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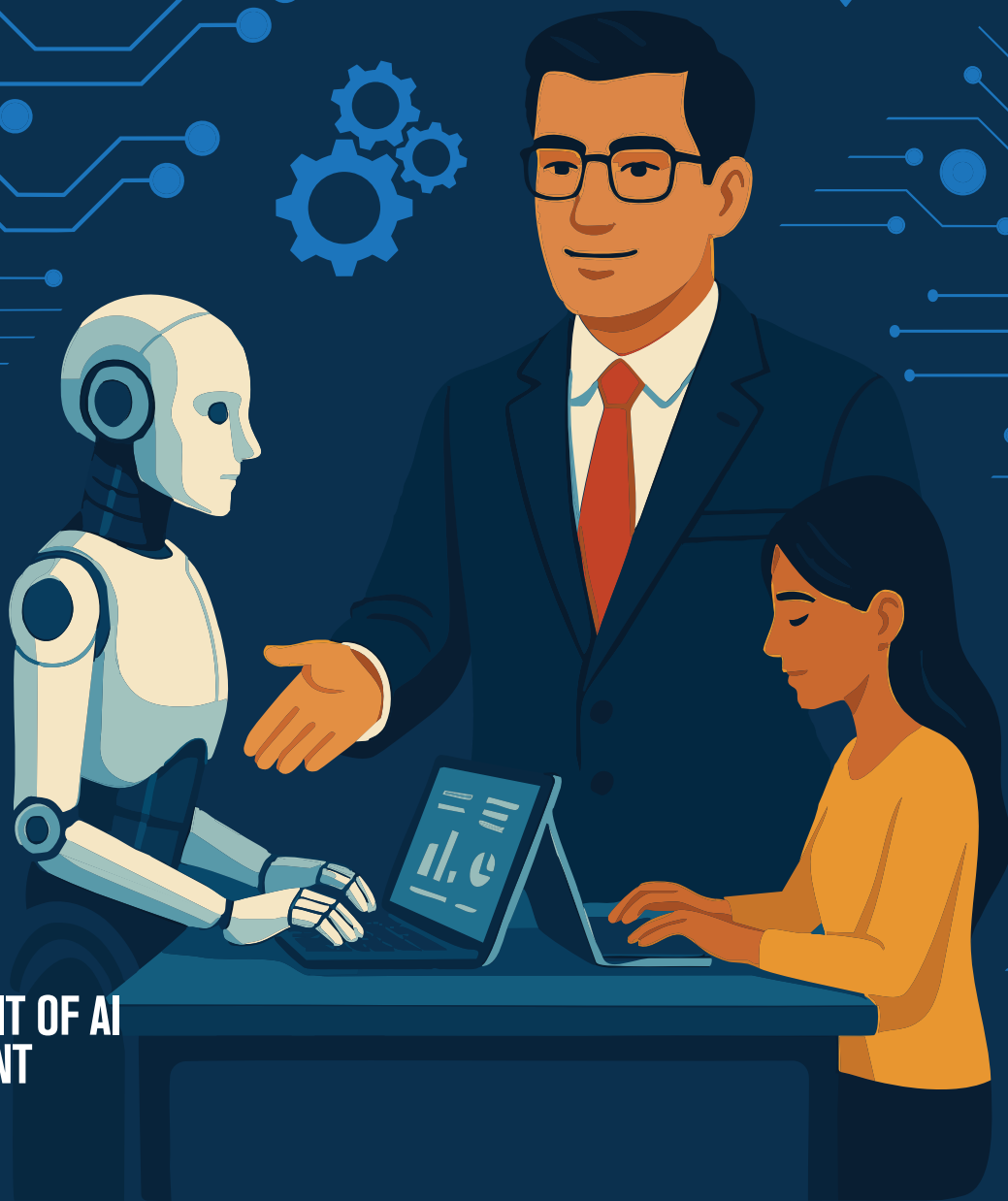
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SMARTER WORK

AI in Hybrid Environments



**THE PURSUIT OF AI
DEPLOYMENT**

Yousef Khalili



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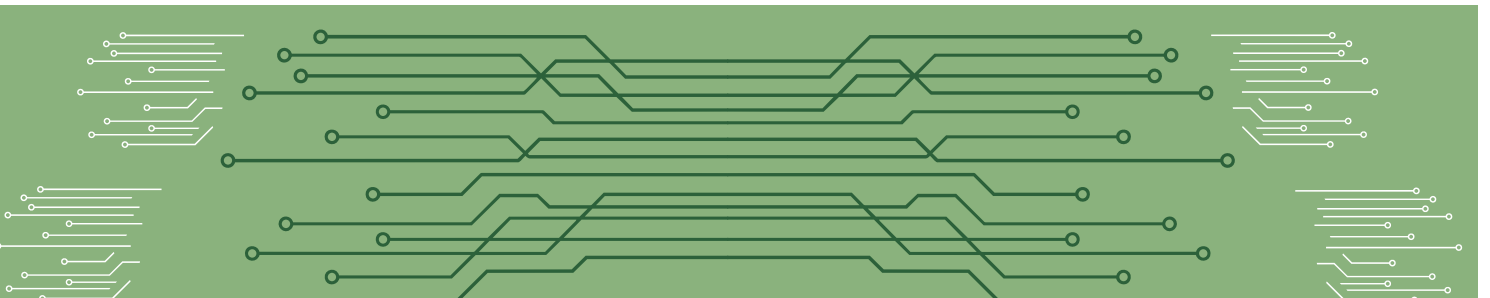
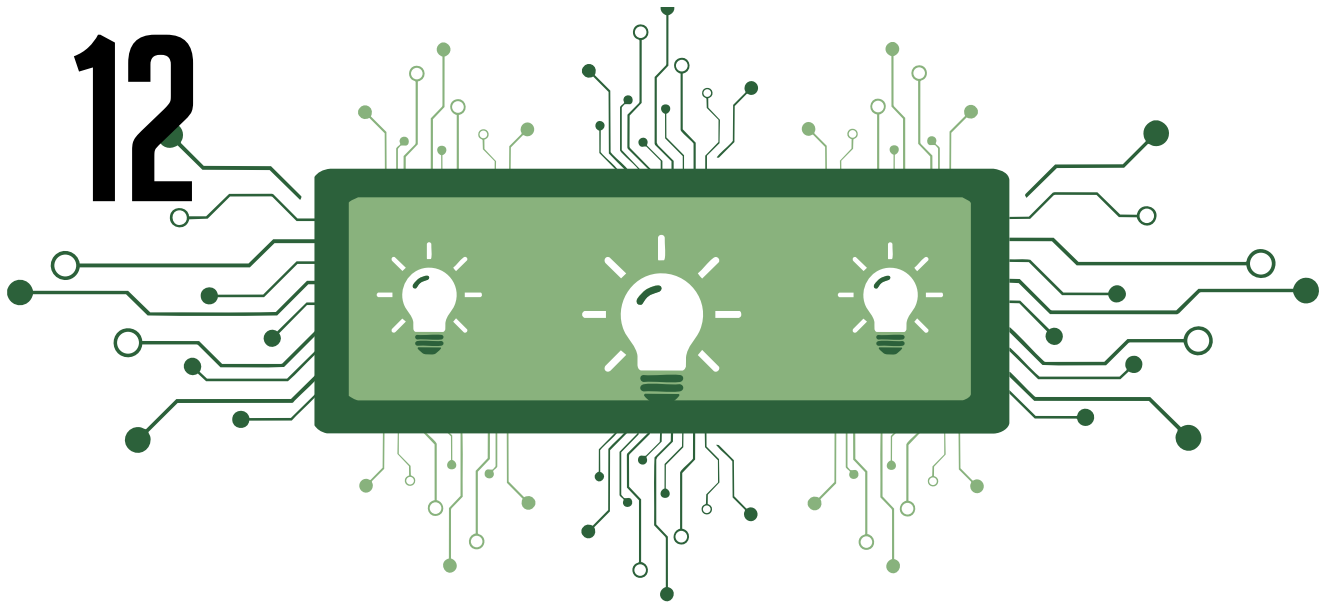
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Mental health in the workplace

Suneeta Reddy is Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd.

Psychological security is the key to mental health in the workplace. It starts with acceptance of the individual, without reference to physical traits, mannerisms, social membership, or any other personal peculiarity that has no bearing on one's work or role

The world has shifted from an exaltation of toughness to a greater sensitivity to suffering, especially in the workplace. 'Don't complain, don't explain' and 'don't ask, don't tell' are no longer the guiding principles of an ideal workplace. Organisations have learned that employee stoicism imposes costs in terms of output, involvement, burnout, and employee turnover.

The COVID lockdowns awakened corporations to the phenomenon of employee mental health, and they have learned to account for its costs and benefits. Mental health management has become particularly important as Gen Z enters the workforce, bringing with them significant social and economic anxieties as well as personal freedom aspirations.

The transition from a grunt economy to a cognitive economy has made the individual more important. Now, business owners and managers want their employees to be present not only physically but also mentally. They worry about employees being distracted, depressed, anxious, and exhausted. They can no longer afford even a few employees to bring down the mood and motivation of the group. It is no longer wise to tell employees to leave their troubles

at the gate. It is now the responsibility of the business to invest in the mental peace, focus, and sharpness of employees.

Employees are people too. They have lives before and after work. They have personal aspirations and obligations, problems, and pursuits. Employers can no longer hope to monopolise their time, attention, and energy without the risk of suboptimal output and damage to the employer brand.

Mental health begins at the top. Rational, reasonable, and sociable behaviour from leaders percolates down to middle management, which gets the real work done. Where middle managers are stressed and anxious, the larger organisation cannot be healthy. To keep employees in good mental shape, it is essential to ensure that middle managers remain calm and care about the mental state of their workforce. It helps to train middle managers in mental health dos and don'ts.

Psychological security is the key to mental health in the workplace. It starts with acceptance of the individual, without reference to physical traits, mannerisms, social membership, or any other personal peculiarity that has no bearing on one's work or role. Any overt or covert stigmatisation for not being 'one of us' can place unnecessary strain on the individual and interfere with their focus and motivation. Employees who enjoy being in the office with their colleagues and managers tend to be significantly more productive and innovative than those

Managing employee mental health is more about fostering a healthy workplace environment and practices than about regimenting wellbeing-promoting programmes, such as meditation and yoga

burdened with work and personal troubles.

Employees' mental health in the workplace is closely linked with the consistency and clarity of instructions.

Employees who are routinely subjected to competing or conflicting instructions tend to develop chronic anxiety. Clarity and control over tasks are critical for employees to work with minimal stress.

Reasonableness and predictability in collaboration are also vital for employees' mental health. Constant uncertainty in workflow can drain employees emotionally.

