

WHAT MOVES FIRST WHEN EVERYTHING'S IN MOTION

INSIDE

- Invisible Rules
- Headsets & Healing
- The Space Economy
- Talent in a Napkin



IGNITING CONVERSATIONS **SHAPING FUTURES**





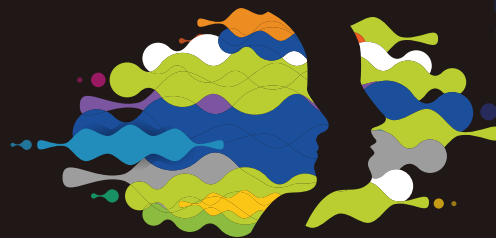
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Across the pages, you'll see themes that look familiar—but but feel different once you sit with them. Not because they're dressed up in jargon, but because they're stripped of it.

SOMETIMES THE best way to understand a problem is to leave it unnamed. When you take away the labels, the titles, the buzzwords—you're left with behaviour. This edition circles around that idea. It observes how people respond to systems, how systems bend around people, and what happens when neither gives way.

Some pieces are anchored in the world of business decisions, but what they're really about is human judgement. Others speak in the language of models and data—but the questions they raise are personal. What do we really mean when we say adaptability? Is success still linear? Does speed always serve?

Across the pages, you'll see themes that look familiar—but feel different once you sit with them. Not because they're dressed up in jargon, but because they're stripped of it. This isn't an issue you skim. It's one you revisit.

There's no thesis here. No narrative arc. Just scattered signals—meant to be picked up, interpreted, maybe even discarded. That choice, as always, is yours.

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We don't offer conclusions. We offer thought patterns. If you find yourself disagreeing with something, that's perfect. Because this magazine isn't built for consumption, but for confrontation.

THERE ARE moments when the surface of things feels calm—but underneath, systems are being dismantled, redesigned, and reassembled in real time. This edition lives in that undercurrent. It doesn't shout or speculate. It just studies. From shifts in retail models to evolving talent decisions, what you'll find here is a closer look at the recalibrations taking place in plain sight.

What's especially compelling is the range of lenses—some stories lean in from an operational angle, others through a behavioural one. The common thread is the recognition that 'strategy' today doesn't always announce itself. It's often embedded in the quiet nudges, the small pivots, the trade-offs that don't make headlines but shape trajectories.

As always, we don't offer conclusions. We offer thought patterns. If you find yourself disagreeing with something, that's perfect. Because this magazine isn't built for consumption, but for confrontation. The kind that happens inside your head, long after you've turned the page.

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EDITOR'S MUSINGS

IT'S TEMPTING to think of business as a set of outcomes. Results. Metrics. Valuations. But the deeper we go into these conversations, the more it becomes clear: what really defines an organisation is everything that doesn't fit neatly into those boxes.

This edition isn't about the big headlines. It's about what happens before and after them. The trade-offs that come with new models. The messy recalibrations when ideals hit market constraints. The questions that don't always have answers.

You'll find patterns here—some around trust, others around pace, many around the very idea of 'value'. Not financial value, necessarily. But the kind that gets built over time, through a hundred quiet choices, a few loud ones, and a steady resistance to the easy way out.

What's refreshing is that none of these stories try too hard to convince. They just show. And in doing that, they allow the reader to come to their own framing of what works, what doesn't, and what might.

If you're looking for a grand takeaway, you won't find one here. What you will find is something better: fragments that stay with you. Because maybe the real work of insight isn't to sum things up—it's to open something up. And let you do the rest.

Hari Govind Nair

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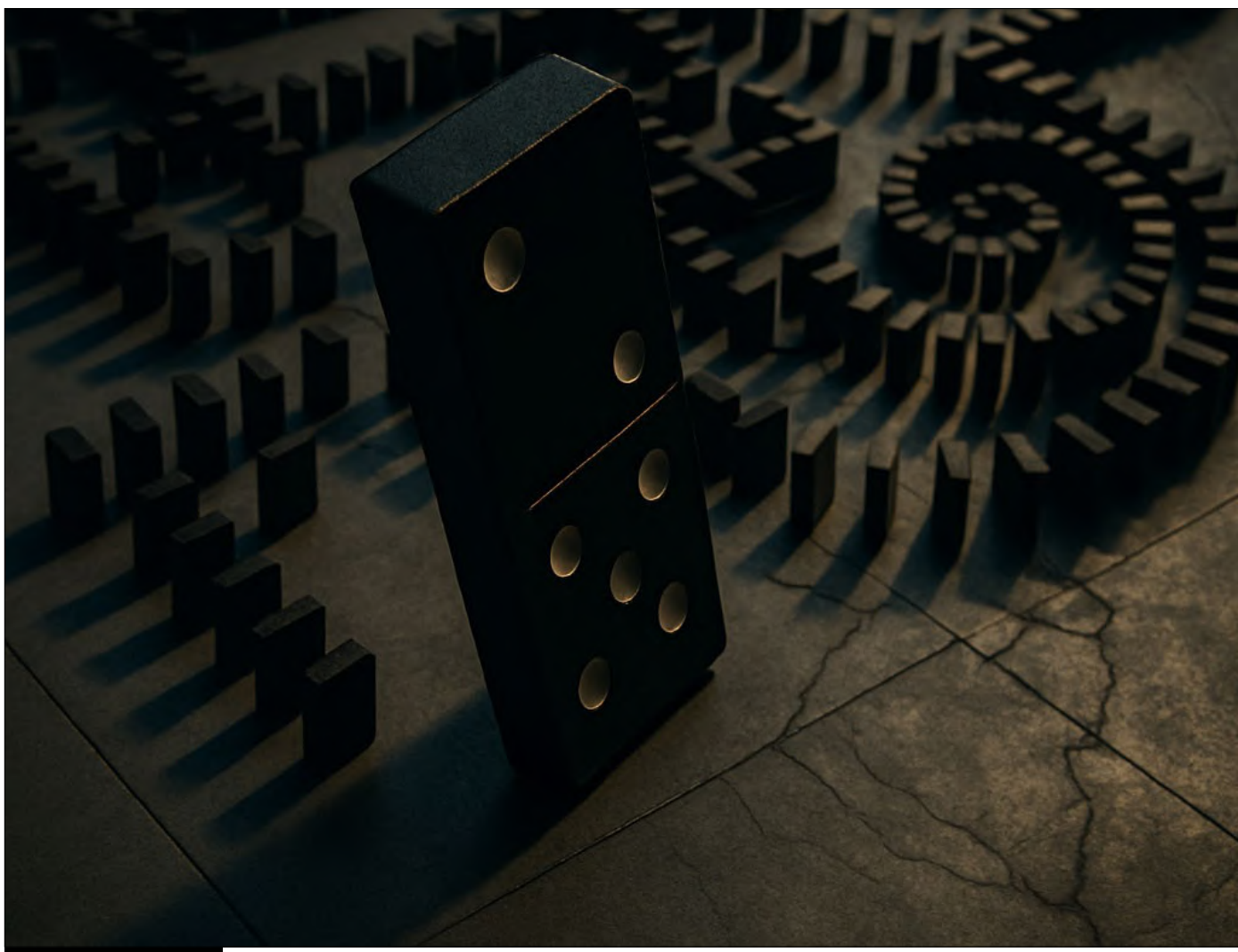
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WHAT'S Inside

Invisible Rules

The Silent Erosion of Workplace Integrity

Beneath the surface of cheerful workplaces lie invisible rules — unwritten norms shaped by bias and power — that stifle merit, fuel politics, and quietly corrode integrity

 by Bonam Kamala Prakash & Itha VSN Tejesh

Offices are generally positive places, bubbling with promises of inclusivity and positive interactions. Leadership promises to value your opinions and ensure that rational and professional decisions are taken in all walks of business. Your colleagues celebrate diversity and seem welcoming. It's a beautiful place where we spend most of our daytime — more time than we spend with family members and close friends. Managers are always friendly and care about fostering a positive work culture. Coffee breaks with colleagues and inside jokes make us laugh and enjoy the day. There are days when we stay up





all night to work on a hectic deliverable — working hard, filled with passion, and aiming for a sense of accomplishment.

After working for five years in the industry, I have seen and experienced it all — the beautiful and meaningful aspects of office life, the memories made with colleagues, and the jokes made about bosses. And yet, the darker corners stay hidden from the purview of most people.

The Quiet Rise of Toxic Norms

Let me introduce you to the darker side of office life — where efficiency and merit take a back seat when politics and personal biases come into play. Where people are denied promotions because of their cultural origins and are made fun of behind their backs. Where a casual team outing starts with harmless teasing but turns into personal attacks without anyone noticing. Where people in power get away with almost everything, and those under them follow blindly, all in accordance with the invisible rules. These are rules not written anywhere, with no formal knowledge transfer — and yet, somehow, everyone seems to know and follow them without question.

We've seen managers use manipulative tactics, turning a once-positive ecosystem into a toxic cycle. Most don't oppose it. They follow blindly or choose to switch jobs rather than go against the invisible rules.

The invisible rules slowly erode the motivation of even the most talented employees, replacing creativity and drive with resignation and silence

And the few who dare to stand up are shot down by the power of authority, sacrificing their future in the company. Power is intoxicating. When people gain hold of it, they do everything they can to retain it — and in doing so, they often create even more unwritten rules. Subordinates then emulate this behaviour, exerting it on their juniors and creating a vicious cycle of politics.

What seems like a harmless step toward positive gain or power retention results in layers upon layers of politics being created. The company

begins to choke under these unwritten rules as talent is lost to self-serving interests. The invisible rules slowly erode the motivation of even the most talented employees. People stop believing in the company, lose the drive to think creatively, and settle into doing the bare minimum.

When Leadership Fuels the Cycle

It is critical for global leaders to be conscious of their personal biases. Policies must be crafted with the goals of both the company and the employees in mind. What starts as an innocent personal concession to a preferred employee can evolve into a myriad of unwritten rules at the ground level, growing stronger as it filters through multiple layers of the organisation. Employees suffocate under these invisible rules, and the company begins its slow descent into decline.

If you are a global leader, you must adopt a black-and-white approach when it comes to the company and its employees. If you falter, the invisible rules will coalesce — and they will damage the entire ecosystem of the organisation. ◀



Bonam Kamala Prakash (L) and Itha VSN Tejesh (R) are PGDM(GM) students at XLRI

How You Show Up Matters More Than You Think

Stress is inevitable, but how you carry it into the room is a choice. Presence, empathy, and self-awareness are what truly make a difference



by Rishabh Dalip Singh

Your workday does not begin at the office; it starts as soon as you step out of the door. If you take public transport, you are already bracing yourself for squeezing into a packed train, dodging elbows, and standing for half an hour with a backpack on your shoulder. If you drive, the story does not get better: bumper-to-bumper traffic, blaring horns and that one driver who always cuts you off.

When you reach your workplace, you are not just physically tired, but your patience is also tested in the process. As soon as you step into your workplace, you should not just move forward with the same emotions but should bring out the best version of yourself. The professional persona is not a performance; it's a choice to show up with clarity, purpose, and respect for your space.

From Commute Chaos to Clarity

It is important to understand that you should not only manage your responsibilities but also your reactions. The stress from your outside world — like missed alarms, long queues and noisy roads — should not be part of the meeting table you are about to attend. Take a break before entering. Breathe. Reset. Recharge. Your team is not responsible for your rough morning, and they deserve your full presence, focus, and professional behaviour.

A good leader always aims to be an excellent leader; they do not wait for their chance to respond, but they listen to understand — asking the right questions, acknowledging others' ideas and building on their teammates' ideas. To strengthen collaboration and reduce friction, a leader should respect the ideas and work of their subordinates. Like a good leader, your professional persona should reflect your values. Your actions should be guided by humility, kindness, and self-awareness — not by pressure or pretence. You don't have to be flawless or perfect; you just have to be mindful of how you show up every day.

