

ISYX TECHNOLOGIES, MICROSOFT SHOWCASE SOLUTIONS TO TRANSFORM BUILDING INDUSTRY

DUBAI: ISYX Technologies, a fast-growing business innovation consulting company in the Middle East and Africa, successfully held a joint workshop with Microsoft on the challenges faced by the construction and building materials industry. The event focused on how specific solutions provided by ISYX Technologies using Microsoft Dynamics 365 can improve the productivity of the industry players on various projects.

The key objective of the workshop was how to focus on the improvement of specific project parameters like sales automation, supply chain and delivery, material estimation, project P&L management, dashboard, KPI's per project, resource allocation per project, service maintenance, amongst others.

"While construction is important for the world economy, it has a poor record of productivity. Construction related spending accounts for 13 percent of the world's GDP, but its annual productivity growth has only increased by 1 percent over the past 20 years. There are two characteristics linked to the lack of automation and innovation in the construction industry. First, it is a highly fragmented



Sharoon Shamsuddin

industry making integration cumbersome, and second it is amongst the least digitized end-to-end, ranking just above agriculture and below hospitality and healthcare," explained Sharoon Shamsuddin, CEO, ISYX Technologies.

"Having other business ventures such as construction and asset management, I certainly see the potential of a digital future for the construction industry, where the decision-making functions will be moved to intelligent software and the devices that run on it," he added. The McKinsey Global Institute has identified ten root causes for the low productivity in the construction industry. They include three from within external forces, three from within industry dynamics, and four from within firm-level operational factors.

Some of these include inadequate design processes, poor project manage-



ment, under investment in innovation and digitization, insufficiently skilled supervisory and frontline workers, amongst others. Clashing behavior amongst the various construction ecosystem players is also responsible for the continuing low productivity. Suitable action in seven areas can boost the sector's productivity by an estimated 50 percent to 60 percent, including regulations, contracts, design, procurement and supply chain, onsite execution, technology

and innovation, and reskilling workers.

"Our solutions which are, built on the Microsoft Dynamics 365 platform are meant to digitally transform the legacy project approach prevalent in this industry and boost gains for vendors, suppliers, contractors, consultants, and the end customer. The Microsoft D365 solution covers an extended collaboration model linking design, construction and operations. It covers various stages like digital mockup, design review, process simula-

tion, project management and facility management. The solution provides a single place to understand the complete project performance including, portfolio analysis, project progress analysis, punch list analysis across projects, cash flow, EVA, and other variables," added Shiva Kathiresan, VP Applications, ISYX Technologies.

D365 is completely project-centric and is a work-breakdown structure, driven solution. It covers actual versus budget variance analysis, material variance, labor variance, cash flow analysis, EVA analysis, projected cash flow over six-month period, project portfolio analysis, amongst others. It provides coverage for every process of a project based organization. This includes inquiry, estimation, quote, sales order, planning, execution, cash, RFQ, procurement, quality, payouts, financial planning, project dashboards, work breakdown and activity alerts, workflows and hand offs, knowledge base, field service management, amongst others. Other solution capabilities include BIM integration, GIS and map integration, augmented and virtual reality capability, and IoT integration.

CHEAP 3D PRINTED PROSTHETICS COULD BE GAME CHANGER FOR NEPAL

KATHMANDU: Ram's new hand was manufactured on a 3D printer in Nepal's capital for just \$30, an innovation that could be a game changer for many in the impoverished Himalayan country. Once a farmer, Ram lost his hands and toes within a few years of contracting leprosy, forcing the father-of-three to turn to begging in a desperate bid to feed his family. That's where he was spotted by US-born Matthew Rockwell, the founder of Disaster Hack, a non-profit technology startup that is making functional prosthetic hands for those who couldn't otherwise afford them.

Disaster Hack makes its money doing tech consulting and teaching people to code, while running altruistic ventures on the side like teaching Nepalis IT skills and manufacturing low-cost, basic prosthetics. Rockwell—who flits between Nepal and the US, where he is part of the tech team behind the annual Burning Man festival in Nevada's Black Rock Desert—brought a 3D printer to Kathmandu after a powerful earthquake struck the country in 2015.

Soon, he began printing new hands for those in need: a girl who lost both limbs after being electrocuted by hanging power lines, a construction worker whose hand was crushed beyond repair. "We've only distributed to five so far but we have a list that keeps on growing," said Rockwell, sitting in a cramped office in Kathmandu, the 3D printer whirring behind him.

Recycled materials

Rockwell only has the capacity to make hands at the moment—a leg

requires a more heavy-duty printer—but he has identified more than 7,000 people in Nepal who could benefit from Disaster Hack's creations. "A traditional prosthesis costs anywhere between \$1000 to \$3000 to \$5000," Rockwell explained. "Now we're able to produce prostheses for right around \$30 so it (3D printing) lowers the cost dramatically for a functional prosthesis."

