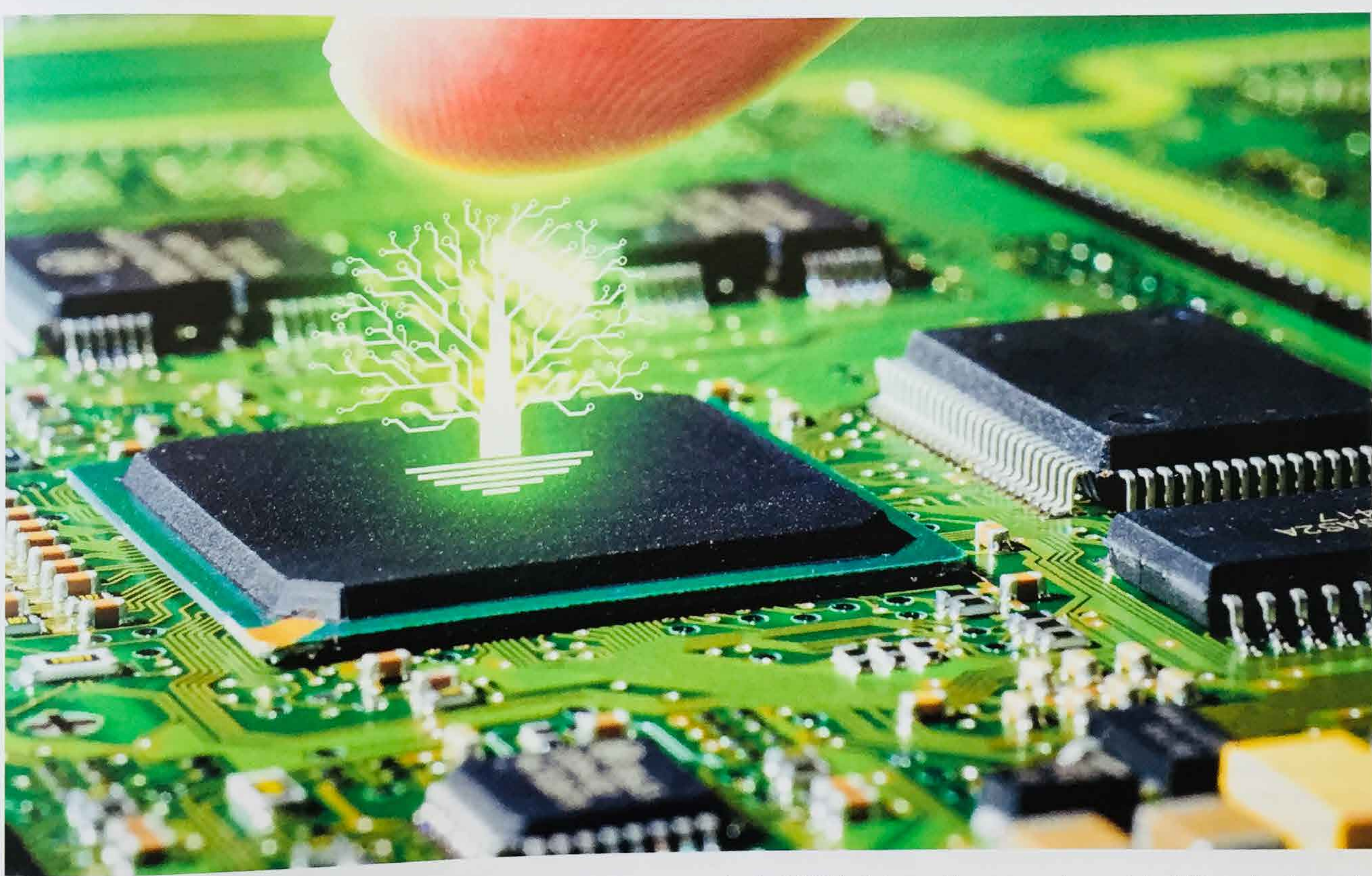


# SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

Green, energy-efficient IT systems may be attractive to your customers because they are environmentally friendly, but energy-saving green technologies can also save your customers money. Sustainable green IT systems can include green data centres, green desktops, green networking and virtualisation, among other energy-efficient technologies. So how are channel partners recommending sustainable technology to their customers in the region? By MANDA BANDA



**F**inding a niche in the "green technologies" segment isn't an easy task for resellers and solutions providers serving the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) market.

