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# EDITOR'S WORDS

AI tipping point marks seminal moment for enterprise software

**T**he year 2023 has undoubtedly been defined by the rise of GenAI. While the integration of artificial intelligence into technology has been a gradual process for more than a decade, the past 12 months have witnessed a tipping point. This shift, exemplified by GenAI technologies like ChatGPT, has urged business leaders to understand and harness its potential. Simultaneously, it has provided technology vendors with a compelling business case that finally aligns with the cloud proposition.

GenAI signifies a new era in AI development which puts previous AI endeavors into the shade. Its impact on customer engagement is already profound. GenAI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants have revolutionized customer service by delivering instant responses, effectively resolving common issues and providing a seamless customer experience.

Data-driven decision-making is also being revolutionized by GenAI as rapid data processing abilities transform analytics into insights. Businesses can now extract valuable information, predict market trends with precision and make informed, data-driven decisions at a pace that was previously unattainable.

GenAI's impact also extends into personalization where AI-driven recommendation engines, underpinned by GenAI, are becoming integral to e-commerce and content platforms. These engines meticulously analyze user behavior and preferences, enabling highly personalized product recommendations, content suggestions and precisely targeted advertisements.

The technology excels at predicting demand, optimizing routes and managing inventory efficiently, resulting in substantial cost savings and elevated customer satisfaction levels in supply chain optimization. Before long we will be able to imagine a world where global production and supply for virtually all commerce will be optimized and managed by a higher force.

However, the rise of GenAI is not without its challenges and ethical considerations. Issues such as bias in AI algorithms, concerns surrounding data privacy and the potential for job displacement have come to the forefront. The lifeblood for GenAI is data and it is imperative that business users carefully consider whether they are implementing GenAI that feeds on their own data or more publicly available data. While ChatGPT is a remarkable tool, it is also prone to significant errors and anomalies. Data integrity will become the most valuable commodity a business can own.

As we approach 2024, the question is not whether GenAI will maintain its dominance, but how businesses will navigate this evolving landscape. The transformative power of GenAI is set to reshape industries and business users must remain agile as they leverage this groundbreaking technology.

The future belongs to those who embrace GenAI's potential while those that don't will be left in a bleak AI wilderness.

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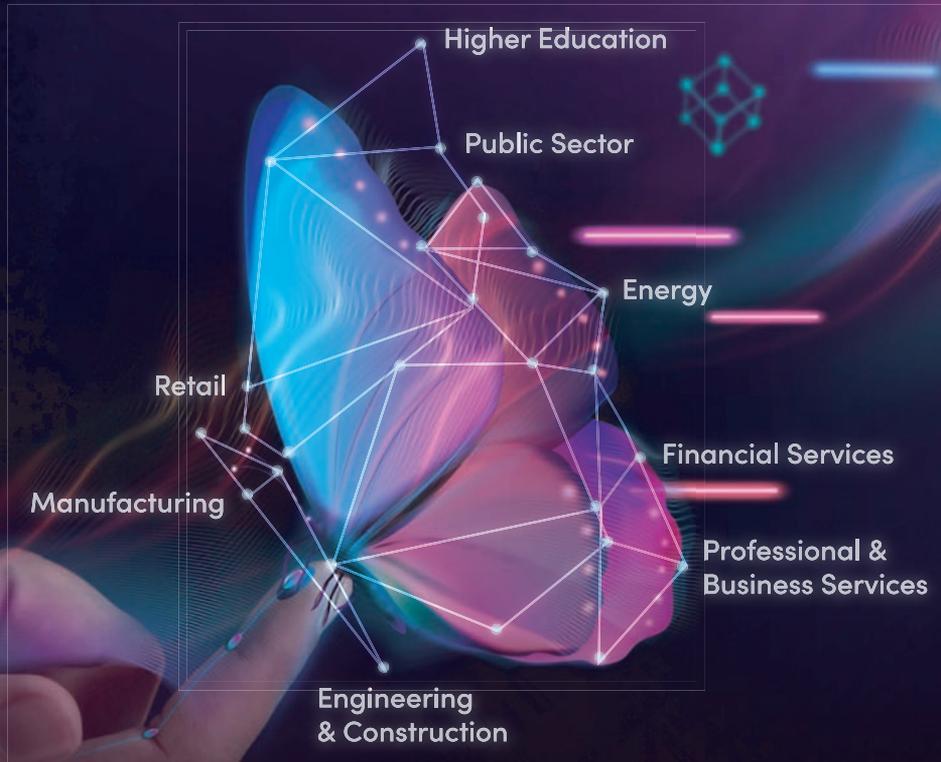
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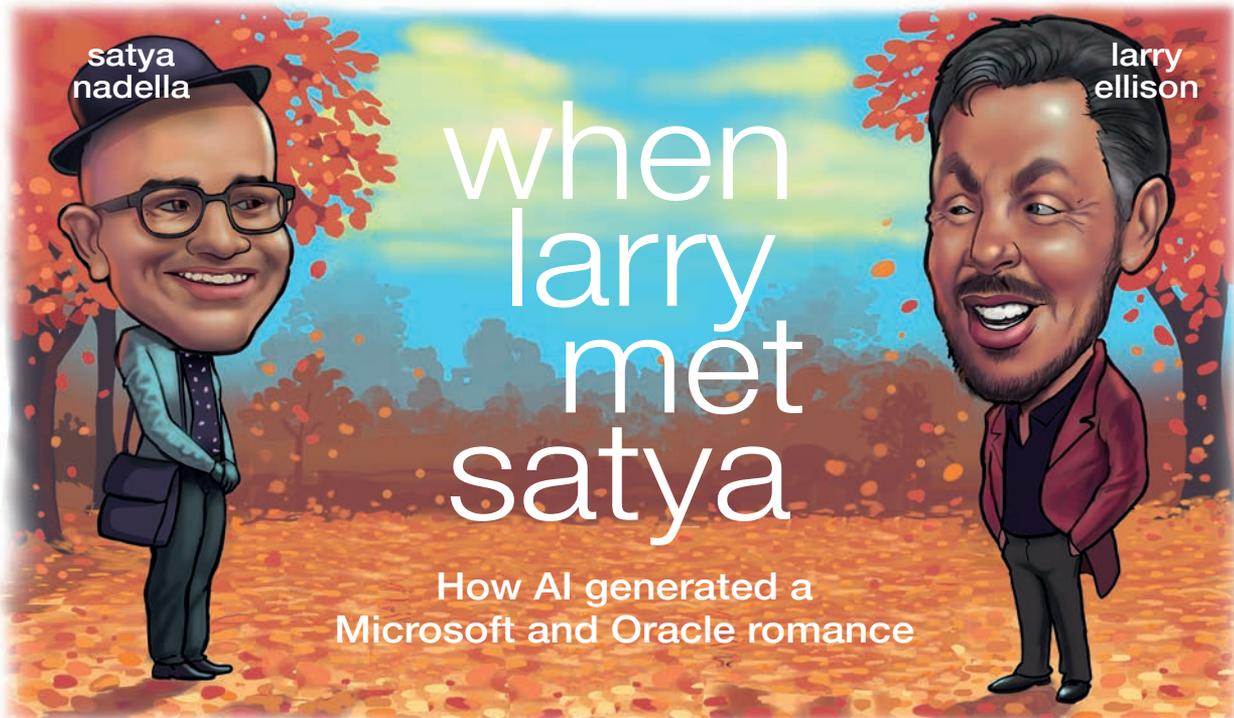


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# NEWS DEALS & WINS



BY STEPHANIE BALL

**O**racle and Microsoft have expanded their partnership with the launch of Oracle Database@Azure, with “cupid” AI generating the latest milestone in the vendors’ relationship.

Offering customers a multi-cloud experience, Oracle Database@Azure allows users to combine their Azure services with Oracle database services running on OCI, colocated in Microsoft Azure data centers.

In a briefing on the launch, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella was joined by Larry Ellison, Oracle CTO and founder, marking Ellison’s first visit to Microsoft HQ. A turning point for the rivals, the match was said by Nadella to largely come together from the needs of AI, with the solution allowing AI services such as **OpenAI** access to “where the data is”.

Nadella commented on the vendor nuptials: “We have a real opportunity to help organizations bring their mission-

critical applications to the cloud so they can transform every part of their business with this next generation of AI.

“Our expanded partnership with Oracle will make Microsoft Azure the only other cloud provider to run Oracle’s database services and help our customers unlock a new wave of cloud-powered innovation.”

In addition to AI advantages, customers will gain maneuverability in where they run their workloads. The service is expected to simplify cloud purchasing and management between Oracle Database and Azure services.

Oracle Database@Azure will offer support for customers migrating their Oracle databases to the cloud, with the benefit of a single operating environment within Azure for infrastructure, tooling and services. Moreover, customers will be able to deploy their Azure services with their fully managed Oracle Database services within a single data center.

The pairing is already bearing fruit as, in Microsoft’s Q1 24 earnings call, Nadella attributed the firm’s sizable 24 percent cloud revenue growth (to \$31.8bn) to its partnership with Oracle, particularly for its Azure offering. Reportedly, Microsoft saw the rapid increase within just 16 days of the offering being announced, as customer spending swelled in a rush to gain multi-cloud access to Oracle Databases, all under the one consumption bill.

Ellison added on the joyful union: “Microsoft and Oracle have been working together to make it easy for those customers to seamlessly connect Azure Services with the very latest Oracle Database technology.

“By collocating Oracle Exadata hardware in Azure data centers, customers will experience the best possible database and network performance. We are proud to partner with Microsoft to deliver this best-in-class capability.”

MICROSOFT  
CLOUD REVENUE  
UP 24 PERCENT  
WITH ORACLE  
AI UNION

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE SHEPHERD



Walter Sun

## SAP nabs new global AI head from Microsoft, Walter Sun

**S**AP has announced the appointment of Walter Sun as global head of AI. This move is a significant change of hats for Sun after an 18-year run with

**Microsoft**, leaving his role as VP of Copilot Applied Artificial Intelligence for business applications to join the German giant. SAP CEO Christian Klein announced dur-

ing his keynote address at SAP's flagship event, Sapphire 2023, that the company will now prioritize AI and has begun the process with a significant collaboration with Microsoft to embed GenAI into many of its offerings.

SAP has now bet on Sun's proven track record of driving technological innovation and his strategic business leadership to play a pivotal role in strengthening the company's AI efforts.

Sun has held multiple senior positions in scientific and product development, leading to his recent role at the helm of an interdisciplinary team to develop business-ready AI and ML capabilities.

Sun founded Bing Predicts, which leveraged anonymized and aggregated data for predictive analytics, and has delivered many AI features across Microsoft's portfolio, including for Bing Search, Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Microsoft Power Platform.

## IBM'S Q3 DEMONSTRATES FURTHER GROWTH

IBM's Q3 2023 results saw revenue totaling \$14.8bn, an increase of 4.6 percent, up 3.5 percent at constant currency.

The company reported software revenues of \$6.3bn, an increase of 7.8 percent. Consulting revenue also saw an increase of 5.6 percent, with reported revenue of \$5bn.

James Kavanaugh, senior vice president and CFO, IBM, said: "Our continued focus on the fundamentals of our business is driving solid revenue growth, profit margin expansion and strong cash generation."



James Kavanaugh

## IFS SEES STRONG 2023 RESULTS

**I**FS's financial results for its year-to-date FY2023 reported total revenues of €749m, an increase of 33 percent year-on-year (YoY).

For FY2023, software revenue was €597m, an increase of 37 percent YoY, while recurring revenue reached



€560m, an increase of 38 percent as cloud revenues jumped to 54 percent.

The company's strong results in the last 12 months were driven by new global customers and partnerships, including **Tele2, Van Oord, Wahaj** and **Roxtec**.



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## Infor mixes AI with blockchain in CloudSuite

Infor has unveiled a wealth of updates to its industry-specific CloudSuites, with new features developed for industries including food and beverage, fashion, automotive and more.

The innovations, part of Infor's new biannual cycle for major product releases, aim to help organizations better plan for onboarding new tech in the name of all things transformation and optimized customer delivery.

Core to the October release was Infor Enterprise Automation solution, a set of Infor OS multi-tenant cloud services, built on AWS. They have been designed to help companies scale automation across their organizations



by connecting data integration, AI/ML and RPA capabilities into a single platform.

The new features in the Infor October release include complete and industry-specific solutions, a digitally enabled open platform that enables ease of integration and hyper-productive workflows

**“OUR RPA IS CONSUMABLE – CUSTOMERS CAN USE IT STRAIGHT AWAY”**

aiming to improve time to value.

Phil Lewis, senior VP, solution consulting for Infor international markets, discussed the updates in Stockholm at Infor

Innovations Day Nordics, highlighting the addition of RPA to the new Infor CloudSuite. Lewis also admitted that attendees in Sweden may have been

thinking “that’s nothing new, that’s been around for years”.

But the SVP explained that Infor’s RPA is built into the platform and framework, plus connected to all Infor applications.

“There’s no lead time, no implementation nor integration,” as he put it. “It’s consumable – customers can use it straight away.”

## NTT DATA'S GROUP COMPANY SNAPS UP SAPPHIRE

**N**TT DATA Business Solutions AG, a group company of NTT DATA and an SAP partner, has announced the acquisition of **Sapphire Systems**.

With the acquisition, more than 1,200 existing customers with an average seven-year relationship with Sapphire will move to the NTT/NTT

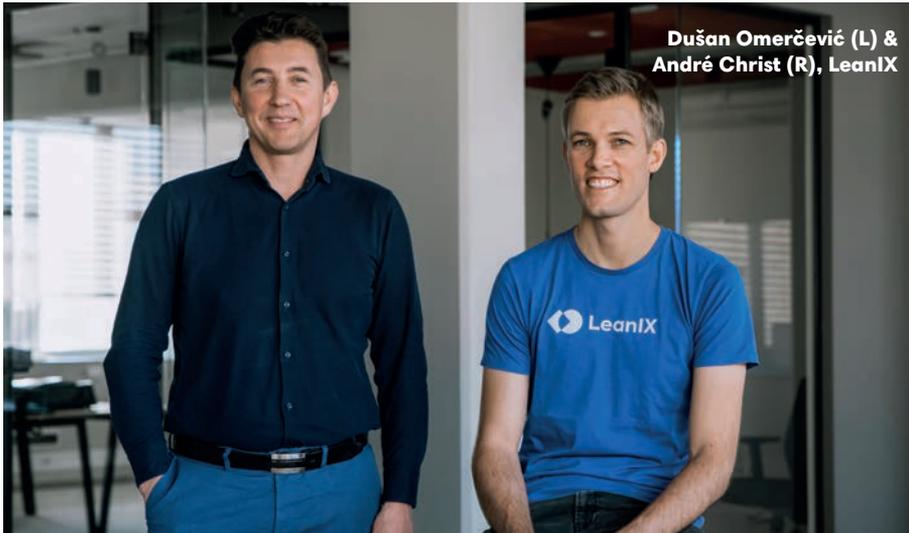


DATA Group. The merger of the two is expected to enhance Sapphire's targeted global expansion.

Norbert Rotter, CEO of NTT DATA Business Solutions and EVP NTT DATA, said: “We are excited to leverage the potential Sapphire offers to our global customers, especially their **ServiceNow** partnership capabilities. Sapphire's expertise

complements those of NTT DATA Business Solutions and will allow us to comprehensively serve the UK and US SME markets.”

Vince DeLuca, CEO of Sapphire, said: “This is a transformative opportunity for our entire team at Sapphire who have now become part of one of the world's largest digital operations providers.”



## SAP to acquire German EAM powerhouse LeanIX

**S**AP has announced it is entering into an agreement to acquire EAM software powerhouse, **LeanIX**.

With its SaaS solutions, AI enhancements and expertise in enterprise architecture management (EAM), LeanIX has an extensive track record of driving businesses to modernize their IT landscapes.

Joining forces with LeanIX, SAP aims to expand its business transformation portfolio with the creation of a transformation suite to give customers access to all tools required for continuous business transformations.

LeanIX has been a strategic partner of SAP and **SAP Signavio** solutions for the last decade, with many CIOs relying on LeanIX's offerings as part of their RISE with SAP digital transformations.

“WE’LL EMBED GENERATIVE AI TO OFFER SELF-OPTIMIZING APPLICATIONS AND PROCESSES”

Christian Klein, CEO and member of the executive board of SAP, said: “Building on our decades of expertise, we’ll embed generative AI to offer self-optimizing applications and processes that can help businesses achieve key goals such as maximizing cash flow while minimizing their environmental impact.”



Satya Nadella

### MICROSOFT SHOWS POSITIVE Q1 RESULTS AMID FASTER CLOUD GROWTH

Microsoft’s fiscal first-quarter earnings for 2024 outperformed analyst forecasts, with revenue in Intelligent Cloud leading the way with a 19 percent rise to \$24.3bn.

Company revenue reached \$56.5bn, increasing by 13 percent while server products and cloud services revenue were up 21 percent.

Satya Nadella, chairman and CEO, Microsoft, said that Azure, growing 29 percent this quarter, again took considerable share as the company continues to see more cloud migrations.

### Celonis appoints former Oracle EVP Mathieu

**Celonis** has appointed Philippe Mathieu as the go-to-market leader for EMEA, APAC and LATAM.

With over 25 years of experience in the enterprise

software industry, Mathieu will focus on driving Celonis’ expansion in EMEA, a region he was previously responsible for at **Palantir Technologies**.

Moreover, Mathieu brings over 15 years experience working at **Oracle**, most recently as executive vice president of EMEA and JAPAC, to this new appointment.



Philippe Mathieu

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**SAP**



Donald J.  
"DJ" Paoni

## Former SAP president DJ Paoni to lead Certinia

**C**ertinia has announced that Donald J. "DJ" Paoni has been appointed as CEO. Paoni, former president

of SAP North America, joins Certinia after over 25 years with the German ERP giant and succeeds Scott Brown, who has stepped down after three years in the role.

Paoni has a proven track record of driving growth and innovation, profitability and customer success in the US and Canada, with experience overseeing more than 25,000 employees and 200,000 customer relationships.

As a former SAP president, Certinia is betting on Paoni's ability to enhance employee and customer engagement and deliver a strong financial and operational performance to lead the company into its next phase of growth.

Paoni said: "I am thrilled to join

such a talented team and to help lead Certinia forward as we set our sights on accelerating growth.

"Certinia has developed the leading PSA offering alongside powerful ERP and Customer Success solutions, built a robust, loyal customer base in a market with rapidly growing demand and cultivated a team-oriented culture where innovation thrives."

Departing CEO Scott Brown, said: "I am incredibly proud of the Certinia

team and the progress we've made advancing our product offering, growing our customer base and differentiating Certinia as the leader for PSA solutions. It has been a privilege to lead such a talented and highly engaged group of professionals who are so committed to the company's culture of innovation, collaboration and excellence."

**"I AM  
THRILLED TO  
JOIN SUCH  
A TALENTED  
TEAM  
AND LEAD  
CERTINIA  
FORWARD"**

## Accenture sails ahead with strong fourth quarter performance

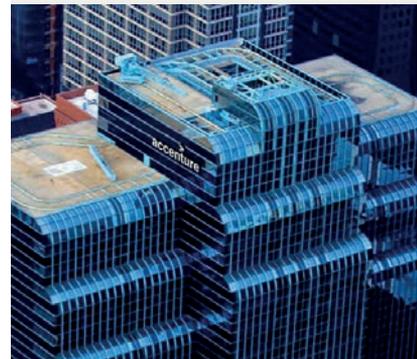
Accenture reported its fourth-quarter results with revenues of \$16bn, meeting expectations set back in Q3 with an increase of four percent in both US dollars and local currency.

The company reported total revenues for FY23 at \$64.1bn, an increase of four percent in US dollars and eight percent in local currency.

Julie Sweet, chair and CEO of Accenture, said: "I am extremely proud that we have achieved another strong year of financial performance in fiscal year 2023. Our ability to remain laser-focused on meeting the needs of our clients is reflected in new bookings of \$72bn in fiscal 2023."

Communications, media and technology, however, led the company down for the second quarter, running with a revenue of \$2.71bn. This was a decrease of 12 percent in US dollars compared with the fourth quarter of fiscal 2022.

GAAP operating income for fiscal 2023 decreased to \$8.81bn, or 13.7 percent of revenues, compared with \$9.37bn, or 15.2 percent of revenues, in fiscal 2022.



## ServiceNow teases with real GenAI “product” in Q3 23 success

**S**erviceNow has outperformed its guidance across most Q3 23 profitability metrics, citing GenAI impact as it increased 2023 subscription revenues and operating margin guidance.

NOW saw total revenues of \$2,288m in the quarter, representing 25 percent year-on-year (YoY) growth and 22.5 percent in constant currency. Subscription revenues reached \$2,216m, representing 27 percent YoY growth, 24.5 percent in constant currency – over one point above company guidance.

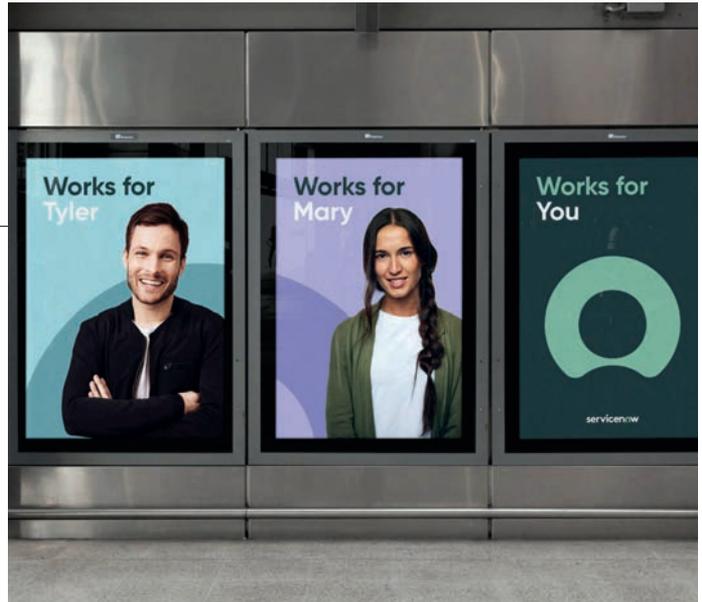
Spurred by GenAI’s “tailwind of growth”, ServiceNow chairman and CEO

Bill McDermott said that ServiceNow had “another beyond-expectations quarter”: “AI has strengthened the market dynamics for enterprise software. ServiceNow is the fastest-growing company in this market at a relative

scale. We have the highest rule of 50-plus across our peer set with the highest growth of any other large-cap software company,”

McDermott said. “GenAI represents 36 percent of AI spending overall. We believe every dollar of global GDP will be impacted by AI over

**“Others issued press releases - we released product”**



the next several years. This isn’t a hype cycle. It is a generational movement. In the last year, ServiceNow has doubled down on our AI investments. Our Vancouver release includes generative AI-powered Now Assist for every workflow.

“Others issued press releases - we released

product,” the CEO also teased in a comparison with rivals in the ERP space.

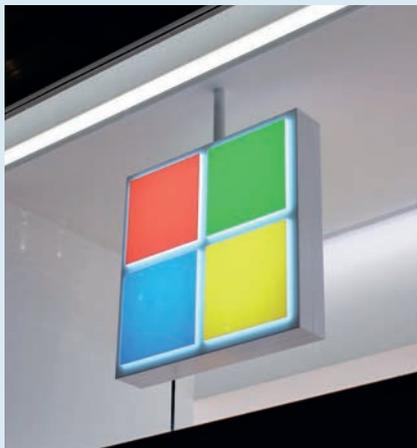
He also explained that ServiceNow boasts over 300 customers in its pipeline from “every industry and every stage of testing”, with GenAI SKU driving the highest number of customer requests for a pre-release product in the company’s history.

## Tata Consultancy Services collaborates with Microsoft

Mumbai’s **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)** has announced a collaboration with **Microsoft** to build autonomous solutions with Project Bonsai to help manufacturers transform.

Project Bonsai is a low-code, secure AI platform which will be used by TCS to accelerate the development of these autonomous solutions that can sense and respond in real-time, optimizing equipment and processes.

TCS and Microsoft plan to help companies modernize their



TURAG/UNSPLASH

manufacturing, reduce downtime and material wastage, improve quality and enhance employee safety.

TCS has already developed a warehouse optimization solution using Project Bonsai as part of its “build-with” initiative with Microsoft. The company is also planning to build AI-powered autonomous solutions in manufacturing yield optimization and energy management.

The Indian IT company is showcasing its autonomous solutions at TCS Pace Ports, its global network of co-innovation hubs.

## SAP S/4HANA HELPS BT'S TRANSFORMATION

**S**AP has announced that **BT Group** has chosen SAP S/4HANA to transform its cloud-based ERP operations and retire its 11 legacy finance platforms.

BT Group will run SAP S/4HANA to support its "Making Finance Brilliant" initiative to unite its finance data, reports and accounts, and power its business, **Openreach** and group finance operations in the UK.

This continued collaboration with SAP will support the deployment of BT Group's multi-year digital transformation journey aimed at enhancing its operations and building better colleague experiences.

BT Group has used SAP during its modernization

program since their partnership in 2019, streamlining finance operations before the switch to S/4HANA.

Through the creation of the MyHR platform under SAP SuccessFactors, BT Group has credited SAP for the enhancement of its colleague and customer experiences.

The partnership adds SAP Business Network to BT Group's SAP portfolio, following its onboarding of SAP SuccessFactors as part of its goals to enhance workforce experience. These deployments form the strategic transformation of its digital HR capabili-

ties, transforming learning, talent acquisition and management of contingent workers.

Jay Doshi, MD, digital, corporate units and India at BT Group, said: "The last couple of years have shown the necessity of being able to move fast and be agile to changing circumstances without

disrupting either the customer or colleague experience."

Ryan Poggi, managing director for SAP UKI, said: "With immediate savings and wider benefits in productivity and performance, our services can scale to meet and deliver against BT Group's transformation ambitions."



## MELISSA DI DONATO BECOMES CEO OF KYRIBA



**Kyriba**, a cloud-based finance and liquidity solutions firm, has announced the appointment of Melissa Di Donato as chair and CEO.

She succeeds Jean-Luc Robert in the leading role. Di Donato brings her experience of successfully leading **SUSE** as the firm's first female CEO who spearheaded unprecedented growth, including two strategic acquisitions and a multi-billion-euro IPO debut on the **Frankfurt Stock Exchange**. Prior to this, Di Donato held senior executive roles at **SAP**, **Salesforce**, **IBM** and **Oracle**.

## Salesforce acquires Airkit for more AI

**S**alesforce has agreed to acquire **Airkit.ai** to expand its AI capabilities and improve customer experience.

A creator of AI-powered customer service applications and experiences, Airkit.ai is often integrated within helpdesk systems to ease customer service teams.

Airkit.ai is set to help Salesforce's service, sales, marketing and commerce teams move faster into the future of customer engagement with AI.

The company also helps **Fortune** 500 businesses build AI-based customer service agents.





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■ ■ ■  
The better the question. The better the answer.  
The better the world works.



Christian Klein

## SAP Q3 results show Klein's next phase of transformation

**S**AP has announced its Q3 2023 financial results, demonstrating cloud revenue growth of 16 percent to €3.47bn, up 23 percent at constant currencies. SAP explained this success as mainly driven by the growth of its combined SaaS and PaaS portfolio, which was up 19 percent and up 26 percent at constant currencies.

The ERP giant reaffirmed its 2023 outlook with its total revenue up four percent to €7.74bn and up nine percent at constant currencies. Its current cloud backlog is up 19 percent to €12.3bn and up 25 percent at constant currencies.

Despite the strong cloud growth, however, SAP narrowly missed revenue goals, likely due to the decrease in software license revenue.

SAP S/4HANA current cloud backlog had an impressive rise of 58 percent to €4.2bn and up 66 percent at constant currencies. Owing to the company's aggressive RISE and

GROW campaigns, SAP S/4HANA cloud revenue was up 67 percent to €914m and up 77 percent at constant currencies.

Christian Klein, CEO of SAP, said: "Our Q3 results are yet another proof point that we have entered the next phase of our transformation. We accelerated cloud growth across our portfolio and significantly expanded our cloud gross margins.

"Our strong focus on innovation, including our latest SAP Business AI capabilities, ensure SAP's continued resiliency in the face of tough macroeconomic conditions and increasing geopolitical tensions."

Supported by a few major transactions, notably the intention to acquire EAM powerhouse **LeanIX**, software licenses revenue decreased by 17 percent to €335m and was down 14 percent at constant currencies. Cloud and software revenue was up four percent to €6.68bn and up nine percent at constant currencies.

"WE ACCELERATED CLOUD GROWTH AND SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED GROSS MARGINS"



SENDI GIBRAN/UNSPASH

## RED HAT UPGRADES COHESITY

**Red Hat** revealed that **Cohesity** has selected Red Hat Enterprise Linux as the foundational operating system of its Cohesity Data Cloud platform.

Cohesity brings AI-powered data security and management together in a single platform. With the Linux platform, Cohesity brings Red Hat's hardened technology, support expertise and domain-specific acumen to handle operating system upkeep, while allowing its experts to focus on innovating and enhancing the customer experience of the Cohesity Data Cloud.

## SOFTWAREONE'S GRAND Q3

**SoftwareOne's** Q3 2023 results saw the company's group revenue rise 8.4 percent YoY to CHF 233.4m.

Brian Duffy, CEO of SoftwareOne commented: "EMEA remained resilient and APAC demonstrated continued excellent momentum, while NORAM saw more cautious purchasing behavior by clients and longer sales cycles. Given this mixed outlook, we have revised our full-year 2023 revenue guidance to high single-digit growth [but have] maintained our adjusted EBITDA margin target of 24-25 percent."

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## Automation Anywhere adds automation and AI in a fresh launch

**A**utomation Anywhere (AA) has announced an array of generative AI-powered innovations at the Imagine conference in Austin, Texas, aimed to help companies put automation and AI to work across enterprises.

AA's CEO, Mihir Shukla, said that this year marks a very pivotal inflection point: "With the convergence of automation plus AI, we find ourselves in a moment in history, like the birth of a computer, or the internet, a moment that has reshaped our world irreversibly."

In a string of announcements, AA unveiled the expansion of Automation Co-Pilot for Automators and the launch of Autopilot.

Automation Co-Pilot for Automators will



Mihir Shukla

JAY WATSON

come with new capabilities to empower citizen and professional developers to create customized automations using natural language prompts to lower the barrier to automation in enterprises.

