

- Power of Storytelling
- Data Centre Dilemma
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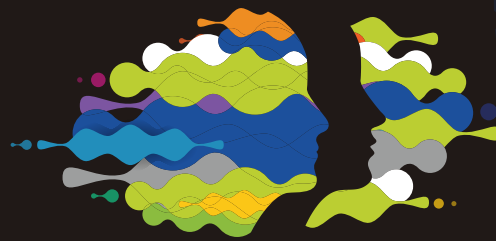
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**Let's continue
to challenge
ourselves, to push
boundaries, and
to celebrate the
joy of learning.**

The last few months with Xplore have been nothing short of inspirational. It's as if we've been on a collective journey, navigating through a sea of new ideas, engaging with thought-provoking perspectives, and uncovering truths that were once shrouded in mystery. The flood of appreciative messages from the corporate and the academic community has been both humbling and exhilarating. Each word of encouragement reaffirms our mission and fuels our passion for exploration.

This period of growth and discovery has been marked by a series of revelations—about the world around us, the infinite potential within us, and the unbreakable bonds that connect us. Every article, every feature, every conversation has contributed to a richer, more vibrant sharing of knowledge. We've seen the power of shared curiosity and the beauty of diverse thought coming together to forge something truly remarkable.

As we move forward, let's carry the spark of inspiration that has illuminated these months. Let's continue to challenge ourselves, to push boundaries, and to celebrate the joy of learning. Your stories, your insights, and your enthusiasm are the heartbeat of Xplore. Together, we're not just reading about change; we're living it, creating it, and leading it.

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Xplore has grown into a vibrant forum for exchange, where every voice is valued, and every opinion is considered.

Xplore has been a journey of connection, a path that has led me to say “hello” to so many new people, ideas, and perspectives. Each edition has been an open door, inviting us to step into the worlds of others, to share in their experiences, and to learn from their wisdom. This adventure has gone beyond just uncovering knowledge; it’s been about building a community of curious souls, eager to explore the unknown.

The interactions I’ve had, and the stories I’ve heard, have enriched my understanding and expanded my worldview. It’s been a privilege to witness the growth of this platform into a vibrant forum for exchange, where every voice is valued, and every opinion is considered. Xplore has become a bridge, connecting diverse minds and fostering a sense of belonging among those who dare to question, to dream, and to innovate.

As we embark on the next phase of our journey, I’m filled with anticipation for the new connections that await, for the fresh insights that will emerge, and for the endless possibilities that lie ahead. Let’s continue to embrace the spirit of exploration that defines us, welcoming new faces, new ideas, and new opportunities with open arms. Together, we’ll keep pushing the boundaries of what we know, discovering new horizons, and shaping the future of our ever-expanding community.

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EDITOR'S MUSINGS

Navigating the world of Xplore has been a bit like hosting a dinner party that's gone wonderfully off-script. Picture this: each edition, we set the table with care, laying out a spread of ideas and stories, expecting a civilised evening. But what happens? Our guests—your brilliant minds—bring along their own dishes of thoughts, turning the affair into an unforgettable feast of insights.

This journey with Xplore? It's less of a stately cruise and more of a spirited jaunt through a land of "what-ifs" and "why-nots," where we all end up friends who can't help but dive into discussions that last until dawn. The magic of Xplore isn't just in the articles themselves but in the lively banter they spark, the kind of conversations that have us laughing, pondering, and sometimes, rethinking life's big questions over a metaphorical cup of tea (or a literal one, if you prefer).

What stands out isn't just the resilience of human curiosity but the joy of sharing that adventure with others. Each piece we share is a toast to the endless possibilities that unfold when we let our guards down and our imaginations run wild.

As we look forward to the next round of stories, let's keep this spirited dialogue alive. It's your curiosity, your insights, and, yes, your sense of humour that turn the pages of Xplore into a lively gathering of like-minded souls. Here's to more discoveries, more shared laughs, and the unexpected joys of wandering through the maze of knowledge together. So, grab your explorer's hat (bow tie optional), and let's see where the conversation takes us next.

Hari Govind Nair

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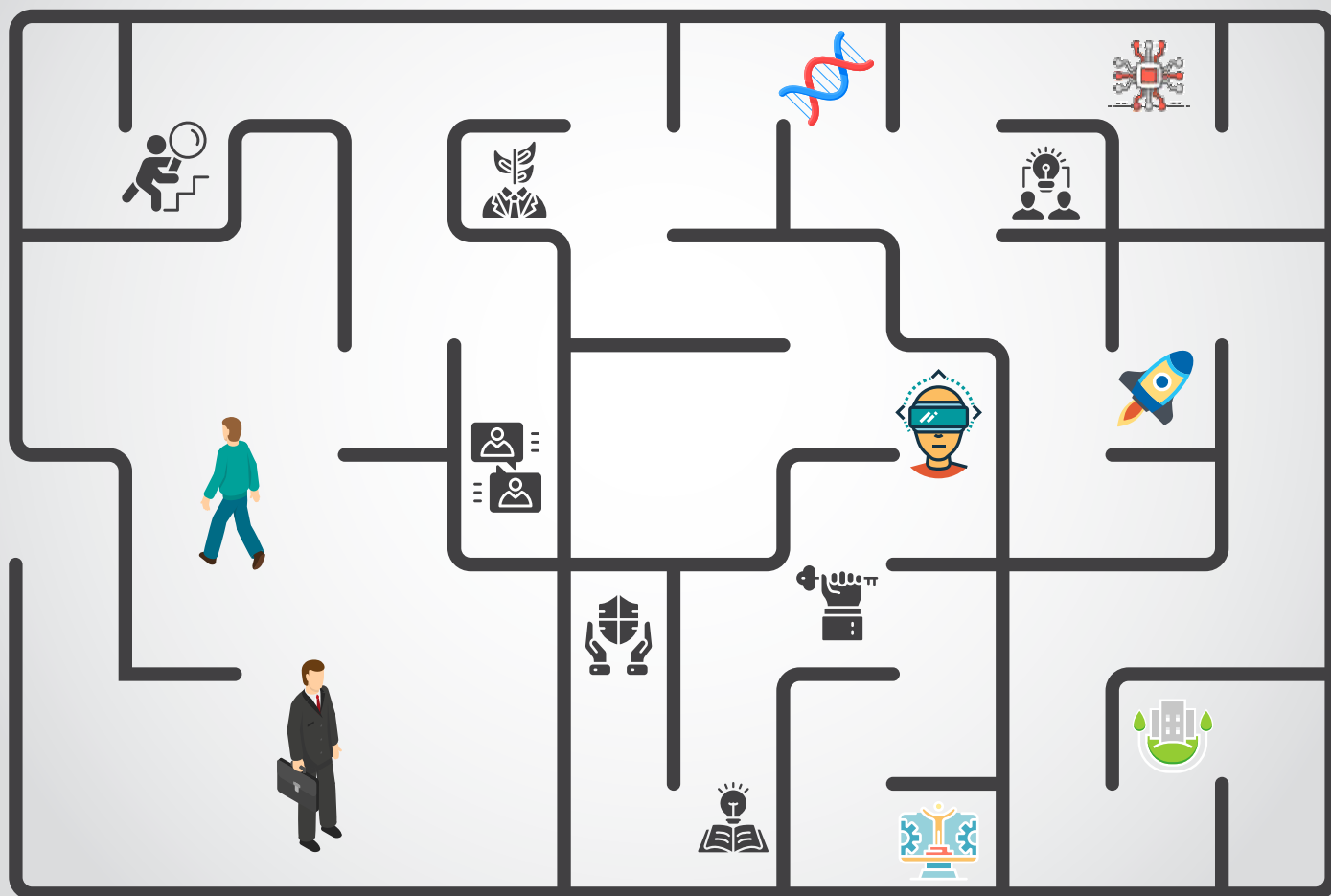
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CEO LOUNGE



34

Cover Story

Beyond Crossroads. Crafting Pivots in the Wake of Change

Tales That Bind: 10





16 **The Data Centre Dilemma**
Can These Power Giants Ever Go Green?

20 **Q&A**
Shamita Chatterjee, SVP - Head HR for Infosys Subsidiaries

24 **Knockoffs**
Boon or Bane for Business?

28 **The Art of Resilience**
Triumphing Through Life's Trials

50 **How not to fire**
A case study for CEOs!

