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First issue
2018

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First issue 2018

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Welcome

By Ahmed Mahomed, CEO

This issue of Infocentrix speaks to some of the recent activities that support the business in its mission to be the chosen ICT partner to corporate and public sector organisations.

Technology partnerships: Datacentrix is focused on representing leading technology partners with excellence and at the highest levels of certification. The company has achieved the following partner recognitions recently: "Overall HPE Partner of the Year" for 2017 for the second consecutive year; four of the six OpenText Digiruption Indaba awards for 2017; and "Huawei Energy Partner of the Year" award. Datacentrix is also the sole distributor of HPE NonStop in Africa and is taking steps towards building a greater local HPE NonStop support structure and local skills pool.

Execution excellence: Datacentrix' execution excellence is central to its business strategy. We take a look as some customer successes, including: the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), which has seen more than 400 percent performance improvement within its SAP environment following the deployment of data centre infrastructure; MediaCloud, who is meeting the demanding needs of the film, television and media industries after opting for hyper-converged infrastructure; and Multichoice who has significantly improved its media archiving and retrieval with a high-speed solution from Datacentrix.

Empowerment and industry standards: Datacentrix has demonstrated its commitment to empowerment and industry standards, having garnered certification as a Level One Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Contributor. The company has also achieved ISO 9001:2015 (Quality Management System), 14001:2015 (Environmental Management System), and OHSAS 18001:2007 (Occupational Health and Safety Management System) certifications.

Technology and innovation: Datacentrix supports its customers' growth and success, enabled by leading technologies. We review some of our specialised areas of expertise, such as how hacktivism and other vulnerabilities are being overcome with new security services from the Datacentrix Security Operations Centre. Companies across industries are looking to "disruptive technologies" to be more connected and innovative. In a separate article we review specifically how emerging technologies, like the Internet of Things (IoT), are enabling resources conservation, more efficient operations, higher productivity and, in the case of agriculture, increased yield. Moving to Enterprise Information Management, the 4th Industrial Revolution is delivering vast untapped data sources that require new disciplines in terms of process and governance. Furthermore, eNeworks, Datacentrix wholly-owned company, Internet Service Provider (ISP) and network specialist, is helping customers to circumnavigate the lengthy waiting period around fibre installations, providing an interim, instant-access option. Lastly, we look at how automated systems are being used, in place of humans, in asset management to select and sell stocks.

Customer relationships: Datacentrix focuses on building strong, long-term relationships with its customers, helping to understand their business challenges and technology environments more intimately. We review the discussion that Datacentrix held at its first Agri Indaba, which focused on how technology is transforming farming and food production. Datacentrix also recently hosted an annual 'Tech Conference' held by the IT department of long-term client, Barloworld Automotive, with the aim to keep its IT fraternity up to date with the latest technology trends and offerings.

In closing, I would like to thank our participating partners, Dell EMC, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Lenovo, and Veritas for their support and involvement in Infocentrix.

Datacentrix takes top honours
at 2017 HPE partner awards

Datacentrix has once again been rewarded for its dedication and consistency, proudly taking the title of "Overall Partner of the Year" for 2017 for the second consecutive year at the annual Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) Partner Awards celebration.

The company was also named as top "Server Partner 2017" and "Services Partner 2017", as well as winning the "Platinum Partner 2017" category.

Datacentrix' Merwe Erasmus, a technical services delivery and solution design specialist, was singled out for an HPE Partner Ready Individual Award: "Best Award 2017", in addition to the recognition that he has received over the past several years.

"Our achievement of HPE's top local partner award draws attention to Datacentrix' contribution to the organisation's success locally, underlining the tenacity and consistency of our team, as well as the close collaboration between the two companies," states Ahmed Mahomed, Datacentrix CEO.

"This recognition follows on from Datacentrix winning HPE's prestigious 'MEMA Top Territory Business Partner of the year Award 2017', for our outstanding performance and accomplishments that raised the standard for business excellence and customer satisfaction. Congratulations go to all those whose hard work has contributed to these titles – we are extremely proud of these achievements," Ahmed adds.

Says HPE country manager: channel and territory sales, Leon Erasmus: "Datacentrix' persistently high standard of performance is apparent in the number, and type of awards received by the organisation over the past few years. Datacentrix has a very clear understanding of HPE's offering from start to finish, and has been instrumental in our local growth."

Petro Plotz, HPE partner business manager; Ahmed Mahomed, Datacentrix CEO; Ammar Lababidy, MEMA channel and territory director: HPE; Tony de Sousa, Enterprise business unit manager and Leon Erasmus, HPE country manager: channel and territory sales

Datacentrix takes steps to building
local HPE NonStop capacity

In its role as the first – and only – channel supplier of the Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) NonStop solution locally, Datacentrix is cementing its dedication to this position by providing greater support to customers, as well as bolstering the South African NonStop community.

"The HPE NonStop solution provides users with a converged infrastructure on its own that includes hardware (servers, storage and network), and operating system, database, middleware and services, offering fault tolerant, always available, secure computing," explains Piet Steenkamp, HPE NonStop pre-sales at Datacentrix.

"HPE NonStop is well established as an offering at an international level, but has a smaller user base in South Africa, one that is more focused on the financial services industry. Datacentrix is actively working on expanding and broadening this to other sectors that could benefit from this excellent technology."

In line with this goal, Datacentrix recently handpicked 30 customers, including telecommunications, retail and manufacturing representatives, to attend an event at which international HPE NonStop experts discussed the solution's availability, scalability and cost-effective advantages. In addition, BankservAfrica, Africa's largest automated clearing house and a long-time HPE NonStop advocate, spoke on its dedication to building HPE NonStop capacity locally.

Says Steenkamp: "BankservAfrica took the opportunity at our event to inform attendees of its intention to offer a NonStop-as-a-Service solution to smaller local businesses. The organisation plans to use its state of the art data centre, based in Selby, Johannesburg, to provide other businesses with the benefits of a public cloud in a protected private cloud environment – with the assistance of both HPE and Datacentrix.

"Our plan is to double the local HPE NonStop user base over the next three years, and we believe that this offering from BankservAfrica will be a massive catalyst in this development," he adds.

With a long-term view of building a strong, skilled HPE NonStop community, Datacentrix has already appointed several interns, who are undergoing intensive HPE NonStop

Piet Steenkamp, HPE NonStop pre-sales at Datacentrix

> " By establishing this practice, we are taking a strong step towards building a greater local HPE NonStop support structure in southern African and into Africa, while also helping to develop specialised skills locally.

training. The interns will be based onsite at the premises of local customers, says Steenkamp, receiving both training and practical experience over the next year.

"By establishing this practice, we are taking a strong step towards building a greater local HPE NonStop support structure in southern Africa and into Africa, while also helping to develop specialised skills locally."

The IDC sees exceptional
data centre performance boost with Datacentrix

The Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) has seen more than 400 percent performance improvement within its SAP environment, as well as a marked boost in agility, following the deployment of new data centre infrastructure by Datacentrix.

Established in 1940, the IDC is a national development finance institution, owned by the South African government under the supervision of the Economic Development Department, set up to promote economic growth and industrial development. The organisation provides finance for industrial development projects, plays a catalytic role in promoting partnerships across industries within and outside South Africa's borders, and promotes regional economic growth.

Gert Prinsloo, infrastructure manager at the IDC with Stefan Venter, pre-sales specialist at Datacentrix

According to Gert Prinsloo, infrastructure manager at the IDC, the company had 'sweated' its data centre infrastructure assets for around a year longer than originally planned, so the out-dated equipment was ready for replacement. "In addition to this, the IDC had a pressing business requirement for better performance and agility.

"From a BYOD perspective, staff needed access to our data from anywhere, at any time, and via multiple devices per user, a task that the older equipment was simply not up to. Essentially we needed to invest in future-ready infrastructure," he explains.

Gert maintains that the solution put forward by Datacentrix in response to the IDC's tender was a "hand-in-glove fit" for the organisation. "And while Datacentrix may have had the advantage of understanding the IDC's environment due to a long-standing relationship, it was the value-added services that they included that were most appealing to us.

"The Datacentrix proposal entailed so much more than just putting down servers and storage – it was a full blown solution," Gert continues. "It incorporated the assurance that other peripherals would be integrated with the new infrastructure, looked at whether our networking setup would cope moving forward, addressed the speed of connectivity, and delved into how this would all benefit the end user.

"This kind of partnership approach and strong working relationship is so much more than checking off points covered in a tender document," he adds.

The new equipment was deployed several months ago, to high praise from the IDC's end users. "As a fairly conservative company, the IDC is not easily pleased," Gert states.

"However, feedback from our end users since the project was completed in March last year has been phenomenal. The SAP team in particular has been very complimentary, saying that the speed of the SAP database is the fastest it has ever been.

"We have seen between a 400 and 500 percent increase in performance within the SAP environment specifically – a

> " This was one of the most successful technology projects ever undertaken by the IDC. There was no downtime and our end users were not affected at all; everything just ran as it should. Given the nature and size of this deployment, it was a real coup that it ran so painlessly.

job very well done. When your end users see such a notable performance increase, it is a huge achievement."

The IDC has also seen a significant improvement in agility, as the company is now able to deploy workloads to three or four different places almost instantaneously, something that it could not do previously. It is also able to failover almost instantly to its DR site and is looking at pushing production, back up and DR to the cloud, an inconceivable step prior to the implementation of the new data centre infrastructure.

"This was one of the most successful technology projects ever undertaken by the IDC. There was no downtime and our end users were not affected at all; everything just ran as it should. Given the nature and size of this deployment, it was a real coup that it ran so painlessly."

