

IN DEPTH:  
IT skills  
p7-8

## Building resilient IT operations

Lessons from recent outages

**Melissa Bischooping,**  
Tanium, p5



## Insider threat defense

Protecting the enterprise from a high-risk threat from within

**Matt Rider,**  
Exabeam, p6



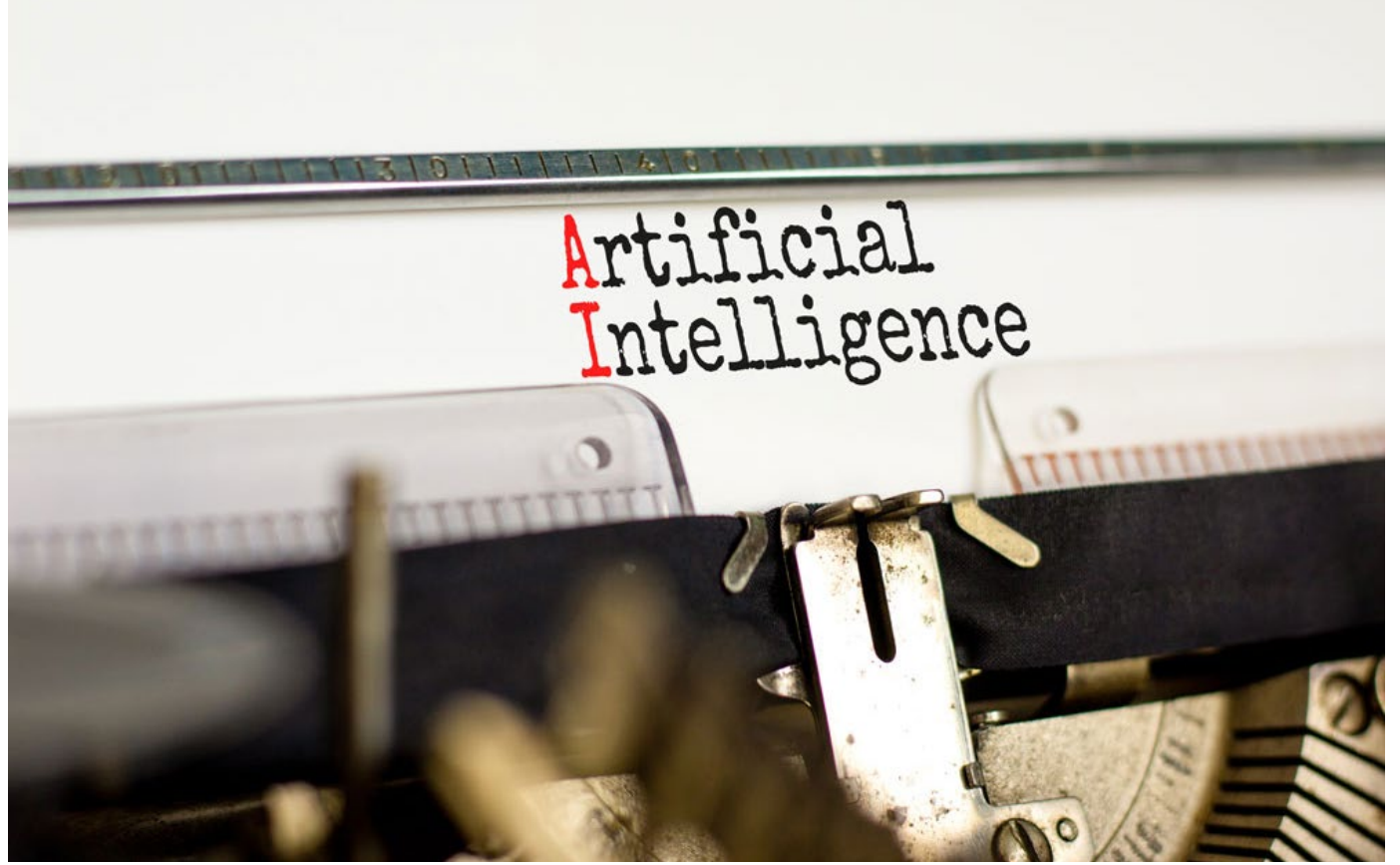
## Questions and answers

Every 6 months I would live in a different location

**Richard Dobbie,**  
Datalec, p16



# 2025 – the year AI was unleashed



**On 13 January, the UK government unveiled the AI Opportunities Action Plan, which urges Britain to help shape the AI revolution, stressing the need to be an ‘AI maker, not just an AI taker.’**

The action plan’s recommendations fall into three themes, aiming to drive economic growth, benefit public services and increase personal opportunities. The plan stresses the importance of securing a sufficient supply of computational power, necessitating long term planning and investment for infrastructure, and a proposed expansion of the UK’s investment in data centres.

A key part of the AI Opportunities Action Plan is the development of AI Growth Zones (AIGZs), areas across the country that will speed up planning approvals for the rapid build-out of data centres, give them better access to the energy grid, and draw in investment from around the world. The first will be in Culham, Oxfordshire – home to the UK’s Atomic Energy Authority.

“The proposed development of AIGZs presents a logical and effective way to fast-track new AI infrastructure, and to co-develop it with distributed energy resources – addressing the many power challenges

that have historically hindered national developments,” comments Mark Yeeles, Vice President, Secure Power division, Schneider Electric UK & Ireland.

It should also be noted that, with more data centres likely to be built outside major cities, key terrestrial routes linking the north and south, east and west of the UK will need upgrades to deliver high-capacity optical and dark fibre capacity.

Moreover, while the UK’s IT sector is broadly positive about the announcement, security concerns have been raised from several quarters.

“Data will play a central role in Britain’s AI future, requiring comprehensive data management systems and data privacy protocols to ensure that AI is trained on trustworthy data and that data inputs don’t breach privacy laws,” says John Lucey, VP EMEA North for Cellebrite. “In key sectors such as policing and defence, organisations need to be able to trust AI systems to deliver accurate results in a safe manner, maintaining client confidentiality while automating manual processes to drive efficiencies.”

“We must not forget the increased threat this technology has created. AI is being

deployed by criminals to create sophisticated phishing and social engineering attacks, widening the attack surface,” notes Andrew Rose, CSO at SoSafe. “Even the benevolent AI that organisations adopt for their own benefit can become a new attack surface, subject to innovative attacks such as data poisoning. It is therefore critical that public-private partnerships to boost AI rollout must be supplemented with the appropriate security measures.”

With many developments and deliverables to track over the next 12 months, including a long-term compute strategy and delivery of the first AI Growth Zone, 2025 is set to be the biggest year yet for AI in the UK.

“The timescales set out in the government’s response indicate that the action plan’s recommendations are being treated with urgency and we can expect significant levels of activity over the next 12 months,” confirms Phillip Souta, Global Director of Tech Policy at law firm Clifford Chance. “Organisations should consider how they may wish to engage with the UK government and regulators on the development of AI policy, plans for unlocking data access, or as part of regulatory sandboxes.” ■

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## DC01UK wins approval for Europe's biggest data centre

DC01UK's planning application for a new state-of-the-art data centre has been approved by Hertsmeare Borough Council's planning committee.

DC01UK will be Europe's largest cloud and AI data centre, with up to two million square feet of space, and the location of the data centre brings together the key pillars needed to fulfil the existing cloud shortfall and cater for the large increase in demand expected in future years. This includes a power reservation of 400MVA from National Grid, owing to its proximity to the Elstree (Letchmore Heath) substation and proximity to national and international fibre optic routes as well as nearby Availability Zones in the region.

"We want to thank Hertsmeare Borough Council for their open and pragmatic approach to DC01UK's plans. They understand our ambition for both the project and the borough. It will bring huge benefits for local people through a stronger local economy, more skilled jobs and better opportunities. Our plans also include a raft of upgrades for local transport, including new and existing bus routes, expansion of the local cycle hire scheme and road improvements," said a spokesperson for DC01UK. "This approval will also solidify Hertsmeare's status as a leading region in the South East as a

tech and media superhub, complementing other established, large technology-driven organisations and film studios in the area. With planning for this important piece of Critical National Infrastructure now approved, the site stands ready to power the needs of tomorrow bringing a much-welcomed boost to the UK's digital economy."

Economic projections estimate the construction value of the project at £3.75 billion with a year-round generation of £21.4 million in business rates once the data centre is operational. The positive economic impact of the data centre would also see the creation of 500 skilled on-site jobs during the construction phase, 200 permanent, skilled jobs once up and running and a further 13,740 indirect jobs. DC01UK is also estimated to generate approximately £1.1 billion per annum GVA (Gross Value Added) indirectly per year.

This landscape-led scheme is set in 85 acres of grounds, 54% of which will be retained as green, open space, with a 10% net biodiversity gain. The approved plans also include a suite of local benefits, including the confirmed expansion of the local cycle hire programme, £2 million of upgrades for new and existing bus routes, and improvements to cycle paths, footpaths and crossings. There is also a significant financial contribution to local employment skills and opportunities included within the plans.

"Data centres are the beating hearts of this modern age, powering the digital infrastructure that we can no longer live without," said Minister for Telecoms, Sir Chris Bryant MP. "That is why I am thrilled to see that Hertsmeare Council has granted planning permission to one of the largest data centre projects in Europe. Data centres like this will not only play a pivotal role in our AI Opportunities Action Plan, but drive economic growth through the creation of skilled jobs across the South East." ■



## BT tells Critical National Infrastructure providers: quit copper

BT has urged providers of Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) to move off the outdated copper network as it is becoming increasingly unstable.

BT's own data shows that 60% of CNI customers in the UK currently have no plan to start migrating off the legacy analogue network.