Picture this: You've had a frustrating commute, your coffee has splashed on your shirt, and your inbox is already flooding with urgent deadlines. The rough start is still occupying your mind, and with all the adversities, you have to enter the team meeting.



Your team isn't responsible for your rough morning — they deserve your full presence, focus, and professional behaviour

Midway through, a teammate suggests something you don't agree with, and without meaning to, your tone sharpens, and silence follows. You didn't intend to be rude, but your stress leaked into the room.

These kinds of moments occur more frequently than we acknowledge. They make us realise that self-management isn't sufficient — we need to manage how we connect with others as well.

Presence Over Perfection

A good work culture doesn't demand perfection, but it does demand presence. You should take a moment before responding, particularly in the heat of the moment. The aim should be to reassure others that their voices are being heard — not dismissed. To build trust over and over again, small habits such as listening

well, acknowledging contributions, and showing patience during disagreements must be practised. At the end of the day, your professional persona isn't just about how you perform — it's about how you connect.

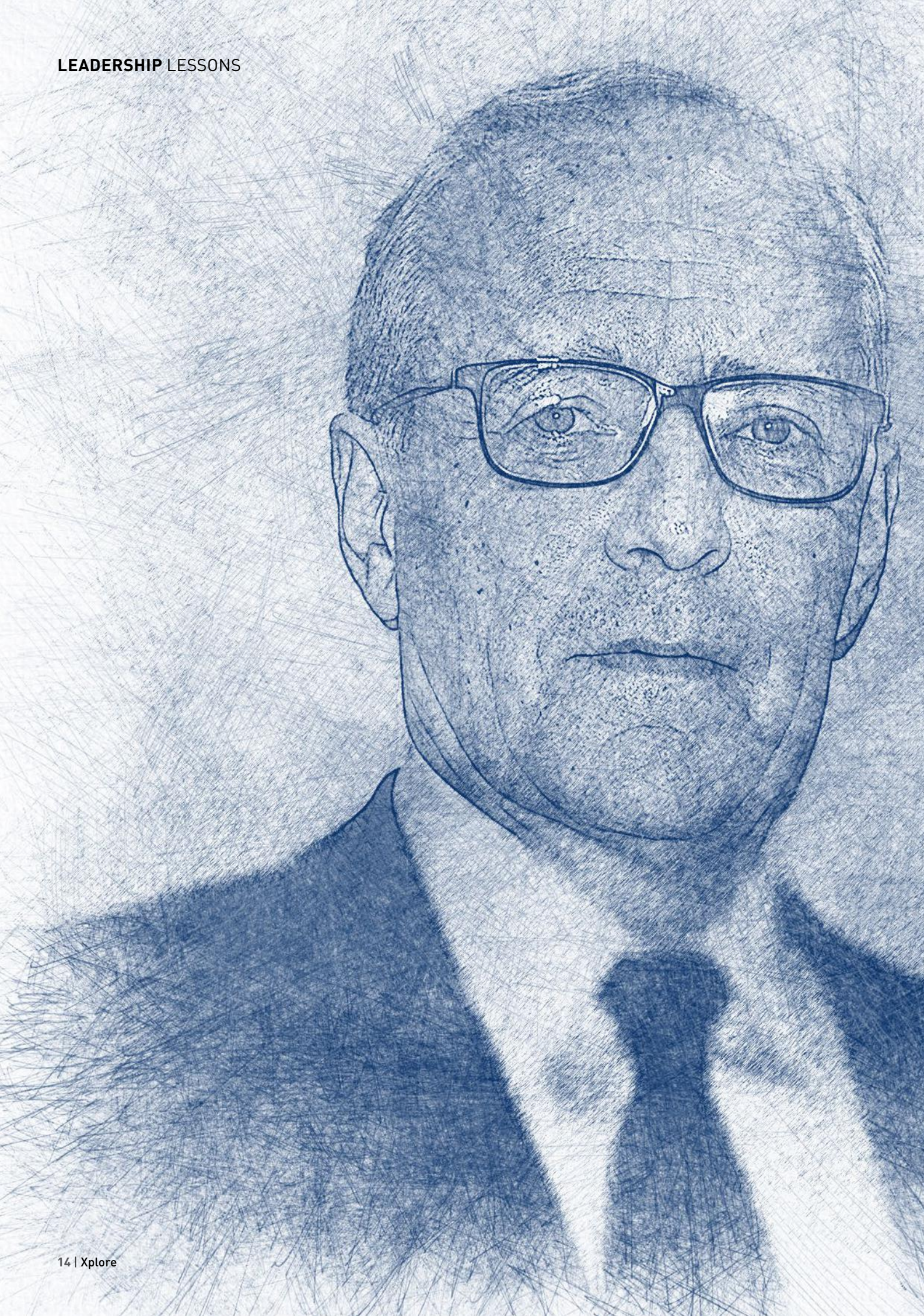
Relationships are the human fabric of work. When you bring emotional maturity, empathy, and respect into your interactions, you help create a space where everyone can show up as their best selves — even on the hard days.

When everything concludes, we realise that there are many versions of ourselves that have been created, each by virtue of the roles we play, the emotions we feel, and the professional environments we inhabit. But it's how we manage those versions, especially in the workplace, that defines our growth.

To create a balanced, respectful, and productive space for everyone, we should bring emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness into our day-to-day communication. We can't always control what happens on the way to work or in life outside of it, but we can choose how we show up. To stand apart in the crowd, we have to make a choice about how we represent ourselves in a professional environment. ◀



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“Don’t Hold Your Talents in a Napkin”

After a remarkable career spanning law, operations, and HR leadership at global giants like AT&T and BellSouth, **Professor Dick Sibbernson** now teaches across continents — from Loyola University and the University of Sydney to XLRI Jamshedpur and even prisons in Chicago. In this wide-ranging conversation with *Anmol Singla*, he reflects on people-centric leadership, India’s rising talent, and the habits that distinguish great leaders — urging young professionals to share their time, skills, and purpose with the world.

Reflecting on your distinguished corporate journey from Tenneco to AT&T, what would you say were the defining moments that shaped your philosophy on leadership and human capital?

The defining moment for me came during my transition from law into operations. I had earned my doctorate in law and was doing well in the legal department, but then I was offered an opportunity to move into operations. Over the next 10-12 years, I worked in sales, marketing, and manufacturing — and that changed everything.

I began noticing a pattern: departments with the same products, processes, and technology often achieved very different outcomes. The difference wasn’t technical — it was human. The best-performing teams had strong leadership, and what I came to call the “X-factor”: people management.

I observed this first-hand through three exceptional line managers. All had engineering backgrounds, yet each had a unique leadership style. What they shared was a people-centric approach grounded in trust, structure, and alignment. They delivered excellent

results and advanced to senior positions — not just because of what they knew, but because of how they led people.

That experience stayed with me. Later, when I moved into corporate HR in an international company, I saw it again and again. Leadership effectiveness always came down to how

The Leadership Pause: Four Daily Questions

Professor Sibbernson shared a simple yet powerful framework used by successful managers around the world — four daily questions that act as a personal leadership check-in:

1. *Who am I?*
2. *Who am I with?*
3. *What do they need?*
4. *What needs to get done — and what’s the best way to do it?*

It’s a moment of pause. A return to intention. A reminder that leadership, at its core, is about people.

The difference wasn't technical — it was human. People leadership, more than products or process, drove performance across every team I saw

consistently and deliberately leaders managed people. Products/services and technology are necessary, but they're not sufficient. People leadership is what makes the difference.

You began your career with a legal background. What prompted the shift into operations and HR, and how has that shaped your leadership style?

I transitioned into operations and was immediately drawn to the energy and complexity of day-to-day business — making, selling, servicing. There's something I call the *psychic reward*: the satisfaction of closing a sale, launching a product, or solving a real-time challenge. That kind of gratification just doesn't exist in the legal profession in the same way.

What really stood out was how deeply people were embedded in every part of the business flow. Whether it was frontline production or customer service, the "X-factor" of people management was at the core of success. That realisation was a major turning point in my leadership journey.

After decades in global corporations, what led you to academia? How has teaching across India, the US, and Africa shaped your views?

I've always believed in the cycle of life: you learn, you earn, and you return. Post-retirement, I felt the need to give back — to help shape the next generation of business leaders by sharing tools and lessons I had picked up over a long career. I wanted to shape in a small way how leadership thinking is passed on.

I was always passionate about developing people — setting up systems, coaching leaders, and creating growth environments. Teaching was a natural extension of that. It gives me great satisfaction to see students strengthen their leadership muscles, particularly in people management.

I also wanted to step out of my comfort zone. As a dual citizen of the US and Australia, I've been fortunate to teach in India, Tanzania, and Indonesia. Each country has enriched me in different ways — both personally and professionally.

I also volunteer two days a week in a North Chicago prison, teaching a course called "Rethinking Your Thinking" to young inmates. It's about helping them understand and process what they carry in their emotional backpack — another way I try to lighten someone's load.

Having taught at XLRI and engaged with India's business ecosystem, how do you view India's talent landscape and the evolving role of Indian MBAs?

India is sitting on a tremendous opportunity. The demographic dividend is real, but it depends on whether human capital investments are prioritised. Institutions like XLRI are playing a vital role. The talent coming out of here can make an enormous impact — with both tactical and leadership skills.

Indian MBAs today are stepping into leadership roles far earlier than my generation did. They're capable of combining technical acumen with people leadership — and that's a powerful combination.

India's economy is projected to grow from \$4-5 trillion today to potentially \$40 trillion over the next few decades.



Whether or not it hits that number, it's clear this will be a period of rapid growth — and that's exciting.

Across countries, I've observed key differences. In Tanzania, students are energetic but often face gaps in foundational education. In Indonesia, there's consistency in the education system, and students bring joy and camaraderie to learning. But in India, what's impressed me most is the emphasis on innovation at scale.

XLRI, in particular, has created an ecosystem that fosters world-class thinking. The faculty are dedicated far beyond the call of duty. Many could earn more in the corporate world, but they've chosen to shape future leaders instead — and that commitment is both rare and admirable.

What advice would you give to young professionals entering the workforce amid such rapid global change?

First: don't cheat yourself. A career is a terrible thing to waste — especially if it's your own. Develop a disciplined approach to understanding yourself. Practice reflection. Build self-awareness like you would a technical skill — and take it seriously.

Based on decades of interviews and data, five habits consistently stand out among top leaders:

1. **Collaboration** — They work well with others to design and deliver results.
2. **Self-awareness** — They understand their energy patterns, triggers, and limitations.
3. **Trust** — They do what they say. They're consistent in both character and competence.
4. **Breadth of experience** — They've worked across geographies, functions, and perspectives.
5. **Empathy** — They're enjoyable to work with, even during disagreements.

We also just finished surveying over 100 global companies about future workforce needs. Five leadership competencies came out loud and clear:

- Integrity
- Technical capability
- Results orientation
- Change leadership
- Interpersonal skills



Your career is a terrible thing to waste. Build self-awareness like a technical skill. Don't cheat yourself of reflection and growth

These aren't optional. They're core. And finally, remember: your career is a marathon. The days may feel long now, but the years will fly. Take care of your health — mental, physical, and emotional. Learn to breathe. Be calm and confident. Believe you can do this.

