, automated endpoint management provides higher education institutions with a “single pane of glass” view, giving IT teams full visibility across all endpoints, from desktop computers and laptops to mobile devices.

This comprehensive oversight not only enhances operational efficiency but also strengthens data governance, allowing IT leaders to proactively implement policies that reduce vulnerabilities on a large scale.

Automated endpoint management streamlines processes, allowing stretched IT teams to automate important tasks such as backups, patching, and security updates. Remote monitoring and control also mean IT teams can support their organisations from anywhere. Universities no longer need to have technicians stationed on every campus or moving between buildings to manage infrastructure and support staff.

Additionally, automated endpoint management tools offer significant benefits for universities that are operating under tight budgets, because several solutions are consolidated under a single platform. Bringing everything under one umbrella not only simplifies IT management and enhances productivity, but reduces complexity and the surface area for attack – dramatically minimising risk.

The rapidly increasing number of endpoints across universities presents significant opportunities for improved learning experiences, but also presents new challenges for IT teams. As universities continue to undergo digital transformation over the next decade, it will be vital for organisations to adopt cutting-edge solutions, like automated endpoint management, to support their IT teams.

By employing these tools, universities can ensure staff and students can take full advantage of the benefits offered by new technologies, while remaining secure and operational.



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‘Age of AI’? Not before the ‘age of data resilience’

Nearly two decades ago, Clive Humby quite accurately predicted that data would become the most valuable resource in our economy, coining the infamous phrase “data is the new oil”. Now, with artificial intelligence (AI), we’ve got the new Apollo 11. At times it can seem like the AI hype has reached its peak, but in reality, it’s just the latest chapter in a long-running story - digital transformation.

BY RICK VANOVER, VICE PRESIDENT OF PRODUCT STRATEGY, VEEAM

THE AI hype surrounding every industry at the moment is valid. It has immense potential to completely revolutionise pretty much everything, but we need to take a beat before we get ahead of ourselves. Organizations need to implement processes that can power data resilience and ensure that their data is available, accurate, protected, and intelligent to ensure their businesses can continue to run no matter what.

Stay out of the shadows

It’s far easier to manage AI adoption now with additional training and controls early on when it comes to something as all-encompassing as a company’s data. You don’t want to be left trying to untangle a mess later down the line. The best time to start was yesterday, but the second best time is now. According to the latest McKinsey Global

Survey on AI, around 65% of respondents stated that their organization regularly uses Gen AI (double from just ten months before). But that’s not the scary statistic. Nearly half of the respondents said that they are ‘heavily customizing’ or developing their own models.

This is a new phenomenon known as ‘shadow IT’ – unknown or unsanctioned use of software, or systems in an organization. For a large enterprise, keeping track of the sanctioned tools in use across various business units might already be a challenge in itself. Individuals or even departments building or adapting large language models (LLMs) will make it nearly impossible to manage and track data movement and risk across the organization. But, putting processes and training in place around data stewardship, data privacy, and IP will help. Even



if they help in no other way, having measures like these in place makes the company's position far more defensible should anything go awry.

Keeping an eye on things

Now, this doesn't mean you need to put a ban on AI as a whole. It's a great tool that organizations and departments will get significant value out of. But as it becomes part of the tech stack, we need to ensure that it falls within the rest of the business's data governance and protection principles. For the majority of AI tools, it's about mitigating the operational risk of the data that flows through them. Generally, there are three main risk factors: security (what if an outside party accesses or steals the data?), availability (what if we lose access to the data, even temporarily?), and accuracy (what if what we're working from is wrong?).

It's in these cases where data resilience is crucial. As AI tools become embedded in your tech stack, you need to ensure visibility, governance, and protection across your entire 'data landscape'. Uncontrolled use of AI models across a business could create gaps. Data resilience is already a priority in most areas of an organization, and LLMs and other AI tools need to make it a priority just the same. You need to understand your business-critical data and where it lives across your entire business. Companies may have good data governance and resilience now, but if adequate training isn't put in place, uncontrolled use of AI could cause issues. The worst part is, you might not even know about them.