The new addition of Autopilot promises to give customers the ability to streamline automation development from process understanding to automation deployment.

## GOOGLE MISSES Q3 EXPECTATIONS DESPITE AI FLURRY

Google parent company, **Alphabet**, has announced its financial results for Q3, with reported total revenues of \$76.69bn, an increase of 11 percent year-on-year.

**Google Cloud** Q3 revenue continued to grow with an increase of 22 percent, as attributed to continued investment in GenAI solutions and innovations.

However, the growth fell short of analysts' expectations and as a result, shares for Alphabet fell more than six percent on announcement of the results.

## Deloitte and Infor set sail for the Nordics

**Infor** and **Deloitte** have extended their partnership with an expansion to the Nordics; combining Deloitte's consulting skills with Infor's cloud solutions, the joint venture aims to deliver faster value in the region.

The companies plan to help Nordic businesses capitalize on ERP solutions, focusing on ventures already in place.

Robert Bergström, partner, Deloitte, said: "The trend in ERP is that even large companies



JEPPE GUSTAFSSON/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

are now seriously looking at real cloud-based solutions. Infor [...] has shown time and time

again that their vision with cloud-based, multi-tenant solutions specifically developed

for different types of industries is the right way to go for the fastest possible conversion of their processes."

Malte Ekedahl, SVP and GM, Northern Europe, Infor, said: "Together, we can offer companies a fast track to change rather than letting customers tread water year after year, something that was previously more the rule than the exception when it comes to the traditional implementation of an ERP solution."

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Larry Ellison

## Oracle CloudWorld 2023: Big Red, Red Hat and more

**O**racle CloudWorld 2023 saw a string of Big Red announcements to help organizations make the most out of their Oracle solutions.

As revealed at the event, Oracle and **Red Hat** expanded their alliance on OCI, new features have been added to MySQL HeatWave and a limited launch was announced for OCI Generative AI service.

The company plans to add search capabilities using AI vectors to Oracle Database 23c, called AI Vector Search, which will also feature in Oracle Fusion Cloud Customer Experience.

Oracle also announced an

array of OCI updates, including Oracle Database@Azure, MySQL HeatWave Lakehouse on **AWS** and increased global partner adoption of Oracle Alloy. New open-source cloud services include Redis, OpenSearch and Apache Spark.

Designed for cloud-native and Java developers, new application development capabilities also aim to enable developers to rapidly build and deploy applications on OCI.

Finally, Oracle announced updates to Oracle Access Governance to help IT teams better assign, monitor and manage user access to applications and other tech resources.

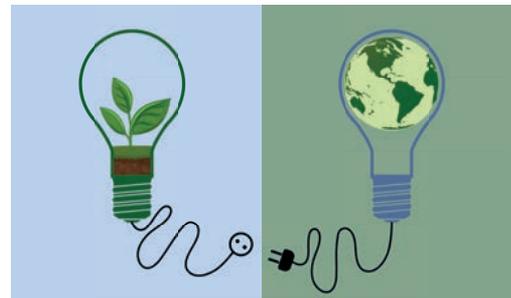
## SERVICENOW HELPS BORDEAUX MÉTROPOLE GO ECO-FRIENDLY

**ServiceNow** and **Bordeaux Métropole** have led a digital transformation for the French city in support of eco-friendly initiatives.

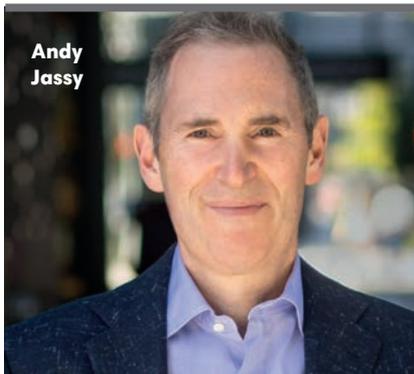
In 2016 the French Metropolis implemented the ServiceNow ITSM platform to establish a standardized regional information system. With ServiceNow's partner, **Aguaro**, the My IT Footprint app enhances the existing platform to place carbon footprint issues at the center of digital services day-to-day management. The city has set up a ServiceNow portal to engage users in carbon reduction and offers Digital Clean-up Days with the recycling company **EcoMicro**.

Matthieu Poulard, co-founder of Aguaro, said: "One benefit for Bordeaux Métropole is that it can build on the investments already made in the ServiceNow platform by automating many of the processes associated with its services."

Jean-Noël Olivier, CIO, Bordeaux Métropole, said: "ServiceNow's platform has been supporting both digital services management and importantly, with the extended partnership with Aguaro, enabling the monitoring of our carbon footprint from one year to the next."



ROSY ZEIGLER/PIXABAY



Andy Jassy

## AWS Q3 sees higher revenue, slow sales

**A**mazon has announced its Q3 financial results, with **AWS** becoming a key driver of revenue in spite of slowing sales.

For the quarter ended September 30, 2023, parent company Amazon saw overall revenue of \$143.1bn, a 13 percent increase year-on-year, whilst AWS reached \$23.06bn in revenue, ending a six-quarter downfall trend.

However, growth didn't come much stronger than in the previous quarter, falling short of the \$23.2bn expectation set by **StreetAccount** analysts.



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## Workday boosts GenAI portfolio

This year's **Workday** Rising flagship event in the US saw Workday unveil new GenAI with conversational text for a streamlined user experience in Workday Adaptive Planning.

Dennis Yen, general manager, Adaptive Planning at Workday, said: "By demonstrating the possibilities of using conversational AI, we are showing our commitment to delivering an easy-to-use, highly flexible planning solution to help our more than 6,300 Workday Adaptive

Planning customers automate key business processes and drive efficiency."

Workday also debuted new Human Capital Management features to elevate manager experiences by empowering them with Workday AI tools.

David Somers, group general manager, office of the chief human resource officer product, Workday, said: "Workday is the single source of truth for people data, enabling us to surface relevant team information to managers when they need it most, helping them be more impactful. Workday AI is making it easier for managers to succeed in their most important role: people leadership."

## PWC ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH OPENAI AND HARVEY

An alliance between **PwC**, **OpenAI** and **Harvey** aims to deploy foundation models for tax, legal and HR services.

Laura Hinton, tax, legal and workforce leader, PwC UK, said: "Our relationships and capabilities mean we can develop the most sophisticated AI solutions."

Brad Lightcap, COO, OpenAI, said: "The alliance will lead to significant advancements in AI technology."

Winston Weinberg, co-founder and president, Harvey, meanwhile said the news "represents a significant opportunity to bring the power of AI to the [...] industry".



ADRIANO/JUNSPLOSH



JEANLUCIHARD/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## Microsoft unveils supply chain Copilot

**M**icrosoft has announced updates to its Dynamics 365 Supply Chain Management Copilot, allowing supply chain teams to take recommended actions based on insights with conversational help.

Georg Glantschnig, VP, Dynamics 365 AI ERP, Microsoft, said: "Empowering workers is no longer just about building new workspaces to

work from, like control towers or command centers, but rather about how we surface relevant information and enable quicker decision-making in the flow of work.

"Going forward, we'll be mainstreaming these data management and integration capabilities into the Microsoft Power Platform, enabling customers and their partners to use the full

capabilities of the platform for a wider range of use cases.

"These desirable outcomes can be delivered in combination with the demand planning capabilities, positioning Microsoft as an industry leader in implementing generative AI into tools able to increase the productivity, collaboration and performance of employees at all levels of their organization."

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## ACCENTURE ANNOUNCES ARRAY OF ACQUISITIONS

**A**ccenture snapped up various companies in the quarter, including Tokyo-based integrated marketing firm, **SIGNAL**, with the acquisition aiming to strengthen the company's ability to support clients' marketing transformation across owned, paid and earned media.

Previously owned by **Vector**, a Japanese PR group, **SIGNAL** offers integrated marketing services combining capabilities across public relations, social media management, influencer marketing, advertising operations, research and web production.

With this acquisition, around 100 industry experts from **SIGNAL** have joined the Accenture marketing operations team in Japan to help organizations deliver a seamless experience across all channels, maximizing their marketing

investments.

Accenture also recently acquired **MNEMO Mexico** to extend its capabilities in Latin America and address the growing regional demand for managed security services.

Paolo Dal Cin, global lead, **Accenture Security**, said: "The addition of **MNEMO Mexico**'s team will help us grow our business in Mexico, expand our presence in Latin America and support our North America business."

This acquisition is part of Accenture's current focus on cybersecurity. The company has also recently collaborated with **Google Public Sector** to launch a new Cybersecurity Center of Excellence to help US federal agencies rapidly detect and respond to

Julie Sweet



cyberattacks.

Accenture has also agreed to acquire **ConcentricLife**, a subsidiary of **Stagwell** and a healthcare marketing agency with expertise in helping life science firms build an optimal brand experience.

**ConcentricLife** offers organizations full-service digital healthcare marketing and communications expertise and capabilities to help brands answer rising consumer demands in rare diseases, health and wellness.

## FIDELITY ADOPTS EY BLOCKCHAIN RECONCILER

**Fidelity Digital Assets** has been revealed as the first enterprise to adopt **EY**'s Blockchain Analyzer: Reconciler tool.

Paul Brody, global blockchain leader, **EY**, said: "The tool will provide an easy-to-use, web-based interface that allows their operations teams to query on-chain data for cryptocurrency data-related workflows."

Michael O'Reilly, COO, **Fidelity Digital Assets**, said: "We are pleased to leverage the **EY** organization's industry-leading, web-based Analyzer tool to supplement our internal risk management processes."



NAT WATSON/JUNSPASH

Fidelma Russo



## HPE BRINGS OUT HYBRID CLOUD UNIT

**H**PE has introduced a new Hybrid Cloud business unit, as led by HPE CTO, Fidelma Russo.

The new business unit will combine the **GreenLake** platform with the technologies and services of **HPE Storage**, **GreenLake Cloud Services Solutions** and the current office of the CTO organization.

Russo has led the team that created the **HPE GreenLake** platform for two years, which is now the company's central offering for its Hybrid Cloud.



## ORACLE NETSUITE REVEALS ALL AT SUITEWORLD 2023

DAVID VIVES/JUNSPASH

**2** 023's SuiteWorld event in Las Vegas saw **Oracle NetSuite** unveil an array of innovations, partnerships and new GenAI capabilities.

Oracle NetSuite debuted innovations that expand its AI portfolio, including AI-powered capabilities such as Text Enhance, Planning and Budgeting, Bill Capture and Analytics Warehouse.

NetSuite also unveiled the latest updates to its NetSuite Analytics Warehouse to help organizations improve

data management. This came with news of the completed acquisition of **Next Technik** to further provide field service management capabilities for NetSuite customers and enable them to digitize and streamline scheduling and dispatch.

Notably, it was announced that **Cohere** has selected NetSuite to support its mission and empower enterprises to enhance business processes with language AI, meeting the growing demand for GenAI-powered services for businesses.

Martin Kon, president and COO, Cohere, said: "With our business growing extremely rapidly, NetSuite provides huge efficiency advantages over our previous manual financial reporting systems, which had become too time-consuming and cumbersome."

Evan Goldberg, founder and EVP, Oracle NetSuite, said: "Over the past 25 years, our mission has stayed the same: deliver a unified suite of cloud ap-

plications that enable customers to do more with less and grow their businesses.

"We continue to extend the capabilities of NetSuite

OUR MISSION HAS STAYED THE SAME: DO MORE WITH LESS

to support this mission and help our more than 37,000 customers benefit from the latest cloud and AI innovations. Our

new updates include traditional and GenAI capabilities embedded throughout the suite to help increase user productivity, reduce costs and improve overall business efficiency."

### A UiPath to Bedrock

**U**iPath has launched its Integration Service Connector to provide customers with entry to **Amazon Bedrock**.

The connector enables automation and citizen developers to integrate GenAI directly in their UiPath Studio and Studio Web automations,

using their model of choice.

Graham Sheldon, chief product officer, UiPath, said: "The UiPath connector for Amazon

Bedrock is simple to use and brings the power of foundation models to all UiPath customers so they can accelerate building their own GenAI."

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# Powering the Growth of the Make, Move, Sell Economy with Cognitive ERP

Written by **Vaibhav Vohra**  
Chief Product & Technology Officer | Epicor



*We're thrilled to share that Epicor has been named a Leader in the 2023 Gartner Magic Quadrant in Cloud ERP for Product-Centric Enterprises based on our Ability to Execute and Completeness of Vision. To us, this acknowledgment underscores our dedication to bringing makers, movers, and sellers together with data-driven insights, composable industry cloud solutions, and a culture of partnership focused on customer success.*

## Executing Our Plan for the Cognitive Enterprise

We stand at a unique place in the evolution and modernization of ERP for our hardworking industries. We're more data-connected than ever before, and the capabilities of AI are changing daily (as recently as four years ago, there were only 100,000 AI experts in the world). Our task is to bridge the challenges of today with the art of the possible. In practical terms, that means we're empowering makers, movers, and sellers like you to gather, transform, and apply data across the supply chain so you can make smart decisions, stay ahead of disruption, and manage your business with people-centric, AI-infused solutions.

Every business is different. One-size-fits-all doesn't apply to your customers, your supply chain—or the technology tools you need to streamline operations and drive profits. Successful solutions are designed with your industry in mind, recognizing the critical requirements and unique efficiencies that deliver results in your marketplace. Effective tools also have self-service capabilities, so you can maintain control of daily processes—whether you're an experienced cloud user or just beginning your journey from on-premises to the cloud.

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on-time delivery, to remote point-of-sale capabilities that enhance the retail experience, to AI-assisted tools for maintaining quality and safety standards on the manufacturing floor, Epicor solutions are designed to improve your bottom line while staying on top of the changing needs of your business, your employees, and your industry.

It takes boldness and clear focus to light the way to supply chain transformation across industries. Our vision for the cognitive, digital ecosystem of tomorrow is delivering for customers today, giving them an insight advantage to optimize and grow.





## SAP announces new AI capabilities and partnerships

**A**t its annual SuccessConnect event at The Venetian Convention and Expo Center in Las Vegas, **SAP** announced that an AI-powered talent intelligence hub and skills framework is now built into the foundation of SAP SuccessFactors HXM Suite.

AI will span the entire SAP SuccessFactors Human Experience Management Suite to elevate the employee experience from talent recruitment and internal mobility to learning and performance management.

Aaron Green, chief marketing and solutions officer for SAP SuccessFactors at SAP, said: “The AI capabilities within SAP SuccessFactors solutions will enable organizations to put people and their experiences first.”

SAP also recently announced its new generative AI assistant, Joule, operating as a natural-language,

AI copilot. Embedded throughout SAP’s cloud enterprise portfolio, Joule will deliver proactive and contextualized insights from across SAP solutions and third-party sources to “know what you mean, not just what you say”.

With this, SAP expanded on new generative AI capabilities dedicated to its SAP Customer Experience portfolio (including Joule).

Similarly, SAP announced its collaboration with **Accenture** to support organizations to

adopt GenAI across their core business processes.

As part of the collaboration, the companies will create AI-enabled solutions and use cases that can enhance an organization’s investment in SAP technology by improving business performance and employee productivity, in turn improving time to value with SAP S/4HANA Cloud.

THE AI CAPABILITIES WILL ENABLE ORGANIZATIONS TO PUT PEOPLE AND THEIR EXPERIENCES FIRST

## BRING YOUR OWN LAKE WITH SALESFORCE AND SNOWFLAKE

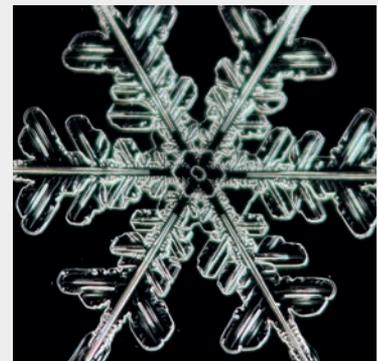
**Salesforce** and **Snowflake** have launched Bring Your Own Lake (BYOL) data sharing with the Snowflake Data Cloud from Salesforce Data Cloud.

The BYOL data sharing builds on the companies’ existing partnership to combine data storage and actionable insights for joint customers. This launch allows companies to gain insights into customer behavior, market trends and operational efficiency allowing them to react quickly to market changes, anticipate customer needs and optimize operations.

Salesforce and Snowflake also plan to launch BYOL Data Federation, which will allow Snowflake data to be accessed within Salesforce Data Cloud.

Rahul Auradkar, EVP and GM, Unified Data Services and Einstein, Salesforce, said: “Data is the foundation for providing AI-driven personalized and relevant experiences across all touchpoints. Our partnership with Snowflake enables companies to smoothly unite their data.”

Christian Kleinerman, SVP of product, Snowflake, said: “There is no AI without data, and together, we are well positioned to lead our customers through the growing interest in AI/ML.”



ZDENEK MACHACEK/UNSPLOSH

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## Celonis announces Symbio acquisition and PI Graph

**C**elonis has announced the acquisition of **Symbio**world, an AI-driven BPM software provider. This collaboration acts as an expansion of Celonis' AI portfolio which currently provides a host of GenAI assistants and tools for process intelligence.

As Symbio enhances the capabilities of the Celonis platform, customers are set to benefit from the use of AI-assisted process modeling.

Alex Rinke, co-CEO and co-founder of Celonis, said: "With Celonis and Symbio joining forces, we have made a huge leap towards providing our customers with an even richer class of process intelligence. Symbio enhances the capabilities of the Celonis platform, bringing world-class process mining and process management together in one home.

At the same time, Celonis and Symbio debuted their enhanced version of Process Cockpit which merges live process insights with Symbio's gathered data to create one unified experience.

At Celonis' annual Celosphere conference, held in Munich, Germany, the company also pioneered its Process Intelligence (PI) Graph along with new platform capabilities.

The PI Graph is a system-agnostic, enriched digital twin, providing a single process intelligence layer that supports improvements, automation and system transformation for back and front office and across-edge applications.

The company will use the new tech to capture and unify an organization's process data and enhance it with ML and deep process knowledge gathered from thousands of customer deployments over the past decade.

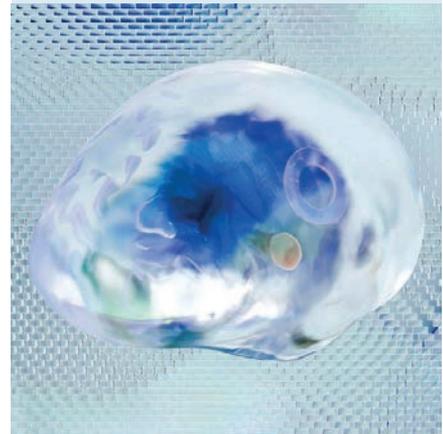
"WE HAVE MADE A LEAP TO A RICHER CLASS OF PROCESS INTELLIGENCE"

## EY AND IBM OFFER AI HR

**EY** and **IBM** announced a new step in their collaboration with the launch of EY.ai Workforce, an HR solution that helps organizations integrate AI into their HR business processes.

EY.ai Workforce combines AI automation from IBM watsonx Orchestrate with EY's knowledge in HR transformation.

Andy Baldwin, global client service managing partner at EY, said: "EY.ai Workforce reimagines ways of working by facilitating businesses to make the most of their talent, putting humans at the center of technology."



GOOGLE DEEPMIND/JUNSPASH

## IBM AND AWS DELIVER GENAI TO BUSINESSES

**IBM** aims to expand its GenAI expertise on **AWS** to deliver GenAI to businesses.

**IBM Consulting** will train 10,000 consultants by the end of 2024 as the two companies aim to deliver joint solutions and services upgraded with GenAI capabilities.

Manish Goyal, senior partner, global AI and analytics leader, IBM Consulting, said: "This suite of reengineered solutions with embedded GenAI capabilities can help our mutual clients to scale GenAI applications rapidly and responsibly on their platform of choice."

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## IT'S "SNOW TIME": SNOWFLAKE'S SLATE OF AI ADVANCEMENTS

**A**nnounced at its Data Cloud World Tour event at ExCel London, **Snowflake** has added new features to its data software offering alongside several partnership developments.

The firm is launching Document AI, a new analysis technology that uses AI technology to take unstructured objects and turn them into semi-structured information.

The company also



Frank Sloodman

announced the general availability of Snowpark Container Services on the Snowflake Platform. It

enables any new or legacy function, application or functional database to deploy and run inside of

Snowflake within a containerized setting, using open-source and Kubernetes technology.

At its Snowday 2023 event, meanwhile, Snowflake also unveiled Snowflake Cortex (private preview), a fully managed service that enables organizations to easily analyze and build AI apps in the Data Cloud.

Christian Kleinerman, SVP of product, Snowflake, said: "Snowflake is making it easier for users to put all of their data to work, without data silos or tradeoffs."

## IBM and KPMG expand partnership to aid client use of S/4HANA

**IBM** and **KPMG** have announced that they are expanding their partnership to aid clients in implementing **SAP S/4HANA** in the energy and utilities industry.

While IBM brings a deep experience within a broad partner ecosystem to the collaboration, KPMG brings a business-led, SAP-enabled functional transformation experience and energy and utility industry knowledge.

As a team, KPMG and IBM have complementary skill sets across SAP technology implementation, cross-sector business processes,

regulatory, risk, finance, tax considerations and operational issues. The combination of the firms' skills and experience can strengthen outcomes for the benefit of clients and lead to successful ERP transformation across the energy and utilities sector.

Brad Stansberry, partner, energy and chemical industry advisory leader, KPMG, commented: "Identifying the potential value created by financial considerations up front in the planning of an ERP implementation can significantly improve the likelihood of success."

"Working with IBM



MIKITA YOUNSLASH

Consulting and the business and technical expertise they bring will expand our ability to help our joint clients accelerate

productivity and unlock growth opportunities."

The pair have previously delivered a comprehensive business transformation at **Liberty Utilities**. The four-year program built on Liberty's "customer first" project to augment the company's customer, finance, asset management, field services and supply chain operations.

Jody Allison, vice president, transformation, Liberty Utilities, said: "IBM Consulting has been our trusted partner and we continue our collaboration to accelerate our remarkable transformation journey."

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## Philip Taphouse

Chief Technology Officer



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## EY AND SAP PAVE THE ROAD TO SUSTAINABILITY

**E**Y has expanded its alliance with SAP to advise on the blueprint of the next generation of software solutions to create more impactful climate, nature and social impact strategies.

These technologies include the SAP Sustainability Control Tower solutions where EY teams will work with SAP to define the capabilities needed for the next generation of sustainability solutions.

EY solutions leveraging SAP Sustainability Control Tower allow organizations to

progress from record to report to action and embed sustainability metrics in their internal performance management processes.

Both teams are helping companies embed environmental considerations in business processes across finance, tax, supply chain, manufacturing and HR as

part of their SAP S/4HANA Cloud transformations.

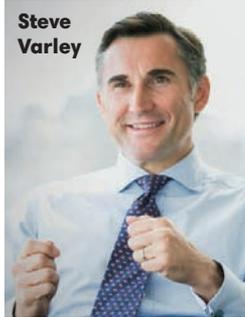
In addition, EY teams are bringing market-leading consulting and carbon accounting ex-

perience to help realize the green ledger concept envisioned by SAP. Both companies will further develop the requirements and analytics needed to move greenhouse gas accounting from estimates to a more accurate reflection of a company's footprint.

Steve Varley, global senior advisor, EY, said: "Organizations need to shift from talking about pledges and promises to showcasing evidence of what they have achieved, actions taken and progress. Leveraging ac-

curate and comparable sustainability data at the same level as financial data can help accomplish this."

Gunther Rothermel, co-general manager and chief product officer for SAP Sustainability, said: "Together, SAP and EY can achieve even greater market and planetary impact by working together on a joint sustainability ambition. Customers want the ability to track sustainability metrics the same way they do financial data and we're focused on helping them do that."



Steve Varley



MIHA REKAR/JUNSPASH

## Capgemini extends silicon engineering with HDL acquisition

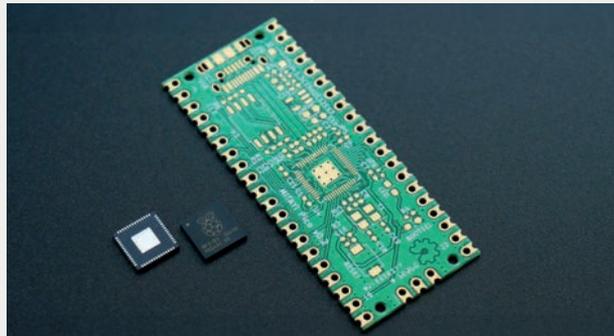
**C**apgemini has acquired **HDL Design House** to reinforce Capgemini's silicon services as a key enabler of the intelligent industry revolution. This acquisition will also largely reinforce its semiconductor presence in the EMEA region.

William Roze, CEO of Capgemini Engineering and group executive board member, said: "As part of our intelligent industry work for clients,

Capgemini is designing, developing and delivering tomorrow's products and services that are both smart and connected.

With digital now inside everything, semiconductors are at the heart of companies' business transformations."

Predrag Markovic, president and CEO, HDL Design House, said: "After 22 years of building and developing world-class expertise for each and every step of systems on a chip implementation and continuously increasing our capabilities in chip design services, while working with major semiconductor companies on leading-edge development projects, HDL Design House begins a new chapter in its evolution."



VISHNU MOHANAN/JUNSPASH



ROMAN/PIXABAY

## SAP S/4HANA cloud goes private

**S**AP announced S/4HANA cloud private edition as part of its mission to help customers move to the cloud at “their own pace.”

Eric van Rossum, chief marketing and solutions officer, SAP Cloud ERP told ERP Today: “The S/4HANA Cloud 2023 release is a big move for us. Not only are we going to have full parity scope with ECC, but it also builds on so many more of the capabilities which we’re delivering with S/4.”

Regarding ECC customers shifting to the cloud, van Rossum believes that from a functional perspective there is “no reason” for clients to not make the transition.

“One of the components – which was actually revamped into S/4 and is one of the big innovation blocks we’ve seen in the 2023 release – is around service management. So we always had that in ECC [...] but we’ve reimagined that and rebuilt it based

on the HANA capabilities. That is now fully fledged on par with the functionality we had – but it also offers so much more of what’s expected from a service business model today.”

Regarding RISE with SAP, van Rossum added: “Within the context of RISE for S/4HANA, Cloud 23 is really the foundation of RISE where we’re targeting this to take our install base to the cloud at the customer’s pace and really leveraging the asset they have. A lot of customers have invested a considerable amount of money

but also have an IP in this and they want to leverage that asset.

“It doesn’t require a total disruption, but customers are able to build on what they actually have today and where they’ve made investments in previous years.”

**It doesn’t require total disruption – customers can build on what they actually have today**

## DELOITTE LAUNCHES ASG TO HARNESS SERVICENOW POWER

**Deloitte** has launched its **ServiceNow** Assets and Solutions Group (ASG), a team built to harness the power of the ServiceNow platform to deliver industry-specific outcomes and digital transformations utilizing GenAI.

Asish Ramchandran, Deloitte’s global chief commercial officer for ServiceNow, said: “Shaped in tandem with ServiceNow, Deloitte’s innovative industry offerings continue to cement our alliance [...] that is reshaping the business of today and tomorrow, leveraging dramatic advances in GenAI.”

## ALIBABA CLOUD, SALESFORCE EXPAND CHINA PARTNERSHIP

**Alibaba Cloud** has announced the general availability of **Salesforce** Sales Cloud, Service Cloud and Salesforce Platform on its platform. Exclusive features for mainland China will include integrations with Chinese social media and messaging platforms to help companies serve customers on their preferred channels.

Edward Cai, CCO, Alibaba Cloud, said the move “will enable enterprises operating in mainland China to better meet the unique local demands while maintaining global Salesforce standards”.



LI YANG/UNSPLOASH



PAVEL RUMME / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## LSEG upgrades finances with Oracle Cloud

**L**ondon Stock Exchange Group (LSEG), a global financial markets infrastructure and data provider, has chosen Oracle Cloud to transform its finance operations.

LSEG needed to streamline its operations to enhance business insights and drive profitability across its line of business. To do this, the company decided to replace its 17 legacy finance systems with Oracle applications.

With Oracle Fusion Cloud and Oracle Financial Services Applications running on a singular, unified platform, LSEG can increase efficiency, reduce costs and improve its financial planning, forecasting and controls.

Oracle Fusion Cloud ERP will enable LSEG to automate financial processes and streamline global procurement processes. Oracle Fu-

sion Cloud Enterprise Performance Management will also enable LSEG to align financial and operational planning, optimize forecasting and scenario planning and increase the efficiency and accuracy of reporting.

Joanna Fielding, group head of transformation, finance, LSEG, said: "With Oracle Cloud, we will be better able to align our financial operations to enhance per-

formance, make better use of data, increase efficiency and streamline billing - all while delivering outstanding service to customers."

Cormac Watters, executive vice president, Oracle EMEA, said: "With Oracle Cloud, LSEG has an integrated business platform that will shape its future growth with scalable, sustainable financial efficiency and insights that will help it serve its more than 45,000 customers."

**LSEG NOW HAS AN INTEGRATED BUSINESS PLATFORM TO SHAPE FUTURE GROWTH**

## Accenture and Google Public Sector launch cybersecurity CoE

Accenture Federal Services and Google Public Sector have announced the launch of a new Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (CoE) to help US federal agencies rapidly detect and respond to cyberattacks. The Cybersecurity CoE will be powered by the front-line threat intelligence of Mandiant and Accenture Federal Services' full-spectrum cybersecurity services.

John Goodman, CEO of Accenture Federal Services, said: "Today's federal missions demand next-generation cybersecurity solutions that can pre-empt and detect threats and assure the reliability of our nation's critical systems.

"We look forward to innovating with Google [Public Sector] to create solutions that our clients need to be confident in their cyber readiness and resilience."

Karen Dahut, CEO of Google Public Sector, said: "Our expanded alliance with Accenture Federal Services will provide the technology and professional expertise that agencies need to mitigate vulnerabilities and quickly respond to threats and breaches."



