AMCHAM
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

LINKAGE

ISSUE 2/2026

magazine

this

tech hub islands summit

IMPACT

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The Honourable Jearlean John
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GoRTT

Anna Henderson
President
AMCHAM T&T

Greer Quan
Group COO & President of Guardian Shared Services Limited
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CEO
AMCHAM T&T

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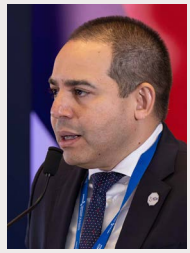

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LINKAGE magazine

The opinions expressed in the editorial contributions in Linkage may not necessarily be those of AMCHAM T&T. We welcome any comments you might have! Simply email a "Letter to the Editor" to the AMCHAM T&T Secretariat to

kennedymaraj@amchamtt.com

AMCHAM T&T'S VISION

As **The Pathway To The Americas**, AMCHAM T&T is focussed on the stimulation and promotion of trade, investment and export oriented growth in the Western Hemisphere.

AMCHAM T&T'S MISSION

AMCHAM T&T will add value to our member companies within the following key focus areas:

- Enhancement of Competitiveness
- Generation of New Business and Market Access for Services/Goods
- Influence on Policies and Legislation
- Transfer of Knowledge
- Contribution to Sustainable Development

AI POLICY

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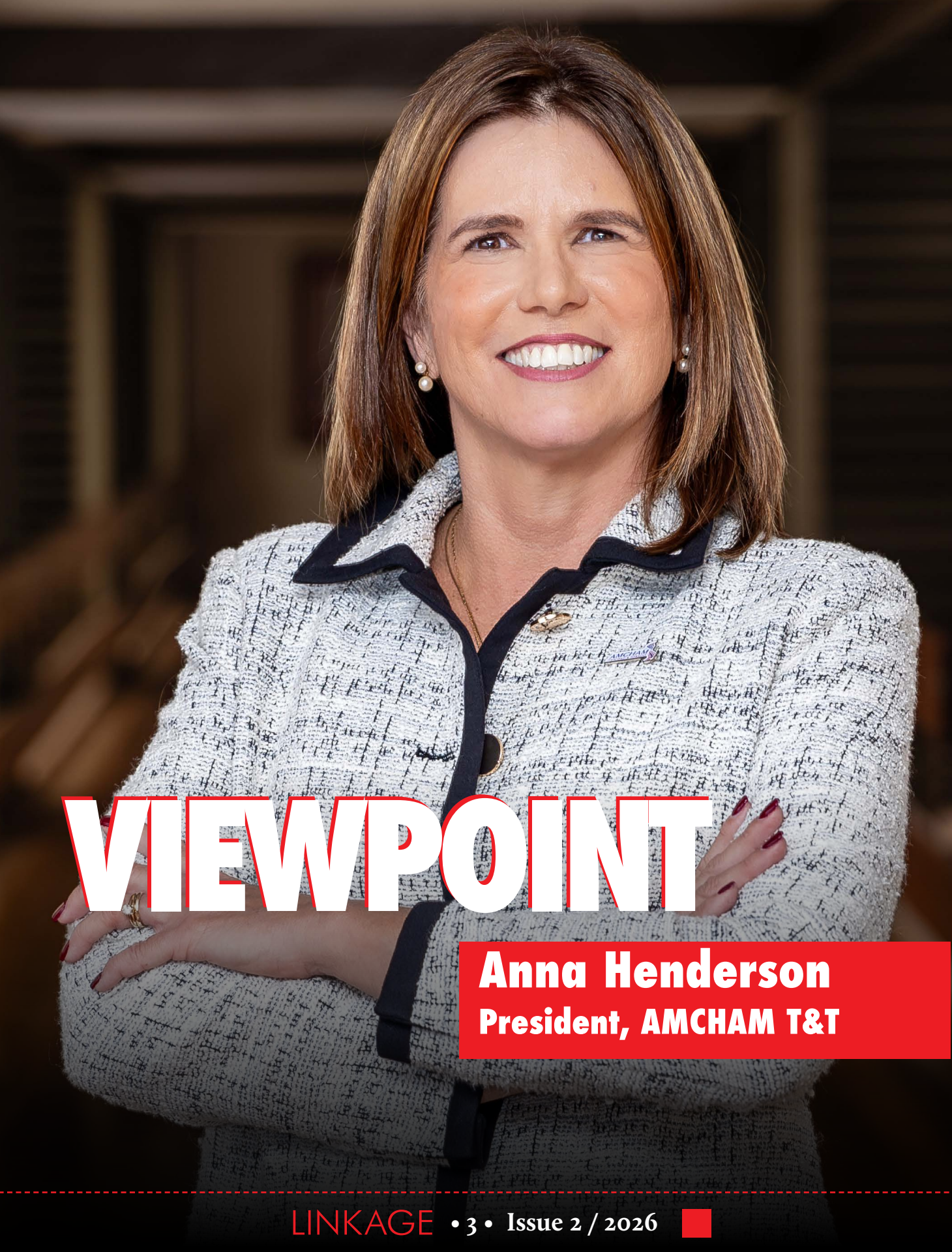

VIEWPOINT

Anna Henderson
President, AMCHAM T&T

VIEWPOINT

By Anna Henderson
AMCHAM T&T President

IMPACT: TURNING POSSIBILITY INTO PROGRESS

It was both an honour and a privilege to be re-elected to serve a second term as President of AMCHAM T&T at our recent 33rd Annual General Meeting & Business Forum. As I reflected on the responsibility that comes with this role – and on where Trinidad and Tobago stands today – one thought remained constant: we are living through a period of profound transition.

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future," John F. Kennedy once said. Nowhere does that ring truer than in the business landscape we navigate today.

The pace of technological advancement, shifting global markets, changing workforce expectations and evolving business models are reshaping the way we live and work. The question is no longer whether change is coming. It is whether we are prepared to create meaningful impact from it.

That is precisely why IMPACT is the theme of this edition of LINKAGE. For me, impact is about moving beyond ideas and intention to deliver tangible outcomes. It is about ensuring that innovation improves lives,

Follow us:

that technology creates opportunity, that leadership inspires confidence and that collaboration produces measurable results. It is about turning possibility into progress.

Throughout the past year, I have been reminded that impact rarely happens in isolation. Whether addressing our members at the Annual General Meeting, celebrating the achievements of participants in our Women in Leadership Mentorship Programme, or engaging with leaders at the Tech Hub Islands Summit (T.H.I.S.), one message has consistently emerged: lasting progress is created when people choose to work together.

LEADERSHIP HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT

In an increasingly uncertain world, organisations need leaders who are prepared to embrace change with courage, make decisions with integrity and invest in the development of others. Strong leadership is not measured simply by financial performance or operational success. It is measured by the ability to build trust, inspire innovation and create environments where people can grow, contribute and succeed. It is also measured by the doing – we cannot all be the cheerleader or observer, for me, the ability to do / volunteer or offer to be present, taking some action is where we can all make an impact.

How can we ALL make an IMPACT? By doing: taking action, volunteer, be present.

That is why the most successful organisations understand that investing in people is one of the greatest investments they can make. When individuals are empowered to learn, share knowledge and develop new skills, they create a ripple effect that strengthens teams, businesses, industries and ultimately our national economy.

At AMCHAM T&T, we remain committed to helping create those opportunities. Whether through advocacy, strategic partnerships, thought leadership, or flagship initiatives like the Tech Hub Islands Summit, our goal is to help businesses navigate change while positioning Trinidad and Tobago as a more competitive, resilient and innovation-driven economy. We continue to believe that our country's greatest advantage lies not only in its natural resources, but in the talent, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of its people.

CREATING IMPACT ALSO REQUIRES PARTNERSHIP

No single organisation, industry, or institution can solve today's challenges alone. Building a stronger Trinidad and Tobago demands meaningful collaboration between government, business, academia and civil society.

It requires openness to new ideas, a willingness to innovate, to take action and a shared commitment to creating opportunities that benefit everyone.

If we are to compete successfully in the global economy, we must continue investing in digital transformation, innovation, workforce development and the ecosystems that allow businesses to thrive. More importantly, we must ensure that these investments translate into real improvements in productivity, competitiveness and quality of life.

That is the kind of impact that matters. In this issue of LINKAGE, we explore the many dimensions of impact—from digital transformation and artificial intelligence to leadership, innovation, sustainability and the organisations and individuals who are creating meaningful change across Trinidad and Tobago and the wider region. Their stories remind us that impact is not measured only by ambition, but by action—and by the lasting difference we make in the lives of others.

I hope these stories inspire you to think boldly, lead purposefully, take action and continue creating impact with results within your own organisation, your community and beyond. ■

AMCHAM T&T's Board of Directors 2026–2027
Standing l-r: Kerry Rampersad, Natasha Ashby, Frances Bain-Cumberbatch, Tricia De La Rosa-Camacho, Kiran Deosingh, Griselle Smith, Gerardo Rivera Menjvar, Nadia McCarthy, Karissa Bissoon, Stuart Franco
Seated l-r: Nirad Tewarie, Giselle Thompson, Anna Henderson, Glenn Hamel-Smith, Anderson Basdeo
Not in picture: Greer Quan, Candice Clarke-Salloum, Philip Kern

WELCOME

Nirad Tewarie
CEO, AMCHAM T&T

WELCOME

By Nirad Tewarie
AMCHAM T&T CEO

Why Technology Still Gives Me Hope

One of my favourite moments at this year's Tech Hub Islands Summit (T.H.I.S.) came just before the Opening Ceremony, when our President, Anna Henderson, joked that she finally understood why I loved this conference so much. Looking around the room, she said she could see exactly what made T.H.I.S. different.

She was right. There is something genuinely energising about bringing together people who are not simply *talking* about the future, but actively *building* it.

Every year, T.H.I.S. reminds me that technology is no longer a conversation reserved for software engineers or global tech companies. It has become one of the most powerful forces shaping how we live, how we work, how businesses compete, and ultimately, how countries create prosperity. That is why this year's theme – **IMPACT** – felt especially meaningful.

Technology has never been the destination. Impact is.

IMPACT

For too long, conversations around digital transformation have focused on the technology itself. Artificial intelligence. Cloud computing. Automation. Cybersecurity. But technology has never been the destination. Impact is.

The real question is not whether we adopt new technologies. The real question is whether those technologies are delivering on their promise. Are they improving productivity? Creating new opportunities? Strengthening businesses? Making people's lives better?

I am pleased to say the answers came quickly at T.H.I.S. 2026.

SOLVING BUSINESS CHALLENGES TODAY

Across two days, we heard remarkable examples of companies from Trinidad and Tobago and across the region demonstrating how artificial intelligence, data, automation, cybersecurity and digital innovation are solving real business challenges TODAY – not in some distant future.

That is an important shift. Because successful digital transformation is no longer about keeping pace with global trends. It is essential to remaining competitive.

This matters enormously for Trinidad and Tobago. As a country, we possess many of the ingredients needed to become a regional leader in the digital economy. We have talented people, a sophisticated business community, a strategic location, and improving digital infrastructure. Combined with our strong energy sector and growing technology ecosystem, these strengths position us to attract investment, develop high-value industries, and create meaningful employment for future generations.

At AMCHAM T&T, we have long believed that technology is one of the most important enablers of economic growth and national development.

BUILDING DATA REQUIRES VISION

But none of this will happen automatically. Building a digital economy requires more than technology. It requires vision, collaboration, investment and a willingness to rethink how we educate, regulate, innovate and compete.

At AMCHAM T&T, we have long believed that technology is one of the most important enablers of economic growth and national development.

Through initiatives such as the Tech Hub Islands Summit, our partnership with The University of the West Indies Artificial Intelligence Research Centre, and our ongoing advocacy for digital transformation, cybersecurity and innovation, we are working to create an ecosystem where businesses can embrace change with confidence.

I REMAIN OPTIMISTIC

That is why I remain optimistic about what lies ahead. Technology continues to open doors to opportunities that simply did not exist a decade ago. Artificial intelligence is reshaping industries. Digital infrastructure is opening new markets. Data is becoming one of the world's most valuable economic resources.

Countries that position themselves early will not simply adapt to the future – they will help define it. That is why the conversations we started at T.H.I.S. cannot end when the conference does. They must continue inside our boardrooms, our classrooms, our government agencies, our startups, and our communities.

Impact is not measured by ideas alone. It is measured by what we choose to build

Conversations we started at T.H.I.S. cannot end when the conference does. They must continue inside our boardrooms, our classrooms, our government agencies, our startups, and our communities.

IMPACT

together. In this edition of **LINKAGE**, we explore the people, organisations, and ideas already making an impact – from business transformation and leadership to innovation, sustainability, and technology. I hope these stories inspire you as much as they inspired me.

The future is already taking shape. The opportunity now is to ensure Trinidad and Tobago plays a leading role in creating it. ■

Follow us:

Photo courtesy Digicel T&T

IMPOSSIBLE!

Why Every Big Change Always Seems Impossible at First

By Pieter Verkade
CEO, Digicel T&T

A lot of talk about AI and data centres is happening across Trinidad and Tobago right now, and if you listen closely, it has a familiar sound.

We hear phrases like: "This will not work here." "Could we get it to scale for impact?" "The economics do not add up." The talk is loud, it is confident, and of course, there are a lot of experts. But the reality is: almost every major shift in how people live and do business was met with the exact same certainty of inability, right up until it stopped being true.