Strengthening your data resilience

Data resilience is no mean feat - it covers the whole organization, so the whole team needs to be responsible. It's also not just a one-time thing, data is constantly moving and changing - and so should your data resilience practices. AI is just one example of things that need to be reacted to and adapted to. Data resilience covers everything from

This is a new phenomenon known as 'shadow IT' - unknown or unsanctioned use of software, or systems in an organization. For a large enterprise, keeping track of the sanctioned tools in use across various business units might already be a challenge in itself

identity management, device and network security, and data protection principles like backup and recovery. It's an intensive de-risking project, but for it to be effective it requires two key things: visibility, and senior buy-in. Data resilience starts from the top down. Without it, projects fall flat, funding limits how much can be done, and protection/availability gaps appear. Data resilience is everyone's problem.

But don't let the size of the task stop you from starting. It's impossible to solve everything all at once, but you can start somewhere. Get ahead of the game as much as possible before LLMs have appeared across your organization. It's likely that many companies will fall into the same problems at they did with cloud migration, going all-in on the newest tech only to wish they'd thought it through a bit more at the start. Start off small(ish), with drills to test your resilience. After all, you can't learn to ride a bike from a book - the only way to learn is to do. And don't hold back, make sure you're testing realistic worst-case scenarios. Try one without your disaster lead for example, a real emergency won't wait around for them to be in after all. After running these tests. You'll be able to gauge accurately just how prepped you are. Then, just start - if you don't, you'll never improve.

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Don't let these three common cloud mistakes derail your AI projects

2024 marked a transformative period for AI, with widespread cloud adoption paving the way for its integration. Over the last few years, we've seen a surge in cloud adoption, with 94% of large enterprises now using it in their operations. It's likely that we'll see a similar surge in AI adoption in 2025.

BY JAKE MADDERS, CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR AT HYVE MANAGED HOSTING

WHILE GREAT PROGRESS in AI projects has been made, 67% of companies still report that their AI integration is either limited or non-existent. This suggests that many organisations are still facing challenges in fully harnessing the potential of AI, and often due to mistakes related to adopting and managing their cloud infrastructures.

In this article, we'll uncover the top three cloud infrastructure mistakes commonly made by businesses that inhibit their AI integrations, along with some tips for unlocking AI's full potential.

Mistake one: Assuming all AI workloads are the same

AI projects often require specialised, high-performance computing resources, especially for more complex or demanding tasks. A common mistake made when it comes to AI implementation is overlooking how these computational demands are unique and vary from one business to another. With this in mind, companies should consider their infrastructure on a case-by-case basis rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach and risking suboptimal performance and missed opportunities.



By carefully assessing the specific hardware needs for each AI workload, businesses can ensure that their cloud environments are optimised for performance and resource allocation. An example of this could be one of our customers who is developing an alternative to neuro-symbolic architecture, which combines neural and symbolic learning and is designed to act similarly to the human brain. The company needed a hosting provider to train one of its products - the Expert Verbal Agent (EVA) model, a Large Language Model (LLM) designed for thoughtful queries and problem-solving. EVA can use a Central Processing Unit (CPU), Graphic Processing Unit (GPU), or both, unlike many AI models, which only run on GPUs as their computational model. Therefore, the setup of most AI models requires a bespoke cloud offering that is tailored to their specific needs.

Mistake two: mismanaging server scalability

AI workloads can fluctuate with periods of intensive processing, like model training. This means that environments need to be appropriately sized to cope with temporary spikes in demand whilst also

ensuring that resources aren't wasted during quiet periods. This is especially crucial for companies with limited budgets, as overprovisioning can lead to significant cost overhead. Meanwhile, running AI processing on environments that are too small or that lack resources will create long delays, potentially hindering operations.

To optimise performance and cost-efficiency, AI environments must be able to scale dynamically. Businesses can solve this by leasing time on pre-built environments as an alternative to capital investments.

However, when using this approach, it's essential to consider which type of environment is the best fit for their unique requirements. Public cloud options can quickly become costly when scaling up, whereas private clouds have more predictable and lower running costs. So, for companies that have ongoing workloads and capital to invest, a private cloud might be the most suitable option in the long term. Hybrid options are another avenue to explore.

Combining the benefits of both types of environments - the scalability and flexibility of public clouds with the control and security of private - they provide a balanced approach for AI projects. Strategically distributing workloads across public and private clouds can help organisations optimise performance, cost-efficiency, and risk mitigation.

Mistake three: Security as an afterthought

There's no question that security should be a top priority for any business in today's world, especially for those operating in highly regulated industries like financial services or healthcare. However, organisations are so focused on the potential benefits of AI that they are failing to implement robust security measures, potentially leading to severe consequences, including data breaches, reputational damage, and financial loss.