54 **Beatriz Milhazes**
A Carnival of Colours and Nature Unveiled



40
How Strategic AI Deployment Can Be Your Winning Move



46
Q&A
Sumit Neogi,
Managing
Director -
HR, FedEx
MEISA
Region



56
Limited Edition

WHAT'S Inside

TALES THAT BIND

The Power of Storytelling in Business

Enter the world of corporate storytelling — where narratives connect, captivate, and drive unparalleled success

 by Prajwal J Haritsa





CORPORATE NARRATIVES

Storytelling is more than simply a creative outlet in the corporate world; it's a tactical instrument that can influence attitudes, create bonds, and bring about change. It all comes down to telling an engaging story that turns data and strategy into engrossing tales of struggle and success.

Exploring the invaluable role of storytelling in the corporate realm, this piece delves into how narratives wield influence, forge connections, and drive change within business landscapes. Insights from Rahul Kolle, a project manager at Cisco renowned for his advocacy of design thinking and storytelling, illuminate the practical applications of this skill. Kolle's brainchild, the 'Art of Business Storytelling' programme, has transcended borders, leaving an indelible mark on professionals worldwide.

The Value of Narrative in Business

Storytelling in business goes beyond the mere presentation of facts. It's about weaving a narrative that engages the audience on an emotional level, making the message memorable and impactful. As Kolle suggests, storytelling is akin to the levers in business that can shift perspectives and influence decisions. It's a way to humanise brands, to turn abstract concepts into relatable stories that stick with the audience long after the conversation has ended.

Kolle's approach to storytelling is deeply rooted in his theatre background, where he learned the importance of holding an audience's attention. He brings this understanding to the corporate world, where he sees storytelling as a means to make business communications not just heard, but felt. According to him, the key elements of a good story — emotion and the element of surprise — are what make narratives in business so powerful. They are the key elements that can make a speaker, a presenter or even a brand stand out in a crowded marketplace.

The Hollywood movie *Up in the Air* offers a poignant example of storytelling's role in business. Ryan Bingham, played by George Clooney, is tasked with the grim job of firing people. Yet, it is his storytelling ability that softens the blow, providing a narrative that helps those affected cope with the change. Bingham's speeches are more than just words; they're stories that convey understanding and empathy, illustrating the transformative power of narrative even in the most challenging business scenarios.

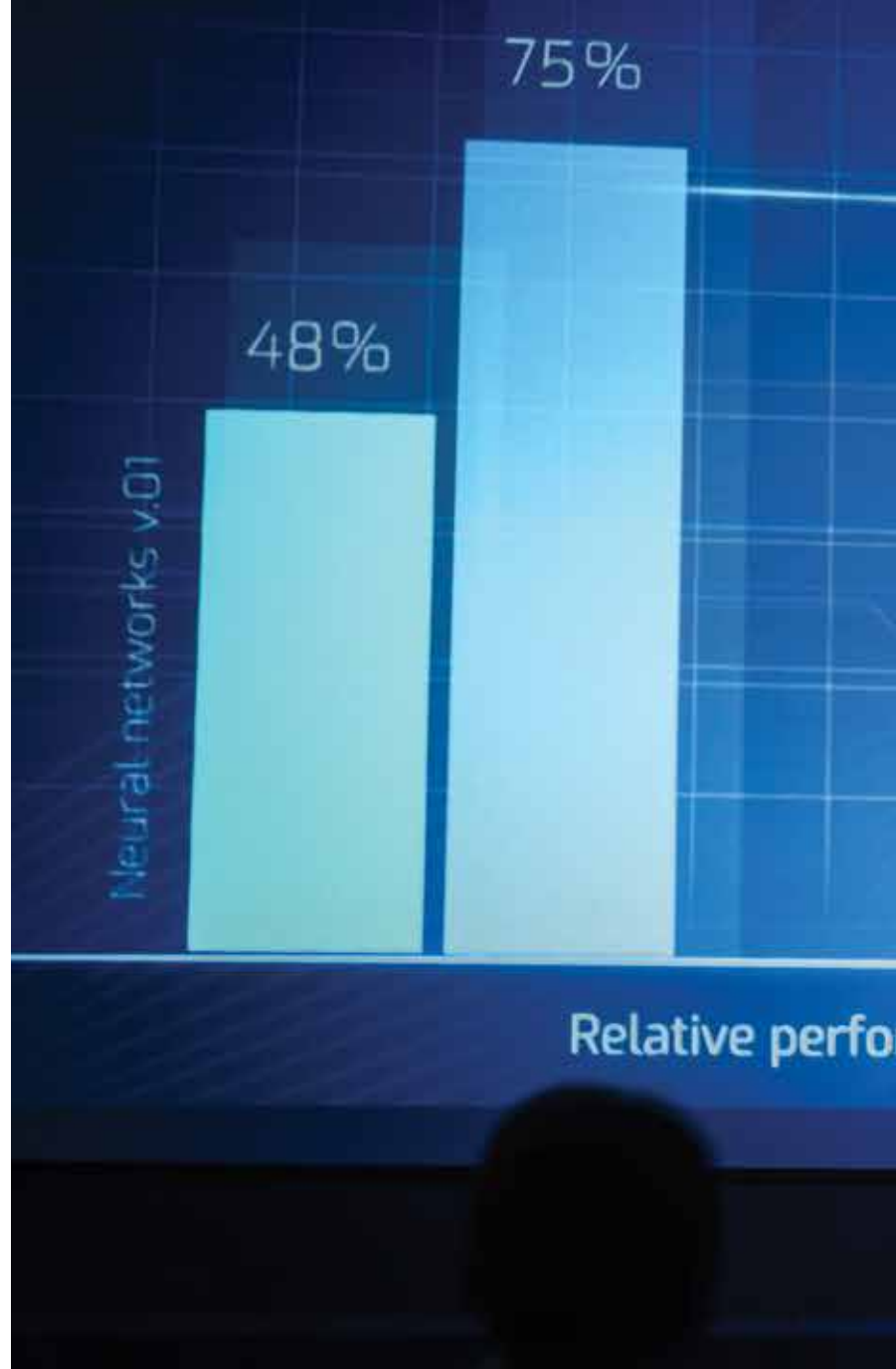
Gaining a Competitive Edge

In today's information-saturated world, storytelling can be a competitive advantage. It's not enough to have a

superior product or service; businesses must also connect with their audience on a human level. Stories can do this in a way that data alone cannot. They can turn a brand into an experience, one that customers remember and return to.

In addition to fostering emotional connections with customers, storytelling can also differentiate a brand from its competitors. In a crowded marketplace where products and services may seem similar, a compelling narrative can set a company apart. By effectively communicating its values, mission, and unique selling points through storytelling, a business can carve out a distinct identity and build brand loyalty.

Moreover, storytelling allows





Storytelling is a way to humanise brands, to turn abstract concepts and data into relatable stories that stick with the audience for long



▶ **Storytelling isn't just about being heard; it's about being felt. Emotion and surprise are the keys to its power in business narratives**

companies to adapt to changing consumer preferences and market dynamics. Brands that can evolve their narratives to resonate with shifting societal trends and cultural values are better positioned to thrive in today's dynamic business landscape.

Leveraging Storytelling in HR

Storytelling is a powerful tool that HR managers can use to enhance their people management skills throughout the various stages of an employee lifecycle. By harnessing the narrative potential, HR professionals can create a more inclusive and supportive workplace environment. They can cultivate a sense of belonging among employees, fostering collaboration and empathy within teams.

Integrating storytelling into HR practices encourages transparency and trust between employees and management. By sharing authentic

stories of both success and failure, organisations can demonstrate their commitment to honesty and openness, ultimately enhancing employee engagement and retention.

- **Engaging narratives:** Craft compelling job descriptions and convey company culture during interviews. Sharing success stories of current employees inspires new hires.
- **Learning through stories:** Incorporate real-life scenarios and anecdotes in training materials to make learning more relatable and memorable.
- **Motivational tales:** Share stories of challenges overcome and goals achieved to inspire and motivate employees during performance reviews.
- **Legacy stories:** Collect and share stories of an employee's contributions at the exit stage to maintain positive relationships and leave a lasting impact on organisational culture.

Storytelling integration transforms employee management into a more engaging and human-centred experience. This not only helps in better communication but also fosters a strong emotional connection with the team.