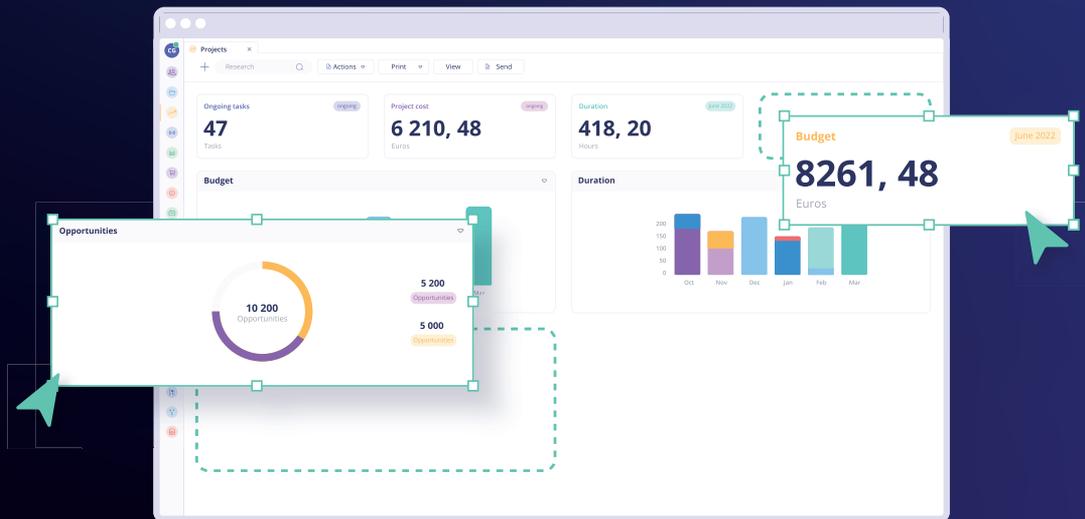
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## RISE WITH SAP TO TRANSFORM TATA PROJECTS

**T**ata Projects has selected RISE with SAP and surrounding cloud solutions for its business transformation journey.

By selecting SAP S/4HANA Cloud through RISE with SAP, Tata Projects will now have access to SAP's latest cloud innovations in augmented analytics and intelligence to modernize its IT landscape. Developing a unified technology platform can help Tata Projects to simplify complex data sources across the organization while providing a single source of truth for its teams, according to SAP.

Vinayak Pai, CEO and managing director, Tata Projects, said: "Embracing the cloud is no longer a technological choice, but a strategic imperative. Cloud solutions from SAP will not just help us transform digitally but also empower our teams to innovate,

accelerate project lifecycles, drive efficiency and infuse agility across the board."

With several marquee infrastructure and industrial projects under way, Tata Projects will utilize RISE with SAP for its mission to

deliver predictable and sustainable projects through innovation and technology.

"I'm delighted to continue working with Tata Projects to help them harness the innovative power of the cloud through RISE with SAP," said Scott Russell, member of the executive board of SAP and lead of customer success. "With the power of SAP S/4HANA Cloud, private

edition, Tata Projects will be able to collaborate even more easily across its operations. We're excited to support Tata Projects' success with SAP."

Tata Projects is described as one of the fastest-growing technology, engineering, procurement and construction companies in India. The country also played host to this year's SAP TechEd event, as held in Bangalore during November.

—  
CLOUD  
IS NO  
LONGER  
A CHOICE,  
BUT AN  
IMPERATIVE  
—



## Workday sees Q3 24 revenue growth as companies skill up

**W**orkday has announced its Q3 financial results for fiscal 2024, demonstrating a 16.7 per cent leap in total revenues

from the year before, reaching \$1.87bn.

As businesses are looking to scale and drive productivity in the tough economy,

Workday's co-CEO, Carl Eschenbach, said that they can't achieve both by simply hiring more, so the company is reaping the benefits of "leaders

turning to Workday to help them reskill and upskill their workforce, all while delivering a great employee experience [driving] productivity".



DARREN MILLER

Carl Eschenbach

## Workday and ADP join forces on the HR experience

**A**nounced at its annual customer conference, **Workday** Rising, Workday and **ADP** have extended their partnership to provide an enhanced global payroll, compliance and HR experience for their joint customers.

Workday and ADP plan to continue building on their decade-long relationship and will aim to provide a streamlined experience for payroll administrators and improve the overall experience for customers.

Together they hope to develop more seamless interactions between Workday and ADP systems and enhance deeper customer visibility into data across their HCM environment.

Maria Black, president and CEO, ADP, said: “We are laser-focused on providing smart, easy and powerful solutions that help our clients confidently achieve their goals, and enhanced integrations provide the personalization we know they desire. This deeper partnership

with Workday builds on our long-standing relationship to provide a technology-first experience across our shared clients’ entire HCM suite.”

According to a recent ADP Potential of Payroll study, navigating disjointed HR and payroll systems

has become an increased concern for companies. The study showed that 94 percent of global organizations agreed that they would like to see integration across all of their systems.

Carl Eschenbach, co-CEO, Workday, said: “This expanded partnership with ADP is an exciting next

step in a journey spanning over ten years of jointly servicing one million employees and thousands of customers. By deepening the partnership between our two companies, we are better equipped to expand our global reach and serve our joint customers’ ever-evolving needs.”

“WE ARE LASER-FOCUSED ON PROVIDING SMART, EASY AND POWERFUL SOLUTIONS”

## DELOITTE AND SAP COMBINE GENAI AND BTP TO EXPAND ERP

**Deloitte** has unveiled plans to expand its practices for **SAP** Business Technology Platform (SAP BTP) to build and deliver GenAI solutions to clients.

The expansion will enhance Deloitte and SAP’s existing relationship of providing organizations with a simplified technology architecture that fosters agility while enabling rapid innovation.

Through the combination of SAP BTP and GenAI, Deloitte’s experts in business transformation will be able to architect, deploy and run use cases optimized for cloud solutions and designed to deliver value to enterprise ERP platforms.

Chip Kleinheksel, SAP CTO, Deloitte Consulting, said: “Deloitte’s ready-to-deploy use cases, SAP and broader technology experience, combined with SAP BTP, can provide intelligent and responsive solutions, from small-scale edge innovation to large-scale transformation.”

Juergen Mueller, CTO and member of the executive board, SAP, said: “This expansion of Deloitte’s SAP BTP practice showcases how we continue to find new ways to innovate and unlock new value for customers.”



Juergen Mueller

**BRIAN  
DUFFY**

**99 PROBLEMS?  
THE FIX IS  
ONE**

BY PAUL ESHERWOOD | PHOTOS BY KURT REBRY



BRIAN DUFFY

When Ice T wrote the lyric “99 problems...” he wasn’t contemplating the elaborate architecture of contemporary IT environments. Nor was Jay Z when he popularized the same line a few years later. If we asked either of those two legendary rappers to rework that famous hook for today’s CIOs, it might sound more like “999 problems” given the scale of complexity and confusion that many face at the end of 2023.

**O**n hearing the announcement that Brian Duffy was leaving SAP after 18 years to join **SoftwareOne**, I had one question: Software Who? Some people may also have asked, Brian Who? But for those who don’t know, Duffy was formerly the president of cloud at SAP and was instrumental in leading SAP’s own cloud transformation and the RISE program.

Duffy is highly regarded both inside and outside of SAP and his decision to leave the German giant after such a long tenure came as a surprise. Even more surprising was that he had joined a company I had barely heard of.

“SAP taught me so much. But I felt that I could learn more elsewhere,” said Duffy. “The decision was more about joining SoftwareOne than leaving SAP. I wanted a new challenge and to test myself. The opportunity to take on a CEO role where I could really move the needle was attractive and the more I found out about the business the more excited I was.”

A little research reveals that SoftwareOne, based in Switzerland, started life in 1992 as **Microware AG**. After a series of mergers and acquisitions, most notably when it acquired a US entity called ‘Software-

ONE’ it adopted that name for the parent company.

**KKR** took a 25 percent stake in 2016 and later floated the business on the **Swiss Stock Exchange**. Since then, the company has continued to make acquisitions but has occupied a fairly anonymous position in the enterprise tech industry until Duffy joined and **Bain Capital** launched a hostile takeover bid just six months ago (more on this later).

Its modest revenues of \$1bn belies the true scale of the company’s influence. SoftwareOne resells and manages more than \$22bn of licenses for **Microsoft** and provides the backbone to more than 175 million Office 365 users around the world. In addition, it works with a further 7,500 software vendors to ensure that customers have access to a comprehensive array of technology solutions which are delivered by 9,250 employees operating in 90 different countries.

In addition to its impeccable Microsoft credentials, the firm has deep capabilities in application management, data and AI, cloud services and digital workplace solutions. It works with the biggest ERP publishers like SAP and Oracle and partners with hyperscalers including **Azure**, **Google** and **AWS**. It provides an end-to-end advisory service for customers through the full lifecycle of software consumption from benchmarking, negotiation and licensing



to selection, procurement and deployment.

The decision to feature our first non-vendor CEO on the cover of ERP Today was inspired by our search for diversification. ERP software and consulting services are fast becoming commoditized products - SoftwareOne told us it had a different story to tell so we packed our bags for Zurich to find out more.

### **The mess we are in**

At first, Duffy's decision to leave the comfort of the world's leading ERP brand to join a Swiss outfit that didn't really do ERP seemed like an odd decision. However, during my three hours with Duffy and his team at SWON headquarters in Zurich, I discovered that the company he had joined may hold the answer to many of the conundrums that are dogging businesses around the world.

Cyber threats, cost control, hybrid workforces, licensing agreements, quarterly updates, chatbots, green targets, GenAI, data privacy, application management, talent acquisition and ERP modernization - to name just a few.

It's time for a reset. It's time for technology customers to rationalize and optimize what they have before biting off anymore. It's time to stop buying and start utilizing, then reinvest whatever can be

saved in tech that can accelerate change. Legacy used to refer to mainframes and on-premise technology but today, many companies already have a cloud legacy and have spent fortunes searching for the optimal state without fully realizing the benefit from their investments.

"Many thought cloud was the answer to everything but it's people and processes that define a transformation," Duffy told me.

In every evolutionary step there is a period where the final incarnation of the end state is unclear. For twenty years, that end state has been a mirage for many businesses - each new piece of tech promised to deliver nirvana and yet it just added another layer to distract and complicate. After two decades of groping for a solution, I see business leaders exasperated with their choices, frustrated by their returns and fearful that one missed step could be a terminal mistake.

"Many are caught in the middle; fearful of missing out and afraid to make the wrong decision," said Duffy.

In all but the most extreme of cases, businesses need an ERP system that is stripped back to the bone, consumed through the public cloud and coupled with a platform for independent innovation.

This halcyon state is a far cry from the chaos that

## The relationship that SoftwareOne has with its customers is not underpinned by the need to sell consulting days for big ERP projects and that assures a level of authenticity that is vital in a very complicated environment.

most enterprise leaders preside over and SoftwareOne is on a mission to help navigate the journey, irrespective of a customer's starting point.

"Most customers are at different stages: some need help to navigate from one place to another and some are genuinely confused and don't know where to go," said Duffy. "They trust SoftwareOne to support them through these critical decisions and to help them make the right choices."

Today, every business on the planet is a technology company. From butchers to bakers and everything in between, there is only one business model. In the past, the recipe for success was simple: be good at making something and know how to sell it. Today, the list of requirements for a competitive business is long and convoluted - and it all rests on a company's ability to buy, make, sell, distribute and service through digital channels.

The technology era was meant to make companies more efficient and our lives easier. From where I am standing it has increased costs, confused most business leaders and thrown workers into a maelstrom of digital dissatisfaction.

"There's genuine confusion out there, and who can blame them," said Duffy. "We're seeing more demand from our customers because the landscape is becoming more complicated. Customers need our help to show them the way forward, which steps to take first and how to identify the real opportunities. We can help eliminate costs and strip out underutilized tech so they can reinvest in the technology that is going to accelerate their journey."

This unique relationship with the customer is one that GSIs are unable to replicate because they are so intrinsically tied to the vendor narrative. Many customer relationships are ultimately owned by the audit partner or through a long-standing

relationship with a consulting firm that has supported the business over many years. While these relationships are valuable, they are not without their challenges and customers cannot be assured that the advice they are receiving isn't tainted by commercial interests.

The relationship that SoftwareOne has with its customers, many of whom are also customers of the same global consulting firms, is not underpinned by the need to sell consulting days for big ERP projects and that assures a level of authenticity that is vital in a very complicated environment.

"We're not pitching for the biggest implementations," said Duffy. "Sure, we can do some of that but our services and advisory business is designed to help customers navigate the end-to-end process and help steer them towards the right decisions. We're agnostic and we can help you understand which is the best solution, that's number one. Then we can help you think about how you might implement that solution. We help define the blueprint, we make a plan, we think about how we take this to market and find the right partner."

This dynamic is unusual and a clear point of difference for SoftwareOne as they are not predisposed to push a particular product or steer the customer towards their own implementation services. You should think of SoftwareOne as an independent strategic advisor to CIOs. An advisor that measures every customer engagement on the outcome rather than the number of consulting days it has sold.

"The partnership we have with our customers is unique because we have very deep relationships with the CIO and the purchasing departments," said Duffy. "Customers in more than 90 countries rely on us to help them navigate everything from buying software to complex migrations and you



## BRIAN DUFFY

don't get that end-to-end solution from anyone else, not even the GSIs."

Duffy described his company's role through a unique analogy that cleverly depicted his vision for the role SoftwareOne can play in supporting customers on their transformation journeys.

"Transformation is hard and customers need protecting at times," he said. "It's a bit like the peloton in the **Tour de France**; the team surrounds the elite riders on the uphill sections to shield them from the wind, to make sure the main rider conserves energy for the end of the race. We are shielding and protecting our customers and when the time is right the peloton opens up and the customer accelerates away."

### The fear factor

It is impossible for two similar companies to compete if they are not on an equal technology footing and this is felt most acutely in the mid-market. A superior technical deployment will outperform the alternative to many orders of magnitude, while market leaders can be plunged into darkness by new competitors with dominant technology.

The mid-market has largely been ignored by GSIs and many have moved ahead with cloud

transformations deprived of the appropriate guidance. Still relatively early in their journey, mid-market companies are also much more prone to decision paralysis where business leaders do not have the level of support and knowledge to make the correct strategic technology decisions.

"They are dealing with challenges on all fronts," said Duffy. "Most come with a legacy and that's a ball and chain from the start. Then they are dealing with rising costs that they barely have sight of. Add to that the challenges of procurement, data, security and AI - it's not hard to see why many are failing to get the most out of their investments."

Aside from these fundamental technology decisions, CIOs know that the consequence of their choices has a direct impact on the company's ability to win in the digital marketplace, for both customers and talent.

Technology is no respecter of history: it matters not that a company or brand has a rich heritage or once-loyal customers. It can turn ardent and dependable buyers into forgotten memories and long-standing employees into disgruntled over-heads.

This customer transience is a source of considerable consternation for business leaders who know that loyalty depends solely on their ability to execute in a digital world. Customer retention, employee satisfaction and the threat of new competition has created a fearful landscape for business leaders. They must invest in technology to reimagine their business, remain relevant in the face of new entrants and support employees with the tech they need; no small task at a time when every business is doing the same thing and you're just a manufacturer that makes things in a foundry.

In a world that changes in days and weeks rather than months and years, there is no time to sit back, reflect and take stock. This relentless pace of change coupled with a crippling fear factor of making the wrong decision or, worse still, making no decision at all, has created one hell of a mess for countless companies around the world.

Duffy told me that the pressures on the c-suite have never been greater and the burden on CIOs is increasing. "To tackle the challenges all at once



Mid-market companies are also much more prone to decision paralysis where business leaders do not have the level of support and knowledge **to make the correct strategic technology decisions.**



is impossible,” said Duffy. “CIOs should start with the thing that is keeping them awake at night - and in most cases that’s spiraling costs. You can’t save yourself out of a problem but you can use those savings to invest in technology that’s going to really help you get to where you need to be.”

### **Duffy the CEO**

Duffy is a first-time CEO and his introduction to SoftwareOne could not have been more challenging. Three weeks after taking the helm, an unsolicited takeover bid was launched by Bain Capital. Duffy and the board rejected the offer but it’s impossible to ignore how unsettling this must have been. A revised and improved offer was also dismissed and since July of this year there has been no further public update on the status of the approach.

Duffy put a positive spin on the news, saying “Bain is interested for the same reason that I joined - it’s a great company.” Recently, **Reuters** reported that several further bids had been received as part of the firm’s ‘strategic review of options’, including a bid from **Apax Partners**. However, it is understood that Bain is now the only interested party and the spectre of an aggressive VC lurking in the wings will be an unwelcome distraction from the job at hand.

The job in question has several elements for Duffy to wrestle with, including an internal transformation and a move away from a federated operating model to one that has a coherent North Star. I asked Duffy how he planned to transform SoftwareOne from its legacy of licensing and what experience he brought to help reshape the company.

“There’s some work to do on our internal transformation for sure. When I traveled the world in my first 100 days, I asked as many people as I could ‘What’s the purpose of our company?’ and I got 100 different answers. I’m building that North Star and we’re making great progress but there’s still work to do, as there would be with any transformation in a company that employs 9,500 people.”

Duffy’s source of inspiration for many of the changes required will come from his experiences at SAP. In most cases he will be able to pattern the scale mentality needed from the structures and processes that were inherent in Walldorf, but he will also use lessons learned about the impact change has on individuals.

“I learned a lot at SAP, especially on the sales side - building pipeline, creating the right governance and building teams to execute against a plan,” Duffy told me. “SAP was brilliant at doing that and

BRIAN DUFFY

## Most compelling of all is the concept of “self-funded” technology investments where a customer can, with the help of SoftwareOne, rationalize its current landscape and divert those savings towards different and more effective tools.

I am definitely bringing some of that forward into SoftwareOne. But there was also my experience of going through SAP’s internal transformation and the RISE program which gave me a great insight into how it affects individuals and the need for clear and continuous communication. I’ve been talking to customers about transformations for a long time but when you go through one yourself you get a new perspective on the challenges.”

The internal changes that Duffy needs to make are underway with several new senior hires in place and a revamped brand as a starting point. Cultural change takes time, but steps are already being taken to reinvigorate the teams and align everybody with some common messaging and purpose. There’s also a drive to broaden the scope of the company’s partnerships and Duffy’s status in the industry provides the platform to throw doors open that have previously only been ajar.

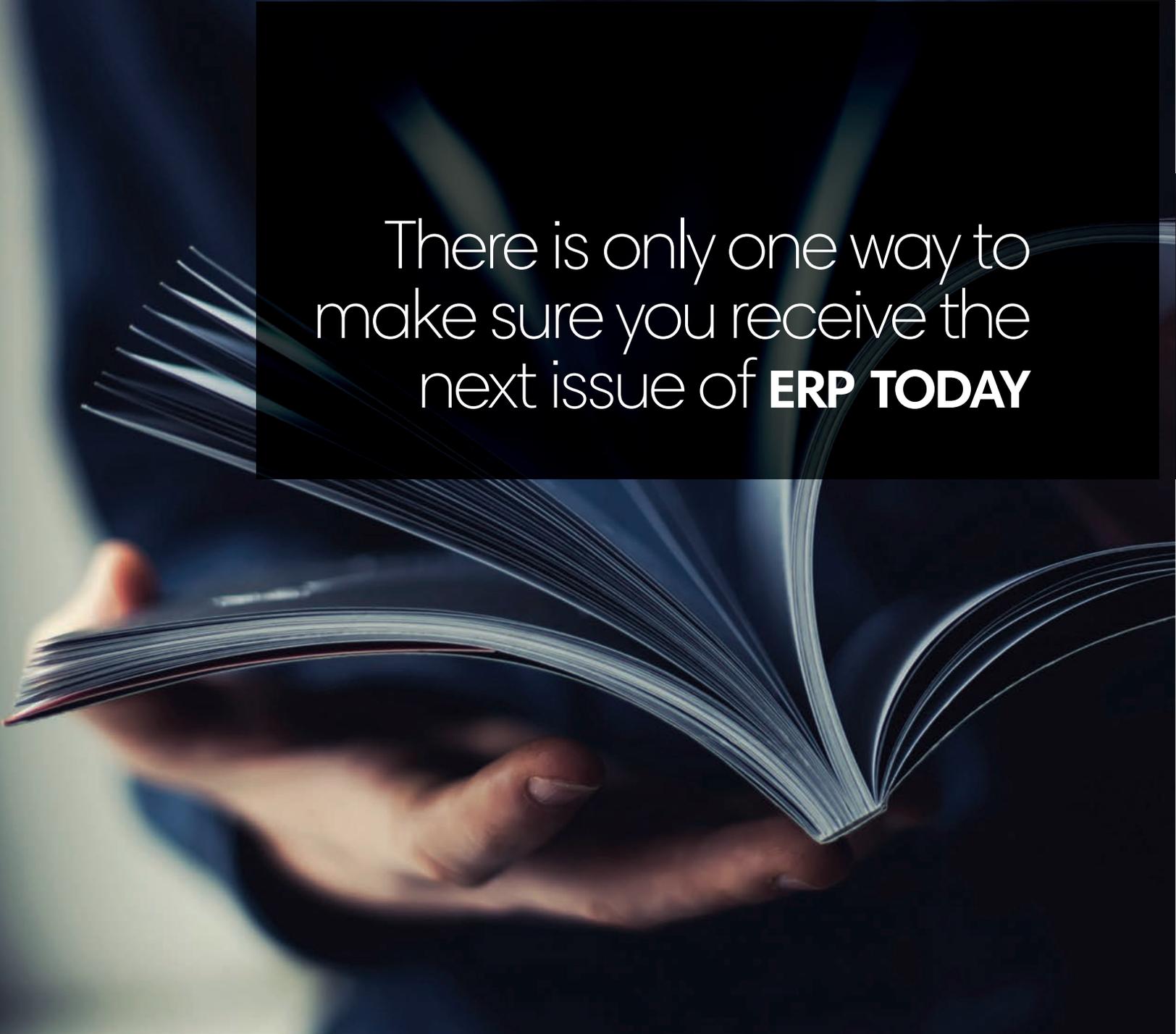
“I’m giving our teams the confidence to walk with a bit of swagger - if you just take our partnership with Microsoft - that’s a \$22bn account,” Duffy said. “Make a list of their partners and we’re right at the top. Then you think about the millions of Office 365 users out there because we brought that product to their doorstep. Our reach and scale in just this one ecosystem is incredible. So it’s about being proud of that and thinking which other partners can we go deeper with? Where else can we build a similar business?”

I asked Duffy if he felt he had all the skills and experience required to make the kind of changes needed and his answer was refreshingly modest. “I feel like it’s a step up in terms of responsibility and what is expected for sure,” he said. “It’s also a step up in terms of the buck stops with me. That doesn’t overwhelm me - I may not have done everything before but I know what good looks like.”

Duffy’s considerable experience at scaling and building big will be a significant asset but so too will his relative naivety. Not in terms of business acumen or his ability to get the job done, but simply that being a CEO is a new gig and he brings the kind of enthusiasm that can be beaten out of more long-toothed execs. Duffy is a young and energetic leader who is energized by the opportunity and keen to test himself. His history in the upper echelons of SAP has equipped him with an incredible foundation of knowledge, experience and contacts. Couple that with the foundation that already exists within SoftwareOne and you start to think about a company that has the potential to really influence the next phase of global digital deployments.

Customers will place a premium on trust when they come to make these decisions having had some of their hopes dashed by previous technology investments. SoftwareOne’s extensive reach into the office of the CIO and the purchasing departments at 65,000 customers provides a foundation of confidence and dependability that can be the catalyst for a new phase of growth. This growth and demand from customers will in turn pave the way for new and deeper partnerships with the biggest vendors - perhaps leading to business units that can rival the current status of its Microsoft practice.

Most compelling of all is the concept of “self-funded” technology investments where a customer can, with the help of SoftwareOne, rationalize its current landscape and divert those savings towards different and more effective tools. At a time when budgets are under more pressure than ever, while the need to accelerate has never been greater, a partner that can help you get there without increasing the cost burden could be exactly what many thousands of mid-market companies are crying out for. ■



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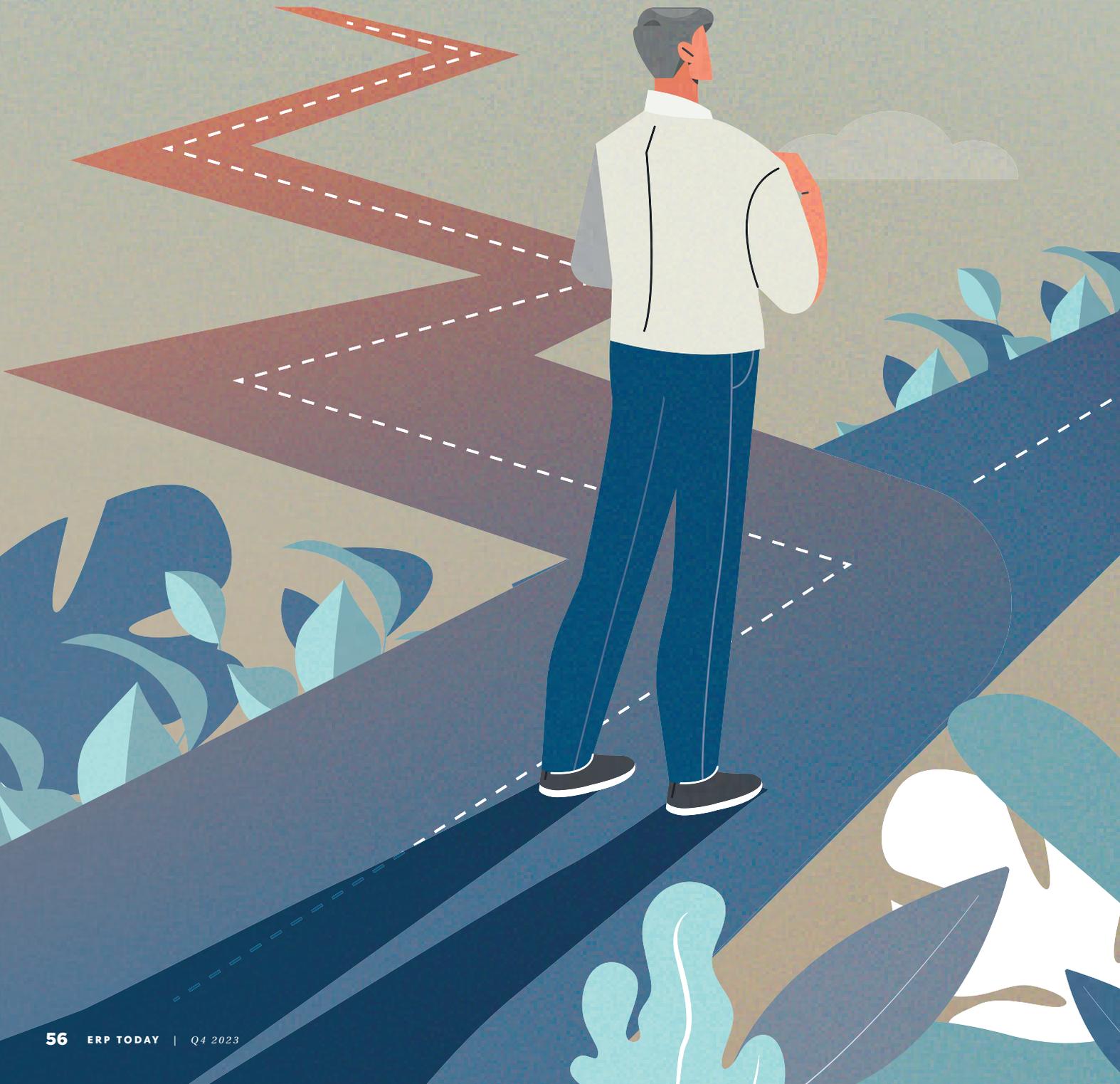
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CLOUD VENDORS



CAN'T



# DITCH ON-PREM

## IT'S LOVE/HATE

BY HOLGER MUELLER

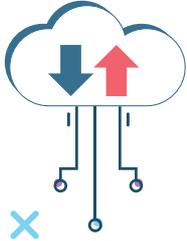
IS IT A GOOD MATCH? THE HISTORY AND HAPPENINGS OF CLOUD VENDORS' DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP WITH ON-PREMISE SOLUTIONS.

\*

The public cloud is the future of enterprise automation, even more so in 2023 - the year of generative AI - as AI's insatiable demand for compute can only be addressed by the cloud. So why do the public cloud vendors still care and provide offerings to run workloads on-premises in 2023? Let's investigate this interesting market development.

### **A short history of cloud vendor on-premise platforms**

We live in a hybrid IT world; where enterprises run part of their automation in the public cloud, part of their automation still resides on-premises. For a long time, cloud vendors ignored the need for on-premise support, as this was the "old" way of doing IT.



## ON-PREMISES WORKLOADS CAN PRACTICALLY BE THE “PIGGY BANK” OF ANY CLOUD VENDOR



**Microsoft** changed that approach with Azure Stack in 2015, largely under pressure from customers. Other players ignored the need for on-premise support for a long time, notably market leader **AWS** even questioning the overall need for such an offering.

That all changed with Thomas Kurian taking over at **Google Cloud** and announcing **Google Anthos**. Anthos changed the need for cloud vendors to offer on-premise computing, as Google - the forever creative number three in the public cloud - not only offered on-premises support but also made Anthos available on Azure and AWS (originally Anthos was launched in 2018, as GKE on-premises). AWS could not hold out much longer and announced AWS Outposts at re:Invent in 2018.

Like Microsoft - based on customer requests - **Oracle** offered Cloud@Customer in 2016 but did not have a viable public cloud option back then, which of course has changed today to Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI). **IBM** announced its on-premise offering with IBM Cloud Satellite in 2020 (its precursor being IBM Cloud Private since 2016). We call all these next generation computing platforms, as they allow enterprises to run the same workloads in the public cloud and on-premises, something which was previously not possible or available.

### So why run cloud stacks on-premises?

**For the enterprise:** It comes down to three key drivers for why enterprises demand to run workloads on-premises. For performance-critical processes that

connect to locations and on-premise systems (think manufacturing, IoT etc) cloud performance may not cut it for a real-world use case, and network speeds to out-of-country cloud data centers may also be too slow.

Data residency is also crucial; legal requirements force enterprises to keep data inside of country sovereignty borders. If there is no cloud data center available, then local in-house operation of workloads is the only option for an enterprise to stay compliant. Lastly, skepticism lingers around public cloud; there are several CxOs left that do not trust cloud operations and still want to have physical access and ownership of their computing environments.

**For the cloud vendors:** Those arguments are strong for cloud vendors, but they additionally have their own set of drivers to offer their cloud stacks on-premises. Firstly, it allows vendors to get early insights into on-premise workloads. Therein, on-premise workloads can be practically the “piggy bank” of any cloud vendor as they can be converted and offer potential future cloud revenue, with that scale.

