

FEBRUARY 2022 | VOL 6



ANDRA

PR & Corporate Communications

ANDRA PUBLIC RELATIONS NEWSLETTER



Feature articles in this issue:

- FinEcho Podcast launch
- Interview with SPIRE
- 'Buy Now Pay Later' feature with Spotii

CEO MESSAGE

Andra PR Newsletter

Creating Mindful Intersections

WELCOME TO OUR 6TH EDITION

A welcome note from Fatema Ebrahim

I'm excited to share our 6th edition of the Andra Public Relations newsletter. The past few months have been quite exciting, and we've planned really interesting topics and highlights for our readers.

For this edition, we talk about our new financial podcast FinEcho in collaboration with Boxobia, Buy Now Pay Later comes to Bahrain, a potential new location for one of Bahrain's leading co-working space; the Collective Hub and much more.

Want to be featured or collaborate with us for the newsletter? Reach out at info@andrapr.com

NEWS
IDEAS
INSIGHTS



FIN CHO

Financial Podcast

FINECHO

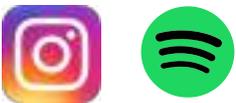
A BAHRAIN BASED PODCAST TO HOST EXPERTS IN MENA

The podcast aims to simplify financial trends and concepts with thought leaders in MENA



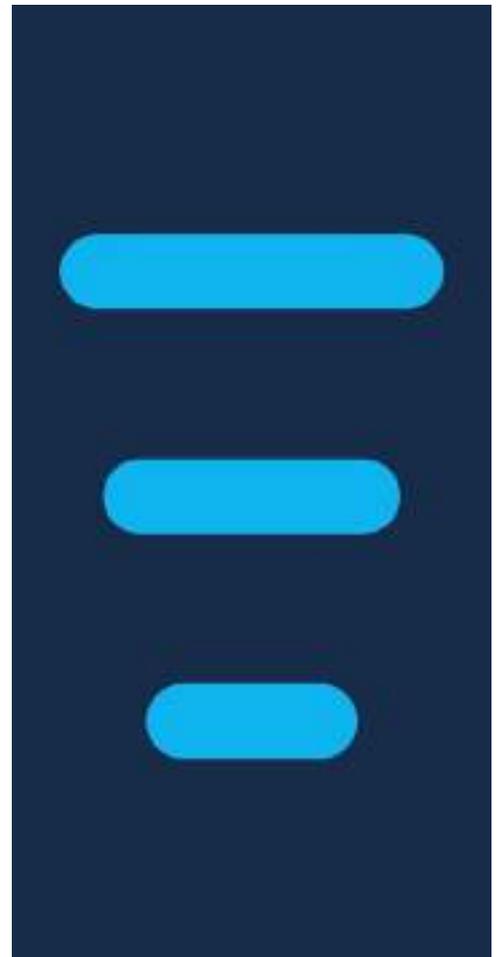
A NEW PODCAST IN TOWN

A BAHRAIN-BASED PODCAST TO HOST EXPERTS IN MENA



We have partnered with Boxobia; a creative design house and innovation consultancy based to launch '**FinEcho**' - a new financial podcast for the MENA region.

FinEcho will provide a platform to shed light on trending financial topics in a simplified manner. The podcast will host financial institutions, corporates, startups, thought leaders and experts in the Kingdom and the GCC.



FIN ECHO

Financial Podcast



BACK IN PERSON!

FEBRUARY 23 & 24, 2022 | DUBAI INTERNET CITY

WE ARE CELEBRATING A DECADE WITH A BACK-IN-PERSON EDITION THAT WILL HOST 8000+ GLOBAL ATTENDEES, 400 SHOWCASING STARTUPS FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD WITH OVER 150 INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SPEAKERS.