The call is more focused on the looming switch-off of the legacy Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) in favour of IP-based digital phone like VoIP services, rather than the much longer-winded withdrawal of physical copper lines themselves that will take many years to complete.

The big switch-off was last year delayed to 31 January 2027 to give internet service, phone providers, telecare operators and consumers more time to adapt. The main focus of this delay was the 1.8 million people who use vital home telecare systems in the UK, which aren't always compatible with the replacement VoIP/IP-based digital phone services. For everybody else, the deadline is still technically December 2025.

BT is now pushing for key network and

CNI providers to leave the PSTN before the deadline, not least due to its lack of support. This will help to stop the switch-off disrupting critical public systems, such as water monitoring sensors, phone lines for doctors and pharmacies, fire and burglar alarms, lift alarms, emergency phone lines by roads, help points at train stations, and some older card payment machines.

"With the ageing copper landline network becoming increasingly fragile, it's simply too risky to run the UK's essential public services on outdated networks. BT is committed to moving these services onto future-proofed modern connectivity well ahead of the closure of the analogue copper network – but we can't do it alone," said Bas Burger, CEO of Business at BT. "We're urging all Critical National Infrastructure providers to act now to help protect their services and reap the long-term benefits of going digital. Waiting until the analogue switch-off is too late. We're working with customers to review their technology estate, test their critical devices and switch to more reliable connectivity by the end of 2025." ■

## Building a buzz with upgraded Wi-Fi

Principle Networks announces a new partnership with Buzz Bingo, Britain's biggest omnichannel bingo operator, to upgrade the Wi-Fi networks across its 80 bingo clubs in England and Scotland.

The project, which will be co-managed by Principle Networks and Buzz Bingo's IT team over a five-year term, will see the implementation of Cisco Meraki wireless access points. These enterprise-grade cloud-managed access points are designed to connect IoT devices and security solutions and will enable Buzz Bingo to offer a range of new services and improve customer experiences across its clubs.

"A key part of our growth will be driven by enhancing customer experiences through investments in our clubs and the latest technologies," said David Cutts, Chief Technology Officer at Buzz Bingo. "The concept of bingo has evolved. Today, customers have a wide range of choices of how they want to play – and our omnichannel approach is unique – with technology sitting at the heart. Principle Networks demonstrated a deep understanding of our objectives and have the expertise required to deliver them. We're excited about this partnership's possibilities and look forward to working with the team."

Over the course of the agreement, Principle Networks will work with Buzz



Bingo's IT team to constantly evolve how Buzz Bingo serves its customers and support the organisation's long-term digital strategy.

"A secure and reliable network infrastructure is central to delivering the best possible customer experience, whether online or in a club. As the UK's biggest bingo operator, Buzz Bingo is continually looking for innovative ways to enhance its offering, and we're very proud to have been chosen as its IT partner for the next five years," said Russell Crowley, co-founder at Principle Networks. ■

## Nscale announces \$2.5 billion data centre investment

Following the big reveal of the UK's AI action plan on 13 January, Nscale announced plans to invest \$2.5 billion in the UK's data centre industry over the next three years, to include the development of advanced AI data centres in both fixed and modular formats, that are powered by clean energy and equipped with cutting-edge generative AI technology.

Nscale has confirmed its first UK data centre with the purchase of a site in Loughton. The site is equipped to support 50MW of AI and HPC capacity, with the ability to scale the power allocation up to 90MW, all utilising advanced liquid cooling to support generative AI GPU deployments. The site is scheduled to be live in the fourth quarter 2026. This UK facility can house up to 45,000 of the latest Nvidia GB200 GPUs.

The company also plans to begin construction of multiple modular UK-based data centres in quarters three and four of 2025, with further expansion of fixed data centres slated for the following years.

Nscale's investment supports the UK's ambition to become a global leader in AI infrastructure by delivering a full stack of AI technologies and services. The new data centres will provide essential UK sovereign, secure and private AI computing infrastructure for industries, research institutions, and enterprises,

ensuring data remains securely within Europe while driving innovation and stimulating economic growth.

"Our investment in the UK marks a significant milestone in building next-generation AI infrastructure," said Josh Payne, CEO of Nscale. "This expansion will help us meet the growing demand for generative AI by deploying advanced GPU clusters more efficiently. Additionally, capital from our recent funding round will accelerate our global 1.3 GW pipeline of greenfield data centres, with 120 MW planned for development in 2025. This underscores our commitment to delivering sustainable, scalable AI infrastructure that drives innovation and economic growth."

"Data sovereignty is at the heart of our strategy. As our customers and prospects increasingly prioritise sovereignty in their selection of an AI cloud provider, our investment will create a secure, GenAI cloud for the UK - ensuring sensitive data stays within the country's borders while enabling businesses to access cutting-edge AI capabilities," said Karl Havard, COO of Nscale. "By combining sovereignty with high-performance AI infrastructure, we're driving innovation, attracting additional investment into the UK economy, and proving that technological leadership can be built on secure, compliant, and purpose-driven foundations, that can be led from the UK." ■

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# HCA Healthcare streamlines data accessibility

Hyland, the content innovation cloud pioneer and leading provider of content management solutions, has enabled HCA Healthcare UK to deepen its operational expertise and streamline financial data accessibility by leveraging Hyland's AI-driven Accounts Payable (AP) solutions, including several cornerstone products of Hyland's unified Content Innovation Cloud.

HCA is the largest private healthcare provider in the world, employing almost 240,000 nurses and 37,000 doctors. Clinicians serving HCA UK's 30+ facilities in London and Manchester were already reaping the benefits of Hyland's real-time enterprise medical imaging

access through Acuo and NilRead. The new partnership will see Hyland's unified content services platform extend HCA's ability to enhance staff efficiency, reduce costs, and scale for growth.

Solutions include Brainware, Hyland's intelligent capture software for classifying, validating, and extracting data; Hyland OnBase, the content services platform that organises and optimises content and processes; and the Hyland Content Portal, enabling secure, regulated access employees and vendors from any touchpoint to speed upload, tracking, processing and status checking.

Advanced AI-powered automation will unlock intelligent capture,

automated workflows, and secure content management. An intuitive user interface empowers finance teams through a unified, streamlined platform for all tasks, while real-time dashboards offer unsurpassed visibility into the AP process.

"Modernising healthcare isn't just about patient-facing technologies; healthcare staff need and deserve the best possible infrastructure to support them," said Leonard Kim, Chief Product Officer at Hyland. "Our partnership with HCA Healthcare UK for both content management and medical imaging provides a solution that prioritises operational excellence and patient care – streamlining workflows, delivering cost

savings, and allowing HCA to focus their resources on delivering genuine value to both patients and stakeholders." ■



## Cybersecurity budgets expected to rise by 31% in 2025

Infosecurity Europe has announced findings from its 2025 Cybersecurity Trends Report, which shows that cybersecurity budgets are on the rise, with UK organisations predicting an average growth of 31% in 2025 - more than double the 15% global forecast from Gartner.

While 75% of organisations expect their budgets to grow, 20% anticipate increases of over 50%. Investment priorities include application security, network security, cloud security, and DevSecOps, as organisations strive to stay ahead of evolving threats.

Additionally, 71% believe they have the budgets required to ensure their organisation is cyber-safe, another 18% said their budgets were nearly enough and 8% said they don't have the funding they need to cover what they want. The remaining 2% hadn't yet costed their needs. Despite this, 47% of cybersecurity professionals struggle to engage at the board level, highlighting a gap between technical teams and strategic decision-making.

The most-cited barriers to building a strong cybersecurity culture include insufficient resources (40%, up from 22.5% in 2024) and a lack of a clear cybersecurity strategy aligned with organisational goals (45%, up from 20.5%). Achieving a truly cyber safe world requires not only adequate funding but also strategic alignment and collaboration across the cybersecurity ecosystem.

"Building a cyber-safe world today goes far beyond protecting data and systems. It encompasses safeguarding the critical infrastructure that underpins our global economy and, quite literally, keeps the lights on. Security must be foundational, baked into every aspect of our digital lives because the reality is, no one is an island," said Rik Ferguson, Vice President Security Intelligence, Forescout Technologies, Inc. "The past three decades have taught us that cybersecurity is not a destination; it's an ongoing journey. The challenge now is to stay ahead, remain vigilant, and foster a culture of security that extends beyond technology to people, processes, and policy." ■

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## Poor data quality an AI obstacle

The Ataccama Data Trust Report 2025 identifies poor data quality as a critical obstacle to AI adoption. Despite AI's transformative potential, its success depends on trusted, reliable data. 68% of Chief Data Officers (CDOs) cite data quality as their top challenge, with only 33% of organisations making meaningful progress in AI adoption.

The report underscores the urgency of addressing systemic issues like fragmented systems and governance gaps. Without resolution, businesses risk stalled innovation, wasted resources, and diminished returns on AI investments.

41% of organisations struggle to maintain consistent data quality, directly hindering AI outcomes. Knowledge gaps around data trust and governance slow progress; education is critical to closing these gaps. Trusted data drives AI success: High-quality data accelerates decision-making, enhances customer experiences, and delivers competitive advantages.

As the UK accelerates its AI strategy with the newly unveiled AI Opportunities Action Plan, the report highlights a foundational gap organisations must address: data trust. When data is accurate, reliable, and trustworthy, users can be confident in making informed decisions that drive improved outcomes and reduce risk.

The report emphasises the need for unified benchmarks to guide businesses in building AI-ready ecosystems. Creating a National Data Library is a core goal within the UK plan for homegrown AI and regulatory principles – safety, transparency, and fairness – could be operationalised through national data governance benchmarks. These standards would ensure clear compliance guidelines while supporting the UK's pro-innovation regulatory goals.