Secondly, vendors can reuse research and development efforts. The ability to make a tech stack available on-premises is critical for its viability. But tech stacks are complex and hard to create, operate and maintain, and no application and technology stacks have been created to run on-premises for approximately 20+ years. No Platform-as-a-Service tech stack, for instance, has been built for on-premises during this time.

Lastly, and vitally, it means vendors can increase lock-in. Cloud vendors can not only get insights into workloads with on-premises, they can also lock in an enterprise early. That is just as valid on both the architecture and the commercial side. In that case, the on-premise contract also operates and therefore gives cloud credits.

So, as we have seen, there is a substantial goal congruency between enterprises and cloud vendors, leading to pretty much all cloud vendors offering on-premise availability: the next-generation computing offerings.

### Identity rules it all

For the next-generation computing platform vendors to deliver value, they need to allow workload portability between on-premises and the public cloud. There are special kudos when the workload can also be transferred to public clouds of other vendors - or if a vendor like IBM does not play in the public cloud market anymore. CxOs want to avoid lock-in and be able to see their workloads run where it is commercially, architecturally and legally feasible, as well as most advantageous, for their enterprise.

Identity can be quite a challenge for the cloud vendors, as they need to run the same APIs and technology stack on-premises as they do in the cloud. Unfortunately, cloud stacks were designed to run in the cloud - not on-premises - which makes the provision on-premises a challenge.

It took Microsoft - the instigator - the better part of three years to provide general availability with Azure Stack.

The notable difference for Identicality is Oracle as, but for a quirk of cloud history, when Oracle shipped it had not yet delivered a competitive public cloud offering, so Oracle Exadata and Cloud@Customer became the cornerstone of OCI. Practically, it means Oracle went from an on-premise system to the public cloud - in contrast to all other vendors who brought pieces of their public cloud technology stacks to on-premises.

Next to identicality, CxOs want to see a single pane of glass that allows them to monitor their workloads, no matter where they run. The ability to monitor, operate and manage workloads in a hybrid and multi-cloud setting is key for the success of enterprises today.

AWS Outposts footprint extension. With AWS re:Invent looming at the end of 2023, it will be interesting if AWS keeps pushing Local Zones - or adds services via AWS Outposts rack and server.

**Google keeps pushing but looks to be taking a break for now.** Google's attempts to improve its number three position have been an ongoing thorn in the side of AWS and Microsoft. So was Anthos when announced - with the ability to port modern, container-based applications to both on-premises and to its key competitor clouds. It prompted AWS to Outposts, so kudos to Google Cloud for pushing the market leader. More recently, possibly due to the focus on AI in the whole industry, Google has not expanded An-

for enterprises to evaluate and procure third-party applications.

**Microsoft Azure Arc remains popular but has not advanced much.** Microsoft has continuously built out Azure Arc (formerly Azure Stack) and added services to it. It has made a special effort on both application development and (cyber)security that resounds well with its install base. Like Google, Microsoft is embroiled in an all-around overhaul of its offerings with AI, which likely has given Azure Arc some pause. As the instigator of the current generative AI movement, Microsoft may be the first vendor here to offer some Azure Arc-based generative AI runtime offering. The future will tell.

## \* NEXT GENERATION COMPUTING PLATFORM VENDORS

VENDOR	NAME	SCOPE	IDENTICALITY	YEAR LAUNCHED
AWS	Outposts	Small	Low	2019
Google	Anthos	Medium	Good	2018
IBM	Cloud Satellite	Medium	Good	2016
Microsoft	Azure Arc	Medium	Good	2015
Oracle	Cloud @Customer	Big	High	2016

SOURCE: HMCC & CONSTELLATION RESEARCH INC

### Checking out their current profiles

So where are these big tech names sitting today with their cloud offerings?

**AWS Outposts is standing still, with AWS pushing beyond.** Today the AWS Outpost offering is split between AWS Outposts rack and AWS Outposts servers. The former is a full rack that is installed by AWS, with enterprises providing power and network. The latter is a customer-installed server shipped by AWS and installed by the customer or a third party.

AWS Outposts rack has more local services available than AWS Outposts server and, therefore, offers higher identicality. In recent years, AWS has also pushed its AWS Local Zones, investing into more regional data centers, with a smaller footprint of the large regions. That has alleviated a non-substantial number of AWS customers requiring an

thos since Fall 2022. Meanwhile, CxOs welcomed the additional ability to run Anthos on **VMware**, a decade-plus-long trusted platform in the enterprise. The Anthos Service Mesh is the architecture offering for Google Anthos customers to operate in the multi-cloud.

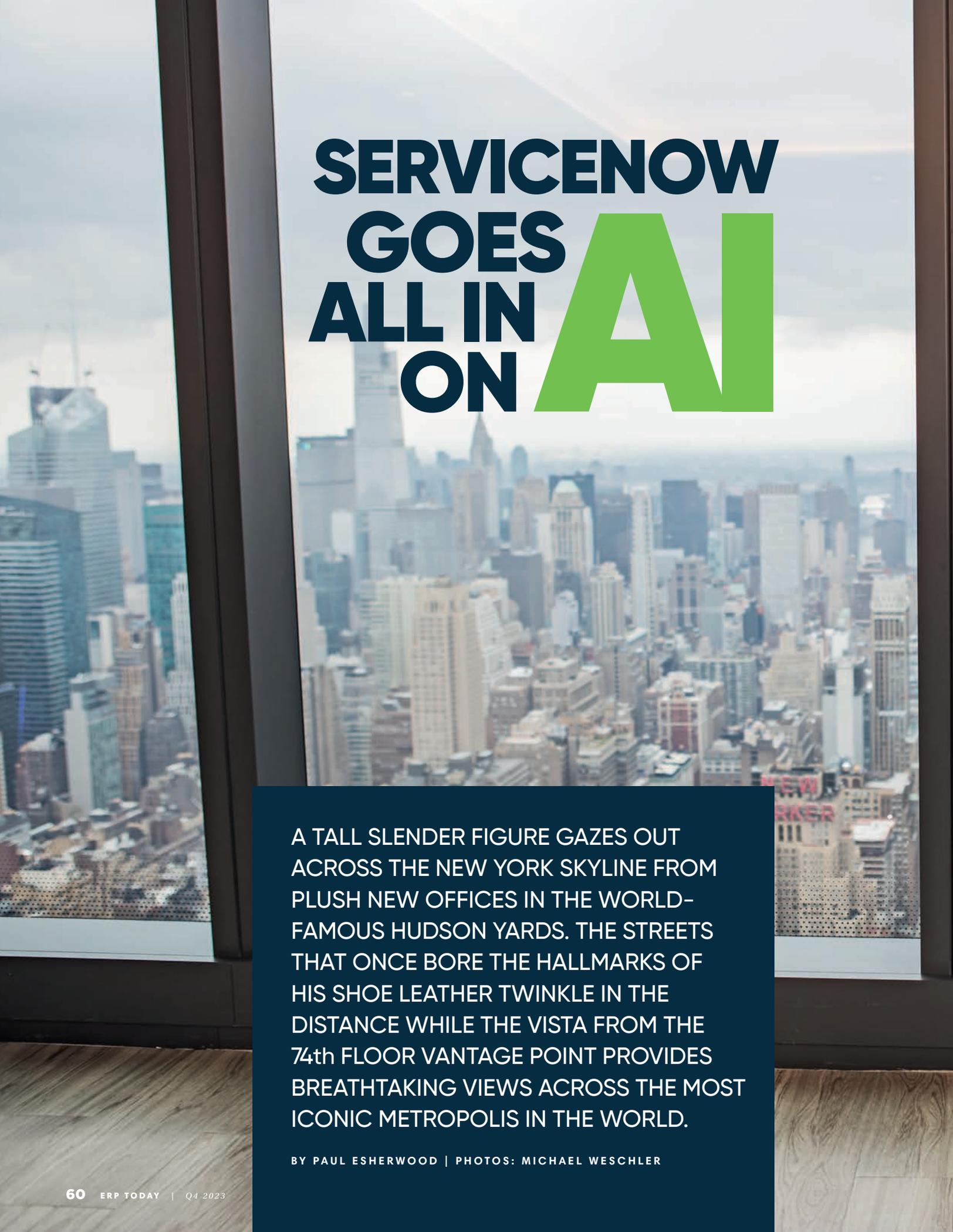
**The IBM Cloud Satellite is growing, and enterprise tech's Switzerland gets bigger.** With IBM having shed its own public cloud ambitions and while partnering with all major cloud vendors, it is easy for IBM to be "Switzerland" - the neutral place to do business with all clouds. And IBM Satellite that leverages **Red Hat OpenShift** under its covers is key to enable this (and get some of the astronomic Red Hat acquisition price back). IBM is now continuously expanding the satellite footprint: the IBM Cloud Pak offerings, IBM Cloud Databases and more all are available, and IBM's Cloud Catalog is becoming a popular place

**Oracle leads with Identicality and is becoming a multi-dimensional player.** Oracle is on the remarkable journey from on-premises to the public cloud and now multi-cloud. The latest addition for multi-cloud support was unveiled at this year's CloudWorld conference, with the native provisioning of the Oracle Database (and with that Oracle Exadata) inside of Azure. As it is always the same underlying Exadata platform, the capabilities offered are identical across the platforms, creating the highest Identicality in the industry. Being fully invested in AI, it will be equally interesting how Oracle will add AI model execution to its platforms.

### It's complex, but it's good news

The enterprise IT landscape gets more complex by the day. Workload proliferation across cloud infrastructures is already a headache. Generative AI will not make the picture easier, as new training and execution platforms emerge, along with specialized hardware platforms for AI.

Now, AI model training and execution make the case for next-generation computing platforms: enterprises need to leverage the public cloud to not only train AI models but execute them across their automation deployments - on other clouds and on-premises, even the edge. The final thought from me - the cloud is winning but it is coming to on-premises. It's good news; CxOs have a choice. ■



# SERVICENOW GOES ALL IN ON **AI**

A TALL SLENDER FIGURE GAZES OUT ACROSS THE NEW YORK SKYLINE FROM PLUSH NEW OFFICES IN THE WORLD-FAMOUS HUDSON YARDS. THE STREETS THAT ONCE BORE THE HALLMARKS OF HIS SHOE LEATHER TWINKLE IN THE DISTANCE WHILE THE VISTA FROM THE 74th FLOOR VANTAGE POINT PROVIDES BREATHTAKING VIEWS ACROSS THE MOST ICONIC METROPOLIS IN THE WORLD.

BY PAUL ESHERWOOD | PHOTOS: MICHAEL WESCHLER



## BILL McDERMOTT

A

Almost a year ago to the day, **ServiceNow** opened its newest office in New York. The building is spectacular and the office space is adorned with sleek work stations, incredible social areas and an understated office in the corner occupied by its CEO. The company already has 25 offices in the US, but this is a statement piece. Bill McDermott has come home.

In August of this year, I met with McDermott and the ServiceNow team for an update on their progress with a particular focus on AI and the mission to become the defining enterprise software company of the twenty-first century.

The ServiceNow story is already a sensation; the fastest to \$5bn in organic revenue and closing in on \$10bn, the only major player to retain headcount through the pandemic, already a Fortune 500 company and the hottest tech brand on the lips of every CIO. Some have questioned whether it will plateau or if its indefatigable leader would run out of steam. From where I am standing, the ServiceNow train is just getting started and the momentum it will carry into 2024 will be the catalyst for a defining year ahead.

In the last issue of ERP Today, I espoused ServiceNow's likening to the iPhone and suggested that we are on the brink of "a great unification", akin to how **Google** unified search some twenty years earlier. A combination of three significant market forces is coalescing at precisely the right time and ServiceNow is uniquely positioned to capitalize on the opportunity.

### Artificial intelligence

The future will be defined by artificial intelligence and, while others are scrambling to find their AI story, ServiceNow started its conversation almost



six years ago. "Others issued press releases, we released products," McDermott quipped on a recent earnings call. "One of the first things I did when I got here in 2019 was to acquire **Element AI** and we got a large workforce of researchers, data scientists and world-class AI engineers," he told me. "AI isn't new for ServiceNow, we have been building it into our platform for years and working with **Nvidia** on large language models for all that time."

Unlike other technologies that have emerged with very short hype cycles, AI is here to stay. "We believe every dollar of global GDP will be impacted by AI over the next several years," said McDermott. It will



become a ubiquitous force that powers every aspect of an enterprise from strategic operations, purchasing decisions, sales and supply chains, right down to impacting the individual worker's day-to-day tasks through AI assistants.

In late 2022, the AI narrative was turned up a notch with the emergence of ChatGPT and since then many of us have had our first experiences with the newest breed of artificial intelligence. I asked McDermott what was driving the demand in AI services and his response was quick to the point. "It took **Netflix** three and a half years to get to 100 million users - it took ChatGPT five days," he said. "That tells you every-

thing about the demand and interest in AI."

Today, every software company on the planet is talking about GenAI but it's easy to be lulled into thinking that all you need is a subscription to **OpenAI** and you are in business. AI needs three things to make the magic happen; it needs a platform or medium as a host, a task to feed on and an ability to execute its outcomes quicker, easier or more accurately than a human could - that's the simple recipe.

There's certainly no shortage of tasks to keep AI busy and its ability to outperform humans has been in evidence for a while. It's the platform or host that is the variable factor and ServiceNow has got that

**BILL McDERMOTT**

covered across multiple domains and workflows. “Our Vancouver release includes generative AI-powered Now Assist for every workflow,” said McDermott. “Generative AI represents 36 percent of AI spending overall and we have over 300 customers in our pipeline from every industry, every buying center and every stage of testing. Our GenAI sales kick off drove the highest number of customer requests for a pre-release product in our history.”

If AI is the first and foremost market force that will drive the next era of innovation and growth, what are the other two factors that are converging to ServiceNow’s benefit?

Firstly, the age-old problem of ERP modernization shows no sign of abating - if anything the pain of transforming ERPs is getting worse, not better. While ERP vendors are forced to come up with evermore elaborate ways to mask the pain of moving from old systems to new, ServiceNow offers to do this at a stroke.

“ERP was developed for the enterprise, not the user,” McDermott told me. “Power users loved it and everyone else hated it.” Today, user experience is vital and CIOs have a choice: invest hundreds of millions in a project and get it done in five years or make something happen with ServiceNow in a few weeks, maybe a couple of months, that puts that system in a position where it can actually be fresh again, because all the complexity can be hidden.”

The final market force that is playing into ServiceNow’s hands is a fundamental shift in the definition of work. We are witnessing the mass simplification of work on a scale never seen before, with AI and the public cloud as the engine and enabler. The industrial revolution turned employees from metal bashers to machine operators relatively quickly, but the

digital revolution has not eliminated grunt work in the same way. In fact, it has increased the burden of low-level data, administration and digital activities with the vast majority of employees complaining that their daily routine is mired in repetitive and boring keyboard-based tasks.

“Just take healthcare as one example,” said McDermott. “Typically, eighty percent of your visit is taken up with someone keyboarding information or form filling. Then you tell them what’s wrong with you and they keyboard that and by the time the doctor has read the notes the visit’s over. With AI assistants, AI-powered workflows and GenAI capabilities, that’s not going to happen anymore. Healthcare professionals will spend all of their time taking care of patients and all of the admin burden will disappear.”

The same logic can be applied to virtually any job type: the salesperson with sales decks that are generated by GenAI, automations for the shop floor and engineers, shipping and supply chains optimized at every step. All of which have a common connection: the human does the job that was always intended for them while the AI does all the administration and grunt work that enables the employer to be more efficient and happier in their role.

**ERP modernization**

Two initiatives within the SAP ecosystem caught our attention recently that perfectly illuminate the challenges for proprietary ERP publishers. **NTT Data**, one of SAP’s primary implementation partners, is offering to repurchase legacy SAP licenses to help ease customer cloud migrations. While this unusual move could have some benefit to the customer, it is a stark indication of the challenges ERP customers are facing.

**“WE HAVE OVER 300 CUSTOMERS IN OUR PIPELINE FROM EVERY INDUSTRY, EVERY BUYING CENTER AND EVERY STAGE OF TESTING. OUR GENAI SALES KICK OFF DROVE THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF CUSTOMER REQUESTS FOR A PRE-RELEASE PRODUCT IN OUR HISTORY.”**





It is often touted that ServiceNow is eating into ERP budgets and adding to the challenges that SAP and others are facing when trying to convert their install base to SaaS. But McDermott was quick to point out that ServiceNow isn't taking IT budgets away from ERP vendors and, in fact, in some cases they are actually helping ERP vendors stay in the game.

"ServiceNow's platform is actually their best friend because it makes their platforms relevant again," said McDermott. "The problem is they are looking at it as a zero sum game based on the IT budget, but it's not a zero sum game. Most of the business cases that we see have nothing to do with taking their spend and moving into us. It has everything to do with creating a net new innovation that never existed before. If you don't have net new innovation, you're not going to get net new spend. And that's not going to be because of ServiceNow, it's going to be because of what you did or didn't invent."

In addition to these net new innovations, Servi-

ceNow and its partners are actively building capabilities to support ERP customers that are caught between a rock and a hard place. One great example can be found in **Eviden's** ElevateNow product which is designed specifically for SAP customers.

Aside from loss of functionality, higher costs, disruption and risk, the biggest barrier for SAP customers to move to S/4 is the migration path for customizations. These developments have been hard-coded into the core of the ERP system over decades and allowed the customer to fine tune the solution to its specific needs. All well and good until that customer looks to the cloud and realizes that none of what it has developed can be easily replicated.

Using the Now platform, Eviden has developed a method of building these functions in the ServiceNow environment, allowing customers to effectively move their customizations to the cloud without having to go through a full ERP migration.

## BILL McDERMOTT

**“CIOS HAVE A CHOICE: INVEST HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS IN A PROJECT AND GET IT DONE IN FIVE YEARS OR MAKE SOMETHING HAPPEN WITH SERVICENOW IN A FEW WEEKS, MAYBE A COUPLE OF MONTHS, THAT PUTS THAT SYSTEM IN A POSITION WHERE IT CAN ACTUALLY BE FRESH AGAIN, BECAUSE ALL THE COMPLEXITY CAN BE HIDDEN.”**

I am not sure whether SAP sees this as a help or a hindrance but customers who cannot or will not subscribe to S/4HANA on SAP's timetable may see the benefit of a halfway house until they are able to commit to a full-scale ERP project.

“If people always do what they always did, they'll always get what they always got,” said McDermott. “The reason I love our chances to scale to infinity and beyond, is because we have the platform for what this generation wants and needs.”

### The platform for a generation

There's a phrase in **Formula 1** that's used to simplify the strategy of tire choice and when to bring the car in for fresh rubber - “be on the right tires at the right time” - which basically encourages teams not to complicate their decision making and do what the driver needs at that moment.

It may seem like an obvious statement but with such fine margins, evolving track conditions and changing weather, picking the correct compound of tire, understanding the level of degradation and knowing when to change is crucial to a driver's success.

That simple explanation for a very complicated problem reminds me of the dilemma many CIOs are facing when deciding what tech to invest in. The answer is as simple as the tire conundrum - ask your teams what they need now and give it to them.

That whole answer isn't to ignore the bigger challenges, but the truth is it's unclear whether the future will render many of those issues moot. Who knows what GenAI innovations are round the corner? Five years is a very long time right now and placing bets which have that kind of expected ROI

requires bravery and a crystal ball.

What I hear from business leaders is that they are under immense pressure to simplify their processes, to increase employee satisfaction, to win in the talent war and to redefine their business model with AI as a central component. McDermott had a clear message for these CIOs: “What do you want to be best known for? Is it upgrading an existing ERP system or bringing in technology that delivers immediate value, net new innovations and a user experience that is unmatched?”

Put like that, it's hard to find the argument for pouring millions of dollars and countless resources into technology upgrades that can't make the same promises.

### 2024 and beyond

There's no sense from McDermott that he is slowing down, quite the opposite in fact. He was as motivated and energized as ever and I actually felt like he was charging even harder than before, if that's possible.

But, at the age of 62 and having taken ServiceNow to its current dizzy heights, McDermott is considering the future and building a plan to ensure the company's continued evolution. Taking the position of chairman is the first move towards building a succession plan which would retain McDermott as executive chair, or something similar, and pave the way for a new leader to assume the CEO role.

I asked McDermott if assuming the chairman role was a source of pride and he explained: “It's wonderful to have that kind of trust with the board. And in particular, with Fred, the founder of the company,” he told me. “Candidly, it had more to do with the right thing for ServiceNow than it did a title. I





**“WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE BEST KNOWN FOR? IS IT UPGRADING AN EXISTING ERP SYSTEM OR BRINGING IN TECHNOLOGY THAT DELIVERS IMMEDIATE VALUE, NET NEW INNOVATIONS AND A USER EXPERIENCE THAT IS UNMATCHED?”**

really don't care about titles. What I really did care about and the reason I am honored and proud of our company, is because now I'm able to initiate a long-term commitment and succession plan.”

However, McDermott was quick to point out that his time isn't up just yet. “There's still plenty of work to do and I am more excited about the future than ever,” he said. My personal bet is that McDermott will see the company to \$15bn in revenue and then start to think about who is the right person to steer

the ship through the next phase. His long-term commitment to the company is assured and by the time that revenue threshold is reached he will probably have established ServiceNow as the AI company for the enterprise.

It was Bill's big dream to create the defining enterprise software company of the twenty-first century and he's getting close to delivering another landmark victory. It's almost time to start thinking about another book, but not just yet. ■



*BIG DATA IS BIG. YOU JUST WON'T BELIEVE HOW  
VASTLY, HUGELY, MIND-BOGGLINGLY BIG IT IS.*

*DATED BUT STILL FETED,*

*THE BIG*

*DATA*

*UNIVERSE*

BY ADRIAN BRIDGWATER

**BIG DATA**

# BIG DATA IS BIG.

TO PARAPHRASE THE LATE, GREAT DOUGLAS ADAMS ON SPACE: YOU JUST WON'T BELIEVE HOW VASTLY, HUGELY, MIND-BOGGLINGLY BIG IT IS. AND THAT'S NOTHING COMPARED TO THE HYPE AROUND IT. HOWEVER, LIKE ALL MAJOR TECHNOLOGY SHIFTS, PARADIGMS AND PLATFORMS, INNOVATION AND EVOLUTION GENERALLY CONSIGN MOST ELEMENTS OF IT TO LEGACY STATUS AFTER A WHILE. SO, HAS SOMETHING CHANGED?



In the era of web-scale everything and the massively parallel processing backbones that span the cloud database era, has the big data furor subsided? As the use of multi-cloud computing fabrics now spans every industry vertical and we look forward to a future of data pipelines fueled by AI-enriched filtering, standardization and integration, can we now say that big data is dead and that ERP systems spanning this space now represent a bigger entity in, and of, themselves?

Whatever amplifying term we use to describe really large, weighty, voluminous or big quantities of data, the reality is that information will continue to spiral and grow, so the whole notion of

big data was probably just endemic of the 1990s and our proclivity for snappy nametags in the wake of the dot com bubble.

### **Beyond the buzz**

Senior vice president for solution consulting (EMEA and APJ) at **Infor**, Phil Lewis broadly agrees and says that of course big data isn't actually dead, it just isn't a buzzword anymore.

"That reality is largely born out of the fact that working with vast quantities of data has become the norm for most companies of any reasonable size. The next frontier is all about harnessing and exploiting data - connecting it, analyzing it, injecting it with intelligence, min-

ing it and squeezing every drop of value it can offer the business," says Lewis.

With technology organizations in the ERP space, like Infor, now working to apply huge amounts of process intelligence, new strains of RPA and of course the now-ubiquitous application of generative AI to their platform, we can see why the conversation might have elevated beyond "look at all that data" today. It's clearly time to accept the size of the known universe and work out how to navigate it.

"Faster, more accurate, intelligence-based and increasingly automated decisions will accelerate business performance at the coalface of software application development and data

analytics today,” clarifies Infor’s Lewis. “We should now expect ambitious organizations to thrive and continuously improve via the development and application of hyper-automation tools, processes and functions; all of which will drive productivity, new data-driven processes, AI-driven insights, revenue streams and services unthought of a few years ago. In modern ERP systems and throughout the entire fabric of enterprise software, data-driven decision-making will become instantaneous and will accelerate the way work gets done. When exactly the right information is injected into both the business process and the decision-making process at exactly the right moment, work happens in a more fluid, composed and efficient manner. We all live in an intelligence-driven world and big data is still right at the heart of it. Even if we drop the term itself, there’s still a whole lot of bigness out there.”

### Dated, but still feted

It feels like big data might be a slightly muted data label by now, but the rationale behind the term being coined in the first place is still very much in place. As we continue to dive into the morass of new information streams, many of which will end up being channeled towards voluminous data lake repositories, we can reasonably expect big data-like technologies to pervade for a long time.

“Big data has indeed become a dated term; it was first used to describe unstructured data and then eventually evolved to encompass much of the work involved with analytics as organizations grappled with the volume, velocity and variety of data being ingested. Unfortunately, big data was never fully equipped to handle the fourth V: veracity, which refers to the quality of the data. That’s where the combination of ERP and AI comes in,” says Stu Johnson, VP of product marketing at cloud ERP company **Rootstock**.

Because we know that almost all of a reasonably sized organization’s data is stored in its ERP system, Johnson says that businesses are increasingly looking to take advantage of AI. They need cloud-based ERP systems that can col-



lect the various Vs of data while also applying it to inform better business decisions. The confluence point between AI and ERP at the edge of the big data chasm is what will make the difference.

“Today we can say that AI tools, including large language models (LLMs), are aided by the contextualization that ERP provides. As a result, big data analysis is democratized; any individual is able to interpret data in various contexts and roles,” clarifies Johnson. “The most powerful ERP solutions are capable of ingesting streams of data signals com-

ing from all directions and interpreting those signals against a vast store of historical data. The next frontier will occur when LLMs - fueled by the data these ERP systems provide - are combined with predictive analytics, unleashing a whole new wave of signals that will drive intelligent decisions.”

It feels like big data is still on a journey then. One where it will be inevitably swept up into the vortex formed by new AI models, the rise of real-time data analytics, the creation of new smart application services and the trajectory that

**BIG DATA**

all these technologies take as they pass over the existing topography of ERP deployments. So, basically, something of an evolution needs to happen.

**Bare metal, laid bare**

“It’s important to realize that what we might consider to be ‘traditional’ approaches to big data (use of dedicated data silos, often located on bare metal cloud servers) are becoming an impediment to business success due to long time-to-value, complex lifecycle management and poor performance,” says James Sturrock, director of systems engineering for UK and Ireland at **Nutanix**.

Clearly keen to tell us that we need to get out of the bare metal era and invest in hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) solutions for big data analytics, Sturrock makes the point that we’re moving rapidly to an always-on continuous computing fabric where many data resources lose value comparatively quickly. As a direct consequence, the way we approach the Input/Output (I/O) capabilities of the systems we use to manage big data - especially in the gargantuan realms of an enterprise ERP landscape - really starts to matter now.

“It’s imperative that organizations embrace big data analytics solutions capable of handling what we like to call the I/O blender effect,” explains Nutanix’s Sturrock. “Because the firehose stream of I/O requests coming from demanding big data jobs results in a random mix of I/O that can defeat storage ‘read-ahead’ algorithms, making it difficult for a central storage system to operate efficiently. We add to the challenge when we realize that there are mixed I/O needs, i.e. some big data jobs require high streaming performance while others create random I/O and

**“BIG DATA WAS NEVER FULLY EQUIPPED TO HANDLE THE QUALITY OF THE DATA. THAT’S WHERE THE COMBINATION OF ERP AND AI COMES IN.”**



PHIL LEWIS / INFOR

data locality and intelligent data tiering (to rank mission criticality across a whole spectrum of levels) and it is argued that big data can be handled in environments that enjoy optimum performance without constant tuning.

**Quality data, big or otherwise**

The ERP big data story is no open-and-shut case. If anything, both disciplines have come under scrutiny, fire and abuse for being clunky, outdated and anachronistic at times. Chief product and technology officer at **Unit4**, Claus Jepsen, is very much of the mind that we should exert a little more balance when we consider these two technology streams concurrently.

**“THE NEXT FRONTIER IS ALL ABOUT HARNESSING AND EXPLOITING DATA - CONNECTING IT, ANALYZING IT, INJECTING IT WITH INTELLIGENCE, MINING IT AND SQUEEZING EVERY DROP OF VALUE.”**

most storage arrays don’t handle both types equally well.”

By consolidating all data services for an ERP deployment on the same platform alongside the core compute function, Sturrock suggests that an organization can simplify provisioning and management while increasing resource utilization. Combine these techniques with a real understanding of

“I don’t think the use, implementation or management of big data is the central issue and, likewise, I don’t think ERP is the sole enterprise software solution that we should consider in the mix,” says Jepsen. “It was only a few years ago that everyone was saying ERP is dead - and I don’t think today we’re in a position to expect an ERP system to manage all an organization’s data management and analysis requirements. The key issue is whether a business has access to the right data to make effective decisions.”

Jepsen’s comment is reflective and illustrative of the wider sentiment here; people don’t want to talk about big data anymore unless it’s business-relevant accurate data that can track a clearly defined path to a positive business outcome. He reminds us that the value of a good ERP system is that the data within it is highly structured, sanitized and contained in order to drive the information systems in an organization. When all these factors are in line, he says a business can then deliver deeper insights and apply ML algorithms to its information streams, because it has confidence in the structure and semantics of its dataset, big, medium, small or otherwise.



STU JOHNSON / ROOTSTOCK

“However, the reality is that we operate in a world of multiple data sources and types, which has created so-called data lakes that are a more convenient way to store and analyze information. Big data offers the ability to accumulate data from those types of subsystems across multiple domains, to be analyzed alongside any data in the ERP system to get a complete picture of a business,” explains Jepsen. “But this cannot be done in the ERP system itself, as it does not necessarily have sight of the data in these other subsystems.”

Because of this unavoidable truth, Jepsen advises IT practitioners to realize the critical need for any ERP system to have the requisite level of interoperability to share data with other applications. An IT shop can standardize the big data analytics solutions in use, but ultimately, if the business is not analyzing the right data then the whole exercise is pointless. Data quality and integrity are critical foundations to ensuring this whole process works, but there is a realization that accumulating vast amounts of big data is useless if you don’t know what to do with it.