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In early days of GSM (what you know as 2G), when I worked in Norway back in 1998, we were explaining the business case for new Mobile Operator Licenses. At that time, the market view, and specifically the view of the banks, was that mobile would never go beyond 40% penetration. Today, it's hard for people to imagine life without their mobile.

Fear of change is loudest right before change happens, not after. It is usually the last sound a threshold makes before it gets crossed.

It's the same fear we hear when we talk to leaders about the first steps of AI adoption: transforming their data models and investing in cybersecurity. There is always skepticism about whether it will really work, trepidation about cost, or an absolute certainty about security (until there is a breach, of course).

The Process Excellence Network (PEX) Report 2025/26, a global survey of enterprise leaders, found that just over half of organisations name poor data quality as the single biggest barrier to AI adoption, ahead of cost and talent.

So yes, AI will be a major economic transformation. But the real amplification comes if successful AI adoption is achieved. The first step is high-quality clean data. And what use is that data, however good it becomes, if it is not protected? In a society where data still runs on spreadsheets and cybersecurity is dealt with only after the fact, that is the gap we risk building into our own foundation. AI will take time to arrive in the mass market. We can start curating quality data, and protecting it, today.

THE DATA PROBLEM NOBODY WANTS TO ADMIT

Walk into many boardrooms in this country and decisions are still made the way they were made twenty years ago. On instinct. On what the CEO's gut says. Data exists, but it sits in spreadsheets nobody trusts, in systems that do not talk to each other, in reports generated because someone asked, not because someone is using them.

The businesses afraid of this shift are not wrong that it feels like a large undertaking. Where they are wrong is in thinking it stays optional. The business that learns to harness data properly will eventually take the customer, the market share, and the advantage away from the business that keeps guessing. There

is a warning most companies skip too. If you feed a system bad data, you get bad answers, and bad answers delivered quickly and confidently are more dangerous than no answer at all. Clean, reliable data has to be the starting point, because everything downstream depends on it.

The good news is that this does not require solving everything on day one. The instinct in most organisations is to automate every process at once, and that instinct is exactly what makes the fear feel justified. The better approach is to start with the one problem customers actually have most often, solve that first, learn from it, then expand. That is how large transformations actually happen, not as one leap, but as a series of solved problems that add up, in hindsight, to something that looks inevitable.

For example, we have made an intentional decision at Digicel to use data and automation in further improving our customer experience. This includes practical fixes, like automatic alerts when a truck has taken down a fibre cable, something that still happens too often, as well as longer-term work, like training our AI-based customer experience tool. For the latter, this is our goal: make sure the data we feed it is clear and specific to our market, so customer queries can be resolved in one call.

IS SECURITY REALLY A LUXURY?

The second fear is cybersecurity. For a long time it has been treated like insurance, something people are very passionate about after something happens, and a line item that gets deferred until calamity strikes.

In T&T and the wider Caribbean, some expenditures are luxuries until it becomes an emergency, and the price we are willing to pay for protection tends to rise only once a threat feels credible. But that is backwards.

The value of what you are protecting should set the price of protection, not the fear of a threat that has already arrived.

If your data is becoming the engine of your business, protecting it has to be treated with the same seriousness as the opportunity itself. They are the cost of playing in this new AI-driven environment because now there are rogue AI agents breaking out of sandboxes and hacking businesses by mistake. Could you imagine if cyber-criminals become more targeted with this kind of power and intelligence at their disposal?

Yuri Arcurs Collection / Magnific

The truth is this: cybersecurity is a bit like insurance. It increases your costs without any clear benefit until something happens. As AI puts greater onus on the quality of our data, it also becomes obvious that we need to protect this data, with cybersecurity and with geographical backups, for example at different locations like data centres or in the cloud.

GETTING AHEAD OF THE INEVITABLE

None of this is theoretical. It is already playing out in how businesses here compete for customers, and it will only accelerate as AI infrastructure becomes part of the national conversation.

The question was never really whether AI data centres can work in Trinidad and Tobago. The louder that argument gets, the closer we probably are to the moment it stops being an argument.

The businesses that spend this moment building clean and secure data foundations will not be scrambling to catch up when that moment arrives. The future is here, embrace its possibilities and stay positive. ■

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

(l-r) standing - Edwin Bennett, Pinnacle Steel and Vanadium; Marc-Kwesi Farrell, Hummingbird AI; David Campbell, bpTT; Philip Kern - Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, U.S. Embassy; Nirad Tewarie, AMCHAM T&T; Christopher Landau, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State; Adam Lowmas, Shell T&T Ltd.; Anna Henderson, AMCHAM T&T; Scott Hansen - Political and Economic Counselor, U.S. Embassy; Tom Kelly, Exxon; Nigel Noel, NuCor

(l-r) front row - Will Herter - Special Assistant, U.S. Department of State Office; Jeffrey Cernyar – Economic Officer, U.S. Embassy; Perry Cowart, Curley Midstream

STRENGTHENING STRATEGIC TIES

U.S. Senior Officials Engage T&T Private Sector on Energy, Investment and Security

AMCHAM T&T, in partnership with the U.S. Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago, hosted two high-level engagements in July and August 2026 that underscored the growing importance of the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago and the United States.

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

Christopher Landau and David Campbell, bpTT

Conversations at this level allow our members to better understand the evolving priorities of the United States.

CHRISTOPHER LANDAU

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau met with AMCHAM T&T and senior private-sector representatives during a special dinner on August 10 at Fanatic Kitchen Studio in Port of Spain. The engagement, held under the theme "T&T's Next Chapter: Energy, Investment, and Supply Chain Security," focused on issues central to Trinidad and Tobago's economic future and its longstanding relationship with the United States. It brought together leaders from major investors, creating an important platform for exchange on Trinidad and Tobago's economic outlook and opportunities for deeper U.S.–Trinidad and Tobago commercial cooperation.

Joining Deputy Secretary Landau and U.S. Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Philip Kern were the event's hosts, AMCHAM T&T President Anna Henderson and CEO Nirad Tewarie, together with senior representatives from bp Trinidad and Tobago, Shell Trinidad and Tobago Limited, Pinnacle Steel and Vanadium, Hummingbird AI and Curley Midstream.

"We are deeply honoured to welcome Deputy Secretary Landau to Trinidad and Tobago and grateful that he took the time to engage directly with members of our business community," said Henderson. "Conversations at this level allow our members to better understand the evolving priorities of the United States while also sharing the opportunities and challenges that are shaping Trinidad and Tobago's investment and business environment."

Meanwhile, Nirad Tewarie added, "strong relationships are built through dialogue, and we believe engagements like this can help identify areas where Trinidad and Tobago and the United States can deepen cooperation as well

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

(l-r) Melissa Pierre, AMCHAM T&T; Scott Hansen, Deputy Chief of Mission (Ag.), U.S. Embassy; Caroline Vik, Chief Policy Officer, U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC); Barbara Feinstein - Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Caribbean Affairs and Haiti; Philip Kern, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires; Nirad Tewarie, AMCHAM T&T

as foster greater collaboration among companies themselves. Deep economic relations are the cornerstone of enduring state-to-state relations, so we look forward to even more U.S. investment and expansion of trade between our countries in the near future."

Deputy Secretary Landau expressed optimism for the future of economic relations between T&T and the U.S. He stressed that commercial ties are an often-undervalued tool in the development of relations between states and that while there is more to be done, recent investments and continued interest by U.S. firms in T&T are reasons to be optimistic about the deepening of economic relations. He stressed that the United States Government is actively working to support the development of private sector projects that can benefit the local economy and further deepen economic ties between our two countries.

ROUNTABLE WITH THE DFC

The Deputy Secretary's visit followed an earlier high-level AMCHAM T&T roundtable with senior representatives of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) on July 14.

Led by Barbara Feinstein, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Caribbean Affairs and Haiti, and Caroline Vik, Chief Policy Officer of the DFC, alongside

Chargé d'Affaires Philip Kern and representatives of the U.S. Embassy, the roundtable provided AMCHAM T&T members with direct access to one of the U.S. Government's key development finance institutions.

The engagement was designed to connect companies seeking financing of US$5 million and above with the DFC and explore potential financing opportunities for commercially viable projects in Trinidad and Tobago.

Participating companies presented projects spanning areas such as port redevelopment, digital transformation, offshore energy, maintenance, pipeline development, manufacturing and critical infrastructure. Following the session, the DFC requested presentations from participating companies, including PwC, PROMAN, Freetown Collective, TOSL, Innovative Solutions Ltd. and Tech Investments Ltd., with follow-up discussions expected to explore potential financing opportunities.

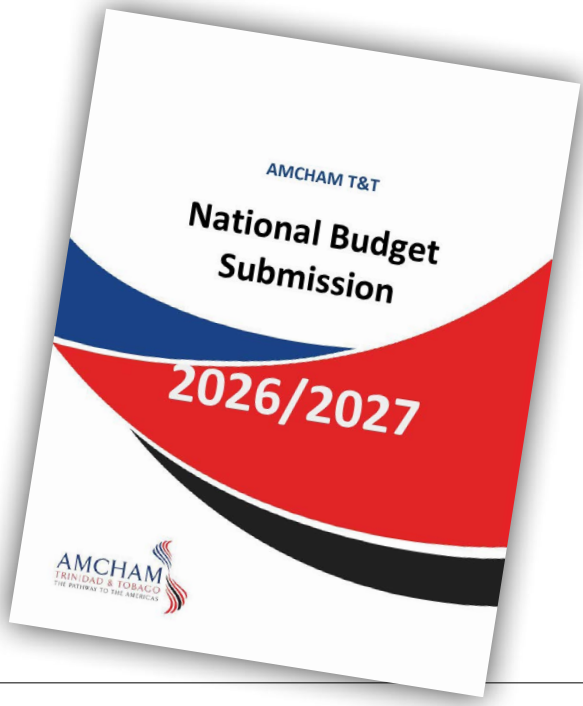
"Access to multiple sources of financing can be catalytic for business growth," Tewarie said following the DFC engagement. "Financing of this nature has the potential to stimulate innovation, expand exports, create high-quality jobs, improve productivity and strengthen our country's competitiveness."

Participating companies presented projects spanning areas such as port redevelopment, digital transformation, offshore energy, maintenance, pipeline development, manufacturing and critical infrastructure.

As Trinidad and Tobago navigates its next phase of economic development, strengthening its relationship with the United States remains strategically important. AMCHAM T&T's continued engagement with senior U.S. Government officials and agencies builds bridges between business, government and international partners to create opportunities for investment, financing and strategic cooperation. ■

A ROADMAP FOR GROWTH

AMCHAM T&T's Recommendations for the 2026/2027 National Budget



The American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago (AMCHAM T&T) recently submitted its 2026/2027 National Budget Recommendations to the Honourable Davendranath Tancoo, Minister of Finance.

The submission presents a comprehensive set of policy recommendations spanning several key sectors, which are reflective of the Chamber's membership concerns gleaned from a member survey conducted by the Chamber's Secretariat.

While broad in scope, they are united by a single objective: creating the conditions necessary for long-term economic resilience and sustainable growth.

COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES

AMCHAM T&T recommends

- designation of the Piarco International Airport as a U.S. Pre-Clearance Port, allowing travellers to complete U.S. immigration and customs procedures before departure
- participation in the U.S. Global Entry Programme, improving the ease of international business travel
- modernising the Trinidad and Tobago–United States Double Taxation Treaty to improve cross-border investment and commercial activity.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

AMCHAM T&T recommends

- establishment of a funded National Digital Public Infrastructure Programme
- implementation of the "Once-Only Principle" for government services
- digitisation of the country's top citizen and business life events
- development of a national artificial intelligence governance framework
- continued investment in cyber resilience.

AMCHAM T&T also proposes

- creation of a National Nearshoring and Digital Export Strategy to position Trinidad and Tobago as a regional hub for digital services while encouraging investment in sustainable artificial intelligence infrastructure and modern data centres.
- enhanced tax incentives for research and development, alongside the introduction of an Advanced Tax Ruling System to provide businesses with greater certainty, improve tax compliance and strengthen confidence in the country's tax administration.
- mobilise greater private sector investment through public-private partnerships to accelerate national development projects and improve productivity.
- continued investment in national security, judicial reform, occupational health and safety, environmental sustainability and broader ESG initiatives that strengthen investor confidence and long-term resilience.
- prioritising strategic cross-border gas developments, including the Dragon, Loran-Manatee and Manakin-Cocuina projects
- a transparent gas allocation policy and longer-term gas supply agreements to support downstream industries and preserve Trinidad and Tobago's industrial competitiveness.
- renewed focus on tourism development through stronger destination marketing and investment facilitation
- expanded support for agriculture and agro-processing to improve food security, strengthen local production and reduce import dependence. ■

CLICK HERE FOR AMCHAM T&T'S COMPLETE SET OF PROPOSALS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS.

30 YEARS OF ADVANCING HSSE

Putting People at the Centre of Safety and Resilience

AMCHAM T&T will host its 30th Health, Safety, Security and Environment (HSSE) Conference & Exhibition on 27 & 28 October, 2026 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Port of Spain.

This year's programme provides an opportunity to reflect on how the meaning of workplace safety has evolved—and where it must go next.

At the heart of this conversation is the recognition that HSSE is not confined to one level of an organisation or the responsibility of one group. It affects everyone—from the individual worker and their physical and psychological wellbeing to the organisation's ability to manage risk, protect productivity, maintain its reputation and build resilient teams.