Managing employee mental health is more about fostering a healthy workplace environment and practices than

about regimenting wellbeing-promoting programmes, such as meditation and yoga. While such activities work for some, others rely on social interaction to release stress and receive psychological support from peers. It is important for organisations to provide time and space for employees to socialise. Many business owners and managers may fear that socialisation among employees could lead to trouble, but most organisations would benefit from an enthusiastic workforce rather than a muted one.

Employee mental wellbeing is a vital resource and a critical competitive advantage. It is not about mollycoddling employees at the employer's cost. It is about gaining extra output and avoiding the cost of suboptimal work and high attrition. Energetic, focused, and contented employees ultimately reflect in the P&L and balance sheet. 

The opinion expressed is personal.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

The future of work is being driven by the rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into business operations, and whether organisations are ready or not, AI is reshaping work processes, redefining roles, and transforming workplace dynamics. In this shifting landscape, leadership plays a pivotal role. Leaders who embrace AI as a tool for innovation and efficiency can unlock new levels of productivity. But, while doing so, they must also support their people through this transition with clarity, empathy, and purpose.

As AI handles more routine and cognitive tasks, employees are can focus on higher-value activities such as strategic thinking and innovation. This new hybrid workforce—combining human and digital workers—demands a different leadership approach: one that is agile, forward-thinking, and ethically grounded.

The true challenge for leaders in the AI era is to balance technological advancement with human values. Ethical leadership, ongoing learning, and a strong focus on people will be the key differentiators between organisations that thrive and those that struggle. As Yousef Khalili, Global Chief Transformation Officer & CEO MEA, Quant, writes in the cover story of this issue, “Your leadership must focus on moral practices coupled with ethical principles, and human-centred approaches. The upcoming era depends, to some degree, on your choices and actions. Treat this duty with due seriousness.”

Do write in with your views to imeditorial@spentamultimedia.com

Maneck Davar
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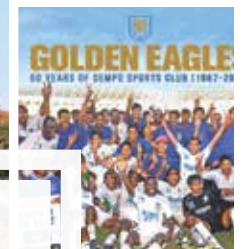
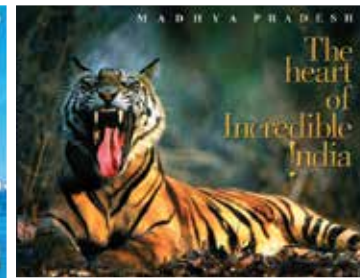
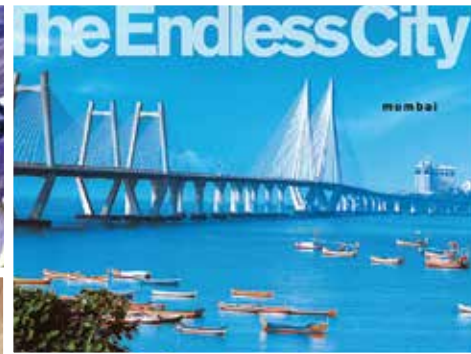
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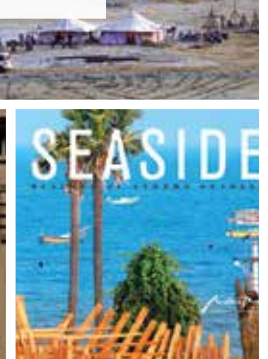
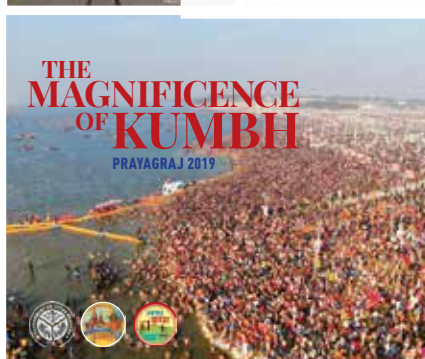
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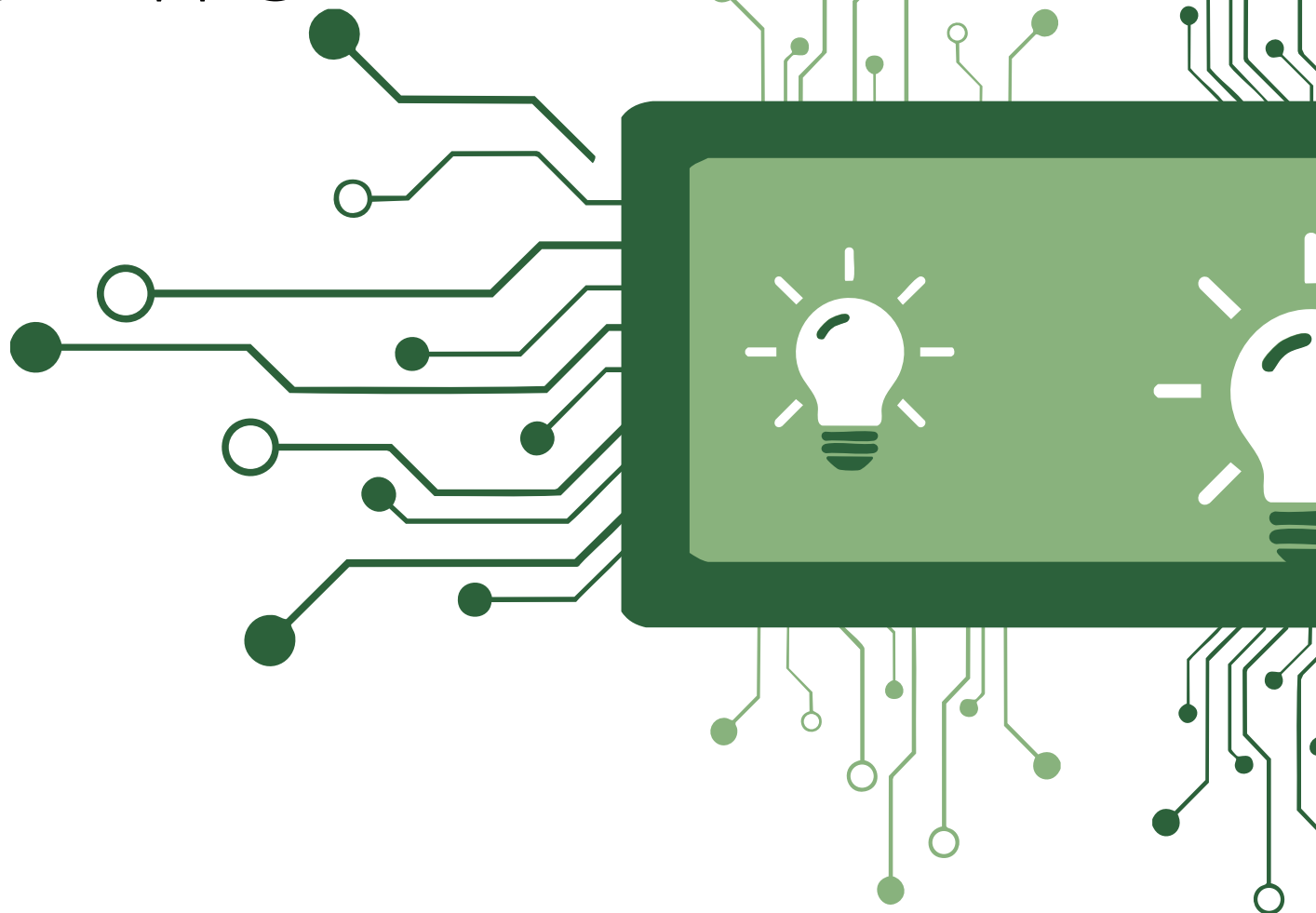