“We find companies are investing more time in the data management planning phase. This is because they want to know the questions they need to ask before accumulating data for analysis from across their



CLAUS JEPSEN / UNIT4

**"TRADITIONAL" APPROACHES TO BIG DATA ARE BECOMING AN IMPEDIMENT TO BUSINESS SUCCESS."**

IT systems,” says Unit4’s Jepsen, referencing the real-world projects his firm interacts with on a daily basis. “An organization must work out what it is trying to understand, what the data represents and what its attributes and semantics are. There is no way to layer an algorithm over the top of a bunch of ERP data (or any other source) and just expect it to deliver meaningful insights. This is why we are seeing more focus on developing specific use cases for data analytics today - and it’s a trend that must surely continue.”

**A fuel for ERP systems**

Agreeing that ERP had been erroneously consigned to the “where are they now” file some years back, chief product officer at **insightsoftware**, Lee An Schommer, suggests that the current ERP renaissance still embodies a degree of disconnect at the data level. Reminding

**"THERE IS NO WAY TO LAYER AN ALGORITHM OVER THE TOP OF A BUNCH OF ERP DATA AND JUST EXPECT IT TO DELIVER MEANINGFUL INSIGHTS."**

us that ERP systems are at the heart of business data locales, she says that users themselves still struggle with information tools and feeds at certain levels.

“These ERP users continue to struggle with enterprise data streams, needing to decipher what insights are ERP-specific (versus those that come from different third-party solutions) in order to effectively help the C-suite understand the health of the business and where to act,” asserts Schommer.

In fact, many mid-market and enterprise companies have more than one



JAMES STURROCK  
NUTANIX

ERP by design, in order to address corporate global needs versus those of certain world regions.

This requires complex blending and deciphering processes with an ever-increasing amount of data, which still means data is essentially big. It begs the question, who will make sense of all this data?

As commentators in this space have underlined, while AI and ML will continue to learn and provide business insights, any given model is only as good as the data it can feed upon. It will be up to the business itself to provide clean, relevant data to produce the best outputs. AI models may then also assess synthesized data, point out anomalies and suggest corrections. For Schommer’s money, the secret sauce is having people trained to run different models based on unique business goals and then convince senior leaders that it’s time to adjust the plan.

“This is often where data exercises fall apart,” she says. “The data is collected and then AI is interjected and applied, but afterwards...we tend to see management go back to business as usual because they are not quite ready to trust the technology and its output. As AI evolves and additional filters create quicker connectivity to better-organized data, team leaders must determine how they can validate and then take advantage of the resulting insights. With this in mind, as AI technology and ERP systems

**BIG DATA**



**"COMPLEX BLENDING AND DECIPHERING PROCESSES, WITH AN EVER-INCREASING AMOUNT OF DATA, STILL MEAN DATA IS ESSENTIALLY BIG."**



**LEE AN SCHOMMER / INSIGHTSOFTWARE**

systems of record and transaction, both of which continuously feed the modern data firehose. Who better to drive home the question of how ERP should dovetail with a big, medium or small data strategy than **AWS**?

"Organizations today create and store petabytes - or even exabytes - of data from a vast variety of sources, from on-line transactions and customer interactions through to connected devices and product inventory," says Phil Le-Brun, director of enterprise strategy at AWS. "Cloud computing allows companies today to streamline data processing in a way that was almost unthinkable a decade ago - and to easily

adapt and evolve as an organization's needs change. This is important because building a data strategy that evolves as the business expands and changes is key to success."

Le-Brun says that he understands just how big that big data mountain might feel to different firms and that every organization's data needs are unique, which is why it's important to have access to a variety of tools so they can leverage the right ones depending on their specific needs. "A modern business will require the data spread across their organization to be integrated and connected, so they can act on their data no matter where it lives. Ultimately, they must eliminate structural and departmental data silos to be sure that all the right people can access data at the right time and with the right controls," concludes AWS's Le-Brun.

Whether we drop the big data term tomorrow or hang on to it by some romantic attachment, its time on Earth has been worthwhile because it has taught us that we can quickly find ourselves with too much to eat at the information buffet or smörgåsbord. A progressive business today needs an IT strategy, a data strategy (which encompasses analytics) and of course now an AI strategy, all of which must exist in symbiotic unity. So long and thanks for all the bits. ■

**"CLOUD COMPUTING ALLOWS COMPANIES TODAY TO STREAMLINE DATA PROCESSING IN A WAY THAT WAS ALMOST UNTHINKABLE A DECADE AGO."**

continue to come together, it can only be expected that these systems continue to grow and phase out big data entirely."

**The modern data firehose**

It seems clear that the big data evolution issue is perhaps nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the ERP space. After all, ERP systems are a) inherently big, b) full of data, c) characterized by the volume of analytics they are able to process and d) typified by their proximity to

**PHIL LE-BRUN / AWS**





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# Slow, stuck

SECTOR ERP UNDER SCRUTINY

IS THE PUBLIC SECTOR





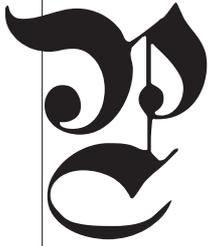
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FAILING TO CROSS ITS ERP IMPLEMENTATION RED TAPE?

BY YOANA CHOLTEEVA



**PUBLIC SECTOR ERP**



Public sector organizations haven't always had an easy ride with their e-implementations. Judging by a string of government bodies making headlines with failed ERP implementations and projects running significantly late and over-budget, you could say this might be indicative of some larger issues brewing.

There is a string of examples alluding to this. The latest **Birmingham City Council** ERP implementation allegedly was a contributing factor to the council going bankrupt after costs skyrocketed from the initial £20m to £100m. The UK's **National Audit Office** finding that ERP-shared services actually added expenses rather than reducing costs. Plus, some notably unsuccessful implementations by the **University of Reading** and **Durham University**.

So why are public sector organizations getting it wrong? It seems like one of the main differences between public and private sector organizations is the levels of change they are ready to welcome.

tions, you find that the attrition is perhaps slightly lower. People stay in their jobs for longer periods of time. That's good on one hand, but in another respect, it means that you've got people that have been there for potentially a long time and are used to their existing ways of working, so changing that mindset is really difficult sometimes," O'Brien says.

But it's not just the unwillingness to change that can interfere with such implementation - the process requires a solid amount of responsibility and insider knowledge in order to make it a success. For this reason, many in this line of work mention the "we can't do it *to* you, but only *with* you concept" since ERP implementations start with the company itself.

O'Brien also explains that sometimes, the contracts are drafted up in a way that sets an expectation that the supplier will do the entire job for the client, but in reality, it is not a sole responsibility. "In a complex environment, we need commitment from both parties and an understanding that actually, if both parties don't play their role, it's not gonna happen," she says.

Echoing this, Duncan Worsell, who

stands its policies but also the processes that implement those policies, then it needs to be engaged throughout," he says, adding that "any system, ERP or otherwise has operators and some sense of the mechanics is essential".

However, overlooking some of these fundamentals of a project doesn't mean that it wouldn't necessarily go live - with plenty of examples, perhaps even the Birmingham City Council one, where you can shoehorn and force a technology to go live. But would it achieve the maximum digital adoption from an end-user perspective?

According to O'Brien, definitely not: "There are so many examples of projects that we haven't been involved in but have discussed with customers where they may have gone live, but you'd be very surprised and probably quite shocked at how many large-scale transformation programs that have eventually gone live are not achieving the return on investment they set out to achieve."

**What makes a win?**

In a world of conflicting agendas and taxing organizational change, making a big implementation is no mean feat. However, in some cases, project constraints



"Our greatest constraint, but also one of our most significant aids: a very tight timeline, with a no-fail deadline."

**DUNCAN WORSELL**  
/ CIVIL NUCLEAR CONSTABULARY



**The change management drag**

Explaining how the dynamics of public sector work can end up impacting their ERP implementations, Emma O'Brien, founder and CEO of **Embridge Consulting**, explains that a key component to the success of such implementations is organizations' willingness to embrace change and be collaborative when welcoming it. A key influence here? How long people have worked for the organization.

"I think with public sector organiza-

worked as chief superintendent at the **Civil Nuclear Constabulary** (CNC) and led the team through a successful implementation of **Oracle Fusion** with **Namos Solutions** and **Quite Laterally**, said that he would not advocate sole reliance on the contractors as the customer has to understand how their processes work and what the outcomes need to be.

"Ultimately, the implementation needs to be owned by the business and if this ownership is to be substantive, where the organization not only under-

can surprise us and come as a handy advantage, according to Worsell.

"Our greatest constraint, but also one of our most significant aids, was a very tight timeline, with a no-fail deadline," he recalls. "This ensured complete focus on the task, a recognition that decision-making could not be constrained and a requirement that the internal and external teams worked well with our contractors."

However, such processes are not always smooth sailing. Recalling her

initial experiences working with public sector companies funded by the public, O'Brien shares: "I was getting quite frustrated, being the UK taxpayer and thinking that there must be an easier way to support these organizations to get it right."

So, in response to this, Embridge decided to invest heavily in developing a public sector industry model in an attempt to simplify things for organizations looking to transform their back-office operations - putting together some clear guidelines about what good project governance looks like, the things they need to have in place in terms of resources, as well as the skill sets the leadership team needs to apply.

Despite it all revolving around the technology aspect, O'Brien points out that the big emphasis of these guidelines is on business change: "You go through a technology transformation but it's not actually anything to do with the technology. Usually, it's to do with how your team can change their processes and adopt new ways of working and how you support them on that journey." As well as, she adds, finding what good practice looks like from a process point of view.

Working on the CNC project collabo-

dilience to deliver the right outcomes," Clayton explains.

In terms of the strategy that helped nurture a win for the CNC project, the team leaned on the collective will to ensure that the Oracle Fusion platform was configured aligning to best practices and not customized at the detriment of long-term "supportability" - a crucial element that organizations often experiencing delays seem to get wrong.

"This meant that only high-value non-typical use cases warranted tailored solutions. In the case of CNC, we focused this effort on front-line services to ensure duty management systems were seamlessly embedded as well as edge cases such as travel management," Clayton says.

Their approach was also certain to secure a strong blend of internal and external resources, bringing product, project and BAU knowledge. Finally, they ensured that change management including process mapping, communication and training was overlaid to help throughout the project with the understanding and engagement of the end users.

### **Do public sector projects fail more?**

Having established that public sector

our funds the best they can."

O'Brien is not wrong here, as it's important to note that there are many big transformation programs in the public sector that have exceeded expectations, but don't get the airtime. However, there are, as O'Brien acknowledges, pressing problems within the sector that adds fuel to the fire behind some of these issues.

"I think there are probably a number of very common reasons," says O'Brien. "The way they procure is an issue, the way that they implement their contracts creates an issue and the bureaucracy and the red tape they are renowned for - it all slows down decision-making progress. So I think there are a lot of underlying cultural issues and - the way the public sector was set up - that makes those projects much harder than the private sector."

For Clayton, it's a case where actually, relatively few projects fail completely, no matter the sector. Rather than a comparison between the private versus public sectors, Clayton notes that we need to acknowledge that both the public and private sectors are full of highly experienced individuals and teams. "I don't think we should lose sight of the fact

"People there for a long time are used to their existing ways of working, so changing that mindset is really difficult sometimes."

**EMMA O'BRIEN**  
/ EMBRIDGE CONSULTING



"I don't think we should lose sight of the fact that the number of 'noisy' failed projects is far outweighed by the number of successful 'quiet' ones."

**RICHARD CLAYTON**  
/ NAMOS SOLUTIONS

ratively with Quite Laterally, Richard Clayton, chief operating officer at Namos shares that all programs, even the ones that end up being an ultimate success, come with their unique challenges. However, he emphasizes that some cornerstone elements that can make or break a project go back to the basics of trust, honesty, communication, partnership and the mantra that "we are in this together". So, "When those inevitable challenges were faced, we met them with a determination not to dwell and a

implementations could undoubtedly be more challenging in some cases, this warrants the question of whether they tend to fail more than public sector projects.

According to O'Brien, it is more a case of heightened public attention. "With public spending, the minute a contract is signed, its value is public information. So people are monitoring it very, very closely, because it's close to everyone's heart, as we're all taxpayers and want to make sure these organizations are using

that the number of 'noisy' failed projects is far outweighed by the number of successful 'quiet' ones," he reminds us.

Despite the presence of some considerable challenges with the nature of public sector organizations, not to mention the highly publicized downfall of notable projects, it does not mean that obstacles cannot be overcome. Quite the contrary, it might be more of a reason to focus efforts on bettering these transformational processes and celebrating the wins in this sector even louder. ■

**CLEANING UP THE**

# **DATA**

**IN A WORLD AMASSING A COLOSSAL AMOUNT OF DATA,**

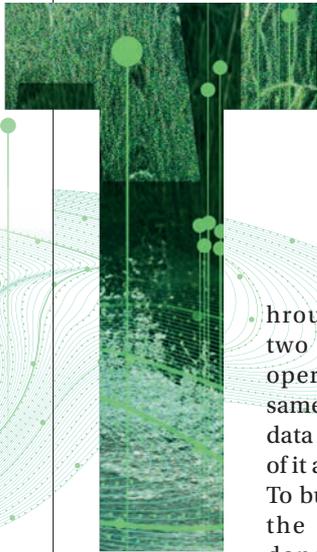


# WAAAMP

**HOW ARE WE WADING THROUGH THE SWAMP?**

BY STEPHANIE BALL

DATA



Throughout the last two decades, we've operated under the same narrative about data - hoard as much of it as fast as you can. To businesses' credit, the majority have done just that with truly spirited gusto. As a planet, we've gone from collecting 700 terabytes of data in the year 2000, to last year collecting around 79 zettabytes of data.

Expectantly, all this data needs to be stored somewhere and vendors are continuing to up their capacity looking ahead. For **Microsoft**, it looks like the company is on pace to build between 50 and 100 new data centers each year to handle all our mounting requirements for the foreseeable future. **Google** operates, or is currently developing, its 35 data centers around the world. **AWS**, one of the biggest spenders alongside its hyperscaler competitors - Google and Microsoft - now covers all continents except Antarctica, with over 100 data centers in 31 regions, and is promising to launch another five regions soon.

Not to be outdone, **Oracle** has also announced this year that it plans to build hundreds of data centers to keep up with growing demand, with at least one for every country in the world depending on regional requirements.

While vendors are all very center-happy, an unnerving realization is hitting home with businesses. At a conference hosted by **Sapphire Systems** earlier this year, one visual shocked to the core of our ongoing strategies - we are wasting the equivalent of 10.5 million Mount Everest's of data each year. At current rates, the amount of wasted

data will rise to 69 percent of that collected by 2025, with **McKinsey** estimating that data to be worth \$11.3tn in undiscovered value.

The fact is, beyond dumping our data somewhere, it also needs to be handled and put to good use - or else we're looking at a pointlessly costly act (both monetarily and environmentally) for the sake of possibility, just-in-case and best practice appearances.

**So why aren't we using it?**

It's no doubt a daunting prospect to get a handle on that sheer amount of data. Breaking things down, the problem most often stems from two key factors.

One: there has been too much data to properly manage without some serious sorting tools.

"Typically in the past, data scientists or data engineers or data practitioners were building applications, and the data sets for them had to be very small," explains Sunny Bedi, CTO at **Snowflake**. "The dashboards were like reading a newspaper. Readable, but then you have to have the imagination to ask the next 'why' question. And it would be really hard to visualize that. So, in the past, the data scientists would have to take all that data and do these things outside of the system."

What resulted was a lot of slow and

even manual processing of a fraction of the possibilities to be gleaned, with the rest of the data filling up its lake, murky and unused, with up to 80 percent of the world's data unstructured.

"Some refer to them as data swamps, because a lot of times the data lake is like users were just told to get as much data in there as possible and then determine value later. But that means that you're creating this data swamp that's not optimized for analytics," explains John Burke, CEO and co-founder at **UBIX Labs**. "Sometimes you're throwing data in there where you've lost sight of lineage and understanding. So, you're creating more of a problem than a valuable store."

Two: data scientists have been difficult to get hold of and, even then, to keep.

There is a well-known shortage of data scientists, and it shows. From 2013 to 2019, data science postings were shown to increase by 256 percent. **Deloitte** research shares that data scientists "know they are in demand" and spend an average of one-two hours a week looking for new jobs, welcoming offers from potential employers. Between 2017 and 2022, results from one study suggested that data professionals remained with their employers for an average of only 1.7 years. Taking vital



**"THAT PERSON EITHER DOESN'T WORK THERE ANYMORE OR THE DATA SOURCES OR CIRCUMSTANCES WITHIN THE COMPANY HAVE CHANGED. SO ALL OF THAT WORK EFFORT TO SOME DEGREE IS LOST."**

MILES MAHONEY / UBIX LABS

ILLUSTRATION: CECI PERRIARD / PHOTOS: ECRAFTS / SUTTERSTOCK.COM

process and progress knowledge to pastures new, a data swamp is left behind.

“Part of the challenge we hear is they’ll run through solving problem A, then that person either doesn’t work there anymore or the data sources have changed or circumstances within the company have changed. So all of that work effort to some degree is lost,” says Miles Mahoney, president and co-founder at UBIX Labs.

### The new tools to clean up our act

This year has seen the potential for data handling to drastically transform with the advent of tools to enable an easier, algorithmic search and processing for specific data, as well as the ability to begin to democratize data handling across the enterprise.

For Sridhar Ramaswamy, co-founder of intelligent search engine **Neeva**, and now Snowflake SVP, finding a better way to search through data was the way forward.

“The bar we set ourselves was that we would have our AI referenceable, meaning it would do things like cited sources, and the information from it would also be real-time,” says Ramaswamy.

In May this year, Neeva was acquired by Snowflake and has now launched a whole new set of solutions for better data handling within its cloud data lake,

removing the need to transfer the data outside of the platform and therein minimizing factors such as egress charges and governance issues.

Its Document AI tool, for instance, allows users to interpret and extract semi-structured information from unstructured PDFs, word documents, txt and screenshots, giving users more digestible and useful information at a faster and scalable pace. Meanwhile LLM-powered Universal Search can query and locate objects within a database, such as tables, views, schemas and marketplace apps.

“Now we have an ability to train through LLM for these complex unstructured data and ask through conversational AI interfaces these simple English questions to those documents and say, ‘please tell me XYZ about this scenario’. You can translate and decode and in seconds, it gives you answers that have previously been hard for you to get,” says Snowflake’s Bedi. “A big portion of AI use cases is actually how you leverage unstructured data and LLMs to de-code the belt of information sitting in these unstructured PDFs and other documents.”

Taking things further still, firms are also creating ways to democratize and simplify data handling with no-code, low-code tools, making functions acces-

sible and reusable, not only freeing up the data scientists’ time with automation, but also enabling users without a coding background to access and analyze data.

Co-pilots are set to enable users to generate and refine SQL queries with text-to-code functionality. Other providers such as UBIX meanwhile are offering no-code, low-code libraries for analytics workflows, creating repeatable and highly accessible data analytics processes.

For Burke, it’s this kind of technology that is defeating many of the blockers to better data management: “It’s freeing a business up from the reliance on a very scarce resource and allowing them to be empowered to solve problems. Because most data scientist projects are a black box, even if you had questions, the business side doesn’t usually get answers. Now, you could bring something to life really easily without having to be a data scientist.

“Innovating faster, it also actually helps bridge that gap between technical teams in that situation, which the technical people love because it allows them to showcase how the data that they built can turn to business value.”

Using Snowflake, it’s prompted businesses such as **Bentley Motors Limited** to create greater data upskilling across all its employees, enabling easier entry to learn the ropes of data handling and analytics under its CDO Dr Andy Moore’s strategy of “data is a team sport”. So named the data science dojo, its data literacy program sees students awarded with graded belts.

Bedi explains: “You can use democratization - I like the word inclusiveness. I want all our 6500 employees to have access and include them in this transformation journey. You want to give them all the necessary tools, scale and systems that they need. And for them to have the right imagination on how they achieve an A plus. Humans want to do the best and if they have the right measurement in place everything can work.”

“SOME REFER TO THEM AS DATA SWAMPS; YOU’RE THROWING DATA IN THERE WHERE YOU’VE LOST SIGHT OF LINEAGE AND UNDERSTANDING. YOU’RE CREATING MORE OF A PROBLEM.”

JOHN BURKE / UBIX LABS



DATA



**“IF WE CAN ELIMINATE A LOT OF THAT WORK, I THINK THERE’S A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF DEVELOPER PRODUCTIVITY THAT KICKS IN.”**

**SUNNY BEDI / SNOWFLAKE**

**Does this mean data scientists will die out?**

With an increasing amount of employees utilizing data science tools, are we looking at a future without the need for specialist data scientist roles, or else fewer available?

“I mean, I don’t think so. It will definitely make them more productive,” says Ramaswamy. “What we at Snowflake tried to do is make more sophisticated algorithms available to people with less technical knowledge so that they can use them without necessarily getting into trouble.”

Therein, rather than making them an extinct breed of techie, it’s looking



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**SRIDHAR RAMASWAMY / SNOWFLAKE**



like these kinds of tools will instead enhance their work lives, removing some of the laborious elements of the role and enticing scientists to stick around for a more creative and riveting to-do list, and if not, at least enabling continuity of their work if they still decide to move on.

For Bedi, it's a case of providing every worker with an assisted experience: “Where some code suggestion and co-pilot assistant will help to write a portion of your code, I would argue that solves 20-30 percent of it. But, where I think we see a more highly impactful, useful case for the IT organization is - we don't want to do QA, we don't want to do testing. We want an AI assistant to help us with

that. We want to do more design and development. And so, if we can eliminate a lot of that work, I think there's a tremendous amount of developer productivity that kicks in.

“That shared use case of an AI assistant, imagine you have 6000 employees and 6000 assistants working for them, just think about the productivity that they could drive. You can't have an AI strategy without having a data strategy. My recommendation would be don't make this a very complex long-term strategy. Break it up into chunks and make it actionable and start one or two use cases that you can create that value.”

### **This doesn't mean less data will be stored**

While the advent of these tools is set to make our data-dealing lives much simpler, this also means the amount of data we store isn't going to get any smaller. The likes of LLMs are ballooning the amount of data stored, on top of our seemingly insatiable appetite for data hoarding.

“There's one thing about ingesting and storing that data in 12 terabytes, but there's a whole other thing around analyzing it because that 12 terabytes turns into 50, as you have all the processing going on. It's not just the storage layer, it's running algorithms against it and reduc-

ing that to feature sets and other things like that,” explains Burke. “A big point is that if you look at the growth of advanced analytics, it's going from a \$41bn market to \$181bn market within three years. With that growth, I believe the majority of companies are going to make a purchase decision in the next three years.”

Though we can master better management of the data itself, simultaneously on the agenda has to be ensuring the building and running of these centers isn't exacerbating an environmental disaster either. The increase in data centers has come with reports of large amounts of water usage to cool them in areas of drought, as well as ongoing energy consumption to keep them running.

The good news is that vendors are responding to some degree, with Microsoft and AWS planning for their data centers to be powered by 100 percent renewable sources of energy by 2025. Meanwhile, Google aims to champion responsible water use and operate entirely on 24/7 carbon-free energy by 2030.

There is certainly more to be done, but from an unruly and expanding data swamp perspective, it's now looking more likely that businesses can ensure their data is managed and monetized effectively and, looking ahead, hopefully sustainably, with a lot less mess. ■

# DEVELOPING A WINNING



THE ERP VENDORS  
DELIVERING THAT WINNING  
EDGE FOR F1 RACING TEAMS.

# FORMULA

BY MELISSA EVATT



**ERP IN F1**

**Formula 1 (F1)** - the whole world knows it. Ten teams and 20 drivers race around over 20 tracks, reaching speeds of 230mph in the hopes of becoming the next world champion and scoring those all-important points for their teams.

There can only be one winner and with the final checkered flag waved, that is the F1 2023 season grinding to a halt. You can see how it ignites that competitive team spirit. Max Verstappen is now the one to beat, having been recognized as F1's three-time world champion after his show-stopping performance for the third year running and joins racing legends who have achieved the same: Jack Brabham, Jackie Stewart, Niki Lauda, Nelson Piquet and Ayrton Senna.

In this highly competitive sport, where precision and speed reign su-

performance of both vehicle and driver. This newfound partnership allows F1 to leverage high performance computing (HPC), ML and data analytics.

With HPC, F1 can run aerodynamic simulations to develop its next-generation car 70 percent faster and reduce downforce loss from 50 percent to 15 percent, giving the driver a higher chance of overtaking.

Neil Ralph, principal sports partnership manager at AWS has seen first-hand AWS' partnership with F1 since its beginnings in 2018.

"The use of AI both in the team environment but also within Formula 1 is helping tell those stories or inform their strategy. So F1 insights and our use of ML have now been incorporated into the broadcast experience that we all know and hopefully you're of the opinion that



JACOB NIBLETT/SHUTTERSTOCK STUDIOS

*"I WOULD NOW STRUGGLE TO WATCH FORMULA 1 WITHOUT THOSE DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS. IT'S BECOME A COMPONENT PART OF MY ENJOYMENT OF WATCHING."* **NEIL RALPH / AWS**

preme, the role of ERP solutions has grown to become vital for F1 teams in gaining that winning edge.

**Driving success with data**

Data makes the world go round and, in F1, data is now paramount to a team's execution and success. A winning team is no longer just made up of a designer chassis and the skill of the driver; F1 now requires more in order to score points and win. Utilizing cutting-edge technology and partnering with Big Tech, F1 teams can, and have, adopted ERP solutions, cloud technology and more to gain valuable insights before, during and after a race and boost their teams' chances against the competition.

On track, F1 is leveraging **Amazon Web Services (AWS)** to enhance the

I am that I would now struggle to watch Formula 1 without those data-driven insights. It's become a component part of my enjoyment of watching, that ML helps us to do those insightful stories using data," says Ralph.

**"Box! Box!" into the pitlanes**

**Scuderia AlphaTauri**, previously known as Scuderia Toro Rosso, and one of two **Red Bull**-owned F1 teams, leverages **Epicor** to optimize operations and enhance performance improvement both on and off the track.

Megan Blanchard, head of global brand, Epicor, says: "In a sport where the ten best constructors in the world compete to pair the fastest car with the best driver, F1 team Scuderia AlphaTauri requires real-time insights to engineer,



manufacture and optimize a competitive race car.

"Each season, the team must design a new car that is even faster than the car designed for the previous season. Each racing car is made up of more than 14,000 precision components. Many of those parts are custom-made onsite by technical designers and engineers. Throughout the season, a complex logistics operation ensures 1,000 parts are shipped on time and intact to over 20 races around the globe."

AlphaTauri is utilizing Epicor Kinetic



to streamline production, correlate components with telemetry data and maximize vehicle performance. During testing, the team overlays telemetry data collected on the track from more than 900 sensors onboard both Daniel Ricciardo and Yuki Tsunoda's cars which provide a precise and accurate insight into individual part performance, along with predictive analytics.

"The team can also automatically 'unwind' the data to earlier snapshots of the car structure to pinpoint potential component issues and ensure a problem is not replicated," adds Blanchard.

Oracle serves as one of Red Bull Racing's primary sponsors having signed a new title sponsorship reportedly worth around \$500m in 2022, in a five-year deal. The F1 team leverages Oracle Cloud to get more out of its races with real-time race simulations, billions of which are

Monte Carlo simulations, run using Oracle Cloud Infrastructure to explore different scenarios and outcome probabilities before and during every race.

In its newest partnership, the Paddock recently welcomed Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) and Sauber Motorsport AG (Alfa Romeo F1 Team). The pairing sees HPE advancing the aerodynamics of the F1 team's race cars. The teams have developed an HPC system for computational fluid dynamics (CFD) which significantly increases computing performance compared to the previous system.

This HPC system is installed in the wind tunnel building of Sauber Motorsport AG in Hinwil, Switzerland, where HPE delivers supercomputing performance as a service utilizing HPE GreenLake, allowing Sauber's engineers to adjust capacity in compliance with

the rules of the International Automobile Federation (FIA).

For Alessandro Alunni Bravi, managing director of Sauber Group and team representative, the way the partnership combines cloud and on-premises ERP seals the deal: "Computational fluid dynamics performance is crucial to success in F1 racing, however, there are also high demands with regards to scalability and data protection.

"HPE GreenLake perfectly matches these requirements because it combines the flexibility of the cloud with



"THE TEAM CAN AUTOMATICALLY 'UNWIND' THE DATA TO EARLIER SNAPSHOTS OF THE CAR STRUCTURE TO PINPOINT POTENTIAL COMPONENT ISSUES." MEGAN BLANCHARD / EPICOR

ERP IN F1



**“IT HELPS US REDUCE OUR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE, GIVING ACCESS TO STATE-OF-THE-ART HIGH PERFORMANCE COMPUTING TECHNOLOGY IN A PAY-AS-YOU-GO MODEL.”** **ALESSANDRO ALUNNI BRAVI / SAUBER GROUP**

the control of an on-premises environment. Moreover, HPE GreenLake helps us reduce our capital expenditure by giving us access to state-of-the-art high performance computing technology in a pay-as-you-go model.”

Elsewhere, **ServiceNow** and **Aston Martin Aramco Cognizant Formula One Team** have also collaborated to enable the F1 team to operate and automate at the peak of performance and technology. Working as the team’s digital platform, ServiceNow helps to streamline the running of the AMR Technology Campus.

ServiceNow’s chief commercial officer, Paul Smith, speaks of the company’s partnership with the F1 team and says: “The ServiceNow platform helps organizations fundamentally change the way they operate.

“By combining tools, services and data on one single platform, Aston Martin Aramco Cognizant F1 Team can drive faster decision making and greater efficiency. We are thrilled to be Aston Martin F1 Team’s ‘team behind the team’ as they continue their quest to be one of most technologically innovative sports

teams on and off the racetrack.”

From Epicor to ServiceNow, the partnerships with ERP vendors deliver race-changing results for the F1 teams, season in, season out, and not only enhance the abilities of the teams behind the scenes but also the way fans engage with the sport.

**Shaping the fan experience**

Though F1 wouldn’t be the sport it is today without its technological advancements, you could argue that F1 fans truly drive and shape the experience for all ten teams and their drivers. For the technology teams behind the F1 action, improving the experience for the fans offers another big win from their implementations.

On track and back at its home base, F1 leverages **Lenovo’s** technology and hardware devices as well as HPC and server solutions which are integrated throughout its operations.

Chris Roberts, IT director at F1, explains the reasoning: “The fans are at the heart of everything F1 does and we are committed to constantly improving their experience, while also finding innovative ways to connect with new and existing audiences all over the world. F1 fans expect the best from everything we do and Lenovo is the perfect partner to help us meet their expectations, thanks

to its premium hardware offerings.