Keep front and centre your responsibility to build the common good as your career grows forth. Get involved! The country and the globe await your skills and ethical conduct to solve mounting social and environmental needs. You are uniquely positioned — individually and collectively — to apply a higher level of planning, fact-based logic, and technology skills to design and deliver effective solutions. Don't hold your talents "in a napkin." Share your time and your talent with the community and society. Not only will you solve such problems, but you will grow to your personal and purposeful best in career and life — and enjoy true joy and a deep sense of purpose. ◀



Your Next Operations Head? **A Digital Twin**

Digital twins are shifting operations from reactive firefighting to intelligent foresight, helping firms act faster, safer, and smarter in an increasingly volatile world



by Abhishek Shukla



Walk into any modern factory, hospital, or warehouse today, and you'll see a paradox: machines have never been smarter, yet decision-making often remains reactive. Despite decades of lean practices and automation, operations still chase problems rather than prevent them.

Digital twins are ending that chase. They are not just software replicas. They are dynamic, real-time, data-driven models that continuously mirror the state of a physical system — be it a production line, a power plant, or a hospital ward. These living models simulate, predict, and suggest actions, helping organisations anticipate issues, adapt strategies and optimise performance.

By embedding intelligence into operations, digital twins are reshaping how excellence is not just pursued but achieved.

From Monitoring to Mastery: The 4×E Model of Digital Twin Impact

Drawing from recent research and practical deployments across industries like manufacturing, healthcare, energy, logistics, and retail, digital twins transform operations through four core capabilities. Let's call it the 4×E model:

Element	Core Question	What Twins Enable	Operational Impact
Exposure	What's happening right now?	Real-time visibility through integrated sensors and data platforms.	Eliminates blind spots, manual checks, and miscommunication.
Explanation	Why is it happening?	Simulation and historical analytics to uncover root causes.	Speeds up problem-solving and improves reliability.
Expectation	What's likely to happen next?	Predictive analytics and modelling based on live and historical data.	Enables proactive maintenance, staffing, and resource planning.
Experimentation	What happens if we try this?	Virtual scenario testing for decisions — without real-world risk.	Reduces cost of change, improves innovation success rates.

This loop transforms the pace and quality of decision-making from reactive firefighting to proactive, intelligent operations.

Digital twins aren't just dashboards – they're evolving, thinking versions of your business, with the power to advise, adjust, and at times act to keep operations ahead of the curve

The 5 Pillars of Operational Excellence via Digital Twins

From the reviewed research, five common pillars emerged that form a foundational framework for understanding the contribution of digital twins to operations:

Pillar	Function	Illustrative evidence/example
Percep-tion	Real-time data gathering and sensing	Digital twin of livestock feeding captured weather, animal weight, and nutrient intake
Integra-tion	Combining multi-source, multi-layer data	Spatial-temporal knowledge graphs integrate production logistics in dynamic manufacturing
Simula-tion	Running 'what-if' predictive models	Lean supply chains simulated delay risks and waste under various disruption scenarios
Optimisa-tion	AI-guided adaptive control of operations	Energy-aware decisions in process networks optimised using real-time digital feedback loops
Learning	Continuous model refinement	Knowledge-based models updated performance metrics based on past prediction errors

The Real-World Shift: Numbers Behind the Narrative

A 2025 forecast by Statista shows that digital twin adoption is growing rapidly across multiple sectors:

- **Manufacturing:** Expected to exceed \$6 billion by 2025, as twins become critical for process optimisation, energy efficiency, and downtime reduction.
- **Healthcare:** Hospitals use twins for patient-flow optimisation and logistics coordination, improving care delivery and cutting waste.
- **Utilities & energy:** Digital replicas of power assets and grid systems help balance load, reduce blackouts, and plan sustainable transitions.
- **Logistics & retail:** Warehouse and supply chain twins enhance routing, reduce congestion, and enable greener operations.

Even agriculture is getting twin-enabled. A recent study modelled livestock feeding decisions using digital twins to optimise nutrition and sustainability outcomes saving £58,000 annually while reducing emergency trips by 80 per cent. The applications are as diverse as they are transformational.

Why This Moment Matters

Let's be honest: operational excellence has often been a checkbox defined by





KPIs, dashboards, and lean metrics. But in volatile, data-saturated environments, checklists and static SOPs fall short. Digital twins offer something more adaptive, more alive.

They break the long-held trade-offs between speed and precision, cost and customisation, innovation and risk. Instead of monthly strategy reviews, decisions happen in real time. Instead of assumptions, leaders get simulation-backed clarity. Instead of reacting to yesterday's data, teams prepare for tomorrow's disruptions.

But There Are Real Challenges

Despite their promise, digital twins are not plug-and-play. Across industries four common barriers keep emerging:

1. Data integrity and integration

Twins rely on massive amounts of real-time data. Inconsistent formats, missing signals, or legacy systems can lead to inaccurate models. Without clean,

integrated, and well-governed data pipelines, a twin becomes a misleading shadow rather than a smart replica.

2. Skills gap

Building and operating a digital twin demands cross-functional expertise — engineers who understand machine learning, IT teams who understand operations, and analysts who bridge the physical and digital. These profiles are rare, and upskilling existing staff takes time.

3. Cybersecurity risks

A digital twin that controls physical processes poses cybersecurity stakes far beyond data leaks. Unauthorised access could alter setpoints, halt production, or even compromise safety. This makes secure architecture and zero-trust protocols critical.

4. Value realisation & scope creep

Many firms get trapped in pilot purgatory,

By end of 2025, the manufacturing sector alone is expected to invest over \$6 billion in digital twin technology. Why? Because the very nature of operations is evolving — from fixed routines to fluid intelligence



The 4xE model transforms operations from reactive firefighting to continuous foresight – seeing, explaining, predicting, and testing in real time

impressive demos with unclear ROI. Others chase end-to-end twinning before validating smaller wins. A staged, value-first approach is necessary. Success starts with twinning one critical asset or process and building on it.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The future of operational excellence is neither purely digital nor purely human — it's hybrid.

Digital twins will increasingly:

- Power autonomous decision-making loops (also Green twin, financial twin).
- Support collaborative, cross-silo experimentation (as such Digital Twin-as-a-Service [DTaaS]).
- Enable rapid iteration in everything from product design to carbon tracking (also Metaverse training grounds for new hire).

But excellence won't come from the tool alone. It will come from leaders who

ask better questions, organisations that design around learning, and cultures that treat data as a strategic asset, not a reporting afterthought.

Operational excellence was once about doing things right. Digital twins make it about doing the *right things*, at the *right time*, in the *right way*, informed by the *right data*.

In the race between organisations that react and those that predict, only one group is future-ready. And the key difference? A "digital twin" — isn't just a dashboard or a simulation — they're evolving, thinking versions of your business, with the power to advise, to adjust, and in some cases, to act. ◀



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CEO LOUNGE

Disrupting the Final Frontier

Charting the New Space Economy

Start-ups and tech titans are rewriting space history — driven by reusable rockets, space tourism, and orbital ventures — unlocking new markets, colonisation dreams, and a trillion-dollar economy



by Revanth Palvayi



Space exploration, once the exclusive domain of government agencies like NASA, has now become an exciting playground for private companies. This shift has ignited a burst of technological advancements and opened up incredible new business opportunities. Pioneers like SpaceX, Blue Origin, Rocket Lab and Virgin Galactic are leading this revolution, bringing humanity closer to the dream of space colonisation. This article delves into the role of innovation and entrepreneurship in the space sector and the emerging business prospects that come with it.

The New Space Race

The new space race marks a thrilling transition from government-led missions to bold private ventures. SpaceX, for example, has revolutionised space travel with its reusable rockets, slashing costs dramatically. This private-sector rivalry has spurred rapid technological progress. Nations are also keen to mark their presence in space, adding another exciting layer of competition.

Technological Innovations

Advances in rocket propulsion, spacecraft design and life-support systems are essential for space colonisation. SpaceX's Starship aims to carry humans to Mars, featuring cutting-edge technology to ensure safety and sustainability. Blue Origin's New Shepard and New Glenn rockets are designed for both suborbital and

Reusable rockets have slashed launch costs and opened the door to frequent space travel, making outer space more accessible than ever before

orbital flights, pushing technological boundaries. Innovations in in-situ resource utilisation (ISRU) are equally vital, allowing us to use materials found on other planets to support human life and industrial activities.

Entrepreneurship and New Business Opportunities

Entrepreneurship in space goes far beyond launching rockets. The horizon is expanding to include satellite deployment, space tourism, asteroid mining and space habitats.

Satellite deployment: The demand for satellite deployment has skyrocketed with the expansion of global communication networks. Companies like OneWeb and SpaceX's Starlink are launching satellite constellations to provide global internet coverage, creating new markets for satellite-based services. The low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellite market alone is projected to grow from \$177 billion in 2024 to \$284 billion by 2029, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of nearly 10 per cent. Danish start-up Space Inventor is developing small satellite modules, while Bulgarian

start-up EnduroSat offers NanoSats for secure communications.

Space tourism: Space tourism is another thrilling frontier. Virgin Galactic, founded by Sir Richard Branson, and Blue Origin are pioneering suborbital flights that allow civilians to experience space travel. Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo offers a few minutes of weightlessness and a breathtaking view of Earth from space. While currently a luxury for the wealthy, technological advancements and increased competition are expected to make space tourism more accessible in the future. This burgeoning sector is expected to play a significant role in the space economy, projected to grow to \$1 trillion by 2040.

Asteroid mining: Companies like Planetary Resources and Deep Space Industries are exploring the potential of mining asteroids for valuable minerals such as platinum and gold. This could usher in a new era of resource abundance and economic growth. The potential market value of asteroid mining is estimated to be in the trillions of dollars, given the abundance of rare minerals in space.

Representational image of SpaceX's partially reusable Falcon 9 rocket





From satellite constellations to asteroid mining, the private space sector is carving out billion-dollar opportunities in the final frontier

Additionally, firms like Regolithix are focusing on ISRU technologies to make asteroid mining feasible.

Space habitats: Developing space habitats is crucial for long-term colonisation. Bigelow Aerospace, for instance, is working on inflatable habitats that provide living and working spaces for astronauts, designed to be lightweight and compact for easy transportation. Start-ups like REA Space are innovating with bionic spacesuits to support astronauts in low-gravity environments.

Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite the immense opportunities, challenges such as technical hurdles, regulatory issues and the need for sustainable practices remain. Ensuring the safety of space travellers, protecting the space environment and establishing international agreements on space resource use are critical.

The future of space innovation and entrepreneurship looks incredibly

promising. Continued investment and growing interest from private companies and investors are driving further advancements. The dream of space colonisation is becoming more tangible, with the entrepreneurial spirit playing a key role in turning this vision into reality.

Innovation and entrepreneurship are transforming space exploration. Private companies are slashing the cost of space travel and creating new business opportunities. While challenges remain, the progress made so far highlights the potential for a future where space is within our reach. The journey to space colonisation is just beginning, and the possibilities are as vast as the cosmos itself. ◀



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“OB Helps Decode Why People Do What They Do”

For **Sai Bhargavi Vedula**, Assistant Professor of Organisational Behaviour (OB) at XLRI Jamshedpur, OB is a powerful tool to understand how people and organisations shape each other. “It’s a lens to understand why people do what they do in workplaces,” she says. In this conversation with *Sai Moukthik Konduru*, she discusses making learning personal, decoding human dynamics in organisations, and why self-awareness and emotional intelligence matter more than ever.

Why do you teach OB and what does OB mean to you?

I teach organisational behaviour because I’m fascinated by human behaviour, especially in organised settings. OB, for me, is a lens to understand why people do what they do in workplaces, how organisations influence people, and how people shape organisations.

How has your teaching style changed over the years?

It has evolved a lot. Earlier, I used to focus more on delivering content; now, I focus more on facilitating learning. I use more real-life examples, encourage participation, and try to connect concepts with students’ experiences.

What are your expectations from students in an organisational behaviour class?