MEET SOME OF OUR TOP SPEAKERS



PAUL MISENER
AMAZON



SIDRA QASIM
ATOMS



ELIE HABIB
ANGHAMI



MICHELLE ARRAZCAETA
POLAROID



BEI WANG
STRAIGHT FIRE

8000+
ATTENDEES

400+
STARTUPS

150+
SPEAKERS

2
DAYS

DIGITAL
MARKETING
STARTUPS

WELLNESS
HEALTH & FITNESS
TECHNOLOGY

START
CLIMATE & SUSTAINABLE
TECHNOLOGY

FINTECH
INSURANCE & FINANCE
TECHNOLOGY

FUTURE
TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION



EXHIBITORS



TALKS



LIVE ENTERTAINMENT



WORKSHOPS



STARTUP ACTIVITIES



BRAND ACTIVATIONS

STARTUP? APPLY TO SHOWCASE

REGULAR ATTENDEES CAN BUY TICKETS NOW! [DUBAI.STEPCONFERENCE.COM](https://dubai.stepconference.com)

EMAIL: [HELLO@STEPCONFERENCE.COM](mailto:hello@stepconference.com) FOR SPECIAL RATES ON GROUP TICKETS

THE LEADING TECH FESTIVAL
FOR EMERGING MARKETS
FEBRUARY 23 & 24, 2022
DUBAI INTERNET CITY

step 10
CONFERENCE

step 10
YEARS
CONFERENCE

BUY YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

BACK-IN-PERSON EDITION IN FEBRUARY 2022 IN DUBAI

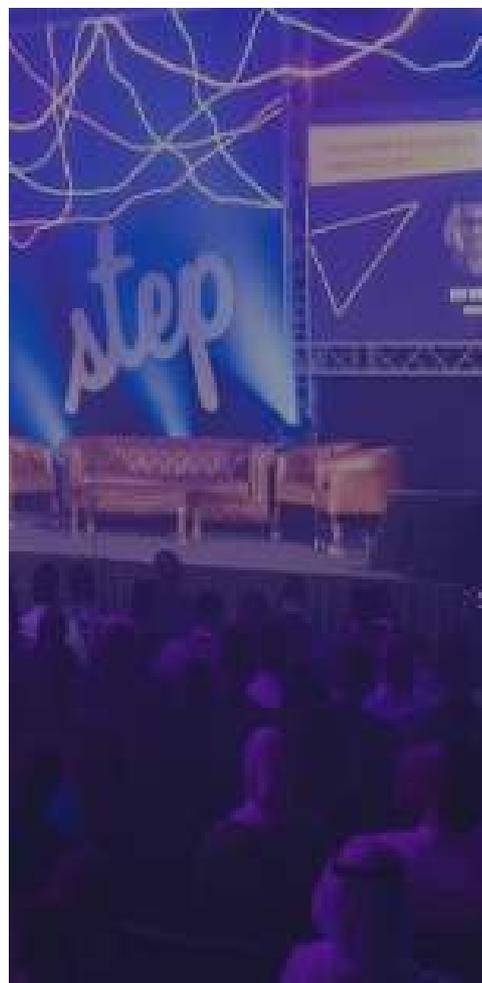
Ruminations from Our Company CEO

The highly anticipated Step Conference, The Leading Tech Festival in Emerging Markets, is celebrating a decade with a back-in-person edition in February 2022 in Dubai!

Since its inception, Step has had more than 1220 startups showcasing across Fintech, Digital Media, AI, Transport, E-commerce, Edtech, Foodtech, and more.

Why join step?

- **Media exposure during the event**
- **Mentorship sessions to enhance your skills and help you grow**
- **Opportunity to participate in Step's Pitch Competition hosted by Dtec**
- **Opportunity to meet**
- **1-on-1 with leading investors and VCs**





بنفت
benefit

The Pulse of Bahrain

We offer trusted and innovative financial and information solutions that make life easier, smarter and more efficient for businesses and consumers.

Proud to present our innovative services:

- BenefitPay
- eCheque
- Bahrain Cheque Truncation System
- Electronic Funds Transfer System (Fawri, Fawri+, Fawateer)
- ATM/POS National Switch
- Bahrain Credit Reference Bureau
- Payment Gateway
- Wage Protection System
- eKYC (Wathiq)
- Trusted Service Provider for Digital Signature
- GCCNet
- GCCNet Dispute Management System

FEBRUARY 2022



TECH TEA SESSIONS

Monita Pesumal - Marketing Communications Manager



Introduction

I've been a communications manager at one of the leading fintech firms in the Gulf since February 2018. As the company has multiple offices across MENA, my role also involves handling public relations, hybrid events, and digital marketing. While the role has its challenges, no two days are ever the same and that rush keeps me on my toes. One minute I'm planning a marketing campaign in Oman, the next, opening social media pages for Jordan or vetting the contents of an article to be published in the Egyptian media.

“Technical jargon should never prevent women from thinking that they cannot master the field”

How did you find out about this position, and why did you apply?