Legacy systems remain a bottleneck to AI scalability, unable to handle real-time, high-volume data demands. With the commitment to sufficient, secure, and sustainable infrastructure, the UK's investment in supercomputing and AI growth zones enables continuous data quality monitoring and governance. These advancements create scalable, efficient systems tailored to advanced AI technologies.

Embedding governance and automated validation practices into data workflows is crucial for compliance, reliability, and long-term growth. Aligning the UK's ethical AI initiatives with data trust requirements would ensure AI systems both operate reliably and adhere to safety and transparency principles. ■



New analysis from Rapid7 has highlighted the increasing activity and sophistication of ransomware in 2024, with 75 active groups reported and a median ransom payment of US\$200,000.

Christiaan Beek, Senior Director of Threat Analytics at Rapid7, said that leading ransomware groups such as RansomHub and Akira have been exploiting vulnerabilities and employing double and triple extortion tactics. The analysis reveals over 5,900 posts on leak sites, although actual incidents are thought to be higher due to unreported cases.

The report from Rapid7 emphasises the necessity for proactive security measures and international collaboration to mitigate this growing threat. It projects that ransomware damages could exceed US\$380 million this year.

"While these numbers reflect public disclosures, many victims choose to negotiate privately, meaning the true scope could be significantly higher," said Beek.

Among the most prolific ransomware groups, the C10p group was noted for exploiting vulnerabilities in Cleo file transfer software. Unlike other groups, C10p does not rely on encrypting victims' data but uses leak sites for extortion, leaving their financial impact within the ransomware ecosystem opaque.

Financial analyses estimate potential

revenues generated by these groups, considering a median payment of USD \$200,000, with approximately 32% of victims choosing to pay. This suggests total payments in 2024 could easily surpass USD \$380 million.

The report also documents trends such as the proliferation of groups, persistent dominance of major players, increased transparency from victims, and the rise of multi-stage extortion tactics.

Rapid7 advocates for strengthening resilience among organisations. Recommendations include preparing for multiple attack vectors, securing collaborations, readiness for incident response, and ongoing risk assessments.

The potential financial incentive for cybercriminals remains significant, with substantial returns even if only a fraction of victims choose to pay ransoms. This reality underlines the necessity for organisations to develop defence mechanisms like user awareness training, strong access controls, and maintaining secure backups.

The report calls for ongoing threat intelligence to monitor emerging groups and tailor defences against them. It stresses the importance of organisations maintaining visibility over their external footprint, including regular asset scanning, real-time monitoring, and holistic patch management. ■

## Caxton transforms operations with Britannic and Five9 cloud

Caxton has transformed its customer experience and business operations in partnership with Britannic.

The partners implemented the Five9 cloud contact centre solution, achieving a 21% reduction in call handling times and an 8% decrease in customer waiting times, plus maintaining an impressive NPS of over 70 during peak periods. Enabling them to improve customer experience and harness data-driven insights to shape strategic decisions while driving continuous improvements.

Britannic worked closely with Caxton understanding its objectives and assisting them in designing their digital transformation journey to improve their customer experience and business operations.

"As a company, we are deeply committed to delivering an exceptional customer experience," said Mital Patel, CIO at Caxton. "We wanted a forward-thinking contact centre solution that could scale and adapt as fast as we do. Five9 and Britannic worked closely

with us to ensure the solution aligns perfectly with our dynamic business environment."

Britannic recommended the cloud based Five9 contact centre solution for their agents who hybrid work in the office and from home. The new solution allows them to scale up and down when required, such as in busy seasonal periods or for sales and marketing campaigns. It also provides additional robustness and security, which is paramount in fintech, plus the flexibility to add on applications when required.

Integration was critical to Caxton because they use several external systems such as Zendesk CRM, Hubspot and Microsoft Teams, all of which needed to be integrated for more seamless operations. The integration also provides real time data for agents who see a CRM screen pop of the customer when they call in, providing them with the contact details and the history so they can deliver a more personalised service and instantly see what their last call was about. ■

### Word on the web...

## Balancing tech investment and cost transformation

**Amit Mehrotra, Vice President, Head of UK & Ireland at Tata Communications**

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# Building resilient IT operations: lessons to learn

*Melissa Bischooping, Senior Director, Security & Product Design Research, Tanium*

Last summer's IT glitch that led to unprecedented levels of digital chaos was a wake-up call on a global scale. But unlike other incidents, the outages were not the result of a security incident or malicious cyber activity.

In this case, it appears it was due to a routine software update process that didn't quite go to plan. This latest headline-grabbing event showed how easily things can grind to a halt when a spanner is thrown into the works. In a shift from the usual storyline, many endpoints were patched and protected, but still fell to an exploited risk inherent in our current IT systems. Modern organizations may have yet-unknown single points of failure which can lead to widespread disruption. For many businesses, the outage resulted in significant operational delays, lost revenue, and a breach of customer trust.

The incident underscored a harsh reality: no IT system — no matter how advanced — is completely immune to failure.

As Gartner so eloquently put it in How to Prepare for Cloud Outages: "all systems are subject to failure. We cannot purchase hardware that never breaks, we cannot build software that is entirely bug-free — and, most importantly, we must always live with human error. It is impossible not to make errors that can potentially cause downtime, degrade service or result in data loss. However, we can try to reduce the impact of failures."

## The risks of relying on a single IT platform

One of the most glaring lessons from the CrowdStrike outage is the risk of not having robust recovery plans and diversified infrastructure to support business continuity. As our world becomes more interconnected, the failure of one system can have a domino effect, impacting a wide range of services.

The events this summer have, once again, made it clear that organisations need to diversify their IT infrastructures. By integrating multiple systems that can operate independently — yet support each other in times of need — businesses can build a more resilient framework. This approach not only mitigates the risk of a total system collapse but also ensures that services can continue operating even when one part of the system fails.

## Data confidence is key

For me, effective management of IT systems, particularly during crises, hinges on one crucial factor: data confidence. If organisations want to respond swiftly and effectively to IT failures, then they must have complete visibility over their systems and immediate access to accurate data. Without these, the ability to diagnose and rectify issues promptly is severely compromised.

On the evidence of recent weeks, many organisations lack the necessary infrastructure to gather and analyse data in real-time. This gap in capability often results in delayed responses, finger-pointing and prolonged downtime, exacerbating the impact of IT failures.

If there's any good to come out of the CrowdStrike glitch it's that it is yet another reminder that if organisations want to build more resilient IT operations, then they must invest in systems that provide comprehensive visibility and allow for

real-time data access.

In this regard, there are no shortcuts. This capability is essential not just for responding to incidents, but also for preventing them. By continuously monitoring their systems, insisting on controlled deployments of updates, and having real-time data at their fingertips, organisations can identify potential issues before they escalate into full-blown outages.

The same is true of a strategic approach to IT infrastructure. By planning ahead, thinking the unthinkable and accepting that when it comes to digital disasters, it's 'when' — not

'if' — organisations can be much better prepared to prevent, respond to, and recover from incidents with minimal disruption.

But that means adopting a much more proactive stance towards IT management. It means not only focusing on preventing failures but also on ensuring that systems are in place to quickly address issues when they do occur. That's why the concept of 'defence in depth' — where multiple layers of security and operational controls are deployed — is a key strategy in this regard. Often, organizations think of defense in depth as something to apply to adversarial

behavior, but the same approach is equally beneficial in addressing operational business risks and critical system availability.

By diversifying IT platforms, ensuring data confidence through complete visibility and immediacy, and adopting a multi-layered approach to security and operations, businesses can build a more resilient IT infrastructure. For business leaders, it's about putting in place a strategy to mitigate risk while building resilience to ensure services have the very best chance of remaining operational — even in the face of unexpected events. ■




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# A high-risk threat from within: defending against insider threats



**Matt Rider, VP Solutions Engineering, UKIE, Exabeam**

Insider threats are some of the greatest cybersecurity risks. Unlike other types of security threats, insider threats are complicated because attacks typically involve valid credential use and only a few are caused deliberately. An insider's access to an organisation's most valuable assets makes these attacks harder to identify and remediate.

The impacts of insider threats are far-reaching and have the potential to cause irrevocable damage to an organisation's reputation. On a financial level alone, the Ponemon Institute found that insider threats cost companies an average of \$701.5k per incident in 2023. Beyond these financial losses, organisations that fall victim to insider attacks also face severe reputational and regulatory repercussions.

To overcome this challenge, organisations need to take a smarter, more proactive security approach. Deploying user and entity behaviour analytics (UEBA) provides increased visibility into user access and activities to catch insiders before they exfiltrate critical data or disrupt operations.

## Understanding internal risks

Insider threats can originate with authorised users, such as employees, contractors, and business partners, who intentionally or accidentally misuse their legitimate access, or have their accounts hijacked by cybercriminals.

The amount of sensitive data at risk from an insider threat is massive. Common targets for insider threats are financial reporting data, customer data, product or technical documents, and employee data.

There are several types of insider threats that organisations need to be aware of:

- 1. Malicious insiders.** Typically, malicious insiders are employees or contractors who act with the deliberate aim of stealing information or disrupting operations.
- 2. Negligent insiders.** Negligent insiders are employees who do not follow proper IT procedures.
- 3. Compromised insider.** The most common examples of compromised insiders are employees that have had their devices infected with malware or credentials compromised.

## An AI-driven security approach

Procedures and controls are the essential first line of defence against insider threats. Many traditional security tools were designed to detect incoming attacks rather than analyse valid credential use and activity.

Augmenting your security information and event management (SIEM) platform with an advanced UEBA solution employs an intelligent approach to overcome this challenge. It uses variations of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), data enrichment, and data science to

improve threat detection investigation and response (TDIR) of insider threats.

