made the correct investments to ensure our success in this area.

Discuss your channel engagement initiatives in terms of training/ incentives etc?

Currently the existing HP team in Emitac are conducting in house trainings for the sales and pre sales forces of our channel partner. We have exciting plans that will help keeping the channel up to date with the latest technology innovations. We will share more details about this new initiative once it is officially launched.

We have been supporting our partners through a number of incentives and initiatives. We have been working closely with our partners to offer them initiatives that will help them to grow their businesses whether it is end user events or sales promotions. There are a lot more exciting incentives come this year.

What has been the year on year growth in the distribution business?

Emitac Distribution has seen growth of 5% in 2011 in spite of the challenges of a very difficult year for the region. We expect to see significant improvement in 2012 full year results, and we a very encouraged by progress achieved so far.

How is the third party datacenter business growing in the region and how is e-Hosting DataFort making the best of the opportunities?

The adoption of third-party data centre services has seen increased demand from both large and medium businesses, driven both by the need to cut costs as well as to lower the risks associated with investing in data centre infrastructure, equipment and technologies that face ever shortening refresh cycles.

Holding the fort

eHosting DataFort is a leading IT service provider in the region and provides data hosting services to many leading clients. Yasser Zeineldin, CEO, eHosting DataFort speaks to The Integrator in the following interview about the company's focus.

Majority of the revenue for third-party data centre services used to come from colocation hosting services but this is fast changing. Managed services is increasingly becoming a large component as there is a major shift in mindset and organizations are looking at service providers to manage their IT infrastructure.

The key verticals for third party data centre services have been banking, hospitality, government, IT and technology. A growing need to focus on core business; lack of skilled resources for in-house management of data centre operations and rising power, cooling and real estate costs have remained the major drivers for adoption of third-party DC services. The role of an IT service provider like eHosting DataFort has gained higher relevance after the financial crisis as organisations see them

bringing in knowledge, technical expertise and readily available technological innovations. This helps reduce costs, improve performance levels and lower financial risks.

Service providers are continuously investing in the latest technologies in order to provide different routes to deliver this value to clients. CIOs can then allocate their IT resources to innovation and developing business applications rather than spending time on mundane operational activities.

Today, even at eHosting DataFort, we see our customers demanding not only solutions for cost-cutting measures but also for deriving long term benefits. They see a service provider as an extension of their IT department. Clients are also still focusing on converting capital expenditures (CAPEX) to operating expenditures (OPEX) by using a service provider.

At eHDF, we see that this trend is here to stay for the long term. In addition to flexible, reliable and customized solutions, eHDF provides its customers State of the Art Infrastructure along with 24/7 technical support. We also guarantee up to 99.9% Service Availability on account of our credit-based, industry-leading Service Level Agreements (SLAs). eHDF also follows strict service desk response and resolution targets.

Yasser Zeineldin
CEO
eHosting DataFort

Monthly service reports including SLA incidents, server performance and internet are maintained and monthly service reviews are carried out in order to preserve high standards of performance.

Our predictable Business model of charging monthly fees allows customers to reduce the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), in turn allowing them to convert their capital expenditure (CAPEX) to operating expenses (OPEX), thereby freeing up savings which can be used to reinvest into other new business initiatives and projects.

eHDF has been continuously investing in infrastructure and technology partnerships with

an aim to improve its enterprise computing business and has strategic alliances with technology majors like Microsoft, Cisco, HP, BMC, IBM, EMC etc. In the past year, we have also partnered with Double-Take Software to enhance comprehensive hosted disaster recovery solutions to customers.

Owing to our focus on international best practices and clearly defined processes, eHDF has been recognized by international bodies such as BSI and ISO thus ensuring that our managed services are best-in-class. eHDF has obtained certifications including ISO 9001, ISO 20000, and ISO 27001, and BS 25999.

In addition we have been recognized by the industry as the leading Managed Services Provider in the ME region for the last 4 years.

Do you see potential of providing hosting services for more global scale customers, not necessarily based out of Middle East?
eHosting DataFort does not categorise itself as a System Integrator but as an IT service provider.

UAE is attracting global businesses by providing a business friendly and progressive environment that facilitates the expansion of their operations across the region.

For many of these organisations, working with a local managed IT service provider offers a value-add as critical customer data remains within the country.

eHDF has vast experience in providing managed hosting services to customers, both local and international. Companies see improved performance, controlling costs and complexity, extensive industry knowledge and expertise in meeting global infrastructure

requirements as the primary reasons to work with eHosting DataFort.

