

A mobile future

It has been an eventful year in the solutions world as enterprises witnessed the rise of managed services, mobility and IT as a true enabler of business transformation. But what does 2013 have in store for the Middle East?

Not that long ago IT was seen simply as a support service driven by the requirements of a business. Those days are gone.

These days IT is doing the driving, with the business in the passenger seat. Utilising technology enables the business to be efficient, agile and innovative. If an enterprise is not keeping up with IT, it is not keeping up with its competitors.

One of the biggest influencers on enterprise IT in 2012 has been mobility – in fact, it has changed the whole landscape of business. With the penetration of smartphones and tablets skyrocketing, people increasingly want that user experience matched in the enterprise, and businesses are realising that by embracing mobility with things like apps, they have a more direct route to their audience.

The effect of mobility has also reached the IT infrastructure of a business. People want to be able to work from anywhere, at any time and on any device. The benefits of this are obvious, but when employees start accessing work data on their own devices, it creates challenges for the IT environment. These are all things that have been priority considerations for CIOs in 2012.

According to Cisco's recent visual networking index forecast, mobile data traffic will grow 34-fold between 2011 and 2016 with a compound annual growth rate of 102%, whilst business mobile traffic

will grow 12-fold with a compound annual growth rate of 65%.

Furthermore, Gartner predicts mobile devices to pass PCs to be the most common Web access tools in 2013.

This means that the significant mobility trend enterprises have witnessed this year is certain to continue in 2013.

"Enterprise mobility is set to become the main driver of enterprise transformation over the next decade," says Sachin Bhardwaj, Head of Marketing and Business Development, eHosting DataFort.

"Key strategic trends in enterprise mobility will shape business over the next five years, including the consumerisation of IT, mobile applications, mobile enterprise security and management, and machine-to-machine solutions. It provides actionable insight into local and unique adoption, supply, and emerging technology trends in EMEA's mobile B2B market, including strategic guidance on CIO and end-user trends, vendor and service provider go-to-market strategies, channels, and market forecasting."

Ahmed Muammar, Technology Consultant Lead, KSA, EMC, predicts a large percentage of eBusiness and eGovernment to become 'mBusiness' and 'mGovernment'.

"We will see more professional smart devices applications and BYOD will bring a lot of hope after a big hype. We will see enterprise 'drop-boxes' and other



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collaboration tools become common place. Middle East social changes are too big to be ignored and mobility was a main driver for this change. Enterprises cannot simply go without adopting some solution for both its employees and customers,” he says.

Saed Sakran, GM and Acting Sales Director, Scope ME, agrees, saying any company today will now include mobility and related solutions in its budget for 2013.

“It is something that simply cannot be avoided because it is difficult to conduct business without this. As enterprises see an influx of data on their networks due to these mobile devices, they will have to consider things like network upgrades, virtualisation and managed services. Growth in data always translates to growth in ICT spending, and this spending should be across all areas of IT and not only focused on one single aspect,” he says.

King disruptor

Whilst mobility has succeeded in shaking up the IT industry this year, it is impossible to take the crown of king market-disruptor away from cloud.

Cloud has been a source of major hype for several years now,



Sachin Bhardwaj, Head of Marketing and Business Development, eHosting DataFort

but 2012 was really the year where early adopters first began to toy with the technology. Gartner predicts that by 2015 low-cost cloud services will cannibalise up to 15 percent of top service players’ revenue. But will 2013 be the year where we begin to see wider adoption?

“Industry players will need to drive business value as these services drive change to IT organisations. New technologies like cloud computing will enable many organisations to exploit internal capabilities to establish new business service revenue streams. Businesses are increasingly moving their computing and collaboration applications to the cloud, and their shift in IT spending reflects that change in behaviour,” Bhardwaj says.

The market is “clearly moving” towards further cloud services and the Middle East is “quite hungry”



for new cloud services, according to Fady Younes, Client Director, Cisco UAE.

“We can see huge room for growth in this space. Furthermore we expect the market to have a large appetite for new consumption models for managed services and cloud services that meet the businesses financial expectations and fast growing demands within manageable budgets. Therefore a new approach is needed to free individuals and organisations from the constraints of traditional IT. We believe that cloud is part of the answer and will play a central role in the next era of ICT and managed services solutions,” he says.

While private clouds fall under the spotlight, public cloud adoption will not take off until regulations and compliance of the telecom authorities in the Middle East are formalised, says Savio Tovar Dias, Senior Systems Engineering Manager, MEA and Turkey, Avaya.

“In the meantime, several enterprises will look to build their own private cloud solutions for their enterprises, with some point public cloud solutions from the likes of Salesforce.com and other SaaS vendors,” he says.

“The managed services market is trending in an upward manner moving into 2013, as more enterprises begin to understand the model and the significant commercial benefits that come along with



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this new model. We will also see more and more managed services offerings come about from various local and global vendors in the market, along with the regional service providers playing a significant role in this space.”

Despite this, Muammar believes that going forward most enterprises are looking to convert to a digital business model where the focus is shifting to data.

However, Bhardwaj maintains that mobility will be the key word in 2013 as mobile experiences move to the cloud.

“Consumerisation drives tablets into the enterprise. Cloud and mobile are mutually reinforcing trends. The bring your own device trend will accelerate in the region,” he says.

Younes concludes that the Middle East continue to be one of the most exciting and dynamic regions in the world and an important and strategic market for Cisco.

“Gulf markets are leapfrogging developed economies by embracing new business models and technologies to achieve their social and economic goals. Given the explosive growth of information and the ability to access it through Internet applications anywhere anytime, the Middle East has developed into an emerging hotspot for new technologies.” ■