Choosing the right cloud environment goes hand in hand with security, and both public and private cloud systems offer distinct advantages and drawbacks. Public clouds, while they might appear more affordable and flexible for scaling, present heightened security risks due to shared server infrastructure. Conversely, private clouds provide dedicated resources and tighter control but demand significant upfront investment in infrastructure.

It's important for companies to choose a cloud provider that aligns with their specific business needs, and one of the most crucial factors for companies to consider when selecting a provider in 2025 will be the strength of its security measures.

Bonus tip: partner with a Managed Service Provider. Our IT Skills Gap Report 2024 revealed that a significant 65% of UK businesses opt to work with a Managed Service Provider (MSP) to achieve their goals cost-effectively. Partnering with an MSP can be an attractive option for businesses because they offer efficient infrastructure and hardware management, safeguarding against unnecessary expenses and misconfigurations. MSPs provide efficient infrastructure and hardware secured by a service that works to prevent unnecessary costs and misconfigurations.

Additionally, 61% of businesses utilise MSPs specifically for their cybersecurity expertise. They provide continuous monitoring and protection against threats and vulnerabilities, helping to secure cloud environments. What's more, businesses can benefit from expert guidance in optimising their cloud strategies and selecting the most suitable and resilient environment for their specific AI needs.

Looking forward

Looking ahead to 2025, the convergence of AI and the cloud is set to drive significant advances in technology. The maturation of generative AI and the growth of agentic AI - the 'third wave' of artificial intelligence - will have a profound impact on a wide range of industries, from finance to healthcare. The potential applications of AI are vast, and as these technologies continue to evolve, we can expect to see significant improvements in efficiency, productivity and innovation.

To unlock the full potential of AI and drive innovation, organisations should take a phased, strategic approach to adopting these new tools.

A well-defined cloud strategy focused on

performance, scalability, security, as well as cost optimisation will help

modern businesses maximise resource efficiency while minimising risks. By partnering with an MSP, organisations can streamline this journey and position their infrastructure to be AI-ready and deliver long-term value.



Why NaaS is set to change networking

In a world where everything from data storage to software delivery has embraced the cloud, networking remains one of the last functions still clinging to legacy models.

BY JUSTIN DAY CEO AND CO-FOUNDER OF CLOUD GATEWAY



MANY NETWORKS continue to rely on hardware that is not only complex but also costly and difficult to scale. But the landscape is shifting. Network-as-a-Service (NaaS) has emerged as a new, service-driven model that promises to streamline network management, reduce complexity, and redefine how networks are built, maintained, and scaled. But what exactly is NaaS?

Understanding NaaS

Network-as-a-Service is a cloud-based model that delivers network capabilities on a subscription basis. Instead of investing in costly hardware and infrastructure or managing in-house, companies can use NaaS providers to access and configure their network resources through a flexible, scalable, and user-friendly platform.

NaaS has a key advantage. It allows companies to move away from a CapEx-heavy investment in infrastructure, towards an OpEx model that allows them to only pay for what they need, when they

need it. This is especially useful for companies adopting hybrid or cloud-only strategies, as NaaS supports integrations between cloud and on-premise resources. While the model is still evolving, it's clear that NaaS is more than just another cloud solution. It represents a big shift in how networks can be designed and delivered, with efficiency and usability put front of mind.

Why is Network-as-a-Service gaining traction?

The rising popularity of NaaS is partly a response to the current skills gap in networking. Network specialists are becoming harder to find, and with the increasing complexity of today's digital environments, fewer organisations can afford the level of in-house expertise traditionally needed for robust network management. NaaS addresses this shortage by offering simplified, and easy to use interfaces that allow technical teams such as DevOps to configure and manage networks without needing extensive networking knowledge.



This emergence of NaaS also reflects broader expectations around cloud service models or “as-a-service” models. Just as with SaaS and IaaS, organisations now expect more from their networks than basic connectivity tools and perimeter defences; they seek visibility, automation, security, and agility – all seamlessly integrated. NaaS addresses this demand, providing a more user-friendly experience without compromising on network robustness.