The art of storytelling in business is about more than conveying information; it's about creating an experience. Kolle's insights, combined with the narrative techniques exemplified in *Up in the Air*, demonstrate the profound impact storytelling can have. It's a tool that can humanise a brand, foster loyalty, and ultimately, drive success. In the end, the businesses that master the art of storytelling are the ones that will not only survive but thrive in the ever-evolving landscape of the corporate world. ◀



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THE DATA CENTRE DILEMMA

Can These Power Giants Ever Go Green?

In the digital era, data centres power innovation, yet their voracious appetite for energy surges. As demand skyrockets, the quest for sustainable solutions intensifies. Can they find a green path forward?

 by Vivek Dahiya



Hydrogen can store excess renewable energy when the sun shines or the wind blows, providing a reliable green backup



In the age of AI and the ever-expanding cloud, data centres are the throbbing heart of the digital revolution. But for all the innovation they pump out, these behemoths have an insatiable hunger for power.

The International Energy Agency estimates that data centres slurped up a staggering 1 per cent to 1.3 per cent of global electricity in 2022. And the thirst is only getting fiercer. The cloud boom, fueled by remote work and streaming binges, has sent demand soaring. Then came ChatGPT, the AI wunderkind that exploded onto the scene with 100 million users in just two months. Now, generative AI is the new hotshot, unleashing another wave of data-gobbling demands.

Suddenly, the 27-39 GW of power crunch in 2022 looks quaint. Experts anticipate a cloud-driven CAGR of 14-20 per cent, and AI could potentially double that. Throw in telecom, government needs, and hidden demand, and we're staring down a potential 100 GW monster in the next decade.

Quest for Solutions

Data centre giants are scrambling for solutions. Green sources like solar and wind are the obvious heroes, but the reality is messy. Not all countries have the landmass or storage infrastructure to make this work 24/7, especially for the ever-growing behemoth DCs. A typical 100 MW solar plant needs a whopping 400 acres — imagine powering a 500 MW monster! Hydropower is limited by geography, and traditional sources like coal come with their own baggage.

The current green energy toolbox is simply not equipped for this data centre goliath.

But wait, there's a glimmer on the horizon: two knights in shining armour — green hydrogen and Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).

Green Knights Emergent

Green hydrogen, produced using renewable energy and water, is a versatile and storable clean power source. The catch? It's still expensive and requires a lot of energy to produce. Enter SMRs — compact nuclear reactors with a maximum

capacity of 300 MW. Over 80 designs are in development, with some already under construction.

This unlikely duo could be the answer to the data centre's green prayer. Hydrogen can store excess renewable energy when the sun shines or the wind blows, providing a reliable green backup. And SMRs, in strategic locations, could offer a near-constant supply of carbon-free power.

It's early days, but the promise is undeniable. Data centre giants and energy companies are starting to forge partnerships, plotting a path towards a greener future.

The 100 GW puzzle may have no easy answer, but with green hydrogen and SMRs on the battlefield, the data centre goliath might finally find its Achilles' heel — a green one, at that. ◀



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“ A FRESH B-SCHOOLER’S KEY CONTRIBUTION CAN BE QUESTIONING THE STATUS QUO IN ORGANISATIONS ”



As demographic shifts continue to reshape the workforce, Kanika Dhawan speaks to **Shamita Chatterjee**, SVP - Head HR, Infosys Subsidiaries, HRD, where she manages a staggering portfolio of 12 global companies spanning from Singapore to Finland. With nearly three decades of experience, this XLRI Jamshedpur alumna shares insights on how she continues to nurture people-centric organisations, cultivate a cohesive culture, and reimagine HR dynamics.

You have a long history with XLRI Jamshedpur. How was the experience growing up there?

My sister and I were born in Jamshedpur. At that time, XLRI operated from Loyola College and then Kaiser bungalows. My father hailed from its earliest batches and secured a fellowship from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) while teaching there. I was two or three years old when XLRI was being built; I have memories of playing with sand on the construction site. So, yes, my family has a legacy with the institution. Although I had qualified for IIM-Bengaluru, my father insisted that both his daughters join XLRI.

You said in an interview that your job is to make connections, network, and help solve problems. How do you do this?

Today, I do a job that is not a traditional CHRO role. It entails managing a portfolio of companies, 12 separate legal entities from Infosys that operate with their boards and CEOs. We have acquired a few companies and created some others, like EdgeVerve, which focuses on products and platforms separately from the 'services' business. We are very clear about giving them the flexibility to run their businesses, bring in innovation, and so on. Therefore, what's the purpose of having a common CHRO like me?

It is to nurture the Infosys way of life by bringing in the flavours of all these companies and creating a balance, which is lost in larger organisations for good reason. How do I do it? I create networks. For instance, for HR heads, we have a collaborative, community-building app called Synergy. Here, they post issues, share resources, and have fruitful discussions. I also facilitate a network of CEOs with the support of one of the CEOs who helps me create these synergies.

When it comes to solving problems, there are common problems across these companies. For example, one of them sought to implement a new Human Resource Information System (HRIS). Fortunately, they discovered a perfect fit in another company that already had a successful experience in HRIS implementation. This alignment was possible because both the companies shared similar organisational styles and



cultures. So, we leveraged the power of intra-networks to make this happen!

Every organisation has a different way of working. Is it possible to bridge the work cultures or operational philosophies of multiple organisations, or do you let them operate independently? How do you navigate these challenges?

I have a very tactical example that hits the mark. In November, we organised a culture workshop for all our companies. We brought them together to explore the dimensions of culture, including geographical influences and unique cultural elements within each company. Everyone came together to share their views.

As a sign-off, we requested everyone to share certain behaviours they believed should be observed during virtual meetings. Surprisingly, there was unanimous agreement that keeping the video on during meetings was essential, even if attendees were in pyjamas. This seemingly small detail highlighted the tactical nature of the discussion. It also reflected the modest expectations people have of each other while working together.

Another example is Fluidio, our company in Finland. It is common there to serve wine during meetings inside the office during frigid temperatures. However, at Infosys, we don't serve alcohol on our premises, and there is a cultural, values-driven reason for it. It has come down from generations and is a part of our core values. So, these smaller organisations had to accept and make adjustments.

My job as a CHRO is to nurture the Infosys way of life by bringing in the flavours of all our companies and creating a balance, which gets lost in larger organisations

Shamita, this is your 28th year in the HR industry. Please shed light on the generational differences you have experienced in the way people work.

I have a slightly different view on this from my peers. As individuals who are 50 plus, we must accept the fact that we do not understand the current generation. Perhaps, we should look at our children to understand this generation. I do look at mine to decipher how they see the world.

One side of me still looks at productivity — our traditional working style, putting in long hours, and so on. On the other hand, I know this is a new and different world. So, we must create an environment where we unlearn everything and enable this generation to bring out their best. Even on the work-from-home versus work-from-office debate, I don't have answers. However, I know we have to find ways to nurture a holistic culture without compromising

We must accept that we do not understand the current generation... It's a new world, so we must create an environment where we unlearn everything

on output and client excellence.

All my companies are in the West, and they are fully embracing remote work with employees spread across different locations. To ensure team cohesion, we organise occasional events like pop-up shops and fitness challenges, bringing employees together in the same or nearby locations. These events serve as opportunities for office meetings, discussion forums, and team-bonding sessions. This shift towards event-based engagement has proven to be innovative and effective in keeping our teams engaged.

While dealing with different companies, how do you tackle thought barriers?

As a person, I am very adaptable. I also know that I must evolve my point of view — something I have learned from Nandan (Nilekani). The man is almost 70. If he can do it, I know we can do it too! He is our inspiration for pushing the barrier and believing that nothing is impossible. In my current job, I continually re-learn my learnings, and this is something that truly excites me!

When it comes to incentives, how do you understand what people want?

In the realm of rewards, clarity and fairness are key. By clarity, I mean it's critical to communicate why the company compensates employees in a certain way, and what they can do to earn more. Transparency in this regard is crucial. Moreover, regulations increasingly demand transparency in these matters, which I fully support.

For me, fairness means consistently applying the same principles to every individual. While it may seem unfair that someone from the same graduating class earns more, adherence to predefined principles ensures fairness. If there's a discrepancy, it's crucial to communicate clearly why certain decisions were made and ensure that principles guide our actions.

