Edition **Five**

uiq

Ultima

Insight Quarterly

2024. Welcome to the year of AI empowered people and business outcomes

2023 was a year where we saw the coronation of HRH King Charles III, against a more sombre backdrop of geo-political disruption with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and of course, OpenAI and the ongoing impact this will continue to have on every aspect of life in the year ahead.

At Ultima, we extended our technology investment portfolio across Cloud, Security, Digital and leveraged our automation and AI experience to attain a leading position as a Microsoft Copilot partner. With the recent announcement from Microsoft about Copilot now on general release and as an offering to businesses of all sizes, we are excited about how Ultima can help our customers to take full advantage of the workspace benefits this will bring.

Our first 2024 issue of UiQ focuses on what we see as being the main technology trends to consider. Unsurprisingly, AI dominates as both an influencer and an enabler across Cloud, Security and Digital Workspace and this edition looks at the opportunities as well as the risks. I hope that you will find it useful when considering your strategy development and consolidation over the next 12 months.

As always, our technology experts and advisers are on hand to help further.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey, and here's to a year filled with growth, resilience and success.

Kindest regards,

Scott, CEO, Ultima

Scott Dodds,
Ultima CEO

Technology Trends 2024

Staying ahead of the curve is paramount for businesses striving for innovation and competitiveness. As we enter into 2024, Ultima brings a comprehensive overview of the most influential technology trends shaping the landscape across cloud, security, digital and Microsoft.

Swipe right to begin

Technology Predictions 2024: Cloud

Navigating Cloud Realities and Emerging Trends: Insights for C-Level IT Decision Makers

While cloud adoption has been a driving force for operational transformation, cost-efficiency, and flexibility for some years, the realities of cloud adoption have sometimes differed from the trend predictions.

Read on to find out key insights on the state of cloud adoption and emerging trends to help inform IT decision making for C-level executives.

Surprises from 2023

While many expected trend predictions for 2023 revolved around cost reduction and increased security in the cloud, we were surprised by two notable observations that had a significant impact:

1

Legacy Cloud services persist

In 2023, we continued to see "Legacy" cloud services, such as Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) and initial adoption of public cloud for server-based disaster recovery.

Despite public cloud's mainstream status for over five years, discussions around modernisation and cloud-native services remained relatively scarce. This observation underscores the persistent shortage of public cloud skills and resources in the market.

As a result, organisations adopted a phased approach to cloud adoption, prioritising aspects like cost management, security, tooling, and internal skill development. This trend aligns with Ultima's experience in 2023 where we saw a 165% growth in customer uptake of our Managed Azure Service.

2

"Blind" use of native cloud services

Adoption of native services within public cloud environments, often had little consideration for third-party solutions.

An illustrative example is the comparison between Commvault Cloud and Azure Backup, where the latter is a SaaS-delivered Commvault solution. While the licensing costs of Commvault Cloud may be higher, the storage efficiencies it provides result in significantly lower backup storage costs.

Additionally, Commvault Cloud offers an air-gapped backup solution that enhances cyber resilience and additional security features at a more cost-effective price point. Several customers have realised substantial cost savings over three years by adopting such approaches. This highlights the value of working with the right cloud partner, who can make product/service recommendations based on an understanding of customers' business requirements, combined with extensive experience, strategic vendor relationships, and market expertise.

Emerging Cloud trends for 2024

→ The growth of FinOps

FinOps, a discipline focused on optimising cloud spending has seen increased adoption in 2023 and is expected to gain even more prominence in 2024, given the current economic climate.

However, it is worth noting that FinOps adoption is still in its early stages for many companies.

Top priorities for the year include:
1. Creating visibility and transparency in cloud costs
2. Integrating cloud cost data into existing reporting mechanisms
3. Providing FinOps training and education internally.

(Source: The State of FinOps; FinOps Foundation)

→ Increasing emphasis on Cloud Security

Cloud security is assuming greater importance due to the evolving threat landscape. Basic security hygiene, such as multifactor authentication and applying zero trust principles, and protecting data, still protect against 99% of attacks.

Therefore, ensuring the implementation of these fundamental security principles should be a top priority before addressing additional security gaps.

Working with a partner such as Ultima in collaboration with our Vendor specialist network, can assist organisations in achieving robust cloud security through a combination of Cloud and Security Health Checks, implementation, and Cloud Managed services.

(Source: Microsoft - Digital Defence Report 2023)

→ The rise of Hybrid and Multi-Cloud

Hybrid and multi-cloud environments are set to gain further prominence in 2024, with Forbes Cloud Trends Report predicting usage growth to 85%.

To effectively manage these environments, a centralised IT operating model must be established, enabling common solutions to work seamlessly across hybrid and multi-cloud environments.