Making networking easier

While traditional network management is often resource heavy, time consuming and costly, NaaS, in contrast, allows companies to adjust their network capacity and services based on their current needs. Making it ideal for organisations with evolving digital demands, varying workloads or those navigating the transition to hybrid working models. By operating on an OpEx basis, NaaS eliminates the need for long term commitments and allows businesses to pay for the services they actually use. This offers a level of flexibility that empowers organisations to adjust their network spend in line with operational changes and better allocate resources as needed.

For businesses looking to streamline operations, manage costs, and improve network efficiency, NaaS offers a solution that enhances both security and reliability. Many leading providers include built-in monitoring, threat detection, and automated maintenance services as part of their offerings. This proactive approach helps minimise risk, reduce downtime, and enhance business continuity, enabling companies to focus on growth without running into unexpected network issues or costly hardware investments.

Misconceptions around Network-as-a-Service

Despite its advantages, there are some misconceptions around NaaS. Many assume that it offers the same level of convenience as shopping on Amazon and allows you to simply ‘spin up’ a new network in a few clicks. In reality, NaaS is much more nuanced. Effective NaaS solutions go beyond offering routers and switches, they provide visibility, reporting, and analytics that meet business needs. Companies evaluating NaaS need to consider these wider capabilities in order to truly understand the value of a well-designed solution.

Another misconception is that NaaS is a plug-and-play solution that anyone can manage. While NaaS does aim to simplify network management, it still



requires a strategic approach – especially in the initial phases. Many organisations learned this the hard way with cloud transformations. Those that rushed the transition without proper planning faced unforeseen costs and operational challenges. NaaS is no different. To fully realise its potential, companies should adopt a phased approach, starting with low-priority workloads and gradually scaling up.

Moving towards a NaaS future

For organisations in the UK, NaaS presents an opportunity to reimagine networking in a way that's more aligned with the demands of today. But as with any transformative technology, a thoughtful approach is key. Companies should begin by assessing their network needs and identifying potential challenges, before diving in. Importantly, NaaS providers must also continue to refine their offerings to make networks as intuitive as possible. With the right NaaS solutions in place, network management could soon move from a highly specialised field to one accessible by a broader IT audience, enabling organisations to meet demands with more confidence and agility.

Ultimately, NaaS offers more than just a technological advancement, it represents a strategic shift in network management. By addressing cost, complexity, and scalability challenges, NaaS holds the potential to redefine networking for UK businesses, empowering them to be more responsive and resilient in an ever-changing digital landscape. For those ready to explore this model, NaaS can bring new efficiency, provide insight, and build a solid digital foundation for their operations.

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How automation is revolutionising MSP service delivery

As managed service providers (MSPs) face growing demands to deliver high-quality services while managing costs, the pressure to transform their service management processes has never been greater.

BY ANDY VENABLES, CTO AND CO-FOUNDER, POPX



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION is no longer optional - it's vital for survival. Yet, despite best intentions, many MSPs stumble on the path to transformation, plagued by stretched timelines, escalating costs, and resource bottlenecks.

Tools like ServiceNow, ZenDesk, and Salesforce offer the potential to revolutionise operations, enabling automation across workflows such as self-service portals, incident management, and service desks. Yet, many MSPs encounter difficulties in fully realising this potential. Common pitfalls include a lack of internal expertise, reliance on costly external consultants, and limited domain-specific knowledge. These challenges not only drain resources but can also create a cycle of professional service dependency that diverts focus from core business goals.

To navigate these challenges, MSPs must rethink their approach to service management.

Why a shift to a continuous improvement model is essential

Static systems are like outdated machinery - they

may still function, but they lack the agility to keep pace with demand. MSPs must embed automation at the core of their service delivery processes to enable faster resolution times, scale operations, and offer more personalised customer experiences. Think of automation as the central nervous system of an MSP - a network of connected processes that allows more rapid response times and operational efficiency.

