



# CIO CHAT WITH CHETNA: EPISODE 3

## VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

**Chetna Sehgal (00:07):**

Hi, everyone. My name is Chetna, and I'm excited to welcome you to our CIO Chat series, where I have this unfair luxury of chatting with some amazing CIOs.

**Chetna Sehgal (00:17):**

Before we start chatting, though, I'd like to talk about the wheel. Yes, the wheel, the round thing invented in 3500 BC. Historians believe that the idea behind the wheel was simple: the shaping of clay to make pottery. It took 300 years for anyone to even think of using the wheels for chariots and transportation. Over time, humans have begun using the wheel for cars, airplanes, wheelchairs, skateboards, electric fans, analog clocks, doorknobs, screwdrivers, egg beaters, cranes, windmills, and the list goes on. But what if? What if humans had stuck to using the wheel only for its original intent, i.e. making pottery? It would have been an unfortunate and staggering miss for humankind.

**Chetna Sehgal (01:04):**

Now the creation of the internet and the early data centers that powered it are very much like the invention of the wheel. Brilliant invention, but limited to a specific use case. It was the foresight of uncountable individuals and corporations who built upon this basic use case to pivot us to today's worlds of the interconnected. Something that was unthinkable in the nascent days of the internet.

**Chetna Sehgal (01:30):**

Now one such company is Equinix. Equinix was a pioneer in the early days of the internet to bring together disparate parts and organize it to make it then work in its data centers. Just as with the

wheel, Equinix then took the use case of offering colocation via data centers to creating this powerful ecosystem of networks, partners, hyperscalers, to now digital infrastructure to create value that no one could have fathomed. And by the way, those data centers that were the backbone of the internet are now the backbone of the cloud.

**Chetna Sehgal (02:05):**

So, with this context, and with great pleasure, I would like to welcome our guest today, Milind Wagle, the CIO of Equinix and a good personal friend. Welcome to the show, Milind. I am thrilled to have you on.

**Milind Wagle (02:20):**

Hey, Chetna. So good to be here. Thank you for having me on.

**Chetna Sehgal (02:24):**

Absolutely. So Milind, I'm going to continue with the theme of taking offerings of colocation and data centers to the pervasive internet, and then today's unthinkable world of the interconnected. And I'm going to ask you this question. Equinix is adding serious value to its customers, including enabling revenue growth. Could you tell us more about that?

**Milind Wagle (02:46):**

Absolutely, Chetna. Always love to talk about Equinix and what we're doing. But, before I sort of answer the specific Equinix question, I wanted to just zoom out a little bit and give you the broader context, right? Which is, as you know, digital transformation efforts are just accelerating everywhere, creating this massive economic opportunity, pretty much across all



industries. And they say the fourth Industrial Revolution is currently underway, which is leading to this massive explosion of number of devices, apps, data, network traffic at its all-time high. And what this is leading to is, we're finding that hybrid multi-cloud architectures are becoming the predominant deployment options for all digital enterprises. And the complexity of deploying this hybrid multi-cloud architecture which spans across private and public environments requires apps to be distributed all over the globe closer to your stakeholders, requires infrastructure to be deployed across many geographies, and then experiences that you deliver to your customers and your employees to be composed across multiple service providers.

**Milind Wagle (04:14):**

To do this, you need a solid interconnection backbone to bring all these digital entities together. And that's where Equinix comes in. And we provide the platform that is making us now the trusted center of this new cloud first world.

**Milind Wagle (04:34):**

So, if I had to summarize and answer your question directly around what differentiates us, I would say three primary areas. First and foremost is our interconnected ecosystems. We have more than 10,000 customers across multiple industry segments that use our platform to interconnect their digital ecosystems. And to just give you an idea, we have like 400,000 plus interconnections that are on our platform between these digital enterprises.

**Milind Wagle (05:07):**

The second differentiator for us is the unmatched global reach of our platform. So, our platform spans 230 data centers across 26 countries in like 64 markets all over the globe. And to give you an idea, this platform is differentiated for us because we've invested more than \$30 billion of capital over the course of our existence, just building out this global platform.

**Milind Wagle (05:38):**

And then the third thing which differentiates us is just our high service quality and consistency. So, we offer six nines of availability and uptime. We make tons of effort to make sure our

experience for our customers is globally consistent. So, we put a lot of effort in making sure that that experience is superior and consistent globally.

**Milind Wagle (06:04):**

Now just to sum this up, the world of how digital infrastructure is getting consumed is also changing from a very physical-oriented consumption model to a software-oriented consumption model. And so we're investing heavily in building out a catalog of our digital infrastructure services that will enable our customers and prospects to just consume this platform through software. We have this internal vision that we say we want to deliver infrastructure at software speed and make private cloud infrastructure simple, easy, secure, performant, and all those good things.