At Infosys, our value system is embodied in C-LIFE (Client Value, Leadership by example, Integrity and Transparency, Fairness and Excellence). So, I believe in consistently applying the same principles for every individual and that drives our reward decisions.





In the realm of rewards, clarity and fairness are key. It's critical to communicate why the company compensates employees in a certain way and what they can do to earn more

What are your thoughts on upskilling and reskilling in this AI age?

Whether it is upskilling or reskilling — it is about knowing something better than what you already know. From an organisational perspective, we are investing in people who can quickly turn around skills and have the flexibility to deliver. Toward this end, we have reskilled nearly 70 per cent of our workforce on basic AI.

Right now, we are at a cusp in the skilling game. A couple of years ago, we were looking at digital, full stack, and had all kinds of processes around it. But that has given way to the AI wave. We are telling our people that their jobs aren't going away, but they must continuously learn.

According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2023, 69 million new jobs were created while 83 million will be eliminated. Additionally, over the next five years, 23 per cent of global jobs are expected to transform

due to advancements in industries such as AI, as well as text, image, and voice processing technologies. Your insights?

While I may not be one to make predictions, my recent completion of a Harvard Business School course on disruptive strategy has highlighted the importance of focusing on 'jobs to be done.' It emphasised designing services or products around addressing specific needs rather than being overly fixated on the features of the product or suite of services. At Infosys, we excel at understanding and fulfilling these 'jobs to be done' for our clients. Our approach involves creating applications and solutions tailored to meet these needs, integrating systems seamlessly. So, as long as there are 'jobs to be done' in the world, our jobs are not going to go away anytime soon. History has shown us that they are here to stay.

Do you think that Covid has helped companies grow by leaps and bounds when it comes to progressive ways of thinking?

Yes! It has busted many culture, productivity, and work myths. So, we must continue to respond fast to this new paradigm. As you said at the beginning of the interview, the romance around jobs and careers is waning. Because there are different ways to earn your living, corporate careers aren't how we envisage them.

What do you think B-schools should add or modify to raise better industry professionals?

I have seen a big difference between business school graduates from the West and India. Here, we are still in a slightly paternalistic educational system where conformity is rewarded. The most important contribution that a fresh B-schooler can bring to the table is questioning the status quo in organisations. So, B-schools will have a huge role to play in bringing this level of confidence and entrepreneurial competencies across the board. ◀

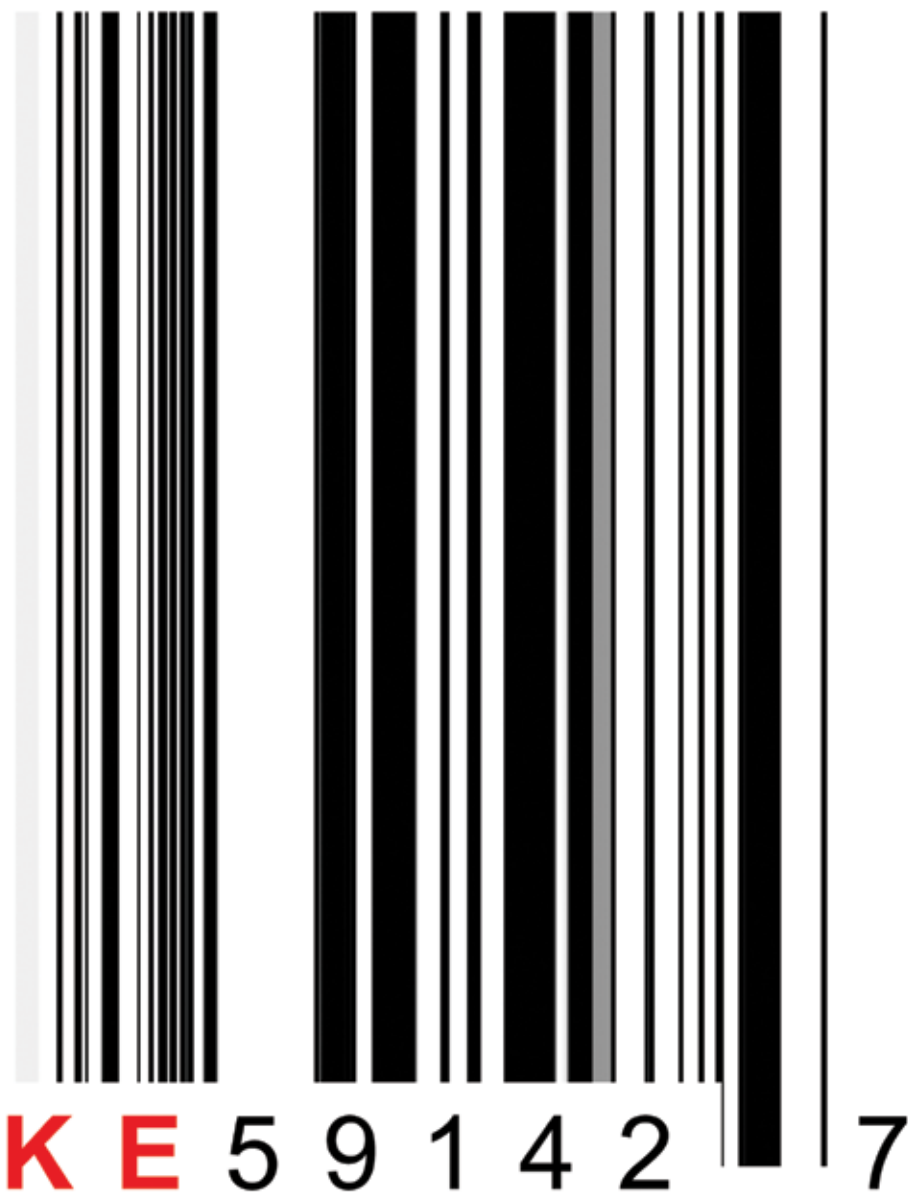


KNOCKOFFS

Boon or Bane for Business?

Navigating the blurred lines of counterfeit goods: Are they a savvy strategy or a perilous pitfall for businesses?

 by Pradhyumn Pradeep



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The sale of fake merchandise, be it bags, belts, or even pirated movies, is an enormous underground business in India. We have all seen markets flooded with these contrabands, drawing in a specific crowd enticed by items they may or may not have the means to purchase. We understand these goods are available not only in India but worldwide. The

most significant portion of buyers for these items have been tourists, especially from poorer countries, trying to buy these knockoffs to experience the luxury associated with these products or simply to show them off to people in their circle.

The government laws and regulations are unambiguous and strict on where they stand on the

issue. But when you try to look at businesses whose products are getting counterfeited, does it make sense to stop these counterfeits? This essay is a deep dive looking at the various sides of the information asymmetry for the buyer, the seller, and the company to whom the original belongs.

Counterfeit Market Dynamics

Let's take Delhi, my hometown, as an example. In most of the city's major markets, you can easily spot over a dozen merchants openly selling counterfeit products without hesitation. Why do they do that? It's pretty straightforward: they are not targeting customers who have the financial means to buy these products, but rather those who may not have even heard of luxury brands like Gucci or Fendi, or those who have heard of them but cannot afford their high prices.

They may present them as replicas of the originals, and occasionally, to be crafty, they change the logo and features slightly to resemble the original at first glance, thus avoiding direct plagiarism. The crowd they are targeting to sell these counterfeits is okay with buying or using the products; they seek a taste of luxury at a fraction of the original product's price.

For the sellers of these counterfeits, it is a simple business. The most significant complication arises from the frequent inspections in these hotspots, necessitating vigilance against any checks in the area. This is typically managed by negotiating deals with the officers overseeing these inspections.

The products counterfeited are not too expensive to produce, but the value lies in the brand name. While society may not view these products in the same light as other crimes, as they're perceived as relatively harmless, some criticise them for potentially luring people into a false promise of a lavish lifestyle. The demand for these knockoffs is complex for sellers, as they must identify interested buyers and ensure their sales staff can effectively convert that interest into actual sales. Of course, the buyers aren't the affluent class who can easily afford them, instead, individuals eager to taste luxury without spending a fortune.

The underground market of counterfeit goods thrives, targeting aspirational consumers seeking luxury at a fraction of the cost

Also, these products have a short shelf life because luxury brands frequently introduce new items, making older ones less desirable. Counterfeiters must constantly adapt to the latest trends in the market. Although production costs are low, customers also expect low prices, resulting in meagre profit margins for counterfeiters.