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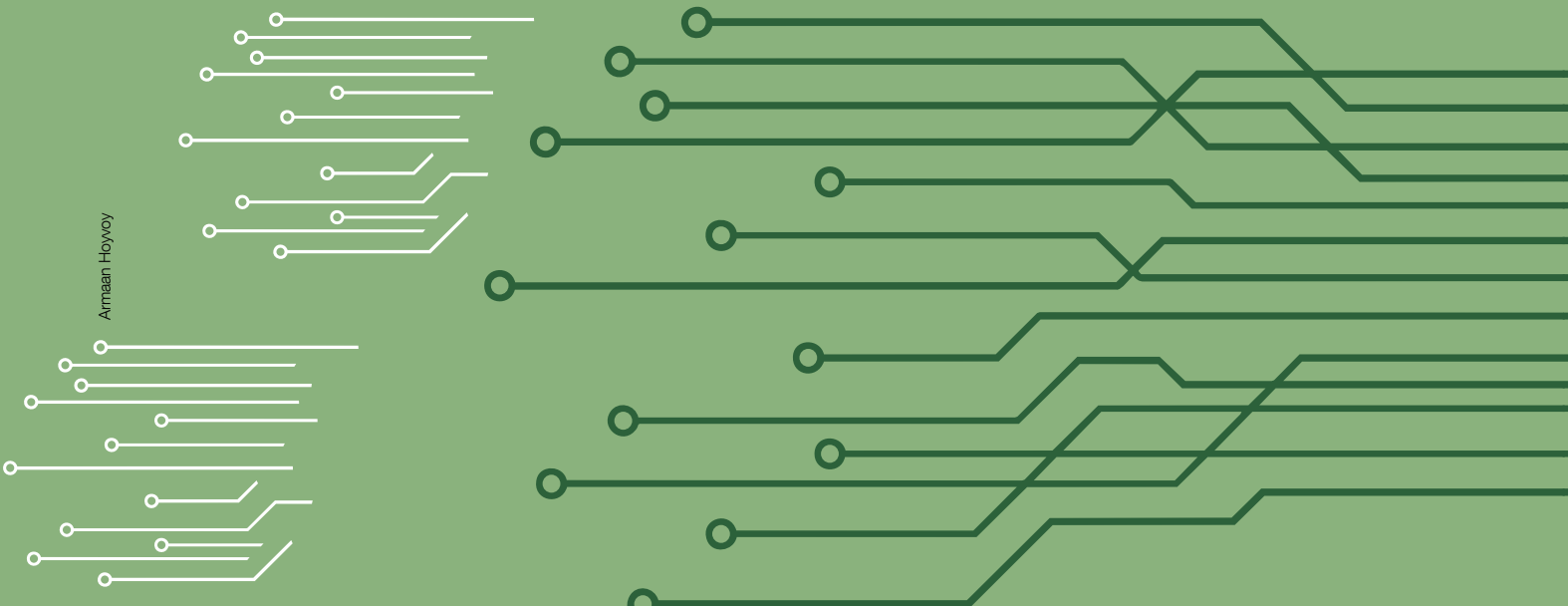
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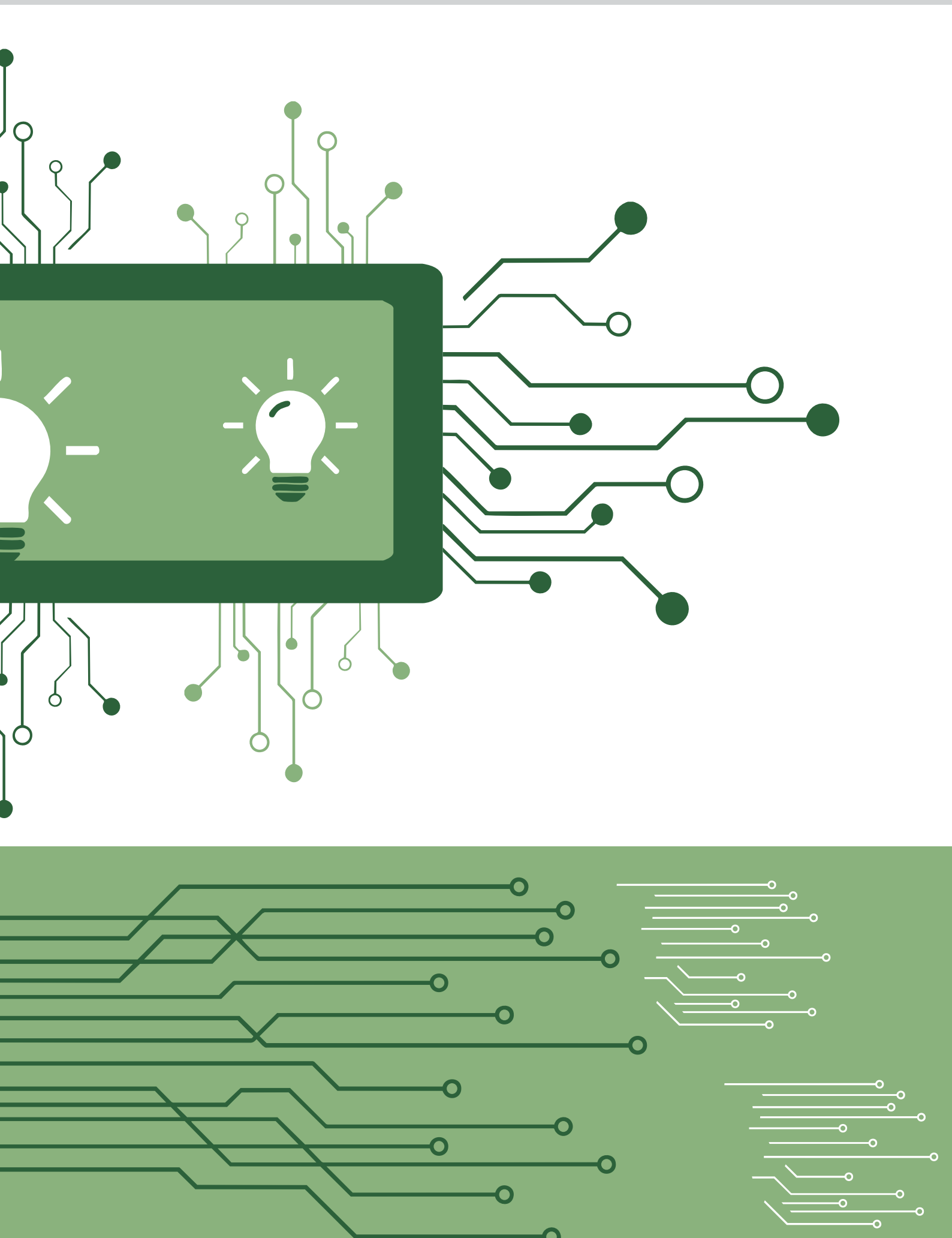


THE FUTURE OF WORK



Armaan Hoyvay







Armaan Hoyoy

The pursuit of AI deployment

As a leader at the forefront of AI-driven business transformation, your organisation holds a critical role in shaping AI's impact and public perception, demanding ethically grounded, human-centred leadership to responsibly guide the revolutionary changes ahead.

♦ YOUSEF KHALILI, QUANT



Before the end of this decade, offshore hiring of physical labour to save costs will disappear permanently. The future has arrived independently of your readiness to face it. The acceptance of this reality by you and your leadership of your company and its workforce determines whether your business endures success or fails. A research conducted by McKinsey* suggests

AI will handle thirty per cent of total working hours throughout 2030. In total, that accounts for twelve hours of a forty hour work week.

A leader who guides future workers needs to use a purposeful and decisive approach. Organisations entering the AI era should develop effective methods to unite technology systems with human talents so their combined power exceeds their individual strengths. A leader should build an environment that provides comfort to all people working within their organisation.

Digital teammates

The definition of teammates has always been limited to human beings: the person you meet both socially for coffee or lunch and periodically network during office functions. The traditional method of adding teammates remains valid, but your new digital agents will eventually join these traditional members. Advancements in AI systems include the latest version of automation which everyone currently uses.

Agentic AI transforms AI into a tool that takes actions end to end, instead of a tool that just relays information back to you. When you provide a request to a typical generative AI system known as GPT, it generates an all-inclusive response. Agentic AI stands apart because it shifts from answer provision to problem resolution when solving a specific issue. The GPT explains how to solve website problems, but agentic AI completes the actual resolution and fixes the issue at hand.

Digital employees implemented correctly will improve two essential aspects when deployed in a workplace environment. Subject matter experts (SME's) will gain freedom from their overworked state to focus on complex creative problems after implementation of this system. Your customer service hold durations will decrease considerably at the moment of implementation. Your business delivers superior customer service through digital employees which results in a rapid increase of positive brand association scores from customers.

Steps to a successful and positive roll-out

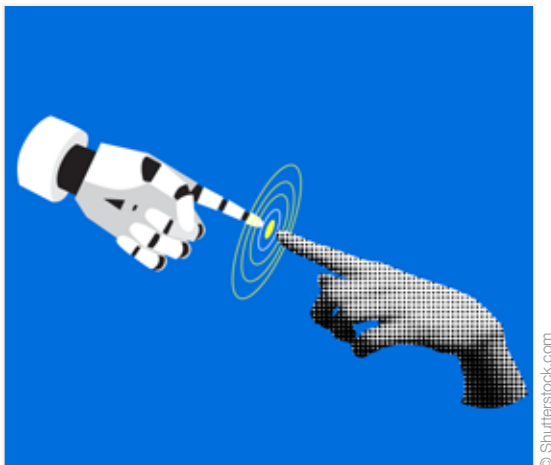
Your team needs an exact demonstration of how

Organisational leaders should approach AI deployments with total seriousness and extensive planning. The first requirement for digital employees is to establish programming that subjects them to human operators

this new technology will manage basic operations so they can focus on advanced assignments. Help employees understand AI success stories through the recognition of projects that both improve operational speed and develop good working environments for everyone. The collection of stories illustrates how advantages result in accomplishments that benefit human beings.

Empathy and understanding are key

The practice of empathy enables workers to bear short-term discomfort as they strive for enduring career progress. Adjustments leading to adaptation will require employees to endure short-term challenges. Multiple workplace positions will go through extensive changes which will result in eliminating particular job functions entirely. New roles will enter the system, while simultaneously time existing roles transform into more stimulating responsibilities. Expertly demonstrating empathy paired with uncomplicated, and clear communication, enables you to assist co-workers through AI transitions, while extracting the best possible



outcomes from AI development.

Diverse group of testers and advisors

All deployments need a diverse testing team consisting of qualified reviewers to conduct assessments prior to system release. The combination of a single employee with their team and professional background remains insufficient to predict every possible adverse consequence from your AI deployment. Your last group should include front line personnel followed by representatives from each department and every organisational level. Your AI deployment success becomes guaranteed when your efforts follow company goals and strategy. Every department will take ownership and involvement in your final product because you have involved people from all organisational levels. Staff members will accept this new technology as an organizational benefit for themselves and their work colleagues.

Subservient and moral encoding

Organisational leaders should approach AI deployments with total seriousness and extensive planning. The first requirement for digital employees is to establish programming that subjects them to human operators. Your first development step must encode a system which teaches 'good versus bad' ethics through every keystroke. 'Right and wrong' education of people begins at birth, therefore digital employees require the same type of training. Because digital employees come from human creation, you cannot depend on them to identify moral principles. Building ethical digital employees who serve people is a huge responsibility, and it is your responsibility.

People first, profits second

The pursuit of AI deployment advantages should never cause you to eliminate your



most valuable organisation resource; your employees. AI serves business needs because people require assistance with their work assignments. You should evaluate each new AI injection by assessing whether it enhances or damages the wellbeing of your personnel.

The pinnacle of AI development comes through human-centred AI creation and deployment procedures. Your AI solution must completely match all the fundamental ethical principles and organisational values your company maintains. Orderly communication through honest question-and-answer sessions should be continuous with every team member. Instantly resolve all employee inquiries about the topic by presenting the most direct and transparent information. You need to keep teaching your team that AI serves dual purposes of

organisational advancement and personal improvement.

Your position at the cutting edge of future business operations makes you an AI-using leader. Your organisation plays a vital role in AI's achievement of its maximum potential as well as shaping the public perception of this technology across the modern world. Your organisation along with its sector will experience revolutionary changes through Agentic Agents and digital employees. Your leadership must focus on moral practices coupled with ethical principles, and human-centred approaches. The upcoming era depends, to some degree, on your choices and actions. Treat this duty with due seriousness. **IM**

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- * <https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/a-new-future-of-work-the-race-to-deploy-ai-and-raise-skills-in-europe-and-beyond>



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yousef Khalili
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& CEO MEA, Quant.



The mindful office

In a world where the average office worker checks their email 74 times daily (and their phone nearly twice that), our relationship with technology has become less of a romance and more of a hostage situation. As someone who has spent the better part of a decade studying digital habits, I can confirm what you likely already suspect: we are not handling this relationship particularly well.

But here is the good news—you don't need to build a Faraday cage around your office or institute mandatory flip phone Fridays to make meaningful change. Small, deliberate shifts can dramatically alter how technology serves your team rather than subjugates it.

The starting point is truly understanding the challenge. As we all know, most apps are designed to grab our attention and keep it for as long as possible—it is simply their business model, and the AI-enabled algorithms are becoming more powerful at achieving this every day.

But the problem is not just hours withered away; it is more fundamental. Our attention is how we experience our lives, so getting stuck in digital spaces that don't serve us well impacts everything: from productivity, self-esteem and mood to sleep quality and relationships.

A 2023 Microsoft Workplace Insights study found that the average knowledge worker is interrupted every six minutes, with recovery time from each interruption taking an additional 23 minutes. This means many of us spend our entire workday in a state of perpetual recovery, never quite reaching that elusive flow state where our best work happens.

