

Holistic Digital Empowerment for Unleashing Human Excellence

Mr. Lakshman Pillai
Chief Architect, Smipio
lakshman.pillai@lpcube.com

In the mid 90s, Ray Lane, COO of Oracle, said “The next 5 years we will see more changes than the last 50 years.” The digital transformation we went through during the last 15 years is mind blowing. Great inventors have transformed smart toys into intelligent robots that speak, listen, walk, look and perform like human beings. Financial institutions have evolved from small money lending outlets to smart banking enterprises. Digital transformation in retail have changed the way we decide and buy. Driverless cars, driverless tractors that performs ploughing, cultivation and harvesting were beyond our imagination. But, not anymore. Through holistic innovations we can empathetically understand the present pains and create the future wonders.

The greatest achievement in the 21st century lies in the ability to divert human minds from digital distraction. Diverting human minds with a sense of purpose, imbibing humanity, and digitally empowering human minds will define the success in the future. Let me elucidate on the possibilities specific to unleashing human excellence by creating revolution at work, education institutions and in individual thoughts and actions.

The New Age Challenges

Unfortunately, poverty still exists in the 21st century. Pollution, unhealthy food, infertile soil, decaying of environment, digital dopamine, and unhappy workforce lead to more psychological and physiological sickness. Education got stuck in the 19th century factory moulding model. Workplace complexities lead to more suffering and employee disengagement.

High level of disengagement at workplace and classroom ruins competence building effort and work performance. Presently, the regimented and disempowered learning and work environment bring stress. Outdated and factory-model of education lead to high unemployability and underemployment. Underemployment is more painful than unemployment. Blind learning without sense of purpose and lack of holistic self-directed learning undermines the true potential of individuals. Disintegrated and complex workplace practices result in rigidity, stagnation and unhappy experience for both employees and customers.

The biggest challenge in this era of digital information age is not lack of information but too much information. Information overload distracts knowledge workers and drains their energy as they spend more time searching through the mountain of information. John Naisbitt said, “We are drowning in information but starved for knowledge.”

An extraordinary ecosystem is vital for enabling knowledge workers to peacefully sleep, joyfully get up from bed without an alarm, enthusiastically learn, and passionately do their duty every day. Knowledge workers need to naturally and subconsciously perform their role like honeybees cross-pollinating, birds dispersing seeds, and water flowing through the rivers.

Skill, soil and soul are the three interlocked pillars of social and national development. Skill development is not just about developing technological competence but about nurturing humanity. Humanizing workplace and education can unleash human excellence to help deliver the best performance naturally without pain. Digital technology plays a vital role in unleashing human excellence by making learning and working wise and scalable. This article elucidates on why, how and what it takes to drive holistic digital empowerment for creating an outstanding ecosystem for thoughtfully learning and working together.

Convergence of Brilliance

Charles R. Swindoll said, “The secret of living a life of excellence is merely a matter of thinking thoughts of excellence. Really, it's a matter of programming our minds with the kind of information that will set us free.” Democratizing knowledge and education can transform society to rise and work at their optimum level. Digital transformation can democratize knowledge, democratize education and democratize innovation. This technological transformation of bringing right knowledge to right people at the right time can redefine talent management, idea management, teamwork and customer interaction.

Future of education, future of work and future of talent is all about holistic thinking, agility, singularity, autonomy and working in harmony with collective brilliance in the entire ecosystem. Unlocking the unique potential of individuals as well as the collective minds is going to be the basic necessity to succeed and lead in the future of robotization and rapid advancements.

Atomistic thinking prevents us from solving inter-connected problems meaningfully and completely. We need a holistic approach to digitally transform and converge the brilliance of industries, institutions, and individuals to unlock the true potential of human beings. Great human potential energized by holistic education, high performance workplace, digital empowerment, and enriched environment is the foundation of sensible progress. Knowledge empowerment powered by digital technologies can change the way we think, learn and perform to deliver excellence. It will rewire human minds towards becoming mindful and making their existence meaningful and sensible.

Nation with high level of human development index, innovation capability, quality education and entrepreneurial thinking can remain or become a developed nation. Achieving such greatness is possible only through holistic digital transformation. Therefore, it is necessary to embark on the journey taking industries, institutions and individuals to the next orbit.

About Digital Transformation

Data Democratization



Making knowledge seekers to learn effectively and easily and making knowledge workers to perform wisely are all about empowering them with right insight. Technological empowerment can enable insightful decision making, aspiration, and working to perform at the optimal level. Therefore, the knowledge must easily flow through the organization to ensure that everyone gets right knowledge to perform their daily function well.

Digitizing information, learning content and data are vital to make this instant access to relevant knowledge a reality. Digitalization is necessary to ensure that knowledge workers and seekers are empowered with right technology to productively navigate through the knowledge.

Imagine the power of poorest of the poor person in the remotest of the remote village having access to the great lectures of MIT, Stanford, IIT professors and industry experts. Democratization of education will transform both schools and colleges. Regimented education, rigid blackboard driven classrooms, and shallow assessment of theoretical knowledge are the designs of the factory era of the 19th century. Nothing is going to block individuals from accessing the world of knowledge. No one can narrow the learning of anyone.

Insightful Integration



Digitization and digitalization are not enough. Everything needs to converge. Therefore, it is important to identify all the components of the system and to understand the interworking of these components. With this understanding, we need to design the holistic system to integrate all components, connect related knowledge and facilitate not just smooth flow of knowledge but also drive holistic learning.