Some of our Global clients are Panasonic, Societe Generale Bank, TRIMEX Group, JRG International and many more. Another example is Switzerland's Security Lab which hosts its IT infrastructure and protects the confidential data of its customers within the UAE at eHosting DataFort's Data Centre. Security Lab specialises in providing security audits to banks and multinationals, delivering services that include vulnerability assessment and penetration testing. It has a portfolio of global clients from the legal and financial sectors, many of which are setting up base in Dubai. Regional tie-ups with IT service providers is a core strategy that the security firm adopts around the world to host highly sensitive customer information and communications securely. For the company it was essential to work with a local managed IT company, not only to physically protect their IT infrastructure, but also to ensure secure communications that meet its customers' international compliance and standards requirements.

What are the Managed services that the company provides? Which are the fastest growing in the region and for the company specifically?
eHDF has a whole gamut of solutions in the managed services segment ranging from Dedicated Servers to a Fully Managed Services option whereby a customer's entire IT infrastructure is managed right from their Data Centre through their Core Business Applications and everything in between (including Network, Servers, Storage, Backup, Security etc). In 'Managed Hosting', customers lease one or more dedicated servers from eHDF and the organization undertakes the

responsibility of managing these servers up to the Operating System (OS) layer. In addition, EHDF also undertakes the responsibility of providing managed services that include Backup, Storage, Security, Network, and Application & System Administration Services. The entire hosted infrastructure is managed on a 24x7 basis and is also backed by SLAs required for high availability, reliability, security and redundancy.

At eHosting DataFort both colocation and fully managed hosting services model have seen demand with a majority of clients needing managed services such as network, security, databases, storage, etc.

In addition, there has been extensive growth in Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Services due to Arab Spring in the region with UAE becoming a safe haven for data.

The top three industry sectors that have shown immense growth for these services at eHDF are IT, Electronics and Telecom, Financial Services and the Government Sector.

Do you see sizeable business potential for Managed services among some of the larger to medium sized SMB companies?
SMBs, accounting for over 90% of the private enterprises in Dubai, are leading economic growth and job creation in the UAE today. It is, therefore, a top priority that this sector has access to leading edge knowledge, technology, funding and markets, according to the SME development agency of the Department of Economic Development (DED) in Dubai. Service providers and technology companies usually scale down solutions and products for SMBs but are not able to offer

a customised solution for this segment. The SMB sector has unique requirements that need to be addressed differently. eHDF has been able to address specific needs of the SME sector and has worked successfully with a number of SMEs in the region.

In order to support this sector, eHDF has launched SME-specific dedicated servers packages - 'Lite Package' and the 'Premium Package'. Both the offerings require minimal capital expenditure (CAPEX), making it easier to be provisioned and allowing for faster time to market. They are housed in eHDF's secure data centres that ensure critical business data is always

> **"Companies see improved performance, controlling costs and complexity, extensive industry knowledge and expertise in meeting global infrastructure requirements as the primary reasons to work with eHosting DataFort"**

secure and protected.

Moving forward, eHDF is planning to launch public cloud infrastructure services specifically targeted to SMEs in Q2 2012.

Discuss your focus on cloud computing and what are the vendors you are associated with for providing cloud services to your customers?
We have charted out our cloud roadmap and will be launching cloud services very soon. We already have a cloud ready infrastructure in our data center. eHDF will be launching our own Managed Private cloud solutions for medium to large enterprises looking at enhanced & dynamic utilization of existing infrastructure

/ applications in terms of scalability, elasticity & faster time to market. Also we have plans to launch a Lite Public cloud version for companies operating in the SMB space.

In summary, what is the outlook for the managed services business over the year ahead and for the company specifically in terms of new initiatives / expansion plans planned

There will be an expected growth in the Managed Services market since enterprises will continue to invest in data centre technologies and services but not building their own infrastructure. There is a tangible and growing desire to

increase efficiencies by looking at the lease option i.e. "Pay as you Go" IT Services.

eHosting DataFort will be enhancing services in the Data Centre services area by expanding our existing services portfolio and offering new services, e.g. Cloud Computing. As mentioned, eHDF will be launching our own Managed Private cloud solutions for medium to large enterprises looking at enhanced & dynamic utilization of existing infrastructure/ applications in terms of scalability, elasticity & faster time to market by the end of the year. Also we have plans to launch a Lite Public cloud version for companies operating in the SMB space.