I expect them to be open-minded, reflective and participative. Organisational behaviour is not just theory — it’s about introspection and application. The more you relate it to your life and work, the more meaningful it becomes.

What’s the one OB concept you believe every student should remember even after graduating?

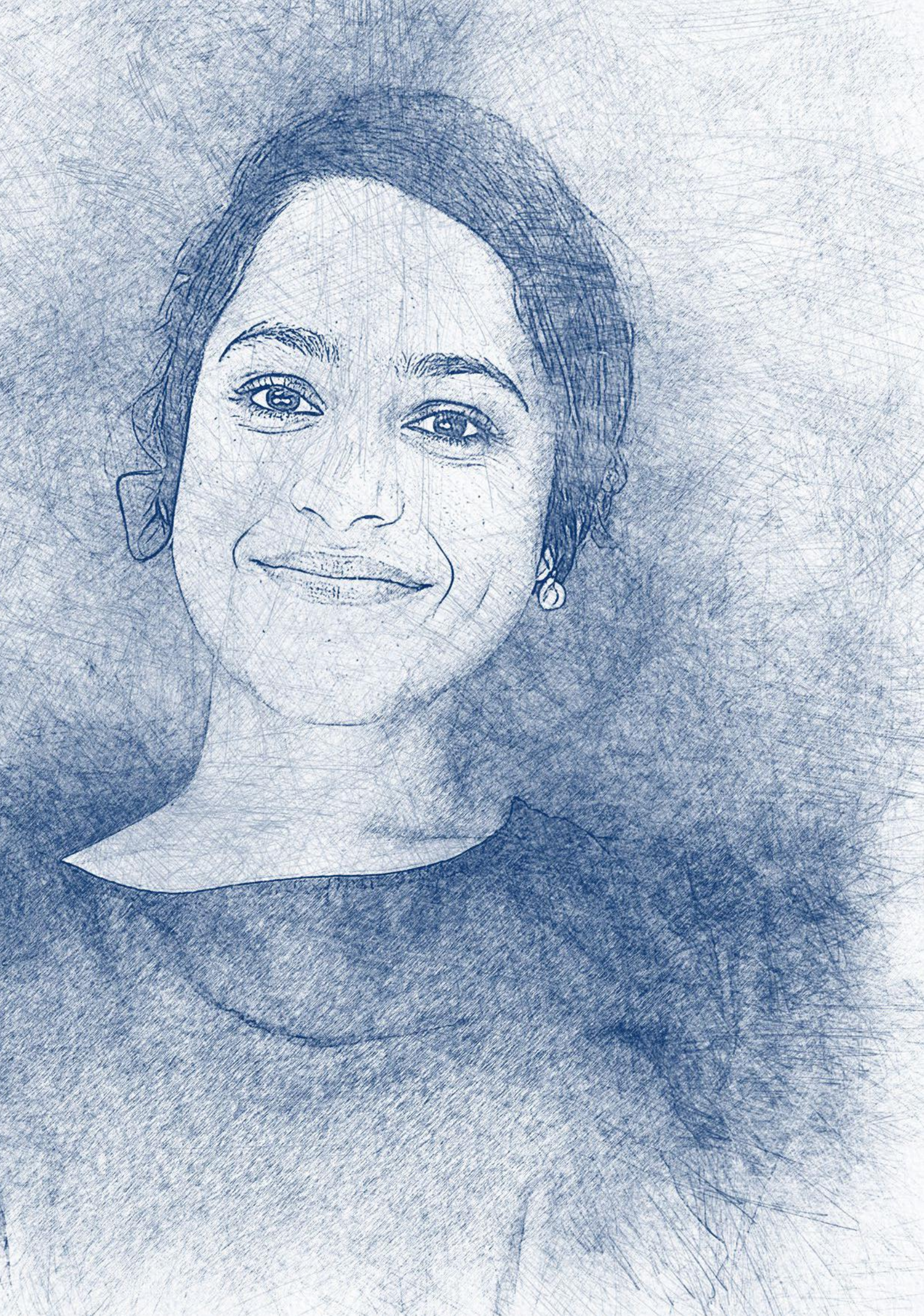
Self-awareness. It’s the foundation of good leadership and effective interpersonal relationships. Knowing oneself helps in managing oneself and others better.

Many CXOs have mentioned that OB helped them become better leaders and team players.

Absolutely. In fact, organisations today value emotional intelligence, collaboration and adaptability more than just technical skills. Organisational behaviour gives you those insights.

How do you maintain such high energy levels throughout your class? It’s really infectious!

(Laughs) That’s sweet of you to say. I genuinely enjoy teaching and interacting with students. That energy comes from passion. Also, I prepare well and make sure I’m mentally present in the classroom. ◀



Consulting Gets a GenAI Upgrade

GenAI is transforming how consulting firms work — from research to resourcing — but human oversight remains essential for sound judgement, strategic alignment, and client confidence

 by Sujay Jain

Hi, I'm your GenAI assistant.
How can I help you today?

- Should I draft the market sizing slide?
- Should I analyse last year's client feedback?
- Should I write an executive summary?
- Should I prepare key points for tomorrow's meeting?

Generative AI (GenAI) is transforming consulting, streamlining project execution, reshaping talent needs, and altering business models. Traditionally reliant on manual research and slide-making by large junior teams, consulting firms now see GenAI automate these processes, freeing consultants to focus on higher-value client work.

Faster Research and Analysis

GenAI's ability to process vast information has cut down research and hypothesis generation from weeks to hours.

A 2023 Harvard Business School and BCG study with 758 consultants found those using GPT-4 completed 12 per cent more tasks, 25 per cent faster, and with 40 per cent higher quality. Yet, performance dipped when AI was used for complex tasks without human oversight, underlining AI as an aid, not a replacement.

Firms like McKinsey now use GenAI tools (for instance, Lilli) for over 500,000 monthly queries, helping consultants focus on insight refinement and client interactions.

Talent and Team Shifts

The traditional consulting "pyramid" model, dependent on large junior teams, is shifting toward leaner hybrid teams blending strategy consultants with AI and tech experts.

- Junior consultants now focus earlier on critical thinking, hypothesis testing, and client communication.
- Mid- and senior-level consultants require AI literacy, from prompt engineering to bias evaluation.
- Firms are hiring fewer generalist MBAs and more data scientists and AI specialists. McKinsey employs over 7,000 digital and tech experts under QuantumBlack and McKinsey Digital.

Changing Business Models

As GenAI reduces timelines, billing purely on hours becomes less viable. Consulting firms are increasingly exploring new pricing structures that better reflect value delivered, rather than time spent. Firms are moving toward:

- Outcome-based pricing tied to client results.
- Subscription-based advisory models with continuous AI insights.
- Productising in-house AI tools as new revenue streams.

KPMG has a \$2 billion partnership with Microsoft to embed AI in audit and advisory, while PwC announced a \$1 billion AI investment to integrate GenAI across solutions and operations.

Consultants' Evolving Role

While GenAI automates research and analysis, consultants' roles are shifting toward:

- Framing problems for action.
- Interpreting AI outputs within client context.
- Facilitating stakeholder alignment and managing change.
- Ensuring ethical and secure AI deployment.

AI-generated plans still require buy-in from stakeholders and alignment with realities, making the consultant's human insight indispensable.

Opportunities and Challenges

GenAI offers a powerful toolkit, but its impact depends on how well consultants navigate its possibilities and pitfalls.

Opportunities:

- Faster, higher-quality insights.
- Expansion through proprietary AI tools.
- More strategic client engagements.

Challenges:

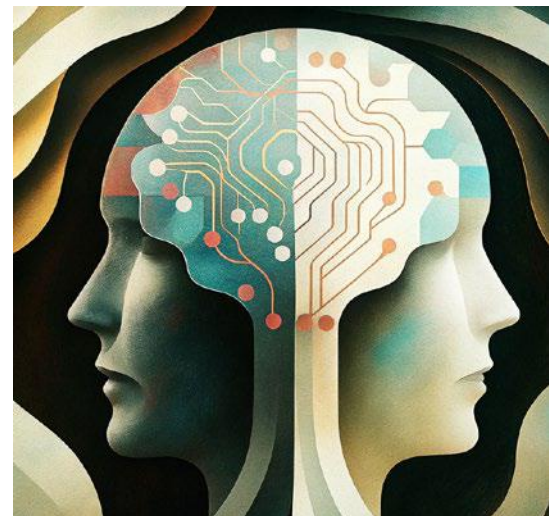
- Managing bias and hallucinations in GenAI outputs.
- Ensuring explainability to clients.
- Navigating data privacy and regulatory concerns.

Clients now expect firms to drive transformation, not just analysis, requiring a blend of AI and deep consulting expertise. Consultants must now act as both technologists and change agents to meet rising expectations.

The Road Ahead

With rapid advances, GenAI is no longer optional — it's foundational to the future of consulting. GenAI will become the default backbone of consulting:

- Routine analysis — automated.



- Strategy design and stakeholder alignment — human-led.
- Business models — moving toward value-based pricing.

AI-first consulting startups are emerging, challenging traditional players with faster, cost-efficient analysis. However, large firms retain an edge in trust, execution, and change management while leveraging GenAI for productivity.

Redefining Value

GenAI is not replacing consultants but amplifying their effectiveness. By automating repetitive tasks, it frees consultants to focus on strategy, enabling change, and aligning stakeholders. In this new landscape, consultants must continuously adapt and upskill, integrating AI seamlessly into their problem-solving frameworks.

As clients adopt AI internally, firms must deliver insightful, practical, and ethical advisory using AI as a tool, not a crutch. The future belongs to those who can blend tech fluency with deep business insight. Consultants who embrace AI while honing human-centric advisory skills will define the next era of strategy consulting, combining GenAI's scalability with human judgment to drive business results. ◀



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Healing in the Age of Headsets

How VR is Quietly Revolutionising Medicine



Virtual reality is quietly transforming healthcare — reshaping how doctors train, patients recover, and medical professionals build empathy in ways once thought impossible

 by Tanish Mathur



Al, blockchain, and Industry 4.0 are frequently discussed in conversations about digital transformation. However, virtual reality (VR) has subtly — and more significantly — transformed one of humanity's most vital industries: healthcare. Once used solely for entertainment and gaming, VR now enables medical students to learn at an unprecedented level, doctors to practise surgeries, and patients to process trauma in a safe, controlled environment. It has become a bridge between medical theory and practice, pushing the boundaries of care, training, and healing.

Precision, Training, and Treatment

The most obvious application of VR is in surgical training. With platforms like Elucis by Realize Medical, high-risk procedures such as neurosurgery or cardiovascular operations can now be practised in lifelike, fully immersive simulations. These

DIGITAL CARE

allow doctors to rehearse surgical techniques, examine patient-specific anatomy in three dimensions, and receive feedback — all without entering an operating theatre. This not only reduces procedural errors but also fosters a level of clinical confidence that textbooks alone cannot provide.

Beyond the operating table, VR is revolutionising physical rehabilitation. Elderly patients at risk of falls benefit from balance-enhancing virtual exercises, while stroke patients use gamified simulations to regain motor skills. The added capability of delivering these interventions remotely through telerehabilitation makes them more inclusive, particularly in post-pandemic healthcare models. This shift represents a profound change for many patients — from passive recovery to active, engaged healing.

Reimagining Mental Health and Empathy

VR's impact on mental health is equally noteworthy. Patients with addiction, PTSD, phobias, or social anxiety are gradually exposed to triggering

environments in controlled virtual settings. Whether it is a war veteran revisiting a battlefield simulation or someone with a fear of flying boarding a virtual aircraft, VR provides a safe space for confronting and resolving trauma. In cases where traditional treatments fall short — such as when patients struggle to articulate their emotions or visualise scenarios — exposure therapy has shown promising results.