Digital transformation is all about unification and simplification for operational efficiency and excellence. Think of the disruption made by Uber and OLA through digital empowerment. They beautifully connected drivers, vehicles, maps, and passengers. Passengers have all the data at their fingertips to decide wisely. They also know where the taxi is, how long it will take to pick them up, and which route the driver is going to take.

It brings highest level of comfort and safety to passengers. There is a high level of transparency in the pricing. Imagine the power of individuals with right insight and world of experts at fingertips to help them look at various career options and confidently decide. Imagine a simplified technology directing individuals with personalized learning map and wise planner.

Gainful Globalization



Digital transformation is the launch pad for taking business enterprises, knowledge and talents to the entire globe. Individuals need not limit them and their businesses to a small geographical territory.

Virtual collaboration, digital library, online shops, internet banking, Direct To Home (DTH) entertainment, virtual universities and so on are redefining our living. This mind-blowing new design is bringing great disruption in all sectors.

Imagine what wonders digitally powered holistic education can do to the learners and career aspirants. Now, the entire world is the classroom. Digital empowerment can help learners drive their learning beyond imagination. People can globalize their expertise and businesses with ease. The barriers can be easily broken. One can transcend the limitations to jump into the world of opportunities to perform. Knowledge of the experts can be traded across the globe. Experts need not limit their teaching to a tiny classroom.

Inspirational Innovation



Frog in a well cannot see much. Eagle born and brought up in a place full of chickens will live and die as chickens do. Narrow thinking and boxed thoughts undermine individuals' cognitive ability. While digital transformation enhances the reach for all, it also makes competition extremely tough. Competitors are not limited to a particular geography. Anyone from anywhere in the world can create wonders and reach out through digital empowerment.

Someone from Mongolia can create a virtual library. They can build Apps and market them to the whole world. Language does not matter. Digitally innovate or perish. Technology and execution power will make it easier to setup online shops even in places like Somalia or Nigeria.

Be humble, be simple and be nimble. Agility is the only way an organization, institution and individuals can exist meaningfully. Longevity of any organizations will be shortened if they do not take reinvention seriously.

Transformational Technology



Incremental technology and mediocre solutions cannot excite anyone anymore. What matters is transformational disruption. Giving an option to download the PDF version of the school and college books is not digital transformation. It is about fixing a motor in a horse carriage and calling it a car. Can we compare it with autonomous cars and intelligent BMWs?

Radical change is vital to make prospects across the globe to use your products and services. Imagine how the aggregation businesses like food delivery, show booking, travel booking, hotel booking, and shops have shaken the traditional businesses. Copy and paste will not work. Anyone with the intention of getting into this sector now, need radical ideas and transformational technologies.

Authentic Abundance



One of the greatest advantages of digital transformation should be creating abundance of quality in everything. Virtual university should be able to scale up to millions of students. Virtual collaboration can connect thousands of experts across the globe to ignite great thoughts.

Digital empowerment can break the bureaucratic hurdles, monopolistic business, and other limitations blocking someone from getting what they want and genuinely deserve.

Lean Leadership



Agility and lean thinking have become an uncompromisable quality of progressive organizations. Creating learning organization is necessary for driving continuous improvement, operational efficiency and organizational excellence. Virtual office is going to be the future. Think of those large enterprises operating from few big campuses making everyone spend 7% of their time just for traveling. This unnecessarily long travel has many negative impacts. It is environmentally destructive; workforce get tired and ultimately result in low quality and productivity.

Back-to-back meeting culture need to change. Instead, technology is necessary to connect the concerned people to interact, share knowledge, ask for help and collectively work towards delivering excellence at work. Technology can do most of what managers do every day. Managers can be turned into leaders and

change agents. The concept of self-governance, learning autonomy, self-transformation, self-directed performance management will eliminate the need for unnecessary and unproductive supervision from the top.

Conclusion

Digital transformation is not just about technology. It is more about cultural change, resetting of cognitive rigidity and letting go of the individual domination. Digital empowerment is all about harnessing the collective power. Without this shift in the thinking, implementing mediocre or disintegrated software will make organizations crash land into massive disaster. So much of content available on public domain on both personal and organizational change management.

Digital distractions can ruin individual's productivity and knowledge when digital transformation is not driven by sense of purpose and shared vision. Take the empowerment of knowledge workers and knowledge seekers seriously. Provide them the right gadget and tools to help them become what they want to become and to help them perform how you expect them to perform.

Castles are not built overnight and they are built one brick at a time. Thousand-mile journey starts with the first small step. Create the right roadmap and move one step at a time. Digital empowerment enables workplace, education, social and personal excellence. Faculties deserve happy facilitation of learning, students deserve joyful and sensible learning, workforce deserve happy working, and customers deserve great experience. Digital and knowledge empowerment driven by system thinking make transformational learning and working a possibility.

About the author



Lakshman Pillai is an entrepreneur, author, reinventor, and holistic design thinker with 30 years of experience in information technology, software product innovation, holistic knowledge empowerment, digital empowerment, and workplace, higher education and personal transformation.

He is the Chief Architect of Smipio, a holistic software innovation, designed to digitally empower learners and workforce to think, learn and perform towards unleashing human excellence. He has authored a book *Holistic Workplace for Excellence*, and has developed *Transform for Excellence* consulting and workshop to empower knowledge workers and knowledge managers.

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