**Leveraging partnerships will be key to business success in 2017**

2016 will go down as one of the most unprecedented years in history. From the UK’s decision to leave the EU, to the Presidential election in the United States, there were historic political and economic upsets that caught many by surprise. Global markets and stock exchanges are still struggling to cope, and as we enter the New Year, it is clear that 2017 will also be challenging.

The one thing that has remained relatively constant in the midst of these unpredictable times is consumer demand. While the world goes through fundamental changes, the need for the efficient and effective movement of goods and services has not changed. At Aramex our focus has been to stay alert, responsive and agile to meet these demands, and we have succeeded.

Why have we been able to navigate these turbulent times?

Innovation in technology. This has been the underlying reason why we have been able to keep pace with changing consumer preferences. In 2016 we launched our mobile app for consumers to improve our customers’ experience, giving them the option to live track their package, make in-app payments and schedule deliveries. We also partnered with what3words, the global address system, to reach more customers in off-the-grid locations. Technology is ultimately behind every fundamental business decision we make and is critical to the growth of our e-commerce business and global footprint. Other companies have also leveraged technology to succeed, with Uber, Air BnB and UAE company Careem using platforms to aggregate data, predict consumer behaviour and develop new and innovative products and services.

And while we can celebrate these achievements, the harsh reality is that technological innovation is now essential. If you are a business and want to compete, having innovative technologies is no longer an option, it is a requirement. But as we move into an unpredictable 2017, I believe the recipe for business success calls for a different order. Innovation in technology alone will no longer be enough to navigate the current environment - businesses must do more.

In my opinion, businesses must pursue strategic partnerships while continuing to leverage innovative technologies. We partnered with Australia Post this year to give us reach across all post offices worldwide. Partnerships are important because they give companies unique opportunities to further leverage their technologies, such as long-term personal relationships with new business partners, local market insights, expanded product and service portfolios and even future business deals. We aren’t the only company to have taken this idea on board. Careem recently partnered with the Roads and Transport Authority and Deliveroo to allow customers to book RTA cars and order food through their app.

Ironically, technology has always played an important role in enabling communication, as we wouldn’t often be able to connect with other companies without it. Yet in today’s environment, pursuing synergistic partnerships also allows businesses to leverage technology more effectively. Today, Aramex exports our technologies to new business partners and integrates other business’ platforms into our operations. New partnerships also make us more cost effective by outsourcing logistics services to third party suppliers who have the appropriate technologies in place. Our e-commerce platform has also benefitted from more partnerships with online shopping vendors who have the necessary technological hardware.

With all of this in mind, one thing remains very clear. Companies are succeeding by disrupting their business models through innovation in technology. But moving forward the key to more success in 2017 will be how companies leverage strategic partnerships to help them adapt to global market uncertainty, take advantage of innovative technologies and capitalize on opportunities for growth.

*The author is Hussein Hachem, CEO of Aramex, a leading global logistics and transportation solutions company in Dubai.*