As one executive recently confided to me, "I bought a safe with a timer just to lock my phone away when I need to focus." When imprisonment of our devices becomes a reasonable solution, something has clearly gone amiss.

The trouble with most 'digital wellbeing' solutions is they rely heavily on willpower. But as we all know from both research and personal experience, willpower is about as reliable as 'estimated arrival time' during rush hour traffic! The part of our brain responsible for executive functions such as self-control and focus accounts for only 4 per cent of our body mass but consumes a whopping 25 per cent of our energy. No wonder it fatigues quickly. Which is why we really need other strategies.

The power of intentional digital habits

The best (and worst!) characteristic of habits is that they are automatic. They do not require much conscious input, the body and mind

just know exactly what to do. So the lowest-effort and most sustainable way to change our behaviour is to build new habits.

In my new book *Your Best Digital Life: Use Your Mind to Tame Your Tech* written with co-author Jonathan Garner, we explore exactly how to do this and offer the M.O.R.E. Method for cultivating intentional habits, which I'll summarise briefly for you here:

Mobilize: Connect with your purpose, values and your personal 'why' for wanting to change your digital habits. Without this clarity, new habits won't stick.

Observe: Get into a scientific mindset and watch your own tech habits with a deep curiosity, but without jumping to conclusions. Notice how you check your phone for the time, fall into an Instagram wormhole, then put it down – still not knowing what time it is.

Reflect: Schedule a weekly tech check in with yourself. Consider what you have observed: Is responding to emails at 2 AM helping your career or just giving you anxiety about it? Are your habits serving your own goals or just serving Meta's advertising algorithm?

Experiment: Create micro-adjustments based on the insights you have gained. Small changes practiced regularly beat grand aspirations that collapse by Tuesday.

The leadership challenge: Shifting the norm

Here is an uncomfortable truth: your team is watching how you use technology, not listening to what you say about it. If you are responding to Slack messages at 11 PM while preaching work-life boundaries, your actions speak louder than words.

Research from Harvard Business School shows that leaders who model digital boundaries see 34 per cent higher adoption of similar behaviours among their teams. So when you finally silence your phone during meetings, you're not just preserving your attention—you're issuing a permission slip for everyone else to do the same.



As a leader, it is your job not just to set an example but to shape a healthy digital culture. Instead of vague calls to “prioritise digital wellbeing” consider these evidence-backed approaches instead:

Deep work slots: Reserve 2–3-hour chunks on team calendars where meetings are forbidden and communication tools are paused. The University of California found that employees need at least 23 minutes of uninterrupted time to reach meaningful engagement with complex tasks.

Task batching distractions: Every time we switch contexts there is a substantial cognitive cost. Minimise this by batching together similar tasks, even the ‘distractions’. Consider a phone break mid-way through a meeting to prevent constant second screening.

Turn your volume up in meetings: Give permission for those expecting messages to turn up their volume. This may sound counter-intuitive, but it reduces the number of times people check their devices when they don't need to, and encourages engagement.

Notification audits: Hold quarterly ‘notification audits’ where team members review and justify each app that can interrupt them. Think of it as Marie Kondo for your digital life!

Measuring what really matters

When it comes to shaping culture, it is easy for managers and organisations to

inadvertently reward digital presenteeism through metrics focused on responsiveness rather than results. Consider instead:

Impact-focused metrics: Shift performance indicators from quantity of communication to impact of contributions.

Connection ratios: Track the ratio of face-to-face interactions to digital ones, aiming for healthy balance rather than elimination of either.

Focus time accounting: Measure periods of uninterrupted work as a valuable corporate asset, not just a personal preference.

Physical space supports boundaries

Your office design silently communicates expectations about technology use. Research from Cornell University demonstrates that physical spaces significantly influence digital behaviour patterns, a phenomenon known as choice architecture. Here are two examples:

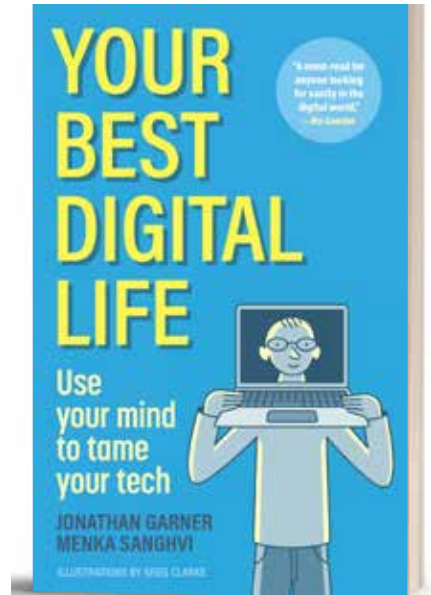
Give tech a home: Install physical phone storage on desks or in meeting rooms. One company created a playful ‘phone hotel’ outside of meeting rooms where devices ‘check in’ for meetings, complete with tiny room numbers and ‘Do not disturb’ signs!

Low-tech zones: Designate areas where laptops and phones simply don’t belong. These can become sanctuaries for conversation and thinking, or simply taking a break, not just “another place to sit with my laptop.”

Be bold in your experiments

When speaking to businesses about the mindful use of technology, I often encounter resistance rooted in fear: “But we’ll fall behind if we’re not always connected!”

While many professions and situations require intense periods of time in the digital trenches, the mistake is assuming that this default setting is always the best one for the whole organisation and at all times.



This is the spirit with which I wrote *Your Best Digital Life*—“best” necessarily looks different for every person, team and organisation, and the only way to find out is through experimentation. My book contains sixty experiments to try out, but more importantly, it sets out a framework for creating to your own approaches, because no expert can tell you what’s right for your organisation.

What starts as a productivity hustle can soon lead to profound cultural shifts. One CEO told me: “By running these experiments together people started talking about their digital habits more openly... without the usual shame and blame.”

Ultimately, having a better relationship with our technology is about exercising choice, and building up the inner freedom we have as humans in this digital age. By reclaiming control of our attention we can double down on what matters most to us in each moment. So when we create workplaces that honour attention as our most precious resource, we don’t just work better—we live better. 



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Menka Sanghvi is co-author, *Your Best Digital Life: Use Your Mind to Tame Your Tech*.



Lida Citroën, founder and CEO, LIDA360, LLC and author, *The New Rules of Influence: How to Authentically Build Trust, Drive Change, and Make an Impact*, examines the myths, protocols, systems, and formalities many businesses (and their leaders) anchored into previously and how those rules shifted to the positive for those who were paying attention.

**MYTH
BUSTER**

Influence reimagined

What happens when the rules change, and no one alerts us? We keep

doing things the way they have always been done and become frustrated that we do not see results. This is what many professionals and executives have experienced in leadership development, influence, and personal fulfillment: the rules shifted and many missed the memo.

MYTH 1: EXECUTIVE PRESENCE IS THE KEY TO UNLOCKING SUCCESS.

Traditional models of executive presence taught that to succeed—to be taken seriously, gain support for your vision and have your messages received as intended—you needed to look and sound a certain way, and to have gravitas. By curating an appropriate image (complete with red power tie), scripting poignant and clever communication, and delivering your presence with charisma, confidence and suaveness, you will have lasting impact.

Yet there is a fundamental flaw in this belief: We don't all look and sound the same,

and gravitas is hard to define and teach. So where did that leave those of us who aren't charismatic, who don't have the expensive clothes and aren't eloquent? We needed rules which are more meaningful, practical, and sustainable.

Today, influence and impact come from all layers of the organisation, not just the leadership level. We see evidence of outspoken, passionate and profound vision coming from tech giants (think Meta CEO, Mark Zuckerberg), activists (think climate advocate Greta Thunberg), and political influencers (think US Senator John Fetterman) and others who do not fit the mould in how they look or sound.

More important than how they look and sound is what they have to say. People with influence today are real, consistent, inclusive, credible, agile and visible and their ideas, vision and messages are making a difference in the lives of those they serve.

MYTH 2: INFLUENCE COMES WITH POSITIONAL AUTHORITY AND RANK.

Previously, it was a widely held belief that those with the job title or rank were heard and respected for their views. When they spoke, we listened and acted. But did they

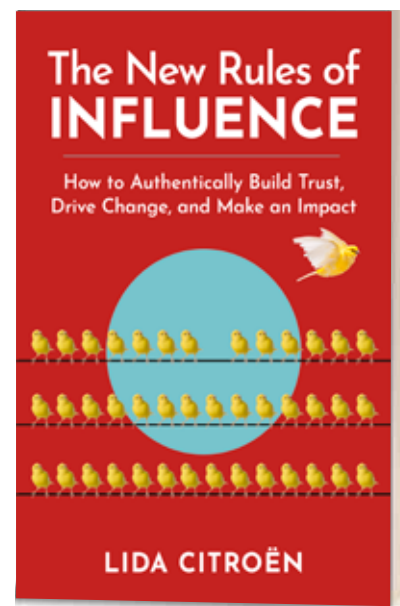
have influence or were we simply complying? If your job (and paycheck) depends on it, you'll act when someone with seniority gives an instruction. But do you believe what they say? Are you in alignment with their vision? Can someone have influence without the rank or job title?

A junior sales associate at a consumer products company transformed his passion for environmental conservation into a company-wide sustainability initiative. Despite initially facing skepticism about the potential costs, he strategically approached the challenge by building relationships with key influencers in operations and marketing. Carefully crafting a business case that aligned sustainability with the company's brand, goals, and talent retention, he demonstrated how environmental responsibility could create value. He listened to feedback, refined his approach, and ultimately secured leadership support to run a global sustainability program.

His success wasn't about positional power, but about unwavering commitment and the ability to build bridges that could create meaningful organisational change.

MYTH 3: TO BE AUTHENTIC MEANS SHARING EVERYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF.

It is possible that our desire to let people know everything about us became accelerated as we all sheltered in place during the Covid-19 pandemic, with our Facebook accounts keeping us company. In the past fifteen years, as social media took root in our lives, the lines between authenticity and transparency blurred. We found ourselves sharing and voicing our views on topics without thinking. Then, when we realised (the next morning?) that what we'd posted or commented on could be negatively viewed, we collectively tried to stuff that genie back into the bottle.



Note: It doesn't work that way.

It is important that we project our authentic selves. As a personal brand and reputation management professional, I encourage clients to let people know them, see them and hear about their real hopes and dreams. But we should put limits or boundaries on how far we go.

With cancel culture on the rise, one ill-fated online comment can lead to firing or public hostility. Today's professionals need to be mindful about how much they'll share with others. Navigating the line between authenticity and transparency is critical. We can define authenticity as the genuine and truthful comment or response you offer to a question or prompt. You share your real thoughts, beliefs, ideas and views. And you retain the right to say, "I'm not comfortable answering that," to remain real and authentic.