Crackdown or Capitalise

The crucial question for the companies to which the original product belongs is: Should they crack down on these counterfeits or let them be? At first glance, they should crack down and not allow people to sell these counterfeits to protect their brand. However, doing so

could have unintended consequences, such as it could be construed as a significant market player jeopardising people's livelihood.

Additionally, some people will continue to buy these counterfeits to maintain the perception of owning authentic products within their social circles, thus bolstering their so-called 'social status.'

On the other hand, one could argue, having these counterfeits in the market in the long term can actually help increase the original brand's value. It contributes significantly to their marketing efforts, reaching a segment of society these brands usually do not reach out to. Increasing brand equity and value impacts the overall financial





While crackdowns on counterfeit sales may seem prudent, their presence can paradoxically enhance brand value and equity over time

situation. Also, people buying knockoffs may have an affinity for the brand and aspire to buy the authentic product once they achieve financial stability.

In conclusion, brands should crack down on counterfeit sales occurring on websites and other online platforms, as these products undermine the integrity of the original company's brand. They must not be perceived as indifferent to the proliferation of counterfeit goods. However, they should refrain from tracking down small shops in local markets, as it may not be financially feasible to do so. Instead, in the long term, they should assist these shops in building a customer base that forms emotional connections with the brand, thereby enabling them to outperform competitors in future. ◀



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THE ART OF RESILIENCE

Triumphing Through Life's Trials

Unlock the power of resilience: while some may possess it naturally, others can cultivate it through intentional actions, behaviour, and thoughts



by Mayurakshi Zodage

As Vince Lombardi rightly said, "It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get up." Resilience is often said to be the hallmark of a successful person. It's considered a distinct virtue that sets a successful person apart from an average person. But what exactly is resilience? And is it a trait that only a select few are born with? Or is it something that can be developed? Let's dive into it further.

Resilience, By the Book

Resilience, as defined by *Oxford Languages*, is "the capacity to recover from difficulties." The American Psychology Association defines resilience as "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress." However, Ruth Feldman (Professor of Developmental Social Neuroscience) argues that a nuanced definition of resilience is yet to be made. She argues whether resilience should be defined as a trait (Connor and Davidson, 2003), outcome (Masten, 2001), or process (Luther *et al*, 2000). However, all the definitions include positive adaptation and adversity (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013).

Neurobiological studies show that resilience, among other things, is the presence of distinct adaptation mechanisms in individuals that promote normal behaviour (Krishnan *et al*, 2007; Friedman *et al*, 2016). This suggests

that while resilience might be a trait for a few, others can develop it through guiding their behaviour, actions, and thoughts. It's like a muscle that can be developed with time and intention.

Crafting Resilience: Strategies for Inner Strength

Factors contributing to resilience include active coping, optimism, prosocial behaviour, cognitive reappraisal, and others. Many strategies can be used to cope with stress that help in building resilience:

Build relationships

with people around. This would help you realise that you are not all alone. Building relationships with compassionate and trustworthy people enables you to overcome stress and develop solutions to get out of the situation. Traumatic situations can make you isolate yourself, but relying on others is necessary to help you out of it.

Practising mindfulness

by practising yoga or meditation can help you develop the mental strength required to overcome the difficulty. Provide ample nutrition and sleep to your body. Such practices can restore hope,

Building relationships with compassionate and trustworthy people enables you to overcome stress and develop solutions to get out of the situation







Experience is the best teacher. Use it to develop goals and ways to achieve them

which would help you build resilience.

And while using less-than-ideal outlets (alcohol, etc) seems tempting, it may be of no help since it's akin to putting a band-aid on a deep wound. Developing the strength to manage stress is a better way to deal with it than masking it using substances.

Help others, whether helping a friend or volunteering at an NGO. These activities contribute to your self-worth and purpose. They increase your confidence and help you gain the strength to face adversities in your life.

Developing realistic goals and working towards them can also help you gain confidence and make yourself stronger. They provide a clear pathway to your destination. They serve as a marker for how long you've come and how long you have to go. It gives you a sense of achievement, leading to hope.

Lean into your past experiences to figure out what works and what doesn't. As they say, experience is the best teacher. Use your experiences to

develop goals and ways to achieve them.

Stories of Overcoming

Michael Jordan wouldn't have won six NBA championships with the Chicago Bulls had he given up his dream based on the opinion of his peers and teachers in high school. He didn't let it get to him because he had found his purpose in life. That purpose fuelled him through the tough times and made him more resilient.

Stephen Hawking could have discontinued his physics research. But he let his curiosity guide and help him achieve his goals, and he went on to write 15 books. Jeff Bezos continued his dream even after facing a huge setback of \$50 million (a considerable amount for Amazon back then) due to pets.com. But he didn't let the failure get to him and continued working on his business, making it one of the biggest successes globally.

Among all the examples above, one common factor is resilience. They all have developed behavioural mechanisms that let them continue their path, even amid the darkness.

To sum up, resilience stands as a crucial aspect of our behaviour, requiring development to enhance our robustness and adaptability to life's adversities. Focus on finding purpose, building relationships, practising mindfulness, and, when necessary, seeking help without hesitation. In closing, I leave you with the words of Steve Maraboli: "Life doesn't get easier or more forgiving; we get stronger and more resilient." ◀



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BEYOND CROSSROADS

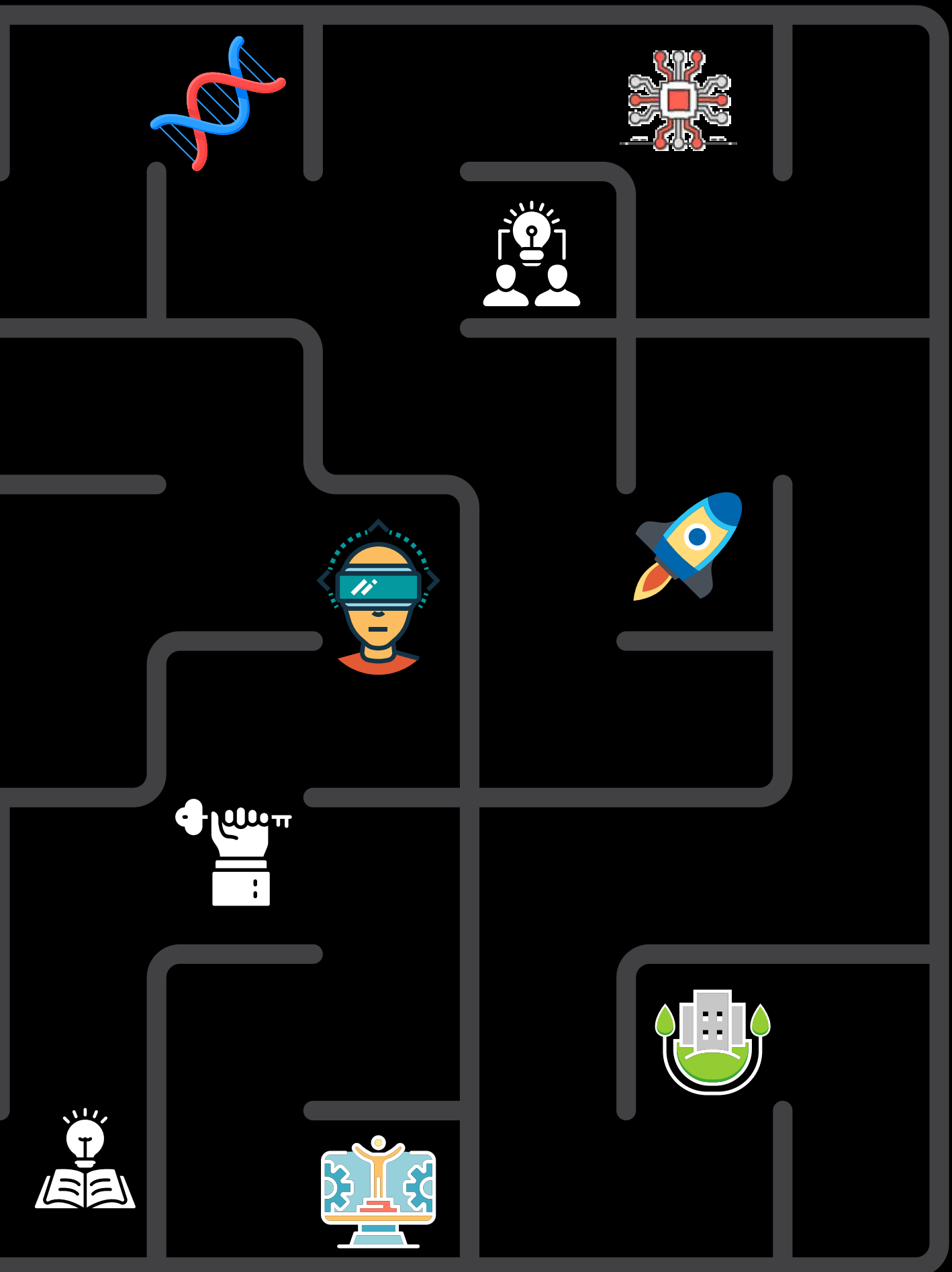


Crafting Pivots in the Wake of Change



In the heart of Hyderabad, Xplore, a platform created by XLRI and CEO Lounge, brought together a vibrant assembly of minds. This roundtable was a forge where the future of careers, talent, sustainability, and marketing was hammered and shaped. Leaders and visionaries unpacked the essentials of navigating our fast-evolving world, turning insights into action.





