HERE Technologies helps Crave InfoTech drive its innovation imperative.

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Innovation is the new business imperative, but it's certainly not a guarantee of success, particularly in the tech sector. New technology products experience failure rates significantly higher than in virtually any other industry. Rapidly evolving customer needs and expectations require tech providers to be agile, to anticipate demands and hit an always-moving target. Innovation, then, is an ongoing resource and expertise-consuming journey. It demands that all but the largest companies establish an ecosystem of technology partners with capabilities and innovation agendas that complement their own.

Much of today's technological innovation focuses on helping organizations improve operational efficiency. We're well into an era of automation, its value on the factory and warehouse floor established, certainly. But manufacturing, distribution, utility, retail and other asset and supply chain-intensive businesses are now seeking efficiencies beyond what automation can deliver, efficiencies that can only be realized through broader use of disruptive technologies.

As the concept of digital transformation gained momentum in the marketplace, Crave InfoTech responded by innovating. Its Co-Founder and CEO, Shrikant Nistane, led an initiative to extend the company's traditional value proposition – providing digital apps that augment the SAP ERP solution - to taking on a role as its customers' partner in digital transformation. Crave InfoTech's business remains SAP- and app-development focused. That said, company developers are now utilizing disruptive technologies, like real-time location and location intelligence in those apps, most notably those designed to improve asset tracking, enterprise asset management and warehouse management.
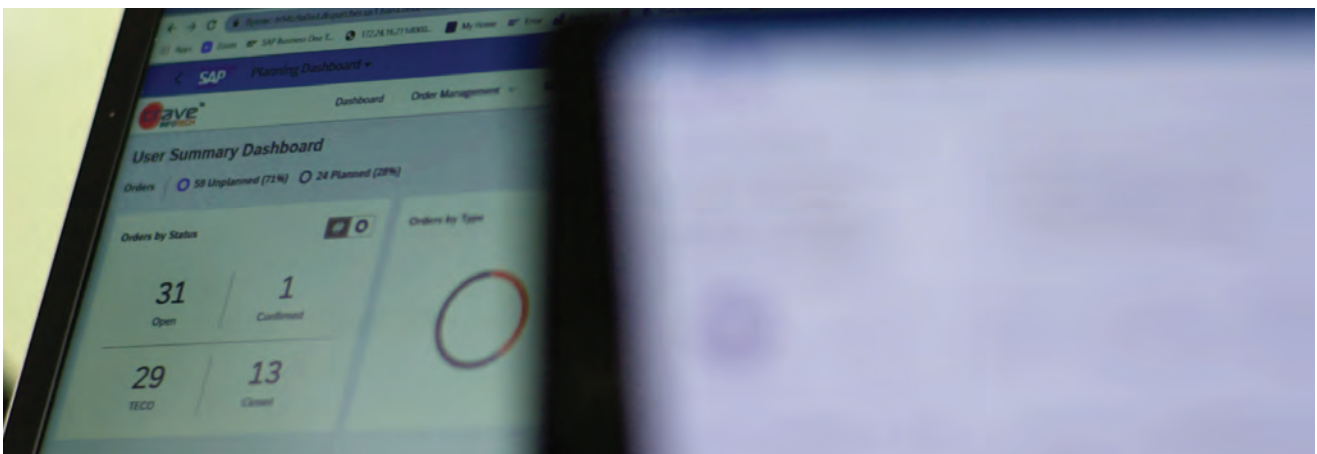
The next frontier in operational efficiency

Nistane believes an increasing number of organizations view real-time indoor and outdoor location tracking as the next frontier in operational efficiency. "Most large organizations in manufacturing, utilities, retail and distribution use ERP, but now they want to utilize real-time location, geo-positioning and mapping solutions, especially in the supply chain and warehouse operations side," he says.

He saw opportunity in his customers' appetite for more sophisticated capabilities, but he recognized they weren't interested in technology for technology's sake. It would fall to Crave InfoTech to build solutions around those technologies and demonstrate how the solutions would impact their core business. "I see my role as aligning this company with all the changes in the technology marketplace, building innovation into our DNA and staying one step ahead of what customers are looking for," Nistane says.

However, with a staff of approximately 100 people, he'd need access to outside resources to help Crave InfoTech anticipate and outpace market demands. "We're always looking for companies at the cutting-edge of technology, who have a solid roadmap for innovation and who can work with us on go-to-market strategy," Nistane says, pointing to his company's association with HERE Technologies as a classic example of such a partnership.