Transparency, on the other hand, should be reserved for governments and businesses.

If transparency is understood to be “I’ll tell you anything and everything about myself,” then risks abound!

To avoid the too much information slippery slope of transparency, setting up guardrails in advance empowers you to be genuine and authentic, and not overshare or share past what makes you feel safe. Don’t feel like offering your political views at a client dinner? You don’t need to. Not comfortable talking about your mental health struggles on Instagram, don’t worry about it. We are, as human beings, allowed to keep some topics off the table and still be seen as an authentic, real person.

MYTH 4: IF YOU ARE GOOD AT YOUR JOB, IT DOES NOT MATTER WHAT OTHERS THINK OF YOU.

I get this question a lot in my workshops, “If I’m good at what I do, why do I care if others don’t like me?” And it boils down to this: Perception is how we assign value. If I see you as someone I enjoy working with, who brings new ideas to the conversation and who will consider other viewpoints, I’m likely to want to help you, support your career, and bring you ideal opportunities. But, if I see you as arrogant, self-serving and stiff, I may not want to work alongside you.

Research has shown that more important to decision makers than your skills, ability and competency, is how I feel about you. Perception and feelings drive buying behaviour and positive outcomes.

Does this mean you have to make everyone like you? Absolutely not. That would be impossible. But it does mean that you’ll need to be mindful of the impression you’re making and how you’re perceived. In perception mapping work, we inventory how a client is perceived by those around them by asking simple questions such as: What

makes this person different from their peers? What words would you use to describe this person? Then, we can align the responses that support the clients’ desired positioning, those that deviate from how they want to be perceived, and add new perceptions that create authentic and meaningful influence within target audiences.

MYTH 5: EARN YOUR SPOT BEFORE YOU SPEAK UP.

This myth may, admittedly, relate more to women. For generations women were taught to wait their turn before asserting their voices and views. Then, somewhere around the 1980s and 1990s, our voices began to ring out from corporate board rooms (and later online) to where today women are asserting their views without fear of being outcast or judged as aggressive, pushy or loud.

There is protocol and respect to hierarchy. There is a comfortable formality to earning your spot before rocking the boat. But what happens when someone who’s waiting their turn holds onto a valuable idea, creating missed opportunities, or who doesn’t share a warning because they didn’t feel safe or validated enough to assert their position? Smart companies recognise that asking for input from people in the back of the room, flattening organisational charts, and promoting leaders who may not have the pedigree or credentials, can drive innovation, creativity and community unlike anything seen before.

The good news is that influence today is achieved through systems and rules most of us have access to in our work and community. No longer do we have to look or sound the part to be heard. Our best message is delivered with our most real voice. 



Recommended reads



GAIN: DEMYSTIFYING GENAI FOR OFFICE AND HOME

Author: Michael Wade and Amit Joshi

GAIN offers a timely and in-depth exploration of the profound impact of Generative AI (GenAI). It provides a structured analysis of how GenAI differs from traditional AI technologies and the changes it is set to bring to our work and lives. Combine academic rigour with practical business insightst, the clear, evidence-based approach used in *GAIN* makes GenAI's impact easy to understand, even for leaders and managers with limited experience with AI technology.



WE NEED NEW LEADERS: MASTERING REPUTATION MANAGEMENT TO RESHAPE THE C-SUITE

Authors: Charlotte Otter

Publisher: Practical Inspiration Publishing

The value of diversity in leadership teams is now widely accepted, yet leaders from diverse backgrounds remain dramatically under-represented in organisations around the world. The author argues that a key factor behind this is how these aspiring leaders are seen, heard, and trusted. The book is more than just a leadership manual; it works as a powerful call to action for a new generation of authentic leaders to rise and thrive on their own terms.



THE DNA OF ENGAGEMENT: A STORY-BASED APPROACH TO BUILDING TRUST AND INFLUENCING CHANGE

Author: David Pullan and Sarah Jane McKechnie

Publisher: Intellectual Perspective Press

Often, the reason why a business idea succeeds or fails is not about the quality of the idea itself, but the ability of leaders to breathe life into it and capture the hearts and minds of the people who need to hear it. The book can help you influence whatever change you need to see. It is a toolbox that you can apply immediately and use in all areas of your professional and personal life.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR BUSINESS: HARNESS AI FOR VALUE, GROWTH AND INNOVATION

Author: Kamale's Lardi

Publisher: Kogan Page Ltd

Artificial intelligence is one of the hottest topics in business right now, but this book cuts through the hype to offer a practical, comprehensive roadmap to help leaders drive AI transformation. Readers will learn how to build AI-ready teams and a culture of innovation from the ground up, to balance AI's strengths with our unique human capabilities. This book is packed with invaluable guidance around the present and future of artificial intelligence in business, and has real-world case studies.



CAREERS IN TECH, DATA AND DIGITAL: FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

Author: Christina Lovelock

Publisher: BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT

Nearly all business management roles today involve using technology, yet the idea of moving into a career in tech is still a daunting one for many people. This book makes stepping into a fast-paced, innovative and exciting industry feel much more possible, at any stage of your career.

The reality is that getting into tech doesn't have to mean learning how to code, and this book showcases the breadth of interesting, creative, and collaborative roles available. The author draws on her 20 years' experience to provide an insightful overview of how the tech sector really works, so whatever your skillset or interest, you will feel better equipped to move your career in a direction that is right for you.



STRATEGY AND LEADERSHIP AS SERVICE: HOW THE ACCESS ECONOMY MEETS THE C-SUITE

Author: Sara Daw

Publisher: Routledge

Strategy and leadership as service is a boardroom trend that is gaining momentum across different industries around the world. It is challenging the traditional employment model for business leaders, allowing organisations that can't afford full-time C-suite executives to still tap into invaluable specialist experience as and when they need it. This book by has quickly become the go-to guide to this emerging model of business leadership. By presenting a working business model and real-world case studies throughout, the author provides executives, leaders, HR professionals, recruiters, and consultants with a complete understanding of the key benefits, challenges and, most importantly, how to apply the 'access economy' model in practice.



♦ DR SUMANTA DUTTA, ST. XAVIER'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), KOLKATA

Ancient wisdom

Chanakya, also called Kautilya, was a philosopher, statesman, and economist from ancient India. His teaching philosophy, which are summarised in books like the *Arthashastra* and *Chanakya Niti*, have long been valued among us for their deep understanding of politics, government, and moral behaviour. A rare collection of aphorisms known as the *Chanakya Niti* demonstrate Chanakya's profound comprehension of societal systems, power relationships, and human behaviour. Although the main focus of his writings was on politics and governance, Chanakya's ideas have proven remarkably applicable in contemporary settings, especially in the context of better corporate understanding.

Chanakya's ageless wisdom offers many important lessons in this fast-paced business world of today, which is marked by intense competition, quick technical breakthroughs, and constantly shifting consumer needs. Here, we quote from several *shlokas* (verses) from *Chanakya Niti* to investigate their applicability to the current business practices in order to critically analyse the relationship between *Chanakya Niti* and corporate strategy. That

is why, in the *Chanakya Neeti* 4.15 it has been written clearly that: **अनभ्यासे विषं शास्त्रम्।**

It means knowledge without practice is like poison.

Chanakya Niti: An overview

Teachings from the *Chanakya Niti* cover a wide range of topics—from politics to personal ethics. It emphasises the value of knowledge, strategy, and forethought and is a veritable gold mine of useful advice. The text is well-known for emphasising pragmatism and action that is focused on results, which makes it extremely relevant to the business world of today.

Some of the central themes in *Chanakya Niti* include:

- Leadership and organisational behaviour
- Strategic thinking and competitive advantage
- Economics and wealth management
- Innovation and adaptability.

In this article a critical examination is done to see how *Chanakya Niti* provides insightful information that is applicable to modern corporate management and leadership techniques.

Leadership and organisational behaviour

One of the key insights of *Chanakya Niti* is its emphasis on leadership. He believed that the main role of a leader is to inspire, motivate and

guide their followers toward the achievements of a common goal. This principle aligns with modern principle of transformational leadership, whereby effective leadership is essential for driving organisational success.

Shloka 1: A person should not be too honest. Straight trees are cut first, and honest people are screwed first.

This *shloka* pointed out to the need for adaptability and strategic thinking in leadership. The above quote from *Chanakya Niti* reflects a pragmatic view on honesty and the complexities of human behaviour. It suggests that while honesty is a virtue, being excessively honest can lead to negative consequences, particularly in a world where deceit and manipulation are prevalent. In the corporate world, leaders must sometimes make difficult decisions that involve balancing honesty with pragmatism. A leader must be aware of the competitive landscape and the pressures their organisation faces.

Shloka 2: As soon as the fear approaches, attack and destroy it.

It highlights the importance of decisiveness in leadership. In corporate terms, it underscores the need to take bold decision-making when they confronting challenges or competitions. Leaders in the corporate world must not hesitate when faced with difficult circumstances particularly in VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) or BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, Incomprehensible) world.

Strategic thinking and competitive advantage

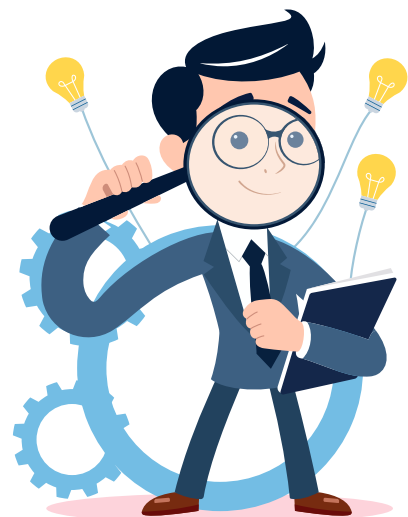
A major linkage between both *Chanakya Niti* and modern corporate strategy is the need for meticulous planning, foresight, and competitive advantage. Chanakya's strategic insights are particularly relevant to business leaders who are constantly evaluating their organisation's position in the market and identifying ways to outmanoeuvre competitors.

Shloka 3: Before you start some work, always ask yourself three questions- "Why am I doing it?" "What might the results be?" and "What efforts will it take?" Once you have got the answers, go ahead.

This *shloka* underscores the importance of clarity and strategic planning before taking any kind of action. In the corporate world, strategic planning is essential for achieving long-term success. Business leaders must assess the potential impact of every decision they have taken and evaluate whether the anticipated results justify the effort and resources required. It may be useful while launching a new product, expanding for new market, or investment in adoption of new advanced technologies etc. Such principles outlined in this *shloka* are integral to corporate strategy.

Shloka 4: There is some self-interest behind every friendship. There is no friendship without self-interests. This is a bitter truth.