This approach facilitates workload management and provides flexibility, especially for organisations with legacy operating systems seeking to leverage hybrid-cloud solutions like Azure ARC.

Influences for 2024

With the persistence of legacy cloud services, the importance of making informed choices between native and third-party solutions, and the growing significance of FinOps and cloud security will influence strategic decisions in 2024.

Connect with Nick

Cloud Services Specialist

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Technology Predictions 2024: Security

Cyber Security or Cyber Resilience: A Double Imperative for Business

By the end of the coming year, the cost of cyber-attacks on the global economy is predicted to top £8.6 billion.

As in every other field of business and personal life, AI will have a significant role to play on both attack and defence. Add to this the fact that we will continue to see more sophisticated AI-powered attacks from deepfake social engineering to automated malware that intelligently adapts to evade detection.

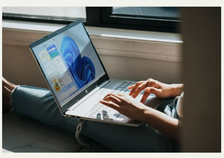
Next-Level Phishing Attacks

Social engineering attacks involve tricking users into giving attackers access to systems and in 2024, Generative AI (such as ChatGPT) tools enable more attackers to make smarter, more personalised approaches, where deepfake attacks will become increasingly prevalent.

Protection against this will largely depend on investment into organisation-wide awareness and education with zero trust policy implementation.

Cyber Security from the Top

In 2024, cybersecurity can no longer be limited to the IT department. Gartner predicts that by 2026, 70 percent of boards will include at least one member with expertise in the field. This enables organisations to move beyond reactive defence, meaning that they can act on new business opportunities that come with being prepared from the top of the organisation down.



IoT Cyber Attacks

More devices talking to each other and accessing the internet means more potential "ins" for cyber attackers to take advantage of. With the work-from-home trend continuing, risks posed by remote working and sharing data over improperly secured devices will continue to be a threat.

Often, these devices are designed for ease of use and convenience rather than secure operations, and home consumer IoT devices may be at risk due to weak security protocols and passwords.

Cyber Resilience – no hiding behind terminology

Cyber security and cyber resilience. The distinction will become increasingly important during 2024 and how to achieve both to the highest standards of consistency.

While the focus of cyber security is on preventing attacks, the growing value placed on resilience by many organisations implies that even the best security can't guarantee 100 percent protection.

Resilience measures are designed to ensure continuity of operations even in the event of a successful breach. Developing the capability to recover quickly while minimising data loss and downtime will be a strategic priority in 2024.

Nothing Less Than Zero Trust

The basic concept of zero trust – always verify – is about an attitude that no network activity can be assumed to be 100% safe.

As the threat landscape evolves, this principle must extend outside of the corporate network to the organisational infrastructure of remote workers, partners and IoT devices. In 2024, zero trust moves from being a technical network security model to holistic.

Gartner predicts that by 2026, 70 percent of boards will include at least one member with expertise in the cyber security field.

Cyber Security Professionals will get Soft

Cybersecurity professionals will be expected to take on more complex workloads during 2024 as the threat landscape grows ever more sophisticated, and not just in a technical sense.

They will tasked with more complex social and cultural aspects of threat mitigation with a growing focus on soft skills such as interpersonal communication, relationship-building and problem-solving.

Cyber Security Regulation

Governments and organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the risks to national security and economic growth posed by cyber threats. The potential social and political fallout of large-scale data breaches is also a major factor in the emergence of new regulations around cyber security issues.

For example, businesses in the UK have until April 2024 to ensure they are compliant with the Product Security and Telecommunications Act, which sets out minimum security requirements that networked products must adhere to. Implementation of the EU's similar Radio Equipment Directive has been delayed until 2025, but the topic is still likely to be high on the agenda of legislators throughout 2024.

Businesses in the UK have until April 2024 to ensure they are compliant with the Product Security and Telecommunications Act, which sets out minimum security requirements that networked products must adhere to.

Adapting Backup Strategies in a shifting Cyber Landscape

Summarising the good, the bad and the accidental.

The good

AI empowers Cybersecurity Teams In a world where professionals face increasing stress and alert fatigue.

In the UK, 51% of workers report stress, 61% feelings of anxiousness and 74% of adults have felt overwhelmed by burn out, especially in the cyber security vertical where one alert could be the difference between your business trading merrily or the front page of the financial times with a £20million fine on its way from the ICO.

Alert increase has actually got in the way of effective threat investigation. False positives, point product alerting systems, lack of context, and resource constraints have all strained resources.

AI and machine learning alleviate these challenges by providing context to alerts (for example Proofpoint's Threat response) reducing the workload for professionals and directing their focus to critical threats. This approach not only enhances efficiency but also helps prevent costly cyber incidents.

AI's speed in incident response is another benefit. It can quickly learn network topology, detect anomalies, and deploy throughout a network with ease. This agility can make the difference between thwarting an attacker and facing business collapse.