Beyond individual therapy, VR is enhancing how we train future caregivers. Nursing students and clinical professionals can now experience patient interaction simulations, gaining insight into conditions like anxiety or dementia. This emotional immersion fosters empathy, preparing medical professionals to deliver more human-centred and compassionate care.

Educating Tomorrow's Medical Professionals

Medical education, traditionally reliant on cadavers, live patients, or plastic models, is being redefined by VR.

VR lets doctors rehearse surgeries and study patient-specific anatomy — without ever entering an operating room — raising both confidence and safety

The Simodont dental trainer allows students to practise procedures in a lifelike virtual environment





With apps like Simodont and Anatomy Builder VR, students can study anatomy in depth, practise dental procedures, and repeatedly simulate eye surgeries — safely and with precision. These tools are more than visual aids; they offer tactile, spatial, and interactive learning experiences that improve confidence, accuracy, and retention. As technology advances, VR-based medical education may become the norm, particularly for institutions without physical training facilities.

Virtual Reality Steps Up

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly accelerated VR adoption in healthcare. As schools moved online and hospitals restricted access, VR provided continuity — enabling remote training, virtual intensive care unit simulations, and mental health support. This period underscored VR's adaptability and cemented its role in healthcare systems that demand resilience and scalability.

The future holds vast potential. Global investment in medical VR — covering hardware and computing power — is rising. However, challenges

► **Exposure therapy through VR offers trauma survivors a safe, immersive space to confront fears that are difficult to verbalise or imagine**

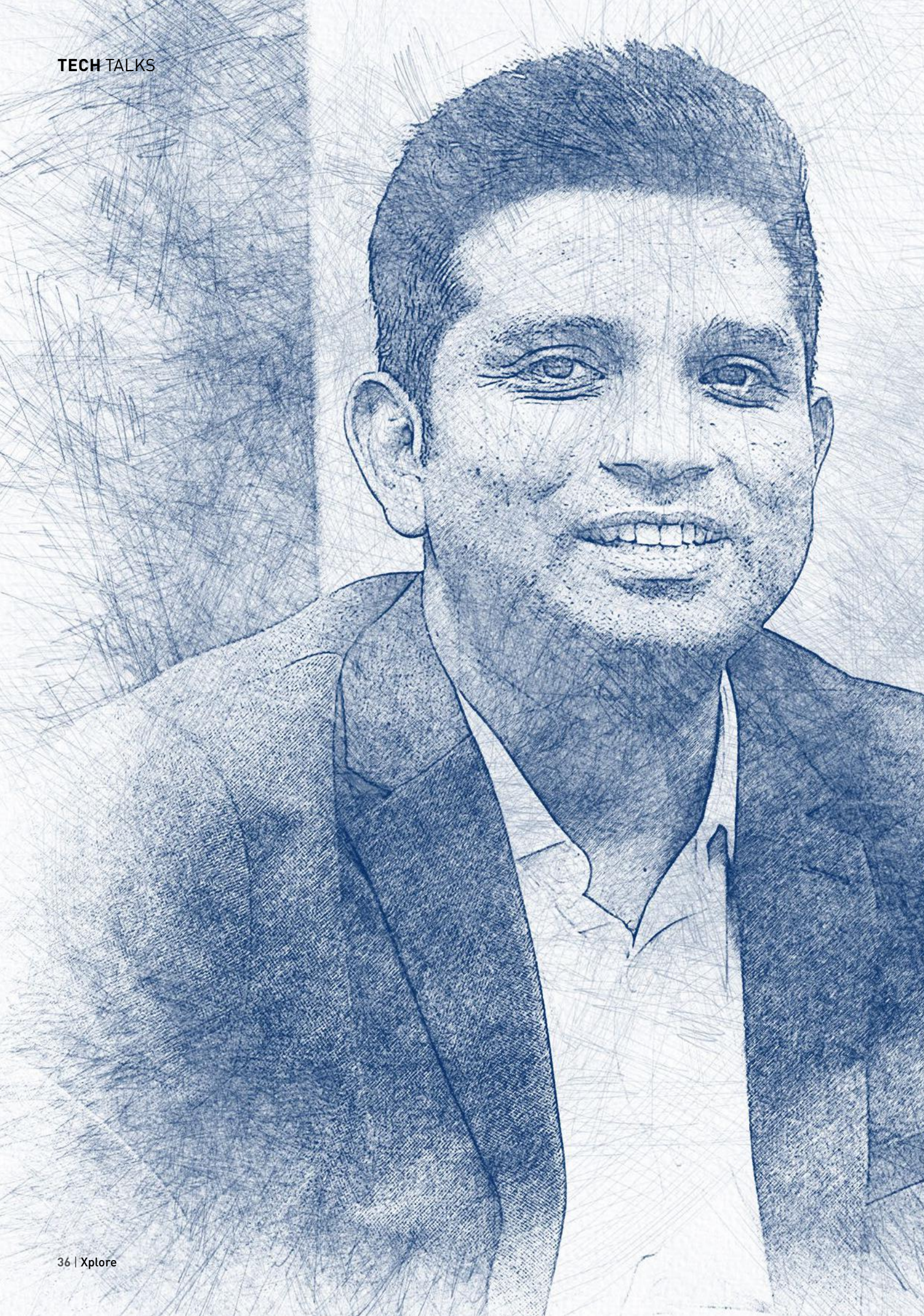
remain beyond cost, including data privacy, clinician adoption, and seamless integration with hospital systems. To unlock VR's full potential, collaboration among technologists, educators, and healthcare professionals will be essential.

People-Centred Digital Revolution

What sets VR apart in discussions about emerging technologies is its uniquely human impact. While much of digital transformation prioritises automation and efficiency, VR enhances interaction, empathy, and care. It empowers healthcare workers to learn better, patients to heal more safely, and systems to adapt faster. In a field where precision and compassion must go hand in hand, Virtual Reality is not just a digital upgrade — it is a paradigm shift. ◀



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“Your Future Coworkers Might Be AI Agents”

In a conversation with *Nandita Kumari*, **Mohammed Anzy**, Managing Director at Guidewire Software, explores the seismic shifts reshaping technology and leadership. From agent-based AI to biotech breakthroughs, he shares how transhumanist trends are redefining work and innovation. Drawing on his SAP and startup experience, Anzy urges India's next-gen entrepreneurs to harness public digital infrastructure and keep learning — to stay relevant and lead in a rapidly evolving landscape.

You've spent over two decades in the industry, witnessing rapid digital transformation and tech innovation firsthand. Which projects have excited you the most? And what key advice would you share with the next generation of leaders?

I take great pride in the work I've been part of. I consider myself fortunate to be working in this century — a time of tremendous change. After the Industrial Revolution, this is the most transformative era we've seen. Post-Covid, the surge in tech innovations, particularly transformer models and generative AI, has had a massive impact across industries.

I began my career at SAP, where I spent 18 years. The company gave me the opportunity to learn about different industries and contribute to products that made a tangible difference to customers' day-to-day operations. It taught me how to build software at scale, especially for clients with millions of users, ensuring seamless performance without disruption.

At SAP, I also helped establish a startup programme in India — SAP Startup

Studio — where I worked with multiple startups, assisting them with scaling, securing funding, building integrations, and finding product-market fit.

Another major milestone was the shift to cloud transformation — watching organisations transition from legacy systems to the cloud, enabling continuous innovation without the need for new installations. That was a significant change.

More recently, the rise of artificial intelligence, particularly generative AI, has accelerated the adoption of technology at every level. These are two of the most pivotal transformations I've witnessed in my career.

As a leader in tech innovation, which developments excite you the most?

Artificial intelligence, without a doubt. People often overestimate AI's short-term impact while underestimating its long-term potential. In the long run, AI will fundamentally change how we interact, develop, and deliver services. Entire industries will be transformed, and many organisations will face disruption.

Agent AI — where agents interact with each other to define and create software landscapes — is another thrilling development. This raises broader questions about the future structure of organisations. It won't just be humans; there will be a mix of agents, automated programmes, and people working together. Traditional hierarchies will evolve.

We're also seeing groundbreaking innovations in biotechnology. With tools like CRISPR, we can genetically modify DNA to enhance human potential — a major leap forward.

Brain-computer interfaces are another fascinating trend. Systems are being developed to read brain signals and interact directly with software. Apple, for instance, recently filed a patent for AirPods that capture neural activity. This could lead to far more seamless human-tech interactions.

Then there's augmentation — wearables like smart glasses, VR headsets, and Apple watches. These can track biomarkers and provide insights into personal improvement. The possibilities are endless. The critical

Agent AI will reshape workplaces — agents, programs, and people will collaborate, pushing us to rethink traditional org structures and hierarchies

question is: What are we doing to stay relevant in this future?

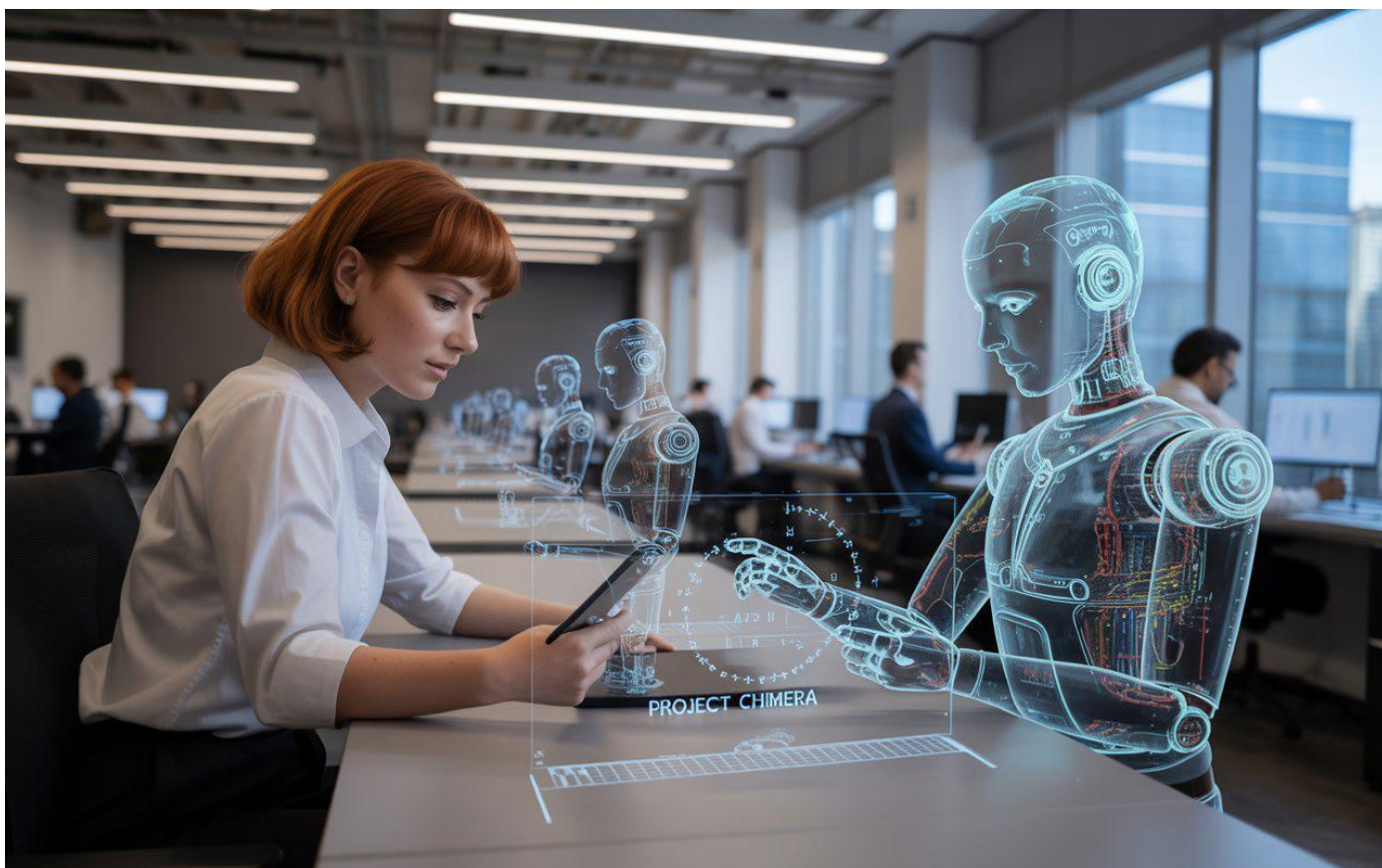
HR and IT may merge as functions, given the blend of organic and digital elements in the workforce. Performance assessments will need to account for both augmented and non-augmented individuals.

