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# Driving smarter outcomes

**The IT industry is going through a period of transformation and Insight EMEA has rebranded itself to effectively navigate this and provide more intelligent solutions to its clients.**

IMAGES KALLE SINGER PHOTOGRAPHY

Companies need to perceive information technology as a strategic asset, rather than simply as a cost factor. That's according to Insight's President of the EMEA region, Wolfgang Ebermann, who believes that by allowing IT solutions to form part of a business' tactical plans it will result in greater success for all parties. To address this situation, Insight has recently undergone a total rebrand of its identity and it is focusing on empowering people inside and outside of the organisation. *The CEO Magazine* had a chat to Wolfgang about where the industry is heading and what role Insight will play in that.

***The CEO Magazine:* What was your professional background prior to becoming President of Insight's EMEA operations and how has it influenced your leadership style?**

**Wolfgang:** I have had 25 years in the IT profession and I started my career after university working for Hewlett-Packard. The reason why I joined Hewlett-Packard was a very distinct one. At that time, the company talked about 'the HP way' and for me, in a very simple way, 'the HP way' was all about allowing people to realise their potential. They gave employees, even when they started as newcomers, a great empowerment framework coupled with accountability. It was based on >>

**Insight** 

Wolfgang Ebermann  
 Insight  
 President of EMEA region  
 Headquarters in Arizona, US  
 5,400 employees  
 US\$5.3 billion turnover in 2014



teamwork and trust and an ethical principle. I was very much intrigued by that value system because it is very much linked to what I was looking for in terms of my professional career. So I was really excited to join HP and then I had an opportunity to become part of the international marketing centre. In that role, I was responsible for managing the strategic software alliance partnerships.

Microsoft was one of those partnerships. It had a similar value system to HP—very people centric, and a great strategy and vision. They offered me the opportunity to join them and I spent the last 22 years before I joined Insight at Microsoft.

Both companies, as I said, are very people centric. They are focused on allowing people to realise their potential. They are also companies with great vision and clarity on how they take that vision and turn it into strategy. For me, the opportunity to grow my career within both companies, into executive roles and international roles, has been phenomenal. That is the way my personal

**“IT has not yet demonstrated that it is a strategic asset although it drives true business outcomes and improvement.”**

**- Wolfgang Ebermann**

leadership style has been built. It is really people centric but also about thought leadership. Thought leadership is really centred on clarity of vision, strategy, and making sure that the strategy lends to execution excellence. That is the way I like to run businesses and that is also one of the key opportunities I could see joining Insight. I am really excited to have been in the company now for almost two years.

**Insight has recently rebranded its identity. Has that been a necessary part of the company's future?**

If you look at the IT industry, I think we have had a phenomenal ride over the last 30 years. We have been driven by innovation and that is why it has been, for many companies from the supplier side as well as from the IT reseller side, a great opportunity to grow. IT has become

really relevant to help businesses improve the way they run; however, in the last few years I think there is also a challenge which the IT industry needs to address right now.

That challenge is that when you talk to key business decision-makers in companies—not to the IT department but to the actual business decision-makers—and you ask them how they perceive IT, everybody will acknowledge that it is a must-have. However, if you ask them if they see IT as a strategic asset or as a cost factor, the perception of business decision-makers very often turns into them viewing it as a cost factor rather than a real strategic asset. The chief financial officer will immediately support that with numbers and say that very often 80–90 per cent of their IT budget is being spent on just running current IT infrastructure. IT has not yet >>

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demonstrated that it is a strategic asset although it drives true business outcomes and improvement.

I think that is what we need to address, and we were fortunate that we became a Fortune 500 company, thanks to the way we have transformed a couple of times already. We sat back and thought about that perception challenge and decided that we needed to think about the next step in our evolution. When you now look at the way we are rebranding, it is a visualisation of the evolution of our company centred upon a new purpose statement, where we as a company want to provide intelligent solutions to allow

businesses to run smarter. From those intelligent solutions, we basically want to drive a better business outcome. That said, if you think about Insight today and tomorrow then this will centre on two core competences.

One is our existing core competency—what we are known for—being a preferred IT partner, delivering standard IT software and hardware and related services in local countries or on a global basis. That stays intact, but on top of that we have an additional offering that pivots on the ambition of being an IT trusted adviser helping businesses to improve business outcome through intelligent

solution offerings. We use the cloud innovation and related services as a key enabler to allow IT to really drive business outcome. That is the evolution of the company which resonates with a new purpose statement and lands us with a new brand identity which we are highlighting globally.