AI automation allows for economic growth while bolstering protection. The cybersecurity industry currently faces a skills shortage, with a plethora of job vacancies. AI can be trained to respond to attack patterns, enabling teams to focus on upskilling and strategic initiatives that safeguard company revenue and drive business growth.

The bad

AI poses risks when misused by malicious actors. Ransomware-as-a-Service (RaaS) has become more prevalent and affordable, with subscription costs as low as £30 per month.

Cybercriminals will increasingly leverage AI to develop ransomware, identify vulnerabilities, and enhance encryption making it challenging for cybersecurity professionals to combat these threats effectively.

Phishing and social engineering will escalate, with generative AI creating highly convincing emails tailored to specific individuals based on their roles and characteristics. Voice cloning technology, known as vishing, is already being used to impersonate public figures, celebrities, and CEOs for illicit financial gain.

Companies utilising AI for model creation and research and development attract more attacks for data extraction. The growing sophistication of malicious actors and nation-states in targeting these organisations raises significant concerns.

The accidental

Perhaps the most worrying aspect of AI is the potential for unintended consequences due to inadequate governance.

This is where human intervention, management and skill set capacity is the real critical topic which needs to be at the top of the Boardroom security agenda for all businesses in 2024.

Connect with Jake

Networking and Security Specialist

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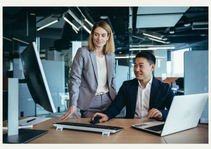
Technology Predictions 2024: Digital Workspace

People first.



The world of work is constantly changing and despite 6 generations in the workplace, the 'nine to five' office based and 'job for life' rules of work are now more likely to be consigned to history.

Technology is clearly a driver of this. However other social factors such as higher retirement ages, hybrid practices introduced by the COVID-19 global pandemic, a growing commitment towards enabling better work life balance and the environmental impact of working practices are important factors, too.

In 2024, we can expect to see further development of many of the trends that have reshaped our working lives in recent years. However, the impact of breakthrough technologies (particularly AI) will be felt more keenly than ever as the rate of adoption accelerates. This wave of digitisation and transformation will affect everyone, even those outside of the high-tech industries and tech-focused roles.

Generative AI

People who use AI will replace people who do not. Generative AI tools such as Chat GPT or the highly anticipated Microsoft Copilot promise to increase efficiency in all lines of work. However the key is to understand the limitations, work with them but apply professional skills to deliver the right results more effectively.

Sustainabile working practices

For many businesses who are not able to articulate their policies, culture and approach to actions on our environment and planet means that critical talent will simply not be interested in joining the organisation. And it's not just about how or where we work but how we implement lifecycle management processes that reduce IT wastage, encourage recycling and re-use of resources.

Investment in future skills

As technology transforms more areas of work and business, ensuring we're equipped to use it effectively will be a priority, from understanding the importance of data-driven decision-making to developing an awareness of cyber threats, developing emotional intelligence and adopting effective leadership when your team is spread around the world.

Employee experience

While customer experience is integral to developing long term relationships and generating recurring business, equally important is ensuring employee satisfaction outside remuneration.

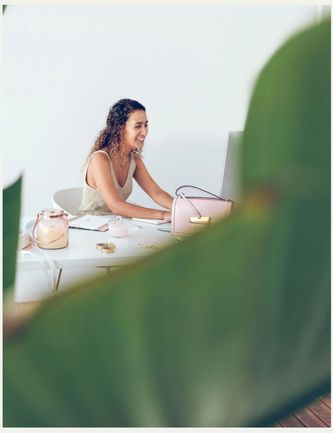
Technology now has a broader responsibility to enable work/life balance, personal wellbeing as well as personal growth and development.

Digitalisation and datafication

In 2024, data will impact every aspect of our working lives from metrics used to assess productivity to the information our workforce needs to make better decisions and implement more efficient processes.

Lifelong learning

To bridge the ongoing skills gap, businesses will require workforces to take part in ongoing training in order to keep skills up-to-date or reskill in emerging technologies, particularly those involving data and AI.



The hybrid workplace

Remote working was a necessity for many of us during the Covid-19 pandemic. Today, we might choose it because we prefer the benefits it brings to work/life balance, or we're more productive without wasting time (and money) commuting. Or because we want to leverage the ability to build a truly globalised and decentralised workforce. In 2024, more will choose hybrid working arrangements and the technology implications are clear.

Workspace technology has undergone significant transformations in recent years, shifting from traditional office setups to digital workspaces that improves flexibility and work life balance.

Reflecting on the changes in 2023, the adoption of hybrid work models became prevalent due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual collaboration tools, cloud computing, and AI automation became standard practices. However, this transition was not without challenges, including cybersecurity risks and the demand for robust IT infrastructure.