This aphorism highlights the importance of understanding human nature and relationships, particularly in business dealings. In the corporate world, relationships with the clients, partners, or employees are often driven by mutual benefits. While this may seem cynical,



Whether it's adapting to technological advancements, responding to market disruptions, or shifting customer preferences, businesses must be agile and innovative to thrive

it reflects the reality of business dynamics, where every interaction carries an underlying motive, whether it's profitability, power, or influence. Corporate strategies often revolve around building networks, alliances, and partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

Economics and wealth management

Chanakya's *Arthashastra* and *Chanakya Niti* provide detailed insights into the management of resources, wealth creation, and economic policies. These philosophies are highly applicable to the financial and resource management aspects of corporate strategy, where efficiency, profitability, and sustainability are given paramount importance.

Repeating Shloka 1 once again: A person should not be too honest. Straight trees are cut first and honest people are screwed first.

This *shloka* also connected with the economic dimension of corporate strategy. In a competitive marketplace, businesses must make strategic decisions to protect their economic interests. While ethics are important, a purely idealistic approach may not always be effective in a competitive market. Strategic decisions often involve negotiating with suppliers, partners, and competitors to optimise resources and maximise profitability. Moreover, *Chanakya Niti* emphasises the importance of managing resources optimally.

This approach is in line with modern corporate strategies that emphasise more on resource efficiency, waste reduction, and responsible financial management practices.

Innovation and adaptability

In today's fast-changing business environment, innovation is playing a crucial role for long-term

success. *Chanakya Niti* advocates for constant learning and adaptation principles that are integral to contemporary corporate strategies focused on growth and innovation.

Shloka 5: Learn from the mistakes of others... you can't live long enough to make them all yourself.

This *shloka* emphasises on the importance of learning from experience and adapting themselves based on market conditions. In the corporate world, companies must constantly evolve themselves to stay relevant in the market. Whether it's adapting to technological advancements, responding to market disruptions, or shifting customer preferences, businesses must be agile and innovative to thrive.

Conclusion

Chanakya Niti has been providing invaluable insights since ancient times, that are relevant to the corporate world, even today. Its emphasis on leadership, corporate strategy, resource management, and adaptability to the situations offered a comprehensive framework to the modern business leaders navigating the complexities of the modern business environment. By gaining insights from *Chanakya's Niti*, companies can strengthen their strategic planning, enhance their competitive advantage, and build sustainable business practices that ensure long-term success. In conclusion, while *Chanakya Niti* was formulated in a different historical context, its teachings philosophies are deeply rooted to the modern corporate strategy. So, a true leader according to this *Niti*:

गुणैरुत्तमतां याति नोच्चैरासनसंस्थितः।
प्रासादशिखरस्थोऽपि काकः किं गरुडायते॥

(*Chanakya Neeti* 16.06)

This translates to: Greatness comes from good qualities and not from a high position. A crow doesn't become a *garuda* (the chief of the feathered race) just by sitting on the top of a palace. 🦅



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Transforming air travel

India's aviation sector is experiencing unprecedented growth, with domestic passenger traffic expected to exceed 350 million by 2030. Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionising the industry, optimising air traffic management, enabling predictive maintenance, enhancing passenger experiences, and strengthening airport security. AI-driven innovations, such as DigiYatra facial recognition and predictive analytics for aircraft maintenance, are improving efficiency and safety. However, challenges like infrastructure gaps, data privacy concerns, and a shortage of AI talent must be addressed. With continued investment and regulatory support, AI will propel India's aviation sector towards global leadership, ensuring safer, more efficient, and sustainable air travel.

Introduction

India's aviation sector is on an unprecedented growth trajectory. As the third-largest aviation market globally and poised to become the largest domestic market by 2030, the country faces immense pressure to manage surging air travel demand efficiently. Domestic passenger traffic soared to 152 million in 2023—a 33 per cent increase from 2022—and is projected to surpass 350 million by 2030. Managing

this explosive growth while maintaining safety, operational efficiency, and passenger satisfaction is a formidable challenge. Enter AI—a revolutionary force that is reshaping the aviation industry. From predictive maintenance to streamlined check-ins, AI is driving unprecedented transformation in India's skies. However, while AI's potential is enormous, several critical challenges must be addressed.

AI's role in air traffic management: Optimising India's congested skies

One of the most pressing challenges in Indian aviation is Air Traffic Management (ATM). India's airspace is among the busiest in the world, handling over 2,700 flights daily, with aircraft movements expected to reach 11 million annually by 2030. This congestion results in frequent delays and inefficiencies.

AI is revolutionising air traffic control by deploying predictive analytics, machine learning algorithms, and real-time data processing to optimise airspace management. For instance, AI-powered systems implemented by the Airports Authority of India (AAI) have reduced air traffic delays by 25 per cent at major hubs like Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport and Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. By analysing weather patterns, flight schedules, and congestion levels,

AI helps air traffic controllers make smarter, data-driven decisions, improving efficiency and safety. The deployment of AI-driven route optimisation has also reduced fuel wastage and emissions. The GAGAN (GPS-Aided Geo Augmented Navigation) system, developed by ISRO and AAI, enhances navigation accuracy, reducing flight path deviations and cutting fuel consumption by up to 5 per cent, leading to annual savings of over 120,000 tons of CO₂ emissions.

Boeing and Airbus have both integrated AI-based health monitoring systems in their aircraft, which have reduced unscheduled maintenance events by nearly 35 per cent, globally

Keeping aircraft in the sky: AI-powered predictive maintenance

Unexpected aircraft maintenance issues are costly, causing flight disruptions and financial losses. AI-driven

predictive maintenance is addressing this challenge head-on by leveraging data from over 5,000 sensors embedded in aircraft engines, landing gear, and other critical components to forecast potential failures. IndiGo, India's largest airline, has adopted AI-based predictive maintenance tools, reducing maintenance costs by 15 per cent and increasing fleet availability by 10 per cent. By detecting anomalies early, airlines can schedule maintenance proactively, preventing costly last-minute repairs and enhancing operational reliability. AI-powered systems also optimise spare parts inventory, ensuring airlines have the right components available when needed, further minimising downtime. Boeing and Airbus have both integrated AI-based health monitoring systems in their aircraft, which have reduced unscheduled maintenance events by nearly 35 per cent, globally.

Enhancing the passenger experience: From check-in to boarding

Long queues and cumbersome check-ins are becoming a thing of the past, thanks to

AI-powered solutions. Airports across India are integrating AI-driven facial recognition technology, self-service kiosks, and chatbots to enhance passenger experiences. Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport has implemented DigiYatra, an AI-based biometric facial recognition system that processes up to 25 passengers per minute per gate, cutting boarding times by 50 per cent. This system ensures seamless movement for over 3 million passengers per month. Similarly, airlines like SpiceJet and Air India have deployed AI-powered chatbots that handle over 100,000 passenger queries daily, offering real-time assistance on flight bookings, cancellations, and travel regulations. AI-driven sentiment analysis tools also help airlines gauge passenger satisfaction and improve service quality.

Strengthening security: AI as the guardian of safe travel

Security is paramount in aviation, and AI is playing a critical role in enhancing airport safety. AI-powered X-ray screening and CT image analysis systems now scan over 50 million pieces of baggage annually, detecting threats with 30 per cent greater accuracy than human operators. The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has implemented AI-based threat detection systems across 20 major airports, reducing human error and significantly improving risk identification. Smart surveillance cameras use AI to analyse passenger behaviour in real-time, identifying suspicious activity and alerting security personnel promptly.

Challenges: Infrastructure, privacy, and workforce readiness

While AI offers game-changing advantages, its widespread adoption is hindered by several challenges:

- 1. Infrastructure limitations:** While airports in metro cities like Mumbai, Delhi,



and Bengaluru have embraced AI, over 50 regional airports lack the technological infrastructure to implement advanced AI systems.

2. **Data privacy concerns:** The increasing use of AI-driven facial recognition and behavioural tracking raises serious privacy issues. India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP) mandates stringent data security protocols, which airlines and airports must comply with.
3. **Skill gap in AI talent:** India's aviation industry needs at least 5,000 AI specialists by 2030, yet there is a significant shortage of skilled professionals. Investment in AI training programs and partnerships with academic institutions is essential to bridge this gap.

The future of AI in Indian aviation: A glimpse ahead

AI is set to revolutionise India's aviation sector, driving advancements in automation, sustainability, and passenger experience.

1. Fully autonomous aircraft - AI-powered flight: AI-driven autopilot systems are

advancing beyond traditional flight assistance, leveraging deep learning and real-time sensor data for autonomous flight management. AI enhances flight precision, reduces pilot workload, and improves safety. In the near future, AI-assisted co-pilot systems could aid human pilots, while fully autonomous cargo and passenger aircraft may reduce operational costs and address pilot shortages. Leading global manufacturers like Airbus and Boeing are already testing AI-enabled aircraft, and India's aviation sector is poised to follow suit.

2. Sustainable air travel - AI for a greener future: AI is playing a crucial role in cutting aviation's carbon footprint, with fuel optimisation expected to reduce emissions by up to 50 per cent by 2050. AI-driven route planning minimises fuel consumption by analysing weather patterns, traffic conditions, and aircraft load. Predictive maintenance further enhances engine efficiency, extending component lifespans and reducing waste. AI also facilitates the adoption of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) by optimising blending and distribution. Initiatives like India's GAGAN



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AI-powered chatbots, real-time flight updates, and predictive travel assistance enhance passenger convenience, while sentiment analysis helps airlines improve customer service

navigation system are already improving fuel efficiency, and future AI innovations will drive the industry toward carbon neutrality.

3. Personalised travel - AI-driven passenger experience:

AI is transforming air travel with hyper-personalisation, streamlining security and check-ins through biometric authentication and facial recognition, such as DigiYatra

at Delhi Airport. AI-powered chatbots, real-time flight updates, and predictive travel assistance enhance passenger convenience, while sentiment analysis helps airlines improve customer service. In-flight personalisation, from tailored content to meal recommendations, will further elevate passenger experiences.

With AI reshaping Indian aviation, the sector is set to become more efficient, sustainable, and customer-centric, solidifying India's position as a leader in AI-driven air travel.

Conclusion: AI as the co-pilot of India's aviation future

Artificial intelligence is not merely a technological trend—it is the engine propelling

India's aviation sector into a new era. From streamlined air traffic management and predictive maintenance to biometric check-ins and heightened security, AI is ensuring safer, more efficient, and sustainable air travel.

However, realising AI's full potential requires overcoming challenges like infrastructure gaps, privacy concerns, and workforce shortages. With continued investment, regulatory backing, and strategic innovation, AI will be the co-pilot that guides India's aviation industry to global leadership by 2030. As India takes off into this AI-driven future, one thing is clear—the sky is no longer the limit. **IM**

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As organisations face increasing market volatility, regulatory complexities, and shifting workforce dynamics, the qualities of visionary thinking, ethical integrity, and adaptability become paramount.

