

2023 GTDC Summit EMEA Highlights Innovation and Sustainability

IT Ecosystem Orchestration Takes Center Stage



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Powering the Next Wave of Technology



The future looks bright for the IT community. While the rapid pace of innovation and shifting business models present certain challenges for vendors and solution providers, distributors are orchestrating clearer paths of opportunity for the channel.

That value proposition permeated many of the discussions at the 13th Annual GTDC Summit EMEA conference, hosted by the Global Technology Distribution Council.

This year's event, held June 13-14 at the Grand Hotel Huis ter Duin in Noordwijk, Netherlands, featured presentations by some of the world's preeminent thought leaders. From noted futurists and researchers to vendor and distribution executives, the conversations covered a wide array of critical industry topics.

The keynote speakers provided deep insight into the global economic conditions and expectations for the technology and business communities in the years ahead, as well as the rising value of technology across the globe. **IT distribution empowers ecosystems**, and that long-standing proposition continues to **fuel innovation and drive new revenue opportunities for channel businesses**, from the smallest solution firm to Fortune 500 vendors.

That theme permeated through the presentations, breakout discussions and social conversations at this year's event.





Innovation Orchestration

GTDC CEO **Frank Vitagliano** welcomed attendees and started off the event with a look ahead, emphasizing the many ways distributors are empowering the IT and business communities. “Innovation is a key sales driver and rising value proposition for the channel as businesses struggle to keep pace with increases in labor costs, global competition, and regulatory compliance,” said Frank Vitagliano, CEO of the GTDC. “While organizations rely on IT solutions and technology providers to address those concerns and meet other critical objectives, distributors are a force behind the scenes, delivering more technology options, services and support capabilities than ever before.”

With North American and EMEA revenue at an all-time high, despite recent chain disruptions and economic uncertainties, distributors are gaining momentum. The ongoing transformation of business models and IT portfolios should further strengthen that position.



Moving from Science Fiction to Science Fact

Futurist **Gerd Leonhard** highlighted a number of ways innovation impacts various global communities, from AI and machine learning to digital transformation. The noted speaker discussed how the world could harness the power of technology for the greater good and must work to solve potential ethical and legal concerns with these advances.

While IT may lead to the “end of routine” tasks, businesses will need to look closely at the effects of replacing humans with machines. Moving people into more impactful jobs will require changes in education and training.

The Big Bet: Which Investments are Paying Solid Returns?

Channel strategist **Dave O'Callaghan**, Partner at Vation Ventures, led an insightful executive discussion on distribution investments that will provide the most benefits in the future. This session's panelists included:

- **Gianluca Guasti** – GM, Value Business & Marketing, Computer Gross
- **Clive Fitzharris** – CEO, DCC Technology
- **Klaus Schlichtherle** – CEO, Infinigate

“As we move from the traditional offerings to digital, we must redefine strategies and motions to better connect our partners and vendors,” emphasized Guasti. “Our focus must be on operational excellence and technical innovation to increase positive outcomes for our ecosystem.”

Distribution investments often involve expanding geographic footprints and specializations. However, as Schlichtherle notes, cloud enablement is attracting a lot of attention. “Our biggest investments are clearly going into digitization and cybersecurity, which requires a lot of our partners to move from traditional business models to become MSPs and MSSPs. We help with those transitions and ensure everything is seamless.”



Sustainability Takes the Driver's Seat

Stuart Sumner, Global SVP of Content for The Channel Company, joined a lively panel discussion on the IT industry's role in corporate sustainability. ESG initiatives are at the forefront of discussions within the IT industry, capturing the attention of corporate executives, SMB leaders, and global investors alike. However, there are certain obstacles hindering the widespread adoption of these initiatives. In response, the technology community is taking proactive measures to tackle these challenges head-on. The expert panel included:

- **Virginie Le Barbu** – Global Channel Sustainability Director, Lenovo
- **Manuel Aguirre** – Global Sustainability Manager, TD SYNEX
- **Alastair Wynn** – Business Development Director, Softcat

Where is the IT industry with sustainability? “Pressure (for these initiatives) is increasing from customers, regulations, investors, employees and the whole ecosystem,” said Le Barbu. “We are in a collaboration mindset, listening and helping partners with their sustainability efforts and working to accelerate that journey.”

With sustainability being such a broad conversation and major challenge, Aguirre suggested vendors and partners need to engage and collaborate more to tackle these objectives. “That starts with explaining the importance of sustainability, from vendors and partners to co-workers and kids, education and consciousness is critical. We set targets on energy usage and transportation and collect as much information as possible to help customers make better decisions.”

Wynn pointed out that sustainability is more than just checking boxes. “It’s definitely a differentiator with customers and equally an opportunity for vendors and partners to reach new audiences. We can do things better and smarter with tech innovation and need to challenge ourselves to go not only faster and better but do the right things.”



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Navigating Through Complexity

PwC Chief Economist **Jan Willem Velthuisen** offered key insights on the current and evolving economic situation in Europe. He highlighted growth factors in the IT industry and identified potential obstacles to market expansion and technology advancement.

IT Distribution Through the Looking Glass

GTDC CEO **Frank Vitagliano** capped off the event by exploring the long-term transformation of the channel with an esteemed panel of distribution executives. With innovation accelerating at an exponential pace, vendors and solution providers need more support than ever before. Executives weighing in on that topic included:

- **Alessandro Cattani** – CEO, Esprinet Group
- **Anton Herbst** – Executive Advisor, Tarsus
- **Patrick Zammit** – President, Europe & APJ, TD SYNEX

Those panelists suggested the future of distribution will involve an even stronger focus on cloud enablement for the IT community. “We need to be thinking bytes instead of just atoms today,” suggested Cattani. “In addition to logistics, we must allocate investments in the customer movement to the cloud and help our partners better manage the complexity of technologies.”

Zammit emphasized the need to specialize and differentiate to improve profitability and retain customers. “Clearly that means distribution has to rethink its value proposition by partner segment, with cybersecurity being a good example. We reorganized along technologies by value proposition for ISVs, traditional resellers and MSPs are investing differently in each community.”

Those changes go much deeper than technologies and logistics, suggested Herbst. “Three to five years from now distribution is going to develop in three areas. We are going to become demand, talent and sustainability engines that empower the IT ecosystem.”



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Save the date for [GTDC Summit North America 2024](#), February 7-9, 2024 at the [Mission Pacific & Seabird Resort](#) in Oceanside, California.



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