Striking balance.

Looking ahead to 2024, the focus is on striking the right balance between remote and hybrid work. While these models persist, companies are expected to leverage lessons from previous experiences to refine their approaches. The benefits of increased flexibility, access to global talent, and reduced overheads will continue, but challenges like collaboration hurdles, security issues, and over-dependence on technology will persist.

"Success in 2024 hinges on a well-thought out plan that uses technology to enhance the workforce while managing IT costs effectively. This involves investments in secure and scalable technology, employee training, and fostering a culture that embraces digital transformation."

A notable challenge is the shortage of skilled tech professionals. Companies must invest in training and development, use AI and automation for routine tasks, and instil a culture of continuous learning. AI can play a pivotal role in automating tasks, aiding in talent acquisition, and facilitating ongoing training initiatives.

Choosing the right technology partner is crucial. A strategic partner understands business needs and provides tailored solutions and guidance. General AI (Gen AI) emerges as a game-changer for productivity, employing natural language processing and predictive analytics to automate complex tasks and offer valuable insights. The concept of an AI PC designed specifically for Gen AI is on the horizon.

Doing more, with less

As the workspace tech landscape evolves in 2024, companies that embrace new trends, utilise AI, form strategic partnerships to address talent shortages, and optimise existing services will thrive in the digital realm. The focus is not on reverting to basics but on continuous innovation and adaptation to the evolving digital landscape.

Connect with Volkan

Workspace Solutions Specialist at Ultima

Click here

Technology Predictions 2024: Hybrid Cloud Part 1

The Data Centre: A safe bet.

The debate on which cloud infrastructure is best for the business and realising benefits such as resilience and ROI will continue for C-level tech business decision-makers as 2024 brings new challenges and opportunities for more effective hybrid cloud adoption and overall cloud management.

Three significant challenges underscore the importance of hybrid cloud adoption:

Transformation of Enterprise Applications

The process of transforming enterprise applications is complex and time-consuming.

For many organisations, legacy systems and applications are deeply entrenched, making migration to a purely public cloud environment a daunting task.

Hybrid cloud allows for a gradual transition, ensuring minimal disruption to operations and data integrity.

Escalating costs in the Public Cloud

The reality of high costs associated with public cloud services has led organisations to re-evaluate their cloud strategies.

Hybrid cloud models offer cost optimisation by allowing companies to leverage the public cloud for specific workloads while keeping critical data and applications on-premises or in private clouds.

Shortage of Public Cloud skills

Finding skilled personnel who are proficient in public cloud technologies remains a challenge.

Outsourcing may not be the ideal solution for everyone, given the need for internal expertise in managing critical cloud infrastructure.

Hybrid cloud models enable businesses to maintain control over their data while mitigating the skills gap.

Further considerations for 2024

Multi-cloud management

Waiting for Maturity Multi-cloud management is a concept that has garnered interest but has not yet reached its full potential. The market is still relatively immature, and adoption has been slow.

One potential reason for this delay could be the need for more time for the technology and ecosystem to mature. As organisations explore multi-cloud options, they should keep a watchful eye on developments in these spaces.

Broadcom's impact

The acquisition of Broadcom in November 2023 has raised concerns within the technical community. Some worry that the uncertainty and potential cuts implemented by Broadcom could affect technical development, partnerships, and customer loyalty to VMware solutions.

As a result, organisations may accelerate their transition to alternative hybrid cloud solutions, such as Nutanix and Microsoft. This transition could reshape the hybrid cloud market share landscape.

Optimising Cloud

Public cloud usage is ubiquitous, but many deployments lack proper optimisation and architecture. In 2024, IT teams have an opportunity to revisit their cloud infrastructure, focusing on:

Cost Optimisation: Eliminating redundant, overbuilt, or unused cloud infrastructure

Business Resilience: Prioritising resilience over service-level redundancy

Supply Chain Mitigation: Using cloud infrastructure to mitigate supply chain disruptions

Modernisation: Modernising infrastructure to align with evolving business needs

Adopting principles

Data centres are evolving, with a shift towards platform-based co-location providers and 'as-a-service' models. This brings cloud-like service-centricity and economic models to on-premises infrastructure.

Characteristics like modularity, scalability, automation, and resilience enable data centre operators to deliver faster, cheaper, and more flexible services.

Gartner predicts

65%

of application workloads will be optimal or ready for cloud delivery by 2027.

35%

of data centre infrastructure will be managed from a cloud-based control plane by 2027.

75%

of enterprise generated data will be processed outside centralised data centres or clouds.

Cutting edge computing

A distributed model that processes and stores data closer to its source, offers numerous advantages. These include reduced latency, bandwidth savings, enhanced performance, improved security, and privacy.

Unstoppable data growth

For the past decade, data growth has consistently surged at an annual rate of 25%. This isn't just a prediction; it's a long-standing reality.