This evolution isn't new — some call it transhumanism, others see it as technological progress. Either way, technology is advancing at an unprecedented pace.

Drawing from your B2B startup and tech experience, what's one key piece of advice for young entrepreneurs or MBA professionals?

India presents an incredible opportunity. With a population of 1.5 billion, the world's largest biometric ID system (Aadhaar), and a robust digital stack — including UPI, ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce), and other public digital infrastructures — you can build entirely frictionless businesses here.

If you're passionate about creating something, you don't need to look beyond India. The country has the user





base, mobile penetration, data access, and financial inclusion needed for scalable innovation.

You can build systems that serve a billion people. As Pramod Varma, former Chief Architect of Aadhaar, once said: Human-scale problems need human-scale solutions — and India provides the platform to develop them.

Biotechnology is another high-potential sector. It's still relatively untapped, so entering early allows you to build intellectual property in India and scale globally.

Given these industry shifts, employees undergo many transitions. Leaders must make critical decisions while keeping teams engaged. What core

India has all the ingredients — digital stack, user base, and scale — to build businesses that serve a billion people

values guide you in such situations?

The foremost value is fostering a culture of learning. Upskilling should be a continuous pursuit for everyone — not just CXOs. There's no permanent competitive advantage. Every day is a test of whether you've improved from the day before.

Second, focus on creating delta — making a meaningful impact. Historically, we've been obsessed with perfection, but time-to-value matters more. Perfection should emerge as a byproduct of strong processes.

My strong recommendation is to prioritise progress — incremental development and consistent delivery. Over time, these small improvements lead to massive disruption. That mindset is crucial for any organisation. ◀



New Tools Same People

We've been upgrading our tools for centuries, hoping for transformation. But the real operating system — us — still runs on instinct, ego, and the odd flash of brilliance

 by Shivangi Sharma

Every era has its tools. Fire, the wheel, the printing press, Excel. Today, it's AI, no-code platforms, and workflow automation. Each time, we tell ourselves this is different — a revolution, a reset, a step into the future. But in all the noise about what's new, we forget what's not: *us*.

Humans remain the same wonderfully flawed, pattern-seeking, meaning-making creatures we've always been. We romanticise change and resist it in the same breath. We adopt new tools with evangelical enthusiasm, only to wield them with old mindsets. If anything, we're not addicted to technology — we're addicted to the feeling of progress.

Old Mindsets, New Machines

Take leadership. Many companies have adopted cutting-edge digital platforms, yet continue to run on outdated command-and-control thinking. You can give a 1980s management mindset a 2025 dashboard, but all you'll get is micromanagement at scale. As Marshall McLuhan said, "We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us." But let's be honest: most leaders haven't stuck

around long enough to be shaped back.

Employees, too, are often branded as "resistant to change", when in fact, they're just reacting to a deeper emotional undercurrent — the fear of becoming irrelevant. People rarely reject tools because they're difficult; they reject them because they threaten identity. McKinsey found that 70 per cent of digital transformations fail, and the culprit isn't clunky software — it's fragile culture.

We've also fallen for the illusion that tools can build culture. They can't. Slack doesn't make you collaborative. Miro doesn't make you creative. A toxic workplace simply becomes a toxic workplace with emojis. Culture is analogue. Tools can only amplify what already exists — or reveal the absence of it.

Marketing's Tech Overload

Marketing departments are buried under an avalanche of tech. The average team uses over 30 different platforms, yet brand differentiation is at an all-time low. Why? Because we've mistaken data for insight, and automation for creativity. AI can write a headline, but it can't tell

you if it's worth writing. That still takes human taste — a resource in shorter supply than GPUs.

Sales has evolved in channels, not in essence. Sure, we now have AI-scored leads, automated sequences, and hyper-personalised outreach. But the close still hinges on trust, timing, and tenacity. You can't automate chemistry. As sales author Jeffrey Gitomer says, "People don't like to be sold, but they love to buy — from people they like." New tools, same rules.

Efficiency Isn't Effectiveness

Operations have digitised everything from procurement to project tracking. But scaling chaos with better dashboards is still chaos. When underlying processes are broken or ownership unclear, tech doesn't fix it — it just makes dysfunction more efficient. Clarity is the real productivity tool.

And then there's HR. You can optimise hiring pipelines with AI and track engagement scores to the decimal. But judgment, empathy, and potential don't show up in analytics. Great hires aren't just data points — they're stories, instincts, sometimes even leaps of faith.

Customers? They don't care what's powering your backend. Whether it's generative AI or a tired support agent in a call centre, they remember how you made them feel. Experience, not tech stack, drives loyalty.

People Still Power Progress

So yes, the tools are new. Sleeker, smarter, faster. But the people wielding them — the ambitions, insecurities, egos, and empathy — haven't changed all that much. And maybe that's not a limitation. Maybe that's the point.

Because innovation isn't about replacing people. It's about enabling them — flaws and all — to do what they've always done: adapt, learn, build, and occasionally, stumble forward into something brilliant. ◀



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What Moves First When **Everything's in Motion**

In Pune, the Xplore roundtable centred on a quiet but urgent question: what do you fix first when everything feels slightly off? When the strategy sharpens, but structure lags. When speed picks up, but no one's sure who owns what. When clarity exists—just not all at once. And yet, execution can't wait.







Some shifts are visible. Others creep in. Either way, decisions get made. People move. And momentum starts building—sometimes before the wiring catches up. This discussion unpacked what happens in that gap between intention and



infrastructure, and why progress often begins before alignment ever does.

Fixing One Thing Changes Everything Else

You can't wait for structure, speed, and strategy to sync. So something moves first. But what? Leaders shared how real

Attendees: Abhijeet Gonguli, DemandFarm; Arjun Jain, Varroc; Deepak Chandani, Angel One; Dolly Takkhi, Taffy Labs; James V Chelliah, Tata BlueScope Steel; Sandeep Kapoor, Thermax; Shrikant Sarda, Accenture; Shubhankar Chatterji, Cummins India; Rajesh Korde, Northern Trust Corporation; Richa Shekhar, Principal Global Services; Umme Haani, KPMG; Venkatesh Palanidas, Arya Omnitalk; Vivek Bhamodkar, Deloitte



progress often comes from stabilising one layer—org charts, ownership, clarity on what matters—and watching the rest recalibrate. The danger is when different parts of the system make different bets on what's stable.

Alignment Can't Be a Prerequisite

If alignment is always the first step, the organisation never takes a second. The group challenged the idea that consensus must precede motion. Sometimes action creates alignment, not the other way around. And sometimes, useful friction is better than a perfect pause.

Town Halls Don't Change What People Do—Until Something Else Does

Communication may be clear, but belief is slower. This session explored how town halls shift perception only when backed by consistent signals—actions, incentives, informal cues. Messaging opens the door. But people walk through only when they see who else has.

Ownership Moves Quietly Before It Moves Officially

Before org charts get updated, roles are already shifting. People step up, step back, and navigate the blur between initiative and overreach. The real question isn't who owns what on paper—it's who's holding the line when priorities move midstream.

Change rarely waits for everything to be ready. And in that mismatch between momentum and structure, the most adaptive teams don't chase perfection. They move—with just enough alignment, just enough clarity, and the discipline to make adjustments before cracks become fractures. ◀

“Innovation Isn’t Chaos. It’s a System”

In this wide-ranging exchange, **Shubhabrata Roy** — Founder and Chair of BIAS, a behavioural science “Do-Tank” — dismantles the myth of innovation as a product of chaos and creativity alone. Roy argues that the most meaningful innovations stem from structured, systems-led approaches. Speaking to *Madhumeta Rajkumar*, he reflects on the promise and pitfalls of behavioural science, the role of biases in HR, the real meaning of inclusion, and how consulting must evolve to turn insight into impact. As Roy puts it, the most innovative leaders may not be visionaries in a lab — they’re professionals solving problems from nine to eight, every day.

Innovation is often labelled as a buzzword in today’s business lexicon. In your view, what does ‘innovation’ truly entail? How do you distinguish genuine innovation from mere rhetoric?

There are different ways to approach innovation, and I’d like to structure my response in two parts: first, what innovation entails, and second, how innovation can be made more effective within a system, rather than distinguishing between “genuine” and “ingenuine” innovation.

To begin with, there are three paradigms through which we can look at innovation. The first is the *temporal paradigm*, which views innovation across short-term, medium-term, and long-term horizons.

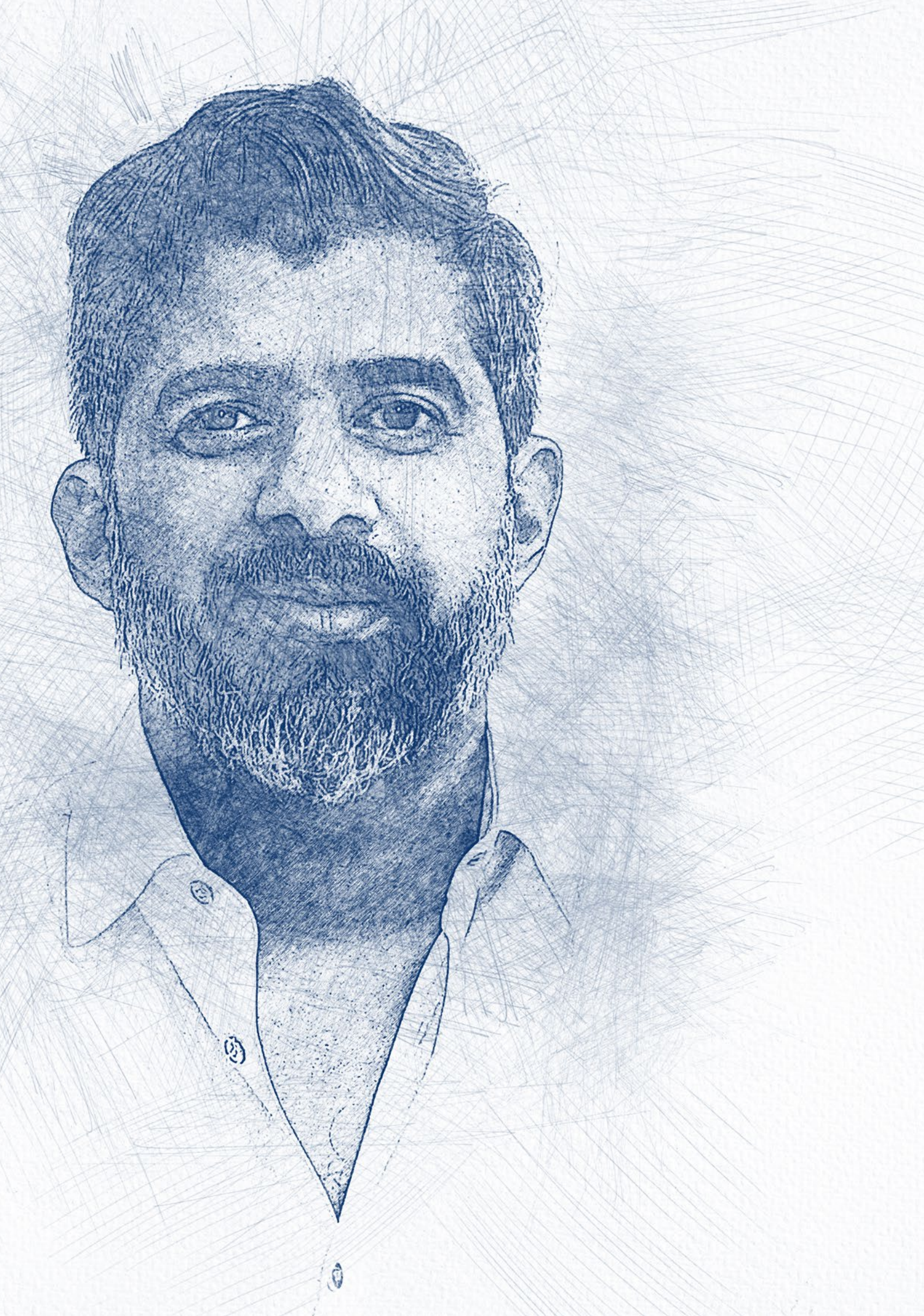
In the short-term, innovation solves yesterday’s problems. For example, you notice something going wrong — perhaps due to competitive pressures, regulatory changes, or geopolitical

factors — and need to resolve it. This kind of innovation is about catching up and solving immediate issues.