Leveraging UEBA enables organisations to stop insider threats before they become incidents in several ways:

- **Rule and signature-free incident detection** — UEBA tools use advanced analytics to detect abnormal and risky activity, eliminating the need for predefined correlation rules or threat patterns. It delivers meaningful alerts with minimal setup and tuning, reducing false alarms. With UEBA tools, security teams can conduct in-depth investigations into suspicious activities earlier in the attack cycle to uncover hidden insider threats faster.
- **Dynamic peer groupings** — UEBA not only performs behavioural baselining of individual entities but also dynamically groups similar entities, such as users from the same department or IoT devices of the same class. This allows the analysis of normal collective behaviour across the entire group and identifies individuals exhibiting risky behaviour.
- **Real-time monitoring and alerting** – UEBA tools continuously analyse network activity, allowing security teams to detect insider threats as they occur. This is crucial in today's threat landscape, where threats can proliferate and cause damage in a matter of minutes. Once a threat is detected, UEBA tools can send out alerts in real time. This enables security teams to respond swiftly and mitigate the threat before it can cause significant damage.
- **Automating investigations** – A key feature of modern UEBA tools is their ability to automate and orchestrate various security tasks. Automation allows these tools to execute predefined actions automatically when certain criteria are met. For example, if the system detects multiple failed login attempts from a user within a short period, it can automatically lock the account to prevent unauthorized access.

Beyond deploying UEBA, organisations can add an extra layer of defence against insider threats by focusing on employee education.

## Prioritising a proactive approach

Defending against insider threats is a complex challenge that requires a comprehensive security approach from organisations.

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# Roundtable: Mastering IT skills

**With technological developments racing ahead, what are the implications for IT skills in 2025? We discuss how the UK's enterprises can ensure their teams are up to the task.**

## Where are the skills gaps within the UK's existing IT staff?

**Alexia Pedersen, SVP International, O'Reilly:** Our research underscores significant skills gaps within the UK's existing IT workforce. Employers identified the digital skills they found most lacking, noting an urgent need for expertise in AI and ML (61%), cybersecurity (48%), data analysis (48%), cloud computing (43%), and programming

(32%) across their workforce over the next 12 months. The significant surge in demand reflects the urgency for companies to adapt to rapid technological advancements, especially considering the integration of GenAI.

**Abhas Kumar, Senior VP, NIIT:** The IT talent market is now truly global, and the skills shortages seen in the UK reflect those experienced worldwide. The most in-demand technical skills include cybersecurity, cloud computing, data

analytics, AI modeling, and ML for advanced roles.

**John Booth, Technical Director, National Data Centre Academy:** There are still areas where staff don't understand the basic engineering principles for data centres, especially about cooling and the application of the EU Code of Conduct for Data Centres (Energy Efficiency) best practices.

**Michael Aspinall, Account Director, First Point Group:** As organisations increasingly rely on cloud services and digital infrastructure, the demand for professionals skilled in these areas

has surged. However, due to rapid technological advancements and training programmes not adapting quickly enough to the evolving landscape (yet), there is currently a lack of professionals to meet this demand.

**Jason Moss, senior vice president, EMEA, CompTIA:** Several factors contribute to these skills shortages. First, an ageing workforce approaching retirement, leaving a void that younger



Alexia Pedersen, O'Reilly



John Booth,  
National Data Centre Academy

generations are not filling quickly enough. Second, the relentless pace of technological advancement means that many professionals struggle to keep their skills current. Third, the evolving threat landscape, particularly in cybersecurity, demands expertise that is both specialised and adaptable. Finally, organisations are

unintended consequences. Indeed, three in 10 UK firms cite insufficient technical skills as a significant challenge.

**Abbas Kumar:** Generative large language models (LLMs) represent an emerging and transformative AI technology. Future IT professionals would be well

**“GenAI is now a must-have for all employees. Every employee within an organisation — not just tech teams — must be up to date with GenAI to stay ahead of the competition. AI won’t replace humans, but humans with AI will replace humans without it.”**

under pressure to drive revenue growth, which often requires adopting new technologies that outpace the availability of skilled professionals. The demand for IT skills in the UK is further compounded by a misalignment between the skills taught in educational institutions and the needs of the modern IT sector.

**How are skills requirements changing with the advent of new technologies like AI?**

**Michael Aspinall:** There’s a growing need for professionals who not only understand AI technologies but can also integrate and manage them within existing systems. Skills in ML, data manipulation, and ethical AI development are becoming increasingly critical.

**Alexia Pedersen:** GenAI is now a must-have for all employees. Every employee within an organisation — not just tech teams — must be up to date with GenAI to stay ahead of the competition. AI won’t replace humans, but humans with AI will replace humans without it.

O’Reilly’s research indicates a strong demand for reskilling across all levels of a business, with non-technical staff seeking opportunities in AI and ML (62%), cybersecurity (53%), data analysis (49%), and programming (31%). Meanwhile, two-thirds of employees in technical roles have proactively pursued upskilling in AI and machine learning, alongside requests for training in cybersecurity (52%), cloud technologies (44%), programming (36%), and software architecture (25%). This shift highlights the need for an organisation that is not only technically adept but also versatile in adapting to the rapid advancement of technology.

**Zeshan Sattar, Senior Industry Relations Director, EMEA, ComTIA:** The top five functional areas where businesses are adopting AI include data management and analysis, cybersecurity, software development, IT

infrastructure, and project management. Professionals across these domains are being called upon to upskill and adapt to this new reality. Yet many lack a clear understanding of critical issues such as data privacy, which could lead to

served to develop transversal skills — the value will be in the user experience and the interaction of IT tech with real world data continually informing the generative engines.

**Can existing IT staff fill the gaps — with adequate training?**

**Abbas Kumar:** Yes and No. Over the last 50 years, the IT industry has been remarkable in the way it has created talent by both reskilling existing staff as well as creating a new discipline of education that provides fresh talent to the industry. Even with productivity enhancing AI tools, demand for IT staff is projected to grow over the medium term, which will require investment in education at the school and college level as well as in reskilling existing staff.

The advantages of upskilling existing staff are manifold — they are familiar with the organization and understand the company’s systems, processes, and culture, making it easier to integrate new skills into their current roles and lead to much faster transition period. This is often more cost-effective than recruiting new talent and is beneficial to the overall company culture in terms of retention and tenure. Conversely, companies must also be open to a hybrid approach and look at hiring new talent when it comes to highly specialized skills like advanced AI or quantum computing where current employees lack the foundational knowledge needed to upskill.

**Michael Aspinall:** If IT professionals have a solid foundation of IT principles, this can be built upon through targeted upskilling. Organisations that invest in comprehensive training programmes can effectively close skills gaps, leveraging the existing knowledge of their staff while building upon their competencies in new and emerging technologies.

**Alexia Pedersen:** The UK’s existing IT staff can fill the gaps with adequate training, but it requires a strategic approach from employers. UK businesses are struggling to fill hundreds of thousands of digital roles due to a scarcity of skilled candidates; a critical digital skills gap that is estimated to cost the UK economy £63 billion per year. Despite this, companies are recognising

the value of investing in their current workforce.

**Zeshan Sattar:** One critical area of focus is the professionalisation of the cybersecurity industry. As this sector matures, there is a growing emphasis on compliance with frameworks and standards, which will help ensure consistency and competency across the workforce. This shift underscores the importance of benchmarking skills and aligning them with industry-recognised certifications to validate expertise and build trust.

**Has there been enough investment in training and qualification programmes in recent years?**

**John Booth:** I think yes, but it may have been poorly focussed. It’s all very well doing the fancy stuff, 5G, software, AI, etc., but that’s like driving an F1 car on a farm track and expecting it to break speed records. I think more training needs to be focussed on the underlying supporting digital infrastructure piece, the foundations for all digital services.

**Jason Moss:** A significant mismatch remains between the depth of skills required by employers and the training currently available. One key challenge is that employers often lack the time or resources to fully evaluate the training programmes on offer. As a result, they may find that the outcomes do not align with their specific needs.

**Alexia Pedersen:** With Prime Minister Keir Starmer calling the country’s current skills system a ‘mess,’ employers have taken matters into their own hands. 26% have increased spend on apprenticeship

**“Organisations will likely place greater emphasis on continuous learning and adaptability, ensuring that their workforce can keep pace with technological advancements.”**

schemes by 21–40%, while a further 24% have increased spend by 41–60%. However, employers still appear to be investing more in recruitment to acquire new talent than in L&D for existing staff, despite 79% of existing employees proactively seeking new digital reskilling opportunities over the past twelve months. In fact, 35% of UK employers will spend between £35,000-50,000 on recruitment for skills in AI and ML, cybersecurity, data analysis, cloud, and programming over the next twelve months. By comparison, only 31% will invest that amount on L&D to enhance these skills within their workforce.

**Abbas Kumar:** There are bright spots — like UK’s support for apprenticeship programs — but in aggregate, we need more investment and to direct the investment to effective outcomes. In our experience, a large part of most training investments is wasted on topics not directly relevant to making a person job ready on Day 1, which is a colossal amount of time and money that can be

productively redirected towards targeted outcomes.

**What are your expectations for talent, training and hiring practices in the UK in 2025?**

**Jason Moss:** Two-thirds of UK firms surveyed for our IT Industry Outlook 2025 report indicated they will be hiring for anticipated growth of their business in the new year, while 41% will engage in backfill hiring due to retirements and departures. For tech job roles specifically, 72% of UK firms intend to increase staffing in 2025.