Managing this data explosion requires not only robust infrastructure but also efficient data management strategies. Investing in scalable and adaptable IT solutions will be crucial to harnessing the potential of this ever-expanding data landscape.

Sustainability focus

Clients who now allocate 15-20% of their evaluation criteria to sustainability in tender responses and Data centres, will naturally be under scrutiny in 2024. Being mindful of energy consumption and adopting green IT practices by using vendor solutions on a flexible usage basis can not only reduce costs but also meet the corporate commitment to environmental responsibility.

Server lifecycles

Major tech giants, including Google, Amazon, Microsoft, and Meta, have extended their server refresh lifecycles from 3 years to 5 or 6 years. Beyond the financial benefits, it aligns with sustainability goals by reducing electronic waste. However, this shift may challenge server manufacturers. As decision-makers, evaluating the trade-offs between cost savings and server efficiency will be crucial when determining your organisation's refresh cycles.

Trend: Subscription Consumption Models

A trend towards subscription-based consumption models will continue to gain momentum. Solutions like HPE's GreenLake, Hitachi's Everflex, and Dell's Apex offer flexibility and scalability.

Broadcom's acquisition of VMware signals a shift towards subscription-based offerings, moving away from perpetual licensing. While this may align with the cost-effective nature of OpEx spending, it may pose challenges for sectors still reliant on capex budgets.

Evaluating the financial implications and alignment with your organisation's procurement strategy is essential.

Wait, there's more

Regulatory landscape

Waiting for Maturity Multi-cloud management is a concept that has garnered interest but has not yet reached its full potential. The market is still relatively immature, and adoption has been slow.

Cyber recovery

2024 is to witness a significant change in Cyber and Disaster Recovery (DR) practices.

Traditionally, DR plans were designed to address natural disaster events, but the emerging trend is to bridge the gap between disaster and cyber-attacks.

This evolution will bring about improved recovery speeds for high-volume VM workloads and containers.

Data resiliency

The importance of resiliency, particularly in backup and disaster recovery, remains relevant in 2024.

Recent advancements in security functionality by industry leaders such as Commvault and Veeam have given companies valuable tools to enhance their data protection operations.

Embracing these security features will be crucial as businesses continue to prioritise data security and resilience.

Generative AI

Generative AI is rapidly making its presence felt across various domains, including Copilot, AI in Storage Management systems, and AI in Backup software.

Beyond these applications, generative AI has the potential to revolutionise data centre operations. It can optimise infrastructure, enhance security, and deliver personalised experiences for end-users.

As Gartner predicts, over 80% of enterprises will leverage generative AI by 2026, underscoring the technology's growing significance.

On the next page...

Read on to discover how Ultima's data centre specialists are going to leverage the next 12 months

Technology Predictions 2024: Hybrid Cloud Part 2

In 2023, Gartner provided us with a roadmap categorised under the strategic flows of "Optimise, Scale & Pioneer."

Now, as we step into 2024, we will find these trends will continue to evolve.

Optimise. A Data-Driven Future.

Gartner's call to "Optimise" urges businesses to embrace data-driven decision-making across Resilience, Operations, and Trust. The concept of creating Digitally Immune Systems resonates strongly, driven by automation and rigorous design and testing to both mitigate operational and security risks but also lay the foundation for implementing AI.

Scale. Accelerating up (or down).

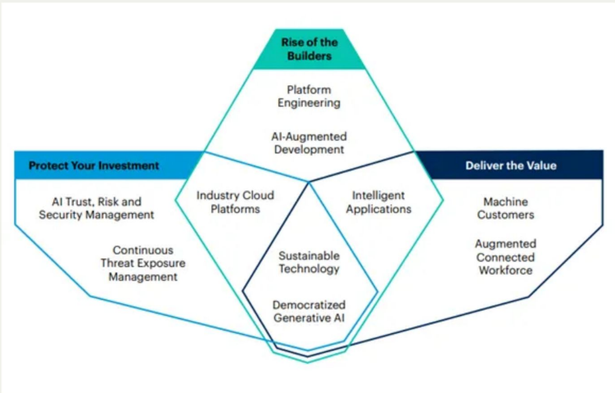
Reducing time to market for new products and services and enabling connectivity across all devices are essential. Gartner's recommendations include:

- **Leveraging services** that combine Software as a Service (SaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), and Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS). These services should possess the agility to adapt to disruptions swiftly.
- **Embracing DevOps Platform engineering,** akin to app stores, which curate tools, processes, and capabilities. This approach lightens the load on DevOps teams, driving productivity and innovation.
- **Recognising the importance of wireless networks**. As the bulk of data is generated outside traditional data centres, providing wireless network services everywhere, from edge to end-user computing.