The medium-term perspective focuses on goals for the next one to two years. Here, innovation aligns with the organisation’s vision, ensuring progress without venturing into highly disruptive territory. You work with a clear understanding of the organisation’s direction and drive innovation accordingly.

Lastly, long-term innovation is about aligning with the organisation’s broader vision — what it aspires to achieve in the next 10 years or more. This is where revolutionary ideas come into play. Think of Uber disrupting transportation, Elon Musk’s dreams of colonising Mars, or NASA’s advancements in space exploration. Such innovations aim to shape the future and leave a lasting legacy.

Another paradigm is the *quantum of innovation* — the scale or degree of change being pursued. At the most basic



level, you have incremental innovation, which involves minor improvements to a product, service, or process. For example, enhancing production efficiency, reducing costs, or slightly improving the quality of a product.

The next level is medium-scale innovation, which offers a competitive advantage but isn't entirely disruptive. For instance, replacing traditional toothpaste with chewable tablets — a notable improvement, but not a radical departure.

Innovation is not about mad scientists and chaos. The best innovations follow a disciplined, structured, and systems-driven process

Finally, there's radical innovation, where the entire concept changes. For example, imagine a toothbrush releasing cleaning agents without toothpaste. In manufacturing, radical innovation might involve embedding a mini-factory within fishing trawlers, where fish are caught, cleaned, and canned onboard, significantly reducing supply chain inefficiencies.

The third paradigm is the *systems perspective* of innovation. Contrary to popular belief, innovation isn't just about chaotic creativity. It's often a systematic, structured process involving internal and external stakeholders, a supportive organisational culture, dedicated resources, and defined procedures. Successful companies and industries — be it IKEA, Tesla, or Nordic fishing firms — follow a systems approach, ensuring that creativity is channelled effectively within a process.

Joseph Schumpeter's concept of "creative destruction" illustrates that innovation often requires breaking away from the status quo. However, industries sometimes stagnate due to inefficiencies and need fresh, often external perspectives to drive change. For instance, Tesla wasn't founded by

legacy car manufacturers, Uber didn't come from traditional taxi companies, and Airbnb wasn't created by hotel chains. These disruptors came from the outside, highlighting how both internal and external forces drive innovation.

To sum up, innovation can be viewed through three lenses: temporal, quantum, and systems. Temporal innovation addresses immediate, medium-term, and long-term goals; quantum innovation spans incremental to radical changes; and the systems perspective ensures a structured, sustainable process. Genuine innovation isn't about meeting a rigid definition — it's about what organisations and industries prioritise and how they align their efforts with their goals.

Moreover, this comprehensive view challenges the romanticised idea of innovation as purely chaotic or creative. It's not about mad scientists or wild ideas emerging from disorder. The most innovative companies — whether in tech, manufacturing, or design — are often those that integrate creativity into a disciplined, systems-driven process. Innovators may not look like characters from a James Bond movie; they're professionals working nine-to-five (or nine-to-eight) jobs, systematically advancing their organisations' vision. While creativity plays a role, innovation thrives on structure, discipline, and a robust process.

Behavioural sciences have traditionally been perceived as niche and emerging. Given your extensive experience, do you believe the time has finally come for behavioural science to take centre stage in business transformation? How do you see its role evolving in the near future?

The answer is both yes and no. To borrow from Dickens, it's the best of times and the worst of times for behavioural science.

Why is it the best of times? Never before have organisations faced such immense challenges in adapting to change and driving innovation. The Covid-19 pandemic, geopolitical upheavals, and economic fluctuations have highlighted the need for fresh approaches to problem-solving. At the core of how the world operates is human behaviour. Everything — how nations behave, how industries behave, and how



organisations and their leaders behave —has a behavioural component.

During Covid, for instance, we saw a shift in leadership priorities. There was a renewed focus on what were traditionally labelled “soft skills” like empathy. Women leaders were often praised for outperforming their male counterparts due to their empathetic leadership styles. Although I personally disagree with the terminology of “soft versus hard leadership,” this trend underlined the growing recognition of behavioural factors in decision-making.

In marketing, we see that traditional strategies that worked for decades are now falling short. Television commercials remain important for building awareness, but they’re no longer enough. Today’s consumers are bombarded with stimuli — short-form videos, social media reels, and endless streams of information. Decision-making has become increasingly complex due to limited time, overwhelming choices, and fragmented attention spans. Behavioural science provides critical insights into how consumers make decisions in this new environment. For instance, the classical economic model assumes rationality, yet we see behaviours that defy these assumptions. A consumer might meticulously compare telecom plans for hours, saving a few rupees, but walk into an Apple store and spend ₹30,000 impulsively on accessories. Behavioural science helps unpack these seemingly contradictory decisions.

Then again, we see an intent-action gap. Whether it’s an organisation’s behaviour, a citizen’s behaviour, or a consumer’s behaviour, we are grappling for answers. What worked in the past —the proverbial carrots and sticks — no longer seems effective. This gap is a cornerstone of behavioural sciences, which focus on alternate ways of researching, influencing, and designing behaviour. This is also the foundation of the work by thinkers like Daniel Kahneman, who have explored the complexities of human decision-making and provided us with tools to address these challenges.

At the societal level, this gap is evident in areas like financial and health behaviours. Despite the rise of fintech and health-tech influencers, are people becoming healthier? Not really. Are they



making smarter financial decisions? Again, not as much as expected. For example, Indian consumers often avoid insurance and have poor savings habits, despite the availability of information. Behavioural science aims to bridge this gap between intent and action by understanding people and designing interventions that resonate with real-world behaviour.

However, while the potential is immense, the challenges are significant. First, there’s no established “behavioural science industry.” Clients are often too preoccupied with solving immediate problems to explore new approaches. Bringing the science to them is the first hurdle.

Second, there is a lack of India-specific case studies and proof of concepts (POCs). While behavioural science may have proven successful in Western contexts, clients often question its applicability in their unique environments. Creating relevant POCs requires investment in time and resources.

Third, behavioural science is experimental by nature, and the term “experiment” can scare clients. People — including leaders and decision-makers — are inherently risk-averse and tend to default to traditional methods, even when those methods are less effective. Convincing them to adopt behavioural science and embrace experimentation is a significant challenge.

Finally, it is difficult to find academics willing to engage in applied

Behavioural science helps bridge the intent-action gap, offering tools to influence real-world decisions across health, finance, and consumer choices

research. Behavioural science often straddles the line between academia and practice, and many academics prefer theoretical work over the messy realities of real-world implementation.

To sum up, while behavioural science is gaining recognition and relevance, there’s still a long road ahead. It’s not just about understanding human behaviour but also about bridging the gap between theory and practice. With the right investments in proof of concepts and collaborative efforts between academia and industry, behavioural science can truly transform how we approach business, policy, and society.

BIAS operates as a ‘Do-Tank’ rather than a traditional consulting firm. Could you share the inspiration behind this approach? What strategic vision drives BIAS, and how do you see this model transforming the consulting landscape?

Honestly, there wasn’t a single moment of inspiration behind creating a Do-Tank — it was driven by necessity. It emerged from the frustrations of clients and colleagues across industries who felt they were unable to move the needle on critical challenges despite having access to excellent tools, data, and frameworks.

Take, for example, personal behaviours. Even with perfect health apps and advanced technology, not everyone exercises regularly, monitors their calorie intake, or follows through on actions they know are good for them. Not everyone buys insurance, drives safely, or makes decisions in their best interest. This gap — between what is known and what is done — sparked the question: What can be done differently?

India has a robust market research and analytics ecosystem, complete with advanced AI, machine learning tools, and strong insights-generation capabilities. But many CXOs I spoke with — nearly 50 to 100 during the early days of BIAS — expressed the same frustration: *We have the data and*

the insights. Now what? That was the genesis of the Do-Tank: bridging the gap between insights and action.

A Do-Tank operates differently from traditional models. Most consulting firms approach problems from either a rational, analytical perspective or a purely creative one. For example, you’ll see solutions grounded in SBCC (social and behaviour change communication) or UI/UX design,

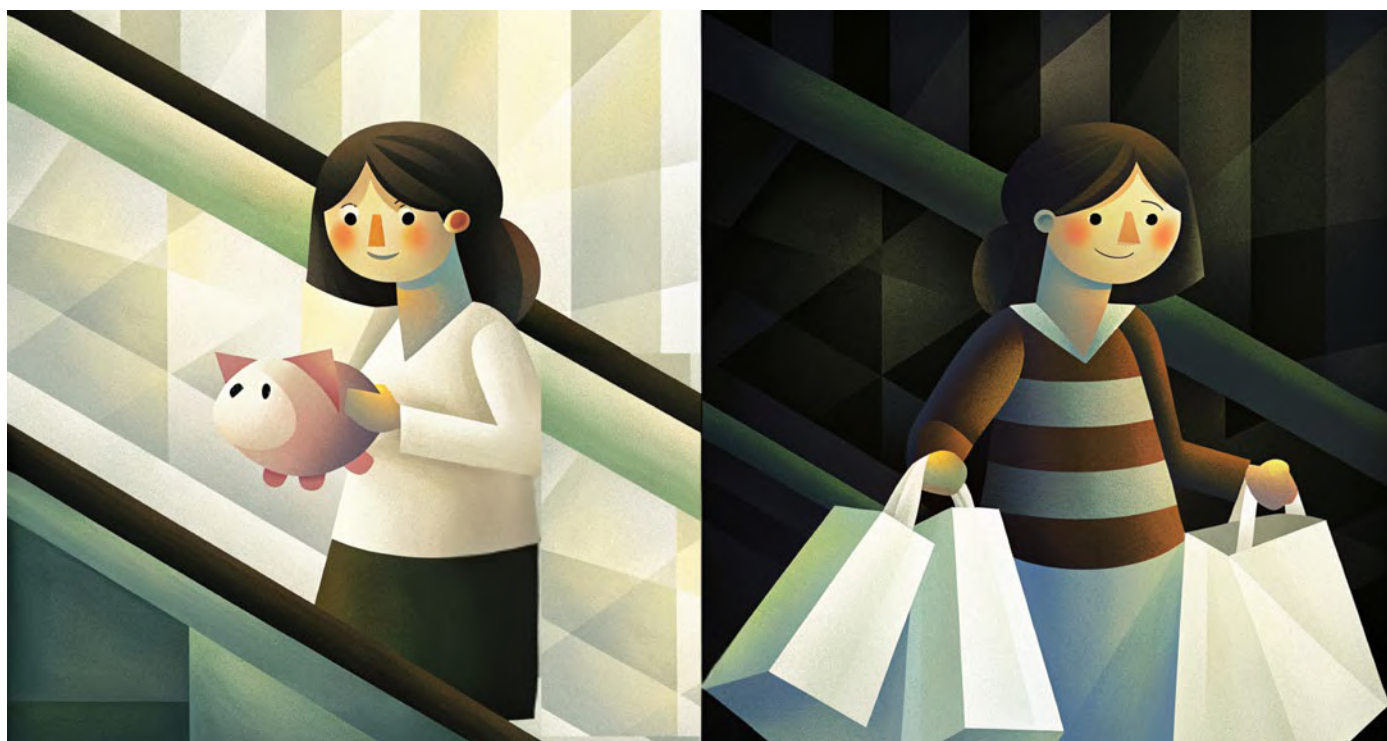
We compare telecom plans for hours, then impulsively splurge at an Apple store — behavioural science helps decode these conflicting decision patterns

which simplify consumer journeys, or in pricing strategies rooted in economics and finance. However, these approaches often miss the opportunity to combine science-based creativity with behavioural problem-solving.