In addition to refreshing equipment, Datacentrix is also assisting the IDC to repurpose its older hardware – which the ICT company explained might be ageing but is not obsolete as yet. "We felt that the idea of repurposing the older equipment to be used for back up and DR purposes was a very clever proposition from Datacentrix," Gert says.

"It is Datacentrix' mandate to deliver tangible business value to our customers," explains Stefan Venter, pre-sales specialist at Datacentrix. "As a long-standing service provider to the IDC, it was critical that we provided a data centre infrastructure solution that would help the organisation future-proof its infrastructure, and we are pleased to see that it is delivering real business benefits."

Datacentrix achieves
level one
B-BBEE status

Datacentrix has achieved certification as a 52.13 percent black-owned Level One Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Contributor, with 135 percent procurement recognition.

Completed in alignment with the amended ICT Codes gazetted in November 2016, the certification was awarded through EmpowerLogic, a SANAS accredited B-BBEE verification agency.

Datacentrix is also classified as a designated supplier, which will allow anyone purchasing from the company to gain additional B-BBEE points on their scorecard. The organisation has both a 52.13 percent black ownership as well as a 42.67 percent black woman ownership.

Says Datacentrix CEO, Ahmed Mahomed: "Datacentrix is pleased that the strategies put in place over a number of years have enabled it to reach a Level One status. As part of our commitment to ongoing transformation, we will continue to foster an environment that will deliver substantively on empowerment objectives, including skills, socio-economic and enterprise development."

B-BBEE Level One contributor	135% B-BBEE recognition
43,80% Black voting rights	**33,25%** Black woman voting rights

Datacentrix and clients win four
Pan-African OpenText awards

Datacentrix and three of its flagship clients netted four of the six OpenText Digiruption Indaba awards for 2017.

This impressive haul confirms Datacentrix' unparalleled depth of understanding, not only of OpenText's Enterprise Information Management (EIM) tools, but also in integrating OpenText into SAP-based enterprise software.

One of the awards (Go-Live Project of the Year) represents a true world-first. Awarded to Datacentrix client MediClinic, the healthcare provider successfully integrated OpenText Extended ECM and SAP SuccessFactors.

"The solution helped to transform human capital management of MediClinic's over 16,000 staff members, and consolidate record keeping into a single, trusted database,"

explains Lenore Kerrigan, country sales director: Africa at OpenText.

Secondly, 'Customer of the Year' Award went to Engen, which contracted Datacentrix to implement a Contract Management Solution using SAP OpenText extended ECM. The Engen and Datacentrix teams were able to digitise contracts, eliminate many manual, paper-based processes, reduce risk and provide better visibility into the Engen contract management process.

Thirdly, the 'Customer Ambassador of the Year' Award was handed to Yasir Ahmed, chief director for transport regulation at the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works, based on the success the department has had over many years with Datacentrix and its EIM solution.

From left: Detlev Legler, vice president sales EMEA emerging markets at OpenText; OpenText, Wayne Keys, business development manager at Datacentrix; and Lenore Kerrigan, country sales director: Africa at OpenText

> "Datacentrix has shown tremendous commitment in embracing the OpenText solutions and embarking on extremely challenging implementations, delivering innovative solutions that have helped to solve complex business problems for our customers."

Datacentrix' head of operations: EIM for the Western Cape, Mike Johnson, comments that "the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works has been a leading light in enhancing information management in the province. This momentum is now spilling over into other local and provincial structures in the Western Cape."

He explains that the Western Cape Government recently extended its EIM agreement, to span multiple departments, covering over 20,000 end-users in total, and touching the lives of millions of South Africans.

And finally, Datacentrix itself was named the winner of the 'SAP Solution Enhancement of the Year' Award – for its work in transforming business operations within Engen and MediClinic.

In giving the award, Lenore notes that "Datacentrix has shown tremendous commitment in embracing the OpenText solutions and embarking on extremely challenging implementations, delivering innovative solutions that have helped to solve complex business problems for our customers."

Mike says success stems from the team's intimate knowledge of OpenText's technology set, matched with a thorough understanding of the client's' business.

"We're able to effectively combine the technology, the professional services, the international expertise and the local support, to create a compelling array of EIM services to our clients," he adds.

Delivering expertise and flexibility along the digital journey

Digital journey roadmap & strategy

Integration and optimisation services

Solution implementation and hosting

Digital managed services

Contact Nigel Hysom, business unit manager, enterprise information management, Western Cape nhysom@datacentrix.co.za

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HPE unveils industry's first
SaaS-based multi-cloud management solution for on-premises and public clouds

Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) introduced HPE OneSphere, the industry's first multi-cloud management solution that provides a unified experience across public clouds, on-premises private clouds and software-defined infrastructure. Through its software-as-a-service (SaaS) portal, HPE OneSphere provides customers access to a pool of IT resources that spans the public cloud services they subscribe to, as well as their on-premises environments. HPE OneSphere is designed for IT operations, developers, and business executives seeking to build clouds, deploy applications, and gain insights faster.

Enterprises today are challenged to quickly capitalise on a relentless volume of information from applications to more effectively compete. These new applications are created differently – virtualised, containerised, built as microservices – and can straddle clouds and sites, creating complexity.

Managing multi-cloud environments today is complicated. Organisations may have multiple points of management, preventing an aggregate accounting of resource utilisation and costs. Traditional cloud management platforms are difficult to set up and manage, and don't span public clouds and on-premises. These factors hinder IT organisations' ability to make informed decisions, impacting digital transformation initiatives and operational agility.

HPE OneSphere's multi-cloud strategy – enabling the solution to be used with any public cloud provider – is designed to dramatically simplify operations. The solution works across virtual machines, containerised workloads, and bare metal applications, so internal stakeholders can compose hybrid clouds capable of supporting both traditional and cloud-native applications. Delivered as a service, HPE OneSphere provides users with a single point to access all their applications and data from anywhere. Through it, users can build private clouds and connect public cloud resources, resulting in a virtual resource pool.

With its unified experience, HPE OneSphere streamlines DevOps and provides deep insights across an enterprise's public and on-premises environments to accelerate cycle times, improve productivity, and generate cost savings – increasing the speed of digital transformation.

> **With its unified experience, HPE OneSphere streamlines DevOps and provides deep insights across an enterprise's public and on-premises environments to accelerate cycle times, improve productivity, and generate cost savings – increasing the speed of digital transformation.**

"Our customers need a radically new approach – one that's designed for the new hybrid IT reality," states Ric Lewis, senior vice president and general manager, Software-Defined and Cloud Group at HPE. "With HPE OneSphere, we're abstracting away the complexity of managing multi-cloud environments and applications so our customers can focus on what's important – accelerating digital transformation and driving business outcomes."

Through HPE Pointnext, HPE simplifies customers' end-to-end digital transformation, including helping them build their strategy, implement multi-cloud environments and simplify costs through consumption models. With the recent acquisition of CTP, which specialises in cloud consulting services, HPE brings expertise in migrating, developing, and managing cloud applications and infrastructures across public and private clouds.

In addition, the HPE OneSphere pay-for-use subscription licensing model complements the HPE Flexible Capacity pay-for-use consumption model for customers' on-premises infrastructure. HPE makes it simple and affordable for customers to start with a single DevOps project or manage across a multi-cloud, multi-site enterprise.

A solution to accelerate digital transformation

HPE OneSphere is ideal for businesses that want to capitalise on digital disruption and enable a broad range of new customer experiences. Key benefits include:

Improved speed and simplicity – To respond to developers faster, IT admins can build clouds and deploy virtual machines, containers, and bare metal in minutes. As projects grow, HPE OneSphere enables rapid dynamic provisioning across public cloud and on-premises environments.

Accelerated application delivery – With unique multi-tenant workspaces called Projects, HPE streamlines and speeds application development and deployment with environments where developers can self-service provision and access catalogs containing templates, cloud-native tools, services and applications.

Greater cost efficiency – HPE OneSphere provides a single view of usage and aggregate costs across all public cloud and on-premises deployments, so CIOs can control and optimise resources and spending. This solution also has the unique ability to provide "showback" costs by cloud, site, line of business, application or subscriber, and enable real-time self-service cost reporting to designated users.

Key HPE OneSphere features include:

- Multi-cloud architecture, supporting different combinations of public clouds, as well as on-premises environments
- Unified experience across clouds, sites, orchestration tools, platforms-as-a-service (PaaS) and containers, minimising the need for specialised skills
- Built-in role-based collaboration Project workspaces designed for IT operations, business users and consumers of IT, such as developers, data scientists and researchers
- Software-defined and API-driven virtual resource pool
- Subscription consumption model

For additional product information visit:
www.hpe.com/onesphere

Hewlett Packard Enterprise

eNetworks overcomes fibre red
tape for fast, simple high-speed connectivity

Datacentrix group company, eNeworks, an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and network specialist, is helping clients to circumnavigate the lengthy waiting period around fibre installations, providing an interim, instant-access option.

According to Jaap Scholten, eNetworks COO, landlord and municipal approvals can be huge barriers in the installation of high-speed fibre installations. "Rollouts can take between three and 12 months; a long, frustrating wait for clients to be up and running.

"Datacentrix is now offering businesses a fast, cost-effective solution, using locally manufactured dual LTE routers that can be working within four hours – a timeframe that includes site inspection and installation."

Jaap explains that not only does this solution provide quick, painless connectivity, it is also highly redundant. "These routers provide dual connection to two different providers, meaning that there is an automatic failover should one connection stop working.

"Additionally, a significant factor for buildings like hospitals, where there are many restrictions, there is no need for drilling when installing the routers, bypassing the need for site approvals."