Pioneer. Embrace change.

Gartner's vision of creating ecosystems or SuperApps resonates with the evolving tech landscape. These platforms consolidate services and features, empowering customers to deliver their own mini-services or mini-apps. Augmented by AI, these SuperApps are driving behaviour models through real-time feedback, even offering augmented reality training in select verticals. Real-time adaptation and adjustment are becoming the norm.

The unexpected surge in ChatGPT and Generative AI's capabilities has propelled AI into the forefront of business thinking and planning, a year earlier than anticipated.



Source: Gartner's 10 trends for 2024

To conclude

Cloud considerations will continue to challenge Senior IT Decision Makers. Work with partners who are informed, provide forward thinking strategic input and focus on data-driven decision-making and can work with you on ROI value.

Embrace sustainability, optimise server refresh cycles, explore subscription models, and ensure compliance with evolving regulations to help position your organisation for success in 2024.

Connect with Richard

Head of Data Centre Presales

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Connect with Geoff

Data Centre Specialist

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Connect with Gary

Data Centre Specialist

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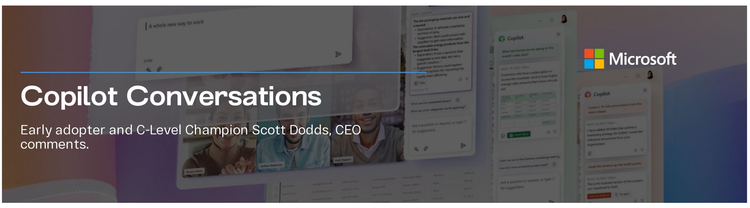


Copilot Conversations

Early adopter and C-Level Champion Scott Dodds, CEO comments.

"As an early Microsoft Copilot adopter, I have found the journey to higher personal effectiveness transformational. In nearly 30 years, I have never yet seen any technological advance to develop as rapidly as AI Copilots and Microsoft's January announcement of general release of Copilot for Microsoft 365 promises to bring the power of generative AI to businesses of all sizes across every industry."

Scott Dodds, Ultima CEO

Ultima

A quick recap: What are AI Copilots?

AI Copilots are a type of artificial intelligence designed to assist humans with complex tasks like writing, designing, coding, or data analysis. Instead of replacing human workers, they enhance their skills. AI Copilots offer suggestions, feedback, corrections, or alternatives to users, who can choose to accept, reject, or modify them.

Examples include: Microsoft M365 Copilot for productivity, Grammarly for writing assistance, Adobe Photoshop for design help and GPT-3 for general language generation.

Workplace benefits

1.

→ Increasing productivity and efficiency

AI Copilots speed up task completion for human workers by minimising errors, improving quality, and automating repetitive aspects.

For instance, an AI Copilot can assist a writer in producing error-free articles by checking grammar, spelling, and style, saving time by generating or summarising content.

2.

→ Enhancing creativity and innovation

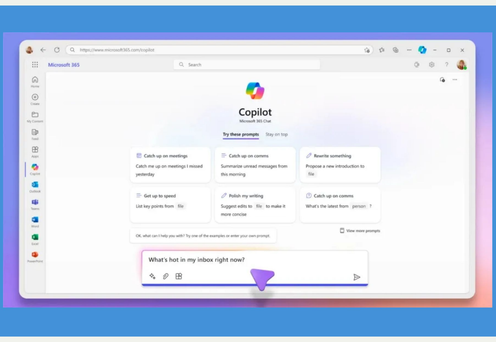
AI Copilots inspire human workers with diverse suggestions, examples, and perspectives, fostering creativity and innovation. They help overcome creative blocks and challenges by suggesting alternative approaches. For example, they can aid a designer in creating unique images by offering different options, styles, or effects, overcoming design challenges efficiently.

3.

→ Collaboration and communication

The smart technology can improve collaboration and communication by bridging knowledge, skills, and language gaps thereby helping to support diversity and encourage greater inclusion across the organisation. They provide common platforms and tools, enabling effective coordination of goals and feedback.

For instance, an AI Copilot assists a team of developers in a complex project by suggesting code, testing results, and ensuring code consistency. It also aids communication with stakeholders by translating, summarising, or explaining code and generating supporting documentation.



Balancing the use of AI Copilots

3 simple strategies

1.

→ Establish clear guidelines

Create clear and consistent guidelines for developing, evaluating, and regulating AI Copilots.

Ensure these guidelines cover technical, ethical, and social aspects, addressing performance, quality, accuracy, reliability, security, privacy, accountability, transparency, and fairness.

Involve input from various stakeholders, including developers, users, regulators, experts, and the public.

2.

→ Provide training...and keep providing it

Offer comprehensive training and education to employees using AI Copilots. Ensure they are well-informed and skilled in using these tools responsibly.

