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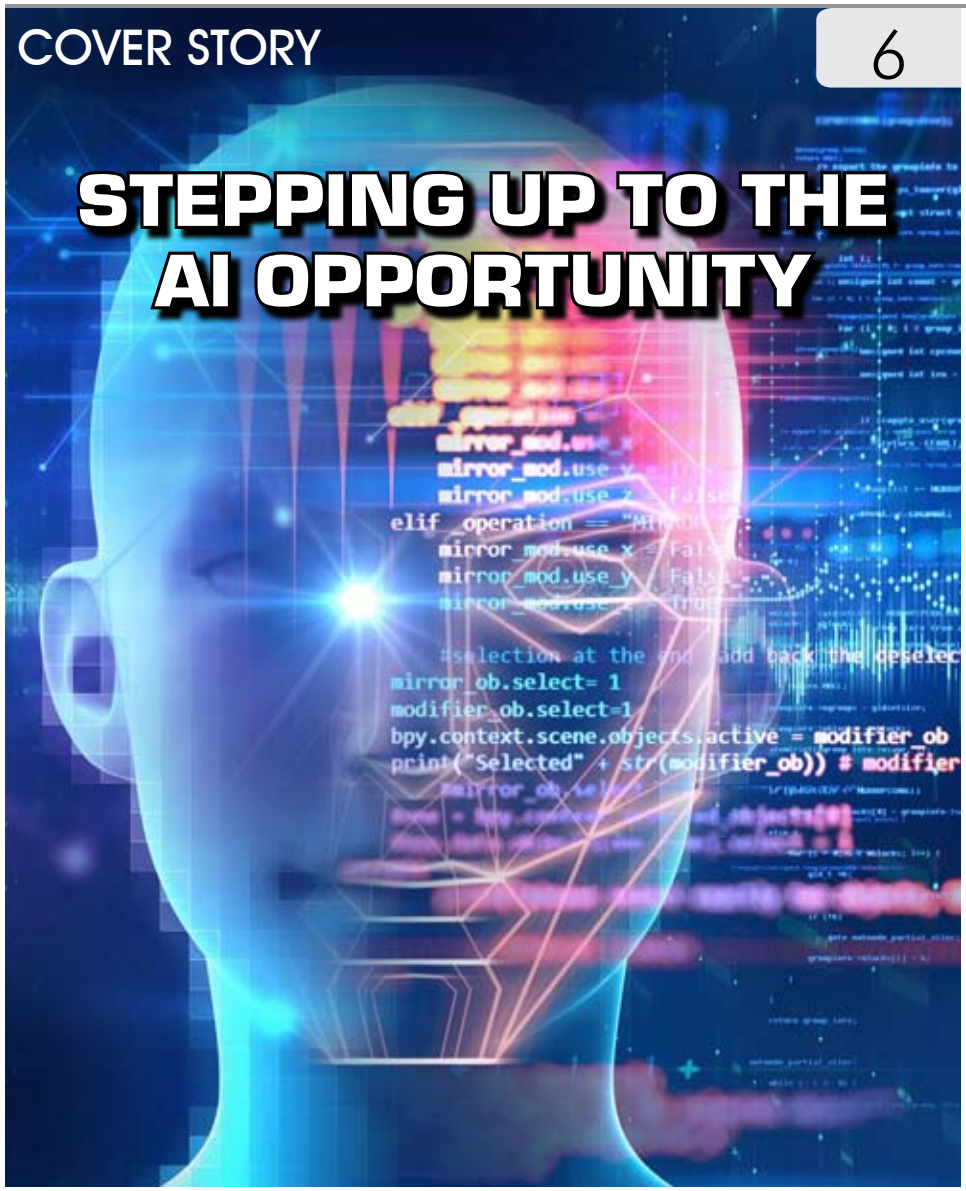

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STEPPING UP TO THE AI OPPORTUNITY

AI is set to be the key source of transformation, disruption and competitive advantage in today's fast changing economy. Drawing on the AI-led transformation among the businesses, this cover story analyzes how quickly AI is disrupting business models and driving customer experience

Amit Singh

From the personal assistants in our mobile phones, to the profiling, customization, and cyber protection that lie behind more and more of our commercial interactions, Artificial intelligence (AI) touches almost every aspect of our lives. And it's only just getting started.

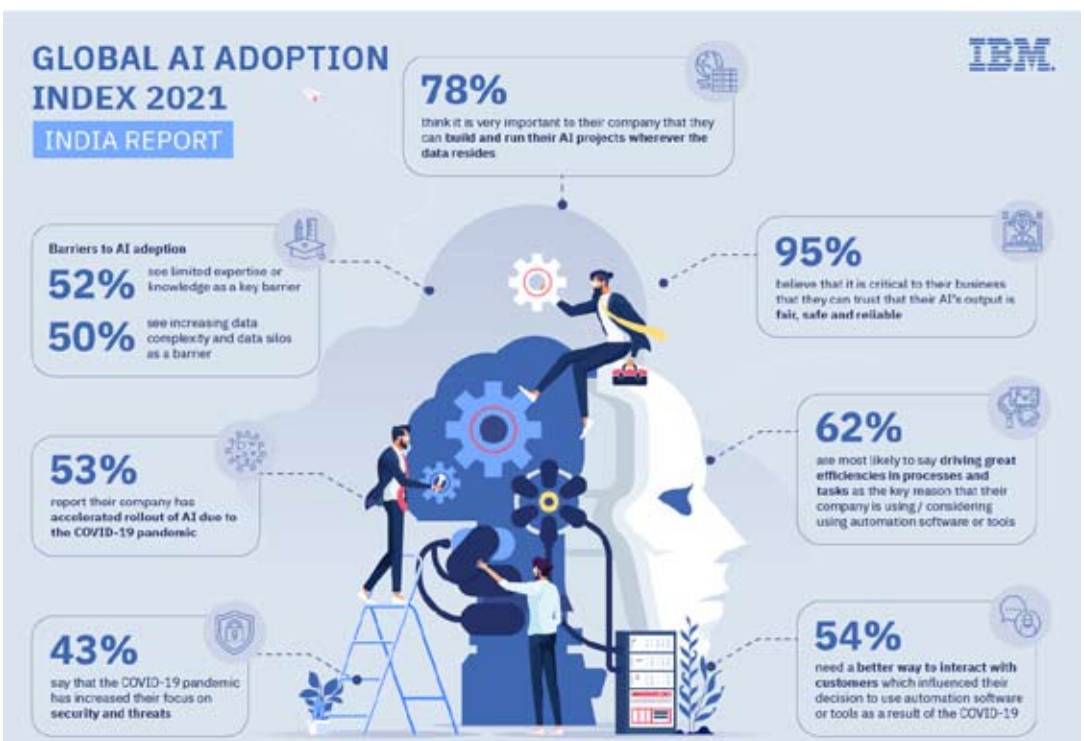
AI indeed has been a buzzword in the IT industry for some time now, but a global pandemic prompting a massive shift in favor of working from home and demand simplifying complicated IT environments has a way of accelerating emerging trends into the mainstream.

Changing business needs due in part to Covid-19 is driving adoption of AI and advancements in the technology are making it increasingly accessible to more businesses. In fact, by 2025, a whopping 50 percent of enterprises will have devised AI orchestration platforms to operationalize AI, up from fewer than 10 percent in 2020, according to the Global AI Adoption Index 2021, a report conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of IBM.

Spending to skyrocket

In addition, companies worldwide are likely to spend $342 billion on AI solutions in 2021 – a 15.2 percent YoY growth, according to IDC. The market is forecast to accelerate further in 2022 with 18.8 percent growth and remain on track to break the $500 billion mark by 2024.

> "Market sentiments and customer demand have prompted enterprises to bring AI into the mainstream. In fact, almost one-third of the organizations are reportedly using AI in the mainstream business."
>
> **SUBRAM NATARAJAN,**
> CTO & Director, Technical Sales, IBM India/South Asia