Young companies scaling the maturation curve may not prove the most stable prospects. And sectors of the green economy are

struggling at the moment in the MENA. Solar panel manufacturers in MENA, for example, face pricing pressure from low-cost photovoltaic cells from China.

Yet some solutions providers seek to cultivate business in the field of sustainability, which covers areas ranging from energy conservation to the reduction of carbon emissions.

Some emerging sustainability technology solution sets have broad application: software that lets businesses track and report on their sustainability efforts, for instance. Others have a vertical orientation, such as solutions that help architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) companies design green buildings using building modelling principles.

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Research firm IDC said spending on the technologies that enable smart city initiatives is forecast to reach \$1.26bn for the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region in 2018.

In the first release of its 'Worldwide Semi-annual Smart Cities Spending Guide', analyst IDC said as these initiatives gain traction, it expects spending in MEA to accelerate over the 2016 to 2021 forecast period, reaching \$2.30bn in 2021.

Cities across the Middle East are implementing digital transformation initiatives within urban ecosystems in order to facilitate a broad range of environmental, financial, and social outcomes.

According to IDC, a smart city begins to be developed when multiple smart initiatives are coordinated to leverage technology investments across an entire city, use common platforms to decrease service time/maintenance costs, share data across systems, and tie IT investments clearly to smart missions.

At D-Link Corporation, a global provider of connectivity solutions for small, medium and large enterprise business networking, the company is ramping up efforts that are aimed at pushing the "green technology" agenda for channel partners and end user customers in the region.

According to the vendor, it recognises its responsibility for business growth, responsible corporate citizenship, constant product innovation and adjustment of technology to meet the needs of channel partners, businesses, consumers and the environment.

Sakkeer Hussain, director - Sales and Marketing, D-Link Middle East and Africa (MEA), said the company has been promoting green technology development and adoption in the MEA market for over two decades. "Eleven years ago, D-Link was the first to introduce the industry's first 'green Ethernet' technology with a series of environmentally-friendly small office, home office (SOHO) Gigabit switches that decrease energy costs by reducing power consumption without sacrificing operational performance and functionality," he said. "D-Link has continued this ethos and today, we continue to develop green networking technology, which allows our products to drastically reduce power consumption."

Rajiv Prasad, chief innovation catalyst, Xpandretail, said organisations not only in the Middle East but around the world are also

embracing green IT initiatives with open arms.

Prasad said statistics have shown that more than 70% of customers prefer to associate themselves with corporations that support and promote green practices and social causes. "With the rise in technological advancements it has become simpler to reduce, reuse and recycle materials in order to promote environmental protection schemes," he said.

Shabih Hassnain, channel manager, TP-Link MEA FZE, said green IT initiatives are moving up the corporate agenda for organisations in the Middle East. Hassnain said an increasing number of businesses are now concentrating efforts to make green IT initiatives a part of their operations plans. "Given that adopting green IT initiatives results in both cost savings and environment protection, more and more organisations are realising that these practices create holistic win-win situations," he said. "In the Middle East, it isn't just the organisations that are embracing green IT initiatives, the government is also proactively encouraging entities and people to do their bit."

Given that most channel partners in MENA have gotten on board and are working with many vendor and distributor on several green IT initiatives, it is critical that they bring this to influence their customers technology spending and adoption habits.

Hassnain added that the importance of green IT needs to be understood on a much broader level across the region. "It is a bit challenging to get everyone on board with green IT initiatives," he noted. "Change takes time and gradually with efforts put in by brands we are sure that things will be different in the near future in MENA."

That said, Hassnain pointed out that training and awareness are needed to ensure that the channel partners and vendors are updated and benefit from the green solutions that are being developed.

