

CHANNEL RESILIENCE: ADAPTING, INNOVATING, THRIVING



PRASHANTH SUBRAMANIAN
Quadra Systems



GANESAN ARUMUGAM
NetApp India



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Znet Technologies



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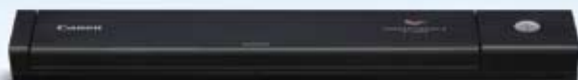
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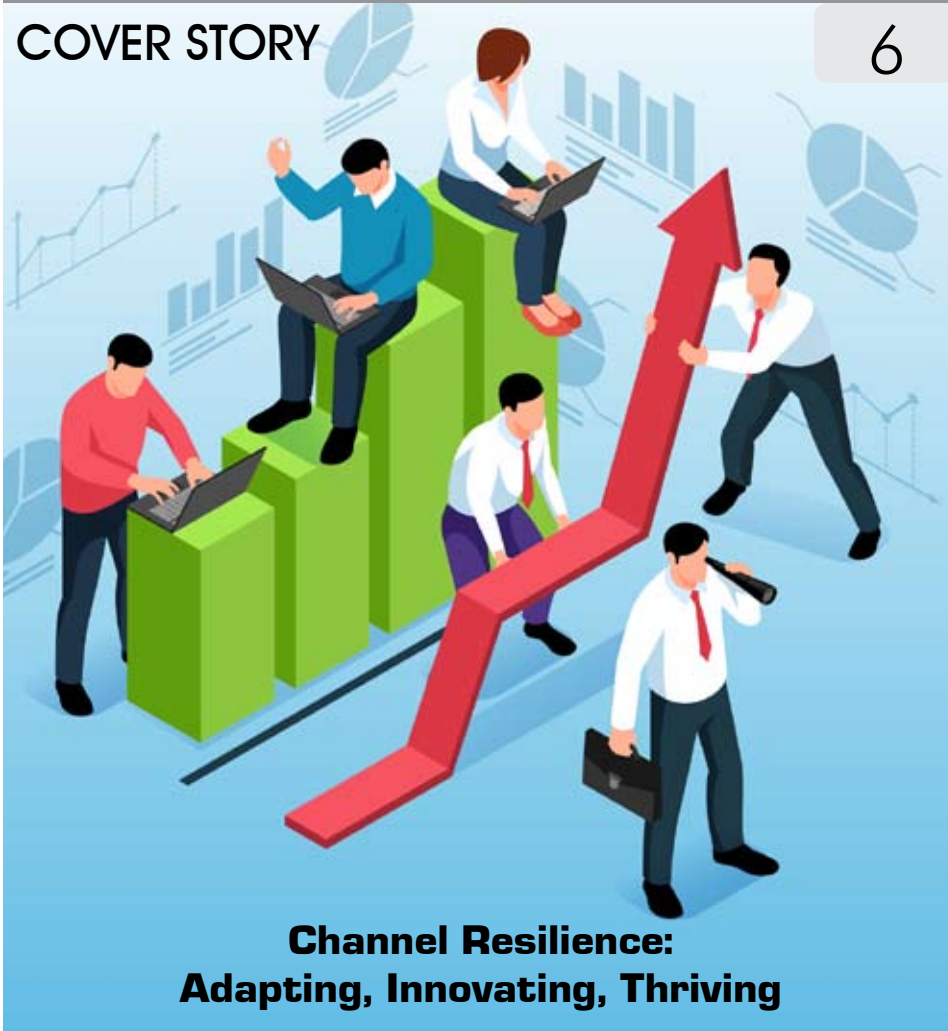
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CONTENT

COVER STORY

6



Channel Resilience: Adapting, Innovating, Thriving

We Offer a Comprehensive Marketing Guidance Program for ISVs to Promote their Software Solutions in the Market: Znet Technologies



23

MUNESH JADOUN,
Founder & CEO, Znet Technologies

Our Partners are Equipped with 11 Service-Certified Tracks & 19 Solution Competencies: NetApp



25

GANESAN ARUMUGAM
Director of Channel Sales, NetApp India

MPS has Revolutionized the Way Organizations Handle their Printing Needs: Aegis Solutions



28

JAYANTA DAS
Director, Aegis Solutions

SURAJIT TEWARY
Director, Aegis Solutions

IN CONVERSATION

Achieving a Flawless Customer Experience is a Myth in Our Industry



15

ANUJ GUPTA,
CEO, Hitachi Systems India

Acceptance of Remote Support during the Pandemic Laid the Foundation for a Hybrid Support System: Orient Technologies



20

AJAY SAWANT
Managing Director, Orient Technologies

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Channel Resilience: Adapting, Innovating, Thriving

In the ever-shifting landscape of IT services, one constant remains - resilience. Channel partners, system integrators, and managed service providers are not merely adapting to change; they are thriving in the face of it. The story of their resilience unfolds as a testament to their ability to embrace innovation, navigate disruptions, and envision strategies for future growth. As we delve into this narrative, we uncover the strategies and insights that empower these solution providers to navigate the challenges of the new norm in IT services, offering readers a glimpse into the resilience that has become their hallmark.

Amit Singh



In the pulsating heart of the digital era, the IT services landscape is a kaleidoscope of perpetual change. It's a domain where evolution isn't a choice but a necessity, and within this dynamic arena, the resilience of channel partners, system integrators, and managed service providers emerges as a defining force. As technology advances and global events reshape the way we work and connect, these professionals not only adapt but thrive, turning disruption into an opportunity to showcase their unwavering resilience.

Rapid transformation of IT services

The seismic shift in the IT services landscape over recent years has posed challenges that demanded swift and decisive responses. As organizations globally grappled with the ramifications of the global pandemic, channel partners emerged as frontline navigators of the 'new norm.' Overnight, remote work evolved from a mere option to an indispensable necessity. Channel partners not only adjusted their internal operations but also played a pivotal role in

facilitating clients' seamless transitions to remote work environments.

Anuj Gupta, CEO of Hitachi Systems India, reflects on this paradigm shift, stating, "Work from home, which was once inconceivable, became a reality. The last two years witnessed an unprecedented surge in the adoption of technology and digitalization. Organizations embarked on diverse technology projects, recognizing the imperative of a digital-first approach for survival. Tech-savvy businesses rode this wave, achieving substantial scaling. However, numerous struggled to adapt to the new working paradigm, resulting in the demise of several technology-dependent enterprises."

In the realm of recent disruptors, the ascent of GenAI technology stands out prominently. Munesh Jadoun, Founder & CEO of Znet Technologies, elaborates on its impact, saying, "GenAI technology, with its advanced AI and ML capabilities, has revolutionized various aspects of our operations, particularly in cybersecurity."

Through a lens focused



“Our clients were navigating uncharted territory, and so were we. The key was to stay ahead of the curve, anticipate challenges, and provide solutions before our clients even realized they needed them.”

PRASHANTH SUBRAMANIAN,
Executive Director, Quadra Systems



“Our Partner Sphere program revolutionizes our engagement model with partners by offering innovative enablement programs. In response to evolving customer expectations, our partners are now equipped with 11 service-certified tracks and 19 solution competencies.”

GANESAN ARUMUGAM,
Director, Channel Sales, NetApp India

on innovation, the channel ecosystem assumed the role of architects of continuity, ensuring that clients seamlessly propelled digital transformation while transitioning to remote work environments without missing a beat. Prashanth Subramanian, Executive Director of Quadra Systems, emphasizes the proactive stance taken during these tumultuous times, saying, “Our clients were navigating uncharted territory, and so were we. The key was to stay ahead of the curve, anticipate challenges, and provide solutions before our clients even realized they needed them.”

He goes on to explain the dual facets of their company’s approach, stating, “There are literally two fronts to our company: one team is focused on thinking ahead and identifying the technologies that will matter most for our customers, and the other team helps customers stay on track with their existing technology portfolio, even while working closely to help them adapt to what’s next.”

In fact, the IT services sector demonstrated remarkable agility in adapting to the altered

circumstances. Ajay Sawant, Managing Director of Orient Technologies, highlights their swift pivot to delivering managed services through their Network Operating Center (NOC) and the embrace of Remote Infrastructure Management. This strategic shift marked the inception of a hybrid support culture, leveraging the NOC to provide remote support and bridging the gap to ensure comprehensive assistance to clients.