♦ SANJAY KOUL, PROJECT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

LEADERSHIP

Navigating leadership

The role of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is multifaceted and dynamic, encompassing a range of responsibilities that are critical to the success of an organisation.

This overview explores how CEOs formulate and execute strategies by understanding the business environment, defining vision and mission, engaging stakeholders, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Additionally, it highlights the challenges CEOs face, such as market volatility, regulatory compliance, and workforce management, while emphasising the importance of key qualities like visionary thinking, ethical integrity, and resilience.

The discussion also delves into various leadership styles, emerging trends such as sustainability and digital transformation, and the complexities of CEO compensation and succession planning. Furthermore, it examines the impact of technology on CEO roles, underscoring the significance of data-driven decision-making and cybersecurity awareness. By providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence CEO effectiveness, this write-up serves as a valuable resource for aspiring leaders and stakeholders seeking

insights into the essential components of successful executive leadership in today's ever-evolving business landscape.

Introduction

The role of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is pivotal in shaping the direction and success of an organisation. As the highest-ranking executive, the CEO is responsible for establishing and executing the company's strategic vision, managing operations, and serving as the primary spokesperson for the organisation. The journey to becoming a successful CEO involves navigating a complex landscape of challenges, including market volatility, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder expectations.

Successful CEOs possess a unique blend of qualities, such as visionary thinking, ethical integrity, and resilience, which enable them to inspire teams and drive organisational performance. They utilise various leadership styles and adapt to emerging trends, such as sustainability and digital transformation, while fostering a culture that prioritizes employee well-being and innovation.

Moreover, the impact of technology on CEO responsibilities is profound, as data-driven decision-making and cybersecurity awareness have become essential in today's digital

landscape. This comprehensive exploration of the CEO role highlights the key elements involved in effective leadership, the challenges faced, and the strategies employed to navigate an ever-evolving business environment. By understanding these dynamics, aspiring leaders and stakeholders can gain valuable insights into the essential components of successful executive leadership in contemporary organisations.

Overview of CEO

A CEO is the highest-ranking executive in a company, responsible for its overall operations, decision-making, and strategic direction. The CEO reports to the board of directors and works to achieve the organisation's long-term goals, increase value for shareholders, and ensure the company's growth. Key responsibilities include:

- **Setting vision and strategy:** Defining the company's vision, mission, and strategic goals.
 - **Leadership and management:** Overseeing the executive team, managing resources, and ensuring efficient operations.
 - **Decision-making: Making major** corporate decisions and overseeing company policies.
 - **Financial oversight:** Managing financial performance, including revenue, profit margins, and budgeting.
 - **Stakeholder relations:** Engaging with investors, partners, and stakeholders to build and maintain relationships.
- A CEO's role varies based on the organization's size, industry, and goals, and they often serve as the public face of the company.

Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of a CEO are extensive and central to the success of a company. Here's a detailed breakdown of their

key duties:

Strategic vision and planning

- **Setting company direction:** Develops and articulates the company's vision, mission, and long-term strategy.
- **Strategic goals:** Defines clear, achievable goals to drive growth and performance.
- **Evaluating opportunities and risks:** Identifies business opportunities, evaluates risks, and decides on the best course of action for growth.

Leadership and management

- **Building the executive team:** Hires, develops, and leads the senior management team, fostering a culture that aligns with the company's values and goals.
- **Empowering decision-making:** Delegates responsibilities effectively, providing support and resources for departments to execute their roles.
- **Motivating the workforce:** Ensures a positive organisational culture, motivating employees and driving engagement.

Operational oversight

- **Monitoring performance:** Tracks key performance indicators (KPIs) and benchmarks across all departments to ensure progress toward goals.
- **Resource allocation:** Oversees budgeting, ensures efficient resource allocation, and optimises operational processes.
- **Implementing policies:** Develops and enforces policies and procedures that support operational effectiveness and compliance.

Financial management

- **Setting financial goals:** Develops revenue, profit, and growth targets for the company.
- **Budget oversight:** Approves and monitors budgets, ensuring that financial resources align with strategic priorities.



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- **Investor relations:** Communicates with shareholders and potential investors to build trust and secure funding if needed.

Board relations

- **Reporting to the board:** Provides regular updates on the company's performance, financial health, and strategic initiatives.
- **Governing support:** Works closely with the board of directors to shape the company's vision and ensure alignment with shareholder expectations.
- **Guiding decisions:** Participates in key decisions on corporate governance, mergers and acquisitions, and strategic partnerships.

Stakeholder management and public relations

- **Building relationships:** Engages with external stakeholders, including clients, partners, and regulatory bodies, to foster goodwill.
- **Serving as the public face:** Represents the company at events, with media, and in public forums, shaping the company's public image.

- **Crisis management:** Takes the lead in managing crises and communicating transparently to maintain trust and stability.

Innovation and growth

- **Driving innovation:** Encourages innovation in products, services, and processes, keeping the company competitive and relevant.
- **Exploring new markets:** Identifies and enters new markets, forming partnerships and exploring strategic acquisitions.
- **Customer-focused growth:** Ensures the company is aligned with market needs, customer demands, and industry trends.

In short, a CEO's role is multifaceted, requiring strategic vision, financial acumen, and strong leadership to steer the company toward sustainable growth and success.

Mindset of a successful CEO

The mindset of a successful CEO is characterised by a unique blend of attitudes, beliefs, and mental frameworks that enable them to lead effectively and drive their organisations toward success. Here are some key elements of this mindset:

Growth orientation

- **Embracing challenges:** Successful CEOs view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. They believe in the potential for improvement and learning from setbacks.
- **Continuous improvement:** They are committed to personal and professional development, constantly seeking ways to enhance their skills and the skills of their teams.

Visionary thinking

- **Long-term perspective:** They maintain a focus on the future, setting ambitious goals that align with a clear vision for the company's direction.
- **Innovative mindset:** They encourage creativity and innovation, fostering an environment where new ideas are welcomed and explored.

Resilience and adaptability

- **Bouncing back:** Successful CEOs possess the ability to recover from failures and setbacks, learning valuable lessons without losing momentum.

- **Flexibility:** They adapt their strategies and approaches in response to changing market conditions, customer needs, and technological advancements.

Data-driven decision making

- **Informed choices:** They prioritise using data and analytics to guide decisions, recognizing the importance of evidence-based strategies.
- **Measuring success:** They establish metrics and KPIs to assess progress and make adjustments as needed, ensuring accountability and performance.

Customer-centric focus

- **Understanding customer needs:** They prioritise understanding and addressing the needs and desires of customers, believing that customer satisfaction is key to long-term success.
- **Building relationships:** Successful CEOs focus on building strong relationships with customers, stakeholders, and employees, understanding that trust is vital for business growth.



The mindset of a successful CEO is proactive, growth-oriented, and adaptable, with a strong emphasis on collaboration, customer focus, and emotional intelligence

Collaborative leadership

- **Team empowerment:** They believe in empowering their teams, valuing collaboration and input from all levels of the organization.
- **Shared Success:** They recognise that the success of the organisation is a collective effort, celebrating team achievements and fostering a sense of belonging.

Emotional intelligence (EQ)

- **Self-awareness:** Successful CEOs are aware of their own emotions and how they impact their decision-making and interactions with others.
- **Empathy:** They practice empathy, understanding the perspectives and feelings of their employees, which helps build a supportive work culture.

Decisiveness and accountability

- **Taking initiative:** They are proactive in making decisions and take responsibility for the outcomes of those decisions, whether successful or not.
- **Learning from mistakes:** They view mistakes as opportunities for learning and improvement, rather than failures to be avoided.

Passion and commitment

- **Dedication to the vision:** They are deeply committed to the company's mission and values, inspiring others through their passion and determination.
- **Work ethic:** Successful CEOs demonstrate a strong work ethic, leading by example and setting high standards for themselves and their teams.

Networking and relationship building

- **Value of connections:** They understand

the importance of building relationships within and outside the organisation, leveraging networks for support, advice, and collaboration.

- **Influence and persuasion:** Successful CEOs are skilled communicators who can influence others and negotiate effectively, ensuring alignment and support for their vision.

In summary, the mindset of a successful CEO is proactive, growth-oriented, and adaptable, with a strong emphasis on collaboration, customer focus, and emotional intelligence. This mindset enables them to navigate complex challenges, inspire their teams, and drive their organisations toward long-term success.

Keys to CEO readiness

Experience, personal attributes, network, and relationships plays a crucial role in preparing an individual for the demands of a CEO role.

Experience

Experience is often seen as the foundational pillar for CEO readiness. It encompasses a broad range of professional encounters and skills that equip a leader to navigate the complexities of running an organisation.

Types of experience:

- **Industry knowledge:** A deep understanding of the industry in which the company operates is vital. This includes awareness of market trends, competitive dynamics, regulatory issues, and customer behaviour.
- **Functional expertise:** CEOs typically have experience in various functional areas, such as finance, operations, marketing, or human resources. This cross-functional knowledge allows them to make informed decisions that impact multiple aspects of the business.
- **Leadership roles:** Prior experience in leadership positions, such as managing teams or departments, provides essential

skills in people management, strategic planning, and execution.

- **Crisis management:** Experience in handling crises prepares future CEOs to remain calm under pressure, make swift decisions, and guide their organisations through challenging times.

Why it matters

- **Confidence in decision-making:** Extensive experience helps build confidence in making strategic decisions, as leaders draw upon their past learnings and insights.
- **Risk assessment:** Experienced leaders are better at assessing risks and opportunities, leading to more balanced and informed decision-making.
- **Credibility:** A strong track record in relevant roles can enhance a leader's credibility with stakeholders, including employees, investors, and partners.

Personal attributes

The personal attributes of a CEO are critical to their effectiveness and influence.

These traits shape how they

lead, interact with others, and respond to challenges.

Key personal attributes

- **Emotional intelligence:** A high level of emotional intelligence (EQ) enables CEOs to understand and manage their own emotions while empathizing with others, fostering a positive organizational culture.
- **Resilience:** The ability to bounce back from setbacks and maintain focus is essential in a leadership role, particularly in times of uncertainty or failure.
- **Visionary thinking:** Successful CEOs

are forward-thinking and possess a clear vision for the future, allowing them to inspire and motivate their teams toward common goals.

- **Integrity:** Upholding ethical standards and demonstrating honesty fosters trust among employees and stakeholders, which is crucial for a successful leadership tenure.
- **Decisiveness:** The ability to make tough decisions quickly and effectively is vital for steering the organisation in the right direction.