The position was advertised on LinkedIn. I had recently completed a Masters' degree in journalism and when I applied for the role, I could not help but think how perfectly it suited my skill set. The selection process took over two months as I had several interviews and aptitudetests to sit for.

What were your stereotypes about the FinTech sector pre joining?

To be honest, at first, the sector daunted me. I knew very little about financial technology. There were alien words like SaaS and API being thrown around, which I hadn't heard of, as my previous roles had been in the banking sector. However, I read a lot on the topic, attended networking sessions, and realized like any other job, all it required was dedication, passion, and commitment to succeed and grow. Technical jargon should never prevent women from thinking that they cannot muster the field.

What do you like most about your current role? And what are the challenges that you are trying to overcome?

What I love most is the people from across the world that I get to interact with daily. The fintech I work for is culturally diverse in hiring so learning from different cultures is a blessing. I also love the excitement that comes with the role, especially when it's time to launch new products or solutions and marketing, and PR has a crucial role to play.

Time is always a challenge – there are never enough hours in the day to get things done. I try to avoid working on weekends as I like to

practice work life balance and not just preach it. Currently I find working from home a challenge as I miss my colleagues and the personal interaction that is vital for any marcom role.



“I realized like any other job, all it required was dedication, passion, and commitment to succeed and grow.”

What is your advice for graduates that would like to pursue a career in FinTech?

I would say go for it. There are so many online courses either on LinkedIn or on other platforms which you can use to boost your knowledge. Before facing interviews, watch YouTube videos as they give you confidence and help to frame your answers in the right tone and manner. Always try to find yourself a cheerleader - be it a family member, colleague or friend that will motivate you and boost your morale and encourage you to step into the tech world. And then, a job in the fintech field, will be one that you don't need to escape from.

WINNER OF NBB'S DIGITAL BANKING CHALLENGE

Tell us about 'NBB TREE' and who is behind the team

■ The team behind the "NBB Tree" idea consists of 4 dedicated members, Farah Alkhanaizi, a computer engineering student at the University of Bahrain, Nabaa Khalaf, a quantity surveying student at the British University of Bahrain, Amna Alnashabah, an architectural engineering student at Applied Science University, and Nabaa Alkhanaizi, an actuarial science student at the University of Bahrain.

What solution did you come up with for the Digital Banking Challenge?

■ In our idea, we aimed to take the application to another level, ranging from building customer loyalty, supporting the sustainable development, and applying the gamification principles within the app, which can be done by implementing a “Gamified Challenge Mechanic”! where the customer has to complete a set of missions that suit the customer usage and behavior (e.g., person-to-person transactions, bills, loans, donations, insurances, instant salary...), to win prizes! The more they use the app, the more they'll earn “Leaves” and the number of leaves earned depends on each mission difficulty. After collecting a certain number of leaves, the customer will be awarded with a real seedling! Which is a brilliant way to market the NBB's sustainability initiatives and by this, NBB and the customer will contribute in making our beloved “Bahrain” Green.

The customer will have the choice to either request planting the seedling by their own or let NBB plant it on their behalf and send a message to inform the customers. Gamification is not about turning an app into a game; However, it is about applying the gameplay principles into a non-game environment to make it interesting.

Gamification is a new smart way to differentiate the banking experience. Yes, we're targeting the youth; however, our idea creates an interesting experience for all ages! Imagine a unified and integrated app for all your necessary services, and on top of this it rewards you for your active use. Won't you move to use this app instead of other apps?

What did you learn and what was the most memorable experience during the 6-week mentorship course?

■ Throughout the journey of the NBB digital banking challenge, we've improved uncountable skills and capabilities that prepare us for our future life.

From the sessions at Fintech Bay, to the meetings with different mentors from NBB, till the day of presenting the solution, we've learned a lot, and gained new experiences from various fields.

The most memorable experience is the trip to Dubai, as we had the chance to visit Expo Dubai 2020 and present our idea after 6 weeks of hard work and continuous development.

The memory that We'll always remember, is the moment of announcing us winners. Which was the result of all hard work, efforts, and cooperation.

What advice would give other young entrepreneurs that have an innovative idea in mind?

■ Younger people are more creative, excited, and have many ideas that can make a change in the society.

Being a young entrepreneur can be challenging, you may face different obstacles, but never give up on your business ideas and always work towards your goals.