Sawant underscores that this strategic adaptation allowed them to maintain the delivery of robust IT services, safeguard employee well-being, and meet the evolving needs of clients even in the face of unprecedented disruptions. The channel ecosystem’s ability to not only weather the storm but also proactively shape the narrative of the ‘new norm’ exemplifies the true resilience embedded within the DNA of IT service providers.

Innovations in service delivery

In response to clients’ increasing demand for agility and tailored solutions,



service providers boldly entered the arena of innovation. They transformed into architects of change, not merely crafting solutions that met current needs but anticipating the evolving demands of their clientele.

“The embrace of remote support during the pandemic laid the groundwork for a widely embraced hybrid support system. Post-COVID, this model has not only endured but has become a permanent fixture in our service offerings. This heightened acceptance reflects a broader trend wherein clients value the agility and effectiveness of remote support, culminating in a secure and efficient hybrid support system,” reveals Sawant of Orient Technologies.

Even with the return of employees to offices, the acknowledgment and acceptance of hybrid support persist, seamlessly integrating both remote and on-premise assistance, he adds.

Clients are venturing into containerized modes, embracing no-code applications, and optimizing resources with large language models (LLM). However, as customers

grapple with adapting to these evolving technologies that could potentially disrupt or dismantle their businesses, partners find themselves challenged by the rapid pace of skill development required to keep up. Gupta of Hitachi Systems underscores the importance of transparent collaboration with customers, transcending a mere supplier role. Collaboration on significant projects and a commitment to mutual learning form the bedrock of evolving together.

Moreover, Hitachi Systems underwent regional restructuring to initiate a refined Go-to-Market (GTM) strategy. “In the north region, our focus has been on key sectors like BFSI, IT/ITES, manufacturing, and Government. In the south, we targeted significant software development houses and a burgeoning cloud and startup ecosystem. By integrating these specialized services with our traditional System Integration (SI) business, we embarked on a strategic go-to-market approach. While the journey has been challenging with more investment than recovery thus far, I am optimistic that in the next two years, these



“Whether it’s optimization services or security services, encompassing DevOps, FinOps, and SecOps, the cloud ensures these are seamlessly delivered, offering financial visibility to clients regarding their cloud billing. This trend has witnessed substantial growth over the last three years and continues to expand.”

AJAY SAWANT,
Managing Director, Orient Technologies



initiatives will set us apart in the market,” shares Gupta.

Numerous service providers have innovated to meet the evolving demands of clients. Jadoun of Znet Technologies notes the changing expectations of ISV (Independent Software Vendor) customers, seeking marketing guidance in addition to technical support. Responding to this, they launched a comprehensive marketing guidance program, assisting ISVs in effectively promoting their software solutions in the market, expanding their reach, and achieving better market penetration.

Conversely, NetApp is simplifying the process for partners to add competencies and enhance service delivery. “As the industry shifts towards cloud services, we introduced a partner program called Partner Sphere. This program revolutionizes our engagement model with partners by offering innovative enablement programs. In response to evolving customer expectations, our partners are now equipped with 11 service-certified tracks and 19 solution competencies. These competencies cover

areas such as flash, cloud, customer services, and various service models, enabling partners not only to supply products but also to deliver implementation, deployment, and managed services,” describes Ganesan Arumugam, Director, Channel Sales, NetApp India.

He emphasizes, “Our certification programs and solution competency certifications help partners stand out from the crowd. In a world where partners aim to differentiate themselves and move beyond mere transactions, NetApp’s programs empower partners to provide differentiated services to their customers.”

Cloud services as the mainstay

Cloud services have not merely been solutions; they’ve evolved into enablers of a new paradigm, fundamentally reshaping the essence of IT service delivery.

“Initially, the cloud was often confined to experimental and developmental work, with production work predominantly on-premise. However, there has been a paradigm shift with a substantial number of



“ We have identified five key areas for investment and skill development: cybersecurity, APM, cloud computing, database management, and open-source technologies. In collaboration with key OEMs in these areas, we have concentrated on reskilling our employees.”

ANUJ GUPTA,
CEO, Hitachi Systems India



customers hosting both development and production workloads on the cloud,” shares Sawant of Orient Technologies.

This acceptance of cloud services has remained steadfast even post-COVID. “Cloud services offer a unique advantage in their remote accessibility. Whether it’s optimization services or security services, encompassing DevOps, FinOps, and SecOps, the cloud ensures these are seamlessly delivered, offering financial visibility to clients regarding their cloud billing. This trend has witnessed substantial growth over the last three years and continues to expand,” he further elaborates.

In fact, the cloud has become a cornerstone for many service providers. “The cloud has become one of the three pillars for us to drive our business forward. We established a dedicated Cloud Business Unit (BU) with focused teams, fostering partnerships with industry leaders such as AWS, Azure, and Google. The goal was to create a separate entity for cloud services, distinct from traditional on-premises services, which proved to

be a successful strategy. Presently, our Cloud BU boasts a team of 150 professionals, engaging in hybrid use cases, particularly in sectors like banking and manufacturing,” explains Gupta of Hitachi Systems.

The company also strategically focuses on the future role of applications. “We identified that applications would be central to businesses, prompting the creation of a robust practice in Application Performance Monitoring (APM) and AI Ops as the second pillar. This involved partnering with entities like Dynatrace, Heal, and Cisco Appdynamics. With a dedicated team of 100-150 professionals, this practice has seen substantial investment over the last 18 months, yielding positive results,” he adds.

Furthermore, cloud services have played a pivotal role in reshaping IT service delivery, especially for SMB clients facing challenges in scaling their businesses. “We addressed this by offering customized cloud solutions tailored to the specific requirements of SMBs. This transition has resulted in significant cost savings and increased



“We offer a diverse array of training programs and actively encourage our employees to pursue relevant courses to augment their skill sets. Our team boasts more than 200 technical certifications, ensuring that we possess the expertise and knowledge to deliver top-notch solutions and support to our diverse clientele.”

MUNESH JADOUN,
Founder & CEO, Znet Technologies



operational efficiency, reducing the reliance on on-premise hardware for our clients,” says Jadoun of Znet Technologies. The cloud’s transformative impact extends beyond a technological shift; it has become a strategic lever for businesses aiming to thrive in the evolving landscape of IT services.

Cybersecurity becomes the rage

As the digital landscape expanded, the scope and sophistication of threats expanded in tandem. Cybersecurity evolved from being an optional add-on to a fundamental cornerstone, a non-negotiable imperative in the current IT landscape.

“Cybersecurity has emerged as the third pillar driving our business growth. Leveraging our 22-year expertise in this domain, we offer specialized services through our Security Operations Center (SOC) and Risk and Intelligence (RI) services. This involves strategic partnerships with key Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), allowing us to create a comprehensive suite of services around their products. Acknowledging

the evolving threat landscape, our approach is service-centric rather than merely product-oriented, addressing challenges posed by AI-driven attacks and defenses,” explains Gupta of Hitachi Systems.

Similarly, Orient Technologies strategically integrated various tools and technologies to enhance its remote infrastructure support capabilities over the past two years. “The critical aspect here is ensuring the security of customer data while comprehending their infrastructure solely through logs. We meticulously shortlisted and developed proficiency in specific tools, training our resources to optimize their usage. This strategic move has resulted in a substantial increase of 15 to 20 percent in revenue, particularly in cloud services and on-premise services delivered remotely,” shares Sawant.

Subramanian of Quadra Systems adds, “We have consistently delivered transformational outcomes for our customers across multiple domains, including manufacturing, pharma, and IT/ITES. AI-based security dashboards seamlessly combining organizational insights with security

signals, AI-powered, human-curated managed security services, and the continuous delivery of digital transformation experiences – these are just a few among the many projects that have contributed to our customer’s success.”

The human element

In the whirlwind of technological advancements, the enduring value of the human touch has emerged as a constant. Channel partners recognize that technology, while transformative, is a tool, and its true magic unfolds when wielded by professionals who prioritize relationships. Building strong client relationships, in this context, has become an art form—a testament to the enduring power of human connection.

“In our line of business, delivering a superlative customer experience is akin to managing a delicate relationship where one glitch can overshadow multiple successes. Thus, we acknowledge that achieving a flawless customer experience is a myth in our industry. Instead of promising the unattainable, we focus on setting realistic expectations and standing

firmly by our customers,” asserts Gupta of Hitachi Systems.