PAULA DAVIS JD, MAPP
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

BURNOUT

This perspective will be brought into focus by Paula Davis JD, MAPP, the conference's Keynote Speaker. Paula is a global speaker, strategic advisor and award-winning author who specialises in building resilient teams and addressing the human factors that influence performance and successful organisational change.

Paula will speak on the topic *"Healthy Leaders. Healthy Systems: Teaming Up Against Burnout"*, which will address how the pace of work, constant change and uncertainty and the scaling of AI technology have left teams and leaders exhausted.

Burnout is a business risk that impacts the entire organisation, yet most attempts to help focus on quick-fix strategies aimed at individuals. Something is missing. In her programme, Paula focuses on a holistic approach to burnout prevention, providing actionable strategies for individuals, leaders, and teams. ■

HSSE 2026 WILL ALSO FEATURE THE FOLLOWING SPEAKERS:

Justice Frank Seepersad – Judge of the Supreme Court, Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago
Professor Gerard Hutchinson – Professor of Psychiatry, The U.W.I.
Nicole King – Human Resources Manager, PROMAN Trinidad
Anna Mohammed – Chief Operating Officer and Director, S.M. Jaleel & Company Limited

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FROM NOW TO NEXT

AMCHAM T&T Calls for Confidence, Collaboration and Regional Opportunity at its 33rd AGM

AMCHAM T&T convened its 33rd Annual General Meeting & Business Forum under the theme "Now to Next," on June 12th at the Trinidad Hilton & Conference Centre, bringing together member and stakeholders to examine Trinidad and Tobago's path forward.

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

NOW TO NEXT

Opening the Forum, AMCHAM T&T President Anna Henderson challenged attendees to consider not only where the country wants

AMCHAM T&T President Anna Henderson

to go, but how it intends to get there. "'Now to Next' is a simple yet important question: How do we move from where we are today to where we need to be tomorrow?"

Henderson acknowledged the significant economic and social challenges facing Trinidad and Tobago while emphasising that the country's greatest opportunity lies not in simply restoring past successes, but in building a more diversified and innovative future.

Reflecting on the current environment, she noted: "This is our NOW."

She cautioned that while diversification remains a national priority, the country's energy sector would continue to play a vital role in the near term. "Now, we often speak about diversification – as though it is something that can happen quickly. But the reality is more complex," Henderson said. "For the foreseeable future, our energy sector will remain the backbone of our economy... Therefore, we have a critical window of opportunity."s

Henderson stressed that realising this opportunity requires coordinated action across government, industry and regional partners. "We must act now to convert possibility into certainty."

Looking beyond energy, she called for a deliberate approach to economic transformation. "NEXT is not just about restoring what we had. It is about building what we do not yet have. It is about diversifying deliberately, investing in new industries, and reimagining what Trinidad and Tobago can be in a changing global economy."

"The challenge is not one of ideas. It is, and probably always has been, a challenge of implementation."

Central to that transformation, Henderson argued, is rebuilding confidence through transparency, accountability and effective implementation. "Trust cannot exist without transparency. And confidence cannot grow where accountability is absent."

She also commended recent government initiatives aimed at improving the investment climate, while emphasizing that implementation must remain the priority.

"The challenge is not one of ideas. It is, and probably always has been, a challenge of implementation. We must ensure that implementation keeps pace with ambition and that reforms translate into measurable improvements for businesses and citizens alike."

The President highlighted innovation and technology as critical drivers of future competitiveness. “Countries that act will lead. Those that hesitate will fall behind.”

She further underscored the importance of regional partnerships, noting that stronger commercial relationships throughout the Caribbean and South America will be essential to long-term growth.

STRENGTHENING A 160-YEAR PARTNERSHIP

Delivering remarks on behalf of the United States Embassy, Michael Fitzpatrick, Chargé d’Affaires a.i., reflected on the enduring commercial relationship between the United States and Trinidad and Tobago and the opportunities emerging across the wider region.

Thanking AMCHAM T&T for its continued leadership, Fitzpatrick stated: “Thank you for AMCHAM T&T’s continued leadership in strengthening U.S. and Trinidad and Tobago commercial ties – and friendships.”

He also highlighted the growing strategic importance of Trinidad and Tobago within the Caribbean, particularly as regional energy development accelerates. “Trinidad and Tobago is shaping up as a centrepiece of a southern Caribbean energy corridor—connecting nations, creating opportunities and driving regional integration.”

Looking toward Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela, Fitzpatrick encouraged businesses to embrace new regional opportunities while reaffirming U.S. support for increased commercial engagement.

“The U.S. Embassy is encouraging deals to happen here in Trinidad and Tobago and across the region.”

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

Michael Fitzpatrick, Chargé d’Affaires a.i., United States Embassy

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

AMCHAM T&T's current and past Presidents, including: (l-r) Eugene Tiah, Patricia Ghany, Anna Henderson (current President) Caroline Toni Sirju-Ramnarine, Simon Aqui and Stuart Franco

He also praised the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for its role in fostering renewed business partnerships.

"I want to particularly thank Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Minister Jerlean John, and many others in this administration for their leadership in bringing about renewed interest in new partnerships between American and Trinbagonian companies."

Reaffirming the United States' long-term commitment to the country, Fitzpatrick pointed to the construction of the new U.S. Embassy campus as a symbol of that connection. "Our new embassy is a symbol of our commitment—not just to diplomacy, but to partnership, prosperity, and the decades ahead."

He closed with a call for continued collaboration. "Let's deepen the ties between American and Trinbagonian businesses that have served us so well for 160 years."

LOOKING AHEAD

The Forum concluded with keynote presentations and discussions focused on regional trade, investment and emerging opportunities across the Caribbean and Latin America. Together, the day's discussions reinforced a common message: navigating the transition from "Now to Next" will require stronger institutions, greater innovation, meaningful regional partnerships and sustained collaboration between the public and private sectors. ■

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AMCHAM T&T Welcomes VenAmCham President to Discuss Venezuela's Business Outlook and Regional Opportunity

AMARU LIENDO AT AMCHAM T&T'S AGM

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

"We are burning gas every single day that could power the whole T&T territory. If we recover that gas, we could cover all the necessities of T&T."

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

AMCHAM T&T was pleased to welcome Amaru Liendo, Vice President of the Association of American Chambers of Commerce in Latin America and the Caribbean (AACCLA) and President of the Venezuelan-American Chamber of Commerce (VenAmCham), as the keynote speaker at its AGM & Business Forum.

VENEZUELA: CURRENT SITUATION AND BUSINESS OUTLOOK

Delivering a presentation entitled "Venezuela: Current Situation and Business Outlook," Liendo encouraged the business community to view Venezuela through the lens of long-term regional opportunity, outlining how reforms, investment and renewed economic activity could strengthen commercial ties between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago. (The presentation was delivered prior to the devastating earthquakes that later affected parts of Venezuela.)

A central theme of his presentation was the strategic relationship between the two neighbouring countries, particularly in energy.

"The Dragon field could boost the economic relationship between the two countries, revitalise that relationship and for sure be a source of LNG supply," he said.

Liendo argued that the opportunity extends well beyond a single project, pointing to Venezuela's significant untapped gas resources and the potential for greater regional energy integration.

"We are burning gas every single day that could power the whole T&T territory. If we recover that gas, we could cover all the necessities of T&T."

He noted that strengthening commercial collaboration between the two countries could play an important role in supporting regional energy security while creating new opportunities for businesses operating across the southern Caribbean.

Beyond energy, Liendo painted a broader picture of an economy undergoing structural change, with opportunities emerging across infrastructure, logistics, healthcare, electricity generation and mining.

He pointed to the country's extensive natural resource base as one of its greatest competitive advantages.

"We have the biggest oil reserve in the world, and I would say that we also have a lot of gas that is not yet fully certified. There is a big opportunity to continue to explore."

Liendo explained that Venezuela's oil sector has already begun recovering, with production increasing steadily over

Venezuela's economy is undergoing structural change, with opportunities emerging across infrastructure, logistics, healthcare, electricity generation and mining.

recent months and significant potential for future growth.

"This is a huge amount of money. This is a huge amount of opportunity. Without major investment, Venezuela could rise to 1.5 to 1.8 million barrels per day. With additional investment, we can easily reach again around three billion barrels per day of production, because we have done it before."

He also highlighted reforms aimed at improving Venezuela's investment climate, particularly within the hydrocarbons sector, describing recent legislative changes as an important step toward rebuilding investor confidence.

"We passed from being the least competitive country in the world's borders to being in the middle of the ranking with that law."

Liendo further noted that greater transparency within the energy sector has become a key priority.

"Fortunately, we now have a transparent market for our oil, and all the oil is being traded by American ethical, honest and transparent companies that are paying the full market price to my country."

While acknowledging that challenges remain, particularly within public infrastructure, Liendo suggested these very challenges present significant opportunities for private sector participation.

Recent policy changes have opened Venezuela's electricity sector to private investment for the first time.

He noted that recent policy changes have opened Venezuela's electricity sector to private investment for the first time.

"The government authorised the participation of the private sector in the electricity sector. This is something that never happened in the past. If we are able to change the approach of managing the electricity sector from a private standpoint, we are going to get better results."

He also pointed to opportunities within logistics and healthcare, noting that infrastructure modernisation and expanding access to services will require substantial investment over the coming years.

To support companies interested in entering the Venezuelan market, Liendo highlighted the work of VenAmCham's Centre for Investment, Commerce and Competitiveness, which assists businesses with market intelligence, regulatory guidance and commercial matchmaking.

Closing his presentation, he encouraged businesses to look beyond historical challenges and focus on the long-term opportunities that regional collaboration can create.

"Venezuela and Trinidad are not only connected by geography, they share an energy future. Now is the time to build it together."

Liendo's presentation aligned closely with the Forum's theme, "Now to Next," challenging business leaders to consider how regional partnerships, investment and private sector collaboration can help shape the next chapter of economic development across the Caribbean. ■

Amaru Liendo currently serves as General Manager for SC Johnson in Venezuela and in the Andean Region (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru). He was announced as President of the Venezuelan-American Chamber of Commerce (VenAmCham) for the 2025–26 term. In addition, Mr. Liendo is Vice President of the Association of American Chambers of Commerce in Latin America and the Caribbean (AACCLA).

Mr. Liendo is a Certified Public Accountant from the Central University of Venezuela (UCV), holds a Master's degree in Finance from IESA, and is an alumnus of the Applied Psychology for Business programme at Columbia Business School. He also completed the Global Leadership Programme at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University and completed the YPO Executive Programme at Stanford Graduate School of Business.

In 2024, he participated in Paris in the Future Leaders Invitation Programme organised by the Centre for Analysis, Planning and Strategy of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to his corporate leadership, Mr. Liendo is a professor of Finance at UCV and co-creator of the Responsible Leadership course at Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administracion (IESA) that is Venezuela's leading business school, founded in 1965, internationally accredited and dedicated to training professionals, executives, and entrepreneurs to assume leadership roles and contribute to organizational and societal development. He served as President of Dividendo Voluntario para la Comunidad (DVC) – United Way Venezuela, from 2020 to 2023.

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IMPACT FOR THE FUTURE

AMCHAM T&T CEO Challenges Trinidad and Tobago to Think Bigger at T.H.I.S. 2026

By AMCHAM T&T Staff Writer

AMCHAM T&T's Tech Hub Islands Summit (T.H.I.S.) 2026 challenged leaders to move beyond conversations about technology and focus on creating measurable outcomes for business, government and society.

Under the theme "IMPACT" T.H.I.S. 2026 explored how organisations can move beyond experimentation and begin using technology to deliver meaningful value, improve productivity, strengthen competitiveness and position Trinidad and Tobago as a leader within the region's evolving digital economy.

NIRAD TEWARIE
AMCHAM T&T CEO
AT T.H.I.S. 2026

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

At the Opening Ceremony, Nirad Tewarie, CEO of AMCHAM T&T, described the event as one with the potential to be "truly transformative."

"Technology has a way of sometimes feeling disconnected from our everyday lives. We don't always connect with it beyond the devices we use. But today, we're here to explore how technology is transforming business, government and society."

Reflecting on the Summit's original vision, Tewarie noted that the three objectives established when T.H.I.S. was first launched eight years ago remain just as relevant today:

- accelerating digital transformation within the private sector
- collaborating with government on public sector digitalisation, and
- creating stronger connections between technology founders and established businesses to develop Trinidad and Tobago's innovation ecosystem.

"At AMCHAM T&T, we genuinely believe we can build a viable tech sector in this country."

Tewarie argued that technology should no longer be viewed as a specialised function confined to information technology departments, but as a core capability embedded across every organisation.

"Technology is no longer separate. It's no longer just a department. It's no longer 'those people' who come when your computer freezes or your Windows crashes."

"We have to see our businesses, our institutions and even the public sector as technology-enabled organisations. That is what will allow us not just to survive, but to thrive. And because of that, we have to be ambitious."

7% OF T&T'S GDP FROM TECH

One of the most ambitious proposals presented during the opening address was a call to significantly expand the technology sector's contribution to the national economy.

"Minister, I want to respectfully suggest that we set a national goal of ensuring that at least 7% of Trinidad and Tobago's GDP comes from the technology sector."

Tewarie explained that increasing technology's contribution would generate benefits far beyond the sector itself. "The implementation and deployment of technology across every sector of society would generate productivity gains throughout the economy. It would improve not only our traditional oil, gas and petrochemical industries ,but also the non-energy sectors, because they would become more efficient, more competitive and more outward-looking through technology."

He further argued that technology presented one of Trinidad and Tobago's strongest opportunities for economic diversification and foreign exchange generation.