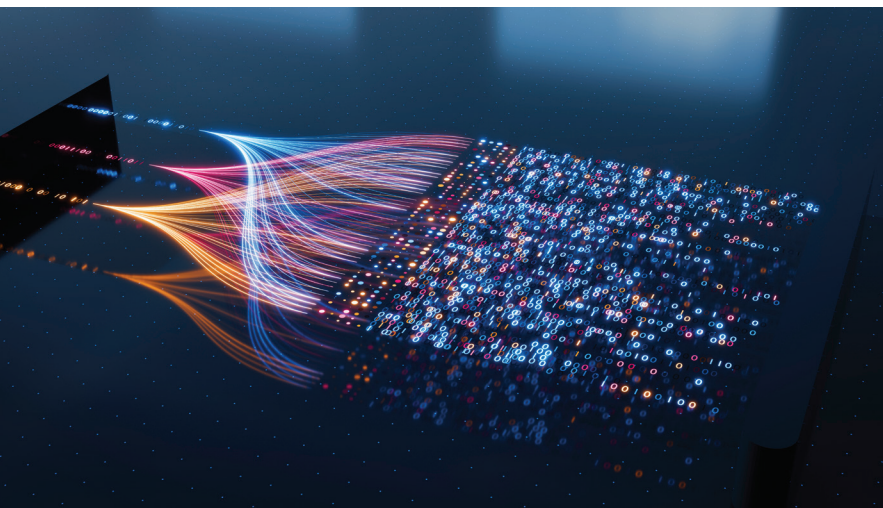
Continuous improvement models thrive on adaptability, with automation acting as a catalyst for sustainable growth. By introducing automation into workflows, MSPs can streamline time-intensive tasks like ticket management and service desk queries. This not only reduces manual effort but frees up valuable resources to focus on higher-value activities that drive innovation.

Faster resolution times also mean happier clients while personalised experiences foster long-term loyalty. In essence, MSPs that embrace continuous improvement models are not just optimising operations, they are future-proofing their businesses.

Where are MSPs achieving success with automation?

For many MSPs, the journey towards automation begins with addressing pain points in their most resource-intensive processes. One such example is the deployment of self-service portals. These portals empower clients to resolve issues independently, reducing the burden on service desks while improving customer satisfaction. Imagine an MSP that serves hundreds of businesses - with a well-designed self-service portal, simple queries such as password resets, account changes, or service updates are resolved without human intervention.

This translates to hours saved each day, allowing teams to focus on more complex and critical tasks. Another area of success lies in automated incident



management to streamline the resolution process and allow MSPs to respond faster and more efficiently to service disruptions. Automation helps reduce the manual workload on service teams, minimises human error, and ensures that critical incidents are prioritised and addressed promptly. Some MSPs have gone further by introducing AI-powered automation into their operations. AI-driven chatbots, for instance, are now being used to handle routine customer enquiries and escalate issues only when human intervention is necessary. This technology not only improves the client experience but also ensures round-the-clock availability, a key differentiator in a competitive market.

Embracing a culture of innovation

If MSPs are to truly compete in 2025, they must empower teams to embrace new technologies, build a culture of innovation, and challenge existing ways of working. Low-code platforms support this by simplifying the development of automated workflows. Low-code tools place power in the hands of internal teams, encouraging creativity and experimentation. These platforms allow MSPs to design, test, and implement new processes rapidly without requiring advanced technical expertise. The result is a more agile and responsive organisation, capable of adapting to client needs and market changes with speed and precision.

Top tips for MSPs

For MSPs eager to begin their automation journey, it can feel like standing at the foot of a mountain. The key is to start small, focusing on high-impact workflows that offer quick wins and clear returns on investment. To start:

- **Identify bottlenecks:** Begin by evaluating the most time-consuming and repetitive processes in your service management operations. Whether it's manual ticket triage, delayed escalations, or repetitive data entry, identifying these bottlenecks will allow you to target areas where automation can have an immediate impact.

Faster resolution times also mean happier clients while personalised experiences foster long-term loyalty. In essence, MSPs that embrace continuous improvement models are not just optimising operations, they are future-proofing their businesses

- **Adopt a phased approach:** Don't attempt to automate everything at once. Instead, start with a single process or workflow, implement the necessary tools, and measure the outcomes. As confidence grows, gradually expand automation across other areas of the business.
- **Focus on user experience:** Automation should enhance the client experience, not complicate it. Ensure that tools like self-service portals are intuitive, user-friendly, and capable of addressing client needs effectively.
- **Measure and iterate:** Continuous improvement requires regular assessment. Automation is an evolving journey – what works today may need adjustments tomorrow. This means tracking key performance metrics, gathering feedback, and refining processes as needed.

Automation is a pathway to resilience and growth

Automation isn't just about cost savings - it's a pathway to delivering better, faster, and more reliable services whilst maintaining a strong competitive advantage.