He emphasizes, “Our commitment revolves around being available 24/7 to support our clients. While we may not have all-encompassing solutions for every problem, we assure our clients that we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them. Our goal is to minimize business disruptions in the event of any issues. Through this approach, we’ve built a reputation for reliability and commitment.”

In the realm of IT services, the customer experience has evolved into a currency of its own. Professionals in the channel ecosystem don’t merely provide solutions; they craft experiences, leaving an indelible mark on the clients they serve.

“Even in remote support scenarios, where physical presence is absent, our service delivery managers play a crucial role. They maintain continuous communication with customers, understand their expectations, and strive to enhance service levels. This personal touch instills confidence in our customers, assuring them



that their concerns are heard. The consistent efforts of our service delivery managers have significantly contributed to an improved overall customer experience, positively impacting customer acquisition and fostering business growth," underscores Sawant of Orient Technologies.

This commitment has translated into substantial revenue growth for the organization. "The investments made in tools and technologies have proven worthwhile, leading to customer retention and the acquisition of new customers. Over the past 18 to 24 months, we

have experienced notable growth, witnessing a 15-20% increase in services revenue. Our proficiency in providing excellent support has not only led to customer satisfaction but has also resulted in technology orders as customers refresh their technologies. In terms of new additions, we have welcomed approximately 22 new logos in the past year, indicating a robust expansion of our clientele," discloses Sawant. The integration of technology with a personalized touch not only elevates the customer experience but also fuels significant growth and loyalty in the competitive

landscape of IT services.

Imperative of continuous learning

In an industry overshadowed by the specter of obsolescence, the call for continuous learning has become a guiding doctrine. As the landscape undergoes seismic shifts, so do the requisite skill sets. Professionals in the channel ecosystem comprehend that survival and success are not foregone conclusions; they must be earned through an unwavering commitment to ongoing learning and development—a direction in which most service providers

are already actively engaged.

"We offer a diverse array of training programs and actively encourage our employees to pursue relevant courses to augment their skill sets. This not only enriches our team members' capabilities but also directly contributes to our organization's success. Our team boasts more than 200 technical certifications, ensuring that we possess the expertise and knowledge to deliver top-notch solutions and support to our diverse clientele," shares Jadoun of Znet Technologies.

To further incentivize and recognize these efforts, a rewards system has been implemented for those actively engaged in reskilling and upskilling. This approach has not only bolstered team morale but has also resulted in a more proficient and adaptable workforce, he adds.

Indeed, channel partners have transformed into architects of their own success by investing significantly in the skills and expertise of their teams. Reskilling and upskilling are no longer mere buzzwords; they have evolved into the cornerstone of competitiveness. The





investment in human capital has become the secret sauce of resilience.

"We have identified five key areas for investment and skill development: cybersecurity, APM, cloud computing, database management, and open-source technologies. In collaboration with key OEMs in these areas, we have concentrated on reskilling our employees. While challenges, including the preference for remote work, have surfaced, we believe that deep specialization is crucial in the current environment. It's a challenging journey, but being a specialist is more valuable than being a generalist," highlights Gupta of Hitachi Systems.

However, with upskilling of employees, retention has emerged as a major challenge for many. "The retention of skilled individuals becomes a significant challenge, especially as their market value increases post-certification. To address this, beyond financial incentives, we've heavily invested in cultivating a positive organizational culture and environment. This includes fostering a sense of belonging, which has

contributed significantly to retaining our talent despite the prevalent industry-wide challenge of attrition," shares Sawant of Orient Technologies.

Beyond technological upskilling, the company sponsors MBA programs and project management courses, adopting a holistic approach that not only enhances technical skills but also promotes team management and project leadership capabilities. This multi-faceted strategy has proven effective in ensuring customer satisfaction and sustaining organizational growth, adds Sawant. The commitment to continuous learning and holistic development stands as a testament to the resilience and foresight of these channel partners in navigating the dynamic landscape of IT services.

Strategies for future growth

What distinguishes leaders from followers in the IT services realm is their foresight for the future. The forward-looking strategies employed by channel partners and IT service providers have become the

roadmap to resilience.

"To thrive in the evolving IT services marketplace, a strong focus on agility and adaptability is crucial. The ability to swiftly respond to emerging technologies and changing client needs is paramount. Additionally, building strategic partnerships with leading tech companies and staying abreast of industry trends ensures access to cutting-edge tools and resources," shares Jadoun of Znet Technologies.

Sawant of Orient Technologies adds that for Managed Service Providers, services like Backup-as-a-Service, Disaster Recovery-as-a-Service, and Device-as-a-Service have gained significant popularity. "On the cloud services front, the focus is shifting towards Security Operations (SecOps) and Financial Operations, indicating an increased emphasis on security and financial aspects within the cloud services domain."

While emerging technologies garner attention, many channel partners recognize the ongoing investments in foundational technologies like servers, storage, and cybersecurity. "We maintain

focus on Business as Usual (BAU) initiatives, which have been instrumental in our current success and will likely continue for the next two years. Simultaneously, we are creating separate business units (BUs) with dedicated teams for cloud, application performance monitoring (APM), and cybersecurity. The intention is to invest and scale these BUs strategically, ensuring their profitability over the next few years, and eventually integrating them into the BAU structure," discloses Gupta of Hitachi Systems.

As we conclude this exploration of resilience, one truth stands out: the ever-evolving nature of IT services is not a challenge to be conquered; it's an opportunity to be seized. The journey from disruption to innovation, from adapting to thriving, is a testament to the resilience embedded in the very fabric of the channel ecosystem. In the new norm of IT services, where change is constant, the resilience of channel partners and IT service providers is the compass guiding the industry towards a future where challenges are not roadblocks but stepping stones to success.

Achieving a Flawless Customer Experience is a Myth in Our Industry

In an era where customer experience is the linchpin of business success, the IT services landscape is evolving at a breakneck pace. Amit Singh engages in a riveting conversation with Anuj Gupta, CEO of Hitachi Systems India, delving into the intricacies of customer expectations, the challenges of technology evolution, and the strategic moves that have propelled Hitachi Systems to the forefront of the industry



ANUJ GUPTA
CEO, Hitachi Systems India

■ **In the evolving services industry, customer experience has become crucial for business survival. What expectations do customers have from IT service providers?**

In the realm of system integration and channel partnerships, technology is evolving rapidly, encompassing

cloud, AI, cybersecurity, and IoT. Customers are exploring containerized modes, embracing no-code applications, and optimizing resources with solutions like GPP. The challenge lies in customers struggling to adapt to these evolving technologies, which can potentially disrupt or destroy their businesses. Similarly, partners are grappling with the pace of skill development

required to keep up. To navigate these challenges, it's essential to work transparently with customers, moving beyond a mere supplier role. Collaboration on significant projects and a commitment to mutual learning form the basis of evolving together. In an environment where there's no perfect partner or customer, agility and continuous adaptation are key. Aligning multiple vendors

and OEMs and working cohesively with customers during these challenging times require a focused and relevant approach. Survival in the ever-changing landscape demands not just adaptation but also a strategic shift in relevance. Additionally, investing in skilling people emerges as a non-negotiable necessity for all involved in the industry.

Cont'd on Page 18



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■ **Over the last few years, how has your organization expanded its solution offerings to incorporate emerging technologies?**

The landscape of emerging technologies is dynamic, with what was considered emerging six months ago becoming mainstream today. Recognizing this, we undertook a comprehensive review of our organization in 2021 when I assumed leadership. We formulated three pillars to drive our business forward. First and foremost, we recognized the significance of cloud computing in its various forms: on-prem, hybrid, and fully on-the-cloud. We established a dedicated Cloud Business Unit (BU) with focused teams, fostering partnerships with industry leaders such as AWS, Azure, and Google. The goal was to create a separate entity for cloud services, distinct from traditional on-premises services, which proved to be a successful strategy. Presently, our Cloud BU boasts a team of 150 professionals, engaging in hybrid use cases, particularly in sectors like banking and manufacturing.

The second pillar involved a strategic emphasis on the future role of applications. We identified that applications would be central to businesses, prompting the creation of a robust practice in Application Performance Monitoring (APM) and AI Ops. This involved partnering with entities like Dynatrace, Heal, Cisco Appd, and Unite. With a dedicated team of 100-150 professionals, this practice has seen substantial

investment over the last 18 months, yielding positive results.