> **We recently undertook a rollout for a client that included 50 branches around the country, including more outlying areas, which was wrapped up within a month.**

Another fantastic benefit offered by this solution is the fact that it is not restricted to metros. "The dual LTE routers can be installed wherever there is an LTE signal," Jaap explains. "In fact, we recently undertook a rollout for a client that included 50 branches around the country, including more outlying areas, which was wrapped up within one month."

For businesses looking at improving enterprise mobility, the LTE devices are also IoT-enabled.

Datacentrix clinches Huawei
energy partner of the year award

Datacentrix has been honoured with the 'Huawei Energy Partner of the Year' award. Datacentrix, which attained its certification as Huawei Gold Partner, has also earned its status as a Certified Service Partner with a specialisation in network energy, covering the full range of Huawei's network energy solutions.

This certification, where Datacentrix has qualified at 5-star level, played a significant role in the company being awarded the title of Huawei Energy Partner of the Year.

Linda Razzino, channel service manager, Huawei Enterprise Business Group, says: "Huawei provides a full range of network energy solutions. This includes telecom energy, data centre energy, BMP&CP (board mounted power, customised power), inverters and uninterrupted power supplies (UPSes).

Rating levels are based on the types of certification, where 3-star is entry level and 5-star denotes high level expertise.

In order to reach the 5-star ranking, Datacentrix had to certify for 3, 4 and 5-star level requirements."

Brian Lendrum, Datacentrix' business unit manager – Huawei Advanced Infrastructure, Commercial, says, "Datacentrix' 5-star certification played a major role in the granting of this award from Huawei. The fact that we now have six trained and certified UPS engineers within our services team was also an important element."

Linda adds, "Datacentrix beat out eight other local network energy specialists to take the title of Energy Partner of the Year based on its standing as an Huawei Gold Partner for Sales, as well as for its Network Energy field certifications."

Brian concludes, "Datacentrix is extremely pleased and proud to further our long-standing relationship with Huawei Enterprise through this acknowledgement. The award, together with our gold level partnership status, is the latest landmark in our joint striving towards satisfied, connected clients."

Mike McGee, business unit manager, workspace solutions at Datacentrix, Alex Du Min, MD for the Huawei Enterprise business group in southern Africa, Brian Lendrum, business unit manager, Huawei advanced infrastructure, Technology at Datacentrix and Corne Young, account executive, Huawei Enterprise

Datacentrix unveils fast, highly
secure Backup-as-a-Service offering

Datacentrix has launched a new Backup and Disaster Recovery-as-a-Service (DRaaS) offering, providing affordable off-site cloud backups with the highest level of data protection and redundancy. This innovative offering is aimed at assisting local organisations with the management of unprecendented volumes of data, while safeguarding it from malicious attacks.

Marius Redelinghuys, solution architect at Datacentrix explains that the new Datacentrix solution operates on the 3-2-1-0 premise – three copies of data stored in two different media repositories, with one off-site backup copy and zero waiting time to restart operations.

"What is key here, is that businesses could potentially have six copies of their data; they are able to backup locally onsite while Datacentrix replicates the data to its cloud systems, with the option of additional replication to a 'deep storage' vault at Datacentrix (capable of five, seven and 10 year retrieval), as well as to traditional tape."

With the ability to start backing up offsite in less than two minutes, both the cloud BaaS and hosted BaaS options are highly available, flexible, allow for end-to-end data encryption and disaster recovery, and provide secure offsite backups.

"The new offering utilises the company's Midrand and Samrand data centres, featuring redundant data links between the two facilities with sub millisecond latencies. "

"Datacentrix' network is connected using dual path fibre cables with wireless failover as backup, between our two data centres. The system is equally divided between them, delivering backup, recovery and replication availability for all workloads, as well as physical and cloud-based resources.

This allows customers to eliminate legacy backup solutions forever," says Marius.

"More importantly, it provides local companies of all sizes with the latest in data backup and protection technology, without taking away the control of their most important asset, their data."

Dedicated front-end firewalls allow customers to connect securely and directly to the data centres via their own line or the Internet using a protected login. Data is fully encrypted at each stage in the process, from the processing point at the customer to the backend, including tape.

"All customer data remains within South Africa's borders, and offers flexible, usage-based payment options." Adds Marius.

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> **More importantly, it provides local companies of all sizes with the latest in data backup and protection technology, without taking away the control of their most important asset, their data.**

Back up your data to the cloud

3 copies of data   **2** different media repositories   **1** back up off site

Visit: http://backup.datacentrix.co.za

Free 30 day trial

Datacentrix tackles 'smart farming' with local agri sector

Datacentrix held its first highly successful Agri Indaba at Zebula Golf Estate in Limpopo, discussing the many ways that emerging technologies, like the Internet of Things (IoT), are transforming farming and food production.

Datacentrix and sponsors, which included Cisco, IBM, ITR Technology, Mimecast, NetApp and Matus, took a hand-selected group of C-level attendees from the local agricultural sector on an exclusive virtual journey.

The two-day Indaba looked at how the concepts of 'smart farming' and 'precision agriculture' are optimising farm sustainability and profitability through the use of machine-to-machine (M2M) technology such as sensors, drones, satellites and global positioning systems (GPS).

Topics under discussion included 'Smart Agriculture through Integrated IoT' by Dr. Harry Teifel, business consultant at Disruptas, and 'A peek into the future of technology that can disrupt farming as we know it today' by Datacentrix chief digital strategist, Rudie Raath.

"Emerging technologies are changing the way industries work," comments Josua Taljaard, commercial business unit manager at Datacentrix and event owner.

"As a leading technology partner, Datacentrix offers the skills and expertise to guide agribusiness along the transition to becoming mobile, connected and data-enabled organisations that fully reap the benefits of modernisation. The Indaba provided a platform to illustrate Datacentrix' expertise in applying technology to transform business processes, deliver business outcomes and drive a better customer experience."

The Indaba's roundtable format encouraged delegate engagement and covered topics such as advanced IT analytics, SD-WAN as an enabler for connectivity and security.

An interactive panel debate tackled some real-world questions around the challenges that the industry, and specifically the attending delegate companies are facing, such as rural connectivity issues, and how these can be overcome into the future.

"As an attendee, I found Datacentrix' Agri Indaba to be a highly valuable experience," says Alf White, group executive: Information Technology at Senwes, one of South Africa's leading agricultural companies.

"Locally there is a fair amount of uncertainty within the sector when it comes to technology; there are just so many options available. The event provided the opportunity for agri representatives to explore the changing market with the assistance of Datacentrix as a trusted advisor, identify any shortfalls within their own roadmap, and also gain the opinions of peers within the marketplace."

Ready or not, technology brings
the changes for African agricultural sector

By Josua Taljaard, commercial business unit manager at Datacentrix

Emerging technologies, like the Internet of Things (IoT), are changing the way entire industries work, enabling better resources conservation, more efficient operations, and higher productivity levels and, in the case of agriculture, increased yield.

Smart farming isn't a new emerging tech conversation and, on a global level, we have reached a point where the actual benefits of technology deployments in farming are being seen.

From farmers in Myanmar (formerly Burma) who are tripling rice harvests from using data that uncovered how carefully sowing rice seeds reaps a greater harvest than casually scattering them, to Kenyan small holdings owners who have learnt how to best use and store grey water for use during the drought seasons – the digital disruptor in farming is already here.

In fact, Forrester tells us that today's young generation of farmers will be the last to use traditional farming

techniques. The next generation will probably never even travel on a gravel road, choosing instead to farm virtually, an option that is actually available to them today.

Consider that around 10 years ago, the mobile phone had become an agricultural tool empowering farmers with early access to information about weather that helped them plan planting and harvesting more effectively. Introduce a concept like IoT and its very real benefits to the agricultural conversation, and we can clearly see the immense opportunities that will benefit even small-scale farmers.

According to the Internet of Food and Farm 2020 (IoF2020), a project established to explore the potential of IoT technologies for the European food and farming industry, "with the help of IoT technologies, higher yields and better quality produce are within reach. Pesticide and fertiliser use will drop and overall efficiency optimised. IoT technologies also enable better traceability of food, leading to increased food safety."

And how this translates for South Africa, and indeed farmers on the greater African continent, is technology companies making good use of the data available right now

Josua Taljaard, commercial business unit manager at Datacentrix

(through existing technology implementations) and applying it to enhance farming operations productivity while maximising yield.

Connectivity is key to this transformational journey, with smart, connected devices at the heart of this process. Connectivity will not just enable the delivery of IoT, it will also allow for greater collaboration between all players within the agricultural supply chain – from the producer right through to government and the public.

The data collection, real-time insight and process automation capabilities of IoT have already been proven across a number of industries. The agricultural sector itself is seeing increased production with more accurate planting, watering and harvesting. In water challenged areas, technology empowers conservation by alerting through weather prediction and soil moisture sensors that enable watering only when and where necessary.

Today, from his desk, a farmer can check and fix solar powered pumps remotely, optimise irrigation based on soil and plant needs, use artificial intelligence to calculate the best fertiliser, and even use location tracking to improve livestock monitoring and management.

The impact of technology on industry is real, and as a company, Datacentrix believes that South African agriculture is ready to embark on this journey, capitalising on these means to deliver competitive advantage and business value. This step is what will ensure that our farmers truly thrive in an increasingly challenging environment.

