

A person's hands are shown holding a glowing, white, fluffy cloud. The background is dark with a blue and white digital network overlay. The network consists of white lines connecting various nodes, some of which are represented by glowing icons: a padlock, a laptop, a magnifying glass with a plus sign, an envelope, two smartphones, a person icon, and a tablet. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and technological.

STRETCHING VALUE

System Integrators are enhancing capabilities to address customer needs even as they cope with the transformation coming in with emerging technologies

The fast paced emergence of new technologies continues to lead transformational shifts with both those who deploy technologies and end users who are beneficiaries of the deployments. For systems integrators in the region, the challenge is to be among the first as well as be the best in taking new solutions to market even when confronting the challenges of sustaining profitable operations in the face of visible economic slowdown.

Some traditional solutions have seen a drop in demand and Emerging technologies have disrupted traditional go to market models, which therefore necessitates the need for an SI to adopt new solutions and new approaches among their offerings. Integrators cannot choose to ignore the change that is coming and need to substantiate their value proposition to customers.

Stephen Fernandes, Executive Vice President - TransSys Solutions, an Oracle Platinum Cloud Select Partner says, "With several new and disruptive technologies such as IoT, software defined infrastructure etc. in the market today, a systems integrator's role has become more relevant in today's business.

System Integrators need to have a good understanding of the customer's strategy, business and their IT requirements. Customers are keen to engage in a partnership model, where the SI on-boards the best practices, proven technology and innovates to deliver value to their stakeholders."

While it may be challenging to have all necessary expertise in-house, collaboration with other solutions providers is an approach to boost overall capabilities to deliver. Companies are increasingly adopting new technologies and solutions from multiple vendors. This consequently creates a huge opportunity for system integrators in helping integrate solutions that differ in architecture and specifications.

Stephen adds, "SIs need to continuously innovate and evolve with changing times to remain ahead of the curve. They need to help customers drive

higher services levels with the right blend of technologies. SIs have definitely shifted their game plan. To offer a high value proposition to their clients, they are collaborating across the board. They are partnering with Managed Service Providers as well as Cloud Providers. Interestingly, in the new collaboration model size does not matter, it is the value that each partner brings to the table. Smaller consulting players and solution providers offer deep industry domain and niche technology to the consortium. Further, there is a growing trend of larger organizations preferring smaller niche solution providers for their skills and agility to deliver."

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SI services, especially in application integration to deliver better customer services. A recent Market and Markets report forecasts the global EAI (Enterprise Application Integration) market to grow at a CAGR of 10.58% during the period 2016-2020. Finesse, an SI that offers software solutions in the areas of Business Intelligence, CRM, Enterprise Content Management, Governance, Risk & Compliance and Corporate Performance Management apart from several other software applications, is continuously

seeking to bring in innovative solutions into the segments its focuses on.

Sunil Paul, COO at says, "We have expanded our portfolio to cater to demands in the newer technologies and offerings. We have been adding different dimensions to our services by integrating solutions into our portfolio for unique positioning. With in - depth knowledge, extensive training and proven experience, Finesse offers the most suitable approach to meet the client requirements."

He elaborates, "We continue to bring



Sunil Paul
COO
Finesse

innovative solutions into our portfolio including the Currency Sterilizer, Robotic Wet Signature (Remote Signature) and HiMed Terminal (for patient-doctor interaction). We offer InfoArchiving solutions to take of legacy systems and applications. We have also added Infra practice to our existing portfolio to give a wholesome solution to our customers.”

The focus on new capabilities and solutions is quite pertinent especially in domains such as information security where the threat landscape is constantly evolving.

Jude Pereira, Managing Director, Nanjgel Solutions, a leading security solutions SI, says, “We are constantly on the lookout for the latest & greatest in technologies/ vendors that can prove immediate value to our clients, so we have most certainly added several new vendors for Incident Response Platform, Application Security – not from a scanning point of view but to be able to hardening the app & securing the same, Intelligent Threat & Machine Readable Management Feeds, Risk Management, End User Threat Behavior Analysis, Endpoint Detection & Remediation etc.”

Substantial shifts

Cloud based services are gaining acceptance for the convenience they offer across sectors. And with that, there has been a sea change in the way a lot of technology is being procured as the consumption based OPEX model gains ground over the traditional CAPEX model.

Sunil says, “Some of the larger projects are being put on hold or moving slowly due to the slowdown in the region.

However on the other side, the demand for OPEX model based solutions is looking up.”

The shift toward OPEX consumption models is necessitating integrators to adopt and modify their terms of engagement and agreement with customers that need to follow best practices.

Stephen says, “There is a shift in the way companies procure today, and going forward, this will continue to spiral towards a consumption based model. An upward trend towards IT outsourcing has called for SIs to adapt to best practices in service delivery. Financial modelling, improved service level agreements backed by innovation and a continuous evolution in solutions to address business outcomes is now a key factor for clients.”

He opines that the perceived slowdown in the economy has made companies to take a cautious approach towards IT investments. Most companies have planned for growth both in revenues and profitability but with reduced budgets; there is a push towards OPEX based models leveraging cloud computing.