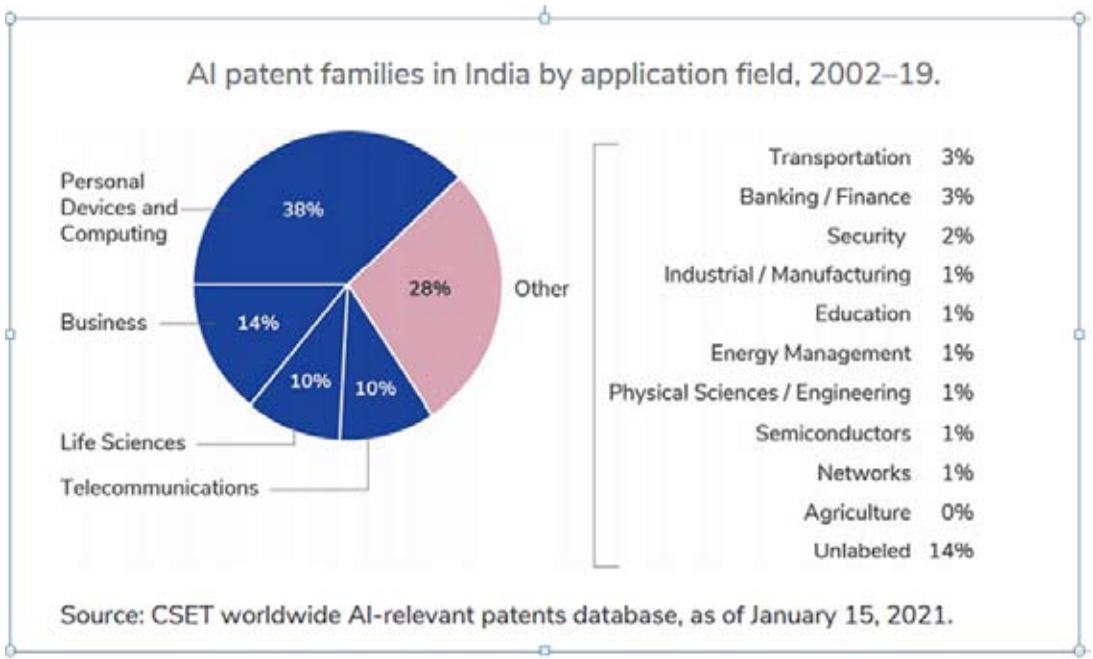
Among the three technology categories, AI Software occupied 88 percent of the overall AI market. However, in terms of growth, AI Hardware is estimated to grow the fastest in the next several years. From 2023 onwards, AI Services is forecast to become the fastest growing category.

Factors like growth

of data-based AI and advancement in deep learning and need to achieve robotic autonomy to stay competitive in the market are expected to drive the adoption of the AI solutions and services. "Disruption is unsettling, but it can also serve as a catalyst for innovation and transformation. 2020 was the year that accelerated digital transformation and strengthened the value of enterprise AI," said Ritu Jyoti, Group Vice President, AI and Automation Research, IDC. "We have now entered the domain of AI-augmented work and decision across all the functional areas of a business. Responsible creation and use of AI solutions that can sense, predict, respond, and adapt at speed is an important business imperative."

"Till some time back, AI has been in the sandbox area when it came to business adoption. Not many organizations had brought AI into the production area. However, the market sentiments and customer demand have prompted enterprises to bring AI into the mainstream. In fact, almost one-third of the organizations are reportedly using AI in the mainstream business," adds Subram Natarajan, CTO & Director, Technical Sales, IBM India/ South Asia.

Further, the patent activity in any country is considered a core indicator of the prevalent research and innovation ecosystem. According to the recent CSET report on Mapping India's AI potential, there were 10 times as many AI-relevant patent applications in 2018 as compared to 2012. In fact, India's global rank on the number of patent families related to AI was 8th, ahead of Russia and France. The top spot is occupied by China, followed by the United States and Japan.



Indian AI ecosystem is further bolstered by the fact that Indian AI startups raised $836.3 million in 2020, the largest funding outlay in the last seven years at a 9.7 percent year-on-year growth, according to a report from AIMResearch. In 2020, Indian government increased the outlay for Digital India to $477 million to boost AI, IoT, Big Data, cybersecurity, machine learning and robotics. Indeed, India's AI ecosystem is seeing explosive growth with a lot of inventive startups entering the space.

Rising maturity in AI adoption

Almost 2/3rd of the Indian organizations are in the early stages of AI maturity, of which 11.6 percent businesses are still at the ad hoc stage, according to the IDC Maturity Benchmark: Artificial Intelligence in India, 2021 report. The report says that more than half of the organizations are still in the opportunistic stage of AI adoption in India. "Most organizations are yet to reach the highest levels of maturity, most notably in the areas of people and technology. Only 8.4 percent of the Indian organizations are in the latter stages of AI maturity highlighting the need for an

enterprise-wide AI strategy aligned with business goals," discloses Rishu Sharma, Associate Research Director, Cloud and AI, IDC India.

Deepak Pargaonkar, VP, Solution Engineering, Salesforce, adds that AI adoption in India is happening primarily in customer-facing bots and for internal decision-making based on Big Data. "The organizations essentially leverage AI to power the intelligence for their internal stake holders. Businesses are seriously considering deploying and leveraging AI in every conversation that they do. AI is clearly a talk point across the operational and strategic levels."

Sectors like travel and hospitality were the fastest to move towards AI-powered processes followed by telecom, media, and technology firms. However, sectors like BSFI, healthcare, and pharmaceuticals are the ones that are likely to see the largest productivity gains from AI.

"The main reason behind this is the large amount of data they store. Managing big data is not an easy task and compiling it without AI intervention can lead to errors. Business functions like customer service, finance, tax, HR, IT, cybersecurity, operations, R&D, risk, legal and compliance, sales and marketing, and supply chain have already deploying AI to reduce the chances of human errors," explains Rashi Gupta, Co-Founder, Rezo.ai.

> "Only 8.4 percent of the Indian organizations are in the advanced stages of AI maturity highlighting the need for an enterprise-wide AI strategy aligned with business goals."
>
> **RISHU SHARMA,**
> Associate Research Director, Cloud and AI, IDC India

AI-led disruption to business models

The consumer revolution set off by AI opens the way for massive disruption as both established businesses and new entrants drive innovation and develop new business models. A key part of the impact of AI is coming from its ability to make the most of parallel developments such as IoT connectivity.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a testament to the fact that intelligence is critical for businesses as they focus on gaining efficiencies, and innovation both internally and externally. "While automated customer service agent was the top AI use case for Indian organizations in 2020, we are seeing momentum for use cases like fraud analysis and investigation, IT automation, recommendation system, and diagnosis and treatment. According to IDC's Future Enterprise Research Survey, 62 percent of organizations in India have plans to increase their AI/ML spend," shares Sharma of IDC India.

Experts opine that AI front-runners will have the advantage of superior customer insight. The immediate competitive benefits include an improved ability to tap into consumer preferences, tailor their output to match these individual demands and, in doing so, capture an ever bigger slice of the market. And the front-runners' ability to shape product developments around this rich supply of customer

data will make it harder for slower moving competitors to keep pace and could eventually make their advantage unassailable. "We can already see this data-driven innovation and differentiation in the way books, music, video and entertainment are produced, distributed and consumed, resulting in new business models, new market leaders and the elimination of traditional players that fail to adapt quickly enough," adds Pargaonkar.

These trends are mandating organizations to take a fresh approach on their business models and processes in order to survive and thrive in a highly competitive market. "Many of the insurance organizations are leveraging AI bots to automate the claims process from beginning to end. Instead of the days or even months it traditionally took to settle a claim, the bot is able to complete the entire pipeline from claims receipt, policy reference, fraud detection, payout and notification to customers in just few minutes. AI solutions are poised to have a huge impact on the BFSI industry," states Utpal Chakraborty, an eminent data scientist, AI researcher and former Head of AI, Yes Bank.

Besides, Covid-19 has forced many of the retailers to modify their business models in favor of AI in order to avoid bankruptcy and closure. Only those companies raised the finances bars which could provide an omni-channel experience to their customers.

> "AI adoption in India is happening primarily in customer-facing bots and for internal decision-making based on Big Data. AI is clearly a talk point across the operational and strategic levels."
>
> **DEEPAK PARGAONKAR,**
> VP, Solution Engineering, Salesforce

With a similar motive and objective to provide an omnichannel experience to its customers, IKEA has invested in a California-based AI and augmented realty firm Geomagical Labs. It invested in visual AI that helps customers turn their 2D pictures to 3D so they are able to visualize the surroundings better. They can see the rug, sofa, bed, etc and can individually compartmentalize it using AI.

"As per market estimates, it is apparent that over 90 percent of companies are implementing or planning to invest in AI solutions to address the current business challenges," highlights Manish Gupta, Co-Founder & CEO, Rezo.ai, a startup specializing in customer experience automation.

AI-led digital transformation

As the world grapples with Covid-19, every ounce of technological innovation and ingenuity harnessed to fight this pandemic brings us one step closer to overcoming it. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are playing a key role in better understanding and addressing the Covid -19 crisis.

In the fight against Covid -19, organizations have been quick to apply their machine learning expertise in several areas: scaling customer communications,

understanding how Covid -19 spreads, and speeding up research and treatment.

India's healthcare providers have embraced AI, recognizing its significant value in better diagnostics with data intelligence and in improving patient experience with AI-powered solutions. Take Manipal Hospitals, headquartered in Bengaluru, which is using IBM Watson for Oncology, a cognitive computing platform, to help physicians identify personalized cancer care options across the country. In cardiac care, Columbia Asia Hospitals in Bengaluru is using startup Cardiotrack's AI algorithms to predict and diagnose cardiac diseases, disorders, and ailments. In addition, many of the healthcare institutions are using machine learning-enabled chatbots for contactless screening of Covid-19 symptoms and to answer questions from the public.