Rockwell hopes to bring down the cost even further by recycling plastic bottle tops to make the wire that feeds the printer. Nepal's healthcare sector is chronically underfunded and ill-equipped but 3D printing can reduce both the cost and time it takes to bring medical equipment to those who need it most. The 3D printed hands being manufactured by Disaster Hack take nearly a full day to print, and are comprised of roughly 20 different parts. Rockwell hopes the mostly volunteer-run project will sow the seeds for something bigger.

He has now trained 20 prosthetists at hospitals in Nepal in 3D printing, and signed a deal with Kathmandu's largest university to set up the country's first biomedical 3D printing lab. Meanwhile for Ram, a new hand could mean a chance to give up begging. "What should I say, I have nothing to eat. If I stay here I make 100 rupees (\$0.97), 50 rupees," he said from his daily spot on the corner of a busy intersection. He lifted the new prosthetic hand, and as he slowly contracted the plastic fingers to make a fist, a smile spread across his face.—AFP



KATHMANDU: This photo shows Disaster Hack founder Matthew Rockwell, right, attaching a 3D printed prosthetic hand to leprosy sufferer Ram's arm in Kathmandu. —AFP photos



KATHMANDU: This photo shows Disaster Hack founder Matthew Rockwell during an interview with AFP in Kathmandu.



KATHMANDU: This photo shows leprosy sufferer Ram, who lost his hands and toes to the disease, begging on the streets of Kathmandu.



MUMBAI: India's richest man and oil-to-telecom conglomerate Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani, right, and his wife Nita Ambani (2R) pose with their children (L-C) Akash Ambani, Anant Ambani and Isha Ambani as they arrive for the company's 40th AGM in Mumbai. —AFP

INDIA'S AMBANI TO LAUNCH FREE SMARTPHONE, SHAKES UP TELECOMS

MUMBAI: India's richest man Mukesh Ambani said Friday that his telecoms venture Jio would launch a free smartphone, escalating a price war that is shaking up the country's ultra-competitive mobile market. The announcement, made at a boisterous Reliance Industries annual general meeting in Mumbai, sent shares in rival telecoms operator Bharti Airtel plummeting almost six percent. "This breakthrough and revolutionary device named JioPhone, along with Jio's disruptive tariff, will unleash the power of digital life in the hands of 1.3 billion citizens of the largest democracy in the world," said Ambani.

The tycoon told shareholders and staff, who regularly burst into chants of "Jio, Jio, Jio," that the phone, the latest entry into India's crowded

market, would be available from September. He said customers would only have to pay a deposit of 1,500 rupees (\$23.32) for the 4G-enabled device, which would be fully refundable after three years. The announcement comes almost a year after Ambani launched the Reliance Jio 4G network with free voice calls for life and vastly cheaper data plans, forcing rivals to dramatically slash their tariffs.

Jio has signed up 125 million subscribers since its launch in September 2016, causing a rush to consolidation in the multi-billion-dollar sector as competitors scramble to match its deep pockets. British mobile phone giant Vodafone is merging its Indian unit with Idea Cellular to help fend off Jio, which is backed by

Reliance Industries—India's immensely wealthy energy-to-chemicals conglomerate headed by Ambani.

Bharti Airtel and Idea Cellular have endured losses since Jio's arrival and shares in the companies fell nearly three percent and six percent respectively following Ambani's announcement Friday. Reliance rose three percent. The news will have also been carefully watched by South Korean tech giant Samsung and Chinese mobile phone maker Xiaomi who possess the lion's share of India's smartphone market. Samsung leads the market with 28 percent while nearly 14 percent of phones sold in India are made by Xiaomi, according to a study by the International Data Corporation, an IT research firm. —AFP

CHICAGO FESTIVAL TO MARK POKEMON GO ANNIVERSARY GOES AWRY

CHICAGO: A Pokemon Go festival at Chicago's Grant Park to celebrate the virtual game's one-year anniversary went awry when a technical glitch prevented many players from logging on. The Chicago Tribune reported the festival's organizers decided to issue refunds for the \$20 tickets and \$100 in credits for use on the app. The Chicago Sun-Times reported the CEO of the game's developer was booted when he tried to explain the problem to the crowd.

Niantic Inc.'s John Hanke said "the whole Niantic team" was working to fix a glitch in the server and log-on problems with cellular service providers AT&T, Sprint and Verizon. Some in attendance paid as much as \$400 online for the tickets when they sold out within minutes of their June release. The augmented reality game that uses GPS to locate, capture, battle and train virtual creatures was introduced in the United States in July 2016. Niantic says Pokemon Go has been downloaded 750 million times.—AP



CHICAGO: Festival goers wander the grounds at the Pokemon Go Fest at Grant Park in Chicago. —AP photos