In the end, automation is more than a technological shift - it's a strategic enabler of growth, resilience, and operational excellence. For MSPs, the ability to integrate and evolve with service management and workflow tools is pivotal to their survival and success.

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Making sense of AI compliance from an MSP perspective



By packaging AI security and compliance as one integrated service offering, MSPs will be well placed to capitalise on a massive and growing market opportunity.

BY MIKE GRAHAM, HEAD OF PARTNERSHIPS, ISMS.ONLINE

THE 2020s will undoubtedly go down in history as the decade in which artificial intelligence truly emerged.

While AI concepts and programmes have been prevalent since the mid-20th century, it is only in recent years that we've seen the sophistication and deployment of real-world solutions really ramping up.

The statistics speak for themselves. At the beginning of the decade, the global AI market was valued at \$93 billion; by 2030, that figure is anticipated to reach \$826 billion.

At the core of this rapidly evolving market is generative AI, with programmes such as OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard already being used for a broad variety of applications, from creating content to summarising complex data and generating code.

The benefits of these technologies are clear, from boosting productivity to enabling better decision-making. However, their rapid advancement has also sparked widespread concerns regarding ethical and legal implications and the potential for misuse, be it misinformation, deepfakes, or other harmful content.

Growing complexity in the AI regulatory landscape

Such debates have naturally drawn the attention of governments that are increasingly working to ensure that AI development is better monitored and managed through the introduction of relevant legislation.

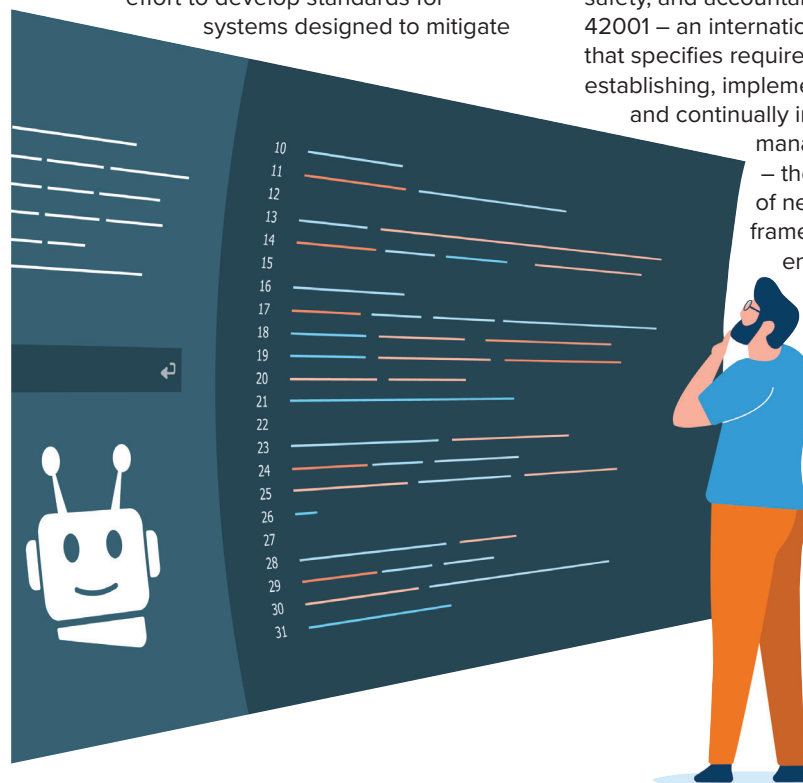
Here, the European Union is leading the way, having introduced the first legal framework on AI in an effort to develop standards for systems designed to mitigate

risks related to bias, privacy, and transparency. Named the EU AI Act, the regulation outlines obligations that providers, deployers, importers, distributors, and product manufacturers of AI systems must follow to achieve compliance.

With that said, it isn't the only legislation that firms must pay attention to. From the OECD's AI principles focused on improving AI transparency, safety, and accountability to ISO 42001 – an international standard that specifies requirements for establishing, implementing, maintaining and continually improving AI

management systems – there are a host of new and evolving frameworks that enterprises must remain vigilant of.

While AI regulation is undoubtedly necessary, it poses a key challenge for enterprises as demands heighten. Indeed, by 2026, Gartner predicts that 50% of governments worldwide will enforce the use of responsible AI through



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regulations, policies and the need for data privacy.