Besides healthcare, AI has been revolutionizing various industries to uphold business resilience. The education sector started using AI, while even online education start-ups began to offer personalized services in line with the needs and specific requirements of the students. The Covid-19 crisis has reinforced the need to transform the conventional education system into one driven by technology. Apart from changing the learning methodology, AI-powered machines also enabled educators in several ways, such as tracking student performances, identifying gaps in teaching techniques, and automating mundane administrative tasks.

> "Many of the insurance organizations are leveraging AI bots to automate the claims process end to end. The bot is able to complete the entire pipeline from claims receipt, policy reference, fraud detection, payout and notification to customers in just few minutes."
>
> **UTPAL CHAKRABORTY,**
> an eminent data scientist, AI researcher and former Head of AI, Yes Bank

Further, in line with global trends, digital platform companies in India are fast adopting AI. Ola, one of India's leading ride-hailing apps, is using data science and machine learning to track traffic, improve customer experience, understand driver habits and extend the life of a vehicle. Myntra, the online-fashion retailer acquired by Flipkart, is using AI to process fashion data and predict trends to launch a fully automated clothing collection without any intervention from a human designer. Online commerce players, including Myntra, Quikr, Lenskart and Urban Ladder, use the Locus AI platform to optimize intra-city logistics and to potentially predict product demands and returns. And Paytm is using machine learning to detect and prevent fraud; the platform makes 20,000 recommendations per second to its 225 million user base—each of them in under 20 milliseconds.

These companies recognize that the most critical levers at their disposal to develop their AI strategy are access to data, technology, and people. Ola, which maintains a

vast database of drivers, customers and every single trip that has taken place on its platform, is deeply rooted in data intelligence to build innovative solutions. Myntra uses a combination of open source technology tools such as Google's TensorFlow and Caffe and then builds its own Rapid tech platform on top.

In addition, fashion brand Vero Moda uses IBM Watson capability to predict the right merchandise for the consumer at the right time. "With Watson mining deeply into big data, the retailer can determine the right assortment plan for each store, predict the next best product to incorporate into its mix, and improve the efficiency of its supply chain. They are working with IBM Watson AI to predict the next big trend and the most relevant styles, colors and size ratios," details Natarajan of IBM.

In the BFSI sector, AI adoption has been mainly driven by three areas: consumer banking, capital market and insurance. There are many AI and ML solutions built by the banks and Fintech organizations. Few of the interesting AI use cases include credit rating assessment, identifying fraudulent activities, loan processing and claim settlement, says Chakraborty.

For instance, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has introduced LiGo – a virtual assistant, powered by IBM Watson to converse with policyholders addressing their queries and providing personalized account specific information. The virtual assistant applies NLP and deep learning techniques to recognize and extract the intent, context and meaning behind queries. The company has also opted for a universal bot architecture using IBM Watson, with well-defined workspace for orchestration of different type of bots for Facebook, Google Assistant and WhatsApp. Hence LiGo is accessible through these channels and can quickly respond to their customers. Using IBM Watson, ICICI Prudential Life has also created an email automation solution that accurately classifies the user requirement and accordingly maps an appropriate response.

> "As per market estimates, it is apparent that over 90 percent of companies are implementing or planning to invest in AI solutions to address the current business challenges."
>
> **MANISH GUPTA,**
> Co-Founder & CEO, Rezo.ai

"In addition, AI is helping manufacturing segment to automate processes like welding, surface finishing, product designing, and assembling. Robotics is making this possible without any human intervention with great scale and high precision," adds Layak Singh, Founder & CEO, Artivatic Data Labs.

AI-driven productivity and customer experience

In the near-term, the biggest potential economic uplift from AI is likely

to come from improved productivity. This includes automation of routine tasks, augmenting employees' capabilities and freeing them up to focus on more stimulating and higher value-adding work. Capital-intensive sectors such as manufacturing and transport are likely to see the largest productivity gains from AI, given that many of their operational processes are highly susceptible to automation.

The impact on productivity could be competitively transformative – businesses that fail to adapt and adopt could quickly find themselves undercut on turnaround times as well as costs. They stand to lose a significant amount of their market share as a result.

A slew of new AI tools are being launched to automate the movement of workloads to the most efficient IT infrastructure, whether it be in a data center, at the edge or in a hybrid cloud environment. AI is striving to transform workload management to reduce time-consuming and manual tasks by data center operators, boost workload efficiency and cut down costs of having workloads in inefficient IT environments such as public clouds versus on-premise.

> "AI is helping manufacturing segment to automate processes like welding, surface finishing, product designing, and assembling. Robotics is making this possible without any human intervention with great scale and high precision."
>
> **LAYAK SINGH,**
> Founder & CEO, Artivatic Data Labs

Artificial intelligence helps allocate workloads in a more effective manner than traditional automation solutions to enable customers to become more flexible and scale faster.

"AI makes sure to embed in the intelligent workflow and help the businesses in scaling their operations at lower costs and errors. Recently, our AI solution increased agent efficiency by 2.5 times and reduced the operational costs by 20-30 percent. The AI solution also increases employee productivity by analyzing every call and sharing constructive feedback," shares Manish Gupta of Rezo.ai.

In terms of adopting AI, the ecommerce industry is making strides. AI is being used to enable these platforms to understand the data and behavioral patterns of their customers. This helps them save time, money, and increase their bottom line.

In general, algorithms that power recommendation systems rely on previous purchases and page views. However, now there are AI-based search engines that suggest instant recommendations. These use AI technology to analyze user interactions to find products that are appealing to individual customers. This solution helps in making instant tailored recommendations based on the specific needs and preferences of individuals.

In addition, personalization is increasingly becoming a key factor in driving sales. Being spoilt for choice, customers are looking for a personal touch. This makes them more responsive to

Three Areas with Biggest AI Potential

Healthcare:

- Supporting diagnosis in areas such as detecting small variations from the baseline in patients' health data or comparison with similar patients.
- Early identification of potential pandemics and tracking incidence of the disease to help prevent and contain its spread.
- Imaging diagnostics (radiology, pathology).

Automotive:

- Autonomous fleets for ride sharing.
- Semi-autonomous features such as driver assist.
- Engine monitoring and predictive, autonomous maintenance.

Financial services:

- Personalized financial planning.
- Fraud detection and anti-money laundering.
- Process automation - not just back office functions, but customer facing operations as well.

Retail:

- Personalized design and production.
- Anticipating customer demand - for example, retailers are beginning to use deep learning to predict customers' orders in advance.
- Inventory and delivery management.

Technology, communications and entertainment:

- Media archiving and search - bringing together diffuse content for recommendation.
- Customized content creation (marketing, film, music, etc.).
- Personalized marketing and advertising.

Manufacturing:

- Enhanced monitoring and auto-correction of manufacturing processes.
- Supply chain and production optimization.
- On-demand production.

Energy:

- Smart metering - real-time information on energy usage, helping to reduce bills.
- More efficient grid operation and storage.
- Predictive infrastructure maintenance.

Transport and logistics:

- Autonomous trucking and delivery.
- Traffic control and reduced congestion.
- Enhanced security.

products that have been marketed to them based on their interests and shopping patterns.

Further, during the pandemic, various companies experienced significant increase in pressure from customers, while their number of available employees decreased. Various contact centers were unable to cope with demand or closed because of lockdown restrictions, leading to long delays in customer service queries, which dramatically affected the customer experience. Hence, the demand for conversational AI has been increasing to the forefront of technology enablers.

Assisted intelligence is highly used in customer leverage sectors where as augmented intelligence is adopted to support human decisions. Businesses first moved to assisted intelligence to handover their repetitive tasks to machines and now they are going towards augmented intelligence to perform the functions that are not possible otherwise, shares Rashi Gupta of Rezo.ai.

Outlook for India

According to a report by Accenture, AI can possibly add $957 billion, or 15 percent of India's present GDP value by 2035. The blend of technology, information, and the ability to make intelligent systems possible has reached critical mass, driving exceptional growth in AI investment.

Businesses are considering investments in intelligent solutions to tackle issues associated with business continuity, labor shortage, and workspace monitoring. Organizations are now realizing that their business plans must be closely aligned with their AI strategies

However, for India to realize the full potential of AI, a coalition of government, industries, and startups is required to provide the necessary infrastructure and policy support, enabling AI innovation across sectors, and mentoring and providing financial support to startups.

Further, AI is a complex system, and for developing, managing, and implementing AI systems, companies require workforce with certain skill sets. For instance, workforce dealing with AI systems should be aware of technologies such as cognitive computing, ML and machine intelligence, deep learning, and image recognition. The integration of AI solutions with the existing systems is a difficult task, which requires extensive data processing to replicate the behavior of a human brain. Even minor errors can result in system failure or malfunctioning of a certain solution, and this can drastically affect outcomes and desired results.

> "Businesses first moved to assisted intelligence to handover their repetitive tasks to machines and now they are going towards augmented intelligence to perform the functions that are not possible otherwise."
>
> **RASHI GUPTA,**
> Co-Founder, Rezo.ai

Professional services of a data scientist or a developer are needed to customize an existing ML-enabled AI service. As AI technology is still in the early stage of its life cycle, the workforce availability with in-depth knowledge of this technology is a challenge. AI market players are, however, coming forward to take this challenge.