**Michael Aspinall:** I expect to see a more agile approach. Organisations will likely place greater emphasis on continuous learning and adaptability, ensuring that their workforce can keep pace with technological advancements.

**John Booth:** The UK Government is friendly to forward direct investment into data centres; already some £25 billion has been announced, and we simply do not have the personnel to meet this need. The sector needs to address this as a matter of some urgency. What is guaranteed is that the existing practice of poaching staff from other organisations is a very short-term approach — couple that with the impending ‘grey tsunami’ where existing personnel are approaching retirement, and we have a recipe for disaster.

**Alexia Pedersen:** As the demand for advanced technological expertise continues to exceed supply, companies will need to prioritise training programs which prepare their existing workforce to adapt and grow with evolving technologies and new challenges.

Hiring practices will likely shift towards a more balanced approach, valuing candidates who demonstrate a commitment to learning and adaptability as much as technical skills. Companies will need to offer supportive work environments that prioritise job security and provide clear pathways for career progression through upskilling. With these strategic investments, businesses can meet their talent needs while strengthening their ability to attract and retain skilled professionals in an increasingly competitive market. ■



Jason Moss, ComTIA



Zeshan Sattar, ComTIA



Michael Aspinall, First Point Group





# Building futureproof data centres from the ground up

Danel Turk, Data Centres Portfolio Manager at ABB

The meteoric rise of AI means power demand is at an all-time high — and it won't stop there. The data centres that run it are part of the digital backbone of an increasingly always-on world. For them to stay viable, new facilities must be built to achieve energy efficiency, regulatory compliance, and renewable integration wherever possible.

## Scalability and energy efficiency

One of the main things to consider when designing new data centres is balancing growth with energy efficiency. Modular designs allow facilities to be built in smaller pieces, like 20MW blocks that contribute toward a 200MW capacity, while using prefabricated components like skids and eHouses to speed up construction. This 'grow-as-you-need' approach prevents overbuilding, while cutting costs and environmental impact.

Developers should also consider using medium-voltage (MV) backup power systems. These set-ups are easier to install and save more energy compared to traditional low-voltage ones. Since they operate around the clock, even small energy savings can add up over time.

## Prioritising regulatory standards

Regulations play a big role in how modern data centres are built and run. For example, the EU now requires energy audits every four years or the use of energy management systems (EMS) like ISO 50001. These rules push data

centres to use energy more efficiently, switch to renewable power, and report on energy use.

To keep up, operators need smart tools like real-time EMS, which track energy consumption and spot localised or system-wide energy efficiency problems. Monitoring systems like ABB's InSite identify inefficiencies, detect malfunctioning equipment, and prevent costly disruptions, all while aligning with regulatory standards.

Another focus is phasing out harmful materials like SF6, a potent greenhouse gas widely used in switchgear. Switching to SF6-free options can greatly lower a data centre's environmental impact while satisfying stricter global bans on the substance.

## Prepare for AI

AI workloads require vast amounts of power, forcing data centres to adopt smarter infrastructure and energy strategies. Ironically, AI-driven automation can itself improve energy use by delivering real-time insights into systems like cooling and power. Automation tools can reduce energy waste by dynamically adjusting cooling systems based on environmental conditions. Considering that cooling alone accounts for 40% of a data centre's energy use, efficiency in this area is vitally important.

Meanwhile, Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) help data centres operate more independently from the grid. For AI workloads, BESS helps balance energy delivery and deliver the power continuity needed for 24/7 intensive

tasks. Minutes offline in a data centre can translate to tens of thousands of pounds in losses, especially where clients pay a premium for specialised AI usage. Emergency energy storage solutions like Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPS) improve grid compatibility while ensuring critical uptime when power quality fluctuates.

## Easy wins for sustainability

As demand for data centres grows, slashing emissions has become a call to action for operators. On-site renewable energy sources like solar panels and wind turbines are the obvious solution, and can be used alongside microgrids — on-site power networks that manage energy generation and distribution. Combining microgrids with BESS further reduces reliance on external power and allows facilities to run independently during outages or peak demand.

To complement advances towards renewable energy implementation, efforts to capture waste heat from servers via heat pumps could provide heating for nearby businesses or homes, mitigating environmental impact significantly. Data centres are increasingly situated in inner-city locations, providing ample opportunities to repurpose and redirect excess heat.

## Climate and cyber chaos

The direct effects of climate change and geopolitical instability are now significant risk

factors for data centre operators. To avoid the risks of extreme weather events such as flooding, site selection is the most important first step, as regions with low water table and little humidity are ideal. Secondly, safeguarding equipment like generators and switchgear as well as data racks with proper insulation is key. A future data centre might use hermetically sealed cabling and solutions like stone wool panelling in its structure to mitigate water damage.

From a cybersecurity perspective, data centre customers should not be required to forfeit safety, value, or control in expanding their operations. In the data centre, where every millisecond counts, operators must be able to detect and intercept threats that bypass basic defenses to avoid malicious shutdowns or data theft. Digital services that can identify threats in real time must be baked into infrastructure from the outset.

## Planning for every possibility

For data centres to succeed in a rapidly changing world, planning for every possibility is vital. Data centres that do so will be better positioned to lead the industry. It's important to look at the bigger picture, not just the initial price. A total-cost-of-ownership mindset makes everything run smoother, cheaper, and greener.

Sustainability and adaptability are no longer optional. By acting now, operators can build data centres that thrive in an energy-hungry and energy-conscious world. ■



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# Operating on the Edge

**Edge is huge right now when it comes to networking – but how can an enterprise adopt a strategic technical approach, and get it right first time?**

**E**dge computing offers distinct advantages for enterprises compared to cloud and fog, including enhanced bandwidth efficiency, real-time data processing and analytics, and support for autonomous systems, among others...

“Edge provides much lower latency, often achieving sub-5ms response times, and reduces costs by minimising egress fees associated with transferring data out of the cloud,” shares Anastasia Kundush, Product Director at Gcore. “Security is enhanced by localised data processing, which reduces the risk of breaches and improves compliance with privacy regulations. While many real-world scenarios require some sort of a hybrid approach, pure Edge computing is still preferable for highly latency and security sensitive use-cases.”

According to Eric Simone, ClearBlade founder and CEO, Edge bolsters an enterprise’s security posture by allowing company data to stay local behind company firewalls.

“Edge computing also increases resiliency, as it can run independently if a network becomes unavailable. It can also optimise data usage, as much more data can be streamed locally, enabling more

efficient use of real-time data to power AI solutions,” adds Simone.

“The ability to gather data from the field and public areas without compromising the privacy of the individuals is critical,” explains Aaron Allsbrook, ClearBlade co-founder and CTO. “With Edge computing, we can keep all that data gathered in the field, pull out and send back valuable insights, and then delete the original personal data. That’s a huge benefit to Edge computing!”

## Who stands to gain?

From industrial automation and smart cities all the way through to transportation and logistics, energy and telecommunications – the industries that stand to gain from Edge are near-endless.

Allsbrook believes that Edge is most beneficial to organisations with field or remote operations and assets: “generally, these businesses have been constrained with how much they can understand, communicate, and optimise what happens in real time. Edge processing allows for bringing IT capabilities like enhanced user guidance, simplified data entry, and

AI agents right to the end operators as they do their jobs. It massively shortens the time it takes for business processes to take place.”

“Industries like e-commerce and media that rely on real-time personalisation and instant authentication are prime candidates,” agrees Anastasia Kundush, Product Director at Gcore. “Additionally, organisations in sectors with stringent security and compliance requirements, such as healthcare and finance, gain value from processing sensitive data locally. Edge computing can also greatly extend the functionality of CDNs with features like authentication and personalisation.”

It’s been said that the ‘killer app’ for Edge is AI, meaning that the ability to run AI locally fuelled with massive amounts of private data is extremely beneficial for virtually any business with a physical presence.

“Consider video processing. AI image recognition is powerful, takes a lot of data, is very compute-heavy, and contains sensitive data. Edge computing is an excellent solution here,” says Simone. “Currently, we see Edge implementations in transportation, buildings and campuses, oil and gas, water, and retail. I anticipate

significant industry expansion given the flexibility of Edge computing and the power of AI.”

## A technical Edge strategy

Picking an effective technical Edge strategy can be challenging, but by considering specific business goals, operational requirements, and technological capabilities, enterprises can make informed decisions.

Organisations should ask themselves: do we need real-time insights from sensors or IoT devices? Is there a need to process large amounts of data on-site to reduce reliance on cloud resources? Are we looking to scale operations without overloading central systems? Is data privacy and compliance a major concern?

“A pilot or proof-of-concept project can test the feasibility of Edge solutions and assess trade-offs before full-scale adoption. Choosing a provider with a robust portfolio of solutions ensures flexibility and alignment with unique needs and is one of the most crucial steps of building an effective technical strategy,” notes Kundush. “Transparent pricing and

infrastructure with global coverage are also essential considerations to optimise both cost and performance.”

“An organisation must have a clear and complete understanding of the current technical landscape of its Edge networks,” says Nathan Collins, Regional Vice President EMEA at NetAlly. “This begins with a thorough network assessment that reviews network reliability, bandwidth, and wireless technologies and provides a complete inventory of connected assets and an accurate topology map. This should reveal whether the current Edge infrastructure can handle the expected workloads or identify deficiencies.”

“Businesses should separate Edge hardware from Edge software. First, find software that enables your company to build and configure multiple solutions with the same software,” recommends Simone. “Then for each solution pick the hardware that best fits the job. Finally, you should be able to conduct a pilot that proves it can deliver an ROI in three months or less.”

Edge computing involves moving resources like compute and data out to the network’s Edge to be closer to users, removing latency, and improving application performance. At the same time, those assets must be connected to users locally and back to the central IT network. Looking at who needs access, how they will connect, and how this will be managed over time is an essential practical consideration.