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> **Connectivity will not just enable the delivery of IoT, it will also allow for greater collaboration between all players within the agricultural supply chain – from the producer right through to government and the public.**
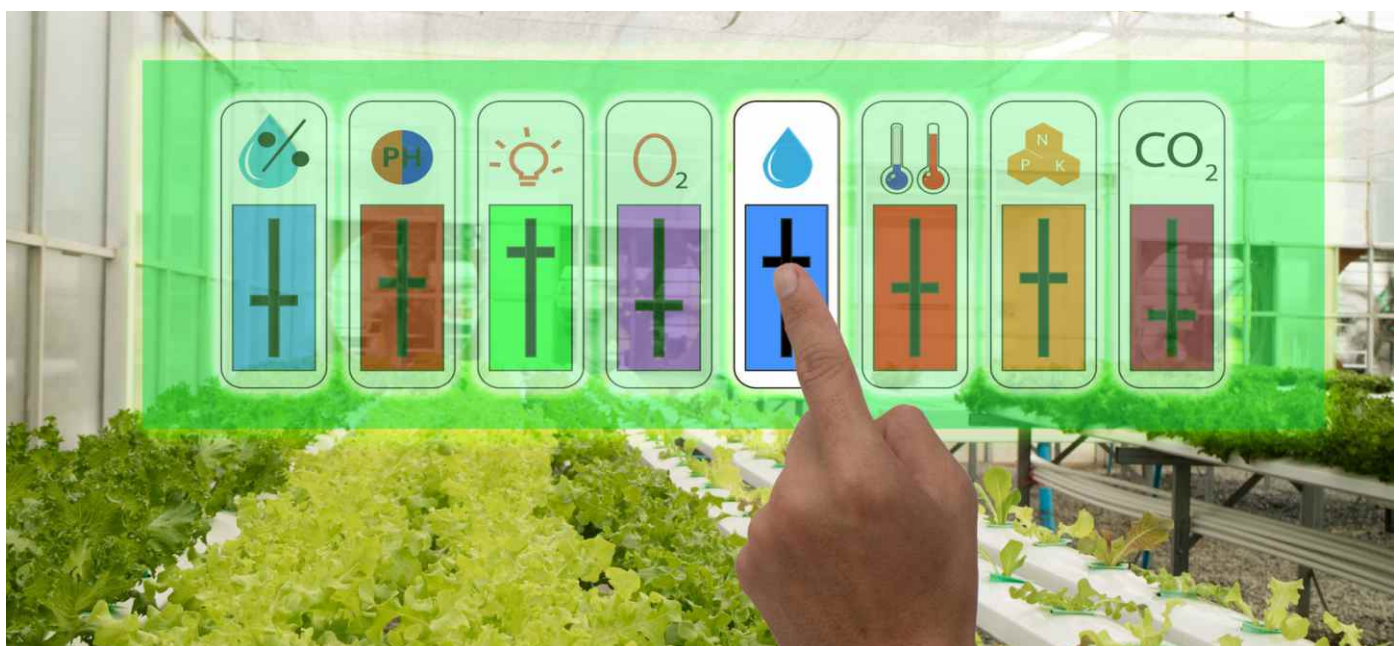
So you're finally on the journey to implementing Hyper-Converged Infrastructure... Now what?

By Alan Browning,Hyper Converged Solutions, lead solutions leader HCI META

The journey to a software-defined data centre starts now. Hyper-converged infrastructure (HCI) is becoming more main stream. HCI is a subset of the complete software-defined data centre; with the major advantage of targeting low hanging fruit within data centres. It does this by allowing optimised operation and availability by allowing turnkey appliances to be operational in a short span of time, while not requiring advanced technical skills that most customers do not have access to.

However, as great as any technology is, mind the speed bumps and ensure that they don't trip you up on your pursuit of implementing a software-defined data centre (SDDC).

An overview of the current HCI landscape
For the past number of years, speaking to enterprise customers about implementing HCI has been likened to pushing water uphill. That mindset is changing as understanding increases and perceptions change. I have often said that the biggest resistance to change is people.

However when a technology fundamentally changes business process, simplifies infrastructure and gives IT the ability to become a profit centre, the adoption of the technology happens despite the "neighsayers". As a point of reference, think back to the resistance when we as IT professionals moved from the adoption of physical servers to virtual servers, and presently; virtual machines are the norm for 90% of x86 deployments globally.

I believe that too many sales people are doing an injustice to the way they are selling and expecting organisations to adopt HCI, these include, but are not limited to:

1. **HCI is being sold as a rip and replace.** This must change as it should be sold as a transitional technology.

2. **HCI is being sold as the answer to every IT challenge.** It is important to remember HCI is not a single product, but a reference architecture. The beauty of HCI is that HCI has an offering for every wallet size and suits most enterprise applications. Understand the customer requirements before leading with a particular product.

3. **HCI is being sold as a SAN replacement product.** This is a misnomer and a brief history lesson will serve us well. No technology is perfect and sometimes, despite the best intentions, the new technology can cause unexpected problems in the data centre. Think back to the phenomena of virtual machine (VM) sprawl in the heyday of virtualisation, it was not uncommon for companies to go from 50 physical servers to 75-100 VMs purely based on the fact that it was "so easy" to deploy VMs. Without proper governance in place, it took organisations longer to realise their return on investment and total cost of ownership due to increased license costs and the complexities of managing a larger VM estate.

> ❝ Don't allow SDS to become the new "pushing water uphill" technology. Embrace it and remember that once the compute is software defined and the storage is software defined, to wrap a layer of software-defined networking around the solution is a relatively simple task.

Alan Browning,
Hyper Converged Solutions
lead solutions leader HCI META

Why selling HCI as a SAN replacement introduces increased costs

I feel that this is such an important thought that to do it justice, it deserves its own heading. One of the unexpected problems that this sales technique introduces is similar to the problem of what virtual machine sprawl introduced.

The challenge is that most organisations have a plethora of storage in their environment so positioning HCI as a SAN replacement means that you need having to propose so many additional nodes to take care of the storage that one ends up with more compute and memory, which becomes unused. This drives up licensing costs, data centre floor space requirements, and of course the price. This is one of the arguments that is often faced in the field that "HCI is a great technology, but it is crazy expensive".

So what is the solution?

While there is no doubt that HCI addresses most of the complexities that organisations wrestle with on a daily basis, it is not a perfect solution in addressing large organisations' storage challenges. The answer is quite simple, the drive to a truly SDDC consists of moving all traditional building blocks namely compute, storage and networking into a software defined state.

HCI takes care of the compute requirements and software defined storage (SDS) should now be positioned as a complimentary technology when a HCI solution is proposed. This drives down the number of nodes that

need to be positioned to address the storage requirement of the SDDC.

SDS is also a reference architecture with various solutions at different price points, be it SDS solutions that provide, file and block storage, object storage, or offerings that allow customers to virtualise all existing storage regardless of the vendor into a condensed SDS offering.

Closing thought

Don't allow SDS to become the new "pushing water uphill" technology. Embrace it and remember that once the compute is software defined and the storage is software defined, to wrap a layer of software-defined networking around the solution is a relatively simple task.

The age old adage of "picking the right tool for the right job" becomes more important than ever. And the most important process before suggesting any "tool" to our clients is to understand what the "job" is? Get this right; and 2018 could be the year that the SDDC becomes a reality.

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Datacentrix takes on hacktivism
and other vulnerabilities with new SOC services

The past two years have seen a veritable explosion of new cybersecurity vulnerabilities, including a steep increase in hacktivism, which Wikipedia describes as "the subversive use of computers and computer networks to promote a political agenda or a social change. With roots in hacker culture and hacker ethics, its ends are often related to the free speech, human rights or freedom of information movements."

Hacktivism came to a head in 2016 around the US elections, with numerous reported malicious cyber assaults being carried out against candidates (including Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders), political parties and governmental IT networks.

Continuing into 2017, we saw WikiLeaks publish thousands of documents claiming the exposure of hacking secrets of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which included the agency's (and presumably other hackers') abilities to break

into mobile phones, smart TVs, and Microsoft, Mac and Linux operating systems.

A Wired.com article from August 2017 stated that: "Yesterday's WikiLeaks dump reiterated something we already knew: our devices are fundamentally unsafe. No matter what kind of encryption we use, no matter which secure messaging apps we take care to run, no matter how careful we are to sign up for two-factor authentication, the CIA can infiltrate our operating systems, take control of our cameras and microphones, and bend our phones to their will. The same can be said of smart TVs, which could be made to surreptitiously record our living-room conversations, and internet-connected cars, which could potentially be commandeered and even crashed."

This year, a mere few weeks ago, a number of global technology companies began to roll out patches addressing design flaws in processors that were named

'Meltdown' and 'Spectre'. The chip vulnerabilities leave devices such as desktops, laptops and smartphones exposed to unauthorised access and information theft, as well as cloud and virtual environments.

"Looking at the course of events over the past two years alone, it is clear that organisations across the globe are grappling with a very real, ever growing data security issue – whether it be held on premise or within the cloud," states Wayne Olsen, security business unit manager at Datacentrix. "Businesses are under immense pressure to protect increasing volumes of data, prevent a myriad of attacks, and do it all faster and more effectively than ever before."

In order to support local companies looking to boost cybersecurity measures, Datacentrix is launching two new services within its industry-leading Security Operations Centre (SOC).

"Firstly, we have created the Datacentrix Cyber Threat Intelligence offering, which will allow local firms to monitor malware, phishing and hacking attacks, identify when information has been stolen, as well as check for malicious mobile attacks. We've increasingly found that applications are being launched using an organisation's name, without its knowledge or permission.

"A recent example of this was a fake version of the WhatsApp app that was downloaded a million times from the Google Play Store before it was discovered to be fraudulent. The Cyber Threat Intelligence offering will help to protect against all of these vulnerabilities, as well as other brand abuse, such as bogus social media accounts created using companies' names."