Why it matters

- **Cultural impact:** Personal attributes influence the company culture and set the tone for how employees interact and perform.
- **Team dynamics:** Strong personal qualities can enhance team cohesion and morale, leading to improved performance and productivity.
- **Trust and loyalty:** Leaders who demonstrate integrity and empathy can cultivate trust and loyalty among their teams, which is essential for retention and engagement.

Network

A well-established professional network is a key component of CEO readiness, as it provides access to resources, knowledge, and support.

Components of a strong network:

- **Mentors and advisors:** Having mentors can provide invaluable guidance, feedback, and perspective, helping aspiring CEOs navigate their career paths.
- **Industry connections:** Networking within the industry can lead to partnerships, collaborations, and insights into best practices and trends.
- **Peer relationships:** Building relationships with other executives allows for sharing experiences, challenges, and solutions,

Upholding ethical standards and demonstrating honesty fosters trust among employees and stakeholders, which is crucial for a successful leadership tenure



- **Community engagement:** Involvement in community and industry organisations can enhance visibility and reputation while expanding professional contacts.

Why it matters

- **Opportunities for collaboration:** A strong network can lead to new business opportunities, partnerships, and innovations that might not be accessible otherwise.
- **Resource access:** Networking can provide access to valuable resources, such as information, funding, and talent, which can enhance a company's competitive advantage.
- **Support in challenges:** A robust network can offer support during challenging times, providing different perspectives and solutions to complex problems.

Relationships

Building strong relationships is essential for effective leadership. The ability to connect with others fosters collaboration, trust, and a positive organisational culture.

Key aspects of relationship building:

- **Internal relationships:** Cultivating strong relationships with employees at all levels enhances communication, engagement, and team cohesion.
- **External relationships:** Building relationships with customers, suppliers, investors, and other stakeholders is crucial for understanding their needs and aligning the company's strategies accordingly.
- **Cross-functional collaboration:** Encouraging collaboration across departments breaks down silos and promotes a more integrated approach to achieving organisational goals.
- **Feedback loops:** Establishing open channels for feedback allows leaders to listen to their teams and adapt to their needs, fostering a culture of trust and respect.

Why it matters

- **Enhanced team performance:** Strong relationships improve collaboration and team dynamics, leading to higher productivity and innovation.
- **Effective communication:** Open lines of communication foster transparency, reducing misunderstandings and promoting

a sense of belonging.

- **Crisis resilience:** In times of crisis, strong relationships can provide the support and loyalty needed to navigate challenges successfully.

The keys to CEO readiness—Experience, personal attributes, network, and relationships—are interconnected and collectively contribute to an individual's ability to lead effectively. By developing these areas, aspiring CEOs can enhance their readiness to take on the complex challenges of leading an organisation and drive it toward success.

The path to CEO success

Becoming a successful Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a journey that involves a combination of strategic planning, personal development, and the ability to navigate the complexities of leadership. The path to CEO success is not linear and varies for each individual, but several key elements are commonly found in the journeys of successful CEOs. This write-up explores these essential components, including building a strong foundation, developing critical skills, networking, gaining diverse experiences, and embracing a

mindset of continuous improvement.

Building a strong foundation

A solid educational background is often the starting point for aspiring CEOs. Many successful CEOs have advanced degrees in business administration, finance, or a related field. However, practical experience can sometimes outweigh formal education.

- **Education:** While a bachelor's degree is typically the minimum requirement, many CEOs pursue an MBA or other advanced degrees to enhance their business acumen and leadership skills. These programs provide essential knowledge in finance, marketing, operations, and strategic management.
- **Understanding the business:** An in-depth understanding of the industry and the company is crucial. Aspiring CEOs should seek roles that expose them to various aspects of the business, enabling them to understand operations, financials, and market dynamics.

Developing critical skills

Successful CEOs exhibit a wide range of skills that enable them to lead effectively. These skills



Building a strong professional network is an essential aspect of the journey to CEO success. Networking can open doors to new opportunities and provide valuable insights

are honed over time through experience and intentional practice.

■ **Leadership skills:** Strong leadership is about inspiring and motivating others. Aspiring CEOs should focus on developing their leadership style, whether it is through formal management roles or informal team leadership opportunities.

■ **Communication skills:**

Effective communication is critical for CEOs. They must convey their vision clearly, engage stakeholders, and foster open dialogue within the organization. Developing public speaking and negotiation skills is essential.

- **Strategic thinking:** The ability to think strategically and make data-driven decisions is crucial for success. Aspiring CEOs should practice analysing situations from multiple angles, evaluating risks, and developing actionable plans.

Networking and relationship building

Building a strong professional network is an essential aspect of the journey to CEO success. Networking can open doors to new opportunities and provide valuable insights.

- **Mentorship:** Finding mentors who can provide guidance and share their experiences can be invaluable. Mentors can offer insights into leadership challenges, career progression, and industry trends.
- **Industry connections:** Actively engaging in industry events, conferences, and professional organizations helps build connections with peers and leaders. These relationships can lead to collaboration and partnership opportunities.
- **Cross-functional collaboration:** Developing relationships across various departments within an organisation fosters a sense of community and teamwork. This

collaboration leads to better decision-making and innovation.

Gaining diverse experiences

Diverse experiences across different roles and functions can significantly enhance an aspiring CEO's readiness for leadership.

- **Cross-functional roles:** Gaining experience in various functional areas, such as finance, operations, marketing, and human resources, provides a holistic understanding of the business. This knowledge is invaluable when making strategic decisions that affect multiple departments.
- **International experience:** Exposure to international markets and global business practices can broaden an aspiring CEO's perspective. Understanding different cultures and business environments is crucial in today's interconnected world.
- **Challenging roles:** Taking on challenging roles, including those that involve crisis management or turnaround situations, can provide valuable lessons in resilience and strategic decision-making.

Embracing continuous improvement

Successful CEOs are lifelong learners who continually seek to improve themselves and their organisations.

- **Feedback and reflection:** Embracing feedback from peers, mentors, and team members helps identify areas for improvement. Regular self-reflection on experiences and decisions can lead to personal growth.
- **Staying informed:** Keeping abreast of industry trends, technological advancements, and market dynamics is essential. Successful CEOs read extensively, attend workshops, and participate in executive education programs.
- **Adaptability:** The business landscape is constantly changing, and successful CEOs must adapt to new challenges. Embracing change and being open to new ideas fosters a

culture of innovation within the organisation.

Cultivating emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is a crucial component of effective leadership. CEOs with high EQ can navigate complex interpersonal dynamics and foster a positive organisational culture.

- **Self-awareness:** Understanding one's emotions and how they impact others is vital for effective leadership. Self-aware leaders can manage their reactions and engage with empathy.
- **Empathy:** Being able to empathize with employees, customers, and stakeholders enhances relationships and builds trust. This quality is essential for creating a supportive work environment.
- **Conflict resolution:** Strong emotional intelligence equips CEOs to handle conflicts effectively, promoting collaboration and maintaining team cohesion.

Demonstrating integrity and accountability

Successful CEOs embody integrity and accountability, establishing a foundation of trust and ethical leadership.

- **Ethical decision-making:** CEOs must make decisions that align with the company's values and ethical standards. Upholding integrity in all actions fosters credibility and loyalty.
- **Accountability:** Taking responsibility for both successes and failures is essential for effective leadership. Successful CEOs own their decisions and lead by example, inspiring accountability within their teams.

Visionary leadership

Finally, successful CEOs possess visionary leadership qualities that inspire and motivate their organisations.

- **Articulating a clear vision:** Successful CEOs can communicate a compelling vision for the future, rallying employees and stakeholders around shared goals.

- **Encouraging innovation:** They foster an environment where creativity and innovation thrive, encouraging teams to think outside the box and pursue new ideas.
- **Driving results:** Visionary CEOs are focused on achieving results, balancing long-term objectives with short-term performance metrics.

Conclusion

The role of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a complex and multifaceted position that significantly impacts the trajectory of an organisation. Successful CEOs are not only strategic thinkers who set and execute a clear vision and mission but also effective leaders who inspire and manage diverse teams while navigating a myriad of challenges. The journey to CEO success requires a deep understanding of the business environment, robust stakeholder engagement, and the ability to foster a positive corporate culture.

As organisations face increasing market volatility, regulatory complexities, and shifting workforce dynamics, the qualities of visionary thinking, ethical integrity, and adaptability become paramount. Additionally, the emergence of trends such as sustainability and digital transformation emphasises the need for CEOs to remain agile and forward-thinking. The integration of technology into leadership practices further enhances the capacity of CEOs to make data-driven decisions and manage organisational risks effectively.

By prioritising continuous improvement and cultivating a culture of innovation, CEOs can drive their organisations toward sustained success. As the business landscape continues to evolve, the insights derived from understanding the roles, challenges, and best practices of successful CEOs will serve as a valuable resource for aspiring leaders and stakeholders alike. Ultimately, the effectiveness of a CEO not only shapes the organisation's performance but also influences its broader impact on society, making the role both challenging and rewarding. 



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Capacity Building Procurement Programme

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1. Certificate Course in Emerging Technologies

- **Duration:** 3 Months (Online – Weekends Only) | **Start Date:** 2nd August 2025 | **Total Hours:** 30
- **Target Group:** Final-year UG/PG students in Science, Technology, Engineering, Management & Early-Career Professionals
- **Fee:** ₹10,000 + 18% GST (10% discount for university-nominated cohorts of 10+)
- **Topics:** AI & ML, IoT, Blockchain, Cloud, Cybersecurity, Quantum Computing
- **Certification:** Joint Certificate from AIMA & AIU

2. Capacity Building Programme for Doctoral Educators

- **Dates:** 7th – 9th August 2025
- **Mode:** In-Person (Residential)
- **Location:** AIMA, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi
- **Fee:** ₹50,000 + GST (with accommodation)
₹35,000 + GST (without accommodation)
- **Target Group:** Faculty & Researchers involved in PhD supervision
- **Focus:** Supervision Ethics & Research Methodology, Institutional Research Leadership, Coaching & Mentoring for Doctoral Guidance, Building Interdisciplinary Research Ecosystems
- **Certification:** Joint Certificate from AIMA & AIU

3. Leadership Development Programme for Vice Chancellors

- **Dates:** 21st – 23rd August 2025
- **Mode:** In-Person (Residential)
- **Location:** AIMA & AIU, New Delhi
- **Fee:** ₹60,000 + GST (with accommodation)
₹40,000 + GST (without accommodation)
- **Target Group:** Serving & New Vice Chancellors
- **Focus:** Visioning under NEP 2020; Global Trends in University Governance; Innovation & Research Funding Models; Branding and Digital Transformation in HEIs
- **Certification:** Joint Certificate from AIMA & AIU

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