“Additionally, administering, managing, and monitoring these Edge networks for vulnerabilities will require dedicated resources alongside the data and compute resources you have in place. You can’t manage what you can’t see, so strong monitoring and testing resources are essential to make any Edge strategy successful over time,” adds Collins.

## Is the network up to the task?

To support Edge computing architecture effectively, the network must be able to handle the unique requirements of decentralised computing, data processing at the Edge, and often real-time communications between devices, sensors, and central systems.

High speeds, bandwidth and low latency are a must-have to enable high throughput for continuous data streams, with high degrees of reliability and availability to meet SLAs. As Edge computing exposes numerous devices, networks, and endpoints to potential security

vulnerabilities, data must be protected in transit and at rest, necessitating end-to-end encryption, secure protocols and access controls.

“Network for Edge often comes down to availability and viability and then working backward,” outlines Allsbrook. “This means that your Edge must be smart enough to recognise what network or offline it’s on and then leverage it appropriately. For example, trains and cargo ships regularly go in and out of high- and low-bandwidth areas. The Edge must use compression, priorities, and batching processes to ensure maximum ROI for the overall solution cost.”

“Resiliency is also a consideration; built-in redundancy ensures continuous operation even if parts of the network fail. When the network falters, your Edge solutions should continue to run with the available data and fail ‘gracefully’ (according to your parameters) if the Edge devices run out of storage,” adds Simone.

Meanwhile, Collins believes that implementing and validating proper segmentation and switch provisioning is indispensable to a successful Edge deployment.

“If and when a hacker tries to gain access to the Edge environment, network segmentation restricts their ability to move laterally across the network,” says Collins. “Checking your configuration and segmentation is challenging unless you connect and verify locally, emulating an Edge device or endpoint. Centralised monitoring systems or tools cannot be relied upon to provide complete data about the Edge network. So, you should have both local physical testing as well as overall network level insight available. There’s no substitute for being there to validate that you have the right approach in place and that your critical Edge assets can’t be accessed by those not authorised.”

## Getting it right

Before diving into Edge computing, UK businesses should be aware of several potential pitfalls that can affect the successful adoption and implementation of Edge solutions, particularly in the context of the UK’s regulatory environment, technological landscape, and operational needs. Indeed, many businesses underestimate the security challenges posed by the proliferation of Edge devices, instead focusing on securing the core infrastructure.

“The Edge computing model was designed to bring data processing closer



to the endpoints that collect it. This delivers performance improvements for applications, but it also expands the potential attack surface area in the Edge,” warns Collins. “You have to consider how you track those assets and ensure that they are secure against vulnerabilities or other security issues so they cannot be used as a jumping-off point to get onto the network as a whole or to attack that particular device for its data.”

Moreover, given that Edge computing often operates in environments where network connectivity is intermittent, if not carefully managed, this can lead to performance issues.

“You must consider the network performance side, particularly when IoT devices are part of your Edge deployment,” says Collins. “Networking issues like Wi-Fi deadspots can affect connectivity and performance, while you will also have to look at your applications’ networking needs and how chatty those applications might be. The proposition for Edge is that you move compute closer to the user, so you don’t want a significant amount of traffic in your application that relies on central processing. That will slow down your Edge application and make it harder for you to achieve your goals.”

Then there’s the matter of scalability: while cloud computing allows businesses to scale quickly and easily by leveraging a central, virtually unlimited resource

pool, Edge computing involves physical devices, localised processing, and distributed networks.

“Scaling is very different at the Edge than in the cloud since you are working with a distributed environment,” asserts Simone. “Typically scaling is location-dependent, meaning you add more Edge nodes as you add more locations. For example, if you are monitoring railroad crossings you require an Edge per crossing, or if you are monitoring building energy usage you may need an Edge per building or floor.”

However, Kundush points out that, “for businesses using provider-managed Edge solutions, scalability is typically more seamless than in cloud environments. Edge infrastructure scales automatically without the manual intervention often required in cloud setups. For enterprises managing their own Edge infrastructure, scalability may require additional investment and expertise, but partnering with the right provider simplifies this process significantly.”

UK businesses must carefully consider these pitfalls before diving into Edge computing to avoid costly mistakes and ensure a smooth deployment. It’s crucial to take a strategic, well-informed approach, keeping in mind the unique needs of the business, the complexity of Edge technology, and the long-term goals of the organisation. ■

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# Staying ahead with faster FIX connectivity

A highly acclaimed retail and corporate bank needed to ensure that counterparties continued to consider it a trustworthy and desirable trading partner. Many of the bank's counterparties execute trades via algorithms that use the Financial Information eXchange (FIX) protocol.

For sales and trading desks, staying competitive depends on two key factors: an attractive commission rate on executed trades; and rapid, reliable connectivity. Reliability is necessary to win business from trading counterparties and fast connections enable traders to quickly seize market opportunities and execute at the best price; while unreliable connections can take a business off the market and impact both revenue and reputation.

trading partner, Applications and Trading Support teams require robust FIX monitoring. They must be able to measure FIX connections, proactively manage potential risks, and minimize time to remediation in case any issues occur.

## Improving FIX connectivity

Knowing that top-notch technology performance is a must-have, the retail and corporate bank's Applications Support team chose ITRS Geneos to further improve its FIX connectivity.

Offering next-gen application monitoring and observability, Geneos keeps mission-critical IT estates always-on with real-time alerts and predictive issue detection. Trusted by more than 90% of Tier 1 firms, Geneos monitors

connections, keeping the turnaround time under a benchmark of 280ms to stay competitive in the trading landscape. The monitoring data feeds a real-time view of each counterparty connection's status, which the Applications Support team displays on a dashboard in the Operations Center.

Geneos also delivers continuous

comparison, proactive FIX monitoring reduced this time to less than 1 minute.

## Unparalleled insights

As a result of the implementation, Geneos' real-time monitoring capabilities allow the bank to ensure minimal FIX latency. It also offers unparalleled levels

**“As a result of the implementation, Geneos’ real-time monitoring capabilities allow the bank to ensure minimal FIX latency. It also offers unparalleled levels of insight into live FIX connections.”**

As such, FIX connectivity must be continually reliable, with minimal latency throughout the lifecycle of a trade message. Thus, to remain competitive and uphold a business's reputation as a trusted

business transactions all the way down to raw machine data.

The project was a roaring success, and today, the Applications Support team uses Geneos to proactively monitor FIX

**“For sales and trading desks, staying competitive depends on two key factors: an attractive commission rate on executed trades; and rapid, reliable connectivity.”**

actionable insights specific to each FIX connection and can provide real time alerts. The tool tracks the latency of all FIX sessions and provides several levels of insights. These include average latency over multiple time windows (present, 5mins, 30 days) and latency to specific counterparties highlighting acceptable differences due to factors such as geography.

Consequently, the Application Support team can proactively identify and mitigate potential issues with FIX connections without relying on a counterparty to alert them. This reliance would introduce extensive human intervention to the remediation process, making mean time to recovery (MTTR) up to 15 minutes. In

of insight into live FIX connections. The active dashboard guarantees immediate response and expedites the potential time to remediation.

A competitive FIX connection turnaround time of <280ms was achieved, and MTTR was decreased by 93%, minimizing the possible risks associated with connectivity issues. Moreover, the move has sustained counterparties' trust and confidence by reinforcing the bank's ability to uphold SLAs with impressively reliable FIX connectivity.

ITRS continues to be an instrumental component of the bank's operations and Geneos delivers game-changing capabilities that make FIX connectivity a competitive differentiator. ■

# Skipton tackles falling satisfaction with Cloud

**S**kipton Building Society (SBS), the UK's fourth largest building society, serves over 1.2 million customers from its head office and 81 branches. In 2023, Skipton launched a large-scale transformation programme to address shifting customer behaviours and preferences. The programme focuses on three principles: digital-first, enabling human interaction when needed, and absolute customer focus.

In addition to enhancing the customer experience, there was a need to replace on-premises contact centre technology, which was nearing the end of its support. To build resilience and modernise, Skipton needed to roll out a new contact centre platform quickly, while ensuring quality and minimising risk.

"As a building society, we're very much customer-led. We want to invest in capabilities that will make a difference for our members and support them in their channel of choice," said Joe Shaw, Product Owner at Skipton Building Society. "Growing digital presence and customer choice meant taking our contact centre to the cloud. Critical services like telephony and web chat are heavily regulated, so we needed a partner that could provide absolute certainty and careful risk management."

## Cloud migration

Genesys Cloud was selected due to its established position in the market as the Gartner Magic Quadrant Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) leader and its status as a proven and tested platform with a clear development roadmap. Kerv was chosen as the delivery and innovation partner.

Rolled out to 1,700 users, the overall solution comprised Genesys Cloud and a range of Kerv-developed products to accelerate deployment, including CX

Dynamics (a pre-packaged Microsoft Dynamics connector), CX Vizz (a data connector for Genesys Cloud), and data migration services to integrate bespoke components into several back-office systems.

Moving the contact centre to the cloud was one of the first deliverables: "It was high profile, so we couldn't afford to leave anything to chance," said Ben Shirt, Project Manager at Skipton Building Society. "We needed to ensure internal stakeholders and key decision-makers felt comfortable, particularly among our Business Readiness Council and internal audit team."

Kerv configured the platform and integrated it with the wider application landscape, such as legacy fax applications and data warehouse platforms. "Understanding the impact and associated risks for a project of this size and developing solutions at real pace was a relatively new discipline. In some instances, we identified a problem at the start of the day, captured requirements in the morning, and had a solution built to release by the afternoon. For me, that is what agile development is really about—enhancing our speed to market," said Shaw.