"When we look at sectors for diversification, I'm a strong supporter of the creative industries. I'm also a strong supporter of agriculture and tourism... But if we ask ourselves where we already have the human resource capacity to move quickly—where we can achieve medium-term growth—we believe technology is one of those sectors."

SOUTH CARIBBEAN TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER

Looking beyond Trinidad and Tobago's borders, Tewarie challenged stakeholders to think regionally, proposing a Southern Caribbean technology ecosystem that leverages the complementary strengths of Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela.

"Why not build a Southern Caribbean technology cluster?"

He suggested that future energy developments could position Trinidad and Tobago to attract energy-intensive digital industries, including data centres, while strengthening its role as both an energy and technology hub.

However, Tewarie emphasised that infrastructure and policy alone would not be enough.

"But for all of this to happen, we must build trust."

He pointed to initiatives such as digital nomad visas, Global Entry, public-private collaboration and data governance as critical components of creating an attractive investment environment.

TECH AND PEOPLE

As artificial intelligence continues to reshape industries globally, Tewarie also stressed that organisations must rethink workforce development and organisational design.

"One of the biggest questions surrounding technology is people."

"We have to find the balance between upskilling our people and redesigning organisations for a technology-enabled future."

Concluding his remarks, he reminded participants that meaningful transformation depends on collaboration across sectors.

"We've all heard the proverb: 'If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together. I think we can do both. We can walk fast—and far—together." ■

IMPACT THROUGH COLLABORATION

Are we using technology to create meaningful change?

Delivering the government's feature address at T.H.I.S., Senator the Honourable Dominic Smith, Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence, challenged participants to shift their thinking beyond technology itself.

"The question is no longer whether we should embrace technology, but whether we are using technology to create meaningful change."

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE DOMINIC SMITH, MINISTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

He noted that while emerging technologies continue to reshape economies around the world, their success should ultimately be measured by the value they create for citizens.

"Technology has value only when it delivers meaningful outcomes for people."

The Minister outlined government's vision for building a modern, citizen-centred digital nation, explaining that digital transformation extends far beyond introducing new technology.

"Digitising government is an important milestone, but transforming the way government serves people remains our ultimate objective."

Central to that vision is VerifyTT, one of the country's foundational digital public infrastructure initiatives, which will enable citizens to securely access, store and share verified government-issued credentials while creating a more seamless public service experience. Digital public infrastructure represents the next generation of national infrastructure, supporting everything from secure digital identity to trusted data exchange and more integrated government services. Government's commitment to developing the country's digital workforce is evidenced through initiatives such as FutureReadyTT, launched in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

Recognising that AI is rapidly reshaping the future of work, he stressed that investment in people must remain at the centre of national digital transformation. "The countries that emerge as leaders in the AI economy will be those that invest deliberately in digital literacy, critical thinking and human capital."

The Minister also emphasised that digital transformation cannot be achieved by government acting alone.

"No government, regardless of its resources or ambition, can build a digital nation in isolation."

Instead, he described forums such as T.H.I.S. as vital platforms for collaboration between government, business, universities, entrepreneurs and civil society. "They provide far more than opportunities for discussion; they create the environment in which partnerships are formed, ideas are challenged, innovation is accelerated and practical solutions emerge."

While encouraging innovation, Senator Smith also underscored the importance of responsible governance as artificial

intelligence becomes increasingly integrated into society. “Innovation and governance are not competing priorities; they are complementary responsibilities.”

TITLE SPONSOR REMARKS

Representing T.H.I.S. 2026 Title Sponsor Massy, Ryan Chaitram, Sr VP, Strategy and Digital at Massy reinforced the role of the private sector in helping Trinidad and Tobago build the capabilities required to compete in an increasingly technology-driven global economy.

“Technology is no longer a side conversation or a specialist agenda. It is central to competitiveness, productivity, innovation, customer experience, and the way people work.”

Chaitram explained that Massy’s support for the Summit reflects its belief that businesses have an important responsibility to help develop the region’s digital capability.

“Massy is proud to be title sponsor of this conference because we believe this is one of the defining conversations for Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean.”

He acknowledged the growing influence of artificial intelligence but argued that technology alone is not enough. Organisations must invest in people,

RYAN CHAITRAM, SR VP, STRATEGY AND DIGITAL, MASSY (TITLE SPONSOR)

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

develop digital fluency and create environments where employees feel confident adopting new tools.

“Access is not adoption. Adoption is not fluency. Fluency is not confidence. And confidence is not mastery.”

He encouraged business leaders to focus not simply on introducing technology, but on helping employees move from awareness to genuine capability.

“Our responsibility as leaders is to help people move through that journey — from awareness, to access, all the way through to mastery.”

Chaitram also challenged organisations to think beyond their own workforce

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

Left-right: Kiran Deosingh, Ramps Logistics; Griselle Smith, IBM; Nirad Tewarie, AMCHAM T&T; Giselle Thompson, Proman; His Excellency Diomedes Cleghorn, Ambassador, Panama; The Hon., Dominic Smith, Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence; His Excellency William Bush Howard, Ambassador, Colombia; Anna Henderson, Amaranth Business Solutions Ltd.; His Excellency Víctor Meléndez, Ambassador, Mexico; Anderson Basdeo, Citi; Nadia McCarthy, Massy

and consider how they contribute to developing technology skills across the wider society.

"Corporate responsibility in this moment has two circles. First, we must build capability inside our companies. Second, we must extend capability into our communities."

For Massy, he explained, this means investing not only in enterprise technologies but also in education, exposure and pathways that help prepare future generations for careers in an AI-enabled economy.

Concluding his remarks, Chaitram delivered a message that captured the broader purpose of the Summit.

"Technology alone will not carry the Caribbean forward. People will. And our responsibility is to help them do so."

As discussions continued throughout the two-day Summit, the opening ceremony established a shared understanding between government and the private sector: technology is no longer simply about digital tools or emerging platforms. Its true impact will be determined by how effectively organisations collaborate, invest in people, strengthen institutions and create opportunities that improve lives.

The conversations at T.H.I.S. 2026 demonstrated that meaningful digital transformation is not the responsibility of any one sector. It is a shared national effort—one that will require leadership, partnership and a collective commitment to turning innovation into measurable impact. ■

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

Philip Kern, Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago, and Senator the Honourable Dominic A. Smith, Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence, are pictured with Anna Henderson, President of AMCHAM T&T (left), and Nirad Tewarie, CEO (right).

IMPACT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

AMCHAM T&T Welcomes U.S. Chargé d'Affaires at T.H.I.S. 2026

Among his first official engagements in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Kern joined Summit participants for the opening, reaffirming the strong and enduring relationship between the United States and Trinidad and Tobago.

AMCHAM T&T is pleased to welcome Mr. Kern to Trinidad and Tobago and looks forward to continuing its longstanding partnership with the U.S. Embassy as both organisations work together to advance innovation, digital transformation, trade, investment, and sustainable economic growth. ■

Building a Legacy of Trust and Shared Progress

For over 100 years, Massy has been expanding in the Caribbean and beyond, creating value for our customers and communities through our diverse offerings and philanthropic initiatives through the Massy Foundation. This growth would not have been achieved without the dedication and expertise of our 13,000 employees.

We believe in prioritizing our people, providing them with the tools, trust, and discipline they need to turn today's challenges into tomorrow's competitive advantages. **This year, we collaborated with OpenAI to help our employees understand how they can use AI to improve their understanding of our operational realities, increase their efficiency and decision-making, and ultimately help us deliver better customer experiences and value to communities.**

Through structured training, effective change management and secure integration within a closed enterprise environment, we believe AI can be responsibly scaled across our business to solve real problems and create measurable value. Our people are proof of that.

Stories of Impact Across Our Regional Operations

Key

- Integrated Retail
- Motors & Machines
- Gas Products
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IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DATA

How Trinidad and Tobago Can Compete in an AI-Driven Global Economy

For decades, economic diversification has been one of Trinidad and Tobago's most persistent national ambitions. Successive governments have pursued policies intended to reduce the country's dependence on oil and natural gas; however, the energy sector continues to account for a significant share of export earnings, foreign exchange and government revenue.

By Ian John
Founder and CEO of CyberEye

This dependence now poses a growing risk. Declining production from mature energy fields, reduced downstream activity, plant closures and job losses are placing pressure on national income and the government's ability to meet its annual obligations. Diversification is no longer a desirable policy objective. This has become an economic imperative.

This transition is also taking place during a period of extraordinary global change. The international economic model that has shaped trade, investment and production for much of the past 80 years is being disrupted by geopolitical tensions, supply-chain restructuring, automation, artificial intelligence and the rapid expansion of digital commerce. Trinidad and Tobago must therefore diversify into industries of the future, rather than attempt to reproduce the economic structures of the past.

WHERE THE OPPORTUNITIES LIE

Software and application development, artificial intelligence, fintech, cybersecurity, creative industries, business-process outsourcing, professional-services exports and high-value manufacturing are frequently identified as promising areas for diversification. These sectors are not unrealistic ambitions. Trinidad and Tobago has several competitive advantages, including an English-speaking workforce, a well-established financial and professional-services sector, strong telecommunications infrastructure, geographic proximity to North and South America, and a time zone that supports nearshore services to North American clients. However, by adapting our mindset and work practices to the always-on economy, local businesses can extend their reach into markets across different time zones. Digital technologies make it possible to conduct commercial transactions, exchange information, and deliver customer service around the clock.

Local companies can potentially export software, cybersecurity monitoring, accounting, payroll services, digital content, engineering support, legal-process services, data analytics and AI-enabled business solutions.

However, identifying the right industries is only the beginning. At the centre of almost every modern growth sector is one critical asset: data.

DATA IS PRODUCTIVE CAPITAL

The phrase "data is the new oil" is often dismissed as an overused cliché. However, its central message remains valid. Data has become a productive economic asset, alongside capital, infrastructure, intellectual property and human talent. There is also an important distinction. Oil is depleted when it is consumed. Data can be used repeatedly, augmented with other datasets and applied to new use cases. Customer information, operational records and market data can support forecasting, fraud detection, product development, customer segmentation and artificial intelligence.

The economic benefits can be substantial. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimates that access to and reuse of public-sector data can generate benefits equivalent to approximately 0.1 to 1.5 per cent of gross domestic product. When private-sector data are included, the estimated benefits increase to between 1 and 2.5 per cent of GDP, with some studies identifying potential gains as high as 4 per cent (OECD, 2019).

For Trinidad and Tobago, even a modest improvement in the use of data could support productivity, innovation and the development of new exportable services. This opportunity becomes even more significant when data-driven products are sold globally. Unlike many physical exports, software, analytics and digitally delivered services can be distributed internationally without the transportation costs, inventory requirements and geographical limitations associated with traditional goods.

Image: iuriimotov/Magnific

AI BEGINS WITH DATA GOVERNANCE

Many local and regional business leaders are eager to discuss artificial intelligence (AI). Far fewer are enthusiastic about data governance. This is a serious strategic weakness in the Caribbean region.

AI depends on reliable, accessible and properly managed data. If an

organisation's information is incomplete, duplicated, outdated or poorly classified, AI will not be useful; I have observed instances in which poor data hygiene caused AI systems to generate inaccurate conclusions at greater speed. Poor data can lead to unreliable forecasts, biased decisions, privacy breaches, regulatory exposure and even reputational damage.

Data governance establishes who owns information, who may access it, how it is classified, where it is stored, how its quality is maintained and how long it should be retained. It also defines the conditions under which data may be shared, transferred or destroyed. Every company seeking to become data-driven should therefore establish a data inventory, identify accountable data owners, classify information according to sensitivity and define appropriate access, retention and disposal rules. Data governance should not be viewed as an effort to restrict information. Its purpose is to enable responsible use while protecting personal data, intellectual property and commercially sensitive information. I can't help but

reemphasise, trustworthy data sharing requires a combination of legal, technical and organisational safeguards that balance innovation with privacy, security and legitimate commercial interests (OECD, 2025).

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ARE GATEWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY

For local businesses seeking access to global markets, good ideas or innovation products are not sufficient. Governments, financial institutions, insurers, healthcare providers and multinational corporations assess suppliers across a range of areas, including information security, privacy, software quality, operational resilience, accessibility and corporate governance. International standards must therefore be viewed as commercial enablers rather than administrative burdens. Standards such as the International Standards Organisation ISO/IEC 27001 are one of the most important foundations for companies handling sensitive information. It provides the requirements for an information security management system and helps organisations manage risks relating to the confidentiality, integrity and availability of data (ISO, 2022).

Another key standard is ISO 9001, which provides a recognised framework for consistent quality management, customer satisfaction, corrective action and continuous improvement. For software developers and professional-services exporters, it demonstrates that quality is built into repeatable business processes rather than being dependent on individual employees (ISO, 2015). Software companies should also establish a secure product-development lifecycle based on internationally recognised frameworks. Depending on the sector, additional requirements may include privacy-management standards, cloud-security controls, payment-card compliance, business-continuity certification, accessibility standards and AI-governance frameworks. While these certifications do not guarantee commercial success they can, however, reduce one of the major barriers faced by companies from small economies: the international customer's uncertainty about whether the local supplier can be trusted and is a reliable source for quality products and services.

BUILDING A NATIONAL DATA ECONOMY

Businesses cannot drive this transformation alone. Trinidad and Tobago requires a coordinated approach involving the public sector, private enterprise, universities, financial institutions and telecommunications providers. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago should

strengthen data protection, privacy and intellectual property legislation and enforcement to build international trust in local businesses, while expanding secure open-data programmes, modernising public records and improving interoperability across state agencies so that properly anonymised public data can support research, entrepreneurship and the development of new digital services.