The third pillar is in an area that is particularly close to my heart - cybersecurity. Drawing from our 22-year expertise in this domain, we have a focused offering through our Security Operations Center (SOC) and Risk and Intelligence (RI) services. This entails aligning with key Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to build a comprehensive suite of services around their products. Recognizing the evolving threat landscape, our approach is service-centric rather than merely product-oriented, addressing challenges posed by AI-driven attacks and defenses.

a strategic go-to-market approach. While it's been a challenging journey with more investment than recovery thus far, I am optimistic that in the next two years, these initiatives will set us apart in the market.

■ **How has your organization excelled in delivering customer experience? And how has your customer experience initiative contributed to customer acquisition and overall business growth?**

In our line of business, delivering a superlative

“ In our line of business, delivering a superlative customer experience is challenging, akin to a delicate relationship where one glitch can overshadow multiple successes. Therefore, we focus on setting realistic expectations and standing firmly by our customers. ”

Furthermore, we restructured regionally, focusing on key sectors like Banking, Financial Services (BFS), IT, ITES, manufacturing, and government in the north. In the south, we targeted significant software development houses and a burgeoning cloud and startup ecosystem. Integrating these specialized services with our traditional System Integration (SI) business, we embarked on

customer experience is challenging, akin to a delicate relationship where one glitch can overshadow multiple successes. Therefore, we acknowledge that achieving a flawless customer experience is a myth in our industry. Instead of promising the unattainable, we focus on setting realistic expectations and standing firmly by our customers.

Our commitment revolves around being available 24/7 to support

our clients. While we may not have all-encompassing solutions for every problem, we assure our clients that we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them. Our goal is to minimize business disruptions in the event of any issues. By taking this approach, we have been able to build a reputation for reliability and commitment.

Setting clear expectations is a key strategy, ensuring that disappointments are minimized. Our dedication is visible from the leadership down to the operational level. If there's a critical issue, the entire team, including myself, is on-site, even during non-standard hours or holidays. We've demonstrated this commitment on occasions like Diwali, where I personally accompanied the team to resolve an issue.

By being transparent about what we can deliver and consistently demonstrating commitment, we have seen positive results. While we don't claim to be the best service provider, we assert that we are a reliable and committed one. This approach has resonated well with our clients, resulting in customer satisfaction and business growth. Our sustained growth over the last two years and the acquisition of key customers can be attributed to this strategy of setting and meeting realistic expectations.

■ **Could you share specific initiatives or investments your organization has made in employee reskilling and upskilling, and how these efforts have**

contributed to your success?

Navigating the challenges of reskilling and upskilling is among the most demanding aspects of today's market. A significant issue is the reluctance of many individuals to engage in continuous learning. In India, there is a prevalent sentiment among some that they already know enough and don't need further education. Managers often pass the responsibility of staying updated to their subordinates without realizing that failing to upgrade their skills may jeopardize their job security in the near future.

I emphasize the importance of relevance; having 15 years of experience may not be sufficient if the technology you are experienced in becomes obsolete. I often use the analogy that one needs to be as relevant as today's technology. We identified five key areas for investment and skill development: cybersecurity, APM, cloud computing, database management, and open-source technologies. Aligning with key OEMs in these areas, we focused on reskilling our employees. While we faced challenges, including the preference for remote work, we believe that deep specialization is crucial in the current environment. It's a tough journey, but being a specialist is more valuable than being a generalist.

■ What strategies do you believe are vital for channel partners and IT service providers to remain resilient and

successful in this ever-evolving scenario?

In the Indian context, there has been a significant influx of global OEMs, resulting in an increase in hiring and field interactions. The technology spectrum has also expanded. In this scenario, it is crucial for channel partners and IT service providers to carefully choose their partnerships and services to build. The ecosystem has become more complex, with challenges such as wrong commitments and misinformation leading to difficulties for partners.

To address these challenges, partners should collectively align with OEMs to avoid detrimental commitments that can harm their reputation and financial

collaborative and transparent ecosystem.

■ Could you provide insights into your India footprint and recent business accomplishments over the past 18 to 24 months?

Over the last two years, we have experienced significant growth, closing at around Rs 1800 crore last year and projecting Rs 2500 to 2600 crore in revenue this year, with a healthy bottom line. Our workforce has expanded to nearly 2000 employees, operating across offices in India, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, all under my purview. While our success is notable, it's

success is solely due to our efforts, we are using this time to introspect, build skills, identify profitable areas, and strategize for the future. At Hitachi, our approach is to plan proactively. We've concluded the dreaming phase, determining what we want to achieve, and are now entering the creation phase for the next two years. Our subsequent goal is to inspire our entire customer ecosystem about what we can deliver. It's a holistic strategy that involves continuous planning and adaptation to the evolving market.

■ What are your key focus areas and expansion plans for the next two to three years?

While emerging technologies are gaining attention, we recognize the ongoing investments in foundational technologies like servers, storage, and cybersecurity. Hence, we maintain focus on Business as Usual (BAU) initiatives, which have been instrumental in our current success and will likely continue to be for the next two years. Simultaneously, we are creating separate business units (BUs) with dedicated teams for cloud, application performance monitoring (APM), and cybersecurity. The intention is to invest and scale these BUs strategically, ensuring their profitability over the next few years, eventually integrating them into the BAU structure. This approach allows us to balance the immediate needs with long-term strategic goals, ensuring sustained growth and adaptability to changing market dynamics.

“ Survival in the ever-changing landscape demands not just adaptation but also a strategic shift in relevance. Additionally, investing in skilling people emerges as a non-negotiable necessity for all involved in the industry. ”

standing. Cooperation and coexistence among partners are also crucial. The current environment necessitates creating platforms where partners can collaborate transparently, acknowledging their respective skills. This collaborative approach, where partners pool their strengths to address specific business needs, can be the future of the channel ecosystem. It's about becoming specialists in certain areas and forming partnerships with other specialists, fostering a

essential to recognize that it stems from a buoyant market. Customers are actively investing in various areas, including storage, cloud, and cybersecurity, with order values that, in my entire career, I haven't encountered before. The market conditions appear favorable for the next two years as well, especially with a potential digital push from the government post the 2024 elections.

However, it's crucial not to become complacent during this period of growth. Rather than assuming our

Acceptance of Remote Support during the Pandemic Laid the Foundation for a Hybrid Support System: Orient Technologies

In this exclusive interview, Ajay Sawant, Managing Director of Orient Technologies, delves into the significant disruptions faced by the IT services industry in recent years and the agile strategies employed by Orient to ensure uninterrupted business operations. In an in-depth interaction with Amit Singh, he shares insights into the pivotal role of hybrid support, the evolution of customer demands, the influence of cloud services, and the strategic incorporation of emerging technologies. Ajay also sheds light on the organization's customer-centric approach, workforce upskilling initiatives, and the key factors driving their business achievements.



AJAY SAWANT
Managing Director, Orient Technologies

■ How would you characterize the most noteworthy disruptions you've observed in the IT services industry in recent years? Can you provide examples of how your organization adeptly navigated these disruptions, ensuring uninterrupted business operations?

Orient has a rich history spanning three decades, during which we've weathered numerous

disruptions—ranging from Y2K and the dot-com boom to the financial crisis. However, none were as impactful across all facets as the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic, a threat not just to business but to human life, stands out as the most formidable disruption.

The challenge posed by the lockdown during the pandemic was unprecedented. For the first time in our history, we faced restrictions on leaving our homes, presenting a substantial challenge

for a service-oriented organization. Balancing the health of our employees with the imperative to support our clients, many of whom had transitioned to remote work, was a complex task. With travel restrictions in place, providing on-site support became a logistical challenge.

In response, we swiftly pivoted to delivering managed services through our Network Operating Center (NOC) and embraced Remote Infrastructure Management. This marked the inception of a hybrid

support culture. In a hybrid support system, critical on-site interventions, such as changing parts or spares, require physical presence. Simultaneously, we leveraged our NOC to provide remote support, bridging the gap and ensuring comprehensive assistance to our clients.

This strategic adaptation allowed us to continue delivering robust IT services while safeguarding the well-being of our employees and meeting the evolving needs of our clients, even in the face of unprecedented disruptions.

■ How have you observed customer demands evolving over the past few years?

Traditionally, most customers hesitated to grant access to their infrastructure for remote connections or support. However, the landscape shifted dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic, compelling organizations to reevaluate their stance. Faced with travel restrictions and an urgent need for support, clients began embracing remote assistance, particularly in critical areas like data centers and networks supporting remote work.