With the sun coming down from its apex in Hyderabad, the latest Xplore roundtable ignited conversations that lit up the path for navigating through professional and business evolution. Created by XLRI and CEO Lounge, Xplore has become synonymous with forward-thinking and pioneering dialogues on leadership and innovation.

The Art of Career Pivoting

The session opened with stories from the trenches on "Navigating Career Crossroads." Here, seasoned professionals shared their pivotal moments, offering a treasure trove of experiences about shifts that redefine careers. This segment was all about seizing the moment, making bold moves, and the transformative power of embracing new directions.



Future-Proofing Talent

As we peered into “Decoding 2024’s Talent Landscape,” the conversation turned to the seismic shifts in workforce dynamics. In an age where technology reshapes every aspect of work, the discussion highlighted the need for skill agility and the growing value of adaptability over fixed qualifications, painting a picture of what it takes to thrive tomorrow.

▶ **Seasoned professionals shared their pivotal moments, offering a treasure trove of experiences about shifts that redefine careers**





Attendees:

Debashish Banerjee, Deloitte; **Deepak Yadav**, CEO Lounge
Prof. Giridhar Ramachandran, XLRI; **Hari Thalappalli**, CallHealth
Prof. Kanagaraj Ayyalusamy, XLRI; **Lokesh Natoo**, Altus Group
Madhuri Dubey, National Skills Network; **Murali Talasila**,
 GroundGame.Health; **Prof. Sanjeev Varshney**, XLRI
Srinivas Kollipara, Integrative Studio; **Subu Boyinapalli**, ANSR
Sundeep Mittal, FinAdvantage; **Dr Sujiv Nair**, Re Sustainability
 Limited; **Uma Rao**, Sekhmet Pharmaventures
Dr Umesh Udayaprakash, Innova Solutions



Sustainability in Action

The talk on "Eco-Leadership" broke down the journey towards embedding green practices in the corporate sphere. It was a candid exploration of the trials and triumphs encountered by companies striving to balance ecological stewardship with business objectives, offering insights into leading with an eco-conscious mindset.

The Simplicity Revolution

Diving into "Marketing Minimalism," the roundtable explored the power of simplicity in a saturated market. This strategy of saying more with

Strategy of saying more with less is emerging as a key to capturing consumer attention, showcasing how brands can stand out by dialing back



less is emerging as a key to capturing consumer attention, showcasing how brands can stand out by dialing back, proving that sometimes, the quietest voice carries the furthest.

As the evening drew to a close, the discussions underscored a collective ambition to not just respond to change but to lead it. This gathering highlighted the essence of thought leadership: to envision, engage, and enact the future of business and professional growth.

In a world brimming with challenges and opportunities, Xplore remains a beacon for those eager to question, learn, and innovate. Through its roundtables, it continues to stitch together ideas that empower leaders to navigate the complexities of today and tomorrow with confidence and creativity. ◀



How Strategic AI Deployment Can Be **YOUR WINNING MOVE**

In the high-stakes game of business strategy, the artful deployment of AI emerges as a masterstroke. Explore how businesses are strategically implementing AI to unveil unprecedented efficiency, customer satisfaction, and innovation, outmaneuvering rivals



by Rohit Kumar Pandey



The business landscape is like a high-stakes game of chess, where each move defines wins or losses. Today, a new weapon has emerged on the battlefield — artificial intelligence. It is no longer confined to science fiction and is actively transforming companies and their strategies across industries.

Imagine looking into the future and seeing consumer trends and market shifts before they boom. AI, using the power of predictive analytics, does just that. By analysing millions of tonnes of data, from consumer behaviour to economic factors, AI algorithms can generate forecasts



with unmatched accuracy in the shortest time. Netflix's AI-powered recommendation engine churns through 60 billion ratings, suggesting to users the perfect show to binge, keeping them engaged, and increasing subscriptions.

Remember those tedious, repetitive tasks that drain employee

morale and reduce productivity? Robotic process automation combined with AI automates this and frees the human mind for high-order thinking. A bank using AI to process loan applications in minutes, reducing human error and enhancing efficiency — it's like having an error-free worker all the time.

Collaboration Over Competition

The fear of robots stealing jobs is legitimate but misplaced. The true strength of AI lies in augmenting human capabilities rather than replacing them, to handle repetitive tasks. Human intuition and strategic thinking will be used in complex decision-making and will work as an assistant, freeing up the human mind for creative problem-solving, strategic planning, and customer interaction. It's about collaboration rather than competition by utilising the unique strengths of both humans and machines.

Customer satisfaction is no longer a luxury; it's a lifeline equipped with a sentiment-analysing personalisation algorithm that empowers businesses to enhance customer satisfaction by 10X. AI-powered chatbots communicate with customers 24/7, resolving issues faster than the rate of complaint generation. Recommendation engines suggest personalised products, turning each customer into a VIP.

From drug discovery to material science, AI is accelerating the rate of innovation. Companies like DeepMind are using AI to develop revolutionary protein-folding algorithms to generate lifesaving drugs. In material science, AI helps produce composites with exceptional properties. It's like having a brainstorming partner with a combined knowledge of the entire human race.

**Netflix's
AI-powered
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With great power comes great responsibilities. AI's rise poses ethical challenges that demand careful consideration

Navigating Ethical Challenges

With great power comes great responsibilities. AI's rise poses ethical challenges that demand careful consideration. Issues like bias in algorithms, job displacement due to automation, and misuse of AI-enabled surveillance systems raise concerns. Businesses must handle this technology with a focus on transparency, accountability, and responsible development. It's not just about winning the game; it's also about playing fair and leaving the world a better place.

Communicating the value and purpose of your AI strategy at all levels will help avoid resistance to change. Leaders must lead in the AI strategy by allocating resources, investing in training, and setting clear expectations for the adoption of AI. AI is not a one-time investment. Companies will have to continuously monitor AI's performance, collect feedback, and modify the processes based on new data and insights. Keeping an agile approach will allow leaders to adapt to

changing circumstances and maximise AI's long-term value.

The future of business strategy is intertwined with organisations that must develop an AI-powered strategy; reacting only to competitors' moves will not work. Investing in the right talent, data, and infrastructure is essential for market dominance. In the AI game, early adopters will take the lead in shaping business strategy.

In conclusion, AI is not just another tool. Rather, it's a revolution. By tapping AI's potential, businesses can unlock unprecedented levels of efficiency, customer satisfaction, and innovation. But like any other powerful tool, AI must be equipped with wisdom and responsibility. Remember, the goal isn't to checkmate your competitors but to build a better future for all. ◀



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CEO LOUNGE



“THE FUTURE OF
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In recent years, the swiftly changing business landscape has presented unprecedented challenges, compelling HR to adapt and evolve rapidly. Against this backdrop, **Sumit Neogi**, an XLRI alumnus and Managing Director of Human Resources for the MEISA Region at FedEx, spoke to *Afrin Pathan* about the key changes and developments shaping HR strategies. Neogi emphasised the pivotal role of embracing flexibility and empowering managers to navigate changing work dynamics, aligning with the evolving needs of the workforce.

from credible mentors or applying your knowledge effectively, credibility is earned gradually. Second, remain humble. Just because you graduate from a prestigious institution doesn't make you a superstar. Remember that success comes from continuous learning, seeking guidance when needed, and staying grounded. By embracing humility and focusing on building credibility, you'll set yourself up for long-term growth and success in your career.