Prasad said a crucial element of organisational success is corporate social responsibility. He added that it enlists not only promoting positive engagement with the community around the business but also maintainable growth and development for an organisation. "By embracing green IT initiatives, a company can ensure it promotes a positive and sustainable approach to usage of technological advancements that lessen the carbon footprint," he said

Hussain said D-Link envisions that green



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SAKKEER HUSSAIN, DIRECTOR - SALES & MARKETING, D-LINK MEA

networking products will help preserve the environment through waste reduction and energy savings. "By utilising this guiding principle, D-Link Green has continued to lead the networking solutions industry in corporate environmental responsibility. "Sustaining a better tomorrow is one that starts with protecting the environment," he said.

He reiterated that this philosophy has served D-Link well for over 20 years and will continue to remain one of the company's guiding principles as it continues to grow and achieve even more milestones.

Hussain said D-Link as a global networking vendor does business in many countries around the world. "Our channel partners, customers and employees are increasingly concerned about green computing initiatives. We recognise our responsibilities in this regard and are committed to protecting the environment," he said. "It is our hope that through

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our MEA-wide green IT initiatives push, we will help ensure a more beneficial future for generations to come."

With vendors touting their green IT schemes, energy-efficient technology and recycling efforts in the region, resellers and distributors should also take up their role in education and user customers on the importance of sustainability technology solutions.

At TP-Link, Hassnain said the company is highly driven towards creating products that enable energy conservation. "Our wide range of smart technology has been designed to help users achieve energy efficiency. We have smart home offerings as well as business solutions that helps customers to play their part and contribute towards giving back to the environment," he said. "For instance, in the smart home range of solutions, we have smart LED bulbs that help users conserve up to 80% of the energy used by standard 60W incandescent bulbs."

He observed that these products are not only energy savers but also smart in usage as they can be controlled from anywhere and anytime from a mobile phone with just an app. "This innovation has led to reduced wastage as well as higher savings of energy. These environment-friendly smart lighting solutions are helping the region reduce its carbon footprint," he said.

D-Link's Hussain agreed with Hassnain on the need to build environment-friendly solutions and explained that D-Link actively works with channel partners and end user customers to reduce energy consumption and has achieved certifications such as Energy Star and RoHS European Union compliance, and is developing products that utilise D-Link Green Technology to help protect the earth. "Our D-Link Green Technology leads the market with energy savings of up to 80%," he said. "Through our service centres spread across the globe, the company is able to recycle 90% of D-Link's waste onsite. We never use materials considered hazardous in any of our products. All our products comply fully with the European Union's RoHS directive to protect both our customers and the environment."

Hussain said through the initiatives that are being rolled out in the commitment, the company is demonstrating its commitment to recycling and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. "We were one of the first networking companies to become registered as Energy Star partners, a



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While it's irrefutable the benefit green technology can bring on a company's bottom line, resellers still face challenges when it comes getting customer buy-in on green IT initiatives in the Middle East.

TP-Link's Hassnain pointed out that it is not easy going green in the IT industry because a number of resellers and vendors see little or no short-term sense in adopting those practices. "The biggest challenge resellers they face is the lack of understanding by customers and the critical environmental threats that has. Once customers realise the magnitude of harm that can be reduced by using green IT, they will be more inclined towards making the move," he said. "The thing with using energy efficient practices is that specific numbers cannot really be predicted from day one, but the



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benefits only grow with increased adoption."

Hussain said as the MENA channel kick starts 2019, more and more corporate organisations are looking to adopt green IT initiatives. He pointed out that software is widely being used as a tool to monitor and control energy within these corporate buildings. "With app-based smart technology and IoT evolving rapidly, an increasing number of companies are becoming more open to instituting software that enables them to conserve energy remotely. These initiatives go beyond smart lighting solutions and energy conservation to helping entities reduce their overall carbon footprint," he said.

Hussain added that the advent of green initiatives is widening business opportunities for channel partners in the technology sector as the use of smart electronic solutions and cloud solutions is rapidly growing. ■

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