IBM is helping bridge the skill gap in the AI market. The company collaborated with CBSE to develop a curriculum for AI and to introduce as an elective subject for class 9 to 12. "The pilot project has already been launched. The aim was to reach about 200 schools across 13 different states. We have covered close to 160 schools and over 12,000 students," discloses Natarajan of IBM. The company is also working with NSDC (National Skills Development Corporation) to offer students access to over 2000 courses and several hundred hours of learning on AI.

2/3RD OF INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS ARE IN EARLY STAGES OF AI MATURITY: IDC

RISHU SHARMA, Associate Research Director, Cloud and AI, IDC India maintains that 62 percent of Indian organizations have plans to increase their AI/ML spend as she speaks about the AI adoption trends, AI maturity in India, and future outlook in a brief conversation with Amit Singh

What are the AI adoption trends you see in India over the last 12-18 months?

Organizations across verticals are adopting AI, driven by the business needs around leveraging data for real-time decisions, enhanced experiences, and improved efficiencies. The business objectives are being attuned towards innovation, resiliency, and offering transformative experiences and embracing technologies like AI/ML help organizations in achieving these goals. The Covid-19 pandemic is a testament to the fact that intelligence is critical for businesses as they focus on gaining efficiencies, and innovation both internally and externally. While automated customer service agent was the top AI use case for Indian organizations in 2020, we are seeing momentum for use cases like fraud analysis and investigation, IT automation, recommendation system, and diagnosis and treatment. According to IDC's Future Enterprise Research Survey, Wave 1, 62 percent of organizations in India have plans to increase their AI/ML spend.

What is the level of maturity you see among the customers in AI adoption in India?

According to IDC Maturity Benchmark: Artificial Intelligence in India 2021 report 2/3rd of the Indian

organizations are in the early stages of AI maturity, of which 11.6 percent organizations are still at the ad hoc stage, but more than half of the organizations are still in the opportunistic stage of AI adoption in India. Most organizations are yet to reach the highest levels of maturity, most notably in the areas of people and technology. Only 8.4 percent of the Indian organizations are in the advanced stages of AI maturity highlighting the need for an enterprise-wide AI strategy aligned with business goals. Across all five AI maturity dimensions (vision, people, process, technology and data readiness), survivors cluster around the ad hoc and opportunistic stages. In contrast, thrivers made significant moves toward the repeatable, managed, and optimized stages.

How is AI helping increase productivity for businesses in India?

Indian organizations are leveraging AI to help them with real-time analysis, providing enhanced experiences, improve efficiencies, and automation. Industry-wise, IDC is witnessing high spending from verticals like BFSI and manufacturing. The BFSI sector is the leading vertical in AI spending with a 29 percent share in 2020 (according to IDC's Worldwide Artificial Intelligence Spending Guide, Feb V1 2021) and is exploring multiple use cases varying from fraud analysis and investigation, video KYC, and conversational AI platforms.

How is AI helping enhance product quality with increased personalization as well as enhancing customer experience to increase consumption/demand?

Indian organizations are leveraging AI to help them with real-time analysis, providing enhanced experiences, improve efficiencies and automation. For instance, conversational AI platforms for customer experience and interactions result in delivering enhanced customer experience and enable employees to focus on higher-value tasks that provide a greater return. Combining AI and analytics with customer data promotes personalized experiences for the customers including sentiment analysis, frictionless customer engagements, and real-time contextualization. We are seeing verticals like BFSI, retail, telecom, travel among the key verticals adopting this.

> "BFSI sector is the leading vertical in AI spending with 29 percent share in 2020 and is exploring multiple use cases varying from fraud analysis and investigation, video KYC, and conversational AI platforms."

How are businesses graduating from assisted intelligence and automation to augmented intelligence and autonomous intelligence?

IDC defines AI-based automation into key 5 categories varying from: human led; human- led, machine supported; machine -led, human supported; machine led, human governed; and eventually machine-led. When asked about the tech advancements that are likely to endure as a result of the pandemic, 46 percent of the Indian organizations stated that automation of repetitive tasks and workflows will become more ubiquitous. When further questioned about the degree of Automation in IDC's FERS survey, 32 percent of the organizations responded with People governed, which is where most activities and tasks are technology-led but governed/managed by people (i.e., augmentation).

What are the challenges you see in the large scale AI adoption in India?

As Per IDC's AI Strategies View Survey, 2021, unclear business cases or involvement/support from LoB (line of business), Trust and Ethics (includes fairness, explainability, transparency, data lineage), Machine Learning Operations, and security and safety of the algorithms are among the top challenges called by Indian organizations.

Please talk about your outlook for AI market in India over the next 2-5 years?

Some of the key predictions that we have for the India market for the coming five years include:

- AI Explainability: By 2023, over 40 percent of consumer-focused AI decision-making systems in finance, healthcare, government, and other regulated sectors will include provisions to explain their analysis and decisions.
- AI Powered Development: By 2025, the number of data analysts and scientists to adopt AutoML for the end-to-end machine learning pipeline from data preparation to model deployment will double.
- AIOps Adoption: By 2025, AIOps will become the new normal for IT operations, with at least 40 percent of large enterprises adopting AIOps solutions for automating major IT system and service management processes.
- Neuro-Symbolic AI: By 2026, 20 percent of all AI solutions will be closer to AGI — leveraging neuro-symbolic techniques that combine deep learning with symbolic methods to create robust humanlike decision making.
- AI Enabled Edge Computing: By 2024, 50 percent of enterprises will run varying levels of analytic and AI models at the edge and 30 percent of those edge AI applications will be accelerated by heterogeneous accelerators.

MANUFACTURING PROCESSES CAN IMPROVE 10-FOLDS WITH INCLUSION OF AUTOMATION: REZO.AI

Manish Gupta, Co-Founder & CEO and Rashi Gupta, Co-Founder, Rezo.ai, a startup specializing in customer experience automation, claim the over 90 percent of companies are implementing or planning to invest in AI solutions to address the current business challenges. In a conversation with Amit Singh, the duo highlights the productivity gains as well as challenges in large-scale adoption of AI in India

How is AI helping organizations to scale business and innovations amid the Covid-19 crisis?

Many businesses couldn't function during the pandemic restrictions due to the reverse migration of the workforce from cities to their native places. While AI adoption was on a rise, the Covid-19 crisis escalated the process further. AI has played a significant role in helping organizations to scale business and innovations amid crises. The business processes were back on track, thanks to the automation of processes. It not only helped the businesses to function smoothly but also highly contributed to the revenue growth of many enterprises. Many companies have now switched to automated processes and even small-scale businesses are keen to implement the same.

According to market estimates, it is apparent that over 90 percent of companies are implementing or planning to invest in AI solutions to address the current business challenges. There has been a substantial decline in manpower which has led to the adoption of AI. This whole process is considered to bring efficiency, flexibility, and sustainability to many sectors. AI will significantly reduce the chances of human errors which helps the companies to focus on higher value-adding and priority tasks.

What are the sectors which are likely to see the largest productivity gains from AI and why?

With the emergence of remote working due to the pandemic, companies have made substantial efforts towards automating business processes. Now

the companies are moving towards automation not only to ensure business continuity but also to add capabilities to adapt to the ever-evolving business models. A lot of sectors are digitizing their processes to save time and cost involved in the data processing. Being the world's largest market for technology, India is a huge potential growth market.

Sectors like travel and hospitality were the fastest to move towards AI-powered processes followed by telecom, media, and technology firms. Other sectors like BSFI, healthcare, and pharma are the ones that are likely to see the largest productivity gains from AI. The main reason behind this is the large amount of data they store. Managing big data is not an easy task and compiling it without AI intervention can lead to errors. Business functions like customer service, finance, tax, HR, IT and cybersecurity, manufacturing and operations, R&D, risk, legal and compliance, sales and marketing, supply chain, and logistics among many others that have already deployed AI to reduce the chances of human error.

■ How is AI helping enhance product quality with increased personalization as well as enhancing customer experience to increase consumption/demand?

AI enables businesses to provide personalized solutions according to the needs of the customer and situation. It is immensely contributing to the improved services and response speed adding to the customer experience. If a customer is satisfied with the services, they tend to get more loyal towards the brand. AI makes sure to embed in the intelligent workflow and help the businesses in scaling their operations at lower costs and errors. Recently, our solution improved agent efficiency by 2.5 times and reduced the operational costs by 20-30 percent. Increasing employee productivity by analyzing every call and sharing constructive feedback on the same, helps in increasing the demand.

Retail, logistics, and HR are the major sectors to gain consumer demand from AI. All these sectors demand loads of filing work and are hard to maintain all the records. These also involve customer interactions which should be up to the mark in order to sustain the customer for a longer time. AI-powered contact centers help these businesses to enhance the customer experience and provide more efficient results. Luckily, these sectors have started viewing AI as a necessity rather than a luxury and are weaving it into the organizational fabric.

> "AI solutions can improve agent efficiency by 2.5 times and reduce the operational costs by 20-30 percent."