“From running powerful on-premises data collection solutions to producing higher quality content and supporting broadcast applications, up to leveraging next-generation technology such as AR and VR solutions, Lenovo is helping us to improve our operations and bring the fans closer to the sport.”

It’s a partnership that works to deliver a better experience for fans around the globe by running on-premises data collection solutions. It results in producing higher quality content and supports broadcast applications for the fans at home.

For Ed Green, head of commercial technology, and the team at **McLaren Racing**, **Salesforce** is deepening McLaren’s relationship with its global fanbase and keeping fans connected before, during and after the races through the use of Salesforce’s Customer 360 product suite.

Green shares: “I think Salesforce is quite interesting because there’s such a focus on engaging our fans, but also enabling the team. So, Salesforce is really about ‘how do we get better connected as a team?’ ‘How do we know more about our fans, our partners, our



**“LEVERAGING NEXT-GENERATION TECHNOLOGY SUCH AS AR AND VR SOLUTIONS IS HELPING US TO IMPROVE OUR OPERATIONS AND BRING THE FANS CLOSER TO THE SPORT.”** **CHRIS ROBERTS / F1**

guests?’ and really enriching that sort of customer, fan and partner 360.”

Fans were also the focus for AWS’ launch of Alternative Strategy, the company’s 23rd F1 Insight over the last five years of working with F1, announced at the Austin, Texas Grand Prix. A new graphic, Alternative Strategy, provides fans and broadcasters with an alternative view of the racers and their teams’ decisions impacted by a race.

AWS’ Ralph shares how data plays a key role here: “When we put these insights out, we’re very cognizant of the fact we have a spectrum of fan understanding to serve. F1 is putting the



*“EVERYONE’S GOT TO LOOK AT THOSE SMALL MARGINAL GAINS. BUT WHEN YOU’RE DEALING IN SOMETHING WHICH IS THAT FINE A MARGIN, DATA HAS GOT TO SHOW YOU.” ED GREEN / McLAREN RACING*

same pictures out to every fan globally, right. We have one shot at giving that data-driven insight that serves that entire spectrum.”

Powered by AWS, F1 Insights work to deliver a dynamic fan experience differing from one race to the next, transforming the way data is delivered to millions of fans around the globe. Ralph speaks about Alternative Strategy and its insights, where a number are dedicated to race strategy and others analyze the competitors.

Using AWS’ cloud technologies, F1 can bring fans closer to the track, redesign the future of F1 cars and run analytics and ML to digitally transform F1.

For Ralph, ML and the data driving it has changed the game: “If we think about race strategy, what we’ve been able to do with our insights is take Formula 1 from what it used to be - which was a broadcaster that was able to show us pictures of what’s happening on track, give us a few data points about who’s winning the race [in] present time, give us a bit of an insight as to what’s happened in the past from a replay perspective - but [combine this] with our machine learning insights to be predictive about what’s going to

happen in the near future, how the race might play out without giving the game away,” says Ralph.

### The data apex

Looking at the whole F1 picture, data plays a crucial part in not only the fan experience but also in optimizing the performance on the track. Today, it shows, as the teams strategically utilize Big Tech to test the limits of both their cars and drivers. When milliseconds matter, having the right data and analytics tools really do add up.

“If you look at even Fernando and

Sergio when they finished the race in Brazil, they are milliseconds apart or tenths of seconds apart,” says Green. “And when you break that into percentages, it’s like half a percent. You know, sometimes in qualifying, sometimes even between lap times in the grid is you know, level of four percent.

“So you have to use data to go and find those marginal gains and really look at it in that sense of how is everything going to add up together if I’m making the car one gram lighter, a little bit stronger, bit faster, more efficient, whatever it might be in your manufacturing process through to design process through the way we run and operate the race team,” finishes Green. “Everyone’s got to look at those small marginal gains. But when you’re dealing in something which is that fine a margin, data has got to show you where to find those improvements or how you can best measure yourself.”

As the pinnacle of motorsports, F1 and its teams are continuously looking to gain that extra bit of competitive edge to drive them to the top of the leaderboard. Data can make or break a team and, for now, Oracle Red Bull Racing has taken the lead, dominating the 2023 season. The new season welcomes new partnerships and a plethora of opportunities for F1 teams to leverage new technologies to drive success.

With its unpredictable nature no one can know for certain how the 2024 season will play out, but one thing is for sure - teams will leverage Big Tech to steer their results. Here’s to the 2024 season being bigger and better than ever. ■



JACOB NIBLET / SHUTTERSTOCK STUDIOS

# INFOR INN

A man in a dark suit and white shirt is standing on a stage, gesturing with his hands. Behind him is a large projection screen displaying a blue graphic with a central black circle. To the right, another screen shows the 'infor' logo in white on a red background. The scene is dimly lit, focusing on the speaker and the screens.

Giacomo Lee and Adrian Bridgwater “Infor-m” of the vendor’s latest innovations across the globe from Stockholm to New Orleans.

# OVATIONS

A DIGITAL DARWINISM DANCE OFF



INFOR INNOVATIONS



BY GIACOMO LEE

**F**or some vendors, innovation is a mere buzzword, designed to add a sheen on an existing product with new features clients don't need - or justify a new offering that is similarly redundant.

For smarter software names, innovation is a dance-off with "digital Darwinism" to ensure you still have the best moves and go on to dance another day. In other words, operating on the cutting-edge can ensure vendors don't just survive in the ERP space, but also thrive - and jive - while they're at it.

Infor Innovations Day Nordics, as held in Stockholm, Sweden this October, had the threadline of digital Darwinism running all the way through it. Kicking off Infor's showcase was an eye-opening keynote by futurist Sander Duivestein. In a look at AI, social media, deepfakes and

**"THERE'S NO LEAD TIME, NO IMPLEMENTATION OR INTEGRATION. IT'S CONSUMABLE - CUSTOMERS CAN USE IT STRAIGHT AWAY." PHIL LEWIS**

the metaverse, the main takeaway for the corporate audience was "don't be afraid to experiment", especially if you want your business to evolve and survive. A message to be expected at an innovation day, one might argue.

Following Duivestein was Phil Lewis, senior VP, solution consulting for Infor international markets. In his presentation at the **Hilton** Stockholm Slussen, Lewis highlighted the addition of robotic process automation (RPA) to the latest iteration of Infor CloudSuite, whilst admitting attendees may have been thinking "that's nothing new, that's been around for years".

But as Lewis explained, Infor's RPA is

built into the platform and framework and connected to all Infor applications.

"There's no lead time, no implementation or integration," as he put it. "It's consumable - customers can use it straight away."

**It's RPA, Jim, but not as we know it** RPA has nothing to do with robots, but if we were to use a sci-fi analogy, then the ERP tech can often come after the fact - think Star Trek's Borg, in which the robot species are created from "upgrading" humans into their fold.

In this case, Infor's RPA is more like the ultra-responsive holograms in the





“holodecks” of Star Trek, embedded within the architecture of those virtual worlds that they serve and existing nowhere else. CloudSuite makes for the holodeck in this analogy, a software platform that’s constantly upgrading on the cloud, primed for a variety of business scenarios - and now equipped with bots awaiting users on its doorstep. This feature comes live in the October update to CloudSuite, the announcements of which handily coincided with the Infor Innovations Day.

The throughline of digital Darwinism during the day was expounded upon by Lewis, as he laid out an AI use case in which the intelligence doesn’t simply watch and copy a human user in the manner of RPA, but instead makes decisions and carries out actions based on those decisions.

“These automation capabilities come together into what we call ‘enterprise au-

tomation.’ This means automation of the back end, automation of the front end - and then decision intelligence, or ‘decision automation,’ which can be injected absolutely anywhere.”

But with all this talk of AI and the virtual, it was clear Lewis and team Infor are more people-focused than anything else. Infor’s ethos is to go in and understand a business, as examples, including a Dutch baking brand, elaborated upon.

This includes knowing the niche needs of a vertical - take grower’s contracts, a consideration of the food and beverage industry which Infor has “hard-baked” into its platform.

“We really go to town in terms of building last-mile capabilities people

need by industry,” as Lewis put it.

Another vertical the SVP talked about was healthcare, a perhaps sometimes overlooked part of the Infor offering. In the States, CloudSuite Healthcare gave the real-life example of a nurse who can speak with a device and get the materials and equipment she needs instead of trawling hospital corridors for half an hour at a time.

Lewis relayed, “The nurse on our [promotional] video says, ‘this technology is saving people’s lives. This is through using voice to communicate with your system, and back-end automation to automate that process.

“Sometimes the simplest things make for the biggest difference,” Lewis noted.

**“SOMETIMES THE SIMPLEST THINGS MAKE FOR THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE.”**



Malin Petersson & Malte Ekedahl, Infor SVP & GMs



Trophy for the Infor Innovation Awards in Sweden

INFOR INNOVATIONS



**“YOU HAVE TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO HAVE CRAZY IDEAS AS THAT’S WHERE THE BEST INNOVATIONS COME FROM.”**

Interestingly, the healthcare provision now comes with Blockchain Career Credential Verification. The newly introduced tool leverages new HCM technology for career credentials and personal information verification by reducing labor costs incurred with traditional verification methods, time-to-hire and onboarding new employees.

Infor’s blockchain solution automates credential and personal information verification, reducing labor costs for phone call verification processes, onboarding time and time-to-hire, with candidates controlling which verifiable

credentials they share.

The tool is another example of Infor’s impressive dance-off with digital Darwinism. With it, the vendor has also been brave enough to remind the ERP world of something AI has made it all but forget about: Web3 (or Web3.0, if you’d rather). It’ll be interesting to see if other vendors follow suit next year when the GenAI hype is likely to simmer down a little (unless they start to conflate AI, Web3 and the metaverse all over again - enterprise clients will likely fear it to be the post-**Meta** name change agony of 2022 all over again. Eek!)

**You don’t have to be crazy to work here...**

Infor Innovations Day Nordics ended with a panel hosted by Duivestein that again touched on winning digital Darwinism as a business. Lewis spoke with Attila Lengyel, senior business development manager, **AWS** EMEA Digital Innovation (AWS being the “backbone” of CloudSuite, of course). Also joining them on stage were Infor customers ranging from finance to garden supplies: Olav Fyldeng, group CIO, **Plantasjen**, and Per Arvidsson, EVP and CTO, **Lantmännen Group**.

When asked by Duivestein what innovation meant to him, Lewis responded that from an Infor perspective, it’s about innovating on behalf of customers - doing the research needed and carrying out experiments side-by-side with clients.

“The one thing that will derail an innovation project is not having the people behind you - so whatever you do to make people feel involved and not alienated is really important. Along with giving them that freedom to be part of the experimentation, to be part of the ideation and be able to feel they can come forward with an idea. You have to allow people to have crazy ideas as that’s where the best innovations come from.”

In other words, you want people to be Infor-ming the disruption process from start to finish - meaning “robotic” staff need not apply. ■



# INFOR NOW 2023 - TAKING OVER THE BIG EASY

BY ADRIAN BRIDGWATER

**P**rior to its Scandinavian showcase, the start of October saw Infor stage the US leg of its Infor Now 2023 user, partner and practitioner conference in the city they call the “Big Easy” - New Orleans, Louisiana, of course.

Infor CEO Kevin Samuelson and CTO Soma Somasundaram shared the joint welcoming honors and clarified the theme of the event itself: “a technology evolution with Infor” to deliver long-term value to customers through people, process and technology, all of which is accompanied by work designed to accelerate innovation and return on investment with AI/ML, plus automation.

Recognizing the fact that Infor is somewhere around the fifth largest ERP software vendor on the planet today, Samuelson said that he and his team understand that the companies that are bigger than Infor are (as he put it) “quite a lot bigger” - and because of this, he said, Infor knows that it has to be significantly disruptive in order to make a big impact across its markets.

Samuelson added that his firm knows that customers today have a lot of tough customization modifications to enact, which is part of why Infor is so markedly industry-specific in order to retain its focus.

Somasundaram then took over and explained Infor’s three key design principles: industry-specific expertise, digital enablement and hyper-productivity.

“We decided to build a multi-tenant platform in the cloud, which is a great way of being able to leverage more data and provide customers with more insight,” said the CTO. “One instance running globally means organizations can



benefit from updates and enhancement from one source - and this is also part of our ethos. In order to deliver an industry cloud, you need an integration platform, so all our solutions can be exposed to be consumed securely in several places. With rich APIs that can be consumed in multiple ways, we offer the maximum possible freedom here.”

Talking about how he realizes that customers need to use Infor data alongside other data that is now generated or managed in Infor, Somasundaram said it’s now table stakes to be able to offer this degree of freedom - this is why digital enablement is Infor’s second design principle.



The hyper-productivity element is covered off here by virtue of the fact that users themselves do not have to “touch” the systems they are using and know that functions (like inventory optimization and so much more) all happen without the need for user interaction.

“Although a user could purchase one platform for integration, one platform

for automation and one platform for other core functions, we have brought these elements together in one place with our architecture,” said the CTO.

## Platforms and paddle steamers

As Infor Now 2023 progressed - after an appropriate Mississippi River paddle boat drinks soiree - attendees were led through the company’s product and service updates.

Much of the organization’s platform’s development this year focused on bringing RPA more prevalently forward into the Infor OS multi-tenant cloud services layer. On this, Somasundaram shared that the progression of RPA today (and where his firm has applied its intelligence layers) means that the lines between front-end and back-end automation are blurring - and that, he said, is due to the “breadth of the platform” approach and the “rich library” of APIs that Infor has championed.

Coming full circle, SVP head of design at Infor Nunzio Esposito spirited attendees with his enthusiasm for the platform’s new User eXperience (UX) layers. Esposito likes to call it “approachable sophistication”, meaning Infor has looked at its application’s orchestration layer and working model functions to make sure it prioritizes user features in the right order.

Looking ahead, let’s imagine that Infor chooses New Orleans again and we get some more of the cool factor next year. ■



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# LOW THE

BY YOANA CHOLTEEVA

ENTERPRISES SIMPLY CAN'T HIRE ENOUGH TECHNOLOGY SPECIALISTS FAST



# CODE

## FIX FOR YOUR SKILLS CHASE

ENOUGH. ARE LOW-CODE AND NO-CODE SOLUTIONS A PERFECT FIX?

## LOW-CODE / NO-CODE

We're stuck in a skills-chasing loop. As vendor ambitions are ever-expanding for tech developments, not to mention the enterprises wanting to harness them, it's resulting in an ongoing grab for the latest tech-minded talent. It's competitive, with the push to attract the best applicants at a real high.

Since 2016, with the only exception of 2020, global skills shortages have stood at around 60 percent every year, reaching 70 percent of organizations that experienced a skills shortage in tech in 2022.

Plus, despite shortages being widespread and well-documented, the future of the industry doesn't seem to stack up any better as it stands, as US management and consulting firm **Korn Ferry** has predicted that there will be a global shortage of more than 85 million tech workers, representing \$8.5tn in lost annual revenue by 2030. Ouch.

In the constant demand for new skills, the available enterprise talent pool is running dry, with businesses struggling to attract enough talent to fulfill their full potential. So, ever the solution thinkers, tech vendors are increasingly crafting ways to respond to the growing challenge and, you guessed it, it starts with more automation.

#### A growing need for more automation

Being dependent on many highly skilled and specialized developers, without attracting and retaining a much-needed workforce, the tech industry could struggle to develop to its full potential in the long run as companies are also facing increased competition for talent.

Having had many conversations with customers, **Adi Kuruganti**, chief product officer of **Automation Anywhere** (AA),

shares: "There are not enough developers to go around. One of our customers yesterday was saying how it took them six months to hire one developer. If it can take six months to hire one developer, imagine if you want to hire ten."

In the meantime, multiple industries, including retail, customer service, finance, banking, healthcare and manufacturing are tapping into the potential of automation for various processes to increase productivity. Recent research from **McKinsey** has also shown that companies can automate as much as 60-70 percent of their processes to optimize their operations. In this case, however, developers are likely to be inundated with automation requests and unable to cope with the workload in time.

Echoing the observations that most companies are working with massive resource constraints and some budget

constraints on hiring more people, **Claudia Michon**, SVP of product and solutions marketing at AA, says that such companies are "looking at technology, automation and the combination of generative AI as a way to maintain or increase productivity".

"So that's really where we are right now in the world. It's about how we can keep moving forward without the luxury of hiring an infinite amount of people with an infinite amount of skills," she adds.

For this reason, AA has embarked on a mission of building low-code, no-code tools, with the addition of GenAI to allow companies to rapidly auto-generate automations using natural language - a leapfrog from where we've been with the standard code system development tools and technologies of the past.

As part of these efforts, AA has re-

**THERE ARE NOT  
ENOUGH DEVELOPERS  
TO GO AROUND.  
SIX MONTHS TO HIRE  
ONE DEVELOPER  
- IMAGINE IF YOU WANT  
TO HIRE TEN.**

**ADI KURUGANTI /**  
AUTOMATION ANYWHERE



cently unveiled the expansion of its Automation Co-Pilot for Automators, aiming to empower citizen and professional developers to create powerful, customized automations using natural language prompts to lower the barrier to automation creation across enterprises.

Along with this, the vendor has also launched Autopilot, which can enable users to streamline automation development from process understanding to automation deployment - quite often a months-long process across multiple teams. With the element of human validation along the way, tools like Autopilot can generate end-to-end automation based on enterprise process mapping, using the power of GenAI.

With the potential of automation to help increase productivity, public sector organizations can also benefit from this. Raj Iyer, global head of public sector at **ServiceNow**, shares his observations from working with government contacts in this space. What's clear, is that AI is granting opportunities, helping businesses automate a lot of their existing eligibility rules and policies.

"Clearly, over the next decade, I think what we're going to see is a lot of the things that can be automated, AI will take a lot more of it. And then, especially given the workforce challenges, this has to happen. There's just no way to continue to keep things manual."

### Capitalizing on low-code/ no-code applications

The no-code / low-code approach, since

**THE LOW-CODE  
APPROACH IS NOT  
A MAGICAL WORLD.  
YOU ALWAYS NEED TO  
BE AWARE OF YOUR  
PROCESSES AND  
YOUR NEEDS.**

**PIERRE COUDERC /  
AXELOR**



first emerging in the early 2000s, is gaining popularity by bringing mounting advantages to the industry. By enabling application development with little or no coding, it is allowing people to perform common programming tasks with drag and drop, while enabling improved development efficiency.

Pierre Couderc, low-code and BPM expert at **Axelor**, explains that a major advantage of such implementations is that you don't have to develop specific functionalities or processes. You can directly set some parameters while it's all embedded in the ERP.

"If you want to go further and fully customize the accounting part of the CRM part, whatever it needs...It has all these tools in the studio to create the custom form of the BPM to create a process. You can do that by yourself. You don't need to hire developers, you just need to be focused on the functional part and how it is reflected in

the application," says Couderc, while explaining that this is all made possible by completing a short training program on these tools.

Moreover, no-code and low-code applications can help overall team productivity by preventing mistakes when duplicating content instead of using the old-fashioned way of copy and paste some developers rely on - which often times leads to loss of code and errors that can be difficult to manage before deploying an application.

However, while no-code and low-code applications have the potential to improve processes in organizations, Couderc explains that sometimes, there are unrealistic customer expectations, with one of the main requirements for companies to adopt it successfully being the deep knowledge of their own processes - oftentimes the worrying gap in businesses' knowledge.

"Sometimes it happens that there is a bottleneck in their processes. But the low-code approach is not a magical world. You always need to be aware of your processes and your needs...It can be one of the major issues with customers."

Shedding light on the idea that sometimes there is a silo between the business and technology teams in organizations, AA's Michon points out that this often leads to processes functioning slowly, exacerbated by talent shortages and the fact that the process could be too complicated, especially where new regulations come in or costs need to be taken out of the system.

HOW WE CAN KEEP  
MOVING FORWARD  
WITHOUT THE LUXURY  
OF HIRING AN INFINITE  
AMOUNT OF **PEOPLE**  
**WITH AN INFINITE**  
**AMOUNT OF SKILLS.**

**CLAUDIA MICHON /  
AUTOMATION ANYWHERE**



**LOW-CODE / NO-CODE**

Working to prevent this silo of information and knowledge from sitting in just one group, she shares that the opportunity to get key information over to the other side and build upon it, as well as stitching together and creating fusion teams, are probably the most highly anticipated abilities their customers are seeking.

But with the growing fears of technology taking over jobs and removing the need to recruit human employees, the question of whether low-code and no-code can take away developers' jobs altogether, is a pertinent one.

Responding to this, Couderc says: "It's a real question. But is it still a question since ChatGPT, where an AI solution can literally create an application from scratch and make it work without any knowledge in developing, so I think that may be an evolution."

Couderc reiterates that low-code is not a new way of developing applications but one that still implies a strong experience in coding. If you want to develop a low-code application, he believes that this will only become a way for developers to simplify work and become more efficient in everyday tasks.

"And the next generation of developers will be competent in using AI in the everyday world to create content, but it's always the same thing. You can have the most powerful tool like ChatGPT to create a code and you'll always need to have a human check in the end if you want to ensure that there are no functional errors," Couderc says.

**A LOT OF THE THINGS CAN BE AUTOMATED, AI WILL TAKE A LOT MORE OF IT. THIS HAS TO HAPPEN. THERE'S JUST NO WAY TO CONTINUE TO KEEP THINGS MANUAL.**

**RAJ IYER / SERVICENOW**



**Nurturing future talent with automation**

As part of its social impact work, AA has partnered with the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** to help drive digital inclusion in underserved communities while helping develop the skills of young people interested in technology that they need to succeed in the field.

Supporting the idea that a more equitable, wealth-balanced society requires better skilling, so people with little opportunity can access well-paying work, AA is offering free training paths to such young people from the US, the Indian subcontinent and Africa.

For instance, the company is partnering with **leriba.ai**, an intelligent automation solutions, services and skills development company, with the goal of training a million African women in robotic process automation skills. This complements the vision of WEF's

"Reskilling Revolution", which upped its goal, from reskilling one billion people, to more than half (1.6 billion) of the world's workers, having already provided more than 350 million people with better skills, jobs and education.

"When non-profits embrace automation, we witness the profound impact it can have on human lives, often resulting in faster response times or lower operational costs, or both. As the world races towards intelligent automation and GenAI, the non-profits we collaborate with are harnessing these technologies to uplift society as a whole," Neeti Mehta Shukla, social impact officer at AA, says.

But by helping nurture these skills and empower disadvantaged communities to grow their interest in tech, these initiatives also have the potential to strengthen the tech and automation industries in the long run. They can attract young talent, provide learning and bring the industry closer to the lives of young people from diverse backgrounds.

Without getting too stuck on the fears that AI and low-code could disrupt the industry beyond recognition and deprive people of jobs, it seems that as automation is becoming a more desirable component of modern organizations, the "work smarter, not harder" approach that low-code and no-code can offer would only appeal to a wider audience. Having said that, with the creativity and problem-solving skills of humans, joining young talent with shortcut tech approaches might be our best bet for the future of the industry. ■

THE NON-PROFITS WE COLLABORATE WITH ARE HARNESSING THESE TECHNOLOGIES TO **UPLIFT SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.**

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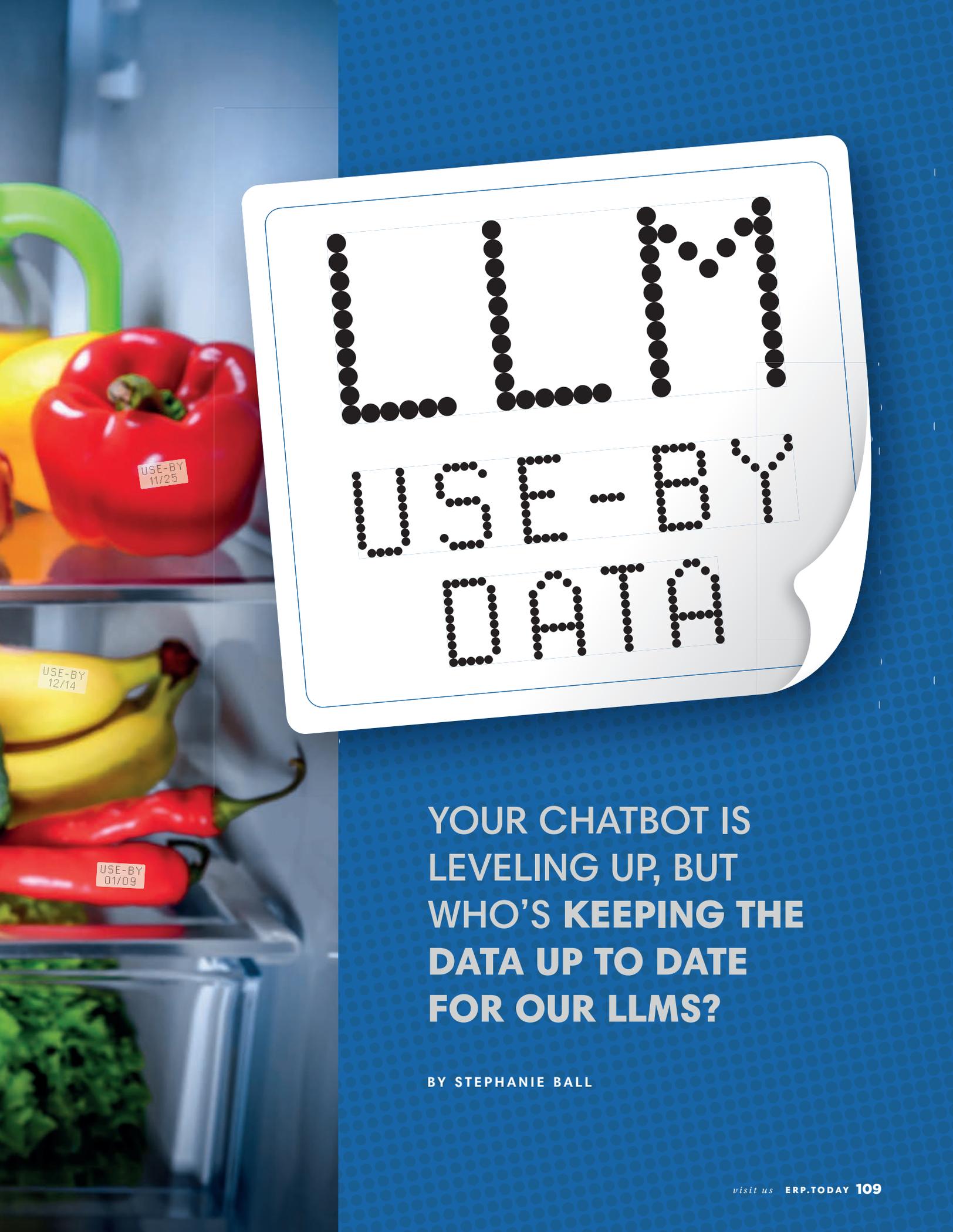
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DATA

## YOUR CHATBOT IS LEVELING UP, BUT WHO'S KEEPING THE DATA UP TO DATE FOR OUR LLMS?

BY STEPHANIE BALL

LLM DATA



AMBRIDGE DICTIONARY'S WORD OF THE YEAR HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED AS HALLUCINATE AND, NO, SADLY, IT'S NOT SYMBOLIC OF THE UNFATHOMABLE RISE IN THE COST OF OUR WEEKLY FOOD SHOPS. AI IS HERE AND THE CHATBOT WORLD IS ADVANCING - AND IS DOING SO FASTER THAN YOU CAN UTTER: "CAN I SPEAK TO A REAL PERSON?"

Thanks to the leading rallies of the likes of **Google** and **Microsoft**, gone soon will be the days of the frustrating and unhelpful answers from old customer-facing bots with those static and glitching preprogrammed responses.

On team Microsoft, **OpenAI's** GPT LLMs kick-started a revolution, boosted by its Copilot technology. While the other vendors scrambled in the chat boom, Google was quick to follow, bringing its generative AI workflow on the VertexAI platform with PaLM and Codey to the table.

But as the word of the year suggests, there is still some way to go before the untrustworthy reputation following AI's rise to fame is cut adrift and, you guessed it, it's all down to data - having the right, best-quality, reasonable shelf-life data and the most mindful tools to cook it up into something digestible for users.

**CHATTING WITH BOTS IN REAL-LIFE**

For far too long, we've been forced into teeth-pulling communication with unhelpful, though try-hard, chatbots. But, at a recent Chatbot Summit London event, the big vendors gathered to show just how far the technology has come since the days of outcasted Clippy.

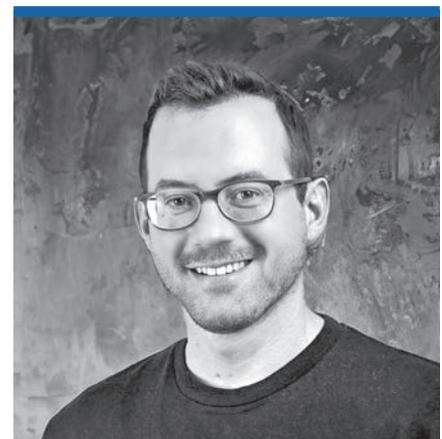
Microsoft demonstrated how the cruise line, **Holland America**, can create chatbots (aka Power Virtual Agents) with no code in sight by leveraging

generative AI with Copilot guiding the way. Automatically generating answers to customer questions, responses are formed from the firm's real-time data sources across its public website and documents uploaded to its AI capabilities page. Everything from ship plan layouts to the latest destination port activities are available in seconds for end users.

Integrating with custom action plugins, with still no need for any hard coding from Holland America, the bots can even utilize the GPT power conversation engine and build an action plan for making customers a last-minute booking to the Bahamas. It goes as far as to loop in a weather plugin to offer up the forecast.

Henry Jammes, conversational AI principal PM, Microsoft, says, "There's no LLM model training needed. There's no need to try to anticipate every conceivable user question and build a reply for it by hand and there is no need to continue to keep syncing content with your knowledge sources. So, if your store opening hours or return policy change and the website or knowledge source gets updated, the bot answer changes are automatic, because it's software as a service, and are customer-facing in minutes. There's no infrastructure to manage or host.

"We actually have companies who have built internal bots in a matter of weeks, just by pointing the bots to their



"THE BOT ANSWER CHANGES ARE AUTOMATIC, BECAUSE IT'S SOFTWARE AS A SERVICE, AND ARE CUSTOMER-FACING IN MINUTES. THERE'S NO INFRASTRUCTURE TO MANAGE OR HOST."