Always remember to believe in your idea, do not stop asking experts and specialists, take advantage of the chances you're given, just go for it and DO NOT hesitate



**NBB'S
DIGITAL BANKING
CHALLENGE
FIRST RUNNER-UP**

Tell us about 'Active Zone' and who is behind it.

■ We are a team of two 19-year old university students from Bahrain Polytechnic. Ali Baqer is a 2nd year student who is majoring in the logistics field, while Reham is a 2nd year student majoring in business.

After we received the email from our university regarding the NBB Digital Banking Challenge, we were very much interested in participating. It was an opportunity for us to develop our skills in aspects such as teamwork, creativity and public speaking as well as gaining experience in the workfield.

What solution did you come up with for the Digital Banking Challenge?

■ The idea we came up with was a new loyalty/reward program for NBB customers in which we promote healthy and active life. NBB users who join the reward program would gain points based on the number of steps they take. The more steps they take, the higher points they earn. These points can be redeemed for a variety of rewards. And all of this would be through the NBB app itself. We believe the idea is a great way to encourage Bahraini citizens to start a healthy lifestyle and introduce a whole new meaning to lifestyle banking. We named the solution 'Active Zone'.

What did you learn and what was the most memorable experience during the 6-week mentorship course?

■ It was an unforgettable experience. The journey from the start till the end was amazing. The new friendships we made throughout the six weeks and the wonderful and supportive insight we gained from NBB mentors and Bahrain Fintech Bay, who both helped us significantly and made us reach this position. Moreover, developing our public speaking skills, enhancing our creativity levels and building our confidence. As well as the fascinating adventure of travelling to Dubai and visiting the Expo 2020 is a memorable experience we will never forget.

What advice would give other young entrepreneurs that have an innovative idea in mind?

■ The best advice is to believe in yourselves. Anything is possible when you are determined to make it work. Always keep in mind that you cannot have success without a few failures. It is completely fine to fail, because failure is the best teacher in life. We learn from our mistakes, and move forward towards success.



\$
PRIZ

**NBB'S
DIGITAL BANKING
CHALLENGE
SECOND RUNNER-UP**

Tell us about 'Tullab' and who is behind it.

■ Our team includes members. Batool Ali Gharashi is a third year student at the University of Bahrain studying Bachelors in Accounting and Finance, and Maryam Akram Tasleem is a second year student at Ahlia University currently studying for Bachelors in Information Technology.

What solution did you come up with for the Digital Banking Challenge?

■ Team Tullab is aiming to introduce a student wallet in the NBB Digital Banking App which includes the student account and a student card. The account will be integrated with universities. Upon signing up for the wallet, students will provide their personal information, while their academic information will be obtained from the university database, reducing steps and making it more user friendly. By opening up an account, the student will be given a choice to either have a virtual or a non-virtual card. This wallet will grant them discounts for purchases and loyalty points. Both sponsored and non-sponsored students can benefit from having credit limits by excelling in their academics providing a sense of security to NBB. Additional features included in the student wallet is financial literacy with tips and advice for students on how to start managing their finances.

What did you learn and what was the most memorable experience during the 6-week mentorship course?

■ We got to experience various mentorship sessions and got to meet some wonderful mentors from NBB and Bahrain FinTech Bay. The most memorable experience during the 6-week incubation period was the meeting we had as a team, planning, deciding and working hard for achieving our goal. We are forever grateful for the exposure we got and we thank NBB and the Bahrain FinTech Bay for providing us the opportunity. We went in as strangers and made such strong bonds with our team mates and students from other teams.

What advice would you give other young entrepreneurs that have an innovative idea in mind?

■ Just go for it, risk it all. In the end even if you don't win, you get to meet wonderful people and experience a lifetime of opportunities as well as enhance your skills. Don't keep your ideas hidden, voice them and lead them to success.

Spire, Aion Digital's open banking platform to transform the \$11 bn market

Interview

The logo for SPIRE, featuring the word "SPIRE" in a bold, dark blue sans-serif font, followed by three horizontal teal bars of varying lengths that resemble a stylized "E" or a signal icon.

Syed Aqdas Ahmad, CEO at Spire

Spire aims to prepare consumers for the next biggest financial ecosystem challenge - Open Banking. Tell us more about Spire and this mission?

