

# Innovations transforming the startup landscape: From Cloud, AI to Cybersecurity

TiE Mumbai recently kicked off its Thought Leadership Series Round Table Discussions focusing on the tech startup community. The discussion was on Digital Native Businesses – Emerging Models, Managing Scale & Cloud Security and moderated by Dinesh Varma, Prisma Cloud Regional Leadsr – India & South Asia, Palo Alto Networks and Minu Sirsalewala, Executive Editor – Special Projects, Dataquest. Excerpts and insights from the discussion



The TiE Mumbai Thought Leadership Series Round Table Discussions on 18th February, 2023 focused on the tech startup community and the latest trends and challenges facing digital native businesses. The round table brought together experts and thought leaders – CISOs, IT heads, CTOs and founders from the tech startup community to share their insights, experiences and best practices in these critical areas. The goal of

the discussion was to provide valuable insights and actionable advice for tech startups looking to succeed in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape.

The trend in the tech startup community is towards digital native businesses that are highly agile, data-driven and leveraging cloud-based technologies. There is a focus on using technology to create new business models, improve customer experiences, and drive operational efficiency.

Companies are also prioritizing data privacy and security, as well as sustainability and ethical considerations, in their technology choices and practices. Additionally, there is a growing trend towards decentralized and distributed systems, such as blockchain, that aim to increase transparency, security and trust in digital transactions and interactions. Most of them opined that using cloud-native technologies, including multi-cloud, helped them build flexible infrastructure in such a way that they could scale up and change scenarios with ease. However, there were pain points for which they sought solutions.

#### **CLOUD NATIVE GIVES US FLEXIBILITY AND AGILITY**

As Deep Ganatra, CTO, The Good Glamm Group began this conversation with, "I can't imagine our company scaling so rapidly without cloud. Thanks to cloud, our infrastructure was built in such a way that even if we want to go to another country, we just have to execute script and within one hour, it's tailored to suit a different nation."

Suyash Katyayani, Co-Founder and CTO, Purpille.com added, "Cloud Native first brought about democratization of the application system and the cloud ecosystem. Now, it's doing the same for Managed Services. This means there are no constraints to the thoughts we want to execute in a certain manner. It gives us tremendous agility to do whatever we want to do. For example, if we want to create a feature to capture the skin tone of the user and recommend the right product, there is recognition available with AWS, there's Vision API, and more such plug-ins available with cloud."

#### **SCALE, RELIABILITY AND SPEED**

"Today, if I want to do a flash sale, I can have an infrastructure that scales up 10x pronto. Something impossible 10 years ago. This helps salespeople concentrate on selling, while experts take care of the platforms and ecosystem that will enable that. That's how we leverage cloud and keep creating business value for the business," said Satish Kumar Dwibhashi, Senior Vice President and CISO, InMobi Group. He also pointed out, "Today, we embrace multi-cloud with ease because apart from being easy to scale, every cloud offers different services."

Dipesh Karki, Co-Founder and CTO, LenDenClub was also quick to point out, "We're into personal loans and for us, speed is important. If we get an escalation from the

business team of a service not working, we don't have the time to fix it right then and there. In every business there comes a time when your cost is not your top priority, business service is. So, building a good orchestration of your cloud infrastructure becomes essential."

He adds, "Working around the clock is not possible either, so, having the right solution architecture in place and ensuring it's used with the right kind of clouds makes sense for any startups - that's growing."

For Deepak Jain, Co-founder, Flexiloans.com, "Being a cloud-based digital company has helped scale up our lending business multifold" because he says, "We're based out of Mumbai, with no branches, servicing 20,000 pin codes across the country. This is possible because of technology and high usage of data science."

#### **CLOUD HAS MANY BENEFITS, BUT SECURITY A MAJOR PAIN POINT**

Cloud has leakage points: "We are a very large services organization and we started taking cloud seriously when we realized that shadow IT infrastructure was taking over businesses," said Arup Chatterjee, CISO for WNS Global Services, and added, "The very basic of security is knowing what you need to protect. You can't protect what you don't know. When the pandemic struck, everybody was trying to be agile, many used the cloud to innovate and build solutions fast enough to cater to a never known customer environment. But that also created leakage points in security and privacy. And now, cloud security and infrastructure hygiene have become critical."

Misconfigurations are a real threat: Punam Shejale, Head Process Excellence & Information Risk Management at CitiusTech echoed Arup's words when she said, "Many talk about going to cloud to scale, be customer friendly, etc. But when you are leveraging many native services, you are configuring to integrate with your own solutions. But as per a report by HackerOne, there has been 150% increase in misconfigurations, which are leveraged by hackers. So, information security, privacy, etc., are pertinent when you are on cloud."

Lack of standardization is a security nightmare: As Sanjib Jha, CEO & Executive Director at Coverstack, said, "The challenge with cloud is, while we are standardizing process up front, at the backend there is no standardization between two clouds. So, it's very difficult. Plus, of course, security breaches are inevitable in cloud."

Multi-Cloud code security is a big challenge: “For a lot of CISOs and CTOs, the biggest challenge is multi-cloud. It’s very complex to manage especially when every cloud product has their own Native Security Services. So, misconfigurations and cybersecurity are big issues. Though there are solutions today to manage multi-cloud in huge businesses, remember what runs on the cloud is applications. And therein comes code security. Agility and speed is great, but you’ve to give time to write great code,” says Sanjib.

Zero-trust is not a viable solution: Nirmesh Mehta, VP of Technology Architecture & Security, Gupshup, felt that going zero-trust for everything will only slow down processes. “You need to figure out what are the critical elements, which require security and find a way to keep those elements in a zero trust world and isolate everything else from it,” he opined.

### WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

“Over the last five years, we have spent too much time on infrastructure and perimeter security. Now, it’s the time to secure the code because we are living in an application world, especially API that is loosely coupled and that’s exactly where attackers are making merry,” said Sanjib. “What keeps CISOs awake at night is Crisis management. Your engineers are locked out by a ransomware attack and you can’t access your customer network. That’s the worst nightmare! So unless your basic fundamental concepts are not privileged identity management, access control, monitoring security reviews, baseline security management of the cloud right on the set, I don’t think technology can do anything to protect you,” opines Arup. Adds Deep, “Obviously you can’t be 100% secure, but if you put a system like shut all development servers at 8 or 9 pm sharp, you can somewhat be secure. And so, you need to keep the code clean by creating hard walls. It checks for all the security vulnerabilities and, also even before going on the staging server, all the checks are already automatically done.”

So, to conclude, the speakers in this conference spoke about the top five ways in which tech and adopting cloud native is helping start-ups:

- **Scalability:** Startups can easily scale infrastructure and services on demand, improving productivity and reducing costs
- **Flexibility:** Cloud native architectures allow for easy

integration with other services, making it easier for start-ups to add new features and functionality as needed.

- **Reliability:** Cloud providers offer highly available and reliable infrastructure, reducing downtime and increasing overall reliability.
- **Speed:** Start-ups can quickly deploy and iterate on their applications without having to worry about managing infrastructure.
- **Cost savings:** Cloud providers offer cost-effective solutions, allowing start-ups to save money on IT infrastructure costs while still having access to the latest technologies.

They also discussed the challenges and threats involved in keeping data secure on cloud, and spoke of possible solutions. And that was where a short discussion on the latest craze on the AI tech front, ChatGPT happened. Key points:

### EMERGENCE OF AI AND CHATGPT: CLOUD BONUS?

Smitesh Valanju, CISO, TataCLiQ said it has always been the data that has been the layer of the foundation – as it has been for AI and ML. “ChatGPT is also ultimately all about being fed data which is then thrown back at you. I am sure it’ll evolve to a stage where it will be more cognitive, more understanding from the data in terms of your persona and who’s asking that question,” he said, and added, “This has huge implications for data ownership and privacy. When WhatsApp and other forms of messaging services on social media began to get popular, more personal data began to reside on Cloud. With the increase in concern with respect to privacy, companies devised ways of data storage that stayed within the control of the organization. But ChatGPT, by its very nature, is a large language model, so, you can’t really have one for every organization. Therefore, if you want ChatGPT, unfortunately, your data will go out of the organization, which it will create a lot of headaches for security guys.”

However, Rajasekhar Khandrika, VP Engineering, Xpressbees spoke in favor of intuitive tech when he said, “So far, decision-making is yet to be digitized or automated. But they need to be, so, AI ML plays an important role. Obviously, this is not a ChatGPT-like scenario, but it’s more about understanding the patterns of how we have been investing, deploying a resource, how the customers and our suppliers are behaving, and then actually creating

# Focused Digital Campaigns...



**"IN THE MIDDLE  
OF DIFFICULTY LIES  
OPPORTUNITY"**

Enable your business in  
this challenging time  
with  **CyberMedia**  
digital offering...



**We ENGAGE with  
your AUDIENCE**

Large Enterprise / Medium Enterprise /  
Small And Medium / Channel Eco-System /  
Start-up / Developer / End Cosumers /  
Gaming Community

## HOW TO BETTER A DIGITAL BRAND STRATEGY



Branding



Response  
Generation



Webinar



Virtual Round  
Table



Custom  
Program



Virtual  
Event

Create a successful brand focused campaigns with :

**Harminder Singh**, Associate Vice President - Online Expert, [harminders@cybermedia.co.in](mailto:harminders@cybermedia.co.in)



systems that can automatically make these decisions, tell us what to do next.”

Dipan Mehta, VP, LogiNext spoke of the utilitarian aspect of AI and ChatGPT, and said, “This is the first time ever that AI is leveraging reasonable visibility. Regardless of how it falls out, we’re seeing more utilitarian technology is now in use in AI. What we had in the past was all just research and excitement over the findings. Now we’re seeing actual products where you hope the API helps individuals do something on their own on, say, a mobile app.”

But Smitesh maintained, “ChatGPT gives us immense possibilities depending upon creativity and how far can the mind go. So, there has to be some form of governance built into the platform. We are kicked about it now, but I think the consequences are going to be difficult unless it is controlled soon.”

## CONCLUSION

Harsh Mittal, CTO, Yubi, neatly summed up the ‘to cloud or not to cloud’ debate, when he said, “Most business these days are ecosystem driven, not just customer-centric. You have third-party litigations, partners, software integrations...

But while all this might post security issues for you, the customer doesn’t see you as an ecosystem. For him, you are a service provider, and so, it’s your responsibility to not just secure his data and privacy, but also give him an unconceivable customer experience. And that makes our responsibilities boundary-less and holistic.”

So, as India’s entrepreneurship landscape continues to flourish, the focus is firmly on technology and digitisation that drives growth and innovation. Startups have matured into enterprises establishing clearer and more sustainable growth paths for themselves. The trend clearly indicates that entrepreneurs will adopt a cash-conservative attitude and therefore will be revenue and growth-focused in 2023. This means the Indian start-up ecosystem continues to be a silver lining on our economic horizons because the players see it as a long-term investment game. So, those who stay for 10-15 years will see fantastic returns.

This thought leadership session organised by TIE Mumbai reiterated that with a focus on growth, scale, customer retention and efficient acquisitions, the Startup ecosystem is well poised to boost momentum and drive innovation. 