This is where behavioural science principles come in. Take pricing as an example. Traditional approaches to pricing focus on rational analysis — cost, margins, and market conditions. Behavioural science, however, examines how price communication and psychology influence decision-making. Concepts like decoy pricing and anchoring become critical tools for reframing price perceptions. For instance, after a certain point, consumers become desensitised to the word “free” or to seeing slashed prices. Behavioural science introduces nuanced approaches to overcome these cognitive blind spots.

Another example is app design. Many apps are designed with functionality in mind, but often fail to consider real-world user behaviour. Some users may struggle with inclusivity, accessibility, or usability challenges. Behavioural science, combined with design thinking, helps address these obstacles by focusing on how users actually interact with the app, not just how designers intend them to.

Behavioural science also brings



unique value to advertising and communication. For instance, Rory Sutherland, Vice Chairman of Ogilvy, realised that in today's world of overwhelming messaging clutter, traditional advertising approaches needed an overhaul. That realisation led to initiatives like Ogilvy's Behavioural Science Practice, which leverages behavioural insights to create impactful communication strategies.

BIAS builds on these ideas, applying behavioural science across domains to solve real-world challenges. By merging rigorous scientific methods with creative problem-solving, we address issues from pricing and design to communication and decision-making. The Do-Tank model ensures that insights are actionable and outcomes measurable, transforming not just how problems are approached but also how they are solved.

In summary, the strategic vision behind BIAS is simple but powerful: combine behavioural science, creativity, and data to bridge the gap between knowledge and action. By doing so, we aim to reshape consulting for a world that demands both innovative thinking and practical solutions.

Behavioural science is often associated with marketing, but its applications go far beyond that. What are some other ways behavioural science can promote business transformation?

HR is one key area where behavioural science can have a significant impact. Let me start by drawing a parallel to marketing. Just as behavioural science helps marketers understand and influence consumer behaviour, it can also help HR teams address biases and create more equitable workplaces.

In today's diverse world, we often talk about inclusion and equity, but the reality is that humans are not immune to implicit biases. These biases stem from our evolutionary traits. In fact, biases have historically been survival mechanisms — helping us decide whether to fight, flee, or, in certain cases, find a mate. For example, if you see a six-foot-tall individual with an eye patch and a knife in a dark alley, your instinct is to run, not to consider whether they might just be misunderstood or differently abled. This immediate response is rooted



Clients kept asking: we have data, insights, frameworks — now what? BIAS was born to close that gap between knowledge and action

in our primal instincts.

However, while these biases served a purpose historically, they manifest in modern workplaces in ways that can perpetuate inequality. Let's take diversity in organisations as an example. What are the kinds of diversity you would expect in a truly inclusive organisation?

- *Gender representation* is one obvious area, ensuring women have a strong presence in leadership and decision-making roles.
- *Age diversity* is another, breaking down hierarchies and encouraging inclusivity across generations.
- *Religious and ethnic representation* is equally critical to creating a workplace that reflects broader societal diversity.

These are the more obvious

categories, but behavioural scientists encourage organisations to look beyond them. For instance:

- *Geographic diversity*: Consider individuals from Tier 1 cities versus Tier 2 towns or villages. Someone from a rural background may face different challenges than someone from a metropolitan upbringing.
- *Stability privilege*: Employees who grew up in geopolitically stable regions have an inherent advantage compared to those from conflict zones. Organisations need to create opportunities for people from less privileged backgrounds to thrive.
- *Disability representation*: This includes both visible and invisible disabilities, ensuring an inclusive environment for all levels of ability.
- *Socioeconomic diversity*: Someone from a wealthy family has access to resources and opportunities that others may not.
- *Criminal rehabilitation*: There's even scope to consider individuals with criminal backgrounds and offer them pathways to reintegrate into society.

A concept I recommend exploring is the "wheel of privileges." This framework helps identify different layers of privilege that often go unnoticed in organisational diversity strategies, from skin colour to access to education, geographic stability, and more. Behavioural scientists can work closely with HR teams to go beyond these

surface-level biases and design systems that promote true equity and inclusion. Using insights from people science, HR can create not only diverse workplaces but also equitable environments where everyone has a fair chance to succeed. This approach transforms HR from simply managing diversity to actively leveraging behavioural insights to build more inclusive and high-performing organisations.

Diversity isn't just gender or ethnicity. True inclusion examines privilege – geography, stability, disability, and socio-economic background must also be considered

BIAS operates at the intersection of academia, private sector and policy makers. Academia-industry collaboration often faces significant challenges, particularly when it comes to applying theoretical frameworks to real-world scenarios. From your experience at BIAS, what are the major barriers to effective collaboration, and what roadmap do you envision to bridge this gap?

There are three major challenges in academia-industry collaboration that I've observed:

1. The accepted range of error:

In industry, speed often trumps precision. Businesses are typically comfortable working with 80 per cent accuracy if it means they can act quickly and seize opportunities. Missing the bus on timing can cost them dearly. This mindset is captured in terms like minimum viable product (MVP) — a concept the industry frequently relies on to balance basic due diligence with rapid execution.

Academia, on the other hand, prioritises rigour and strives for perfection. For academics, quality cannot be compromised, even if it means extended timelines. This difference in priorities — perfectionism versus pragmatism — creates a fundamental tension. The challenge lies in marrying

these two mindsets, finding a middle ground where timelines are reasonable, and quality is acceptable to both sides.

2. Limited applied research expertise in academia:

Another significant challenge, especially in the Indian context, is that academics often have deep theoretical knowledge but lack experience with applied research. In social sciences, such as behavioural science and marketing, the gap between theory and practice has widened considerably over time.

For example, in your marketing classes, you've likely studied consumer psychology, societal changes, and social norms. But how often do we see marketing teams in the industry staffed with specialists like PhDs in sociology or consumer psychology? Rarely, if ever. In finance, sales, or marketing teams, professionals with academic backgrounds in these specialised fields are conspicuously absent.

At BIAS, we're trying to change this. We aim to serve as an interface that connects knowledge producers (academia) with knowledge users (industry). By fostering a continuous dialogue between these two worlds, we can ensure that academia focuses on applied research that directly addresses the needs of the industry, economy, and society. This feedback loop is critical: the industry provides real-world insights to academia, helping researchers understand what to study and how it can be practically applied.

3. Bridging specialists and generalists:

Academia often represents specialists, while the industry is typically made up of generalists. Both perspectives are valuable, but the lack of collaboration means these groups often operate in silos. Students, in particular, can benefit immensely from exposure to both worlds. By creating partnerships that encourage interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, we can bridge this divide and help students





become versatile professionals who can navigate the demands of both academia and industry.

At BIAS, we see ourselves as catalysts for this collaboration, helping academia and industry work together seamlessly. By building these bridges, we hope to transform not just how problems are studied but also how they're solved.

You're a master of all trades — you've got an MBA, a Master's in Public Policy, a Master's in Design Thinking, and now you're now pursuing a PhD at IIT-Delhi as well. You seem to have bridged the gap between being both a specialist and a generalist. For aspiring consultants and future generations, what would you recommend? Should we focus on a more generalised strategy or adopt a specialised approach to build our skill sets?

It's really a matter of choice. I call it the choice between the "B" and the "P." The "B" stands for business — like the "B" in Bombay (or Mumbai, as we now call it) — and represents those who want to take care of business problems, solving challenges at the C-suite level. The "P," on the other hand, stands for PhD and represents expertise. If you're drawn to deep domain knowledge and becoming a subject matter expert, you go for the "P."

Ideally, though, the best approach is what we often call the T-shaped model.

Traditional advertising and pricing strategies are reaching their limits. Behavioural science offers fresh, science-backed ways to nudge decisions

You should have a broad understanding of business —spanning finance, HR, marketing, and more — while also possessing some depth in a particular domain. Think of it as having minimal viable knowledge of the industry or domain you work in, alongside the ability to connect the dots across disciplines.

Going forward, I would suggest aspiring professionals aim to specialise in what I call a "dual-focus approach." I know it sounds contradictory — specialising while embracing duality — but it's critical. Here's why: If you focus

solely on depth, you risk being seen only as a domain expert, a subject matter specialist, or what I'd call a knowledge producer. While that's valuable — especially for roles like research or academia — it limits your ability to traverse the broader aspects of business.

Conversely, if you only focus on the broader business context, like many leaders from past generations who were highly qualified engineers, you may struggle to engage meaningfully with experts in today's specialised and dynamic world. In a rapidly changing environment, leaders now need to understand much more than just the basics of finance or marketing. They need to grasp digital marketing, UI/UX design, people science, and technology trends, among other things.

For example, Mark Zuckerberg recently highlighted that for tech-driven companies, it's critical for the top leadership to have a deep understanding of technology. This principle applies across industries — leaders need to know their domain as well as the business context.

So, my advice? Don't choose between business and subject matter expertise. Instead, integrate both. The ability to combine these dimensions will define successful leaders in the future. And honestly, people are talented and resourceful enough to achieve this balance with the right mindset and effort. ◀



Twisters by Abraham Aby

1 Who is the current CEO who famously said, "We're not just a car company, we're a tech company"?

2 Which former investment banker swapped spreadsheets for lipsticks, launching a beauty e-commerce platform at the age of 50 that went on to become a billion-dollar unicorn?

3 Which Indian healthcare entrepreneur, inspired by NASA's moon landing, founded a hospital chain in the 1980s and named it after the historic mission?

4 Which company's maxim was 'Follow the Cable' way back in the 1850s?

5 The sales of which brand surged approximately 50 per cent after *Risky Business* (1983), and then climbed another 40 per cent following *Top Gun* (1986), thanks to Tom Cruise's iconic portrayal?

1. Elon Musk, 2. Falguni Nayar, 3. Dr Prathap C Reddy, Apollo Hospitals, 4. Reuters News Agency, 5. Ray-Ban (Aviator sunglasses)



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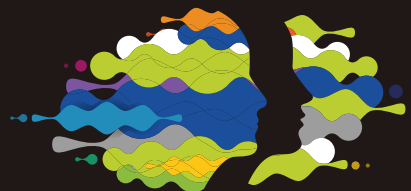
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