**Chetna Sehgal (06:51):**

I tell you, that is impressive. And speaking of which, you were featured in Forbes, Milind. And in your June feature, you talk about how you used AI to predict power consumption needs at a data center. It was, to me, a brilliant example of how a CIO can leverage technology to impact the company's core business. So, can you tell us more about that and any other examples you might have?

**Milind Wagle (07:18):**

Absolutely. This is a big focus area for us, so I'm always excited to talk about it. But again, the broader context for this is AI and machine learning technologies, I think are no longer hype, right? They're getting increasingly real, they're getting increasingly sophisticated. And whenever there's a need for applying any kind of prediction, prescription or classification to a use case, we find AI and machine learning technologies can be super differentiators.

**Milind Wagle (07:54):**

In our business, we also find these technologies are becoming more prevalent just for driving more intelligent and autonomous operations for just managing infrastructure. And I find when I talk to some of our customers, everyone is going and adopting AI/ML in some sort of creative way. Either to drive better customer adoption, bring agility in their business, manage risks in supply chains or distribution networks, or just plain old simple, just create more top line



revenue opportunities. So, as a company, we have prioritized data-enabled intelligence to support our business strategy wherever possible and use AI/ML technologies to do that.

**Milind Wagle (08:46):**

And then the example that you cited was specifically our predictive capacity analytics. We call it the PCA program, that helps us track utilization, forecasting of our power and space needs in our data centers. And you can imagine for running a platform of our size, 230 data centers with almost 20 million square feet of space within those data centers, it is very critical for us to manage our footprint and predict our capacity consumption across this massive platform. And we've been very successful using the AI/ML technologies there.

**Milind Wagle (09:30):**

A couple of other use cases which have been very impactful for us in the realm of IT, we are using an AI-based bot to help with the automated resolution of tickets that come to the IT help desk. And to date, we are resolving now about 35% of all the ticket volume through this self-service autonomous bot experience and closing the tickets as soon as they're raised. So, that has given us the ability to scale our workforce.

**Milind Wagle (10:07):**

Another use case that we very recently went live with was building an AI-based auditor. You can imagine the number of accounting transactions that are generated in this \$6 billion enterprise of ours. And in the old model, we had a very manual sort of review and approval step around this. And we are applying AI to drive automated approvals of a whole bunch of these requests where the risk is low, the dollar amount thresholds could be low and we know we can predict using our historical machine learning algorithms that these approvals can be approved with lower risk. And so we basically target only the key ones and present them to our stakeholders.

**Milind Wagle (11:00):**

So those are just a couple of examples that we're applying at Equinix, and just this is a huge area for us of focus.

**Chetna Sehgal (11:09):**

Yeah, those are great examples. And just as I always think, the power of technology when leveraged well. So thank you for that. Now Milind, I want the audience to get to know you better. So, we're going to get to my favorite part, the five rapid fire questions, "Getting to Know Our CIO." So, I'm going to get started here. One role in your career that taught you the most?

**Milind Wagle (11:30):**

Taught me the most. So, I learn at Equinix, I think every day, it's a very dynamic environment. Like they say, never a dull moment at Equinix. Having said that, I think the role that shaped my professional career the most was my consulting experience with KPMG. And the reason for that was just the diversity of work assignments that I got to work on, working in different corporate cultures and countries, meeting people of different personalities, ability to sort of communicate and influence all levels of the organization really shaped me and who I am as a professional. So, I would call my KPMG experience probably the one that taught me the most.

**Chetna Sehgal (12:22):**

Excellent. And I do remember you from KPMG. When you were there, not me. So, what is a message you would like to give to your CEO?

**Milind Wagle (12:31):**

To my CEO? Well, not just my CEO, I guess, because I give this message to my CEO all the time. But for any CEOs out there, I would say the biggest message is, don't underestimate the power of your IT organization and what it can do to help transform your business. I cannot think of any other organization that has such a unique vantage point and such a broad perspective on everything that happens in the business, right? And so my advice would be, take advantage of those IT perspectives to drive your transformation.

**Chetna Sehgal (13:09):**

Excellent. Your favorite way to give back to society?

**Milind Wagle (13:14):**

Great question, Chetna. I've been lately very passionate about a cause that is advancing women's education in India. And I've been working with an organization called Shadhika,



S-H-A-D-H-I-K-A. I would encourage your listeners to go check their website out and make an impact. But, it's an amazing organization that is investing in young women and empowering them to be independent. And as we know, when that happens, it creates a ripple effect and causes positive change to happen across families and communities. So, that's what I've been personally involved with. And then obviously, any other area where technology can be used for creating good, like bridging the digital divide. It's an area that I'm increasingly getting passionate and involved with.

**Chetna Sehgal (14:13):**

That's very heartening to hear. Your favorite sport or activity?