Kerv also offered hybrid manual and automated testing. The company's International Software Testing Qualifications Board (ISTQB) certified test manager planned and coordinated all the QA efforts and test plan. This enhanced overall test coverage and reduced User Acceptance Testing (UAT) time with Kerv's QA test tooling consisting of Azure DevOps (ADO) and Cyara CX Assurance tooling.

Further, Kerv collaborated with Skipton and other third parties to ensure a successful go-live. Kerv provided regression testing of 2,000 numbers during the cutover, which took just 8 minutes, enabling quick identification

and rectification of number translation errors on the fly. Skipton coordinated effective reporting lines on the go-live date, with Kerv onsite to assist with any user errors. Kerv also used Cyara Pulse for continuous regression testing and monitoring during hypercare to ensure all lines performed as expected.

## From 0 to 100 – in 9 months

The new Genesys Cloud platform enables over 1,700 users to manage phone, email, and chat conversations from a standard desktop, rationalising 1,768 configured DDIs with 418 queues and 382

**"The new Genesys Cloud platform enables over 1,700 users to manage phone, email, and chat conversations from a standard desktop, rationalising 1,768 configured DDIs with 418 queues and 382 inbound call flows."**

inbound call flows. Along with in-house customisations, Skipton successfully integrated an existing workforce management solution and data warehouse infrastructure.

Skipton believes average handling time and first contact resolution have both already improved, while customers and brokers have more opportunities to self-serve. Now, with asynchronous Genesys Web Messaging available on its website, advisors can have 3-4 interactions on the go at the same time.

Previously, software updates would be planned 12-18 months in advance and use to be a big concern from a service impact point of view. Now, with clear line of sight provided by Genesys Cloud as to where the innovation roadmap is heading, Skipton tech teams receive and deploy updates once a week, with far less effort.

"Kerv Experience brought innovative ideas that really challenged our thinking. For a regulated organisation operating in pretty tight risk and compliance frameworks, that was refreshing," said Shaw. "With Kerv, we went from a blank sheet of paper, no requirements, no contract or legals, to go live within nine months. That really was extraordinary."

"Working closely with Skipton, we derisked and accelerated the migration, meeting an aggressive nine-month go-live date," said Gary Muchmore, Operations Director at Kerv. "Within a few months, Skipton began to see improved CX with higher first contact resolution and lower average handling time. Previously

impossible innovations are now firmly within their reach."

## An AI-enabled future

Looking ahead, Skipton aims to quickly pilot new AI functionality such as predictive engagement to nudge customers on their website. The Genesys Cloud fabric, together with flexible free trials, allows Skipton to iteratively implement new functionality and easily measure success before proceeding to a full-scale rollout.

"Our aim in the future is—way before they reach an advisor—to answer questions like, 'What's the customer's intent? Do they seem angry or upset? What do we already know about them?' That's the assured way of showing real empathy," said Shaw. ■





# Building a bespoke contact centre for South Central Ambulance Service

Steve Duncan, Account Manager – Central Government & Public Safety, Avaya UK

When it comes to emergency services, seconds count. This means that the South-Central Ambulance Services (SCAS) needs its technical infrastructure to support its skilled front-line staff in the way they need to work for the best results possible.

## Specialist emergency services contact centre

SCAS is the 24/7 emergency ambulance service for over 7 million people living in the English counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Hampshire. It employs over 2,000 specialist staff to handle more than 500,000 urgent calls a year from its contact centres across the region (as well as homeworkers).

The service requires that both 999 emergency calls and 111 non-emergency calls are handled through the same technical infrastructure and operational units. Its skilled staff answer the growing number of 111 calls but are also needed to be able to rapidly reorient to handle any sudden incoming 999 calls if a large-scale incident or emergency occurs. This is only possible with contact centre technology that enables managers and supervisors to react to changing situations easily and efficiently on the fly.

Emergency calls into the SCAS contact centre can also require multiple specialist medical experts to listen in to help speed up the initial triage of a patient and determine the next steps e.g., dispatch an ambulance as soon as possible for critical cases. Enabling such a unique multi-disciplinary approach, that also provides the flexibility needed to support the 999/111 blended answering roles, necessitated a bespoke solution for SCAS. FourNet, a specialist in secure cloud, CX consulting and digital transformation in the public sector, was able to deliver this via its experience and partners in the Avaya ecosystem.

## Bespoke tailoring

FourNet was able to confidently look to the ecosystem for specific expertise and the right amount of co-development support to build the bespoke front-end application SCAS required for its very specific needs including:

- A comms-screen that provides a full operational overview and real time status visibility between agent and supervisor.

- Chat capability between agents, supervisors, and departments/roles.
- Skill/role assignment during login process.
- Bookmarking of agent- and

- department-based favourites.
- Instant replay of recorded calls for agents.
- Enhanced supervisor functionality.
- A 'raise my hand' functionality to support homeworkers trying to contact a supervisor if help is needed.

To solve the challenge, Engelbart Software GmbH, a specialist developer for the operation and management of IT and unified communication and collaboration services, was consulted. Its proposal was to use its esuits2 applications framework

scenario a 'raise my hand' functionality has been implemented to contact a supervisor if help is needed from the agent.

## Partner for success

FourNet works with more than half the UK's Ambulance Trusts and has supported SCAS since 2018 to deliver life critical services.

"FourNet builds partnerships with all its public safety customers; this ensures we have excellent knowledge of working practises within the organisations and also knowledge of the marketplace and the

**"The building of a bespoke frontend for SCAS is a fantastic example of how an ecosystem of technology and specialist partners can draw on best-in-class innovation to deliver a tailored next-generation customer and employee experiences solution."**

as an alternative UI making it possible to define and design the integrations and user interfaces required by SCAS.

"Engelbart Software became fully embedded into the process of solution specification and design for the new bespoke user interface. Its developers' detailed experience with Avaya application programming interfaces (APIs) and software development kits (SDKs) as well as their open approach to fully understanding the customer's business requirement allowed all stakeholders to drive the project even beyond the initially scoped set of requirements," said Markus Bornheim, Avaya International Practice Lead for Public Safety & Emergency Services.

The bespoke functionality requested by SCAS and provided by the esuits2 SPC includes a comms-screen for real-time status visibility between Agents and Supervisor; chat between Agents, Supervisors and departments/roles; the ability to agent assign skill/role during login and bookmarking of Agent- or department-based favourites. Supervisors also benefit from enhanced functionality including the ability to listen-in to existing calls; change skill / role assignment on the fly; change Agent status; remote Agent logout and replay of recorded calls. For the support of a work from home

solutions available to help improve patient/citizen safety in the UK," said Ben Ryland, Head of Public Sector, FourNet. "SCAS is a Global Digital Exemplar market-leader, which is an internationally recognised NHS provider delivering improvements in the quality of care, through the world-class use of digital technologies and information. FourNet helped SCAS gain recognition for delivering world-class quality care through digital technologies and information, setting the blueprint to enable other trusts to follow in its footsteps as quickly and effectively as possible."

## It takes an ecosystem

"With help from FourNet and its partners, we ended-up with a solution that fulfils our needs and more," said Chris Hayden, Telecoms Manager at SCAS. "The management and team leaders now have much more control and visibility over their Agents than previously and they are now able to manage the various contact centre behaviours much more effectively."

The building of a bespoke front-end for SCAS is a fantastic example of how an ecosystem of technology and specialist partners can draw on best-in-class innovation to deliver a tailored next-generation customer and employee experiences solution. ■



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## Picking the right rack

Dean Adams, IT Product Manager, Rittal

In today's data-driven world, the performance and efficiency of data centres is crucial. As the foundation for critical IT infrastructure, 19-inch racks/enclosures play a pivotal role in housing and supporting vital equipment. Selecting the right rack requires a meticulous evaluation of various factors to ensure optimal performance, reliability, and scalability.

The initial step involves a thorough assessment of specific requirements. An equipment inventory must be conducted, encompassing servers, networking devices, storage systems, and other components. This analysis informs the number and types of racks required, as well as necessary dimensions and weight capacities. Equipment density within each rack must be carefully considered, taking into account factors such as power consumption and cooling requirements. This will determine the appropriate rack depth and necessitate the evaluation of high-density cooling solutions. Planning for future growth and expansion is also crucial. For example, modular rack designs offer flexibility for accommodating new equipment and adapting to the evolving needs of the facility. The data centre's environmental conditions, including temperature, humidity, and airflow, must be evaluated. Racks should be constructed

from materials that can withstand these conditions and ensure optimal ventilation.

Effective cooling is critical for ensuring the reliability and longevity of IT equipment. Implementing hot and cold aisle configurations within the data centre optimises airflow and prevents hot spots. Adequate clearance between racks must be maintained to facilitate proper air circulation. A range of cooling options should be evaluated, including the utilisation of high-performance fans within the racks, implementation of in-row cooling units to provide targeted cooling to specific sections of the rack, and consideration of liquid cooling solutions for high-density deployments, offering superior cooling efficiency and reduced energy consumption. Temperature sensors should be installed within the racks and throughout the data centre to monitor real-time temperatures and proactively identify potential hotspots.

Reliable and efficient power distribution is crucial for uninterrupted operations. The total power requirements of the equipment must be calculated, and racks with sufficient power capacity to meet current and future demands should be selected. Redundant power supplies, such as Power Distribution Units (PDUs), should be implemented to ensure continuous operation in the event

of power failures. PDUs with integrated power monitoring capabilities should be utilised to track power consumption and identify potential issues.