"We were looking for agility and needed access to location, mapping, routing and geospatial APIs. Our developers worked with HERE to integrate their geospatial and mapping technology with SAP ERP and handheld hardware technology from Zebra Technology. That's how we got started on our product journey, developing our tracking and transportation solutions."
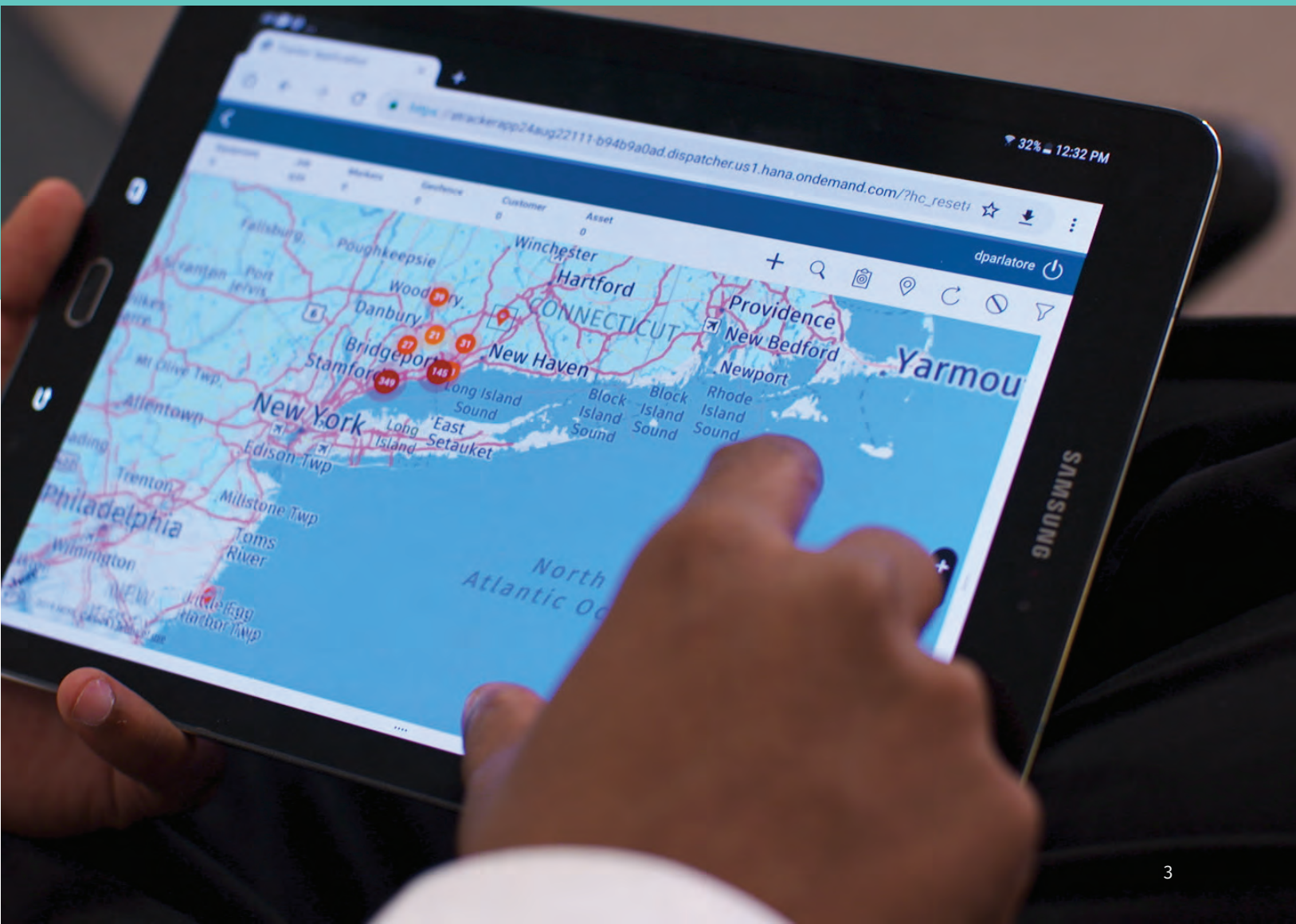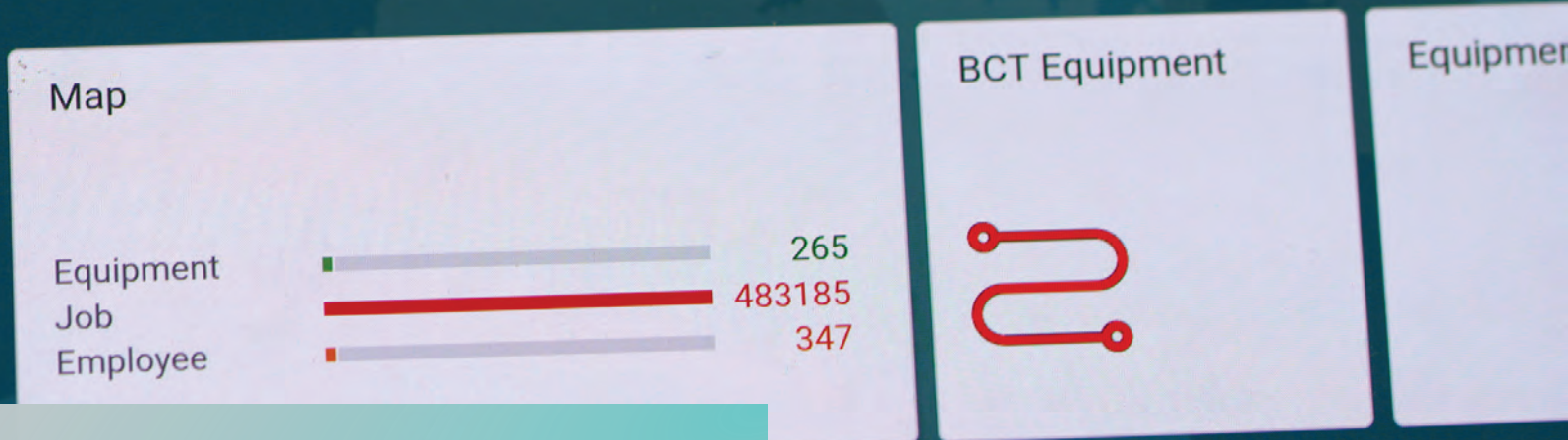
Innovating with HERE

