As we head deeper into 2021, my role is shifting to allow more time working directly with customers and partners, helping them to make the most of emerging automation technologies and orchestrate between new investments and existing systems and data flows.

Which technologies should organisations be investing in to keep up with the pace of change?

Low-code surged in 2020 when organisations needed new ways to adapt quickly to change. Forrester says 75% of development shops will be using low-code platforms by the end of 2021 for two reasons: speed and unification. By allowing users to drag and drop workflow diagrams, low-code makes apps quick to build and quick to change, supercharging the agile development process. It also enables the inclusion of any worker (people, bots, AI, and business rules) or resource (data and systems) into a single workflow. It’s built for change.

Many organisations have invested in RPA and AI, but ROI is limited unless bots are integrated and orchestrated into larger workflows.

How important will automation capabilities be for organisations in the new normal?

Automating workflows can free up the human workforce to take on more complex, higher value tasks. By handling mundane tasks, your teams have the gift of time to think more strategically and, handle errors and exceptions more efficiently. That could make all the difference when handling a seismic change in the market, like the pandemic. Decisions are augmented by intelligent technology, giving humans the power to do more with their time.
Can you highlight some use cases for your technology or some customer examples from the Middle East region?

Holding company Alturki have used Appian for two years now, having started small with 100 users and a CRM app. They quickly realised that Appian could help them scale across their portfolio of companies, so they used our enterprise deployment across subsidiaries to standardise and unify processes. The result is better management of staff, procurement processes and vendor relationships across the group. During the pandemic, Alturki built a legal system using Appian, meaning they could handle legal requirements across jurisdictions without physical travel between locations.

Another great example is Abdul Latif Jameel, the largest vehicle distributor and retailer in the Middle East. Based in Saudi Arabia, they moved their systems from on-premises to the cloud just a month before COVID-19 took hold, transforming their response to the pandemic. With Appian, customer service is digitised and complex data systems are orchestrated, providing the right information at the right time to employees and creating a better end customer experience. More efficient operations with Appian means cost savings and faster deployment speeds for new applications needed in ALJ’s network. Processes that used to take weeks now take just hours.

What would be your best practice advice for CIOs on creating a business management strategy that enables them to scale?

Software is now at the beating heart of most enterprise organisations. But, without the right orchestration between technology, data, systems and humans, investing in things like AI, RPA or intelligent document processing (IDP) can add complexity without much added efficiency or competitive advantage. A company that depends on its systems can only move as fast as software development allows. To scale automation, IT leaders should see low-code as indispensable to developing at speed. By reducing the time needed to express intent, develop, test and deploy – as well as the time to maintain, upgrade, and enhance your applications – organisations can respond with agility to whatever the environment in which they operate demands. CIOs and business decision makers need to act together to select low-code platforms and ensure they deliver the types of applications required while meeting compliance requirements and aligning with the organisation’s overall technology strategy.