Effective cable management is essential for improving airflow, enhancing aesthetics, and facilitating maintenance. To ensure optimal organisation and prevent congestion, cable routing within the racks should be strategically planned, incorporating the use of cable management arms, trays, and other appropriate accessories. The most suitable cabling approach, such as front-to-back or rear cabling, should be determined based on equipment and airflow requirements.

Racks should be equipped with lockable doors, and consideration should be given to implementing additional security measures, such as access control systems. Sensors should be implemented to monitor environmental conditions such as temperature, humidity, and smoke to detect potential hazards and prevent equipment damage.

Selecting the right vendor is critical for a successful rack deployment. A reputable vendor with a proven track record in the data centre industry and a strong commitment to customer satisfaction should be chosen. The level of support offered, including installation, maintenance, and warranty services, should

be thoroughly investigated. The vendor's ability to customise racks to meet specific requirements, such as adding custom mounting brackets or integrating specific cooling solutions, should be evaluated.

The total cost of ownership, encompassing the initial purchase price, ongoing maintenance costs, and energy consumption costs, must be considered. Racks should be chosen that offer the best value for the investment, balancing cost with performance, reliability, and future-proofing. Ease of access to equipment for installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting should be ensured. Ergonomic factors such as comfortable working heights and sufficient clearance for technicians should be considered.

Racks should be chosen that can be easily expanded or reconfigured to accommodate future growth and changing requirements. Racks with modular components, such as easily replaceable fans or PDUs, should be considered to simplify maintenance and upgrades.

By carefully considering these factors and collaborating closely with experienced vendors, data centres can make informed decisions about their 19-inch rack purchases, ensuring optimal performance, efficiency, and scalability for their critical IT infrastructure. ■

### PRODUCTS

**I The Dynamode 42U Floorstanding Server Cabinet** offers total server and high valued IT device containment coupled with ease of installation and post maintenance.



A cabinet used throughout both public and private sector installations across the UK and Europe, the server cabinets include features like superior hot air venting (both passive and active), heavy duty vertical uprights (both front and back) which can be fully adjusted and multiple cable entry points for correct cable placement.

Using a universal mount system means that almost any server, 19" network device, Telco/PBX device and of course passive patching systems can be quickly added as and when needed. Apart from the standard 600mm(w) x 1000mm(d) design, the enclosure is also available as an 800mm(w) x 1000mm(d) design for installations which need more space for cable patching.

Features include a 4-way rooftop fan tray, fixed shelf, castors, levelling feet, M6 cage nuts and front vertical cable management (Left/Right); up to 500kg static load capacity; welded steel frame; ETSI standard 19" front and rear adjustable vertical profiles; front, rear and top vented slots for improved air flow; and multiple cable entry (gland plates) in the base of the cabinet (slotted for precise cable fit).

The Dynamode 42U Floorstanding Server Cabinet complies with ANS/EIA RS -310-D, IEC297-2, DIN41491 PART1, DIN41491 PART7, GB/T3047.2-92 Standard.

**I Orion's 42U Premier Server Rack 800mm x 1000mm** combines sleek, attractive styling with a toughened steel structure making them ideal for housing servers, IT equipment and server rack accessories in any office environment or server room.

According to Orion, this premium

server rack range includes the following additional features: Airtech Hex Mesh front and rear door for a maximum of 85% air flow; swing handle lock front door; top cable entry in lid; mid-mount profiles; and other



premium features.

With a 19" profile width, CR4 Steel lockable/removable side panels, and heavy-duty castors, Orion's offering would make a sleek addition to the modern data centre.

**I The Prism DCS 42U 800mm x 1200mm PI Server Cabinet** can accommodate all of today's data centre requirements and this additional grade of material allows a static loading of 750kgs to be used. This range of enclosures can be supplied with a choice of cladding options including mesh single piece, mesh wardrobe doors.

Features include 19" server equipment housing; structured



cabling / multi-vendor installations; lever latch lock with 3 point locking system; lockable front & rear metal door with 64% airflow mesh; lockable side panels with high and low level venting; raised and vented top cover with cable entry; open base design; vertical cable management (800mm wide only); and fully adjustable vendor neutral 19 mounting profiles.

**I Rack Solutions' RS148 Data Center Server Cabinet** provides a secure solution for rack-mount equipment in IT environments. The enclosed server cabinet meets EIA standard for 19" server racks and is compatible with rack-mount servers, networking, and telecommunications equipment from Dell, HP, IBM, and other brands.

Perfect for any server room or data centre, the enclosed server cabinet comes fully assembled in 42U or 48U height. The 42U or 48U rack options come with 4 vertical cable management bars to organize cables and support power distribution. Constructed from 13 GA steel, the rack frame is finished with a black powder coat. Mounting points allow for custom solutions and additional accessories to be used. The side panels are lockable and removable, allowing for in-rack serviceability.

Each of these enclosed server cabinets come standard with four adjustable cable

management bars. The 2.5" width of the cable management bars create enough room to mount two standard PDUs side by side. The design is compatible with tool-less button style PDUs.

The rack top allows the user to fight debris and dust while maintaining the ability to pass through cables. Featuring four round holes, the access openings allow cables to be routed in the most efficient way possible.



**I SRE Rack's Premium 42U Server Racks - 800mm Wide 1000mm Deep** - boast attractive styling with a rugged, toughened steel structure.

This 42U server rack is supplied with a high-quality durable powder coated paint finish of black or grey with other colours available upon request. Options include fan trays, cable management and power distribution.

The cabinet height quoted includes 100mm for the heavy castor (static load weight 250kg) set supplied with the rack.

Supplied fully assembled and with a flat pack option, the rack has bolted construction for an easy on-site installation. Excellent ventilation with an Airtech hex mesh front and rear doors for a maximum 85% airflow is included, alongside adjustable 19" front and rear rack profiles. Top cable entry is possible in the cabinet lid, and the side panels are removable.

With a 12-month warranty, a cabinet load weight of up to 1 tonne with correct distribution and base fitting, and a choice of colours upon request (Black RAL9005, Grey BSI BS4800, Goose Grey 00A05), SRE Rack's Premium 42U Server Racks can advance any data centre.





# Please meet...

Richard Dobbie, Director of Sales & Marketing, Datalec

## Who was your hero when you were growing up?

My heroes growing up were my parents. They set an incredible example of hard work, determination, and teamwork, shaping my values and work ethic from an early age. They showed me the importance of perseverance when dealing with challenges and the strength that comes from supporting others. Their consistent and unwavering support, guidance, and wisdom were the foundation of my growth, giving me the confidence and tools to pursue my goals. I am deeply grateful for their sacrifices and the life lessons they instilled in me. Without them, I would not be where I am today.

## What was your big career break?

My big career break came when I was 25, after months of relentless job applications - over 1,000 online - with no responses while working temp jobs, and I got a call back from CommScope. That opportunity changed everything. The team welcomed me and taught me the industry from the ground up, for which I am forever grateful. That experience not only kickstarted my career but also gave me relationships and lessons that have lasted a lifetime. To this day, I remain close friends with my first hiring manager, Dom, who continues to mentor and guide me. Thanks Dom!

## What did you want to be when you were growing up?

Growing up I dreamed of becoming a snowboard instructor. The idea of getting paid to do something you love while teaching others and sharing the joy of the sport sounded like the perfect career. There's a saying: 'If you work doing something you love, you'll never work a day in your life,' and that's exactly how I felt about snowboarding. The freedom, exhilaration, and connection to nature made it my ultimate passion and if it didn't pay peanuts, that's the job I would be doing today.

## If you could dine with any famous person, past or present, who would you choose?

While it may seem cliché, if I could dine with any famous person, it would be Winston Churchill. His life was marked by monumental decisions that shaped the course of history. Churchill's unwavering focus, steadfast dedication, and extraordinary resilience during some of history's darkest hours are remarkable. I would value the opportunity to hear his thoughts firsthand - exploring his strategic mind, his gift for inspiring others through powerful words, and his relentless determination to overcome adversity. A dinner with Churchill would undoubtedly provide an invaluable insight into leadership and courage and be inspirational.

## What's the best piece of advice you've been given?

The best piece of advice I've ever received is to treat others the way you'd like to be treated. It's a simple yet profound principle, which encourages respect, empathy, and understanding in every interaction. By approaching people with respect and fairness, you create meaningful connections and build trust, both personally and professionally. This timeless advice serves as a constant reminder to me to lead with courtesy and integrity, no matter the circumstances.

## If you had to work in a different industry, which would you choose?

If I had to work in a different industry, I would choose robotics. This field represents the next groundbreaking evolution in technology with

the capacity to reshape the world as we know it. With the potential to revolutionise every side of society and daily life from healthcare to manufacturing, robotics is equipped to drive incredible advancements. It's an exciting space to watch.

## What would you do with £1 million?

If I had £1 million, the first thing I'd do is take my family on an unforgettable, all-expenses-paid holiday to create lasting memories together. Next, I'd pay off the mortgage for financial peace of mind, followed by donating a portion to

charity to support causes close to my heart. The remaining funds would be wisely invested to ensure security for the future.

## Where would you live if money was no object?

If money was no object, every 6 months I would live in a different location - first stop Italy.

## What's the greatest technological advancement in your lifetime?

The greatest technological advancement in my lifetime has to be the internet. The World Wide

Web was invented just a few years before I was born, and I've had the opportunity to watch it evolve into something genuinely transformative. It has become the backbone of modern life, revolutionising communication, education, and entertainment. Its impact is immeasurable, connecting people and ideas in ways that were once unimaginable and driving change in virtually every aspect of our lives. I'm incredibly proud to be part of the industry that builds data centres - the critical infrastructure that powers the internet. It's rewarding to play a role in enabling the connectivity and innovation that defines our world today. ■

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