### How does Insight work to empower people and why is this value so important?

If I come back to our evolution as a company—to be seen as a trusted adviser and to be able to provide intelligent solutions—then it's clear this can only be accomplished through our people. Our employees, we call them teammates, represent Insight and they are in charge of understanding our clients situation and providing trusted advice. This requires empowering our teammates, allowing them to realise their strengths and potential and provide development to allow them to grow their capabilities. We call this a learning organisation which we believe is critical in today's world of constant change. Our core company value system centres around three important components: hunger, heart and harmony.

Hunger is centred on allowing our people to grow, develop, and increase the value proposition they can provide to our clients. The heart is the fact that we believe the company's DNA and our purpose statement is client centric. We need to make sure we meet the needs of our clients and provide them advice which allows them to drive a better business impact in the way they run their operations. And harmony is all about allowing our people, with their strengths, to partner with each other and, with that, complement each other in the best interest of clients.

Putting people with their strengths into the right roles and allowing them to team up to successfully focus on the needs of our clients is the magic of our

cultural value system. This allows us to actually drive transformation and become a leading partner who is capable of building intelligent solutions, allowing our clients to run their businesses smarter.

### What have been the highlights for you in this role so far?

Our cultural DNA is one. When I talk about that value system of heart, hunger, and harmony, it actually starts at the top of the company, with the executives and leadership teams. They are clearly walking the talk of our core values. The openness and willingness of that executive board who have been building a global footprint and not been standing still has been great. They are willing to take on that next level of success and have supported us in the EMEA region very successfully while driving the company's whole transformation.

The second very important highlight is that our success is built on our strategic alliance with the leading software and hardware manufactures. They are very supportive because they see that industry challenge and they are searching for alliance partners like us with whom they can actually address our joint client talents. Having their support in that strategic partnership is part of the transformation. It is a great highlight and a great asset for us.

Also, the new alliances we have built with our service partners around the world. We believe the successful transformation at this time is very dependent on building strong alliances with different angles. You can't expect a one-stop partner and you won't be able to do everything on your own. I think you can provide key services through a strong network of alliances. With this in mind, we built a service alliance partner program in Europe over the course of the last 12 months and we have been very



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successful in attracting the best service partners with whom we are deeply working to provide the end-to-end solution offerings to our clients.

Last but not the least is agility. Many large corporations who decide, from a vision and strategy point of view, to transform, find it very often requires more time than they thought. The agility and the speed of transformation at Insight is pretty strong and again I think that has a lot to do with the cultural value system in place. Many large corporations who know they need to transform experience difficulties once they get started as people are not used to move out of their comfort zone and are reluctant to change. At Insight the company has already

transformed more than twice as due evolution of IT Market and Client demand. It still takes time. We build a model which allows us to capitalise on today's assets while we build on our future. Our cultural value system and the spirit of “a learning organisation” fosters our speed and agility. Of course that is important because the IT industry is a fast-moving and agile market.

### How does the company collaborate with suppliers and partners to ensure success?

Strategic partnerships are super important. It is part of our core DNA within our business model. In order to ensure that we execute against that, we >>

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basically have dedicated alliance managers, and their role is to work on a joint business plan with our key alliance partners. Based on that plan, they then drive execution excellence. We participate in executive briefing sessions of the market leading Software and Hardware manufacturers on a regular basis. We are ahead of the curve, capturing the key trends and teaming up with our alliance partners to jointly address new opportunities.

### **What does the future hold for the IT industry and how will Insight ensure it is ahead of the curve?**

I think we as an industry right now have that perception challenge which we need to overcome. For us, partnering with our key suppliers and service alliance partners is all about demonstrating that intelligent IT solutions, using the cloud as a key enabler

from a technology point of view, can improve business outcomes. I think that is very, very important.

