# Analyst Blog: Airtel - Taking Charge of its Enterprise Edge Journey!

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*In this first of a six-part series, IDC analyst Nikhil Batra speaks with Ganesh Lakshminarayanan, CEO-Enterprise Business and Head- Cloud Portfolio, Airtel Business and Bill Lambertson, Vice President, Cloud, 5G and Edge, IBM, on how Airtel is leveraging its IBM partnership to help its enterprise customers unlock the potential of edge compute in India.*

By Nikhil Batra, Research Director, IDC Asia/Pacific Telecom and IoT practice

As the enterprise ecosystem further expands beyond its traditional boundaries, it boasts of an increasing number of endpoints that straddle all domains including IT and operations. All of these connected endpoints will generate a tremendous amount of data, both structured and unstructured. For example, telemetry for machines, in any factory, is a continuous stream of data that needs to be monitored to assess the health and efficiency of machinery. Sensors that track temperature and humidity changes on the factory floor are other examples of endpoints that are generating structured data. But there are also an increasing number of unstructured data sources from endpoints like CCTV and other computer vision applications. All this data increasingly needs to be analyzed in "real time" to aid in enterprise decision making with a view to increasing efficiency not only in production but also in operations.

These new use cases and enterprise requirements increasingly demand low latency, which will require computing much closer to the enterprise premise. This is further complicated by enterprise reluctance to move sensitive and critical data to the public cloud. And edge has emerged as a solution to address these business challenges and more.

**Edge as a Foundation of a Digital-First Enterprise**

IDC defines Edge as a distributed computing paradigm that includes infrastructure and applications outside of centralized, dedicated and cloud datacenters located as close as necessary to where data is generated and consumed. Digital-first business, processes, and operations are driving IT service to new edge locations. Key trends in the edge paradigm:

- Leveraging modernized edge IT resources, industries are building digital-first operations and driving innovation through data-driven insights and controls.

- Modernized edge infrastructure seamlessly interacts with cloud, IT and network resources to support digital-first operations.

- As the edge ecosystem evolves to meet the needs of digital-first operations, new partnerships and alliances will define the edge journey.

**Edge for Enterprise: Powered by Airtel, IBM & Red Hat**

IDC predicts that over 50% of new enterprise IT infrastructure deployed will be at the edge rather than corporate datacenters, up from less than 10% in 2021. Moreover, by 2024, there will be an 800% increase in the number of applications at the edge. Keeping in view an accelerating trend of organisations evaluating 5G enabled edge use cases, how is Airtel leveraging its network and technology capabilities in partnership with IBM, to help its enterprise customers embrace edge as a strategic imperative?

**Ganesh Lakshminarayanan, CEO- Enterprise Business and Head- Cloud Portfolio, Airtel Business** says, " Airtel's low latency Edge platform extends cloud services securely to wherever data resides, helping Indian enterprises improve business performance and customer experience while addressing data security and sovereignty requirements. The combination of Airtel's network services and IBM and Red Hat's edge software can also help simplify edge deployments for developers and startups."

**Developing an Ecosystem for Edge Offerings**
Partnerships are key to driving development of the edge marketplace and IBM is partnering with telcos around the globe and playing its part in bringing together the edge ecosystem. As interest and investment in edge have risen, so has the introduction of a wide range of edge products and solutions suitable for specific use cases as well as an increasing number of partnerships between cloud service providers, communications/networking vendors, and a variety of software and hardware infrastructure players. What are some of the key points IBM would suggest Comms SPs keep in mind as they start or progress on their edge journey?

**Bill Lambertson, Vice President, Cloud, 5G and Edge, IBM** says, "By partnering with IBM and Red Hat in India, Airtel maintains full control over its edge computing platform, which is critical in today's market where hyperscalers are garnering more and more control through telco partnerships. Airtel's open and hybrid approach to edge computing will set them up for long-term success and a high impact go-to-market strategy. An open approach is a critical component of IBM's strategy in our work with operators, like Airtel. Telcos need the flexibility to adopt partnerships and solutions as they and their technology evolves, which is core to IBM's ecosystem strategy. We have a wide network of ecosystem partners – from network equipment providers like Nokia to security solutions like Palo Alto Networks. This should be a key consideration for service providers and network operators, and IBM's goal, to ensure they maintain control plus choice to set up themselves for a successful long-term strategy."

To summarise, enterprises are increasingly leveraging multi-access edge computing and 5G to support multiple use cases across sectors and drive business outcomes. Customer experience and manufacturing automation and optimization are the most important for Digital Leaders. As a result, a new **edge value chain** is developing, with **telcos at the core** supporting enterprises in connecting these two technologies.

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**Bio**

**Nikhil Batra, Research Director, IDC AP Telco + IoT**

Nikhil Batra is a Research Director for the regional telecommunications team in IDC Asia/Pacific. Based in Australia, Nikhil focuses on Telecom Service Provider and tech vendor strategies, along with enterprise services across the A/P region. In his role, Nikhil works with the regional telecom teams to produce intelligence reports, market insights, and contributes to various consulting projects for leading regional telcos and tech vendors.

**Ganesh Lakshminarayanan, CEO- Enterprise Business and Head- Cloud Portfolio, Airtel Business**

Ganesh is responsible for strengthening Airtel's market leadership in the B2B segment further and accelerating growth as enterprises undergo digital transformation to become future ready. He brings with him rich experience in the IT and technology sector. In his last role at Dell, he was the President and MD of Dell India. He has also been an advisor to start-ups like Practo, Belong and Porter and has served on the executive councils of NASSCOM and FICCI.

**Bill Lambertson, Vice President, Cloud, 5G and Edge, IBM**

Bill is an IBM Distinguished Industry Leader and currently the Vice President for Cloud, 5G and Edge solutions within IBM's global Telecommunications Industry. In a prior role, he was the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) for IBM's Systems and Technology Group. With more than 30 years of leadership roles in the telecommunications industry, Bill is recognized as a deep industry expert in telecommunications. He has held several global executive roles across the Telecommunications & Media Industries at IBM.

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