The new service allows Datacentrix to find existing and potential attackers – even on the dark web – minute by minute in real time, and "take them down", Olsen explains. "Secondly, Datacentrix is also introducing a Contextualised Vulnerability Management service, which will identify potential weak spots within a business' network topology, and put them at the top of the risk and vulnerability list," says Olsen. "This allows organisations to then remediate any problem areas.

"As a trusted security solution provider, it is Datacentrix' intention to monitor and defend customer ICT environments in real time against any potential security threats, but to do this in such a way that our clients are also able to reduce costs and leverage existing technology for improved insight. We believe that the new services added to our SOC offering will be a game-changer in the local market," he concludes.

> **"**
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> **We have created the Datacentrix Cyber Threat Intelligence offering, which will allow local firms to monitor malware, phishing and hacking attacks, identify when information has been stolen, as well as check for malicious mobile attacks. We've increasingly found that applications are being launched using an organisation's name, without its knowledge or permission.**

Wayne Olsen, security business unit manager at Datacentrix

Disruptive tech set to
catapult African businesses ahead

"Disruptive technology" is a phrase that has gained massive airtime in the media, as more and more companies across industries look at how to use technology to do business in a more connected and innovative way. CIOs should take heed of three major disruptive technology forces over the next two years or so, notes Rudie Raath, chief digital strategist at Datacentrix.

"There's no doubt that the Internet of Things (IoT) is gaining huge impetus across Africa, and is set to play a significant role in building the continent's digital future, across sectors ranging from agriculture, road infrastructure and transport, to healthcare, utilities and more.

Local businesses, regardless of industry, are seeing the need to harness the power of IoT to remain competitive, through improved business models and services and enhanced customer experiences. This has placed the focus firmly on investing in IoT-related technologies now for the future."

According to Forrester Research, 82 percent of companies will rollout some form of IoT application this year alone, giving them access to increasing volumes of data that will help them to predict market trends and needs. "And this data will grow exponentially as more and more IoT-enabled devices are being used, highlighting the dire need for an evolved infrastructure," Rudie explains.

"In line with this, we're seeing the local introduction of the low-cost IoT network, a technology that is particularly disruptive to our local telco sector. These cost-effective, low-power wireless networks utilise batteries that can last a number of years, connecting IoT devices to the cloud, and helping Africa to unlock the potential of IoT."

Rudie maintains that cloud infrastructure automation tools will also have a serious impact on the African technology landscape.

"By implementing a solution for hybrid cloud automation, businesses will be able to do away with traditional 'bricks and mortar' technology infrastructure, and leverage a combination of private and public cloud and on-premises solutions – essentially consuming cloud as a service.

This approach completely disrupts the conventional IT shop model, and enables companies of any size to consume cloud technology in a more cost-effective, easy to manage manner, essentially accelerating the modernisation of many traditional industries.

"Even now, tech giant Microsoft is in the process of building two new Azure data centres in South Africa, a serious investment in reliable cloud infrastructure for the continent in its entirety."

> By implementing a solution for hybrid cloud automation, businesses will be able to do away with traditional 'bricks and mortar' technology infrastructure, and leverage a combination of private and public cloud and on-premises solutions – essentially consuming cloud as a service.

Rudie Raath,
chief digital
strategist at
Datacentrix

Finally, states Rudie, the personalisation of data to consumers is seeing not only a new business approach, but a disruption of human behaviour itself. "We're already seeing a major change in the way that consumers receive information, with personalisation built into direct communication," he explains.

"For instance, one of South Africa's largest financial services and healthcare groups has changed the way that customers' health benefits are managed based on their app usage, including wearable, sensory data.

"In addition, one of our 'big four' banking groups is planning to reduce the number of physical branches it has, driving more customers to use its app instead of visiting their local bank. This is enabling the organisation to reach and service customers much faster than before.

"Technology is becoming intertwined into all aspects of our everyday lives. It should be viewed not only as a disruptor, but also an integrator, something that will catapult Africa and the continent's population forward when it comes to new economy transformation," Rudie concludes.

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MediaCloud satisfies customers'
need for speed with hyper-converged infrastructure from Datacentrix

MediaCloud, a niche market internet, telecommunication and cloud services provider, has opted to go the hyper-converged route with Datacentrix, allowing the company to meet the demanding needs of the film, television and media industries.

According to Cecil Barry, founder and MD of MediaCloud, today's fast-paced production environment has brought with it the ever-increasing need for secure, reliable and high-speed connectivity solutions to allow media-rich content creators and distributors alike to send, receive and distribute content without any delays.

Over the past decade, he explains, the industry has migrated from tape-based analogue systems to a digital environment, shooting on solid-state media, which is then ingested within disk-based systems that are typically stored on site or in data centres.

"Bottlenecks within this process can become both expensive and time-consuming, and in many cases, standard internet connections just aren't quick or robust enough to send large files in a timely manner.

"As a company that services hundreds of clients at the same time, who all want access to terabytes if not petabytes of storage, MediaCloud moves, processes and stores large volumes of data at a time on a daily basis. We have a love/hate relationship with technology; it's costly, so the notion of virtualising all this technology and not having to house physical hardware could be perceived as one that is almost 'romantic' to us," notes Cecil.

MediaCloud wanted to virtualise certain elements of its hosted environment, enabling it, for example, to spin up a virtual machine (VM) for a specific client within a very short space of time, without any bandwidth contention ratios, connectivity or latency challenges.

"We need to be able to deliver content backwards and forwards between the production company and broadcaster, as well as to open up huge files, move media around, process it, render it, mix audio files, perform colour grading and so on, on a file that is essentially kilometres away. Fundamentally this requires a lot of bandwidth," continues Cecil.

"And obviously, no-one wants their media to be vulnerable to theft or piracy, so the challenge for us was to be able to create silos that are secure, protected and possibly encrypted. When it comes to looking after a client's assets, it was really important that we would be able to provide a level of security that ensures their assets are within a safe environment. Redundancy and reliability were also critical."

Faced with these challenges, MediaCloud, has built a high-speed managed fibre optic network, specifically designed to meet the rigours of today's current and future, new media, print, high definition and digital cinema workflows.

"Our investment in this cloud-based infrastructure means that MediaCloud is now able to provision services rapidly and scale our internal infrastructure into bite-sized chunks. This means that we do not over-capitalise on the

initial purchase of IT infrastructure, while also unlocking this new market segment."

The organisation's vision to deliver cloud services is linked to the following product offerings:
- Media asset management workflows and automation;
- Object-based storage;
- Post-production project management and sharing;
- Broadcast and media solutions; and
- Data management.

This is based on solutions including accelerated file transfers, backup and archiving solutions, cloud PBX, live broadcast links, unified communication servers, scalable object storage, and live web streaming.

"By implementing a resilient, easy-to-manage infrastructure, MediaCloud is able to realise its vision of delivering these services without the complexity of managing legacy architecture. This hyper-converged infrastructure has not only simplified operations, it also allows the company to focus on delivering innovative and cost-effective solutions to customers without the need to overinvest in expensive IT resources," states Graeme Dendy, business unit manager at Datacentrix. "Furthermore, the simplification of IT deployment has freed up resources to focus on core business and delivering better services.

"By embracing new technological trends, MediaCloud bolsters its reputation as a leader in this market segment, and ensures that it will continue to be seen as the most relevant player within what is a highly complex market segment," he says.

Cecil adds that the solution implemented by Datacentrix has "ticked all of MediaCloud's boxes in terms of availability, scalability, performance and reliability, as well as other areas such as the ability for non-disruptive upgrades.

"From a price perspective too, while the solution is equivalent to a traditional system when looking at cost per virtual machine (VM) or node, there are a host of added advantages that come with this type of infrastructure. The fact that we don't need to go and buy a switch, storage and a compute station – it all ships as one highly reliable unit – is of huge value to MediaCloud.

"MediaCloud is staying ahead of the technology curve, and the fact that we managed to presell all of the availability on the new system before it was even installed is a clear indicator of the need for hyper convergence within the media industry," he concludes.

> **This hyper-converged infrastructure has not only simplified operations, it also allows the company to focus on delivering innovative and cost-effective solutions to customers without the need to overinvest in expensive IT resources.**

Cecil Barry, founder and MD of MediaCloud

Multichoice Media Technology significantly improves media archiving and retrieval with high-speed solution from Datacentrix

Weekends are incredibly busy at M-Net and SuperSport, the group of sports-focused television channels owned by Multichoice and carried on the DSTV satellite platform. The company understands the importance of technology in bringing sports-mad South Africans the sports visuals they love, as quickly and slickly as possible. Warp speed in staying up-to-date with the latest sports news from around the world is a non-negotiable demand as is the case with the organisation's Video-on-Demand (VOD) and BoxOffice offerings.

It's against this background that the Multichoice enterprise storage solution project took place in partnership with Datacentrix. Leon van Wyk, Multichoice head of department for the Media Technology Media Asset Management (MAM) division, says the installation process took place in two phases, providing a platform for high resolution and proxy files.

He says, "The hardware for our MAM system runs on a five-year cycle, with a planned refresh at the end of this period. From the start of this project, we knew it was time to go big and go different for the archiving and retrieval of our media clips for insert and news productions and delivery to all our platforms.

"Across the various business units of Multichoice, we have enormous volumes of video information coming in on a daily basis. Previously, recent footage could only be kept online for about a month. Thereafter, it had to be archived to LTO (linear tape-open) format. When producers working on media inserts needed to retrieve archived clips and bring the media back online, the process could take up to four hours. This had an impact on workflows and often caused bottlenecks in the work process."