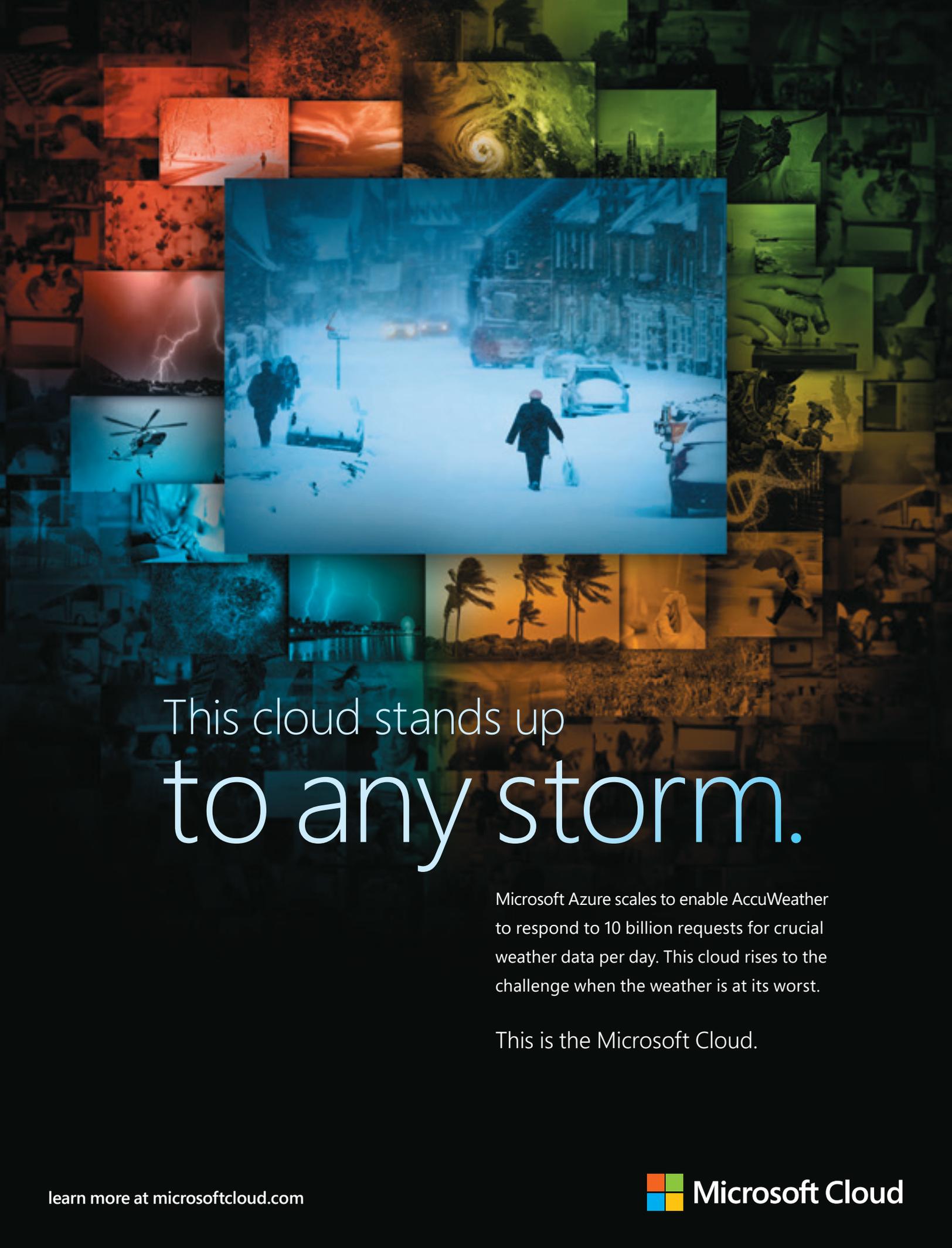
Secondly, to truly deliver Intelligent IT solutions in today's world you need to build strategic alliances to create true end-to-end solutions. If you do this well you become the trusted advisor for your clients.

The third element is focused on that trusted adviser role. We want to make sure our clients know they can enjoy Insight as a preferred partner for supplying standard software, hardware, and related services. We want to go one step beyond that now and be a trusted partner by engaging with the decision-makers in those businesses, understanding their business problems and then working together with them on IT. Ultimately, we want to work out how we can turn those business problems into

true business outcomes using intelligent IT solutions.

When you look at IT decision-makers or CIOs in many of our clients' businesses, they are challenged today by their decision-makers because it is not about technology talk any more. It is about them having a seat at a level table and by getting that seat it is important that they embrace and understand the business challenges. I think that transformation is something where we, as a partner, want to help our IT colleagues at to basically change that perception. That's where we're heading. ■

*"Insight is one of Microsoft's largest strategic partners, delivering and deploying Microsoft's hardware, software and cloud solutions. Our relationship with Insight enables us to deliver solutions that help our mutual customers thrive in a mobile-first, cloud-first world." - Celine Bremaud, Vice President, EMEA, Small and Midmarket Solutions and Partners (SMS&P) Group-Microsoft Corp*



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