

Organisations rely on technologies to accelerate business growth and efficiencies. Increasing workloads have driven firms to transform data centres to cater to demands in the digital era. Data is the single most important asset for an organisation and the way it is stored, archived, accessed, analysed and backed up spells out how successful a business is.

Research firm IDC predicts 'modernisation' as one of the ten key predictions for the global data centre market over the next three years. The study predicts that by 2020, the heavy workload demands of next-gen applications and new IT architectures in critical business facilities will have

BUILDING MODERN DATA CENTRES

Reseller ME examines the prospects for channel partners as organisations look to modernise data centre infrastructures and assets in the digital era.

compelled 55 percent of enterprises to modernise their data centre assets through updates or new deployments.

Savitha Bhaskar, COO, Condo Protego, says, "The Middle East has reached a tipping point in data centre modernisation, as organisations need the underlying IT infrastructure to meet the business demands of the datafication era."

From government agencies to banks and universities, every organisation needs to store, secure, and analyse data for new business insights and to enhance their business competitiveness, she adds.

According to Yasser Zeineldin, CEO, eHosting DataFort, the data centre of today is no longer only brick and mortar walls.

He adds, "Data that was once considered sensitive and not allowed to leave the organisation boundaries is today being hosted with either local or international service providers."

"According to a Research and Markets' Global Data Centre Services Market (2016-2022) report, the global service market for data centre market would reach \$76,207.1 million by 2022, at a CAGR of 14.8 percent."

The report indicated that the increasing expenditures on data centre technology, the need to reduce data centre operational cost, and growing complexity of data centre are some of the significant factors driving the growth of the market.

"The demand is further enhanced due to growing awareness about the

technology and its widespread adoption by end users," he says.

According to Zeineldin, the company has seen the use of data centres in not only the enterprise sector but also in SMB.

"We have seen a high demand for the services by the SMB Sector. And on the business vertical side, we envisage greater demand by the government, BFSI, telecom, healthcare and retail sector in the coming years."

Equinix managing director for Middle East and North Africa Jeroen Schlosser believes factors like the recent reports on Google and Amazon eyeing countries such as Saudi Arabia to setup data centres, Amazon already present in Bahrain, and AliCloud in the UAE, it is becoming increasingly clear how Middle East is becoming a tech hub and how "data is the new oil".

He says, "According to a recent analysis by Frost & Sullivan, the managed services market growth within the Gulf Cooperation Council states is set to expand from \$1,073 million in 2012 to \$3,112 million by end of 2018. The GCC states have been proactive in their efforts to develop better information and communications technology (ICT). Infrastructure development programmes have focused on transforming these countries into knowledge-based societies. Lower oil prices, currency depreciations, and challenging business environments are driving organisations to increase business process efficiencies while



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maintaining or reducing OPEX and CAPEX.”

Agreeing, Sanjay Sainani, regional vice president IT and Data Centers, Huawei Middle East, points out that total cost of ownership has become the determinant on whether a customer hosts its own IT or move to a service provider.

“This trend is powering a strong growth in service provider-led investment in the data centre space as they ramp up to be ready for the XaaS business demands,” he says. “New data centre technologies and approach of modular and pre-fabricated data centres, allow investors the flexibility of Build-As-You-Grow and short deployment time leading to better financials and the ability to meet new demands with ease.”

The operating expense required for a data centre over a period of three

to five years can amount to equal or more than the capital expense needed to build it.

“Data centres are energy guzzlers, and in the Middle East even more so as the hot environment puts additional demand on cooling energy consumption. There is a visible shift towards selecting high efficiency solutions including power conversion and cooling. High efficiency UPS’s, aisle containment in row cooling, automation through DCIM trends are picking up as customers seek more on saving OPEX to improve TCOs,” Sainani adds.

“Yes,” Zeineldin says, “this has been the biggest change in the data centre industry over the last few years. We have also noticed a shift towards better efficiency and cooling and this has greatly affected energy management.”

The demand for data centre

solutions and infrastructures will only continue to rise over the next few years. There are infinite opportunities present in terms of technologies and markets. However, when it comes to partners, how can they play a serious role to take advantage of the prospects?

According to Mark Hosking, data centre and virtualisation leader, MEA, Juniper Networks, partners have a significant role to play. He says, “As the market shifts towards a more software-defined approach, channel partners should ensure that they retrain teams to be relevant and add value in such environments. Sales teams need to be ready to engage with IT stakeholders beyond the infrastructure units and technical engineers need to develop skills in the areas of software programming and automation.”

He also adds that the services teams should focus on improving their ability to go beyond delivering technology solutions and instead demonstrate how they can help clients transform their operational processes.

Hosking believes that channel partners can create opportunities for revenue by focusing on their customers’ desired business outcomes when deciding on the appropriate data centre solutions for them.

He explains, “From a technology perspective, this means providing solutions that adhere to open standards, ensuring clients are not confined to proprietary data centre architectures. This flexible approach will also help address a common challenge that both partners and customers face, which is coping with an IT landscape that is rapidly changing.”

Sainani advises partners to invest time and resources in training on new technologies, solutions and best-practices to stay ahead in the data centre business.

The opportunities that exist for partner business is varied. He adds, “Right from making data centre facility even more demanding of availability, security and reliability; assessing and upgrading existing data centre



Gary Williams, AESG

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facilities to meet new demands to upgrading power, cooling, adding DCIM and replacing batteries at existing facilities are few avenues of opportunities for partners. Facility maintenance contracts are low hanging fruits that can bring run-rate business to partners.”

Partners have a huge opportunity in ensuring that all aspects of a data centre work together seamlessly to achieve desired results. The data centre commissioning process looks at this area in detail. It includes verifying and documenting that the facility and all related systems and assemblies are planned, designed, installed, tested, operated and maintained to meet the needs of the customer.

Gary Williams, director of Commissioning, AESG, says that


although great attention is given to the design and implementation of data centres, including subsequent upgrade cycles of the active equipment such as servers and storage, little or no emphasis is given to ensuring critical systems such as cooling, power, and fire and life safety run at optimal performance.

He says, “This not only results in long-term fiscal impact due to inefficiencies creeping into the operation, but can also lead to downtime, thereby crippling IT services. For regional providers, commissioning serves as a perfect value-add service that increases the scope of the project and extend contracts beyond the one-time implementation.”

Equinix’ Schlosser adds, “Channel partners play a key role in the

data centre market in taking the services to the last mile, expanding the delivery and support coverage. With the cloud services touted to be a major trend, channel’s role has crossed over from sales enablers to IT transformation agents.

“Building a successful channel business will increasingly be dependent on being part of the right ecosystems. Channel businesses need to work with partners that can connect them to broad ecosystems of vendors, service providers and cloud companies.”

The modernising of data centres presents a number of opportunities for channel partners. It depends on individual channel business to identify the profitable areas and swiftly develop their skillset to offer differentiated solutions for customers. 



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