**Milind Wagle (14:19):**

Favorite sport. Cricket, of course. As you know, cricket is probably the biggest religion in India. And I was converted into this religion at a very, very young age. Having said that, I must say that for the listeners, the T20 cricket World Cup is currently happening and just looking at India's performance in it, it feels like the cricket gods are not really happy with us right now. But cricket it is. Favorite sport.

**Chetna Sehgal (14:53):**

I can relate to that. I remember waking up at 4:00 AM to watch cricket, although I'm in a football camp right now. But, earlier it used to be the cricket camp. All right, Milind. Innovation or diversity?

**Milind Wagle (15:05):**

Innovation or diversity. Great question. I personally think these two concepts are not necessarily at odds or with each other. They're not the two sides of the same coin, if you will. Because I personally believe that bringing in different perspectives is what drives us to innovate, think outside the box, and deliver work that is ideal for everyone involved. And at Equinix, we put a lot of focus on this because as you know, when we bring people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives or life experiences and teams, magic happens. So, I think invest in diversity and the innovation will follow suit.

**Chetna Sehgal (15:59):**

Perfect. So I'm going to jump to our last question. You mentioned all the data centers that Equinix has and data centers are the backbone of your business. So I think I would be remiss if I don't talk about sustainability. You have data centers located in 63 metros around the world and just the sheer size and volume involves a carbon footprint. And I love to see that Equinix has a strong sustainability agenda. So, could you tell me more about that and the role your organization plays in that?

**Milind Wagle (16:30):**

Absolutely, Chetna. And as you know, sustainability is becoming such an important agenda for every company, right? It's not just a fashion statement anymore, it's becoming very integral to your business strategy. So specifically at Equinix, we have a Future First sustainability strategy, because I think we believe that as the world's largest digital infrastructure company, we have the responsibility and the obligation to sort of harness the power of technology to not only drive innovation, but to contribute to a more accessible, climate neutral, sustainable future.

**Milind Wagle (17:16):**

And then we believe in creating the shared value with everyone around us, including our customers, partners, shareholders, employees. And that basically means that we need to ensure that we're good stewards of not just the environmental capital, but of human capital as well. So, our sustainability strategy, very similar to a lot of corporations out there, has a very broader significance across three corporate pillars, environment, social and governance.

**Milind Wagle (17:52):**

And your question was more environment oriented, so I'll zoom in on that. We build our data centers to the highest standards because we aspire to be 100% renewable energy consumption across our entire global platform. And in that sort of domain, just this year, we announced a goal to be climate neutral by 2030 and use science-based targets to achieve those goals. And we have embedded these carbon reduction goals within our business strategy. So, we're all sort of marching towards those goals.

**Milind Wagle (18:37):**



Now, specifically to second part of your question around what does my organization do, and how does it fit in the broader ESG strategy? So, first and foremost, data and insights is core to driving accountability for any kind of sustainability strategy, right? And so my organization plays a very critical role in just, number one, making data and insights available in dashboards and reports that just make achieving these goals very actionable.

**Milind Wagle (19:11):**

Then, I'll go back to the example that we just discussed earlier, the predictive capacity analytics use case that I shared with you earlier. This is a perfect example where a data model was built by IT to predict and optimize our data center utilization. And by doing so, we have reduced the environmental impact not only for Equinix, but for our customers' infrastructure. So, very real case of using technology to drive a sustainability agenda.

**Milind Wagle (19:45):**

And then the last thing I would say is within the IT domain, we can make efforts to reduce the carbon impact of the potential digital waste that's generated through our hardware and software assets. Right? So, I think we have a unique opportunity to make an impact, but just doing better life cycle management of our infrastructure assets all the way from cradle to grave, and just ensuring optimization, recycle, reuse type of policies to just make impact on the broader environment. So those are examples where I think IT can play a role.

**Chetna Sehgal (20:27):**

Excellent, Milind. I feel this was awesome. I feel it was too short. I really had a great time talking with you. I appreciate you taking the time, so thank you so much for being here.

**Milind Wagle (20:39):**

Thank you for having me Chetna, that was awesome.

**Chetna Sehgal (20:42):**

Awesome. Yes, we'll catch up soon. So, for our audience, there you have it. You could have a data center offering for wholesale and location, but Equinix knew that would be a miss to limit it just to that. So, the added use cases that Milind talked about, the digital infrastructure, and

creating this astounding ecosystem that adds unprecedented value. Now, that's really catapulting your customers' business forward, and Equinix has done that brilliantly. And Milind has shown that a CIO organization can really be an invaluable partner to the business while ensuring sustainability.

**Chetna Sehgal (21:18):**

So, I guess while it's still okay to use the wheel to create pottery, we should be thanking our predecessors for extracting its true potential by using it for windmills and those nimble cars, although I do think riding to work on a horse would have its own peculiar charm. Thank you for joining us today. Until next time, be well and we'll talk soon.