Leon clarifies that Datacentrix has an established relationship with Multichoice, having installed the company's IBM hardware five years prior. He explains, "We did look at other products regarding our hardware renewal. However, given our longstanding relationship with Datacentrix, as well as their previous performance, we opted to maintain the partnership.

"When we started engaging with Datacentrix on the hardware refresh, we realised how cost-effective the proposed IBM Elastic Storage Server (ESS) offering was, and also that it would easily allow for expansion, from 285 terabytes of data to almost four petabytes. This was an astonishing leap forward."

Leon adds, "We are also excited about the longevity that has been added to our storage capacity for the future using IBM Jaguar tape technology. This technology allows us to reuse our existing cartridge assets without having to change them as tape capacity technology advances, saving us data migration time from one

technology to another. These transitions can potentially impact on our viewers, and the downtime implications of an on-air operation would be enormous. We will be able to expand in the future by extending our storage with minimal impact. The reasonable cost of the project was another drawcard, as were the performance guarantees."

He adds that the team was also attracted by the compactness of the new IBM media archiving solution. "Floor space is expensive, and the new storage solution offers a small footprint in terms of actual physical space required, yet delivers maximum capacity and extreme performance. It's like buying a Mini with the engine power of a Lamborghini and the storage capacity of a truck."

Leon continues, "Multichoice also has an off-campus secondary storage site, with a conventional storage solution that is currently at maximum capacity with no flexibility to adjust the system. Datacentrix has significantly exceeded this typical storage solution with its offering, for two reasons: its disk configuration, and the fact that the network plays a significant role.

"Now that we are running IBM software on IBM hardware, the combination of this gives us extreme performance. In addition, it also simplifies services as well as the identifying, escalation and resolution of problems."

Leon says the installation of the new solution has significantly improved processes across the business. "All the footage proxy files are now online, both current and archived, for all users. There is no delay now in looking for a media clip. Not needing to wait for a recall of archived footage, or the high resolution version of a clip has enormous implications for the business in terms of productivity."

> ## "
> The time freed up by not having to wait for archive footage bottlenecks will have significant implications for the business' strategy moving forward, and allow the further evolution of creative offerings to our viewers.

"It's now, quite literally, a find-and-click scenario," Leon explains. "The time freed up by not having to wait for archive footage bottlenecks will have significant implications for the business' strategy moving forward, and allow the further evolution of creative offerings to our viewers."

Graeme Dendy, Datacentrix business unit manager: IBM & Lenovo, says: "This high speed storage solution for media retrieval has solidified the lengthy, fruitful partnership between Datacentrix and Multichoice We are pleased to have been able to meet the company's requirements for performance, price and guarantees by providing a solution that has outperformed the previous system so significantly."

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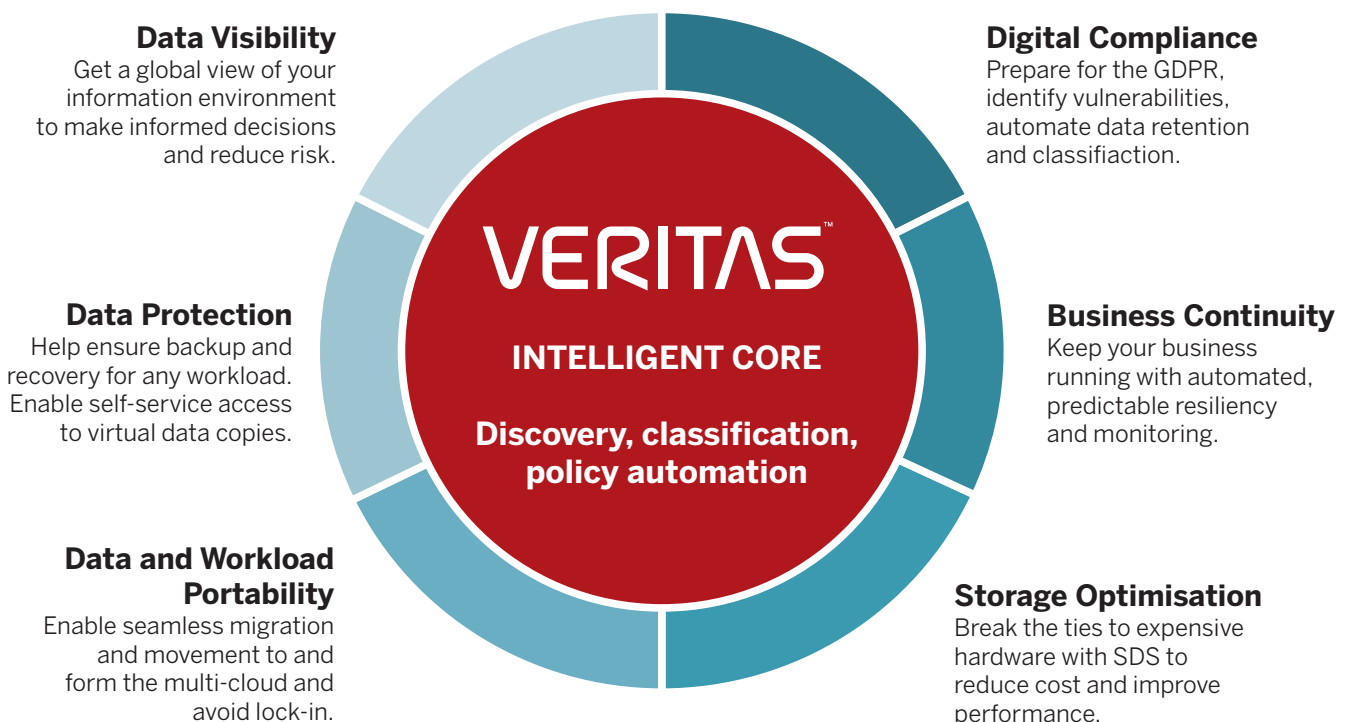
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Digital businesses need faster development to quickly meet changing demands and exploit new opportunities. DevOps and Bimodal IT allow mission-critical "mode 1" applications to coexist alongside rapidly developed "mode 2" applications that are still maturing.

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- Option to migrate out of the cloud or to another cloud

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* Velocity will be added as a feature with Veritas NetBackup™

Datacentrix takes the honour of
hosting annual Barloworld Tech Day

Datacentrix recently hosted an annual 'Tech Conference' held by the IT department of long-term client, Barloworld Automotive.

"The Barloworld Automotive IT department delivers shared services primarily across the Automotive Group, and arranges a yearly technology day to keep the entire IT fraternity up to date with the latest trends and offerings within the ICT marketplace.

"The event has become a landmark day on the company's annual agenda, and it is a great accolade for Datacentrix to be invited as host for the first time," explains Francois Jacobs, senior account manager at Datacentrix.

With an informative full day's agenda, Datacentrix' chief digital strategist, Rudie Raath, followed an introduction by Mark Tarlton, Group Chief Information Officer of Automotive, taking delegates on a journey into the future of technology and looking at the commercial viability of automation, artificial intelligence, machine learning and more.

Datacentrix partners Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), Intuity, Lenovo and Pfortner also each addressed attendees, continuing with the theme of digital innovation and transformation.

In addition, Datacentrix security business unit manager, Wayne Olsen, looked into local cyber-security threats, while its eNetworks chief operating officer, Jaap Scholten, spoke on the art of connected data through low-cost IoT (Internet of Things) networks.

Says Francois: "It was a real honour for Datacentrix to have reached a point in our partnership with Barloworld Automotive, which began more than six years ago, that we have been entrusted to run with this well-regarded Tech Conference. The day provided us with the opportunity to demonstrate our relevance, capabilities and deep technology understanding to the broader Barloworld community, which included CIOs, technical staff, and management and procurement teams."

> **The day provided us with the opportunity to demonstrate our relevance, capabilities and deep technology understanding to the broader Barloworld community.**

From humble beginnings to a strategic partnership, here is a look at the development of Datacentrix' relationship with Barloworld Automotive over the years:

- Longstanding relationship dating back to 2011

- Veritas NetBackup support and services partner since 2011

- Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager (SCCM) upgrade project in 2012. Today, five years later, this is a fully managed service.

- Security assessment in 2012

- IBM Tape Library support since 2013

- Cisco Network Core Design and replacement 2014

- Cisco Wireless Blueprint design and implementation with centralised management for the group

- Barloworld Equipment Outsource partner for end user computing and service desk since 2016

- Lenovo end user computing fulfilment partner for the next three years (2017)

- HPE equipment fulfilment since 2016

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Digitalisation: The unavoidable key to unlocking future opportunities

By Nigel Hysom, business unit manager, enterprise information management in the Western Cape

With local businesses facing a 'perfect storm' of data sources, manipulations and stores, there is a growing imperative to act now based on this new paradigm. The combined forces of the Internet of Things (IoT), which brings vast and untapped data sources, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine-to-machine (M2M) learning, requiring new disciplines in terms of process and governance, and blockchains, where perhaps all our asset registers will be stored, mean that organisations must consider how their businesses will be affected.

Not only will these new drivers bring unforeseen opportunities, they will also lead to different competitors, and companies must adapt their existing business structures to be truly transformative.

The digitalisation of the business' existing data capture, management, work processes and insights (through analytics) is the building block necessary to ensure a business is prepared today for tomorrow's onslaught of new forces.

In the local context this is perhaps even more pertinent. South African businesses are today no longer just competing at a local level; the pressure is on to ensure that they are 'fit' from a global perspective as market forces and customer expectations mean that best products, best services and best prices are available to all. The digitisation process effectively enables businesses to remove wasted time and cost, and this in turn enables them to focus workforces on customer, service and productivity – the cornerstones of a globally competitive business.