Spire is for Open Banking. Our main driver has been and will always be the end consumer. We believe Open Banking can improve people's lives by providing innovative solutions that match today's busy and demanding lifestyle. From quick and transparent payments to budgeting support and personalized products, our mission is to improve people's lives and financial wellbeing. We also do this through our collaboration with financial institutions to develop and launch Open Banking enabled products and services that enhance customer experience and engagement.

We have heard a lot about Open Banking, but can you break down this concept and what it will bring to the region?

We like to breakdown Open Banking into two parts: what it means to end-users (consumers) and what it means to organizations. For Consumers, Open Banking promises that you will be in complete control of your money. Simply put, Open Banking allows you to access services that help you better manage your finances. All your account information and spend data will be yours to share as you see fit,

instead of confined to different banks or financial institutions you are dealing with.

For Organizations, Open Banking will transform the way people handle their finances. As a result, user expectations will be altered. Banks and other financial institutions will have to meet the consumers' newfound expectations and develop new, innovative, and highly personalized products and services.

Open Banking is incredibly relevant in the GCC due to many factors, including the young, tech-savvy population and the evolving regulatory frameworks. These factors create a demand-led push to innovate and meet customers' growing expectations for more personalized and seamless experiences and products.

What is the mindset around Open Banking in the Middle East right now, especially from a consumer level? Are we there yet?

The GCC is well on its way to realizing the benefits of Open Banking. Regulatory authorities have been laying the foundations to support the adoption of Open Banking. Moreover, consumers are the main drivers of innovation. The GCC's young, tech-savvy population has expressed interest and desire for more

from the financial services sector. It's now up to financial institutions to take advantage of the use cases available and cooperate with tech companies to rise to the opportunity.

How does Spire differentiate itself from other Open Banking players in the region?

Consumers are at the heart of everything we do. It's that rigor and discipline we bring to deliver consumer-focused value propositions that sets us apart from others. These value propositions solve complex financial problems to provide an enhanced consumer experience and increased consumer financial inclusion and financial well-being. It also helps increase the Open Banking adoption rate, which is still a challenge even in more mature markets.

Also, Spire is a brand of Aion Digital, an established Fintech in the region. We have a fantastic team of experts who have been working in the financial services sector for years and in different parts of the world. Our unique team and past experiences in digitizing services give us an added advantage. Combined with our network of international and local partners, we offer a holistic experience that enables our clients to go to market quickly and confidently.



Next-level partnerships are necessary to expand a bank's available APIs fast and to create new ones - can you tell us more about Spire's network and any established partnerships?

As a member of the Aion Group, Spire had the opportunity to collaborate with the region's top banks to enable them to become Open Banking ready. We are constantly developing new use cases that banks can capitalize on to provide value to end-users, whether individuals or businesses. We are working with various organizations in the region to enable them to become Open Banking ready from a business model, technology infrastructure and architecture standpoint, keeping them ahead of the Open Banking adoption curve. Also, we're offering Open Banking compliance and data aggregation services to banks in



the region, allowing them to publish their Open Banking APIs in a secure and compliant manner and use the API network to offer value-added services to their customers.

Our product range includes a Personal Finance Manager (PFM) and Business Finance Manager (BFM). We are also ready with Open Banking functionality and different APIs targeting markets that are regulating Open Banking, such as KSA, UAE, and Oman.

The Spire Open Banking Think Board, an advisory board of global experts, provides value by encouraging dialogue between the regulator, industry bodies, and other ecosystem players to support the evolution of Open Banking in the region proactively. Our partners at Salt Edge, a leading global Open Banking platform headquartered in Canada, connect us to 5,000 financial data providers located in 52 countries.

"Spire is a brand of Aion Digital, an established FinTech. We have a fantastic team of experts who have been working in the financial services sector for years and in different parts of the world."

What can we expect from Spire in the new year?

Exciting things! We're working on introducing very effective and impactful use cases that will be leveraged in our Open Banking platform to facilitate fast user adoption. Our main drivers are individual pain points as well as those of micro-organizations and SMEs, and our goal is to provide them with the best financial solutions through better use of data.

GICA TO EMPOWER REGIONAL CULINARY CONNOISSEURS THROUGH AN UNPARALLELED CAMPAIGN

CULINARY CAREERS OFFER UNPARALLELED OPPORTUNITIES FOR BAHRAINIS

The Gulf Institute of Culinary Arts (GICA) opened its doors in 2020, accredited by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). In celebration of the 50th anniversary of Bahrain's National Day, and in partnership with the Australian College of Trade (ACOT), GICA is sponsoring 50 Bahraini students to provide culinary enthusiasts with an excellent opportunity to obtain a professional certificate with guaranteed employment.