HENRY JAMMES / MICROSOFT

SharePoint sites, uploading their employee handbook, policy manuals. They authored a few topics around the key topics that they wanted to manage. In the

future, you can imagine authenticating a user and dynamically expanding the corpus with their own specific contents, like their own insurance policies, their billing statements, contracts, etc. and enable multi-turn chat for your data.”

Microsoft now boasts over 100 Copilots and Jammes states that within just three years from now, a third of work experiences will be conversational AI-enabled and 80 percent of company and direction will be fronted with digital consumers and virtual agents. He also estimates that 750 million apps will need to be built by 2025, with 50 percent of digital work expected to be automated with the current technology available today.

Elsewhere, **BT Group**’s chief digital officer, Kevin Lee, shares the telecom’s journey to building AIMEE, an in-app messaging and automated assistant powered by generative AI, developed through BT Group’s partnership with **Google Cloud** and available to its **EE** customers via Android app and web.

Lee gives the example of how BT Group’s chatbot has developed, growing from a “limited skillset” at its 2021 launch, to digesting over 1.5 million live customer transcripts, to then powering over 3.7 million customer conversations in 2023, with the goal of reaching beyond 400 million in the coming years.

Speaking of one customer request in particular, Lee shares the narrative of how AIMEE would respond to a message from a customer about her son’s “smashed” phone, overcoming the archetypal over-baked and robotic niceties. For this situation, Lee says, it was important that AIMEE was “able to do a context switch”, to realize that there was “a complex, highly emotive context to ‘smash my phone’ – who would be smiling? You’d be angry, quite annoyed, quite frustrated. All you want is not a gibbering chatbot to tell you a ‘step one, step two’, but rather ‘give me the right person, right away to understand.”

In this case, AIMEE gathers just enough information from the customer to book them a time slot at the nearest store to the customer’s zip code and gets them an appointment the same day.

The likes of AIMEE surely shows promise for just how far chatbot technology has come, as so much of this human interaction business, especially in business settings, comes down to knowing how the user wants to be approached.

As Elizabeth Stokoe PhD, researcher and professor of social interaction, **London School of Economics and Political Science** and **Loughborough University** shares, it’s about looking beyond the facts and figures to collect that human data that no one’s actually tracked very much - the interesting small things that make a difference to how engaged the person is and how willing they are to talk.

“I think one of the problems with things like chatbots is that each of the things that it’s doing is kind of static,” Stokoe explains. “I don’t think you can, at least not yet, design them enough to really target the recipient that they’re actually talking to, this individual, and take the evidence of what you just said and tweak its responses again and again, where everything is agile, because that’s how humans do it. So, for me, my optimistic self is saying we need to leverage more of the stuff that we know from conversational research...we learn from those principles and put them into a much better, agile conversational product.”

Stokoe’s research has led her to analyze recordings of real interactions, from sorting car breakdowns and dinner reservations to more life-threatening instances of suicide crisis negotiation and domestic abuse.

“Some of these things are great in theory, but as soon as you start to look at them actually working in practice, you start to see that it’s not even whether or not these chatbots and digital twins can actually do it, it’s more that I’m not sure that we’re looking at humans enough to see what they’re actually doing to make those products really effective,” says Stokoe.

“An even more powerful example of this is I’ve been doing some work on the victims of domestic violence calling 999 when maybe the perpetrator is co-present with them in the building. The victim cannot ask for the police, but they have to sound like they’re genuinely



“ONE OF THE PROBLEMS WITH A CHATBOT IS THAT IT’S STATIC. I DON’T THINK YOU CAN, AT LEAST NOT YET, DESIGN THEM TO REALLY TARGET THE RECIPIENT THEY’RE ACTUALLY TALKING TO, THIS INDIVIDUAL.”

**ELIZABETH STOKOE PHD /**  
LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND UNIVERSITY OF  
LOUGHBOROUGH

calling the police and not just a nuisance call. Somehow conveying to the call taker without using any of your obvious words that they actually are genuinely in trouble. People do it amazingly well. But if you get ChatGPT to roleplay the police dispatcher, it just treats the caller as a hoax caller and it just cannot pick up on the nuance.”

Moreover, it also comes down to how effectively the bots’ finer details can be tested, traced and updated, and what an enterprise measures as a quality outcome. Guardrails for data protection are already being put into place and domain-specific LLMs are helping companies keep their data private. The big vendors are also ensuring customer

LLM DATA

data has citations attached to find its source, with Microsoft and Google saying they are investing large sums into governance and responsible AI to check for any harmful content, non-inclusive language and hallucinations.

But, though the data is locked in, who is responsible for making sure the AI algorithms are pulling up-to-date and unproblematic data? Plus, going beyond the saying "garbage in, garbage out", what happens when something nuanced needs to change within the inner system workings, deeper than just updating opening times or FAQs?

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING THE DATA UP TO DATE?

As Google's senior director of product management, lead for cloud conversational AI, Yariv Adan, explains: "Being factual is not enough. It needs to be fac-



"ALL YOU WANT IS NOT A GIBBERING CHATBOT TO TELL YOU A 'STEP ONE, STEP TWO', BUT RATHER 'GIVE ME THE RIGHT PERSON, RIGHT AWAY TO UNDERSTAND'."

KEVIN LEE / BT GROUP

tual to your own documents in data. We actually even have specialized coders for specific industries, for example, for medical or for security that actually understand the domain deeply. We're hosting the model, the entire stack work for it all, our fine-tuning, our adapter models, all the debugging tools. We're of course connecting it to search and other technologies that for every statement they validate that is true and they can actually give a citation of sorts to support it inside or outside your organization."

One generative AI risk specialist, who wished to remain unnamed, urged companies to check and hold onto the copyright wording on any AI dealings, with the likes of Microsoft and Adobe saying they will deal with any legal proceedings that arise from the use of the technology.

Max Ahrens PhD, NLP researcher, University of Oxford and Alan Turing Institute, says it all comes down to ensuring alignment: "Alignment makes it make sure AI has the same preferences. Right now, we're at a stage where AI has no consciousness. It's just replicating patterns according to focusing systems."

"If technology develops the way it has over the last four years, we will get to a point where we have quite high levels of autonomous agency and automation and we need to think about having some checks and balances in place, especially specifically for the financial sector or any type of highly regulated and highly sensitive data. We do need third parties to do the assessment to say, alright, we shake the model, we do the stress tests, we try to shed a light on the situation and we say whether this model passed it or not, because you should never mark your own homework, like Open AI shouldn't say 'we did the test, it's fine!'"

"Self-regulation has never worked in human history. When you go about dealing mindfully and carefully with new technology, I think this is something that we need to think of now, as we're actually in the process of scaling this out. What means good, what means bad - and that conversation needs to happen now."

For Ahrens, the answer is to have an autonomous third party who can test the more in-depth AI models, so that



"SELF-REGULATION HAS NEVER WORKED IN HUMAN HISTORY. WHEN YOU GO ABOUT DEALING MINDFULLY AND CAREFULLY WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY, I THINK THIS IS SOMETHING THAT WE NEED TO THINK OF NOW."

MAX AHRENS PHD / UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD AND ALAN TURING INSTITUTE

they're certified and allowed to operate in society, in order to avoid the risk of an unsuitable or outdated use case.

"You might even think of a certain insurance around this," he says. "The same way there's a professional liability insurance for humans if they do something wrong with the job, you just want to make sure that this risk that is inherently there - no system is perfect - that you allocate it correctly."

ADMIN TASKS MIGHT STILL BE BOTS' BEST BET

The models and data fueling these chatbots have no doubt come a long way, but what's still most useful for this technology for now is organizing simple ad-



ministrative tasks - with many of them across sectors remaining unchanging and less risky for this new tech.

Google's Adan explains, "A lot of flows the bots do are repetitive across everywhere. They are definitely one of the most repetitive across industries; everyone needs to authenticate. Many industries need to deal with bills or check out status or make payments or do calendars. So, all of these were actually already built for you in very safe and controlled ways, very robust, and you don't need to build that."

The ability to create unique tasks is also offered, and Adan offers the example of ordering pizza or coffee. In this instance, with limited possibilities and outcomes, there is less need to start training and aligning from scratch. Plus, as Adan reveals, "these bots are much faster and more accurate than any human" at doing those tasks.

For Ahrens, it's a similar case, as he says, "I think the first wave will not be pure automation and replacement, it will be augmentation. Most of what you see, lots of the services are actually to augment a human, to take the tedious tasks away, so they have more time to do actually meaningful tasks, which makes me very, very hopeful that this entire evolution / revolution of generative AI will come to the betterment of humanity and now it's for us, specifically for the enterprise, for corporates to alter generative AI strategies to make that holistic

and to think about it globally.

"We used to have very small, very intelligent models where we put in this prior knowledge and then we just said, 'oh, no, it's through the transformer model - no prior knowledge needed - you just learn from data.' And I think our next step will be where we need to still feel our values, a constitutional AI where we design the alignment first."



"BEING FACTUAL IS NOT ENOUGH. IT NEEDS TO BE FACTUAL TO YOUR OWN DOCUMENTS IN DATA."

YARIV ADAN / GOOGLE

The future will no doubt see ongoing advances in this already much-improved technology. But when it comes to choosing the best provider now, BT Group's Lee says it comes down to doing your research and spreading out your options.

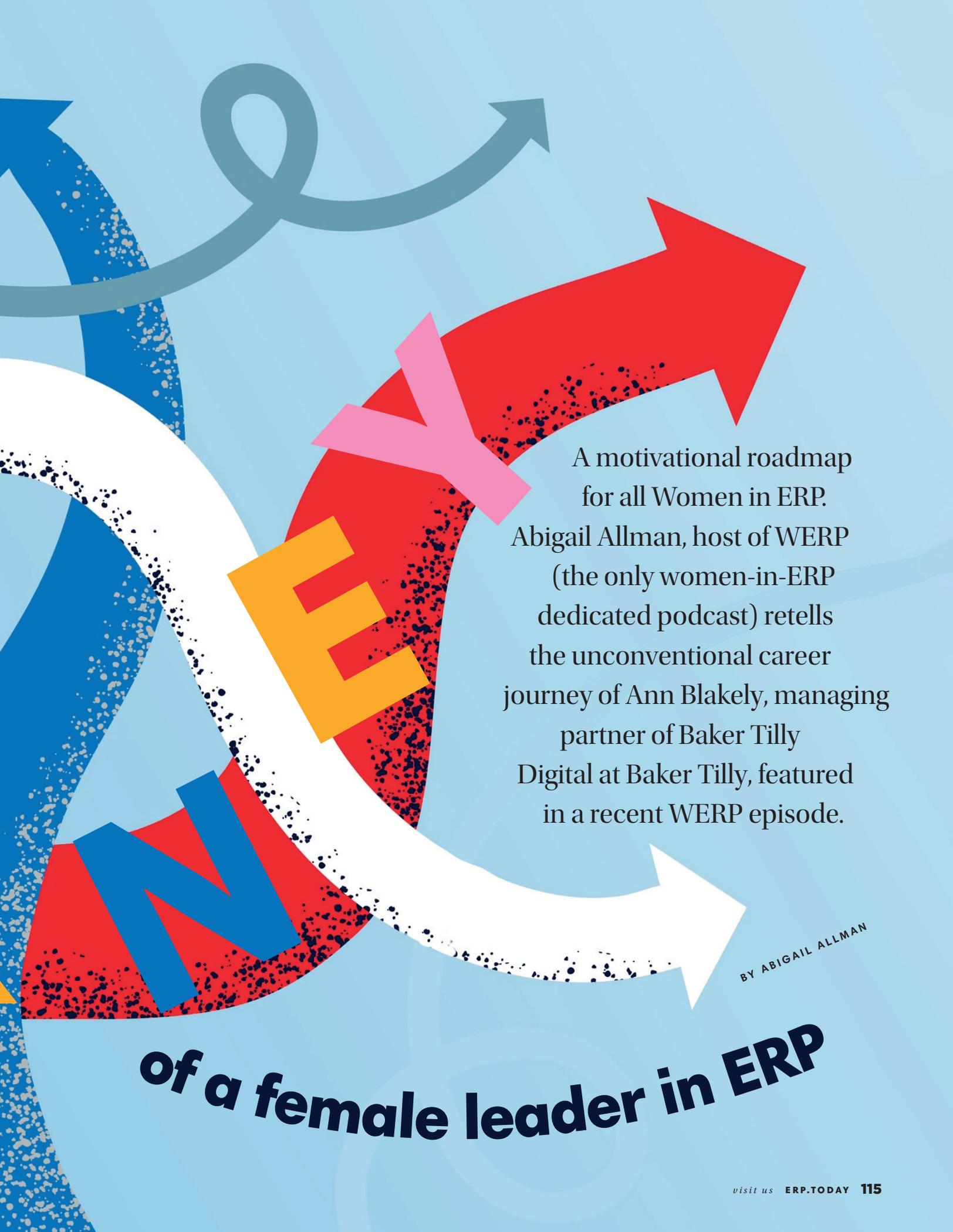
Lee explains: "What we have done over the last six months as a company is to go out, with our ego at our doorstep, to talk to all our partners, not one but multiple LLM partners out there in the world. Why? Because there is no such one LLM today where you can put all your eggs in that basket. Sometimes you can get in this tunnel vision in a good way - to build that technical depth, building, briefing and iterating it, but only when you look at the bigger world, do you see how it is changing?"

As the tools businesses use to harness data continue to develop, it's becoming increasingly important to also improve the tools used to monitor and measure successful outcomes. Yes, as Lee says, you can't afford to put all your eggs in one basket, but also, vendors, organizations and regulators must ensure they can assess these GenAI ingredients against the same criteria so that proper decisions can be made on costs, responsible AI and governance. In our current appetite for advancement, best practice now can quickly become out of date in six months' time - and one thing that's consistent here? No-one wants to ingest something past its use-by date. ■



The unconventional

JOUR



A motivational roadmap for all Women in ERP. Abigail Allman, host of WERP (the only women-in-ERP dedicated podcast) retells the unconventional career journey of Ann Blakely, managing partner of Baker Tilly Digital at Baker Tilly, featured in a recent WERP episode.

BY ABIGAIL ALLMAN

# of a female leader in ERP

WERP

The dawn of the digital age has birthed numerous innovations and technological advancements, with ERP technology undoubtedly being one of its crowning jewels. It serves as a linchpin, seamlessly integrating various business processes, ensuring efficiency and optimizing resources. But beyond the allure of these innovations lies an unsettling truth; the vast gender disparity within the tech landscape.

A cursory look at statistics paints a grim picture. While women constitute a quarter of the tech workforce, a mere fraction of these are women of color. Such figures aren't just cold data points; they are emblematic of the challenges, aspirations and triumphs of numerous women navigating this domain.

My tryst with ERP mirrors many of these experiences. Managing the delicate dance between my professional commitments in ERP, my roles as a doting mother of three and a partner to a husband embroiled in his demanding career is an art of its own. This dynamic becomes even more poignant given that only one in five leadership roles in tech are occupied by women. However, interspersed within these sobering realities are stories that uplift and inspire. Stories like Ann Blakely's.

Our conversation on the WERP podcast was akin to embarking on a voyage of discovery. As we delved deeper into our chat, the differences in our geographies and cultures paled in comparison to our shared experiences and aspirations within ERP. Anchored in Milwaukee, USA, Blakely's trajectory is a tapestry woven with determination, challenges and a relentless pursuit of her dreams.

**It started with an unexpected choice**

A remarkable facet of Blakely's journey is its genesis, deeply influenced by family decisions. She reminisces: "My father actually was in seminary for 11 years, studying to be a Catholic priest and decided about a year before he would have been ordained that he wanted to leave the priesthood and it just wasn't the life for him."

This pivotal shift in her father's career, diving headfirst into the world of technology, inadvertently set Blakely on a path that merged the realms of computer science and business, with her academic pursuits taking root at the **University of Wisconsin**.

ERP, with its multifarious challenges, has always demanded adaptability and a project that Blakely undertook in Alaska is a testament to this tenet. This significant undertaking was aimed at enhancing the prospects for at-risk children. She shares, "I



Abigail Allman

was working as a team lead designing a child welfare information system, so it tracked child abuse, neglect, foster care, adoptions and all the provider payments around that."

Her candid reflection highlights the emotional and professional tightropes she walked, striking chords with many of us attempting to balance professional obligations with personal life, not to mention a frequent commute of over 3000 miles home to Wisconsin.

After several years, Blakely sought a shorter commute and her career took root in accounting and consulting firm, **Baker Tilly**, focusing on HCM and ERP and balancing the relationships between customers and vendor partnerships such as the likes of **Oracle** and **IFS**.

**Balancing professional and personal means pride, not guilt**

Our dialogue inevitably touches upon the perpetual challenge of maintaining equilibrium between work and family. Blakely observes, "I think it's been a really positive experience. My kids are now 13 and 15. So, I feel like I'm maybe on the other side of what my husband and I called 'the fog', which was pretty much from newborn to maybe seven years old."

While juggling professional demands with parenting her kids, Ann has adopted the principle of establishing clear boundaries and refraining from guilt for being a working mom.

"We can be our own worst enemy; we feel like we have to do it all ourselves, we feel we have to have an A+ grade in everything we do. So, for me, it was really an exercise of letting some things go. I had to recognize that I needed more help at home and outsource.

"By setting ground rules pretty early in terms of what I wanted helped to set the stage for how we divided and conquered."

Blakely notes a specific piece of advice that resonated deeply with her: "I received a piece of advice, actually from a mentor. She said don't ever apologize

to your kids about work. Don't ever apologize because you're not actually sorry. You're choosing this every day."

This counsel not only influenced Blakely's personal outlook but underscores a universal truth; our careers, filled with passion and purpose, should be a source of pride, not guilt.

**Taking a leading role at Baker Tilly Digital**

Today, Blakely leads all digital solutions for Baker Tilly Digital, heading the outward market-facing presence for all Baker Tilly's technology-related services offered to clients. Just over a year and a half ago, Blakely also oversaw the company acquisition of **Vanilla Solutions**, a UK IFS partner.

"Ann's trajectory is a tapestry woven with determination, challenges and a relentless pursuit of her dreams."

Discussing her responsibilities as managing partner, Blakely shares the transition that comes when rising to these kinds of roles.

“The job has evolved. Being client-facing in market and delivering the technical solutions and being that translation agent - I’m not as hands-on with that anymore,” she explains.

“Being managing partner essentially means I’m doing more of the looking out to the next three to five years; where are we going, looking at what new bets we’re going to make, new technologies are coming out, leading all acquisitions - more of those across digital initiatives. We have a big initiative to build additional off-shore capability for our teams; we’re driving a deeper level of technical competency models to all the teams, and all the fun things like budget planning, forecasting, reporting.”

She explains, “When I joined Baker Tilly, I was consultant number 25. I think we have 3,000 consultants today and the growth has been so fun, and it’s so fun to be entrepreneurial and think about what our clients need and evolving our services and technologies in accordance with that.”

Blakely’s reflections on her journey with Baker Tilly radiate with enthusiasm and pride. Emphasizing the richness that diversity brings, she champions the cause of varied perspectives and approaches in creating innovative solutions.

Talking about the GROW initiative (the growth and retention of women) at Baker Tilly, Blakely expresses the need to give women a voice in the workplace.

“Helping to give a voice and courage and understanding of options and choices is important. We like to be good at what we do, we like to know we can handle what is coming around the corner. We certainly have the capability, but we sometimes just don’t get selfish enough to ask for more or for what’s next.”

The national program has been built to include everything from networking opportunities, book clubs, providing resources and navigation techniques and mentorship matching to learn from varying experiences.

It comes down to getting more representation in leadership, but also ensuring flexibility in the workplace for both men and women to stop that dropping out of the workforce, explains Blakely: “It’s about how we elevate to leadership, to show the health of a successful pipeline of successors

and candidates moving through the ranks that represent the female population.

“But it’s also about providing flexibility, maybe offering to slow to part-time or internal assignments for a little while to control schedules better, for men and women, while ensuring that doesn’t deter from ramping back up again after you get through whatever transition you’re going through. It’s creating that notion of eliminating the ‘up and out’ progression and removing the stigma from that. Giving the permission to create that space for yourself.”

### An anthem for change

Ann Blakely’s narrative isn’t just a singular tale of achievement. It’s an anthem for change, a call to arms for the ERP industry to pave the way for a more equitable and unconventional future. Laden with insights, her experiences offer invaluable lessons on fostering gender diversity in ERP. As we navigate this ever-evolving landscape, tales like Ann’s serve as beacons, illuminating our path toward a more inclusive future.

Together, let’s sculpt a corner in technology where gender parity is the norm and every voice is celebrated. ■

*Abigail Allman is the founder of the Women in ERP community, host of WERP podcast and head of strategic partnerships at Resulting IT.*

**The only podcast dedicated to real women** working in and around the ERP sector, WERP brings together a global community of women, aiming to close the gender gap and encourage female peers who are working (or are contemplating a career) within the ERP technology sector.





**AN AUTOMATED  
WORKFORCE  
NEEDS HUMANS  
IN THE MIDDLE.  
BUT WHAT ABOUT  
AT THE TOP?**



THE MAGAZINE FOR ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS AND ASSOCIATED TECHNOLOGIES

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# FROM BEDROOM TO BOARDROOM

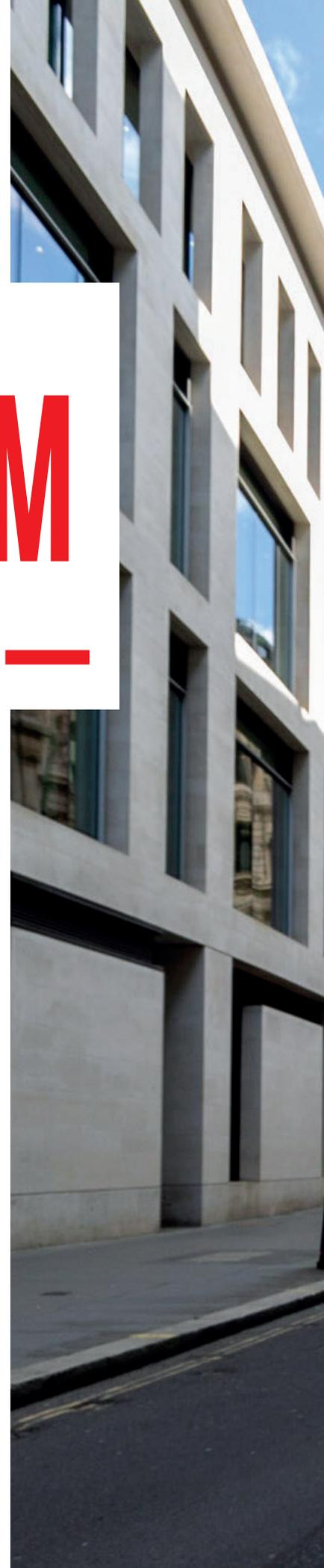
**CHRIS MASON** STARTED NAMOS SOLUTIONS FROM HIS BEDROOM 11 YEARS AGO. TODAY, IT BOASTS 130 EMPLOYEES, BEING ONE OF THE FOREMOST ORACLE PARTNERS IN THE UK, AND HAS RECENTLY OPENED OFFICES IN EUROPE AND THE USA.

BY PAUL ESHERWOOD / PHOTOS BY JOEL CHANT

**T**he UK has a rich heritage of pioneering new technology through entrepreneurial endeavors. Many of the front-runners that paved the way for **Oracle** were founded by entrepreneurs and by the mid-2000s, one of the deepest and most vibrant Oracle ecosystems flourished in the UK.

**Patech, Mokum, Beoley Mill, Claremont, Certus and Inoapps** - to name just a few - all began life in the UK as fledgling businesses. Most have since been acquired by the likes of **Version 1, PwC** and **Accenture**, leaving a dearth of variety in the UK market. Inoapps stands out from the others because it remains independent (although now jointly co-owned by its founder and **Abry Partners**) and has scaled to over 500 employees worldwide.

What was once a vibrant community of nimble Oracle partners is now a far less rich landscape of GSIs and very small niche players offering fewer choices for mid-sized customers that want the flexibility of an independent partner with the scale to deliver complex projects.





## CHRIS MASON

Aside from **de Novo Solutions**, which was only formed two years ago, **Namos Solutions** is now the UK's only truly independently owned Oracle partner with any kind of scale. Founded by Chris Mason from his bedroom 11 years ago, it boasts nearly 130 employees and has a decade-long track record of delivering innovative Oracle projects for customers ranging from universities, local councils and blue light services.

In September, I met with Mason to discuss his journey from bedroom-based contractor to CEO and to uncover the secret behind his success.

#### From bedroom to boardroom

In 2012, a young Oracle consultant who was working for Mokum decided to take a gamble. Newly married and living in rented accommodation, Chris Mason gave up his day job in the quest for something more.

Mason got his first taste for Oracle while working at **Reed Business Information** where he joined the project team during an Oracle implementation. When the project was over, his business-as-usual role didn't seem so exciting and he quickly joined the aforementioned Mokum - at the time the UK's largest independent Oracle practice.

Mason learned his craft on a variety of Oracle projects and quickly became a senior consultant. The experience gave Mason an insight into the dynam-

ics of large IT projects and set alight the desire to breakout and go it alone.

"Some of my friends and colleagues said I was mad. Lots of people had tried and failed to make the leap but I was determined to try. I hate procrastination and spending lots of time making decisions. So that July, on our one-year wedding anniversary, I sat down with my wife, Rebecca, and said I wanted to start my own business. I put £50 into an **HSBC** bank account and hit the phones hard - I won my first piece of work soon after but for the first three years it was just me trying to get the Namos name out there."

That first piece of work came in the form of an

insurance company. The project paid well and gave the fledgling entrepreneur his first taste of self-sufficiency. But, as Mason put it, "it wasn't very fulfilling and just served to get some cash in the bank".

Mason's big break came when he pitched for a small piece of work at **Expedia** which grew into a much larger opportunity. At the time, Namos had a small workforce of contractors based in Paris but was still effectively a one-man-band. A combination of entrepreneurial flair, a little bit of bluff and sheer determination resulted in a successful 23 country roll out and the birth of Namos as a genuine contender in the Oracle space.

"Expedia was a tough project but it proved I could do it. I was on the 4:46am **Eurostar** every Monday morning and would be on site until Thursday and then back on the Eurostar, which often got cancelled, so I could be in the office on Fridays trying to grow the business. The project gave me the confidence that I could take on some of the GSIs for mid-sized programs and also gave me the confidence to start employing permanent people. By the end of that year we were up to eight employees and that's when I could start to think seriously about building a business to compete for bigger projects."

#### The Namos growth story

In the ten years since that first breakthrough, Namos has grown considerably and is now the largest independently owned Oracle consultancy in the UK. It was the first Oracle partner worldwide to join the Modernised Partner Network and has won a series of accreditations, awards and accolades including a highly commended placing in the ERP Today Awards for its work with **Civil Nuclear Constabulary**.

In recent months, it has made a number of strategic hires bringing in Anton Whitefoot and Rob Grace from Oracle to support the global leadership team and it has won a number of projects that would be the envy of any GSI. It has developed a strong reputation in public services and higher education delivering projects for the likes of **Walsall Council, University of Greenwich, London Borough of Bromley** and **West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS)**, to name just a few.

In the case of WMFS, it was the first implementation of its kind and included a full stack of Oracle

"THE PROJECT GAVE ME THE CONFIDENCE THAT I COULD TAKE ON SOME OF THE GSIS FOR MID-SIZED PROGRAMS AND ALSO GAVE ME THE CONFIDENCE TO START EMPLOYING PERMANENT PEOPLE. BY THE END OF THAT YEAR WE WERE UP TO EIGHT EMPLOYEES AND THAT'S WHEN I COULD START TO THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT BUILDING A BUSINESS TO COMPETE FOR BIGGER PROJECTS."

Fusion encompassing Oracle ERP, Oracle HCM and a payroll solution to support the UK's second largest fire service.

However, it's not just implementation work that has been the foundation for success. On the back of these projects, Namos has continually won long term support contracts that it delivers through a framework called eNlighten Managed Services. Predominantly focused on the higher education sector, although not exclusively, Namos provides ongoing support to a variety of customers so that they can continue to extract the maximum value from their investments in Oracle.

The hallmark of eNlighten is a tailored service that is bespoke to each customer and provides first to fourth-line support, delivered locally by trained Oracle consultants and consumed by the customer through a base level contract or from a bucket of support days agreed in advance. The benefit to each customer is that their system is supported by Oracle experts who understand their landscape and can ensure compliance, help to optimize costs and ultimately improve the return on investment.

This ongoing support for customers is vital in the SaaS world as quarterly releases can be almost impossible for customers to manage directly. Leveraging the deep product knowledge within Namos, each customer can be assured that their implementation of Oracle is updated, tested and optimized to take advantage of the newest innovations.

While the notion of a support contract is nothing new and many other organizations offer similar services, Namos' approach to delivering these services is refreshingly flexible and has been a big focus for Mason in recent years.

"We made a big effort to grow our managed services business but we only grow it in the right way," said Mason. "A lot of customers that are in the public sector need the assurance that we are here for them when they need us and our model being delivered locally gives them that assurance. We don't do an off-shore delivery model, in fact we don't have



any off-shore resources, and we don't compete for contracts that are just based on cost. We work with organizations that want a partner and building a world-class Oracle support service is a key strategic goal for Namos."

#### **The next phase for Namos**

It's already an incredible success story that has seen a first-time business owner expand his idea across Europe, the UK and the USA. Not simply

**CHRIS MASON**



“A LOT OF CUSTOMERS THAT ARE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR NEED THE ASSURANCE THAT WE ARE HERE FOR THEM WHEN THEY NEED US AND OUR MODEL BEING DELIVERED LOCALLY GIVES THEM THAT ASSURANCE.”

because the business has scaled from a bedroom to the boardroom, but because it has done so in a fiercely competitive market that is dominated by powerhouses like **Deloitte** and **KPMG**. It used to be the case that the global consulting firms would win all of the big Oracle opportunities and smaller players would have to scrap around for the crumbs.

However, market dynamics have changed over the last five years with the bigger consulting firms needing to win a larger quantity of smaller deals

and the smaller consultancies being able to compete for the mid-sized deals. It is still true that the likes of Namos won't be winning a global roll out of Oracle for a multi-jurisdictional conglomerate but they can seriously compete with the GSIs for all but the very largest of opportunities.