Digitalisation + EIM = gold

Digitisation alone results in many provable business benefits, but a solid digitalisation campaign would go nowhere without the foundation on which it must be built – enterprise information management (EIM).

EIM is supported by three core technologies – enterprise content management (ECM), business process management (BPM) and/or automation, and analytics – all of which feed the communication layers of customer experience and internal planning systems, and directly support digitisation of documents, processes and reports.

We are living in a society where the expectation is digital and there's no getting away from it. People want to transact on their phones, browse, shop, review, connect and socialise digitally. Whether you're a B2C or B2B operation, your business interactions are going to be conducted digitally, and digitalisation will enable you to future proof your business and its processes.

A view from South Africa

Consider B-BBEE. The amended codes of good practice have resulted in increased costs for almost two thirds (65 percent) of South African businesses, according to Grant Thornton's International Business Report for 2016 (Business Tech, August 2016).

Digitalisation is one way of streamlining the regulatory requirements. Access to supplier records with a contract management system, for example, would enable instant verification of the requirements to source from certain types of business. Furthermore, the onus on companies to deliver against PoPIA regulations, or to align with FICA requirements, is eased through digitalisation.

A case for digitalisation

There are many tangible examples of why digitisation is a positive win for businesses and proof points that show how, in the context of market and technology forces, it is an imperative that cannot be avoided.

One of these sees a financial services company that has embedded an ECM system into the heart of its client origination process to ensure the capture of documents both meets FICA processes and is effectively archived and easily updated.

> ## "
> It is a journey that is both transformative and disruptive and a commitment to this vision is key in delivering an agile enterprise that can quickly take advantage of the opportunities that future technology presents.

This company provides credit card facilities and, as such, has to undertake limit appraisals for customers regularly and these require that documents be recaptured and updated. While this process is digitised internally, customers are still expected to submit paper documents at the branch or hub.

In order to improve this process, the business is in the process of deploying a true digital capture mechanism that will enable the customer to use a mobile device to capture the document as an image and upload to their profile.

This is one example of ensuring a robust framework is in place to take advantage of new opportunities. Were there no EIM solution in place, the second phase of adding digital capture would not have been as seamless.

On the flip side, another case study highlights an oil company, which had implemented a contract management system to digitise its supplier contacts, but had not integrated this solution with its existing business process solution to enable contract processes to be managed across the enterprise.

A major customer of this company tendered for a logistics supplier contract, but it was not recognised internally that the customer and supplier were the same entity and the relationship was therefore not leveraged. Had customer records of this company also been digitised, the deal would most likely have been signed, sealed and delivered.

So, where to from here?
Datacentrix offers a number of starting points to help customers take digital transformation from a plan to reality. While it is dependent on company size and complexity, the first steps would be to engage in a single or series of workshops to fully understand and shape the digitalisation journey. These workshops would deep dive the business drivers and priorities, the current system's landscape and the business case.

From there, a digitalisation roadmap will be presented that shows practical steps that the business needs to take to implement a new or optimise an existing framework while preparing or piloting new areas. The focus at this stage is on business impact.

The keyword here, however, is 'journey' as this is a multi-year commitment that sees digitalisation become part of the company DNA, with milestones that will deliver (and prove) value.

It is a journey that is both transformative and disruptive and a commitment to this vision is key in delivering an agile enterprise that can quickly take advantage of the opportunities that future technology presents.

Nigel Hysom, business unit manager, enterprise information management, Western Cape

Datacentrix offers industry
leading performance efficiencies to Adcock Ingram

Adcock Ingram is a pharmaceutical company with production facilities that run 24x7 365. The company's operations are headquartered in Midrand.

The main challenges faced by the organisation were:

- Handling data growth and being able to respond to the increased expectation of business from IT with a limited amount of funding.
- Adcock Ingram's existing VNX 5300s were at the end of their scalability being completely full and almost at the end of their maintenance and support.
- Due to the nature of Adcock Ingram's business downtime is a major concern and the risk of unplanned outages needs to be minimised to ensure business can operate 24x7 365.
- Whatever solution proposed needed to be easily scaled and managed.
- The solution needed to offer simplified provisioning for open systems, block and file environments.
- Another requirement was that the system had to have a foreseeable lifespan for at least seven years without escalating support costs.
- Adcock Ingram needed a stable reliable solution that provides replication between test/dev and production.
- The proposed solution had to be able to leverage tried and tested data reduction technologies to maximise storage efficiency and effective capacity.

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT 1 Rack(s)	VMAX ALL-FLASH PROPOSED VMAX 250FX: 1 Rack(s)
Features • 28 TB usable • Cooling: 7K BTU/hour • Power: 2.1 kW • 20.19 ms response time • 6,620 IOPs*	**Features** • 46 TB effective (@2:1 reduction) • Cooling: 5K BTU/hour • Power: 1.5 kW • <0.8 ms response time • 300K IOPs*
Operational management • Manual performance tuning, storage engineering • No ability for data reduction • Reactive storage tiering *95th percentile used for consolidated arrays	**Operational management** • Zero configuration work, zero tuning, zero engineering • Always on and inline data services *RRM 8K blocks

| Annual power & cooling savings | 96% less latency | 2:1 data reduction | 27% less power/cooling | 57% less rack space | 45x more performance |

> ## "
> **The arrays addressed all the challenges faced by Adcok Ingram in being a reliable trusted platform for business critical applications and catering for significant growth and expansion requirements, as well as delivering 99.9999 percent uptime.**

Disk versus FLASH: Maintenance costs over time
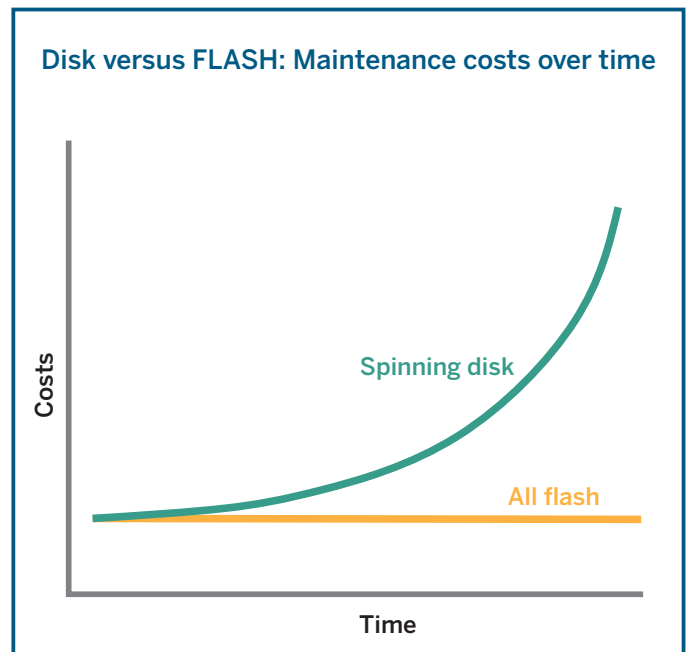
Solution overview

Datacentrix proposed two VMAX 250 FX All flash arrays, offering industry leading performance efficiency and enterprise availability. These arrays addressed all the challenges faced by Adcock Ingram in being a reliable trusted platform for business critical applications and catering for significant growth and expansion requirements, as well as delivering 99.9999 percent uptime. The VMAX 250FX arrays are managed through a central web-based GUI and scale in modular chunks for easy proactive capacity expansion.

The VMAX 250FX also comes inclusive of all software licenses, meaning that there are no hidden costs to enable specific functionality. This open transparent licensing was also a major draw card for Adcock Ingram in deciding on the correct technology platform to carry the company into the modern data centre.

Due to the reliability of all flash systems, the Dell EMC VMAX 250 FX has an expected lifespan of seven years over five years on spinning disk systems, as well as a linear maintenance pricing with no cost escalations after year three.