The manufacturing processes can increase 10-folds with the inclusion of automation. The healthcare sector on the other hand is the fastest in automating their day-to-day tasks. The pandemic accelerated the entire process with the growth in Telemedicine. To cater to all the needs of the patients effectively, the healthcare sector is drastically switching to automating the processes. The smooth process of maintaining Electronic Health Records that includes information on the inventory of critical goods and information is easily done by RPA. EHR reduces the chances of error thus leading to the storage of the digital records safely.

The HR sector includes repetitive tasks which lead to poor time management and increased burden on the employee. The onboarding and offboarding consume a huge part of the day that can be otherwise utilized in other tasks. With automation, organizations can become more time-efficient and evaluation of the employees can be done on a regular basis. It leads to better performance of the high-volume, repetitive operational tasks on behalf of the HR department. The tasks like onboarding of new hires, processing payroll, benefits enrollment, and compliance reporting require a significant amount of manual labor.

Thus, automation is the next big step in the journey of growth of all sectors and verticals.

■ What are the challenges you see in the large-scale AI adoption in India?

The challenge for the companies is to step out of their comfort zones and explore these new ways to enhance their functioning. The pandemic has led to a new norm of physical distancing that can be done by enabling human touch-free processes. One of the biggest hindrances to this is the lack of computing power. It's an untapped resource that people have just started to explore. Deep learning is not yet widely studied so there are limitations to its knowledge and solutions provided. There is a major trust deficit in people about how AI understands and works. Until this process is clearly understood, people will fear using it. There are very few companies that provide the finetuning that is required to make the process work.

In addition, the cost could be a significant challenge. They need to first come out of their comfort zones, explore, reduce humans in the new world of automation, and then find cost-effective solutions. Lack of computing power is another obstacle in the way of automation.

On the brighter side, India is a tech-savvy country. People are keen to learn new technologies, which can largely benefit everyone. New job opportunities will arise as now people will be required to learn how to operate these processes. We just need to fill in the digital divide to use these technologies wisely and this can be possible if we make our youth capable enough to understand, be creative and think unconventionally while solving business problems, engage with the business team across the organization, and generate excitement about these technologies.

Our Cloud Revenues Grew 17.5 percent in Asia Pacific: OpenText

In a brief interaction with Amit Singh on the company's India operations and strategic investments, Manish Dangwal, Country Manager, India Sales, OpenText Corporation India, speaks about few successful customer stories in India as well as highlights of the customer behaviour and market sentiments

MANISH DANGWAL,
Country Manager, India Sales, OpenText Corporation India

Can you share a brief overview of OpenText & its India operations?

OpenText is a 30-year-old company and has been in enterprise software from its inception. Founded and headquartered in Waterloo, Canada, we are focused on Enterprise Information Management. In our last full financial year (1stJuly 2020 – 30thJune 2021) our revenue was $3.15 billion, up by 9.7 percent year-over-year, and a record $ 1.7 billion from cloud revenues, up by 28.4 percent year-over-year.

We have over 15,000 employees globally spread across North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia Pacific. We also have a large footprint in India, with 3,000 employees split equally between our Development Centres in Hyderabad and Bengaluru. We started our operations in India in 2009 in Hyderabad, and following several acquisitions and ongoing recruitment, we subsequently opened a Development Centre in Bengaluru.

Please share details about the company's strategic investments and its growth.

Our growth over recent years has been achieved via a combination of organic growth and acquisitions. Our talent base is therefore made up of hundreds of experts who we've integrated into OpenText following those strategic acquisitions plus the direct recruitment of thousands of employees who are now

making contributions across OpenText's major innovation areas in Information Management.

The past year has shown the importance of digital transformation for organizations of all sizes. Our Cloud Editions provide customers with flexible deployment options and secure, purpose-built solutions to support modern work, connect to global commerce, and engage their customers in new ways. With the innovations we introduced with CE 21.2, customers will be able to accelerate growth and stay ahead of the competition.

The Asia Pacific region, including India, accounted for 8.5 percent of OpenText revenue in fiscal year 2020, totalling $263.8 million. This growth has continued through the first three quarters of fiscal year 2021, with overall revenue increasing 2.1 percent and cloud revenues growing 17.3 percent compared with the previous year. Overall, OpenText has more than 14,000 customers across the region.

We have invested significantly in the broader Asia Pacific Region, with almost 5,000 employees located in India, Australia, China, Japan, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand, Thailand, and South Korea, and plans to continue growing our employee base further. OpenText also has an extensive partner network that augments and extends the company's reach through the entire region.

What is your outlook for India as a market for OpenText' products and solutions?

With regional expertise in financial services, public sector, life sciences, supply chain, manufacturing, utilities, and natural resources, OpenText is digitally empowering many of the most innovative organizations in India.

"We have invested significantly in the broader Asia Pacific Region, with almost 5,000 employees located in India, Australia, China, Japan, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand, Thailand, and South Korea, and plans to continue growing our employee base further."

Following the sudden explosion of remote work, regional and global supply chain disruption, dramatic shifts in consumer behaviour, and escalating cyber security threats, organizations have had to fast-track their digital transformation plans.

In India, OpenText drives real change with high-impact projects enabled by our development centres in India - Bengaluru and Hyderabad. These are major innovation centres where products are designed, developed and matured, and continue to be delivered to local companies within India as well as to enterprises across the globe.

Here are some successful customer stories from India –

Power utility firm Tata Power Delhi Distribution implemented our OpenText Documentum as part of their digital transformation journey and response to Covid-19. With help from Documentum, Tata Power-DDL was able to automate complex, information-centric processes, maintain productivity and keep critical business moving forward during the pandemic.

The company ensured employees, customers, regulators, and external stakeholders retained access to mission-critical content and business processes. With Documentum, Tata Power-DDL was able to keep critical users connected and working to provide power to customers, including hospitals, essential utilities like water supply, and pharmacies and laboratories on the front lines of the pandemic. This resulted in higher efficiency, greater speed, and savings.

Contract research and manufacturing organization Syngene International needed assistance in adhering to strict audit and compliance regulations, which is common in its industry space. Also, the paper-based record keeping was causing delays and proving inefficient. The company started using OpenText Documentum, OpenText Documentum for Life Sciences, and OpenText Documentum for Quality and Manufacturing. Using these products, Syngene International witnessed an improved customer service, enhanced audit compliance and greater automation.

How has the demand for your solutions been impacted/spiralled in the last 1 year as businesses turned to a hybrid work model?

2020 and the first half or 2021 have been an exceptionally challenging period for all of us. We have learnt during this time that organisations should always be ready to face any crisis of any scale.

Despite the challenges, we were able to support remote work in a way that allowed employees to be successful and have a truly positive experience of working remotely with the right infrastructure and processes. In addition to leveraging technologies like Microsoft Teams for virtual meetings, we also have our own collaborative technologies that were a significant factor in facilitating the rapid and

smooth transition to remote work and ongoing success in terms of collaborating and sharing content in a secure environment. Cloud-based solutions like Opentext Core Share allow employees to securely share and collaborate on projects while working remotely with fellow employees, partners, and customers both behind and beyond the corporate firewall.

OpenText has since worked with organisations including the NIH, Tata, TDK Micronas and Eurowings as they have moved their operations remote.

Though people will return to offices, indeed some already have in some regions, those spaces are being reimagined as just one part of a hybrid model in which remote working will continue to feature heavily. The last 15 months have shown that organisations with a robust information management strategy adapt more easily and advance faster, and that talent is now everywhere. Amidst the war for digital skills, organisations can no longer afford to be restricted to one or a few locations if they want to attract the greatest talent.

There are also challenges in this new world of work. However, proximity is important when you innovate. We will still want clusters where we can learn from each other and share experiences. Meanwhile, hybrid work is being met by three other forces – modern digital experiences, such as omnichannel and contactless payments; supply chain regionalisation, sustainability and connectivity; and cybersecurity and resilience – that are all accelerating the pace of change.

Please tell us about the challenges faced in the current circumstances.

Challenges were different for different industries. In the case of healthcare, the Covid-19 pandemic has left a lasting impact on communities and economies worldwide. In its wake, healthcare has become a top priority as the challenges of navigating the pandemic exposed pressing systemic gaps. Life sciences companies have responded to this call, developing innovations that are transforming the modern medtech landscape. Here are five key highlights from recent months:

Information security: Telehealth is on the rise, but with increasing amounts of patient data online, information security remains as crucial as ever. While the goal of seamless data sharing to enable higher quality healthcare should be a high priority, careful consideration is required on how to do this securely.

AI and analytics: AI and analytics have proven invaluable in automating processes, providing insight on patient care, streamlining operations and enhancing decision making. With lockdown orders and social distancing measures limiting the number of employees working on-site, AI and analytics enable companies to maintain safe working conditions for employees working through virtual channels. The global AI in healthcare market grew from $4.9 billion in 2020 and is expected to reach $45.2 billion by 2026, driven in large part by the need to expedite Covid-19 vaccine and drug development.