Training should cover the benefits, risks, and limitations of AI Copilots, along with best practices and techniques.

Foster the development and maintenance of essential skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, communication, and collaboration.

3.

→ Encourage human judgement

Empower human workers to exercise judgment, discretion, and creativity when using AI Copilots.

Ensure they actively engage in their work rather than being passive or complacent. Promote a sense of control, ownership, and satisfaction over their work by clarifying their role, goals, and contributions.

Is your business ready?

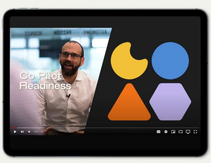
We're here to support you

Copilot Assessment

We are working with customers to assess infrastructure readiness such as Licensing requirements, size of organisation and applications to ensure Copilot investment provides an early return. If you're not sure, take a look at Ultima's Copilot Readiness Assessment.

Click here

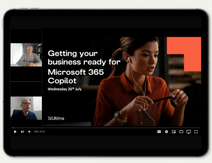
Talking Copilot Readiness



We ran a number of informative webinars at the end of 2023 which covered the basics and provided open, honest capability assessments.

Click here

On Demand Webinars



We will continue to run our dedicated Copilot webinars over the next 6 months as well as a specific set of hands-on events in April and May. Sign up below.

Webinar 2

Webinar 1

Ultima

We function as the bridge between technology and its effective utilisation, ensuring your teams are well-prepared and empowered to optimise productivity and nurture innovation. With Ultima, our emphasis isn't on pushing products but on sparking transformation, propelling your organisation into a future where technology transitions from a simple tool to a central strategic asset.

Learn more

New partner spotlight: Trend Micro

A new hotbed for challenges in Cyber Security. Trend Micro Executive Viewpoint

Jamie Scales, Channel Sales Manager at Trend Micro

As both economic and political terrains continue to undergo digitisation, enterprises will increasingly leverage artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML), the cloud, and Web3 technologies. While these innovations are expected to lend a hand to organisations, they also provide opportunities for cybercriminals by promising big returns, more streamlined operations on wider impact zones, and more targeted victims.

In their pursuit of catering to their organisation's evolving needs, business leaders are faced with a unique challenge: They must strike a balance between foresight and operational hardiness anchored in technological investments.

Here we detail the focal points of 2024's threat landscape, along with insights and recommended mitigation measures from Trend Micro's team of cybersecurity experts that are designed to guide decision-makers toward well-informed choices for the year ahead.

Jamie Scales, Channel Sales Manager at Trend Micro

Cloud native worms will exploit security gaps in cloud environments

As cloud adoption becomes more critical to business transformation today, enterprises need to look beyond their routine malware and vulnerability scans. In 2024, cloud environments will be a playground for tailor-made worms crafted to exploit cloud technologies and misconfigurations will serve as an easy entry point for attackers.

With just a single successful exploit, particularly through misconfigured APIs in the likes of Kubernetes, Docker, and WeaveScope, attacks with worming capabilities can set off rapid propagation in cloud environments. In short, these worm attacks use interconnectivity – the very benefit for which the cloud was made – against cloud environments.

Generative AI will level up social engineering lures in targeted scams.

Spear phishing, harpoon whaling, and virtual kidnapping are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to AI's potential role in cybercriminal schemes. We predict that in 2024, voice cloning, already a powerful tool for identity theft and social engineering, will take centre stage in targeted scams.

Despite malicious large language model (LLM) WormGPT's shutdown in August 2023, we expect more of its spawn to populate the dark web. In the interim, threat actors will also find other ways to use AI for cybercrime. While legislation to regulate the use of generative AI is yet to be passed, it is paramount that defenders implement zero-trust policies and establish a vigilant mindset for their respective enterprises to avoid falling prey to AI-powered scams.

Data will be weaponised against cloud-based ML models.

Data poisoning will make machine-learning (ML) models an exciting and expansive attack surface for threat actors to explore as these promise a wide variety of high rewards with very few risks. A compromised ML model can open the floodgates to possibly divulging confidential data for extraction, writing malicious instructions, and providing biased content that could lead to user dissatisfaction or potential legal repercussions.

Validating and authenticating training datasets will become increasingly imperative, especially while ML remains an expensive integration for many businesses. Enterprises who take their algorithms off-premises to lower cost will also be more vulnerable since they rely on sourced data from third-party data lakes and federated learning systems. This means that they are completely dependent on datasets stored within cloud storage services guarded by systems outside their own.

To mitigate these potential risks, ensure that your approach to AI is defined at board level.

Enterprises making bold bets on ML models, generative AI tools, blockchain networks, and the cloud in the hopes of productivity gains should stay sharp for the unvarnished truths and unexpected pain points that will surely come with these engines of innovation. For defenders to hold the line against the ever-evolving cyberthreats that lie in wait next year, they will need to stay vigilant and practice resilience at every point of the threat life cycle, on top of enforcing a multi-dimensional security strategy grounded on trusted and forward-thinking threat.