“We launched this campaign to empower aspiring culinary enthusiasts and existing talent to kick-start their career path within the hospitality industry. The platform will offer them a strong foundation, encompassing the key disciplines of cooking, baking, and hospitality management. We want local talent to succeed and create their own mark in the region and globally.”

- Mrs. Fawzia Al Khaja, Chairwoman of GICA's Board of Directors and member of Bahrain Businesswomen Society

POSITION BAHRAIN AS A HUB FOR FOSTERING CULINARY TALENT AND DREAMS

Through fostering local talent within the thriving sector of hospitality, GICA positions Bahrain as a hub for cultivating culinary talent and dreams.

Potential candidates will be enrolled in the "Level III Commercial Cookery Program," an international culinary program that will provide them with invaluable opportunities as well as in-depth training and competencies to help them kick-start their career in the booming hospitality industry. Committed Bahrainis between the ages of 18 and 30 are invited to apply to the program, where they will engage in professional learning relevant to the hospitality industry over the course of a 13-month comprehensive program.





AMAKIN. أماكين

Seamless Parking Experience

Bahrain Car Parks Company (Amakin) B.S.C. is a Bahraini public shareholding company. Established in 1981 and specialized in parking management and property management and is the exclusive agent of Scheidt & Bachmann in Bahrain, the German leader in smart parking solutions. The company is listed on Bahrain Bourse and traded under (CPARK).

Our mission is to create seamless parking ecosystem to transform the way people move with our new services. Amakin Currently manage five locations across Bahrain with over 2,490 parking spaces in total, between Amakin Multi-Story Building, The Terminal, Salmaniya Medical Complex Carpark, Bab Al Bahrain 1 & 2 carpark, Manama Centre, and Diplomatic Area. In every project we are engaged in, we aim to achieve user convenience and smooth traffic flow.

OUR VALUES

Creating innovative solutions of tomorrow

Customer comfort & Safety

Collaboration for a better future

THE COLLECTIVE HUB

A CO-WORKING SPACE FOR BOTH STARTUPS AND INVESTORS UNDER ONE ROOF

Interview

By Khawla AlShaikh

As one of Bahrain's leading co-working spaces, how do you distinguish yourself from your competition?

What separates The Collective Hub from our competition is having investors and supporting companies with us on board. The community we have managed to build I believe keeps us in the lead as well. Startups and investors are connected on almost a daily basis where the community can benefit and learn from one another.

"Creating a close bond with our members allows us to be aware of what we can offer to be of further support. We also share a form for feedback from our tenants to try to learn more, and create partnerships and collaborations with other organizations that can possibly support the startups and members further."

A flexible space tends to result in loyal members. Has The Collective Hub adopted flexibility when it comes to packages?

Our packages are very startup friendly as our main goal is to support and ease a startup's journey. Being flexible is definitely necessary when working with upcoming businesses but it all depends on the type of service.

Do you offer any incentives in the form of services that can attract a good number of prospects?

Having access to investors and supporting companies in the ecosystem has been the main attraction to the startups but aside from that we do offer seasonal discounts, team discounts and we host external events and startup initiatives to introduce our services further.



Can we expect anything new in 2022? Perhaps new offers, events, or perks?

New location perhaps?

2022 is going to be a big year for The Collective Hub, we have a lot planned for this year. Stay tuned!



A close-up photograph of a person's hand interacting with a tablet. The tablet screen displays a line graph with several data points connected by lines. In the background, there is a desk with a notebook, a pen, and a laptop. The person is wearing glasses and a blue and white checkered shirt. The overall scene suggests a professional or business environment.