Stephen adds, “Companies demand business value from Systems Integrators and vendors. Forward-looking companies will continue to invest after taking a strategic view of the markets. They will invest in low cost, high impact initiatives driven by Mobility and Analytics. Companies are making a shift to the digital journey, mandated by both their customers as well as their competitors.”

IoT is widely anticipated to be a game changer when it becomes more pervasive in deployments.

Jude adds, “There is certainly going to be a technology explosion with the coming of IoT which is going to change the current technology landscape and the control as well as management of the same drastically. We have already made sure that whatever solutions we currently have in our portfolio are in a position to address the challenges and changes that come with the emergence of IoT & SDN technologies. We have in fact already currently engaged with some projects in the region.”

What it takes

Jude elaborates the consistent effort that an SI needs to invest in to be on top of their game in all processes from understanding customer requirements to designing, deploying and supporting.

He says, “There are several factors that we consider to maintain the lead as a provider of IT Security Solutions. The first is to ensure we have the latest and the best in terms of vendors we are associated with and the technologies we have to offer. Secondly, we need to be able to have an excellent consultant to understand, design and document the customer’s requirements as well as how we can going to provide with the most ideal solution at the best price. Third, it is necessary to have an excellent

certified team that can implement and take the design document, scope of work documents etc and put all of that into implementation of the most successful and automated solution. Finally, you need to be able to support the customer on daily operation issues with zero downtime on the solution. Guess it is easy to begin all these four processes but it's a nightmare to sustain and maintain the same levels of enthusiasm at all times."

He adds that as a company, he believes that Nanjgel, while being one of the more successful ones in the verticals its focuses on in the region, has potential to deliver much more and has enough projects in hand to complete. Therefore, the company doesn't see the need to diversify outside its current areas of competence.

Stephen opines that TransSys sees opportunities across all key industry verticals and adds that to be relevant to the industry sector, it is important to understand the organization's business drivers for technology procurement. Based on its past experience and expertise gained, TransSys has developed industry specific frameworks and methodology that are offered to its clients as part of services. This holistic approach, Stephen claims helps to reduce the risk associated with any implementation and support services.

He elaborates, "Opportunities could range from advisory services around enterprise architecture, to transition their on premise infrastructure and services, including data centers, to a cloud computing model. As an SI, we need to continue to innovate to ensure that we address industry vertical challenges. We have successfully delivered complex solutions across Airlines, Banking, Insurance, Retail, Real Estate and Telecom. Besides we have worked with strategic clients in other industry verticals.

Ahead on the road

With the market becoming more commoditized, SIs now have to focus on delivering value added services that enable their customers to compete in a market led by digitalization. Innovation and differentiation with higher service

levels must remain top of mind for system integrators to remain relevant.

Stephen adds that training and retaining talent is also a key challenge, TransSys invests significantly in training as well as in building innovative solutions that will remain the key focus for the company in the year ahead.

He elaborates, "Attracting and retaining key IT talent and skills has always been an uphill task in the SI industry. To this end, TransSys trains its staff and enables skill development across all disciplines. These investments into our employee's development helps us to retain the best talent with industry standard skill sets. In 2016-17, we will continue to invest in innovation and transformation solutions, thereby helping our clients increase their revenues and market share while improving their profitability. We have invested in building our industry knowledge and this has helped us in successfully delivering multiple transformational solutions across various industry segments."

Integrators such as Finesse are making concerted efforts and investments in participating at different regional ICT expos as well as doing focused events that help them drive visibility with target base of customers about solutions they offer.

Sunil says, "We are very active in organizing regular seminars, road shows and channel orientation programmes and that puts us in a leading position along with robust client acquisition, 100 % Project delivery, awards and recognition."

The integrator is also quite upbeat about prospects ahead, having gone ahead with expansions into different markets and with plans to further stretch out into Africa and Europe.

Sunil elaborates, "Finesse continues to grow at a 50% YoY. With operations across the region with over 175 clients, we have a very strong presence in Oman, Bahrain & Qatar apart from the UAE. We have recently stated our KSA operations. We will be expanding to the Africa & Europe markets by next year and our staff strength should cross 400. We are expecting our revenues to touch 100 million USD by 2022."



Jude Pereira
Managing Director
Nanjgel Solutions

Nanjgel's Jude says that while he has heard about slowdown heat that some companies are facing, his company has enough projects in hand and also has requirement for additional engineers. The SI is now looking to expand its reach into additional verticals.

He adds, "We continue to see ourselves as the pioneers at what we do and confidently say that our dominance has been proved in the Oil & Gas, Telco, Government & Civil Service. We would like to expand in to the BFSI sector, transport & health care in the next couple of months to a year. Certainly we also want to be recognized for successful implementations and excellent after sales support, which we provide whole heartedly literally without any help from our vendors."

The SI market has enough opportunities ahead to build on as ICT continues to interweave itself as an integral Business enabler and a necessary investment, offsetting the slowdown impact substantially. The challenge therefore remain for SIs to ensure they bring to their customers solutions that are built for the future ahead.