Universities and training institutions must strengthen their programmes in software engineering, data security, data analytics, statistics, AI governance and intellectual property commercialisation. Export-development agencies should also assist local companies with the cost and complexity of international certification. For many SMEs, the cost of implementation, documentation and external audits remains a significant obstacle.

FROM AN ENERGY ECONOMY TO AN INTELLIGENCE ECONOMY

Diversification does not require abandoning the energy sector. Trinidad and Tobago's industrial expertise, engineering capability and infrastructure can support emerging opportunities in energy technology, emissions analytics, industrial automation, renewable-energy services and advanced manufacturing. The objective should be to convert decades of energy wealth into sustainable intellectual, technological and institutional capacity. Trinidad and Tobago will not diversify simply by identifying another list of priority sectors. Success will depend on whether local organisations can develop trusted products and services that international customers are prepared to purchase.

Trinidad and Tobago will not diversify simply by identifying another list of priority sectors. Success will depend on whether local organisations can develop trusted products and services.

In an AI-driven economy, innovation begins with reliable information. Trust begins with governance, security and quality. Global competitiveness begins when businesses recognise that data is not merely an output of operations. It is a strategic asset, an input into innovation and a gateway to international markets. For Trinidad and Tobago, the next chapter of economic diversification must begin with one central understanding: It's all about the data. ■

T.H.I.S. CONFERENCE: IMPACT

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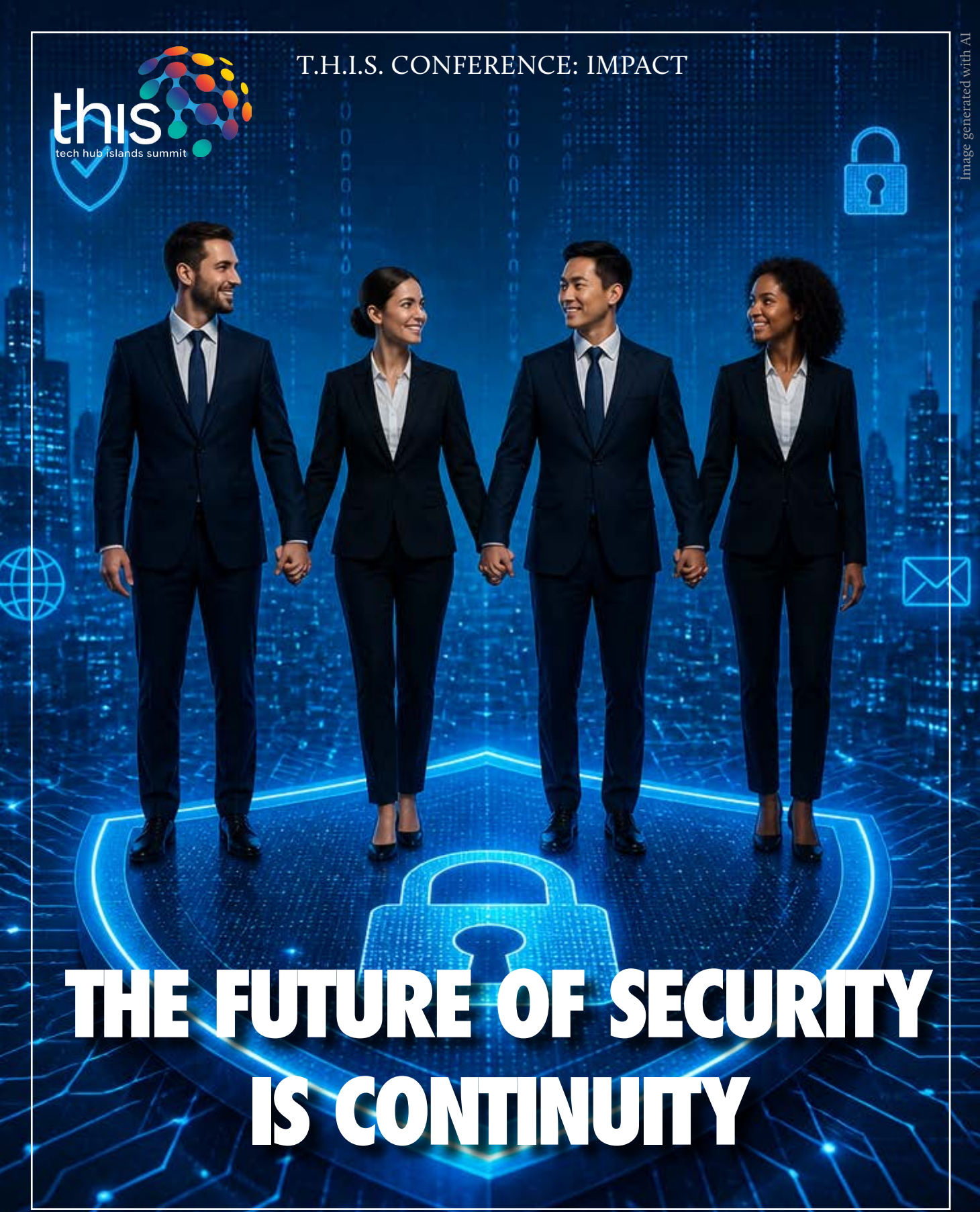

Image generated with AI

THE FUTURE OF SECURITY IS CONTINUITY

For years, cybersecurity conversations have centred on prevention. Organisations invested heavily in firewalls, antivirus software, security awareness training and threat detection tools, all with a singular goal: stop the attack before it happens. Today, that mindset is no longer enough.

As organisations embrace artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, connected infrastructure, industrial automation and digital transformation, they are dramatically expanding their digital footprint and with it, their exposure to cyber risk. The reality is that no organisation, regardless of size or industry, can guarantee complete protection from cyber threats.

The conversation has therefore shifted. The most important question is no longer "How do we prevent every attack?" but rather, "Can we sustain business operations when an attack inevitably occurs?" This evolving perspective is redefining cybersecurity strategy around the concept of cyber resilience the ability to anticipate, withstand, recover from and adapt to adverse cyber events. As highlighted during the Cyber Resilience and Risk Transfer panel at T.H.I.S.26, organisations that successfully build resilience will gain a significant competitive advantage in the years ahead.

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

By Samantha Deoraj
Major Account Manager, Fortinet

THE THREAT LANDSCAPE HAS FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED

Threat actors today operate more like businesses than traditional cybercriminals. They are highly organised, well-funded and increasingly leveraging automation and AI to improve the speed, scale and effectiveness of their attacks. The emergence of Ransomware-as-a-Service (RaaS) has significantly lowered the barrier to entry, allowing even relatively unsophisticated threat actors to launch highly damaging campaigns. At the same time, AI is enabling attackers to automate reconnaissance, craft convincing phishing campaigns and adapt their tactics in real time.

What is particularly concerning is not simply the sophistication of modern attacks, but their velocity. FortiGuard Labs, Fortinet's threat intelligence department, recently reported that the time between the disclosure of a critical vulnerability and its active exploitation has shrunk to 24-48 hours, down from the 4.76 days recorded in 2023.

Organisations are no longer facing isolated incidents. They are facing campaigns capable of moving rapidly across interconnected environments, particularly where information technology (IT) and operational

AI is enabling attackers to automate reconnaissance, craft convincing phishing campaigns and adapt their tactics in real time.

Image: rawpixel/Magnific

technology (OT) systems converge. In many cases, attackers do not need to compromise an entire organisation, they only need to exploit a single weakness to trigger widespread disruption.

This is why many security leaders now argue that the greatest cyber risk organisations still underestimate is not the breach itself, but the operational disruption that follows. When critical services become unavailable, the business consequences can extend far beyond data loss, impacting revenue, customer trust, regulatory compliance and reputation.

FROM PROTECTION TO OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE

Historically, cybersecurity programmes measured success through prevention metrics. How many attacks were blocked? How many vulnerabilities were patched? While these metrics remain important, resilience requires a broader perspective. Organisations must assume that breaches will occur and focus equally on detection, containment, response and recovery. The ability to restore critical operations quickly, maintain customer confidence and minimise business disruption has become a defining measure of cybersecurity maturity.

The 2021 Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack provides a powerful example. A single compromised credential ultimately led to the shutdown of

Cyber resilience is no longer an IT initiative. It is a business continuity imperative.

critical fuel distribution infrastructure across multiple U.S. states. The incident demonstrated how a relatively small weakness can cascade into widespread operational disruption. For organisations across the Caribbean, particularly those operating in energy, financial services, utilities, healthcare and transportation, the lesson is clear: cyber resilience is no longer an IT initiative. It is a business continuity imperative.

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF OPERATIONAL TECHNOLOGY SECURITY

One of the most significant cybersecurity challenges facing enterprises today is the convergence of IT and OT environments. Traditionally, these domains operated independently. IT focused on protecting data confidentiality and integrity, while OT prioritised safety, reliability and operational availability. Today, however, industrial systems are becoming increasingly connected to enterprise networks, cloud services and analytics platforms. This convergence creates tremendous opportunities for

innovation, efficiency and real-time decision-making. However, it also expands the attack surface dramatically.

The challenge facing many organisations is that they continue to treat IT and OT as separate security environments. In reality, attackers do not recognise these distinctions. Once inside a network, they exploit whatever pathways are available. An effective resilience strategy requires organisations to secure IT and OT as a unified ecosystem. This begins with achieving comprehensive visibility across all assets, establishing shared governance models and implementing security architecture designed specifically for industrial environments. Network segmentation, zero-trust principles, continuous monitoring and executive-level oversight all play critical roles.

Perhaps most importantly, successful OT security requires organisational alignment. Technology alone cannot solve the problem. IT teams, OT operators, security professionals and executive leadership must work collaboratively to understand risk and prioritise investments that protect operational continuity.

Insurers are increasingly evaluating an organisation's security posture before issuing coverage, effectively acting as an independent assessor of cyber risk.

CYBER INSURANCE IS RAISING THE BAR

Cyber insurance has undergone a remarkable transformation over the last several years.

What was once viewed primarily as a financial safety net has evolved into a powerful indicator of cyber maturity. Today, insurers are increasingly evaluating an organisation's security posture before issuing coverage, effectively acting as an independent assessor of cyber risk.

As a result, many cybersecurity controls once considered recommended have become essential. Multi-factor authentication (MFA) is now widely viewed as mandatory, particularly for

remote access, email systems and privileged accounts. Organisations are also expected to implement privileged access management, least-privilege policies, identity governance frameworks and strong lifecycle management practices. Identity has become the new perimeter, making credential security one of the most important pillars of resilience.

Insurers are also placing greater emphasis on advanced endpoint detection and response capabilities, email security controls, backup and recovery processes, vulnerability management programmes and network segmentation. Equally important is the ability to demonstrate tested incident response procedures and recovery capabilities.

The message from the insurance industry is becoming increasingly clear: organisations must prove they can prevent, detect, respond to and recover from cyber incidents. Coverage is no longer simply purchased; it is earned through demonstrable maturity.

In this context, cyber insurance is not merely a checkbox. It has become a byproduct of doing cybersecurity well.

THE ONE CAPABILITY EVERY ORGANISATION NEEDS

If there is one capability organisations should prioritise over the next two years, it is rapid detection and response supported by a mature incident response programme. Cyber resilience is increasingly defined by how quickly threats can be detected, contained and eliminated before they evolve into business-wide disruptions. This requires more than technology. It demands the integration of people, processes and platforms into a coordinated response capability.

Organisations should focus on three key areas:

First, establishing real-time visibility across their digital estate, including endpoints, cloud workloads, networks and operational systems.

Second, implementing orchestrated response capabilities that can automate containment activities and reduce the time required to respond to emerging threats.

Third, regularly testing resilience through incident simulations, tabletop exercises and recovery drills involving executive leadership and business stakeholders.

A plan that sits on a shelf is not resilience. Resilience is proven through practice, validation and measurable results under pressure.

The experience of global shipping giant Maersk illustrates this principle well. Following the devastating NotPetya cyberattack in 2017, the company's ability to rebuild and restore operations

Cyber incidents are inevitable. Resilience becomes the ultimate measure of preparedness.

Image: Idyllicterra/Magnific

demonstrated the importance of visibility, coordinated response and recovery planning. The attack was severe, but resilience enabled recovery.

WHAT BOARDS SHOULD BE ASKING

As cyber threats continue to evolve, boards and executive teams must change the questions they ask. Instead of asking whether the organisation is secure, they should ask for evidence of resilience.

- Can critical operations be restored quickly after an attack?
- How often are response plans tested? Are backups regularly validated?
- Does leadership participate in crisis simulations?
- Are independent assessments being conducted to evaluate readiness?

The organisations that can confidently answer these questions will be best positioned to navigate an increasingly uncertain threat landscape.

Cyber resilience is no longer a technical discussion confined to security teams. It is a strategic business capability that influences operational stability, customer trust, regulatory compliance and competitive differentiation.

In a world where cyber incidents are inevitable, resilience becomes the ultimate measure of preparedness. The future belongs not to the organisations that avoid every attack, but to those that can continue operating, serving customers and growing confidently when adversity strikes. That is the new standard of cybersecurity success. ■

WILL THEY FIND YOU?

What Established Caribbean Businesses Are Missing About the Founders Ready to Work With Them

At this year's Tech Hub Islands Summit, I asked a room of senior executives a simple question: when the Caribbean's most promising founders look for established businesses to work with, will they find yours?