"Our customers are looking for end-to-end solutions, nothing siloed, nothing that solves only part of the problem," Nistane says, pointing out that small and mid-size technology companies, like Crave InfoTech, can only do so much. "So partners like HERE Technology enable us to combine our innovation with theirs to provide that end-to-end solution."

He provides a real-world example of a Crave InfoTech customer seeking to optimize the movements of over 100 forklifts operating in a four-football-stadium-sized warehouse. GPS technology doesn't work indoors and narrow aisles or stairs make some areas in a warehouse inaccessible to forklifts. That's where HERE's indoor mapping solution comes into play.

"We can put that information into the routing algorithm for the indoor map and we integrate it with our warehouse management app. That allows us to correlate transactions coming from SAP with HERE's indoor routing and movement data from Zebra mobile hardware devices. We delivered an end-to-end solution that tracks forklifts in real-time and ensures they're utilized at maximum efficiency."

Crave InfoTech continually works very closely with HERE Technology's go-to-market team to expose HERE APIs in its effort to strengthen existing applications and develop new ones. For instance, the company's Connected Assets and IoT application leverages HERE Technologies APIs for fixed asset maintenance and route planning for moving assets, like commercial vehicles.

"For the commercial vehicles, it's important to understand things like the weight capacity of the road, bridge heights or even if a large truck is allowed on a specific street," Nistane says. Using HERE APIs Crave InfoTech combines geospatial and routing parameters with business parameters, like the priority of the shipment, the destination location for the delivery, the customer, and the urgency of the load to create a solution its customers can use for routing commercial vehicles.

Crave InfoTech customers utilize that same solution to schedule and perform maintenance on any other assets. "We started with an application for tracking vehicles and transformed it into tracking every type of asset. We collect and analyze performance data to provide meaningful decision-making intelligence for managers and maintenance technicians in the field," he says. "So location intelligence and location data are important not just for tracking moving assets but for coordinating maintenance on enterprise assets as well - making sure technicians are in the right location at the right time. We have a large equipment focus that requires we use maps effectively."

"The capabilities HERE delivers have become the backbone of our offerings," Nistane says. "We continue to work together on co-marketing initiatives and utilize each other's strengths, reaching out to the right customer at the right time. Large organizations are hungry for real-time location and geo-positioning solutions, especially in the supply chain and operations side, so our partnership with HERE is critical now and as we continue to innovate in the future."

Want to talk? We do, too. Get in touch here.