So essentially, understanding people is crucial, correct?

Think of it like sampling — you don't need to understand the entire population to draw meaningful conclusions. By applying your concepts and analysing

trends from a good sample, you can uncover valuable insights without forcing yourself into their shoes. Trust in your methods and observations to guide you towards understanding and solutions.

In the ever-changing business landscape, what key skills and qualities do you believe HR leaders need to thrive in their role? Additionally, what other values, apart from humility, do you consider essential for effective HR practice?

To excel in HR, two key values stand out: excellence and integrity. Continuously strive for improvement while upholding honesty and doing what's right, even when no one is watching. These values align closely with XLRI's ethos. As HR professionals, our role is to enable business success in a rapidly changing landscape. Understanding the business we support is crucial. While you don't need to grasp every detail, knowing the product, raw materials, and operational costs gives insight into talent needs and how HR can contribute to business outcomes. Avoid the trap of disconnection by embracing financials and product management. Your clients rely on you to identify talent and deliver results, so make the effort to understand and contribute meaningfully.

Given the advancement of AI in HR tasks, do you think HR professionals need to have strong technological skills

to remain relevant in the future?

The future indeed belongs to the digital natives, the millennials, who are already well-versed in technology. Unlike the past, where managers struggled with basic computer operations, today's end-users are tech-savvy and drive technology adoption. However, successful adoption depends on bridging the gap between different generations' comfort levels with technology. While older generations may not be familiar with app design, they should embrace app usage and encourage innovation. HR leaders must be willing to take risks and embrace digital transformation to stay relevant. Continuous learning and adapting to new technologies are crucial for success in the digital era.

How can HR actively participate in shaping and governing the implementation of AI within the organisation to ensure ethical and responsible use of technology?

First and foremost, ensuring data protection is paramount when integrating AI and technology into HR processes. HR should collaborate closely with IT to safeguard personal data, adhering to a standardised approach across all countries of operation rather than implementing separate policies for each region. It's essential to define what constitutes personal data, obtain proper

I'm excited about AI's potential to transform HR processes, as machine learning promises significant enhancements in decision-making





Employee well-being has evolved as a critical focus area in recent years, shifting from physical to mental health, particularly highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic

permissions, and store data in encrypted formats to prevent unauthorised access. However, organisations must strike a balance between data protection and accessibility to avoid over restricting access for analysis purposes.

Regarding AI, while its capabilities are continually evolving, there is a need for caution. There is a concern about AI's potential to behave unpredictably if it gains access to large datasets and starts making decisions autonomously. In such cases, businesses should be prepared to intervene and shut down AI systems if necessary. Regular monitoring of algorithms governing AI processes is crucial to ensure they remain aligned with organisational objectives and ethical standards. Collaboration between HR professionals and other stakeholders is essential to address these concerns and ensure responsible AI usage.

What are your thoughts on future of work and how do you think HR should adapt to prepare for the evolving workforce landscape?

Understanding the evolving requirements of the business and the preferences of future talent is crucial for shaping the future of work. Gone are the days when employees would join a company and stay until retirement; today, employees often retire early or seek new opportunities sooner. Therefore, organisations must adapt their processes and remain flexible to

meet the changing needs of both the business and the workforce.

Flexibility is key, not just in terms of workplace arrangements but also in creating roles that align with the skills and preferences of emerging talent. While some industries, such as manufacturing, may require on-site personnel round the clock, others may have roles that can be performed remotely. However, remote work presents challenges in fostering social connections and maintaining organisational culture, which need to be addressed.

The future of work will remain ambiguous, requiring organisations to develop mechanisms to navigate this uncertainty. Building the capability of people managers to lead flexible teams is essential. Instead of relying solely on HR guidelines, managers must be empowered to make decisions that align with the needs of their teams and the broader organisational goals. By fostering adaptability and empowering managers, organisations can better navigate the complexities of the evolving workforce landscape.

Do you think the post-Covid era has significantly changed organisations, especially considering the shift towards remote work and flexible policies? Previously, we never had the concept of work from home, and post-Covid, employees are quite reluctant to return to work from office.

It's fascinating to observe how attitudes toward remote work have evolved amid the pandemic. When the lockdowns ended, only a small percentage of employees expressed a desire to return to the office, with the majority preferring to work from home. However, as time passed, there has been a notable shift in these preferences. According to a survey conducted by a renowned organisation, the percentage of employees eager to return to the office has increased significantly.

While a sizable portion still prefers remote work, there is a growing trend of employees wanting to go back to the office environment. This shift underscores the importance of flexibility in accommodating diverse preferences within the workforce. As organisations navigate this transition, it's crucial to strike a balance between enabling remote work and fostering a collaborative office culture.

Moreover, the emphasis should not solely be on implementing digital tools to track productivity. Instead, empowering line managers to assess productivity based on individual team dynamics and goals can be more effective. By trusting managers to make informed decisions regarding remote work arrangements, organisations can better align with the evolving needs of their workforce while maintaining productivity and engagement levels. ◀

HOW NOT TO FIRE

A case study for CEOs!

Cautionary tale:
Navigating firings
with finesse. Insights
into CEO missteps



by Helmut Schuster and David Oxley



The nightmare scenarios for all CEOs include earnings misses, an industrial accident, and a public relations disaster.

For Matthew Prince, co-founder and CEO of Cloudflare, the latter scenario became reality, very quickly and very publicly, in mid-January. The background is that Cloudflare was

undertaking a round of job cuts, which saw a number of staff being let go at the same time with very little notice via scheduled video calls. This sort of move is not uncommon in corporate America, even though it is very impersonal and is perfectly legal.

However, on 17 January, one Cloudflare employee, Brittany Pietsch,

recorded her firing and shared it on TikTok, gathering millions of views and shares. The video shows her being fired by two HR admins acting on behalf of Cloudflare, both of whom are strangers to her. After being told the reason for the meeting and that she is being let go, Pietsch takes control of the conversation, asking composed and reasonable questions, that the HR representatives were unable or unwilling to answer. One question stood out: *Why are you and not my line manager talking to me?* Her question has resonated with many.

This article is meant to invite CEOs to think more deeply about how mishandling humanistic factors in their organisation can make or break them. We use this Cloudflare example as a case study. Let us start with a few facts and observations about Cloudflare and its CEO.

Cloudflare: Most people probably have never heard of Cloudflare, a cybersecurity provider, even though its market cap is larger than Nokia's. It has good growth, low profitability, and has an inflated tech valuation. Its business model seems robust and in a high-growth area. It's in the Seeking Alpha watchlist for potential investments 2024. It was founded in 2010, and Matthew Prince, one of the co-founders, is also CEO. It's had a good run so far. Its glassdoor rating is 3.6 — for comparison Apple is 4.2, Akamai, a competitor, 4.5 — so, 3.6 is not great but also not too bad for a young company either.

Matthew Prince: He is cofounder and CEO of Cloudflare. He is on the Forbes list of billionaires. He is a Harvard educated lawyer by background. Early on he acquired significant knowledge in cyberlaw. He co-signed Cloudflare's 2023 annual founders' letter with the opening sentence: "Cloudflare is officially a teenager. We launched on September 27, 2010. Today we celebrate our thirteenth birthday." It's actually a very good letter, explaining what the company does and aspires to do. It's a technical note but a good one. The only surprising thing is there is hardly



any mention of the people who helped shape the company, instead the note ends with an AI generated poem. But no surprise. The website is brilliant for customers and investors but doesn't really say a lot about people, culture, and values.

Key Learnings

Here are four learnings for CEOs and corporate executive, and one learning for young professionals:

1. **Hiring, promoting, and exiting people are critically important activities.** They shape the culture for many years to come and leave a long shadow. CEOs need to keep an eye on it. If this process is delegated, CEOs must make sure that it is to someone 100 per cent trustworthy with common sense, empathy, and an ownership mindset.
2. **Human Resource teams are not substitutes for genuine authentic leadership.** HR's role

is to help make sure that leaders are capable of managing and leading their people. The chief human resource officer is a key role and should only be filled by someone you would also have on the business succession plan. Like the CFO, the CHRO needs to be a competent and trustworthy businessperson. If that's not the case, find a new CHRO.