Migration project

One of the key concerns for Adcock Ingram with the implementation of the new storage systems was risk of downtime, as this would have a major impact on production
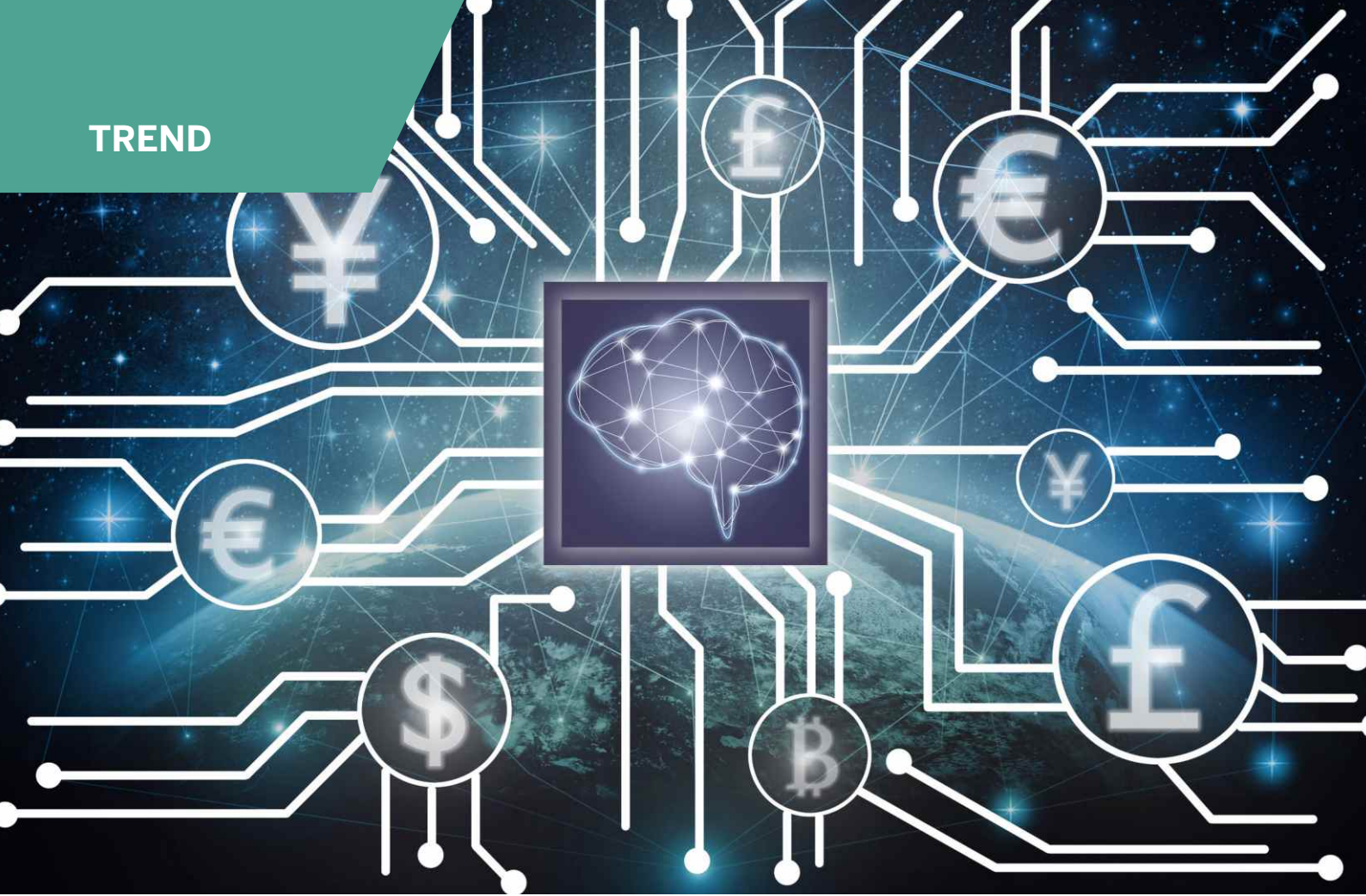
at the manufacturing sites. Datacentrix developed a migration strategy to move data from the old VNX 5300 systems onto the VMAXs with minimal risk to Adcock Ingram. Another concern was the expiry of the maintenance in December 2017, which put a fixed deadline for any migration project.

Due to the nature of the project, Datacentrix allocated one of its senior engineers to handle the migration. The engineer went above and beyond the initial scope of the project also assisting with some power issues encountered at the DR site.

Datacentrix is very proud of the fact that it migrated both the test/dev array as well as production with zero data loss and no unscheduled downtime, and, in the words of Shameegh Khan, technical manager at Adcock Ingram: "The project was a resounding success, and I am very glad that Adcock Ingram engaged with Datacentrix to deliver on the solution."

DELLEMC PARTNER TITANIUM

Man vs machine in the investment
world – the rise of the algorithmic
model and its implications

Artificial Intelligence (AI) showed that it has decisively reared its head in the investment arena

Would you trust a machine to manage your wealth, or do you feel more comfortable with a person? After all, it is a fact that earlier this year, BlackRock – the world's largest asset manager with around $5.7 trillion under management – announced that it was moving away from having humans selecting and selling its stocks, at least in part, and was turning to automated systems for certain of its stock picks.

Datacentrix is fostering discussions on the possibilities that the digital age brings to South Africa, and how disruptive technologies are reshaping traditional business models. Dr Dennis Mwansa, an expert with both local and international experience in the field of stock traders and their related technologies, has contributed to the theme, "Trading billions in nanoseconds – how artificial intelligence is used to achieve this". Mwansa is the chairman of Dot Com Zambia, and holds

the position of technology strategist and head of Technology Research & Development at one of the largest exchanges in Africa.

In the financial services and insurance sectors, AI has already become a force to be reckoned with, taking on certain functions that are based on parameters and inputs that humans provide. This includes 'robo-advisors' in the investment world, and the use of AI in the insurance arena for claims processing. Robo-advisers rely on automation and mathematical rules (algorithms) to offer low-cost financial planning advice on the Internet. They'll typically ask a few questions designed to understand your attitude towards taking financial risks, and how long you have to save and invest your money (for example, as compared to when you will reach your retirement age).

Dr Dennis Mwansa

Once the platform has received some input, it will be able to suggest a personalised portfolio to help you achieve your investment goals.

But the use of algorithms in the financial arena goes much further than the use of a relatively simple robo-adviser platform giving advice to individuals in their quests to improve their personal wealth. In the world of stock exchanges, algorithms can be used to trade billions of dollars in nanoseconds, and also to make decisions on where to invest a pool of funds instead of using a team of human beings.

Dr Mwansa says, "We are seeing the rise of artificially intelligent investment funds in the world's markets. On 17 March 2017, many in the financial world were stunned to learn that BlackRock had cut more than 40 jobs, replacing a number of its human portfolio managers with artificially intelligent, computerised stock-trading algorithms, to create a fund that makes decisions on where and how much to invest using machines rather than people."

And this isn't the only case of Wall Street investors laying off human stock-pickers and replacing them with robots, but it has arguably made people sit up and take notice. While all is not necessarily lost for the human trader, however, it does seem as though algorithmic trading is here to stay – and in turn, this is bound to bring potential job losses in certain financial spheres going forward.

Dr Mwansa further clarified how AI, as used in the world's capital markets, can today allow traders to buy and sell stock in moments on global stock exchanges. He said, "It's a style to execute certain strategies, allowing traders to take advantage of buying and selling price differences in stock on offer in a tiny time frame. Trading securities has increasingly become an information intensive decision-making process. Today, more risk controls are taking place before the trade, driven by regulation and a desire to minimise risk exposure.

"The information that needs to be processed includes details about price, liquidity and even sentiment, coming through from sources such as social media blogs, news feeds and analysts' reports. When you think about big data that needs to be factored in, it's useful to have a system that can vacuum up all the information available and process this data at light speed to make the billion-dollar decision on whether to trade or not."

These decisions are facilitated by algorithmic trading, which uses mathematical models to determine decision making on the financial markets. Computer-based algorithmic trading is most commonly used by large institutional investors (for example, those who are responsible for

running retirement funds on behalf of fund members) because of the large number of shares they buy every day. Complex algorithms allow these investors to obtain the best possible price without significantly affecting the stock's price and increasing purchasing costs.

Fans of algorithmic trading say the use of automation to trade takes the human bias out of the equation. It is a known fact in investment circles that human emotions can lead to financial losses, because people make the wrong investment decisions based on their emotions – buying or selling at the wrong time in an investment cycle because of emotions such as fear or greed.

Speed is also becoming increasingly important in the exchange industry of the 21st century as a way to attract and keep clients. Those exchanges that have trading systems with the lowest latency, which is the time between when an order is received and processed, and acknowledgement sent, will be seen as more desirable to investors, especially those investors in the big leagues with huge funds at their disposal.

Dr Mwansa concludes, "The open outcry floor system has been replaced by digital trading for 21 years. The open outcry system was how professionals on a stock exchange floor communicated, and as per its name, it involved shouting and the use of hand signals to transfer information about buy and sell orders. The introduction of electronic trading immediately made this process dramatically faster, and allowed for anonymity of selling the stocks. Today's ongoing evolutionary use of AI in global stock exchanges has made trading its fastest yet. It is another example of how AI is taking over skilled professions and disrupting business as we know it."

Datacentrix attains quality,
environmental and health & safety certifications

Datacentrix has confirmed that it has achieved ISO 9001:2015 (Quality Management System), 14001:2015 (Environmental Management System), and OHSAS 18001:2007 (Occupational Health and Safety Management System) certifications, a significant achievement for the company, says CEO Ahmed Mahomed.

"This official recognition will certainly have a very positive impact on our positioning in the market, and, combined with our Level One B-BBEE status, provides Datacentrix with a compelling competitive advantage within the local sector," he explains.

The organisation's Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal offices were recently audited by DQS Management System Solutions – as was its Infrasol (Samrand) operation – to assess compliance.
The scope of the audit was determined as "the provision of all-inclusive integrated IT technology and services-orientated ICT solutions to corporate and public sector organisations."

Processes audited included SHEQ (Safety, Health, Environment and Quality), human resources, sales and projects, finance, warehouse, procurement, facilities, IT, and the Gauteng Service Desk.

Its Cape Town, East London and Port Elizabeth branches, as well as eNetworks, will go through the process later this year. Debbie Maguire, divisional manager: logistics and SHEQ at Datacentrix, clarifies: "Datacentrix' management and responsible process owners were involved throughout the audit, assisting in providing the relevant information, documentation and proof of compliance. In fact, the auditors

noted top management's commitment and transparency regarding the management system in the report-back received, and also praised our risk assessment process, enabling assessment of current measures to analyse and control.

"Datacentrix' achievement of these standards is proof that the organisation adheres to consistent processes and procedures, and confirms that compliance and continuous improvement are high up on management's agenda," she adds.

"Our entire team has worked tirelessly to ensure that we met these objectives, and without the dedication and commitment of all members, it would not have been possible," concludes Ahmed.

> **Datacentrix' achievement of these standards is proof that the organisation adheres to consistent processes and procedures, and confirms that compliance and continuous improvement are high up on management's agenda.**

ISO 9001:2015 Quality management

ISO 14001:2015 Environmental management

OHSAS 18001:2007 Health and Safety

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