By Jeffrey Faustin

Managing Partner at Jenson Ventures and co-founder of Caribbean Ventures

Photo: rawpixel/Magnific

THE BUSINESSES THAT BENEFIT MOST WILL NOT NECESSARILY BE THE BIGGEST NAMES IN THE ROOM.

Across the region, a new generation of founders is building tools that could help established businesses serve customers better and respond more effectively to change. The opportunity already exists. The more important question is whether businesses have made themselves easy to find and easy to work with when the right founder comes looking.

Many established businesses still think of themselves primarily as buyers of innovation, waiting for new technology to mature before deciding whether it deserves their attention. That framing is becoming outdated. Founders are not only building products to sell to large companies. They are also looking for partners that can solve their business problems.

The businesses that benefit most will not necessarily be the biggest names in the room. They will be the ones founders recognise as capable of turning a promising conversation into a practical partnership.

INNOVATION IS MOVING FASTER AND COMING FROM DIFFERENT PLACES

Innovation has always helped established businesses stay ahead. What has changed is the speed at which it can achieve this and where it is likely to come from.

For almost every business, whether it thinks of itself as a technology company or not, innovation increasingly involves technology adoption. AI is accelerating that shift. Founders can now prototype and test tools in days or weeks that would once have required larger teams and longer development cycles.

Few established businesses will consistently replicate that pace internally.

Much of the innovation that shapes growth over the next five years may come from outside traditional corporate research and development, from founders already building solutions around problems that established organisations understand well.

This does not mean internal teams, consultancies and enterprise software providers no longer have a role. Founders offer a different route. They often want to build alongside a business rather than simply sell to it, testing ideas quickly, adapting them around real operating conditions and developing the product through direct feedback.

Early partnerships can provide insight into new ways of solving familiar problems. Businesses that learn how to work with founders can improve their own performance while gaining a clearer view of where their industry is heading.

Photo: DC Studio/Magnific

MUCH OF THE INNOVATION THAT SHAPES GROWTH OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS MAY COME FROM OUTSIDE TRADITIONAL CORPORATE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.

THE CARIBBEAN'S OWN NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

A November 2025 study commissioned by IDB Lab found that the Caribbean accounts for less than 1% of total venture-capital deal volume across Latin America and the Caribbean. The study

described the region's venture ecosystem as nascent or emerging, with limited investment and fragmented support.

That is not a reflection of a shortage of talent or ambition. Founders are emerging across the region, and digital tools make it possible to build and serve customers across borders from an earlier stage. AI is reducing the time and cost required to test ideas. Regional and diaspora networks are creating new routes to expertise, customers and capital.

The gap between founder capability and the institutional support around it will not remain static. Through my work investing in early-stage Caribbean B2B technology companies, I see founders building with greater speed.

Established businesses have a window to position themselves early. The companies being built and backed today will be looking for enterprise partners within years, not decades.

FOUNDERS NEED MORE THAN FUNDING

The same IDB Lab study offers an important clue about what founders want. Among those surveyed, 72.5% identified strategic partnerships as an area where they needed support, while 70% identified support with market expansion.

That should attract the attention of every established business in the region. Founders are not simply looking for cheques. They need organisations that

Photo: unaihuiziphotography/Magnific

can help them understand an industry, test a proposition, access customers and build credibility. An established business can provide all of these things, sometimes through a relatively small pilot or commercial partnership.

This is not simply about supporting the regional start-up ecosystem. It is a commercial growth strategy. The right founder relationship can give a company earlier access to solutions and market intelligence that improve its own performance.

Trinidad and Tobago's established businesses are particularly well positioned to play this role. They hold deep expertise across varied sectors. They also have relationships and operating experience that can help a young company move from a promising idea to a credible regional business.

WHAT READINESS ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

Being findable is not the same as being visible. A website, LinkedIn page and well-known brand do not, on their own, tell a founder that a business is genuinely open to working with them.

Readiness starts with a clear, named point of contact rather than routing every approach through a generic inbox. It means having someone with enough authority to recognise a credible opportunity and move it forward.

It also means creating a route for small, limited pilots. A useful test is whether a credible founder can identify the right person in your organisation, secure an initial discussion, agree a focused pilot and navigate your procurement process without the process taking longer than the technology itself took to build.

Readiness does not mean abandoning governance, cybersecurity, due diligence or procurement discipline. Those safeguards are essential, particularly in regulated or operationally sensitive sectors. It means applying them proportionately, so that a credible two-person company is not automatically excluded by processes designed for multinational suppliers.

Leadership is equally important. Someone senior must be willing to give an early-stage company a genuine hearing and assess the idea on its merits. At board level, partnerships with founders should be understood as a route to growth and learning, not simply as a side project for an innovation team.

The strongest partnerships often begin before a founder's proposition is fully mature. Early enterprise partners help define the problem, test the solution and shape a product around the realities of their market. In return, they gain access that later customers rarely receive.

Photo: Yuri Arcurs Collection/Magnific

THE QUESTION WORTH SITTING WITH

None of this requires every business to establish a venture fund or create a large innovation department. It requires a change in posture, from seeing the organisation only as a buyer waiting to be pitched to, to making it a place where credible founders would genuinely want to build.

Businesses that make that shift now will have greater choice among the Caribbean companies being built and funded. They will also have more opportunity to shape solutions around their own markets and learn before their competitors do.

Businesses that wait may still be able to buy the technology later. What they may lose is the chance to influence it, build the relationship early and create an advantage while the opportunity is still taking shape.

So the question is not whether this wave of innovation is coming. It is already here. The question is whether, when the right founders start looking for the right partner, they will find you. ■

Caribbean Ventures is a pre-seed fund backing Caribbean B2B technology companies. Jeffrey Faustin spoke at AMCHAM T&T's 8th Annual Tech Hub Islands Summit in July 2026.

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SECURING THE DIGITAL HORIZON

Redefining Cyber Resilience and Impact

By Obika Gellineau
Security Consultant
Fujitsu Caribbean (Trinidad) Limited

Organisations drastically expand their digital footprint as they embrace artificial intelligence, cloud computing and interconnect infrastructure.

This expansion simultaneously increases their exposure to cyber risk, thereby making cyber resilience a critical business imperative. Lately, conversations have shifted away from prevention of cyber attacks to focus on whether an organisation can sustain its business operations during a cyber incident.

I participated in a panel about Cybersecurity at T.H.I.S. 2026

Photo: AMCHAM T&T

This transforms cyber resilience into a true competitive advantage. At the AMCHAM T&T Tech Hub Islands Summit (T.H.I.S.) 2026, I participated in a panel where the dialogue moved from basic cybersecurity awareness to practices that modern enterprises can adopt to build measurable cyber resilience. Achieving a level of readiness for cyber attacks requires a deep look at emerging risks, securing digital transformation lifecycles, integrating operational technology safely, forming strategic partnerships and rigorous incident response testing.

One of the most critical vulnerabilities highlighted during the discussion was that organisations often underestimate third-party supply chain risk. Most business software relies on open-source libraries, and attackers are increasingly attempting to insert malicious code into these components to create backdoors through trusted software updates. While Boards often focus on direct attacks against the network perimeter, weak vendor oversight can allow attackers to exploit external partners and bypass primary

Organisations often underestimate third-party supply chain risk. Most business software relies on open-source libraries.

defenses. To mitigate this risk, organisations should align vendor management with guidance such as NIST SP 800-161 and establish a structured programme that categorises vendors by the level of data or network access they require. High-risk vendors should undergo deeper technical evaluations, including reviews of SOC 2 Type II reports, validation against ISO/IEC 27001, breach notification requirements and the organisation's right to audit security controls. Organisations can transform vendor blind spots into visible and manageable risks though continuous monitoring external vendors.

Subsequently, the panel moved from third-party risk management to organisations undergoing digital transformation. It's important that organisations remain cyber resilient during this transformative process, but how do you balance innovation with cyber resilience? This is where the concept of Security-by-Design becomes critical for organisations to adopt as part of their digital transformation lifecycle. Security-by-Design is the integration of security processes into the digital transformation cycle at the very beginning of any initiative, rather than waiting till the middle or the end of the project to plan its security. Implementing security from the feasibility stage ensures that digital platforms are constructed with a cyber resilient architecture from day one. Furthermore, it reduces delays in its completion and builds trust with all stakeholders that the digital platform is secure.

Connecting OT and Legacy systems to modern digital platforms introduces unique risks because these platforms are inherently difficult to protect.

On the other hand, not all networks and systems can be modernised through the digital transformation lifecycle. Operational Technology (OT) and Legacy systems still exist within industrial and business environments respectfully. Connecting OT and Legacy systems to modern digital platforms introduces unique risks because these platforms are inherently difficult to protect. These systems were built for isolation rather than connectivity, making them high risk targets for hackers. However, these vulnerabilities should not stall your cyber resilience plans. Implementing strict

network segmentation and establishing strong compensation controls reduces the overall cybersecurity risk of OT and Legacy systems. Furthermore, industrial and manufacturing organisations should structure their physical and digital divisions around established frameworks such as ISA/IEC 62443 standard, which provides a structured guideline for securing industrial automation and control systems, and offers a robust defense in these types of hybrid environments.

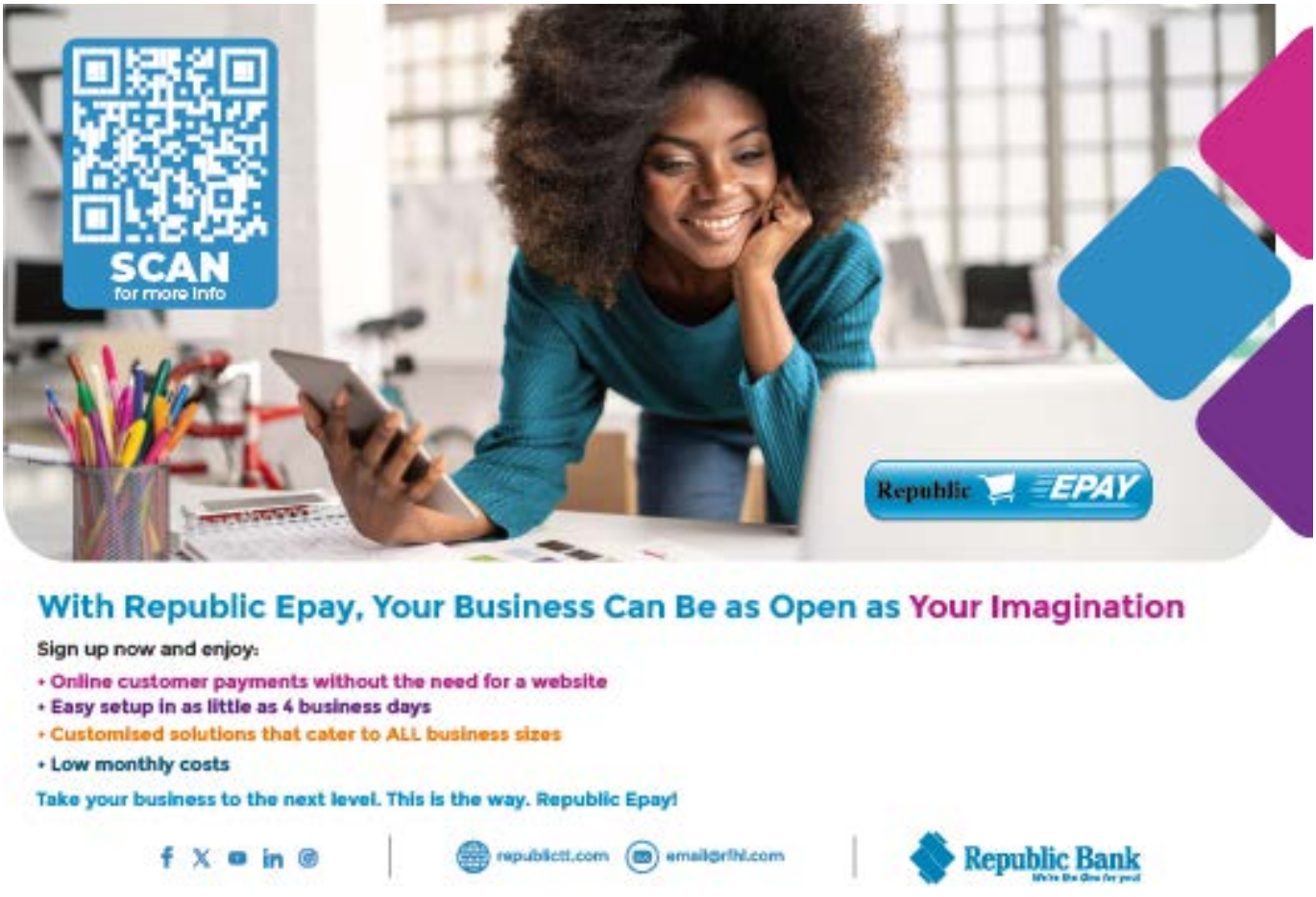
As the impactful conversation continued, we moved toward the importance of technology partners. We all agreed that technology partners are invaluable assets in an organisation's journey towards cyber resilience. Their value extends far beyond providing hardware and software solutions where they serve as strategic advisors, operational enablers and trusted partners in resilience planning. The lack of qualified cybersecurity specialists is a common and significant risk in most organisations today. Technology partners are uniquely positioned to bridge this critical talent gap. Organisations can work with these partners to assist them with assessing their cybersecurity maturity against frameworks such as NIST Cybersecurity Framework or ISO/IEC27001, to build their security awareness training programmes and to help them contain and recover from a cyber attack. Technology partners can strategically, operationally and tactically assist organisations with their cybersecurity programme by providing the necessary expertise and manpower to be cyber resilient.