Internet of Medical Things (IoMT): With Covid -19 imposing continued social distancing and limiting face-to-face contact, the development and adoption of the Internet of Medical Things (IoMT) has accelerated over the past year. There is vast potential for innovation in this area. Telemedicine is picking up speed, while connected wearables, sensors and devices are expected to soon follow, allowing for the collection, analysis, and secure transmission of crucial patient data across a connected framework of health systems and services. In fact, the IoMT market globally is predicted to grow 24.6 percent between 2021 to 2028.

Data integration platforms: With the explosion of big data from a range of different sources across the life sciences sector and healthcare organisations, there is a pressing need to organise and make sense of the valuable raw data being generated.

Cloud content management: With many employees transitioning to working from home during pandemic lockdowns, companies are accelerating their digitalisation journey as part of their disaster recovery and business continuity efforts – and healthcare organisations are no exception. Covid-19 also disrupted nearly every aspect of the clinical trial ecosystem, with 67 percent of healthcare experts planning to use decentralised clinical trials in the future as a result. According to IDC, healthcare is the leading industry in terms of spending on cloud solutions.

The opportunity for individuals to access their personal medical information more easily in the cloud also give patients greater control over their own healthcare. While cloud computing has the potential to improve the quality of healthcare services and reduce costs, data security remains an area of key consideration. When managed correctly, the cloud can be incredibly secure – but organisations need to implement the correct solutions and processes to protect critical information at scale.

What is your future channel roadmap and plans?

We will continue to work with a select number of partners that complement OpenText's own operations and extend our reach within the Indian market. These partners span across the Resellers, Systems Integrators, Services, Technology, Distributor categories under our robust Global Partner Program. Our partners play an important role in our Go to Market strategy to provide wider coverage and offer solutions to customers built on our products in the Information Management space. We are focused on increasing our partner network as part of our growth plan for the India Business.

ISODA announce New office bearer for 2021

The Infotech Software Dealers Association recently concluded their 12th AGM. This was a Second Virtual AGM which was held on 18th September 2021. After the financials and the last years' minutes were passed, the new Management Committee was elected. Mr. Alok Gupta of Softmart Solutions who was the Vice Chairman in the last term, gets promoted as Chairman of ISODA. Mr. Jitesh Chauhaan of Rubik Infotech who was the Vice President in the last term gets promoted as the President of ISODA. Pradeep Daga of Suntronix who is our Secretary and Mr. Ravi Jalan of Shakti Enterprise who is our Treasurer will continue on Board of ISODA for this year. Elections took place for the following positions:

Vice Chairman
Vice President

Gautam Raj founder of E-COM Technology was elected to the post of Vice-Chairman. Mr. Zakir Hussain Rangwala founder of BD Software Distribution Pvt Ltd was elected to the Vice President's position.

Our Chairman's Vision is To help in the growth of the software channel business and to mitigate any problems faced by the software channel community.

ISODA is glad to inform that we have ~ 200 members and the number is growing day by day. We are actively looking at adding new chapters and getting more members on board. ISODA Management Committee intends to create a platform of growth for all its members by pushing a following initiatives for all.

a) Enable collaboration within members to upsell, cross-sell and grow together.

b) Improve communication with OEMs and Distributors.

c) Focus on doubling the Member count and ensuring identification of new regions.

d) Skills development initiatives for employees of ISODA members to enhance knowledge of relevant solutions.

e) Digital Marketing to be taken to next level by Increasing visibility of ISODA socially.

f) To help tackle Counterfeit software.

The New Management Committee is as follows:	
Chairman	Alok Gupta, Softmart Solutions
Vice Chairman	Gautam Raj, E-Com Technology
President	Jitesh Chauhan, Rubik Infotech
Vice President	Zakir Hussain Rangwala, BD Software
Secretary	Pradeep Daga, Suntronix
Treasurer	Ravi Jalan, Shakti Enterprises

The Regional Secretaries for all the designated regions of ISODA remain the same as per Last year.	
Regional Secretary – West	Ajay Bayani, AmbiSure Technologies
Regional Secretary – Gujarat	Rajendra Warriar, Rachaita Infosoft
Regional Secretary – South	Ravi Rajaseharan, V4 Technologies
Regional Secretary – East	Dhirendra Khandelwal, Esquare Systems
Regional Secretary – North East	Tapan Ghosal, DataCrown Computers
Regional Secretary – North	Alok Gupta, Cache Infotech
Regional Secretary – Jaipur	Lalit Choudhary, Aadhar Infotech

Microsoft to Offer Password-less Sign-In for All Accounts, Apps

Microsoft is enabling Microsoft account holders to sign in without a password. Instead, users can log in using the Microsoft Authenticator, Windows Hello, a security key, or a verification code. This feature will be extended to the full suite of Microsoft apps. The company first introduced password-less sign-ins for Windows 10 in 2019 where users could replace their password with Windows Hello Face, Fingerprint, or PIN to sign in to their computers.

Through a blog post, Microsoft announced that all users will now be able to remove passwords from their Microsoft accounts. As mentioned, users can alternatively sign in using Microsoft Authenticator, Windows Hello, a security key, or via a verification code sent as a text or email. These sign-in methods work for all Microsoft apps like Outlook, OneDrive, Microsoft Family Safety, and more. The blog post also mentions that this update will be rolled out to all users in the coming weeks.

Microsoft says that there are 579 password attacks every second, rounding up to 18 billion password attacks each year. It says two reasons for this are human nature and hacker nature. It becomes difficult for a user to create a password secure enough that is also easy to remember. And that makes it easy for a hacker to hack passwords that are easy to remember but not secure enough.

Vertiv's High Efficiency DC Rectifier for Telecom Operations and Demanding Environments

Vertiv, a global provider of critical digital infrastructure and continuity solutions, has introduced in India the all-new Vertiv eSure R48-4300E3A rectifier. A high-efficiency rectifier designed to convert standard AC supply voltages into stable nominal DC voltage, which can be adjusted as per individual application needs. With the eSure rectifier, organizations can operate their DC plants in the most demanding environments, due to its wide input voltage range. It is also safe and easy to expand capacity and perform maintenance during live system operations, with the hot-pluggable module design. With a 4.32 kW of full output power up to 45 degrees celsius, the rectifier is designed to deliver optimum performance at higher ambient temperatures.

DINESH DHUT,
Senior Director, DC power / OSP, offering management (India and SEA Market), Vertiv

"Organizations in India are increasingly focusing on sustainable business strategies. Adopting digital infrastructure that supports this goal has become essential to companies across the board," said Dinesh Dhut, senior director, DC power / OSP, offering management (India and SEA Market), Vertiv. He added, "Vertiv's newly launched power rectifier aligns perfectly with today's business requirements, by reducing power consumption without impacting the reliability of its operation. As organizations enter a new era of hybrid working models, it is important that they are backed by reliable digital infrastructure."

With a maximum efficiency of up to 96.5%, the eSure™ rectifier can handle maximum AC input of 27A at 176 VAC and a maximum DC output of 81.5A at -53 VDC. It has an inbuilt alarm, signaling system, and visual indicators that send reports directly to the system controller. It can operate at an altitude of up to 6560 feet at full power and with relative humidity levels of up to 95%.

JioHaptik Launches Partner Program to Unlock Limitless Business Growth

Conversational AI provider JioHaptik Innovations has launched Conversational Partner Program that empowers businesses to include AI-powered virtual associates as their key business offerings, and seamlessly extending business reach over global markets.

This marquee program is planned for Agencies, Consultancies, Influencers, System Integrators, and Product Companies to allude, co-create and expand their current business offerings with conversational AI solutions, quickening digitization for their clients while achieving industry-leading revenue share exploring the untapped markets. Businesses can choose from Haptik's flexible partnership program leveraging a wide array of perks such as:

Attractive revenue share: Leverage industry's best revenue sharing structure

New revenue stream: Earn recurring referral commissions

Expand business offerings: Co-create Conversational AI Solutions with Haptik's customized co-selling initiatives & joint GTM

Technical Training: Instant access to Haptik's Presales, Sales and Technical live training

Early access: First look at Haptik's new products and features

Dedicated Support: Hands-on delivery support for your 1st customer

Speaking on the launch, Pratyush Kukreja, VP and GM, JioHaptik Technologies, said, "Brands that are catering to their users' ever-growing digital needs and embracing Conversational AI are seeing transformational results. With our Conversation Partner Program, we aim to help businesses to shine and propel their business growth by expanding their product portfolio and delivering world-class customer experiences with high reliability."

PRATYUSH KUKREJA,
VP and GM, JioHaptik Technologies

99% of SMBs Plan to Offer Contactless Services to Customers Permanently

In India, 99 percent of SMBs plan to offer contactless services permanently led by secure digital payments (78 percent), mobile order (68 percent), and digital customer service (62 percent), according to the fifth edition of the 'Small and Medium Business Trends' report launched by Salesforce. The report reveals that SMBs are seeking investments in technology to help their business survive even the most tumultuous times.

Conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of Salesforce, the report analysed the responses of more than 2,500 SMB owners and leaders worldwide to determine how support from local communities have affected SMBs, what SMBs are doing to deepen trust with customers and employees, the role technology plays in their growth, what has changed for SMBs in the last one year, and finally, how has it impacted their future.

As SMBs are struggling to maintain revenue streams due to the frequent lockdowns – the government and the local communities are chipping in to help. Majority (62 percent) of SMBs in India have strongly emphasised that financial support from their community has been utmost vital in the survival of their business in the last one year.

Arun Kumar Parameswaran, SVP and MD, Sales & Distribution, Salesforce India said, "The grit and innovation of SMBs during a time of great change has been a triumph. This has also been a testament to the perseverance and creativity of SMBs and the communities in which they operate. It is truly inspiring to see how Indian SMBS are leveraging technology to transform their operations and push forward after a year of change."

ARUN KUMAR PARAMESWARAN,
SVP and MD, Sales & Distribution, Salesforce India

After a period of turmoil, SMBs are focusing on meeting customer expectations and deepening trust by providing employees with transparent communications and flexibility. Since the pandemic began, 59 percent of SMBs in India have expanded ways customers can reach them and 48 percent have prioritised deepening relationships over one-time transactions.

Many SMB leaders were forced to relook at their strategies in order to keep their businesses afloat; which in turn made their operations more efficient. 100 percent of SMBs in India with some of their operations online moved more online in the last year and 82 percent of them feel the operational shifts made over the last year will benefit their business long-term. 61 percent of growing SMBs in India have accelerated investments in marketing over the past year.

3i Infotech Achieves Certification from Oracle Cloud for its SASE Platform

IT solutions and advisory firm 3i Infotech, a member of the Oracle Partner Network (OPN), has announced that its NuRe Edge, a SASE based platform, has achieved 'Powered by Oracle Cloud Expertise.' It is now available in the Oracle Cloud Marketplace, where it is offering added value to Oracle Cloud customers.

NuRe Edge (SASE) on Oracle Cloud Marketplace enables borderless security at the edge. The combination of NuRe on Oracle Cloud Infrastructure will accelerate decision-making into service, by deploying micro data centers, thereby managing and securing a seamless experience at the edge. It will also provide enterprise and cloud networking,

THOMPSON P. GNANAM
MD & Global CEO, 3i Infotech

NILESH GUPTA
Senior Vice-President and Global Practice Head, Cloud First, 3i Infotech

delivered as-a-service consumption, elastic scale up and scale down, with end-to-end security, performance, visibility, and governance.

Powered by Oracle Cloud, NuRe Edge offers Oracle Cloud customers these additional benefits:

Improved Security & SLA: Simplified access controls, monitoring & auditing maximize operational efficiencies with industry leading SLAs on availability, manageability & performance.

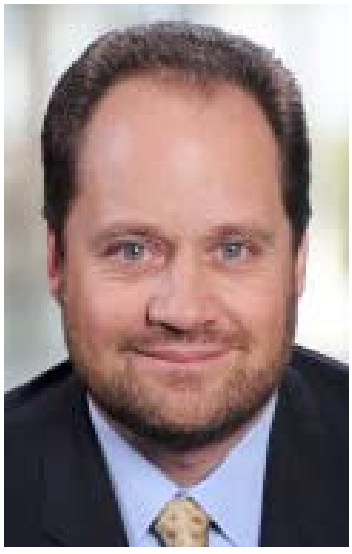
Global Availability: Easy access to new geography regions leveraging Oracle Cloud Infrastructure global footprint.

On Demand Scalability & Faster Time-to-Value: Oracle Cloud is a highly scalable platform able to support 3i Infotech's and its clientele's growing business demands and can be deployed in days.

Thompson P. Gnanam, MD & Global CEO, 3i Infotech said, "We are excited to bring our latest cloud offerings to the market, which will truly help customers excel in their digital transformation journey. The 5G-enabled platform, that is edge-ready will allow for a seamless and effortless transition of customers who are now on 4G and looking to upgrade. We have come out with customized cloud offering instead of the one-size-fits-all approach. We are delighted to collaborate with Oracle to take the enterprise-grade cloud offering to enterprise customers with almost zero overhead and deliver world-class customer experience."

Nilesh Gupta, Senior Vice-President and Global Practice Head, Cloud First, 3i Infotech said, "Our business models are continuously adapting and accelerating at a relatively quicker pace. Companies need to adapt to rapid change in managing their network, security and data complexity on the internet or at the edge to navigate. With NuRe 3i+ and NuRe Edge, we will significantly help enterprises to operate more cost efficiently, eliminate operational and management challenges and increase in higher performances of their applications."

"Oracle Cloud Infrastructure provides excellent performance, security, and scalability for NuRe Edge (SASE)," said David Hicks, Vice President, Worldwide ISV Cloud Business Development,



DAVID HICKS
Vice President, Worldwide ISV Cloud Business Development, Oracle

Oracle. He added, "The cloud represents a huge opportunity for our partner community. 3i Infotech's commitment to innovation with the Oracle Cloud and quality execution help our mutual customers receive cloud-enabled security solutions ready to meet critical business needs."

AWS Announces Winners of the APN Awards 2021 in India

Amazon Web Services (AWS) has announced the winners of the AWS Partner Network (APN) Awards for 2021 at the AWS Partner Summit Online. The awards recognize the technology leaders playing a key role in helping organizations build solutions on AWS and accelerate innovation.

Puneet Chandok, President – Commercial Business, AWS India and South Asia, Amazon Internet Services (AISPL) said, "We have seen accelerated cloud adoption across all industries in the last year – from organizations embarking on their cloud journey to those experimenting and significantly enhancing their cloud workloads. Just as we obsess over our customers, we obsess over our partners, and the APN Awards recognize the invaluable contributions of the AWS Partner Network."

PUNEET CHANDOK,
President – Commercial Business, AWS India and South Asia, Amazon Internet Services (AISPL)

The winners of the awards include:

AWS Rising Star of the Year: Locuz Enterprise Solutions wins this award for taking major strides in its collaboration with AWS this year and more than doubling its customer engagements. This is an AWS Partner who has gone from zero to hero during the qualifying period.

AWS Consulting Partner of the Year: Rapyder Cloud Solution is an AWS Advanced Consulting Partner with a singular focus on AWS, offering end-to-end cloud solutions across industry verticals. This award is given to an AWS Consulting Partner who has delivered consistently, developed their AWS business, and grown with AWS throughout the qualifying period.

AWS ISV Partner of the Year: Darwinbox Digital Solutions wins this award, an end-to-end enterprise HR software start-up that has developed Evolve, a lean suite of HR technology solutions designed to address an organization's HR needs holistically, ranging from employee safety to remote work productivity, engagement, and compliance with new regulations. This award recognizes an ISV Partner who has best leveraged AWS services and the AWS Partner Network, and continued to grow with AWS during the qualifying period.

AWS Business Solution Partner: This award recognizes an AWS Partner who has leveraged AWS services to build innovative solutions to address market requirements, and closely collaborated with AWS to achieve broad customer adoption in a specific industry or customer segment during the qualifying period.

AWS Migration Success Partner: This award is won by Wipro to recognize an AWS Partner who has scaled customer engagement, cloud adoption, and migration to AWS during the qualifying period.

AWS Specialty Partner of the Year for SAP on AWS: This award is won by PwC that recognizes an AWS Partner who has built expertise with SAP solutions on AWS, and helped AWS customers achieve success with their SAP workload.

AWS Specialty Partner of the Year for Data, Analytics, and Machine Learning: Crisp Analytics (Lumiq) wins this award is Lumiq, a data analytics company that powers end-to-end data-driven decision making and intelligent automation on AWS, and offers integrated solutions across data engineering and data science. Lumiq enables businesses to leverage their data and drive insights into action quickly by adopting a step-by-step iterative approach to AI and ML integration with data modeling. This award recognizes an AWS Partner who has gone deep with AWS advanced services and excelled in providing services around data, analytics, and machine learning on AWS in the qualifying period.

AWS Public Sector Partner of the Year: Redington (India) wins this award for its instrumental role in driving coverage and scale for the AWS Public Sector business in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka by on-boarding downstream and emerging partners, supporting them on training and certification, and building go-to-market initiatives. This award recognizes an AWS Partner who has supported in accelerating and simplifying AWS channel partners' journey in driving AWS adoption within the public sector.

The APN is the global community of partners who leverage AWS to build solutions and services for customers. AWS helps partners build, market, and sell their AWS offerings by providing valuable business, technical, and marketing support. There are tens of thousands of AWS Partners across the globe. More than 90 percent of Fortune 100 companies and the majority of Fortune 500 companies use AWS Partner solutions and services. AWS Partners are uniquely positioned to help businesses take full advantage of all that AWS has to offer and accelerate journey to the cloud.

iValue and SentinelOne's Joint Venture for Endpoint Protection

iValueInfoSolutions, India's premium technology aggregator has collaborated with SentinelOne, Inc, an autonomous cybersecurity platform company and a pioneer in delivering autonomous security for the endpoint, DCs and cloud environments.The threat surface has been continuously growing and so is the need to consistently augment endpoint security readiness. The need further accelerated with the on-set of the Covid-19 era, as enterprise controls primarily shifted from Network to two end states – Remote Endpoints & Data, in-transit & at rest.