Given these forecasts, Managed Service Providers must pay attention. Not only will MSPs need to stay ahead of the curve to achieve AI compliance themselves, but they must also keep a finger on the pulse of evolving regulations to ensure that they align with the needs of clients seeking support in this domain.

Outlining the CaaS opportunity for MSPs

Already, we're seeing these demands materialising in the form of a growing compliance-as-a-service market. Again, according to Gartner's forecasts, legal and compliance department investment in governance, risk, and compliance tools is expected to increase by as much as 50% between 2023 and 2026.

Here lies a huge opportunity for MSPs. The shift towards frameworks like NIS2, DORA, and AI-related regulations will only further increase complexity moving forward. As a result, those that lack the knowledge of key standards or simply don't have the time or resources to get up to speed and remain on top of them as they evolve will be looking for partners to help them achieve compliance.

By positioning themselves as experts in AI compliance, MSPs can become go-to partners for managing this complexity, offering AI compliance services, support and solutions to help businesses avoid regulatory risks and adopt AI responsibly.

Achieving this offers a pivotal chance to diversify revenue streams and unlock major competitive advantages, adding significant value beyond traditional IT

service and security support. In fact, a 2024 Statista report indicates that 39% of SMBs prefer working with MSPs who can provide end-to-end compliance services.

Moving beyond automation to deliver a holistic approach

As with any effort to diversify and explore new revenue opportunities, MSPs may have to adapt in order to capitalise effectively.

Primarily, it is important to recognise that effective AI compliance services require a mix of technologies, human oversight and solutions integration efforts. Further, this is a combination that potential clients have come to expect. According to PwC, 84% of businesses anticipate their compliance tool expenditure to increase by 2025, but most are also looking for solutions that include human oversight and adaptability.

For some MSPs, this might require a change in approach. Many MSP models are built on the effective use of automated solutions. With AI compliance, however, they will need to focus on balancing these solutions with additional compliance best practices, of which there are several:

● Integrating people, processes and platforms

First, people, processes and solutions must all be working in a harmonious and complimentary manner to achieve holistic compliance. To help clients achieve this, MSPs should be looking to leverage key central platforms that can enable automated processes to easily be balanced with human involvement to drive greater accuracy and transparency. According to a 2022 survey, companies using compliance platforms with automated reporting saved 25% of their compliance costs. However, those combining automation with human oversight saw 40% higher compliance success rates.

● Transparency and trust

Leveraging platforms that can both automate workflows and allow for human oversight is particularly crucial both in sectors where human judgement and experience are necessary, and in instances where clients need clear, easily accessible insights. According to

a Forrester study, 70% of customers prefer transparency in compliance management and want regular updates on their status. Therefore, it is vital that firms offer this, providing clients with user-friendly compliance dashboards that make it easy to interpret key data.

● Time and cost savings

It's also essential to let AI's merits shine. In this sense, any AI compliance platform should be capable of integrating with existing business tools to minimise manual work while still allowing for crucial human oversight. Gartner estimates that poor data quality costs organisations an average of \$12.9 million annually. Inefficient compliance processes often stem from inadequate data management, leading to increased operational costs and compliance risks. Automating routine tasks while leaving room for human expertise in risk assessments and audits helps MSPs achieve compliance faster and more cost-effectively.

Packaging AI security and compliance solutions as one comprehensive offering

By achieving these best practices, MSPs won't just be well placed to adhere to evolving regulatory requirements themselves. Equally, they will be able to use their expertise to help their clients seeking support on an ongoing basis.

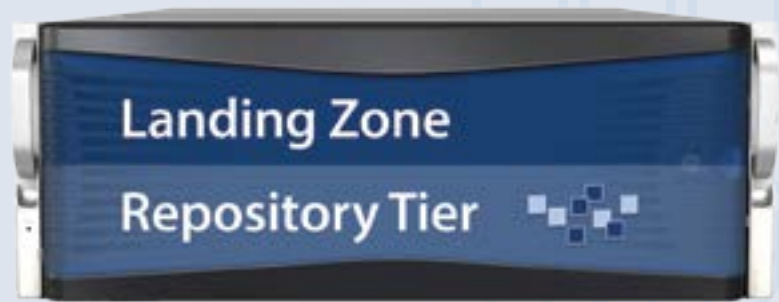
With IBM's Cost of a Data Breach Report 2023, revealing that breaches cost almost \$220,000 more on average when non-compliance with regulations was indicated as a factor in the event, the motivations for companies to seek effective CaaS solutions will only continue to grow as AI regulations evolve and expand.