Ultimately, the cornerstone of true cyber resilience lies in the response and recovery planning, which begins with incident response (IR) and escalates to business continuity (BC) and/or disaster recovery (DR). The IR programme was one of the major talking points of conversation. If a CEO has only one recommendation to prepare for the next major cyber incident, it must be to implement a comprehensive incident response programme, which involves identifying critical response team roles, developing a response plan, development of a crisis communications plan, establishing an escalation process toward BC/DR activation and finally embedding a continuous testing schedule. Every organisation should delegate operational investments to the development and simulated testing of cyber incident response and disaster recovery activities.

At this point the dialogue shifted to the importance of business continuity, which aims to not only reduce operational downtime but also maintain critical business functions after an unexpected disaster. Critical business functions will inevitably fail due to the lack of

necessary technology support. Therefore, organisations must assess the risks to their business functions and their business impact to determine their recovery strategies which impact their data backup frequencies and design of DR sites for their mission-critical IT systems. Furthermore, prioritising continuous tabletop simulations and live simulated BC/DR exercises, ensures that an organisation is fully prepared to withstand and recover from any digital disruption, while securing their operations and maintaining stakeholder trust.

Cyber resilience must now become a deliberate business priority, not a delayed technical project. The key message from the panellists' conversation was clear: organisations must prepare before disruption occurs by strengthening vendor oversight, embedding security into transformation, protecting OT and legacy systems, engaging trusted partners and testing response plans regularly. Executive leaders should act now by assessing their current resilience posture, closing critical gaps and investing in response and recovery capabilities. The organisations that will thrive in the digital horizon are those that prepare today to withstand tomorrow's disruption. ■



FROM HYPE TO IMPACT

Why AI Adoption Must Start With People

The central question about Artificial Intelligence is no longer whether the technology is powerful. It is whether we can put it to work in ways that improve how our people make decisions, solve problems and serve customers.

That distinction matters. Too much of the conversation around AI still treats it as something a business buys and rolls out. But technology does not transform an organisation on its own. People do. AI only creates value when the people

By Ambikah Mongroo
Group Executive VP and Portfolio CEO, Integrated Retail Portfolio | Massy

Photo courtesy Massy

closest to the work apply it to real business problems.

Retail makes this especially clear. It is built on thousands of daily decisions, and AI has to help employees do their work better. One of the most important lessons emerging from Massy's integrated retail portfolio was that the strongest AI opportunities have not come from asking, "What can this technology do?" But "Where are our people experiencing friction, and how can technology help remove it?" This starting point places people at the centre of technology adoption. The colleagues who understand the work are often best positioned to identify where AI can create practical value. They know which processes are repetitive, which decisions are slowed by incomplete information, where customers experience frustration, and where better tools could unlock productivity.

For us, the filter is practical. AI must solve a real business problem. Its impact must be measurable. It must be able to scale responsibly. Most importantly, it must strengthen our people rather than simply showcase technology.

MAKE BETTER DECISIONS

Inventory management provides a useful example. Across our retail network, where we manage well over 30,000 SKUs, ordering is not a simple administrative function. It is a complex decision-making process, and errors show up quickly as out-of-stocks, excess inventory, waste, tied-up working capital and disappointed customers.

Photo courtesy Massy

AI-supported automated ordering is helping our teams analyse inventory faster, identify replenishment needs more accurately, and automate parts of the ordering process that would otherwise require significant manual effort. But the real story is not that a machine is now doing the work. The more important lesson is that our people are being given better information and more capacity to focus on judgement, exceptions and service.

The same principle applies to prepared meals under our Epicure brand. Fresh and ready-to-eat categories require a careful balance between availability and waste. Produce too little and customers are disappointed. Produce too much and waste increases. AI is helping us analyse sales trends, seasonality, customer preferences and location-specific patterns so our teams can make better decisions about what to produce, how much to produce and where to send it.

The point is not to replace category expertise. It is to equip our people with stronger insight so their expertise can be applied with greater precision.

Serving customers is another area where this matters. Many businesses collect customer data, but data alone does not create stronger relationships. What matters is whether our teams can interpret the signals and respond in ways that are relevant, timely and respectful.

By analysing purchasing behaviour, AI can help us identify when a customer may be reducing spend or becoming less engaged. That insight gives our teams an opportunity to move from reactive marketing to proactive retention. It can

support targeted engagement, feedback gathering and a more thoughtful understanding of the customer relationship.

Similarly, we conduct a monthly evaluation of customer service levels across the business. AI is helping us integrate and analyse this information so our teams can identify trends, spot recurring issues and anticipate potential service challenges earlier. The value is not simply better reporting. It is better learning. When insight reaches the people who can act on it, service improvement becomes more continuous and less episodic.

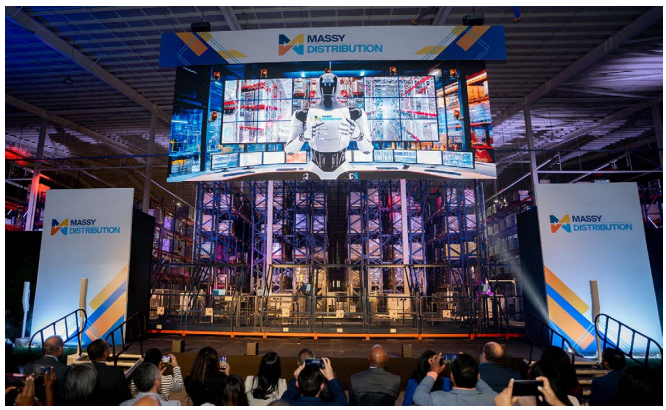


Photo courtesy Massy

RESPONSIBILITY COMES WITH BETTER TOOLS

Once we understand how AI can support our people in making decisions, solving problems and serving customers, the next question is how we use it responsibly across the wider business. The issue is not only what AI allows us to do, but how thoughtfully we choose to use it.

Hyper-personalisation is a good example. The ability to analyse customer purchases, build digital personas and design more relevant offers can make engagement more meaningful. Over time, stronger customer relationship management tools can help us move beyond broad promotions toward communication based on actual shopping behaviour and preferences.

But personalisation should never be treated as permission to over-communicate or intrude. If AI is people-centred, that includes our customers as well as our employees. Better technology should lead to better experiences, not simply more messages.

In supply chain operations, the people-centred principle is just as important. At our newly built Orange Grove Warehouse, AI-enabled automation supports picking, inventory analysis, dispatch and logistics. The deeper value lies in how it helps our teams improve the movement of goods through the business with greater speed, accuracy and consistency.

Better fulfilment and stronger supply-chain visibility reduce pressure points across the organisation and create a more reliable experience for customers. Again, the technology matters because of the problem it helps our people solve.

Marketing and content creation offer a different kind of lesson. In the most recent Epicure brand campaign, our retail marketing teams used AI from early brand design and creative direction through to the production of assets for in-store, traditional media and social media channels. What made this powerful was not the novelty of the tools. It was what the tools allowed our people to do.

ur teams were able to move faster, reduce external production costs, rely less on third-party support and retain greater control over testing and refinement. AI did not replace creativity. It expanded our creative capacity. It gave our people more room to explore, produce, learn and improve. That may be one of the most underestimated benefits of AI. Some returns are immediate and measurable: faster cycle times, lower costs, better forecasting, stronger availability or improved reporting. But the larger return comes when our employees become more confident problem-solvers.

When our people understand the tools and are encouraged to experiment responsibly, they begin to identify improvements that leadership may never have seen from the top. That is when AI stops being a project owned by a small group and becomes a broader organisational capability.

The technology may be ready, and our people may be willing, but leaders have to create the conditions for learning.

This is why AI adoption is ultimately a leadership challenge. The technology may be ready, and our people may be willing, but leaders have to create the conditions for learning. That means putting tools in our people's hands, building literacy, setting clear guardrails and making it safe to test ideas.

A careless use of AI is a problem, and hiding what was learned is a problem. But a well-intentioned experiment that does not work should not automatically be treated as failure. In a learning organisation, it is information.

This is the thinking behind Massy's engagement with OpenAI to bring enterprise-level tools and training to our teams across different levels of the organisation and across the territories in which we operate. The objective is not simply to teach people what AI is. It is to

Photo courtesy Massy

THE MASSY DISTRIBUTION ORANGE GROVE WAREHOUSE TEAM

help our people understand what AI can do in the context of their own roles.

The lesson for business leaders is straightforward. AI should be business-led, people-enabled and governance-backed. It must solve real problems, create measurable value and scale responsibly. But above all, it must strengthen the people who use it.

At Massy, we see many practical ways that AI can improve how our people make decisions, solve problems and serve customers. But the starting point is not the technology itself. It is our people, the customers we serve, and the challenges we are trying to solve.

In retail, transformation does not happen because a new technology arrives. It happens when people use that technology to make the business more responsive, more disciplined and more human. ■

THE POWER OF PERSONAL BRANDING

Perception is Reality!