Recognizing this shift, our organization swiftly adapted, taking remote control of systems to address the challenges users face, whether in centralized data centers or dispersed home offices. The acceptance of remote support during the pandemic laid the foundation for a popular hybrid support system. Post-COVID, this model has not only endured but has become a permanent fixture in our service offerings.

This increased acceptance reflects a broader trend where clients appreciate the agility and effectiveness of remote support, resulting in a secure and efficient hybrid support system. Our commitment to meeting evolving client expectations extends beyond the pandemic, ensuring that we continue to provide robust and secure hybrid support solutions.

■ Considering the current scenario, what is the prevailing mode

of acceptance? Is it still leaning towards a hybrid model, or are customers expressing a preference for increased physical presence?

In the current scenario, there has been a notable shift towards the acceptance of hybrid support. Even as employees return to offices, there is a continued acknowledgment and acceptance of hybrid support, encompassing both remote and on-premise assistance. However, when it comes to scenarios

and developmental work, with production work predominantly on-premise. However, there has been a paradigm shift with a substantial number of customers hosting both development and production workloads on the cloud.

This acceptance of cloud services has not waned, even post-COVID. Our organization actively engages in providing a variety of services on the cloud, all of which are executed remotely. Cloud services offer a unique advantage in their remote accessibility. Whether

technologies to enhance our remote infrastructure support capabilities. The critical aspect here is ensuring the security of customer data while comprehending their infrastructure solely through logs. We meticulously shortlisted and developed proficiency in specific tools, training our resources to optimize their usage. This strategic move has resulted in a substantial increase of 15 to 20 percent in revenue, particularly in cloud services and on-premise services delivered remotely.

■ How has your organization excelled in delivering exceptional customer experiences, especially by infusing a human element into your online services?

Customer experience holds immense significance in the service industry, and recognizing the human aspect in our interactions has been a cornerstone of our approach. Even in remote support scenarios, where physical presence is absent, our service delivery managers play a crucial role. They maintain continuous communication with customers, understand their expectations, and strive to enhance service levels. This personal touch has instilled confidence in our customers, assuring them that their concerns are heard. The consistent efforts of our service delivery managers have significantly contributed to an improved overall customer experience, positively impacting customer acquisition and fostering business growth.

“To thrive in the evolving IT services marketplace, it’s crucial to shift from being just a product seller to a comprehensive solution provider.”

demanding physical intervention, such as break-and-fix situations, on-premise support remains a necessity with no alternative.

■ From your perspective, how has the role of cloud services influenced the reshaping of IT service delivery? Could you share your insights and experiences in this regard?

Over the years, there has been a significant evolution in the acceptance of cloud services among customers. Initially, it was often confined to experimental

it’s optimization services or security services, encompassing DevOps, FinOps, and SecOps, we ensure these are seamlessly delivered, offering financial visibility to clients regarding their cloud billing. This trend has witnessed substantial growth over the last three years and continues to expand.

■ How has your organization expanded to incorporate emerging technologies in the last two years in your solutions portfolio?

In the past two years, we’ve strategically adopted various tools and

■ Could you discuss the investments or specific initiatives you've undertaken to reskill and upskill your team, considering the shift towards online service delivery?

Investing in tools and technologies is a crucial aspect, primarily considered as a capital expenditure (CAPEX). However, the more challenging part lies in operational expenditure (OPEX), particularly in reskilling and upskilling the team to effectively manage the evolving technological landscape. Unlike CAPEX, where you acquire tools and technologies, OPEX involves training new and existing personnel to handle complex infrastructure. The retention of skilled individuals becomes a significant challenge, especially as their market value increases post-certification. To address this, beyond financial incentives, we've invested heavily in cultivating a positive organizational culture and environment. This includes fostering a sense of belonging, which has contributed significantly to retaining our talent despite the prevalent industry-wide challenge of attrition.

■ Can you provide more detailed insights into the specific investments made for reskilling or upskilling?

Our CAPEX primarily focuses on tools, essential for remotely managing customer infrastructure, applications, and databases. However, the major OPEX investment involves people

– identifying the right individuals, hiring new talent, and upskilling existing staff. The significant cost elements in this process are hiring, training, and retaining personnel. This is further complicated by the current trend where individuals often receive lucrative offers from global System Integrators (SIs). To attract and retain talent, our HR strategies go beyond monetary incentives. We emphasize the detrimental impact of odd working hours on long-term health, and simultaneously, we've fostered a culture of rapid career growth. Besides technological upskilling, we sponsor MBA programs and project management courses, creating a holistic approach that not only enhances technical skills but also promotes team management and project leadership capabilities. This multi-faceted approach has proven effective in ensuring customer satisfaction and sustaining organizational growth.

■ Could you elaborate on your global and India footprint, detailing your business achievements over the last 18 to 24 months?

From a domestic perspective, our presence spans across India, with offices strategically located in Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Gurgaon, and Kolkata. Internationally, we have offices in Singapore. In the realm of remote or hybrid business models, geography should ideally pose no boundaries, enabling us to provide support to

customers worldwide. However, challenges arise in terms of working hours and language. These challenges are particularly prominent in some countries where accents or local languages present hurdles. While English may be a common language, accents and local languages in specific regions can significantly impact communication. This accent challenge is notable in certain countries, even though English is spoken.

Over the past 18 to 24 months, we have experienced notable growth, witnessing a 15-20% increase in services revenue. Our proficiency in providing excellent support has not only led to customer satisfaction but has also resulted in technology orders as customers refresh their technologies. This has translated into significant revenue growth. The investments made in tools and technologies have proven worthwhile, leading to customer retention and the acquisition of new customers. In terms of new additions, we have welcomed approximately 22 new logos in the past year, indicating a robust expansion of our clientele. This success can be attributed to our commitment to providing top-notch services and staying technologically relevant in a dynamic market.

■ Looking ahead, what strategies would you recommend for channel partners and IT service providers to remain resilient and successful in the

dynamic IT services marketplace?

To thrive in the evolving IT services marketplace, it's crucial to shift from being just a product seller to a comprehensive solution provider. Moving credentials towards becoming Managed Service Partners (MSPs) or Cloud Service Providers (CSPs) is essential. This transformation distinguishes you in the market, as there are few System Integrators who have transitioned from traditional roles to the dynamic landscape of MSPs or CSPs.

For Managed Service Providers, services like Backup as a Service, Disaster Recovery as a Service, and Device as a Service have gained significant popularity. On the cloud services front, the focus is shifting towards Security Operations (SecOps) and Financial Operations, indicating an increased emphasis on security and financial aspects within the cloud services domain.

Please share insights into your top focus areas and expansion plans for the future.

Our key focus areas for the foreseeable future include Business Intelligence, encompassing analytics, along with Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (AIML). Additionally, Cybersecurity and Digital Forensic Services will be pivotal areas of concentration. Of course, our commitment to services and cloud solutions will persist, forming the foundation of our expansion plans over the next few years.

We Offer a Comprehensive Marketing Guidance Program for ISVs to Promote their Software Solutions in the Market: Znet Technologies

In this insightful interview, Munesh Jadoun, Founder & CEO of Znet Technologies, shares profound perspectives on the significant disruptions shaping the IT services industry. From the rise of GenAI technology to the imperative of remote work, Munesh elaborates on Znet's adaptive strategies and innovative solutions, emphasizing the role of RackNap in streamlining operations and ensuring business continuity. The conversation with Amit Singh dives into Znet's client-centric approach, its evolution with emerging technologies, the impact of cloud services, and its commitment to delivering exceptional customer experiences.



IN CONVERSATION

MUNESH JADOUN
Founder & CEO, Znet Technologies

■ What are the most significant disruptions you've observed in the IT services industry in recent years?

In recent years, the IT services industry has witnessed significant disruptions, including the rise of GenAI technology and the widespread adoption of remote work. GenAI technology, with its advanced AI and ML capabilities, has revolutionized various aspects of our operations, especially in cybersecurity.

Furthermore, customer experience is now more important than ever. With the increasing demand for IT services, automation has become a booming trend in the industry. Our organization, in particular, has swiftly adapted to these disruptions by leveraging RackNap, our cutting-edge cloud service delivery and business automation platform.

RackNap has allowed us to streamline our operations and provide our clients with a seamless digital experience, from service provisioning to billing and support.

This subscription business management tool has been instrumental in reaching a broader audience and enhancing our marketplace presence. In essence, our ability to adapt and integrate innovations like RackNap has been a key factor in ensuring our business continuity and staying at the forefront of the ever-evolving IT services industry.