By providing the tools to reduce the risk of penalties while also saving time and costs on audits and remediation efforts, MSPs can offer immense value as CaaS leaders, combining their existing skillsets in cybersecurity and IT best practices to provide a comprehensive client offering.

By packaging AI security and compliance as one integrated service offering, MSPs will be well placed to capitalise on a massive and growing market opportunity.

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Futureproofing IT infrastructure: three ways to build for tomorrow

Building an IT infrastructure is no mean feat. But the work doesn't stop there. For an IT infrastructure to stand the test of time, it needs to be futureproofed.

BY JONATHAN DEDMAN, DIRECTOR AT CLOUDHOUSE



ONE OF THE KEY benefits and reasons for futureproofing infrastructure is that it enables organisations to seamlessly integrate new technologies like AI and IoT without needing a major overhaul. And a well-designed, scalable IT network can continually adapt to changing demand, data volumes and user needs.

But what are the key ways to build a futureproofed IT infrastructure?

Embrace scalable, transparent solutions

Does your organisation run its own hardware, invest in the cloud, or is it across a hybrid of the two? This can be a critical decision to make. Whichever option you choose can benefit your organisation in different ways – you just need to ensure that your choice is the right scalable solution. By limiting the growth of your IT infrastructure, you're simultaneously limiting the growth of your company. If your infrastructure doesn't scale effectively, it will stifle your company's growth by creating bottlenecks, reducing efficiency, and increasing

operational costs. So, whether you're expanding your team, adding new services, or increasing transaction volumes, your infrastructure needs to be able to scale without requiring a complete rebuild.

This could involve designing systems with modular architecture to allow for flexible upgrades to specific parts or adopting cloud solutions to more quickly integrate the latest tech.

IT teams also need to be aware of the hidden costs of some cloud platforms, which can further inhibit flexibility. Complex licensing means that companies can't adapt as much as they need to and unexpected usage spikes or storage needs can create added and unforeseen costs that eat into your budget.

So, when it comes to costs, transparency equals control, and companies should only pay for what they need.

Invest in automation

How long does your team spend manually maintaining your IT infrastructure? And, if they didn't need to do that, what value could they be adding to the business if they could focus on more impactful tasks instead?

Automation is every IT team's friend. And IT infrastructure management doesn't need to be a manual, time-consuming task. In fact, organisations can greatly enhance their operational efficiency and free up valuable resources by embracing automation.

The first step is assessing which processes in your IT infrastructure could benefit from automation. Using the right tools, routine tasks such as software



updates, server monitoring, and security patching can be easily automated, for example. And by automating these processes, you can then focus on higher-value tasks like strategy development and performance optimisation.

If teams are using automation tools that can predict and alert them to potential problems before they become major issues, they can also establish a more proactive management of their IT infrastructure. What's more, automation helps reduce the risk of human error while enhancing overall system performance.

It's no stretch to say that without investing in automation, in the long run, IT teams will fall too far behind, stuck in a mire of arduous manual processes and resource-sapping maintenance. The growing range of competition, innovation – and threats – simply necessitates it.

Prioritise operational resilience

How often do you consider how resilient your operations truly are?

That doesn't just include mitigating against IT outages and internal process failures, something which was prolific in 2024, but also ensuring your organisation is resilient against cyberattacks and other risks – especially as these threats are on the rise.

The reasons behind this increase range from a complex internet landscape with more sophisticated bad actors to an increased reliance on cloud infrastructure by companies. Without operational resilience, your organisation will face significant and frequent disruption.

How operationally resilient an organisation is rests on how capable it is to continue IT operations when facing unexpected disruptions. This relies on establishing a range of policies and processes, such as fault-tolerant architectures, minimising dependence on single suppliers or points of failure, and using tech to proactively monitor for risks, to prevent, adapt or recover from such occurrences.

Building for the future

Futureproofing your IT infrastructure can make all the difference in how agile, secure and competitive your business is both now and in the future.

The process requires a holistic approach that incorporates scalable platforms, automation capabilities, and operational resilience to ensure that your IT estate can evolve with the changing technological landscape. And this is critical for organisations to stay competitive, secure and adaptable to new business and market needs. By embracing these three steps, you can begin to build an IT infrastructure not only for tomorrow, but for the decades ahead.

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