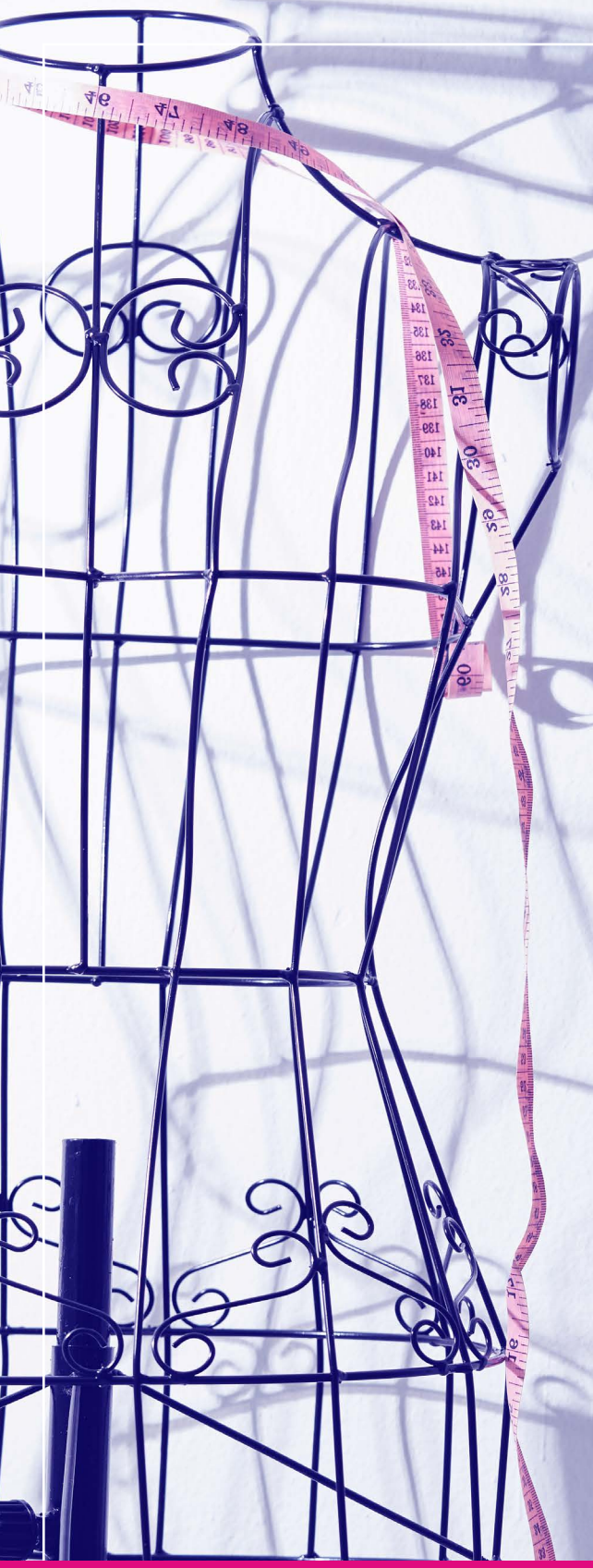


Image: Maylim/Magnifique

By Nicole Thomas
Digital Business Manager, Unicomer

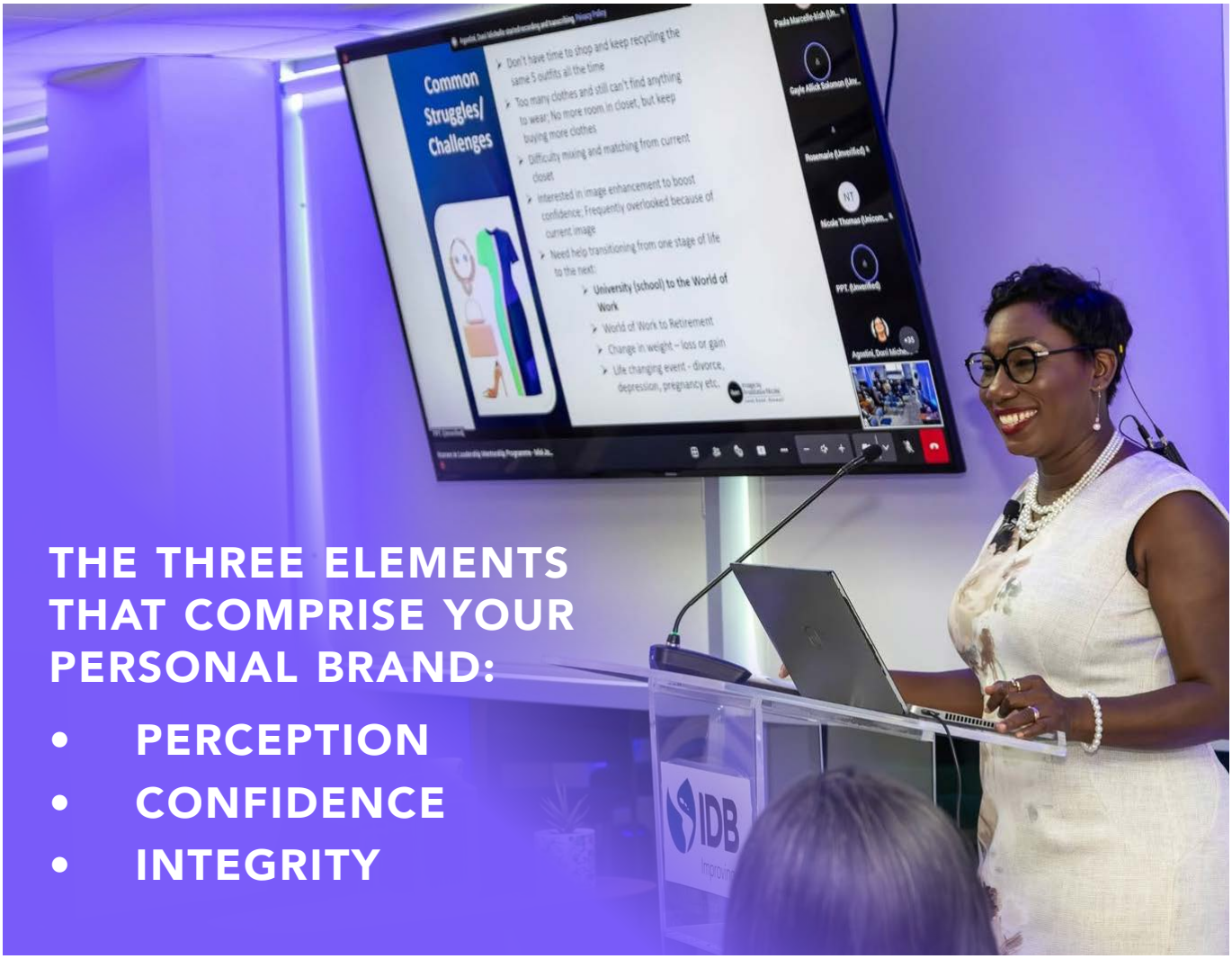


Photo: AMCHAM T&T

THE THREE ELEMENTS THAT COMPRISE YOUR PERSONAL BRAND:

- PERCEPTION
- CONFIDENCE
- INTEGRITY

It's time for a reality check! Whether you're aware of it or not, you already have a personal brand. The question is, how are you controlling it? Let's rewind a bit, though.

First, let me define the term 'brand'. According to Forbes Magazine, your 'brand' is what people think of you when they hear your name. It's everything people think they know about your name, both emotional and factual. Your brand is intangible, existing only in a person's mind. For the employee, like you and me, it means that we get to control the narrative of the brand we want to portray to the rest of the world.

It's said that you can tell a lot about someone within the first five seconds of meeting them. Your personal brand matters in business because it's an opportunity for visibility, which can lead to partnerships, promotions and leadership trust. Adding credibility to your brand can be a positive differentiating factor for you in competitive industries.

PERCEPTION

When discussing the first of these three, the old adage, "perception is reality," is applicable. Typically, our belief about what is true is shaped by our beliefs, emotions and senses, all of which make it quite subjective. Nevertheless, we believe what we perceive. Therefore, managing how you're perceived requires you to curate your image so that it adds credibility to your work.

At the recently concluded Women in Leadership Workshop, titled "The Power of Personal Branding – Owning Your Voice, Style & Story", which was hosted at the IDB Office in collaboration with AMCHAM T&T, I showed the attendees two photos. The first image had three people: one wore a hoodie, the other a ball cap and the last an impeccable business suit. I asked the attendees whom of the three they would trust for financial advice and why. Everyone indicated that the well-dressed person was the best representation of someone who they believed fitted the profile of a financial advisor and someone from whom they could confidently take financial advice.

Next, I enquired of the group whom they would trust as a personal trainer, after showing them an image of three other people. This time, one was out of shape, the other was a comedian and the third was a muscular man with a body type that gave credibility to his

Photos generated with AI

Whom would you trust for financial advice?

Who would you hire as a personal trainer?

title. It came as no surprise that they selected the latter as the one they would trust for fitness advice. This exercise revealed the importance of perception. The reality is, many highly skilled and competent professionals are unwittingly misrepresenting themselves by their attire.

At the workshop, I introduced the Five Levels of Business Attire. When I enquired of the room (online and in-person) who had heard of it, only a few had. I explained that it was a framework that showed the different levels of dress codes in a corporate space and explained how one should dress for their particular job. I further highlighted that it was only a guide, because a company's HR polices and culture take precedence.

THE FIVE LEVELS OF BUSINESS ATTIRE:

Level 5	Baseline Casual - more relaxed, but neat and professional
Level 4	Mainstream Casual - a more polished look.
Level 3	Executive Casual - professional, without being stuffy.
Level 2	Traditional Business Attire - formal but allows for a pop of personality.
Level 1	Boardroom Attire - tends to be more tailored, high-end and conservative.

Unsurprisingly, this segment generated much debate among the online and in-person audience. The prevailing thought was that times have changed in the way people dress for work; many credited COVID as the agent of said change. Additionally, with remote work options and Trinidad and Tobago's seeming transition to a more casual work environment, the relevance of the guide was challenged. Nonetheless, it was a healthy, engaging and potent discourse. In the end, it was agreed that having such information was an excellent starting point, but room must be left for comfort. Also, the new dynamic, multi-generational workforce must be considered, since it has prompted a shift in work standards, expectations and dress codes.

Of course, the question remains: how can you create a positive and lasting first impression while working in a dynamic environment?

The answer is to align your role, ambition and the way you present yourself. In today's hybrid workspaces, before you enter a room, your reputation has. As such, being well-groomed and impeccably dressed will add to your credibility and create the kind of positive first impression we all want. However, to do so you must be mindful of your audience, life goals and how you want to be perceived, addressed and remembered.

If you consider these things, I doubt you would intentionally go to an interview in a sports cap and sneakers.

CONFIDENCE

Confidence is the other component of personal branding that we explored. Confidence is beautiful when it's balanced. A confident person automatically becomes a leader and carries a light that makes them attractive. Confidence in yourself is key. You must believe in yourself before you get others to believe in you. I once had a boss, Tom Byrne, who would say: "Always back yourself!". It's an undeniable fact that no one wants to follow an insecure person. Confidence is shown in:

- Greeting everyone with a warm smile
- Giving a firm handshake
- Having a polite and steady greeting
- Maintaining an erect posture
- Looking directly at someone while speaking
- Having a well-groomed appearance
- Speaking up and clearly

INTEGRITY

The final element of personal branding is integrity. A common mistake some professionals make is thinking integrity means showing up consistently on social media. While that practice can certainly help expand your social circle, we must look deeper at the tenets of integrity.

Your brand integrity is impacted by your honesty, punctuality, work ethic, time management and adherence to deadlines.

Your brand integrity is impacted by your honesty, punctuality, work ethic, time management and adherence to deadlines. Character traits that can negatively impact your personal brand are gossiping, being negative or overly critical, taking shortcuts, talking down to people, boasting, particularly about your earnings and inappropriate conduct on social media.

Ultimately, you are in control of your personal brand and you can wield that power, owning your voice, style and story. Fortunately, doing so isn't complicated. All that's required is adeptly managing your image, confidence, integrity, along with your soft skills and hard skills. ■

Too Hot to Perform

Making Workplace Heat Stress a Business Priority.

Protect people.
Protect performance.

Heat stress is more than a matter of discomfort. It is a workplace hazard with direct implications for employee health, safety, decision-making, attendance, morale, productivity and business continuity. For organisations operating in tropical environments, heat exposure should be integrated into occupational health, HSSE risk management, emergency preparedness and resilience planning.

By Dr. Marisa Nimrod, AAS, MD, MPH (Global Health)
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WORKPLACE HEALTH AS A BUSINESS IMPERATIVE

Effective workplace health must extend beyond programmes focused mainly on individual behaviour.

A healthy workforce is an operational asset. When employees are unwell, the consequences rarely remain confined to the individual. Heat exposure may result in absenteeism, where an employee cannot report for duty. It may also cause presenteeism, where the employee attends work but performs below normal capacity, working more slowly, communicating less effectively or making avoidable errors. That employee may also be less able to recognise a developing hazard or to respond appropriately during an emergency. In safety-sensitive industries, even a temporary decline in attention can endanger employees, colleagues, customers and the public.

Workplace health should therefore be treated as an investment in productivity, reliability and organisational continuity.

EFFECTS OF HEAT STRESS

Occupational heat stress results from the combined effects of environmental

temperature, humidity, physical exertion and the additional heat burden created by clothing or protective equipment.

Two employees in the same location may therefore experience very different levels of risk. A worker performing strenuous duties in protective clothing may face considerably greater physiological strain than an employee completing light administrative work nearby.

The effects on business operations may be gradual and easy to overlook. Employees may slow their pace, take longer to complete physical tasks, make more mistakes or communicate less effectively. They may require unplanned breaks, leave work early or be absent the following day.

When one worker becomes unable to perform, colleagues may absorb additional duties, increasing fatigue, overtime costs and risk across the team. In industrial settings, slower reaction times and impaired coordination may contribute to injuries, equipment damage and production disruption. In customer-facing roles, heat-related discomfort may reduce patience, concentration and service quality.

Office employees are not exempt. Poor ventilation and high indoor temperatures can reduce cognitive performance,

HEAT STROKE IS NO JOKE!

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. It occurs when the body can no longer regulate its temperature effectively. Early symptoms may include:

- excessive thirst,
- heavy sweating,
- headache,
- weakness,
- fatigue,
- nausea,
- muscle cramps,
- irritability and
- difficulty concentrating.

Without timely intervention, these symptoms may progress to heat exhaustion, causing

- dizziness,
- rapid pulse,
- heavy sweating,
- fatigue and collapse,
- confusion,
- unusual behaviour,
- poor coordination,
- seizures or unconsciousness.

Without urgent medical treatment, heat stroke can cause organ damage, disability or death.

motivation and morale, even when work is not physically strenuous.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND LEADERSHIP

Although heat stress is a physical hazard, effective prevention depends heavily on organisational culture. Employees must feel able to report symptoms without criticism or retaliation. A worker who believes that reporting dizziness or fatigue will be interpreted as weakness may conceal symptoms until the condition becomes serious.

Psychological safety allows employees to raise concerns, request assistance and identify unsafe conditions without retaliation. In a heat-exposed workplace, it can determine whether an employee receives early support or experiences a medical emergency.

Supervisors shape workplace behaviour. A manager who dismisses concerns signals that output is valued above safety. A manager who encourages early reporting, appropriate breaks and timely intervention reinforces prevention.

Heat may also affect mood and team relationships, as it can increase irritability, reduce tolerance and contribute to conflict. Managers may incorrectly interpret these changes as poor attitude when the underlying cause is physical strain.

Leaders themselves are not exempt. They may continue making decisions while experiencing heat stress. Leadership resilience should not mean ignoring physiological limits. Effective leaders recognise risk, delegate appropriately, take necessary breaks and model the behaviour expected from employees.

CLIMATE CHANGE, TECHNOLOGY AND EMERGING RISKS

Climate change is transforming occupational heat from a seasonal inconvenience into a strategic business risk. Organisations must consider how rising temperatures may affect them and establish heat-action plans. These plans should define who monitors conditions, how warnings are communicated, when work is adjusted, who may suspend unsafe activity and how medical emergencies will be managed.

Technology can strengthen these systems. Environmental sensors can monitor temperature and humidity, while AI may support heat-risk forecasting and help design appropriate work/rest schedules. Wearable devices may also provide information about

physiological strain in high-risk occupations.

Technology must, however, be introduced responsibly. Employee monitoring should not become excessive surveillance. Workers should understand what information is being collected, why it is required, who can access it and how it will be protected. Artificial intelligence should support professional judgement, not replace it. Employees must always retain the right to report symptoms, even when a digital system suggests that conditions are acceptable.

The strongest workplace heat strategy combines appropriate infrastructure, trained leadership, employee participation, occupational-health expertise and effective emergency preparedness.

A heat-resilient workplace does more than prevent illness, it protects operational continuity. For Caribbean businesses, workplace heat stress is a current HSSE and leadership priority. ■

PROTECT PEOPLE. PROTECT PERFORMANCE. BUILD A HEALTHIER AND MORE RESILIENT BUSINESS.

HEAT STROKE IS NO JOKE!

A heat-resilient workplace should:

- Conduct formal heat-risk assessments
- Improve and maintain environmental elements like ventilation and insulation
- Provide reliable access to water and recovery areas
- Schedule strenuous work during cooler periods
- Introduce structured work-rest cycles
- Train employees and supervisors to recognise and respond to heat-related illness
- Establish confidential, non-punitive procedures for reporting symptoms and unsafe conditions
- Develop emergency protocols
- Monitor complaints and productivity trends
- Integrate heat risk into contractor management and business-continuity planning
- Use sensors, digital alerts and AI transparently and ethically

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