■ What are the evolving demands of your clients, and how is your organization devising innovative solutions and service delivery models to meet these evolving client demands?

Our clients' needs reflect a changing tech landscape and business environment. Data security is becoming paramount due to rising cyber threats and stricter regulations. As more businesses move to the cloud, there is also an increased demand for secure digital infrastructure. We are offering AI-driven cybersecurity for advanced risk identification

and mitigation. Our fast-computing services offer seamless scalability, providing clients with the necessary computational power on demand.

Additionally, a significant portion of our clientele belongs to the IT/ITeS sector. From our interactions with them, we understand that they require more than just IT infrastructure. They need assistance in growing their businesses, and we have developed specialized consulting services tailored to their specific industry needs.

Furthermore, we have noted the expectations of our ISV (Independent Software Vendor) customers who are looking for marketing guidance in addition to technical support. In response, we have launched a comprehensive marketing guidance program that helps ISVs effectively promote their software solutions in the market, thereby enabling them to reach a broader audience and achieve better market penetration.

Our communication platforms and cloud-based tools enhance productivity in

distributed environments. We stay updated with industry trends to ensure our solutions meet evolving client demands in today's dynamic business landscape.

■ How have cloud services played a role in reshaping IT service delivery in your experience?

Cloud services have played a pivotal role in reshaping IT service delivery, particularly for SMB clients facing challenges in scaling their businesses. We addressed this by offering customized cloud solutions tailored to their specific requirements. These services have revolutionized how businesses access and manage their computing resources, providing scalability and flexibility to adapt to changing workloads. This transition has resulted in significant cost savings and increased operational efficiency, reducing the reliance on on-premises hardware.

This shift towards cloud-based solutions has ushered in more agile and dynamic IT service delivery models,

empowering businesses to remain competitive in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape.

■ How has your organization expanded its solution offerings to include emerging technologies over the last two years?

Over the past two years, ZNet Technologies has significantly expanded its solution offerings by embracing emerging technologies. A key element of this expansion has been our strategic partnerships with industry-leading tech companies such as Acronis, Zoho, DocuSign, HubSpot, Polarin, Avast, HPE, Instasafe, and others.

The incorporation of these solutions has been instrumental in driving the growth and success of our business during this period. It has enabled us to provide our clients with innovative and efficient solutions that address their evolving needs. By leveraging these advanced tools and platforms, we have enhanced the effectiveness and value proposition of our services, resulting in increased client satisfaction and loyalty.

■ What specific initiatives or investments have you made to reskill and upskill your teams?

We offer a range of training programs and actively encourage our employees to pursue relevant courses to enhance their skill sets. This not only enriches our team members' capabilities but also directly contributes to our organization's success. By staying updated with the latest industry trends and technologies, our teams are

better equipped to meet evolving client demands. Our team has more than 200 technical certifications, ensuring that we have the expertise and knowledge to deliver top-notch solutions and support to our diverse clientele.

To further incentivize and appreciate their efforts, we have implemented a rewards system for those who actively engage in reskilling and upskilling. This approach has not only boosted team morale but also resulted in a more proficient and adaptable workforce. Ultimately, the investment in our team's professional development

industry trends ensures access to cutting-edge tools and resources.

A customer-centric approach, prioritizing exceptional service and tailored solutions, is vital for building trust and long-term relationships. Moreover, a commitment to ongoing learning and professional development, both for teams and individuals, ensures that providers remain at the forefront of technological advancements. These strategies will not only enable channel partners and IT service providers to weather industry shifts but also position them

“Our ability to adapt and integrate innovations like RackNap has been a key factor in ensuring our business continuity and staying at the forefront of the ever-evolving IT services industry.”

has translated into improved customer acquisition, as clients recognize and value the expertise and innovation we bring to the table.

■ What forward-looking strategies do you believe are essential for channel partners and IT service providers to remain resilient and successful in the evolving IT services marketplace?

To thrive in the evolving IT services marketplace, a strong focus on agility and adaptability is crucial. The ability to swiftly respond to emerging technologies and changing client needs is paramount. Additionally, building strategic partnerships with leading tech companies and staying abreast of

for sustained success in the dynamic IT services landscape.

■ Please talk about your global and Indian footprint and its business achievements over the last 1-24 months.

ZNet Technologies has demonstrated remarkable business achievements on both a global and Indian scale. Notably, we were honored to receive the prestigious #CyberFit Innovation Award 2021 at the Acronis #CyberFit Summit in Singapore, highlighting our commitment to cutting-edge cybersecurity solutions.

Additionally, we were recognized as the IAMCP 2022 APAC Silver P2P Award winner, further affirming our leadership in the industry. In 2023, Dun & Bradstreet listed

ZNet Technologies as a leading SME in India in its report. ZNet Technologies was covered as a case study in the NASSCOM Deloitte Report Emerging Technology Hubs in 2023. RackNap – our subscription business management and marketplace platform, was featured in leading industry reports like IDC, Zinnov, and more.

In such a dynamic and competitive market, several critical factors have contributed to our success. Our unwavering focus on innovation, agility, and adaptability has been instrumental in meeting the evolving needs of our clients. Additionally, our commitment to building strong partnerships with industry leaders and staying at the forefront of technological advancements has allowed us to deliver cutting-edge solutions.

Headquartered in Jaipur, backed by Rashi Peripherals, and with a strong presence in over 10 cities in India, we have established a solid foundation for business expansion, solidifying our position in the market.

■ What are your top focus areas and expansion plans over the next 2-4 years?

Over the next 2-4 years, our primary focus areas will be centered on innovation, expansion, and partnerships. We are dedicated to bolstering our services by harnessing emerging technologies to meet the evolving demands of our clients. Furthermore, we aim to build more strategic partnerships with leading tech companies to further enhance our service offerings. Our expansion plans also include a concerted effort to broaden our global customer base and establish a stronger presence in new and global markets.

Our Partners are Equipped with 11 Service-Certified Tracks & 19 Solution Competencies: NetApp

Join Amit Singh in an insightful conversation with Ganesan Arumugam, Director of Channel Sales at NetApp India, as they unravel the significant disruptions that have reshaped the IT industry in recent years. From the cloud revolution to the changing demands of end customers, Ganesan shares NetApp's innovative strategies, customer-centric approaches, and forward-looking insights



GANESAN ARUMUGAM

Director of Channel Sales, NetApp India

■ How would you describe the significant disruptions witnessed in the IT industry in recent years?

The prevalent shift of customers to the cloud has redefined business practices and data management. Today, data isn't confined to on-premise centers; it sprawls across multiple clouds, introducing complexities in data management. The surge in internet technologies, Gen AI, blockchain, and IoT devices has altered how customers approach application development.

Notably, sectors like banking witnessed a shift toward modernization, with Internet banking becoming ubiquitous, drastically reducing physical branch visits. This digital transformation trend is evident across various sectors like supply chain, manufacturing, financial services, and government operations. As data plays a pivotal role in business,

the focus is on managing it efficiently and securely. Data is often dubbed as the next economic oil due to its critical role. Our key strategies align with simplifying, securing, cost savings, and sustainability in data management. Ensuring data security, irrespective of its location—be it in a co-location, public cloud, or private cloud—is a priority.

Cost savings amidst exponential data growth and addressing sustainability concerns of data centers are vital aspects. Our approach emphasizes agility and flexibility in cloud service delivery, enabling customers to adapt swiftly to market demands. A customer-centric approach tailors solutions to industry-specific needs, considering the stage of transformation each customer is in. Additionally, strategic partnerships and global collaborations, such as with NVIDIA for AI and SAP for ERP applications, play a pivotal role in our strategy, ensuring that we remain at

the forefront of technological advancements in the industry.

■ How have you expanded your solution offerings to incorporate emerging technologies over the past two to three years?

I'll begin with ONTAP, our flagship data management software. Given the substantial migration of customers to the cloud, we ensured the portability of ONTAP, making it available as a first-party service across all major hyperscalers. This innovation emphasizes both availability and simplicity in managing storage. Security is another vital aspect we addressed; ONTAP incorporates built-in security features, including ransomware guarantees, access protection, and robust data management.

Another significant trend in data storage is the growing preference for flash technology due to its low latency and quick data

accessibility. Recognizing this, we introduced our C series, also known as the capacity series, making flash products more affordable. While retaining our high-performance all-flash series (A series) for critical applications, we successfully ventured into providing a budget-friendly option for second-tier applications, resulting in remarkable growth over the last two quarters.

Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a game-changer across various industries. To stay at the forefront, we collaborated with NVIDIA, a leader in AI. This partnership led to the development of over 30 joint architecture and reference architecture solutions, ensuring our architecture aligns with the demands of AI applications.

As the industry shifts towards cloud services, we introduced a partner program called Partner Sphere. This program revolutionizes our engagement model with partners by offering

innovative enablement programs. In response to the evolving customer expectations, our partners are now equipped with 11 service-certified tracks and 19 solution competencies. These competencies cover areas such as flash, cloud, customer services, and various service models, enabling partners not only to supply products but also to deliver implementation, deployment, and managed services. This shift is in line with current business dynamics where customer experience, coupled with a human element, plays a pivotal role.

■ Can you provide examples of how NetApp has excelled in delivering exceptional customer experience through the human element?

While I may not reveal specific customer names due to confidentiality, I can illustrate our methodology with a notable example. Take, for instance, a well-known mattress manufacturer like SheelaFoam. They provide sleep solutions to their customers and required a 24/7 data management solution for seamless access to their supply chain and ERP systems.

In collaboration with SheelaFoam, we closely engaged with them to deploy our solution as a standby system. Our professional services team, consisting of over 50 dedicated individuals, played a crucial role. They assisted in implementing the solution, offering services either on-site or remotely, depending on the customer's preferred service model.

For SheelaFoam, our

services contributed significantly. Their storage performance improved by 2x, leveraging features such as data duplication, compression, and compaction. This optimization extended beyond storage; it positively impacted their shop floor and enhanced supply chain efficiency. This is particularly critical for a consumer product company like SheelaFoam, where timely availability of the right products is paramount.

Consider the scenario where customers are looking for a specific mattress model. If it's not in stock, they might opt for a competitor's product. SheelaFoam, having multiple brands, needed to ensure that their products, including those

“Over the past two to three years, we strategically shifted our focus toward establishing long-term relationships with a select group of partners. This departure from sporadic business dealings with numerous partners allowed us to deepen our engagements and concentrate efforts where our expertise lies. Today, a significant portion of our business is derived from a carefully chosen set of skilled partners.”

of competitors, are readily available. This optimization not only improved supply chain efficiency but also addressed invoicing challenges through a robust 24/7 ERP system.

These successes showcase our commitment to understanding and actively participating in the specific needs of our clients, contributing not only to their operational efficiency but also, indirectly, to business growth. This customer-

centric strategy aligns with our broader initiatives in delivering exceptional experiences and fostering long-term partnerships.

■ Can you brief us on the key digital transformation trends and technologies that you believe will significantly impact the business landscape over the next two to three years?

In the realm of artificial intelligence (AI), we proudly boast the industry's premier data pipeline for AI. Our promotional stance is clear: "IT runs on data, and data runs on NetApp." Integrated Data Services, a pivotal

introduction of data fabric has been pivotal; it allows customers to access and manage their data, whether on-premises or in the cloud, in a simplified manner. Our commitment to staying ahead in the market involves constant adaptation to new technologies and trends.

Now, focusing on the evolving landscape, I'd like to highlight two critical aspects. First, the Intelligent Data Infrastructure is transforming the way customers perceive and utilize their data. Beyond mere storage and retrieval, customers now seek a more intelligent data center. NetApp's response to this demand is the development of data fabric, providing customers with a simplified approach to accessing their data across diverse environments.

Secondly, the Sustainable Technology trend is gaining prominence. According to our complexity report, 83 percent of organizations prioritize sustainability. It's not merely an IT priority; it's a boardroom discussion. NetApp has aligned its technology and products with sustainability goals. We've introduced the Blue XV platform, offering a sustainability dashboard that enables customers to monitor energy consumption and carbon footprint. This empowers them to analyze trends over time and communicate their commitment to sustainability to stakeholders.

On the security front, considering the prevalent cyber threats, NetApp has embedded robust security features in our solutions. Whether it's protecting against insider threats or guaranteeing recovery in the event of

a ransomware attack, we take a comprehensive approach to data security. Our commitment to data protection is reflected in our guarantee to recover customer data within a specified timeframe, providing assurance amid the rising threat landscape.

■ **Can you also share some forward-looking strategies essential for channel partners and IT service providers to remain resilient and successful in the evolving IT services marketplace?**

Channel partners and IT service providers face challenges in an evolving IT services marketplace. At NetApp, we believe in addressing the fundamentals. Firstly, partners need to align with an OEM that offers not just the right product but also facilitates team enablement. Our Partner Peer Program reflects this commitment. We not only sell products but also enable our partners on technology, solutions, and services.

Our certification programs and solution competency certifications help partners stand out from the crowd. In a world where partners aim to differentiate themselves and move beyond mere transactions, NetApp's programs empower partners to provide differentiated services to their customers. Beyond revenue growth, we measure our partners on profitability and their alignment with NetApp values.

Lastly, partners are in business for profitability. NetApp's partner program ensures that partners

receive the right incentives, rebates, and financial support. Through Marketing Development Funds (MDF) and headcounts, we invest in our partners, fostering mutual growth and success. This three-fold approach—team enablement, differentiation, and profitability—guides our strategy to support partners in navigating emerging technologies and market trends. The Partner Peer Program unifies various partner types, ensuring all benefit from our diverse offerings.

■ **Can you discuss your business and channel achievements over the last 18 to 24 months?**

Over the past two to three

streamlined our approach for the long tail of partners, those who engage in occasional transactions or whose primary business is not storage-related. Leveraging our distributor-managed partners model, we empowered our distributors with equivalent NetApp skills. This approach has proven to be successful, with approximately 20 to 25 focused partners and an additional 60 to 70 partners managed through our distributors.

Our commitment to the channel is evident in the fact that 100 percent of our business in India is conducted through partners. We refrain from direct billing, ensuring our partners are the front face in the market. This

“Leveraging our distributor-managed partners model, we empowered our distributors with equivalent NetApp skills. This approach has proven to be successful, with approximately 20 to 25 focused partners and an additional 60 to 70 partners managed through our distributors.”

years, we strategically shifted our focus toward establishing long-term relationships with a select group of partners. This departure from sporadic business dealings with numerous partners allowed us to deepen our engagements and concentrate efforts where our expertise lies. Today, a significant portion of our business is derived from a carefully chosen set of skilled partners.

To manage our bandwidth effectively, we concentrated our investment, time, and efforts on nurturing relationships with a few select partners. Simultaneously, we

commitment has not only fostered partner investment but has also provided assurance that partners are integral to our market strategy.

■ **What are your top focus areas and expansion plans for channel partners over the next two to four years?**

Our primary objective is to empower our channel partners to address evolving business needs, whether it's in cloud migration, data management, backup, AI, or

digital transformation. We aim to build a robust channel network characterized not only by revenue but by the strength of partnerships. Our goal is to foster committed and loyal partners who possess comprehensive skills in NetApp's technology.

Building a strong channel network involves equipping partners to deliver innovative solutions and navigate customers through the complexities of digital transformation. Our partner program focuses on increasing revenue, and measuring success in terms of year-on-year revenue growth and profitability. We have implemented a structured approach through the Partners Peer Program, enabling partners with the necessary skills for solutions and services.

Recognizing that a single partner cannot be an expert in all areas, we provide options for partners to choose relevant solution competencies based on their customer base. Benefits, incentives, and rebates are aligned with partners who are strategically aligned with our objectives, whether in AI, flash, or cloud services.

In essence, our plan is to nurture strong partnerships that enhance our ability to deliver cutting-edge solutions. We aim to support our customers' digital transformation, cloud adoption, and hybrid environment management across various industries through our channel partners. The objective is not only to grow with select partners but also to extend our reach through the long tail partners managed via our distributors, ensuring comprehensive coverage across diverse markets and segments.

MPS has Revolutionized the Way Organizations Handle their Printing Needs: Aegis Solutions

In this enlightening interview, we sit down with Jayanta Das and Surajit Tewary, Directors at Aegis Solutions. Their expertise in the printing industry and managed print solutions provide us with valuable insights into the ever-evolving landscape of office technology.



JAYANTA DAS
Director, Aegis Solutions

SURAJIT TEWARY
Director, Aegis Solutions

■ The printing industry has witnessed significant technological advancements. Can you discuss some of the latest innovations and how they are changing the landscape for both businesses and consumers?