The combination of a hungry and committed CEO coupled with the scale and expertise of more than 100 Oracle professionals puts Namos into a

category that few others can lay claim to. Over ten years it has built sufficient credentials to be taken seriously by large, risk-averse organizations that previously would have favored global consulting firms. Yet it is still nimble enough to win smaller packets of work that are less attractive to big SIs and use these opportunities as a gateway to foster a longer-term relationship.

Many of the Oracle customers that are being converted from E-Business Suite users to Fusion will most likely have selected one of those bigger SIs for their previous implementations and, having been through that journey once before, are much more likely to consider alternatives. Namos is now positioned as one of the few serious alternatives to a GSI, and their win rate, particularly in the public sector and higher education, suggests that they are taking more than just crumbs from the GSIs' table.

This opens up a completely new world of possibilities for a company like Namos. Not only are they able to win bigger deals outright, they are also in prime position to support some of the global consultancies on much larger projects. However,

Mason was quick to point out that partnering comes with its own set of risks and he has always been cautious about taking on projects that are not entirely in his control.

“We’ve just completed our first work share project,” said Mason. “In the past I’ve always been against partnering because of the risk to the Namos brand if something went wrong that was outside of my control. But equally, we are seeing more and more opportunities to collaborate and the project with **Aalto University** in the Nordics is a great example of where partnering can work. We’ve got a good percentage of the overall program but they are also using some in-country resources to help with the language and localization issues. It’s a deal that we wouldn’t have been able to win on our own but equally the local team wouldn’t have won it without our higher education credentials. When you look at all the central government opportunities that are in the UK marketplace at the moment, there are a lot of similar conversations happening where we are assessing not just who can win these deals but what combination of skills and expertise can actually deliver them.”

### Challenges

The biggest challenge for Namos will be to retain its independence. Throughout our conversation, Mason was emphatic that Namos wasn’t for sale, nor did he have any intention of selling for the foreseeable future. Whilst I wholeheartedly believed the story, in reality it’s very hard to ignore overtures from larger organizations in a consolidating marketplace. Although we didn’t discuss specifics, I am sure that Namos is already a target and most owner managers have a magic number even if they don’t know it themselves - when you hear it, you know.

At a time when the big players in the ERP space are snapping up every small consultancy to protect market share and to boost their own resourcing capabilities, there will be keen interest in acquiring a business like Namos. There are few, if any, similar businesses which are not private equity owned or part of a larger organization so retaining independence will be extremely challenging, especially if the idea of partnering and work share arrangements continues to take hold - Deloitte may share work once, maybe twice, but eventually their solution to that dilemma will be a cheque, and quite a sizable

one too. That’s going to be a hard decision for Mason, but it’s one that I am sure he is prepared to deal with at the appropriate time.

Putting aside any potential acquisition interests, Namos’ other key challenge will be to maintain the level of service and quality that has been the bedrock of its success to date. As any business scales, it is hard to hold onto the things that made it special in the first place and, now with a much broader outlook, that consistency of quality will be under even more pressure.

That said, Mason gave a thoroughly authentic interview and his passion for the business was evident throughout. When you start a business from nothing and every customer is like gold dust - that stays with you.

What also came through most was his undiluted joy that he has built something of real substance. Aside from the financial success, it has provided a platform for sponsorship deals with sports stars, given birth to a Veterans’ program that is a source of personal pride and it has proven to many doubters that Chris Mason knows what he is doing in the Oracle space.

As our interview draws to a close, I ask Mason what abiding thoughts he would like to leave readers of ERP Today with. “It’s a bit of a cliché, but Namos is big enough to deliver and small enough to care,” he said. “We’re not a small company but we can do a five day engagement just as easily as we can deliver a large multi-pillared project. We are an Oracle-only partner and have one of the deepest pools of UK-based consultants in the industry. The skills, credibility and the certifications that we have developed means we’re able to deliver on time and on budget - and in many cases, we are the first to do so, as was the case with West Midlands Fire Service. I’m still passionate and hungry and above all else, I still really enjoy what I am doing, so the focus for now is growing our business, serving our customers and making sure that they all get the maximum value out of their investments in Oracle.” ■

“OVER TEN YEARS IT HAS BUILT SUFFICIENT CREDENTIALS TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY LARGE, RISK-AVERSE ORGANIZATIONS THAT PREVIOUSLY WOULD HAVE FAVORED GLOBAL CONSULTING FIRMS. YET IT IS STILL NIMBLE ENOUGH TO WIN SMALLER PACKETS OF WORK THAT ARE LESS ATTRACTIVE TO BIG SIs AND USE THESE OPPORTUNITIES AS A GATEWAY TO FOSTER A LONGER-TERM RELATIONSHIP.”

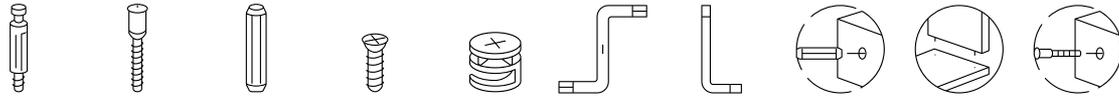
# COMPOSABLE ERP

**SOME**  
**ASSEMBLY**  
**REQUIRED**

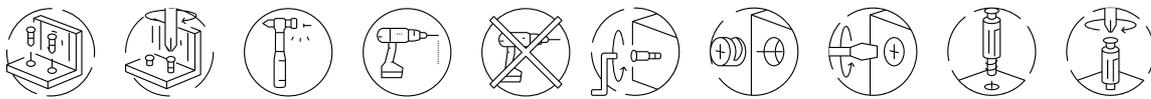
MATT McLARTY



**COMPOSABLE ERP**



**IT'S EASY TO DISMISS THE "SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED" DISCLAIMER WHEN BUYING A PIECE OF FURNITURE, EXERCISE EQUIPMENT OR A KID'S THREE-WHEELER IN A BOX. NO BIGGIE, RIGHT - HOW HARD CAN IT BE?**



**H**ours later, you're looking with frustration at parts scattered on your floor. The instructions are confusing, you need parts, tools are missing and trial and error hasn't solved the puzzle. What you thought would be a simple job has turned into an ordeal.

Similar risks await organizations that launch a composable ERP strategy without fully sizing up how it aligns with business goals and what's needed to make it, well, composable.

**The "what" and "why" of composable ERP**

Composable ERP has emerged as a way to modernize legacy ERP environments to be more flexible and interoperable. The composable model is replacing the monolithic ERPs of yesteryear, so that you can assemble digital business capabilities as you wish - though often using cloud-based services.

Core ERP capabilities like inventory and financial management might be delivered by the central platform, while best-of-breed applications handle satellite functions. Done right, composable ERP equips your business to be nimbler, make informed decisions and create or adapt business models on the fly.

The vision is compelling. All of a sudden, you've got that agility your C-suite has been talking about. You're faster than competitors because you can roll out digital capabilities in bite-sized pieces that are easier to deploy and use. You're smarter too, because you've got data at your fingertips to make informed decisions.

Plus, you've achieved AI readiness because your composable ERP environment lets you test and deploy AI with relative ease. Now, as everyone from CIOs to teenage TikTok-ers knows, AI is a very, very big thing, so this is a benefit that really can't be overlooked.

Almost as a bonus, composable ERP eliminates the risk of a Big Bang ERP lift-and-shift to the latest version going horribly wrong. Of course, all these outcomes depend on ensuring that your shift to composable ERP doesn't itself take a wrong turn.

**The global shift to composable ERP**

As organizations face end-of-life deadlines for outdated ERP systems and brainstorm over digital transformation, composable ERP sits at the leading edge of IT modernization. Its value is widely recognized, to say the least.

Some 94 percent of organizations worldwide are embracing a composable ERP strategy, according to a survey of 1,675 CTOs and enterprise architects conducted by Boomi. Of them, 76 percent are standardizing and consolidating applications, and 71 percent are moving to the cloud.

As composable ERP takes shape, we're seeing several points of differentiation on what works and what doesn't.

**What works and what doesn't**

Composable ERP can't be strictly an IT concern. Sure, it benefits IT with a lower total cost of ownership, reduced technical debt, faster development and deployment and reduced



**THE VISION IS COMPELLING, BUT OUTCOMES DEPEND ON ENSURING YOUR SHIFT TO COMPOSABLE ERP DOESN'T TAKE A WRONG TURN.**

risk. Architecting composable ERP, however, shouldn't be pinned to those IT goals.

Instead, design your composable ERP strategy around specific business objectives. What matters most to the organization—whether increased customer loyalty, better sales rep efficiency, improved decision making? Whatever the goal, composable ERP lets you attack business priorities with speed and precision not possible with a rigid monolith.

Ongoing business and IT collaboration is required. You want to avoid anti-pattern scenarios in which composable ERP starts off with a lot of enthusiasm and executive backing, only to have momentum dwindle into half-baked shelfware.

At some organizations, recomposing business structures may be in order as well. A rigid and compartmentalized chain of command is contrary to the principles of composable ERP. It pays to bear in mind Conway's Law, which holds that any system designed (such as composable ERP) will mirror an organization's communication structure. Composable ERP works best when the business itself is flexible and composable.

### **Composability requires connectability**

Composable ERP that spans the core ERP and diverse cloud systems in a hybrid IT environment doesn't just work out of the box. It's a "some assembly required" proposition and its success depends in part on how that assembly is accomplished.

In the age of monolithic ERPs, some organizations relied on vendor-supplied tools and APIs to devise integrations with any third-party systems that might be used. Many still do. They might have a great team of developers who can roll up their sleeves and custom-code connectivity using Python, JavaScript, .NET and other approaches.

But those outdated tactics don't cut it in our ever-accelerating digital age. It's not quick; development can drag on for months. It's not easy and integrations are often brittle and can break with the slightest change. Nor is



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SHOPPING LIST.**



So, the takeaway here: composable ERP gives you readiness for anything - be it a merger and acquisition activity, a new line of business or even a global expansion. The project is yours to pick, just be sure you have the right strategies lined up so that you can actually hop on that new exercise machine instead of looking with frustration at parts scattered on your floor. ■

*Matt McLarty is the chief technology officer at Boomi.*

it sustainable, as developers skilled in legacy tools are harder than ever to find.

If cloud-first composable ERP is on your roadmap, equipping with the latest generation of cloud-based integration technology that can connect systems, standardize and share data and automate processes should be the first items on the technology shopping list. You want to be able to quickly and easily recompose your ERP environment, leveraging any API or building your own, as applications and objectives evolve.

### **Composability and AI-readiness**

The advent of generative AI alone is arguably a reason to shift to composable ERP. The ability to test, deploy and iterate large language models swiftly has profound implications for business transformation that we will see unfold in the months and years to come. In essence, composability makes it possible to embed AI within core ERP capabilities, handing you what we can call "AI-readiness".

We are already seeing AI introduce "systems of intelligence" that sit between the traditional systems of record and systems of engagement (those used by employees, customers and partners). As with a conventional application, AI is best anchored to business objectives and a sound foundation that can connect composable systems and share data.

When a new generative AI tool emerges, your composable ERP environment is tailor-made to test, tweak and move the shiny new AI tech into production.



**You're either in,**



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**or you're out.**

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# ERP Today Awards & NHS Fundraiser

## ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING; CLOSING OUT THE TRILOGY

BY CHARLES WHITMORE

**F**or the final award ceremony of our Ascot Racecourse trilogy, the **ERP Today Awards & NHS Fundraiser** gathered thousands of people to celebrate our industry, recognize the achievements of our compatriots and raise money for the **NHS**.

This year's weather stole the show, with the sun shining down on the event for a truly radiant award ceremony. Maxi, the AI "chief earth officer"

beamed directly from the future and opened the awards with a bombastic display reminiscent of the start of the Ibiza season.

A few industry execs were truly entranced by Maxi, taking to the stage and dancing on command for the AI visitor. As reluctant as some of them may have been, it didn't take long to get them dancing to Gangnam Style - a sign of how much AI has advanced. A few red faces later (not from sunburn) and the awards went into full swing, co-hosted by the famously tech-savvy Jo Brand and our own editor-in-chief, Paul Esherwood.

In between the self-deprecating diatribe and the occasional playful jab at Paul, Brand was masterful at winning over the crowd with her comedic timing, all in the name of raising money for the NHS, a cause she holds close to her heart.

**Blue Marine Foundation**, nominated by **City Dynamics**, snagged the coveted Transformation Project of the Year award for its work in oceanic sustainability. The ERP Vendor of the Year was won by industry giant **SAP**, with the Transformation Team of the Year award picked up by **Deloitte MCS SAP+**, to name just a few of this year's lucky winners.

It seemed motivation was at its peak for the tug-of-war tournament this year, with so many teams wanting to dethrone the twice-in-a-row champions **Cappemini**. After several grueling rounds, it was **IFS** that managed to snatch the crown.







### All fun and games

This year's event was upgraded with bigger tents, more tables, more activities and - luckily - more sun! Driving simulators, giant arcade cabinets, penalty shoot-outs, fairground shooting galleries and cocktail classes were just a few of the entertainment selections on offer. **Infor's** signature teepee was of particular note, where ceremony-goers could indulge themselves in a few cocktails while reclining on lush (fake!) pelts.

Circus dancers and performers meandered amongst the guests, showing off a few choice dance moves or compellingly contorting themselves around suspended hoops. If you were lucky enough, you might have even been jumped

by a magician showcasing sleight-of-hand tricks (don't worry, they were specifically instructed NOT to pick-pocket).

The giant chocolate fountain also drew a lot of attention, despite this event-goer missing his chance!

The combo of alcohol-happy tech workers and a deserving cause in the NHS was a recipe for success and we can't thank everyone enough for attending and donating.

### ERP Tonight

After the awards ceremony wound down, hundreds of front-line NHS workers were invited to enjoy a complimentary evening of good drinks, tasty food and exciting entertainment.

After a day spent at the award ceremony, a rabble of rambunctious ERP

aficionados got their party on.

Fueled by a truly banging musical setlist from Mr. Esherwood, editor and DJ extraordinaire, a bar that could tend to more than three people at a time (we learned from last year) and party platters full of sliders, the after-party proved to be another memorable night - but perhaps not very memorable at all for those who overindulged. Don't worry, we've got the photos to remind you. We're also happy to announce that no employment contracts were terminated due to conduct at this year's afterparty!

For those who are itching to see what ERP Today has in store for next year, know that the format is going to be changing into something a bit fresher. Keep your eyes peeled for our big announcement. ■





| PHOTODIARY | AUSTIN, TEXAS

# AUTOMATION ANYWHERE IMAGINE 2023

BY YOANA CHOLTEEVA



**A**utomation Anywhere (AA)'s Imagine 2023 conference held in Austin, Texas, leaned into the promise of unleashing GenAI's potential and the rapidly changing nature of what work looks like in the day-to-day.

The jam-packed conference schedule in the vibrantly hot city explored the future of work, the social impact of tech organizations and the role of GenAI in fraud prevention.

In a highly enthusiastic atmosphere during his keynote address, chairman and CEO, Mihir Shukla, declared to attendees that this year marks a pivotal inflection point with the convergence

of automation and AI: "We find ourselves in a moment in history, like the birth of a computer, or the internet, a moment that has reshaped our world irreversibly."

But, as Shukla urged, "this epic transformation is happening today" instead of in the future. Acknowledging the threats and considerations accompanying AI innovations, AA announced the launch of a new set of capabilities and best practices, including the ability for teams to select and manage generative AI models, test and optimize those models, create and manage reusable templates, mask sensitive data and audit automation performance.

The RPA company also released a string of new offerings, including the expansion of Automation Co-Pilot for Automators, along with the launch of Autopilot. The new solutions aim to empower citizen and professional developers, along with streamlining automation development from process understanding to automation deployment.

During an exclusive media briefing, the AA C-suite told ERP Today of its ongoing goals to put automation front and center among enterprises, with the genuine ambition to help organizations do more with the ever-evolving technology. ■



| PHOTODIARY | LAS VEGAS

# UIPATH FORWARD VI

BY ADRIAN BRIDGWATER



**N**ow in its sixth year, **UiPath** held its flagship global AI and automation conference - Forward VI - once again in the buzz of Las Vegas.

As AI continues to attract attention, UiPath reminds us that insights alone are not enough. Detailing its inaugural UiPath AI10 Awards program, ten winning organizations were honored on stage: **Banca Progetto, Cox Enterprises, Equifax, Expion Health, Flutter UK & Ireland, Intel Corporation, Lazard, Omega Healthcare, OMERS** and **USI Insurance Services**, chosen by a panel of expert judges.

The awards recognized UiPath de-

ployment use cases across the globe that best exemplify the AI and automation tech solving critical business challenges, generating significant ROI and accelerating innovation.

#### **UiPath and SAP cozy up for winter**

The Vegas event revealed developments between **UiPath** and **SAP**, with things starting to get more serious (in the “dating” sense... and in the data sense too for that matter), to help large enterprises adopt an S/4HANA “clean core.”

UiPath is to continue its adoption of SAP S/4HANA Cloud to run its own business operations. Meanwhile, SAP is offering the UiPath Automation Plat-

form to its customer base to complement SAP Build Process Automation, giving organizations in all verticals the chance to improve efficiency across SAP and non-SAP workloads.

Rob Enslin, UiPath co-CEO, said: “The need for digital transformation has never been more urgent. The most successful companies will undergo total enterprise reinvention over the next decade.”

Speaking to ERP Today, president of SAP North America, Lloyd Adams, said the two companies are “just getting started”, with next year to see UiPath become more embedded in the SAP customer and technology proposition. ■



| PHOTODIARY | MUNICH

# CELOSPHERE

BY YOANA CHOLTEEVA



**C**elonis's annual conference, Celosphere, held in Munich, Germany, gave voice to more than 110 speakers and gathered over 10,000 process experts to learn, collaborate and challenge their preconceptions.

Assembling enthusiastic professionals and novices alike from all corners of the globe, the two-day conference was infused with fresh insights from big customers including **Coca-Cola, Mars, Bayer** and **Allianz**, who let us in on their experiences of process mining and optimization.

Speaking at the opening session

of the conference, Alex Rinke, co-founder and co-CEO of Celonis, quoted a recent company study which revealed that 75 percent of company leaders said "their processes were getting in the way of the successful adoption and implementation of AI".

Introducing the Celonis Process Intelligence (PI) Graph Drawing, made up of process data, process knowledge and power of the ecosystem, Rinke revealed he initially wanted to abbreviate it as "PIG" and showcase it by inviting a real pig on stage, a concept sadly blocked by his team.

Instead, the CEO drew comparisons to the Rosetta Stone from ancient Egypt, which had text written in three different languages and became key to deciphering the archaic scripts. Demonstrating the PI Graph in a conventional video rather than with livestock, Rinke showcased how it can capture and unify organizations' process data and enhance it with machine learning and deep process knowledge gathered from customer deployments over the past decade.

In a fireside chat with Celonis's other CEO, Bastian Nominacher, and



Allianz's group CEO, Oliver Bäte, further discussed the "gigantic" opportunities modern tech has to offer, going far beyond optimizing services.

"My opinion is we need to use technology to simplify and eradicate economic nonsense and stuff that just gets on the nerves of people and have more humans in the things that really matter. Because as the world gets more dangerous, people need and want advice. And that should come from humans. So, let's get rid of the crap...and focus on getting good advice," Bäte commented, in a remark met with a great amount of applause.

In a similar no-nonsense approach, the company announced its new Material Emissions App, designed to simplify how organizations continuously measure, report and reduce Scope 3 emissions in procurement amid increasing pressure to meet sustainability targets.

With more honest insights and new revelations, another highlight that resonated with attendees was a discussion with Finland's former Prime Minister, Sanna Marin. The former PM shared how her leadership lessons, navigating through a pandemic, a war in Europe and an

economic downturn can all apply to business as well. The takeaway was that there is value in recognizing mistakes and reevaluating your decisions when new information emerges.

In exclusive sessions with Celonis, Bayer, **AstraZeneca** and **Vestas**, ERP Today learned more about how the firms are modernizing their processes in a bid to shape the future of work - more coverage to come!

Wrapped up in Bavarian holiday style, it finished with a winter village celebration, with live music and a hot cup of glühwein. ■



| PHOTODIARY | MILTON KEYNES

## RED BULL RACING WITH IBM AND ORACLE

BY STEPHANIE BALL



**A**t Red Bull Racing HQ, 20 lucky IBM and Oracle customers (and ERP Today) entered the boardroom, with 14 winning F1 cars semi-circled right behind us.

Miles Jackson, consulting member of technical staff at Oracle for Red Bull Racing, shared how the Red Bull Racing, Oracle and IBM Consulting partnership brings winning capabilities: “What you see on the TV, those 60 people, two drivers, 24 mechanics, that’s not the whole team. There’s an entire multiple-building complex of at least 1,200 people working towards that one aim. Data is the lifeblood, the synergy, that holds us all together and

that is what Oracle is helping with.”

### Billions of simulations on OCI

To perfect race strategy, billions of simulations, at £150 per race, run on OCI with Arm CPUs, factoring in weather, crashes, pitstops, tire changes, track roughness, gear ratios, safety cars and more.

Plus, to develop its own engine for 2026, the Red Bull Ford Powertrains partnership started and scaled in two years and “could just turn on” with Oracle, with no extra infrastructure needed.

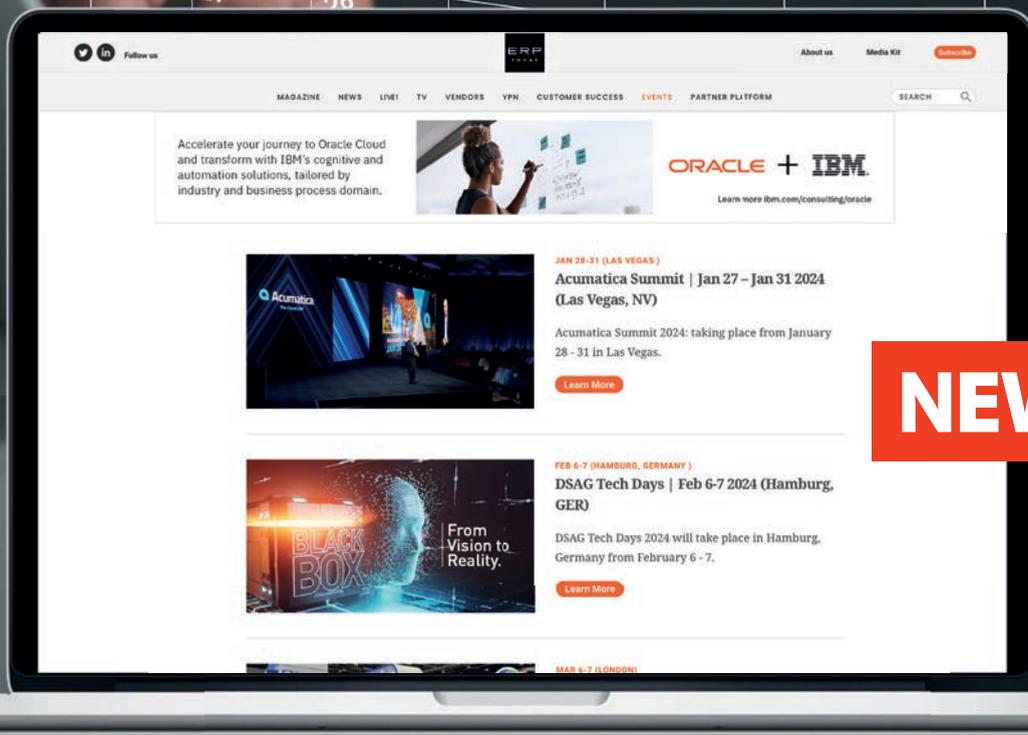
### A heightened digital journey

Cloud, analytics, ML and AI solutions

give fans and drivers a heightened esports experience too, as 240,000 data points per second on each driver pipes into OCI for almost instant feedback. The award-winning fan website, “The Paddock” also uses Oracle to nurture a 90 million fanbase.

Touring the Red Bull Racing factory, OCI is interwoven throughout, from testing material performance to tracking wind tunnel successes - the floor-to-ceiling trophy room being a shiny sign of their track record.

Sworn to secrecy, we can’t share innermost factory details, but word is that heading to the fan website can win you a tour - and it’s well worth it! ■



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| PHOTODIARY | READING

# UKOUG 23 CONFERENCE

BY STEPHANIE BALL



**A**t Oracle's Thames Valley site, the **Independent UK Oracle User Group (UKOUG)** celebrated 40 years young and beyond at its UKOUG 23 conference. Welcoming over 100 businesses, UKOUG president, Richard Pepper kicked off day one and invited Oracle leads to the stage.

Oracle's UK country leader, Siobhan Wilson, said on the panel: "We're now looking at how we can help our customers much more. We're reorientating our company to be a customer-first organization -because of the move to the cloud, we're not selling a product, we're selling a service."

In an aside with ERP Today, Pepper

praised Oracle's work to freshen up its reputation as a hard-line, product-led vendor, with the customer service approach definitely welcomed by UKOUG, though admitting there is still work to do to ensure successful cloud journeys.

Over the two days, talks sharing customer stories were full to the brim across the Oracle campus.

**A fresh face and a fresh generation**

Oracle's GenO program was praised for supporting more people in starting STEM careers. Over doubling in size, this year alone saw 4-500 starters joining Oracle in EMEA, expanding to 40+ EMEA countries.

In a STEM talk by Chloe Fox, foun-

der of **Veritas Digital Marketing**, GenO employees revealed sales, politics, international relations, psychology, HR and ancient history educations - all avenues being welcomed into the talent pool for the next generation of STEM experts.

UKOUG also announced a further partnership with **The Prince's Trust** charity.

**A red carpet affair**

The evening led (along a red carpet) to free-flowing drinks, a cartoonist and chocolate fountain dunking. Comedian Milton Jones took to the stage and cracked some brilliant puns, before a glitzy live band saw the evening out in style. ■



| PHOTODIARY | BIRMINGHAM

# UKISUG CONNECT 2023

BY SHÁNA BRIDDOCK



**W**ith a noticeably packed house, the **UK & Ireland SAP User Group (UKISUG)** held its **CONNECT 2023** conference at the ICC in a Christmas-decked Birmingham, bringing together over 70 **SAP** partners and a huge swathe of customers to network and share industry insights. UKISUG chair Paul Cooper took to the stage for his final opening keynote and passed on the group's baton to UKISUG's vice chair Conor Riordan.

A round-robin of handovers, Ryan Poggi then also stood center stage for the first time in his new role as SAP's UKI managing director. For the new

MD, the message he chose to drive home was that, once again, SAP's door always remains open to reimagining relationships and building trust during cloud journeys.

Sitting down with ERP Today, Cooper and Poggi alike recognized that more companies than ever before are choosing to undergo S/4HANA transformations. The pair shared the view that the biggest factor for cloud success lies in communication - the key being the ability to unlock the power of partnership.

Attendees couldn't have agreed more, expressing a desire for clearer communication from SAP but understanding that cloud transformations

are now becoming an integral step towards innovation. One attendee expressed it's like "eating your broccoli - maybe we didn't want it, but it'll make us strong in the end".

Ironically - although the attendees, SAP and UKISUG all agreed that open honesty and communication is the way forward - everyone ended the night with masks on.

### **Masquerade!**

Attendees were encouraged to dress to the nines as the event hall seamlessly transformed from a networking hub into a masquerade ball. UKISUG 2023 turned into a night that ERP Today won't soon forget. ■

# SIGNING OFF

## AN AI ON THE FUTURE LET'S SEE HOW FAR IT CAN GO

BY PHIL LEWIS

**A**rtificial intelligence has hit the headlines, as ChatGPT and similar technologies make their mark on our everyday lives. With all this attention, you could be forgiven for thinking that AI is a new technology. In fact, what we are actually seeing today are the results of decades of research and technological developments all coming to mainstream fruition now, making a real difference to how we live and work.

### AI versus ML

AI is the ability of a computer or machine to mimic or imitate human intelligent behavior and perform human-like tasks. It performs tasks that require human intelligence such as thinking, reasoning, learning from experience and most importantly, making its own decisions.

Machine learning is a subset of AI. It is computer systems that can learn and adapt without being explicitly programmed or helped to. Machine learning uses algorithms and statistical models to intelligently analyze data, drawing inferences from data patterns to inform further action.

### Where does AI fit in manufacturing?

Put simply, AI (machine learning in particular) facilitates smart, industry-specific applications to improve every aspect of the supply chain. With its ability to factor in an inordinate number of data values, parameters, what-if scenarios and other contributing factors, machine learning can produce accurate and timely recommendations for almost every aspect of the supply chain. Ultimately, this provides a competitive advantage that would be impossible to replicate without the application of AI technologies.

### Where is machine learning being used already?

The uses of machine learning are seemingly limitless. Take precision farming, for example, an area where machine learning is delivering new depths of insight. Recently, animal nutrition company **Nutreco** has achieved additional production cycles of



**AI is already proving to be a driver of real efficiencies**

healthier shrimps, while at the same time using 30 percent less feed. Specifically, the business uses audio sensors in aquaculture to listen to the shrimps, understanding when they are hungry. Machine learning then determines when and how much the shrimps must be fed, which lowers the feed conversion ratio and shortens the shrimp production cycle, doubling production without huge intensification.

Global bakery ingredients business, **Zee-landia Group**, has addressed the challenges of higher costs and lack of available bakery ingredients by deploying a machine learning model that recommends products and prices to be offered to their bakery customers based on what similar customers are buying. Through the implementation of applied AI, the group has achieved an 83 percent faster time to prepare product recommendations for customers, cutting the time down from 30 minutes to five minutes.

As a result of product recommendations taking less time, Zeelandia Group employees are able to provide a better customer experience in addition to increased revenue per transaction and share of wallet per customer, improving the accuracy and speed of product recommendations and pricing strategies.

### A developing story

As more businesses discover the benefits that can be realized with the application of AI, AI capabilities will develop even further still - refined to solve specific industry or business problems. As we're seeing already, the considered application of AI technologies is helping businesses right across the supply chain and this is only set to increase over the next few years. AI is already proving to be a driver of real efficiencies as well as helping businesses plan for all eventualities, delivering the actionable insight that's needed to stay one step ahead at all times. ■

*Phil Lewis is senior VP, solution consulting at Infor.*



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# WORKING *Together* TO DELIVER YOUR ERP



**WORKING TOGETHER WITH  
YOUR TEAM, WE ASSIST,  
SUPPORT AND GUIDE  
YOUR ERP PROJECT.**



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