TRENDING TOPICS

People devote third of waking time to mobile apps

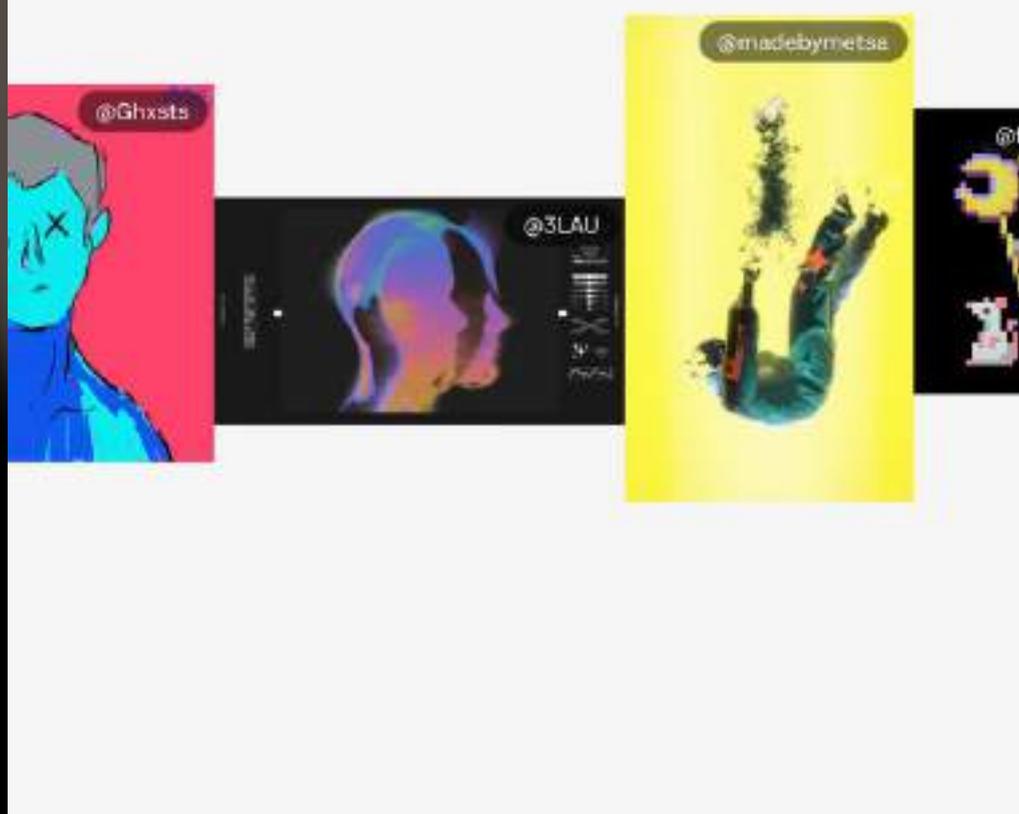


WEB 3.0

Web 3.0 is defined as the next step in the evolution of the internet, one that takes the power back from the powerhouses that have dominated - Google and AWS to name just two - and puts the data and decision making back into the hands of the people. Two key words define it - decentralised and blockchain.

[Read more](#)

coinbase NFT



COINBASE LAUNCHES MARKEPLACE FOR NFTS

Coinbase, like it did with cryptocurrencies, could allow millions more people to become NFT owners. This change could allow the NFT market to support more artists and musicians while also providing new ways for consumers to collect digital goods and play online games. Coinbase collaborated with Mastercard to develop this project, giving people more payment options and making it easier for anyone to buy NFTs using a Mastercard card.

[Read more](#)



CENTRAL BANK DIGITAL CURRENCIES CONTINUE TO EVOLVE

China was the first to pilot its digital currency, the digital renminbi. Subsequently, several countries have been exploring and announcing the concept of a national blockchain-based digital currency to improve cross-border trade. There is a good chance that 2022 will be the year when more countries launch their own CBDCs.

[Read more](#)



DIGITAL TRADE FINANCE

Digital Trade Finance is the ideal applied solution for banks looking to manage all events directly and indirectly related to typical Trade Finance operations, such as the processing of Documentary Credits, Documentary Collections, International Guarantees, and Export Advances/Import Financing, digitally.

[Read more](#)



APPLE TO TURN IPHONES INTO PAYMENT TERMINALS

The new feature transforms the iPhone into a payment terminal, allowing merchants to accept fees with the tap of a credit card or another iPhone onto the back of their device. The move may impact payment providers that rely on Apple's iPhones to facilitate sales, such as Block Inc.'s Square, which dominates the industry.

[Read more](#)

OUR SERVICES

- Corporate Communications
- Press Release Strategy
- Digital Communications
- Media and Press Relations
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Community Relations Development
- Copywriting
- Thought Leadership
- Content Development
- Press Conference Management

“**CREATING
MINDFUL
INTERSECTIONS**”

Andra PR is a Bahrain-based public relations and corporate communications boutique firm with a primary focus on financial technology, educational technology, startups and other specialized governmental sectors.



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