3. **Transparency and honesty are key.** In a connected world, nothing can be hidden, everything will surface eventually. Pietsch had already been told by her colleagues that a series of firings were happening. Embrace honesty and don't hide behind doublespeak and obfuscation. Understand and communicate the reason for firing someone — if the reason is to boost profitability, say so. People are not stupid, they might not like it, but honesty can be respected.

Hiring, promoting, and exiting impact long-term culture. CEOs need to keep an eye on it





In a connected world, nothing can be hidden, everything will surface eventually. Transparency and honesty are key



4. If things go wrong — own up — apologise and fix the problem.

I think Prince did well on the public apology. The question is will it trigger change. From an outsider and investor perspective, I would be very wary of investing in Cloudflare. I think they had a good run, but I would have more confidence if they gave more attention to their people agenda, and this statement is not only a result of this incident.

For Young Professionals...

I like how Pietsch handled this situation. She was fact based and composed. It's absolutely okay to

speak up and it's also okay to use social media in a respectful way. However, it is important to do it selectively and in a balanced way. Not everything is as it first appears, be careful not to get swept along with a fleeting emotion.

Most people have very good intentions and believe in the goodness of their company. Highlighting improvement areas in a respectful way is okay. But equally, it is important to realise we live in an imperfect world where individual needs and shareholder returns are often in conflict. At the end of the day, companies need to make profits to provide good jobs. ◀



Helmut Schuster and David Oxley are co-authors of *A Career Carol: A Tale of Professional Nightmares and How to Navigate Them*. (www.ACareerCarol.com)

Beatriz Milhazes

A Carnival of Colours and Nature Unveiled



Step into the vibrant universe of Beatriz Milhazes with “A Symphony of Colour and Nature” at Tate St Ives, where the interplay of vivid colours and natural forms paints a vivid journey through the artist’s Brazilian heritage and abstract artistry.



This summer, Tate St Ives will become a portal to the exuberant world of Beatriz Milhazes, a virtuoso of colour and form whose art transcends the canvas to evoke the spirited rhythm of her native Rio de Janeiro. “A Symphony of Colour and Nature” offers a deep dive into Milhazes’s prolific career, celebrating over four decades of her relentless exploration of nature, culture, and abstraction.

Milhazes draws us into her realm where the everyday is reimagined



through a lens of kaleidoscopic beauty. “Maresias”, the exhibition’s namesake, refers to the sea breezes that caress the shores of Rio, a subtle yet potent reminder of the interconnectedness of our global environment. This thematic thread weaves through the exhibition, binding the coastal experiences of Cornwall with those of Rio de Janeiro, and inviting a reflection on the shared pulses of life across continents.

A pioneering force within Brazil’s Geração Oitenta, Milhazes rebelled against the conceptual norms of her predecessors, choosing instead to infuse her canvases with a vibrant, life-affirming energy. Her works are a celebration of contradiction - meticulously planned yet exuding spontaneity, complex yet instantly

captivating. The exhibition reveals the secrets of Milhazes’s “monotransfer” technique, a revolutionary method that allows her to play with texture and colour in ways that make each piece a feast for the senses.

Milhazes’s inspirations are as varied as her palette, drawing from Brazilian and European modernism, the baroque twists of colonial architecture, and the flamboyant hues of Brazilian folk art. Each piece is a narrative collage, blending references to the Tijuca forest’s verdant expanse, the iconic waves of Copacabana, and the botanical wonders of Rio’s gardens. Through her art, Milhazes invites us into a conversation about the beauty of geometry in nature, the rhythm of urban life, and the layers of history that paint our world.

“A Symphony of Colour and Nature” is not just an exhibition; it’s a journey through Beatriz Milhazes’s eye, where the boundaries between the organic and the geometric, the personal and the universal, blur in a dance of colour and light. This summer, let Tate St Ives take you on a voyage to the heart of Brazil, through the art of a woman who paints not just what she sees, but what she feels. ◀



LIMITED



Samsung Music Frame

Drawing cues from The Frame, this speaker redefines aesthetics, morphing into a contemporary picture frame to exhibit art or photos. Equipped with deep woofers and smart audio tech, it delivers superior sound quality. With Q-Symphony, it syncs for immersive surround sound with Samsung TVs and soundbars, or shines solo as a wireless marvel.



FiiO CP13 Cassette Player

FiiO reintroduces the golden era of music with the CP13, a portable cassette player designed to deliver a pure, analog sound experience reminiscent of the iconic 1980s Walkman. With its retro design, including mechanical buttons and a cassette tape viewing window, the CP13 marries the charm of yesteryears with contemporary technology. It boasts advanced features like a large pure copper flywheel and a balanced amplification magnetic head to enhance audio performance, alongside an audiophile-grade JRC5532 OPAMP for superior amplification. Equipped with a 3.5mm headphone output and a high-capacity rechargeable battery promising up to 13 hours of playback, the FiiO CP13 offers not just nostalgic allure but also modern convenience, encapsulating the essence of musical nostalgia in a sophisticated package.

Maybach Eyewear Collection

Experience the pinnacle of individuality with these iconic eyewears from Maybach. Bridging the gap between tradition and innovation, this collection offers both prescription glasses and sunglasses, each piece a masterpiece of design and materiality. Handcrafted with meticulous attention to detail, the eyewear features an array of exquisite materials including natural horn, fine woods, carbon fibre, leather, titanium, 18-carat gold, and diamonds. The Maybach Eyewear Collection embodies the brand's iconic elements and expressive styling, making each piece a symbol of unparalleled individuality.



EDITION



Segway GT e-KickScooters

Discover the Segway GT-series e-KickScooters, the apex of high-speed, high-performance urban mobility. The GT1 and GT2, with top speeds of 37.3 mph and 43.5 mph respectively, are the fastest in Segway's line-up, offering exhilarating acceleration; the GT2 zooms from zero to 30 mph in just 3.9 seconds. Beyond speed, these e-KickScooters prioritise rider comfort and control, featuring advanced suspension, hydraulic disc brakes, and wide, self-sealing tyres for a smooth, safe ride. The GT2 also introduces a pioneering transparent PM OLED display, blending speed with cutting-edge technology for the ultimate commuting experience.



Evie RIng

A pioneering smart ring tailored for women and a 2024 CES Innovation Honoree, the Evie RIng by Movano Health features an adjustable design for a perfect fit and uses medical-grade sensors for precise health tracking. Beyond tracking activity and sleep, Evie offers unique daily summaries and AI-driven insights into how hormonal changes impact wellness. Beyond monitoring activity and sleep, Evie provides unique daily summaries and AI-driven insights into how hormonal changes affect wellness. Designed with the modern woman in mind, it integrates seamlessly into daily life, offering a nuanced approach to health that considers menstrual cycles, mood fluctuations, and energy levels. With a focus on empowering women to understand and manage their health better, Evie is a testament to innovation in wearable technology, blending style with sophisticated functionality.



Humane AI Pin

Unveiling a new era in wearable technology, the HUmene AI Pin brings artificial intelligence to the forefront of personal consumer tech without a screen. This product redefines interaction with AI, allowing users to communicate through voice, touchpad, gestures, and a unique Laser Ink Display that projects onto the palm. Designed to seamlessly integrate into daily life, it supports a wide range of tasks from crafting messages in your tone to translating languages and identifying foods. It's powered by Cosmos, an innovative operating system that ensures privacy and intuitive use without the need for traditional apps. Stylish, with perpetual power and a variety of wearing options, this device represents the next step in making AI a personal and integral part of everyday life.





"I was just named VP of Marketing for the entire dark side of the planet!"



"Official policy states: if you don't know what a button does, just push it."



"We want to be the first brand selling into the Mars market."



"Helen, you're the Team Leader, why don't you jump first?"



"Despite your homerun for the company softball team I am not promoting you."



"Sure, I'll take you to my leader ... right after I take you to my insurance agent."



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CEO LOUNGE



IGNITING CONVERSATIONS **SHAPING FUTURES**



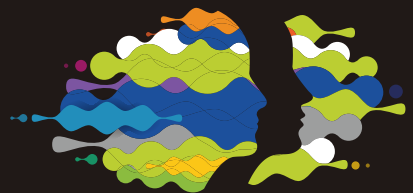
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