See Trend Micro's full 2024 Report here.

Our partnership with Trend Micro, is about empowering your organisation with industry-leading cybersecurity solutions, enhanced visibility and control, comprehensive risk management, seamless integration, and expert guidance. Together, we are dedicated to safeguarding your digital assets, protecting your sensitive data, and ensuring business continuity in today's challenging threat landscape.

Learn more

Safeguard your organisation with expert protection from Ultima

Whether you need to tackle a specific concern, or are looking to evolve your security strategy so it's fit for purpose in the digital world, this guide demonstrates how Ultima will help keep your business resilient in our unpredictable times.

Read our guide

New partner spotlight: Hitachi Vantara

Fortifying Financial Firms: A Strategic Blueprint for Cyber-Resilience in an Era of Evolving Threats.

Mark Katz, Client Strategy and Technology Officer for Financial Services, Hitachi Vantara

"Consistent investment in both offensive and defensive measures is crucial. Firms must proactively stay ahead of the ever-evolving cyber-threat landscape by deploying cutting-edge tools for monitoring and assessment. This requires a continual adaptation of existing capabilities to match technological advancements, keeping pace with the relentless innovation of cybercriminals."

Mark Katz, Client Strategy and Technology Officer for Financial Services, Hitachi Vantara

Regulatory bodies, such as those enforcing the DORA act, underscore the importance of effective governance processes.

In the event of an attack, a comprehensive plan for recovery and resolution becomes paramount. Success in overcoming cyber threats relies on aligning people, processes, and technology in a well-orchestrated recovery and resolution plan. Establishing process governance and accountability is essential to swiftly and safely restore operations should the worst-case scenario materialise.

Maintaining strong data access requirements and entitlements is a foundational component of cybersecurity. Regardless of the data's location—be it in cloud or hybrid cloud environments or on-premises-based data centres—strict controls must be in place to ensure that only individuals with the right permissions and entitlements can access sensitive information.

A meticulous approach to internal and external dependencies is equally critical. Financial institutions must assess these dependencies thoroughly, addressing any weaknesses promptly. Regulatory bodies, such as those enforcing the Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA), underscore the importance of effective governance processes. Regulators are keen to ensure that firms can swiftly resolve issues within their organisations and with third-, fourth-, and fifth-party providers.

The focus on data immutability is intensifying over time, reflecting the growing need for advanced data protection and privacy. As financial institutions continue to create and store vast amounts of data, implementing measures to safeguard its integrity becomes imperative.

Financial institutions must remain agile.

Supporting rapid recovery through high availability environments and failovers is indispensable. Secure backup services for business continuity must be readily available to minimise the impact of any cyber-related incidents. This multi-faceted approach underscores the industry's commitment to not only preventing cyber threats but also responding effectively and recovering swiftly when breaches occur.

In a landscape where cyber risks are inevitable, financial institutions must remain agile, proactive, and resilient to safeguard their data and ensure uninterrupted operations.

UiQ TV: Futureproof your business

If you're looking to get a step ahead and would like to know Ultima's strategies in preparing for DORA and NIS2 regulations, watch our Datacentre Specialist, Geoff Clemow run through everything you need to know.

Watch now

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Hitachi Vantara offers a wide range of solutions and services designed to help businesses optimise their data management, analytics, and storage capabilities. Our portfolio includes data centre solutions, data storage systems, data analytics software, and cloud services. We also offer consulting, implementation, and support services to help our clients achieve their goals.

Learn more

2024. Welcome to the year of AI empowered people and business outcomes

2023 was a year where we saw the coronation of HRH King Charles III, against a more sombre backdrop of geo-political disruption with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and of course, OpenAI and the ongoing impact this will continue to have on every aspect of life in the year ahead.

At Ultima, we extended our technology investment portfolio across Cloud, Security, Digital and leveraged our automation and AI experience to attain a leading position as a Microsoft Copilot partner. With the recent announcement from Microsoft about Copilot now on general release and as an offering to businesses of all sizes, we are excited about how Ultima can help our customers to take full advantage of the workspace benefits this will bring.

Our first 2024 issue of UiQ focuses on what we see as being the main technology trends to consider. Unsurprisingly, AI dominates as both an influencer and an enabler across Cloud, Security and Digital Workspace and this edition looks at the opportunities as well as the risks. I hope that you will find it useful when considering your strategy development and consolidation over the next 12 months.

As always, our technology experts and advisers are on hand to help further.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey, and here's to a year filled with growth, resilience and success.

Kindest regards,

Scott, CEO, Ultima

Scott Dodds,
Ultima CEO