The landscape of the printing industry is constantly evolving, driven by technological innovations that redefine cost and quality standards. The latest trend indicates a significant shift from traditional laser printing to advanced inkjet technologies. The earlier generations of inkjet printers were less favored due to high operational costs, especially for color prints. Now, with the

development of ink tank technology, inkjet printers offer a cost-efficient solution without compromising on print quality. Moreover, the progression from the standard four-color cartridges to six-color systems has enabled a broader color palette, producing prints that are vivid and closer to the original image. This advancement not only benefits consumers seeking high-quality photo prints but also supports businesses that require detailed color schemes for their marketing materials and presentations.

■ Managed Print Solutions have become increasingly important in today's business environment. How does this

service benefit organizations in terms of cost efficiency, productivity, and sustainability?

Managed Print Solutions have revolutionized the way organizations handle their printing needs. Instead of the traditional model of purchasing and maintaining a fleet of printers, MPS provides a service where businesses can rent the required machinery on demand. This shift from a capital expenditure (Capex) to an operational expenditure (Opex) model means that organizations can reduce upfront investments and only pay for the printing they need. MPS providers take full responsibility for the maintenance and technical support of these machines,

ensuring they are always operational and updated with the latest software. This turnkey solution increases organizational productivity by minimizing downtime and allows businesses to redirect their focus from managing IT resources to their core activities. Additionally, MPS promotes sustainability by optimizing printer use and reducing waste, which is increasingly important in today's environmentally conscious business environment.

■ What are the key challenges faced by businesses in the printer and managed print solutions market, and how do you navigate these challenges to deliver

high-quality services to your clients?

The printer and managed print solutions market is not without its challenges. A significant hurdle is the dependency on IT vendors for printer management, which can become complex when dealing with a multitude of printer brands and models. Our organization differentiates itself by providing an outsourced model that requires no IT involvement from the client's side. Our engineers are adept at servicing a variety of brands, which allows us to offer a one-window solution to organizations that typically require a diverse range of products. This multi-brand support is a strategic response to the challenge of product variety, ensuring a seamless service experience for our clients. By the usage of the centralized printing concept, where multiple printers are replaced by one MFD, instead of multiple Printers, where only one MFD has to be maintained

■ The festive season often drives increased demand for printing services. How does the printing industry prepare for this surge in demand, and what strategies do you employ to meet the needs of your customers during this time?

The festive season is a critical period for the printing industry due to a substantial increase in demand. To effectively manage this, we implement

several strategies well in advance. These include accurate demand forecasting to predict client needs, maintaining higher inventory levels to ensure supply meets demand, and optimizing our workforce to handle the influx of service requests. By scaling operations efficiently, we are equipped to provide a continuous and reliable service to our clients, ensuring that their festive season printing requirements are met promptly and to their satisfaction.

products (box selling) and instead focus on providing comprehensive solutions that synergize software and hardware. By offering customized software solutions, we enable our clients to monitor and report on usage data at both the user and department levels. This approach not only facilitates informed decision-making, such as identifying cost-saving opportunities but also enhances the overall efficiency of their printing and imaging operations.

corporate and government clients. The association with Canon, a brand synonymous with professionalism, ensures a steady supply of consumables and spares, as well as regular sales and service training for our staff. As a result, our sales personnel remain well-informed about the latest products, and our engineers are equipped to provide exemplary service, maintaining Canon's high standards of customer satisfaction.

“ Looking ahead, Canon's emphasis on paperless solutions is indicative of the industry's trajectory, especially considering the ongoing digital transformation, the increase in remote work, and the global shift towards sustainability. Software like Canon's 'Therefore' Document Management System (DMS) software represents the kind of cost-effective, robust, and feature-rich customizable solutions on demand. ”

■ Can you share insights into how your company adopts a customer-centric approach? What strategies have proven successful in meeting the diverse needs of your clients in the printing and imaging sector?

Our company thrives on a customer-centric philosophy, where understanding and fulfilling the specific needs of each client is paramount. We move beyond merely selling

■ Please talk about your recent business achievements over the last 12-18 months. What are the key benefits of being associated with Canon?

Over the past year, our company has achieved significant milestones, including our elevation from a Canon Premium Partner of Bardhaman district to a Canon Premium Partner of Kolkata Metro. This strategic move has allowed us to expand our focus to more

■ How do you envision the future of the printing industry, especially in light of digital transformation, remote work trends, and the shift toward paperless solutions?

Looking ahead, Canon's emphasis on paperless solutions is indicative of the industry's trajectory, especially considering the ongoing digital transformation, the increase in remote work, and the global shift towards sustainability. Software like Canon's "Therefore" Document Management System (DMS) software represents the kind of cost-effective, robust, and feature-rich customizable solutions on demand. As a solution partner, we not only implement such software but also take an active role in scanning and digitizing documents for our clients using an outsourced model. By doing so, we're aligning with market trends and contributing to a more efficient, environmentally friendly approach to document handling



Embracing Prudent Growth: India's Tech Startups Move Beyond Valuations

Friends! This issue, we want to delve into an exciting topic that is shaping the landscape of India's tech startup ecosystem - the era of prudent growth. In a world often obsessed with valuations, it is refreshing to witness a shift towards a more sustainable and responsible approach to building successful startups.

India's tech startup scene is no stranger to rapid growth and skyrocketing valuations. However, recent years have seen a paradigm shift as entrepreneurs and investors realize that valuations alone do not guarantee long-term success. Instead, there is a growing focus on building a solid foundation, fostering profitability, and ensuring sustainable growth.

One of the key drivers behind this shift is the realization that sustainable growth leads to a more stable and resilient startup ecosystem. By prioritizing profitability over mere valuations, Indian tech startups are building businesses that can weather market uncertainties and economic downturns. This focus on prudent growth allows startups to make strategic decisions, optimize operations, and achieve profitability without compromising their long-term vision.

Another important aspect of the era of prudent growth is the increasing emphasis on unit economics. Startups are now paying closer attention to the economics of their business models, ensuring that each unit sold or acquired adds value to the overall growth trajectory. This approach not only helps in achieving profitability but also attracts investors who are looking for well-grounded and sustainable opportunities.

Furthermore, the era of prudent growth encourages Indian tech startups to diversify their revenue streams and explore untapped markets. By expanding beyond their core offerings and venturing into complementary sectors, startups can reduce their reliance on a single product or service, mitigating risks and creating additional avenues for growth.

In addition, the focus on prudent growth fosters a culture of innovation and efficiency. Startups are encouraged to think creatively, optimize resources, and find innovative solutions to industry challenges. This mindset is not only beneficial for the startups themselves but also for the overall development of the Indian startup ecosystem.

The era of prudent growth is not without its challenges. Startups may face pressure from investors or stakeholders who prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainability. However, by staying true to their vision and embracing a sustainable growth mindset, Indian tech startups are setting themselves up for long-term success.

As a part of the Indian tech startup community, I am thrilled to witness this shift towards prudent growth. It inspires confidence in the resilience and potential of our startup ecosystem. By focusing on profitability, unit economics, diversification, and innovation, India's tech startups are charting a path that ensures their long-term viability and contributes to the overall growth of our nation's economy.

Let's continue to support, encourage, and learn from these visionary entrepreneurs who are redefining success in the Indian tech startup landscape. Together, we can build a future where prudent growth and sustainable practices are the pillars of success.

Kalpana Singhal

KALPANA SINGHAL, Editor
(E-mail: kalpana@techplusmedia.co.in)

EDITOR: KALPANA SINGHAL
CONTENT HEAD: Amit Singh
CONSULTING EDITOR: Rajneesh De
NEWS ANALYST: Ishita Gupta
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SALES:
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PROMOTION:
Amit Pandey, Nikita Gurung

CIRCULATION:
Pratap Ram

FINANCE:
Inder Pal

HEAD OFFICE:
370A, Sant Nagar, East of Kailash, New Delhi
Tel: 41625763, 26237405, 41620042
Email - kalpana@techplusmedia.co.in

MARKETING OFFICE:
10 UF, West Wing, Raheja Tower,
MG Road, Shanthala Nagar, Ashok Nagar,
Bengaluru, Karnataka-560001

Delhi: 91-8178321837 | **Mumbai:** 91-98997 01316
Kolkata & Guwahati: 91-9331072026
Bangalore: 91-8851119532

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