"We are excited to offer a fully automated, autonomous cyber security platform that has raised the standard for endpoint protection and XDR across the world. India and SAARC are a strategic growth market for SentinelOne, and we are looking forward to building exciting momentum in this region with our award-winning platform along with our partners like iValue," Diwakar Dayal, Regional Director & Country Manager India & SAARC, SentinelOne

The SentinelOne Singularity XDR Platform unifies AI-powered prevention (EPP), endpoint detection and response (EDR), containers, network attack surface management, and cloud workload protection in a single, autonomous XDR platform. With Singularity, modern enterprises gain the visibility, analytics, and AI-driven automation they need to protect against known and unknown cyber threats, detect and hunt malicious actors, and remediate endpoints at machine speed, without human intervention. With SentinelOne Singularity platform, customers now have a trusted and proven next-gen endpoint protection that is easily deployed, scaled and most importantly powered by machine learning, so that time and human intervention are not wasted in preventing attacks in real time.

DIWAKAR DAYAL,
Regional Director & Country Manager India & SAARC, SentinelOne

NAL Equips Self with Dassault Systèmes' 2D and 3D Solutions

Dassault Systèmes has announced that National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL), a constituent of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has adopted the "Passenger Experience" industry solution experience based on the 3D-EXPERIENCE platform to design civil aircraft in India, specifically the Saras Mk-2 program. NAL is also using DraftSight, a feature-rich 2D and 3D Computer-Aided Design (CAD) solution for 2D design standardization in the manufacturing of civil aircraft.

JITENDRA J JADHAV,
Director, NAL

With the adoption of the "Passenger Experience" industry solution experience, and by replacing existing 2D CAD tools with DraftSight, NAL has expanded its usage of technology solutions from Dassault Systèmes. It has been using the 3DEXPERIENCE platform in its overall mission and mandate to develop aerospace technologies with strong science content, to design and build small and medium-sized civil aircraft, and to support the nation's regional connectivity plan such as UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik).

"The 3DEXPERIENCE platform-based 'Passenger Experience' solution has been deployed in designing the Cabin and Cockpit of the Saras Mk-2 program. Virtual twin-based insights offered by this solution helped us to configure the cabin for various use cases and scenarios," said Jitendra J Jadhav, Director, NAL. "Saras Mk-2 will be a 19-seater aircraft with features like high cruise speed, lower fuel consumption, short landing, and take-off distances, low cabin noise, pressurized cabins, and low acquisition and maintenance costs. It will be operable from high and hot airfields, and from semi-prepared airfields." He added.

DEEPAK NG,
Managing Director, India, Dassault Systèmes

"As systems in the Aerospace and Defense industry become more complex to design, build and deliver, OEMs and suppliers need to accelerate innovation, drive efficiencies and adopt collaborative platforms to allow for greater agility on production rate. Dassault Systèmes is enabling companies in the sector by providing new ways to conceptualize, design, manufacture, test, certify and sustain new air and space vehicles," said Deepak NG, Managing Director, India, Dassault Systèmes. "We have long been an integral part of the aerospace industry globally and we intend to replicate the success in India through the association with NAL and in the local development of civil aircraft."

HPE Wins HPE GreenLake Contract Worth $2 Billion from National Security Agency

Hewlett Packard Enterprise has been awarded a $2 billion contract, which will be leveraged over a 10 year period, with the US-based National Security Agency (NSA) to deliver HPE's high performance computing (HPC) technology as a service through the HPE GreenLake platform.

The new collaboration will enable the NSA to harness rapidly growing AI and data needs more efficiently to create insights and other forecasting and analysis with optimal performance. By using HPE's HPC solutions through the HPE GreenLake platform, which provides fully managed, secure cloud services on-premises, the NSA will benefit from an agile, flexible, and secure platform to meet their growing data management requirements.

"Implementing artificial intelligence, machine learning and analytics capabilities on massive sets of data increasingly requires High Performance Computing (HPC) systems," said Justin Hotard, Senior Vice President and General Manager, HPC and Mission Critical Solutions (MCS), HPE. "Customers are demanding HPC capabilities on their most data-intensive projects combined with easy, simple, and agile management. By using the HPE GreenLake platform, which delivers secure on-premises solutions as a service, the National Security Agency (NSA) is gaining industry-leading HPC solutions to tackle a range of complex data needs, but with a flexible, as a service experience."

The new service includes a combination of HPE Apollo systems and HPE ProLiant servers, which ingest and process high volumes of data, and support deep learning and artificial intelligence capabilities. As part of the HPE GreenLake service, HPE will build and manage the complete solution that will be hosted at a QTS data center, a hosting facility that delivers secure, compliant data center infrastructure and robust connectivity to support scaling of operations. The new service will go into use starting in 2022.

JUSTIN HOTARD
Senior Vice President and General Manager, HPC and Mission Critical Solutions (MCS), HPE

Over 200 Partners Attend RP Tech's Multi-City CBF in West Bengal

RP Tech India has concluded its flagship event – Channel Business Forum (CBF) in West Bengal, which was attended by over 200 partners consisting of retailers, resellers and SIs. The objective of the multi-city event was to encourage IT business in emerging cities in the State and educate partners on the latest technologies and products. The event held in Durgapur, Midnapur and Berhampore offered partners product demo and sales training. Brands like ASUS, Belkin, Crucial by Micron, HP, Logitech, Mercusys, Samsung, SanDisk, Toshiba and TP-Link showcased their products at the events.

CBF provided partners and brands with a platform to connect and exchange ideas and suggestions about business. Brand representatives gave product demos and sales training. RP tech team also announced quizzes wherein partners won exciting prizes and gift hampers. RP tech team also unveiled a QR code that provides details of all branch offices. The company said it would help partners connect with branch managers and resolve their concerns efficiently.

Sharing his feedback, Amjad Ali, Owner, Sky Computers & Robotics, said, "I am thankful to team RP tech for re-staring CBF in a new avtar. Small retailers and dealers like us need such events. The event was very informative. All brands featured their latest products. We had a healthy discussion about business, products availability, business margins etc. RP tech team coordinated the event very well."

Nikhil Deora, Branch Head, West Bengal, RP Tech said, "CBF is the most prestigious platform where partners get the opportunity to interact with brand owners and raise their concerns. Since we announced the rollout, there much hype in the channel fraternity about the event. We are encouraged to see the overwhelming response of partners in CBF. We intend to organize such events in more cities in the coming months."

NIKHIL DEORA
Branch Head, West Bengal, RP Tech

Channel Point

Artificial Intelligence the big Opportunity for ISVs & Channel Partners

The days of channel partners being a step behind technology giants are gone. Now the latest technologies that vendors offer and curated into cutting edge solutions by ISVs & channel partners, adding a huge amount of value to the solutions, leverage to the vendors and of course- years to the life of user companies.

Artificial intelligence is one space that is fast developing in its applicability to all sectors, globally. In fact, this is one such technology which is along with a shift in the partner ecosystem is accelerating digital transformation, return to smartern working, and building strategic ecosystems that can drive better business outcomes.

However, India still has a long way to go to be able to utilize AI solutions to add value to business solutions, and we are still experimenting. But to take things forward, its time ISVs also work on their AI abilities, deep understanding and agile processes to offer the advantage AI offers to industry. One of the most significant areas where AI is used widely to develop solutions is in the start-up and small scale sector. Perhaps that's where synergies need to be built, because experts say, that's where most of the AI adoption in India will ultimately take place.

However, factors such as lack of clarity of rules and regulations and the issues of integrity and ethics with AI and ML solutions is hampering the market growth of AI in India. Policy documents and working drafts on Artificial Intelligence issued by the Niti Aayog recognize ethical and fundamental concerns with the implementation of AI and hints towards a self-regulatory approach towards the same in coming times.Also, since data plays a huge role in AI and machine learning apps, there are issues of policies and compliances to be resolved a well!

Perhaps it's also time for ISVs & channels to create their own IPs in the AI space! This could be their opportunity to make inroads into the AI adoption that is expected to reach $500B by 2024, globally. Some of the critical areas where channel partners could add value is chatbots, virtual assistants while the government can utilize AI in citizen services, security, and smart cities.This could provide a significant push to the AI market, especially for the ISV and channel.

In the overall India Artificial Intelligence market share, southern region has captured major pie since 2019 and are expected to lead throughout the forecast period. Further, increasing government spending in research and development of AI based technological advancements would fuel market growth over the coming years.

In 2020, Indian AI startups raised $836.3 million, the largest funding outlay during the last seven years. During the same year, Indian government increased the outlay for Digital India to USD $477 million to boost AI, IoT, big data, cybersecurity, machine learning and robotics.

Either case, it's time for India to develop the ecosystem needed in channels for leveraging AI for better business and to grow to meet world standards of technology adoption.

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