

smartCIO

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Sami Yalavac,
CIO, Bupa Asia Pacific

Technology and Business Culture


**Building business culture
through technology**

Interview with Alex Choy, Senior Vice President
of Technology Products, Workday



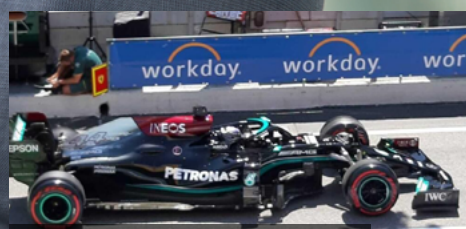
**Technology that
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Tony Park,
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Global Head of HR Optimisation, Aesop



**Formula 1 goes full throttle
on digital acceleration**



Foreword

A strong business culture - one each employee embraces - is vital to success. Organisational success depends on motivated employees and managers working towards a common goal. Culture isn't confined to the office. It extends to how employees interact with customers, partners, and other stakeholders, as well as how they operate in work from home situations with minimal supervision.

Technology has a huge impact on workplace culture and productivity, and its reach extends well beyond work into every aspect of our lives. While a CIO's focus is on introducing the right information technology and computer systems to an organisation, their influence reaches further than just tech.

In issue six of smartCIO, we look at the link between business culture and technology. What role can a CIO play to ensure a thriving business culture of positive values that translates into business growth?

Sami Yalavac, Asia Pacific CIO at global health insurance and healthcare group Bupa, believes technology should be introduced based on needs and for specific purposes, one of which is to foster a thriving culture.

In South Korea, peer-to-peer mobile payment platform, Toss, gives employees the freedom to make decisions, which results in unique products and solutions for customers. Tony Park, Team Leader of People & Culture, credits the right technology as key to building this culture.

The right technology is key to creating a strong business culture. According to Kent Cabrera, Global Head of HR Optimisation at luxury skincare brand Aesop, design thinking in technology implementation will build a stronger cross-functional experience.

In an exclusive report, Chris Roberts, Head of IT Infrastructure at Formula 1, takes us into the IT pits to see how technology is changing the experience for race drivers and fans of the global sport.

Finally, we speak to Senior Vice President of Technology Products for Workday, Alex Choy, about how technology enhances the employee experience and how real-time data and automation improves workplace culture.

Happy and productive employees are the backbone of any successful organisation. When implemented correctly, technology creates a culture that inspires employees.

Sandeep Sharma
President Asia,
Workday

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A culture-first approach framing business technology

Sami Yalavac, CIO, Bupa Asia Pacific

In a world where technology is king, many companies are looking at how it can help guide business culture. But for global health insurance and healthcare Group Bupa, culture is the starting point for harnessing the power of technology.

Most organisations are aware that a strong business culture is pivotal for agility and sustained growth. Leadership and business values play a key role in developing culture as well.

With the impact and influence of technology, there's no denying it's a valuable force for cultural change. So, what role can the CIO and technology play in creating a space for culture and values to thrive?

Whilst many companies may focus on the latest technology to create a vibrant culture, Bupa has a different perspective. Headquartered in the UK, the international company focuses on health insurance, healthcare services and aged care, with over 18.5 million customers globally.

Regardless of the size and complexity at Bupa, culture remains the starting point for technology design. Culture encompasses both employee and customer experiences, with the aim of optimising both aspects.

"When you are designing something tech-related, start with your customer - who might also be your employee - and the business environment," said Sami Yalavac, CIO at Bupa Asia Pacific. "Think about their level of knowledge, capabilities, and what they actually need."

Choosing technology with culture in mind

As Yalavac emphasised, technology should be introduced based on a need and purpose. Even if the purpose is to foster a thriving culture, one can't simply

As Bupa's CIO, Sami Yalavac is responsible for delivering high-quality, reliable and performance-enhancing technology services across the entire organisation. A leader in his field he's been regularly recognised in the CIO50 Awards.

think in terms of introducing the latest technology and hoping it will work its magic.

Bupa is advocating a shift from 'which technology?' to 'the problem I'm solving', with a focus on the business cultural landscape.

"Our job is not delivering technology, our job is delivering the best experiences, both for the customer and our own people to do their jobs. Tech is just a vehicle for it," noted Yalavac.

This approach means that user-centric design principles are utilised in the adoption of technology. A key example is the change in Bupa's operating model. Rather than a function made up of teams that are specific to their expertise, the technology teams at Bupa are cross-functional and include testers, developers, and designers.

The technology team works together with their business colleagues to roll out the product, learning from each other and making tweaks as they progress.

"This way, more people are thinking about the customer-employee experience on the ground, and then designing tech accordingly," said Yalavac.

Another factor to bear in mind is cultural differences within the same organisation.

"The way people communicate is completely different based on their culture, whether they're in Hong Kong versus England, Chile, or Brazil," Yalavac observed. "So, you have to design the technology based on how different demographics will utilise it."

He warns that careful thought must be put into the technology. The same solution might not

work for different regions and their culture.

Yalavac likens it to choosing menus around the globe for McDonald's. "What they put in Chicago, India, Istanbul, or Melbourne has to be influenced by how people eat and what they can eat versus what they can't," he said. "The same goes for technology, as many use it differently based on where they're from."

New isn't always better

When it comes to technology, what's shiny and new may not always be what works. "If people don't understand how to use the technology, even the most advanced system is useless," Yalavac said.

He cites one of Bupa's experiences as a learning point. The aged care team based in New Zealand was on the hunt for a good telephone solution for customers. They introduced a state-of-the-art system with many best-in-class features and numerous functions like video conferencing.

"However, our elderly customers couldn't even answer the phone. They didn't know which button to push out of the 25 ones available, and they just couldn't call people," recalled Yalavac.

Eventually, Bupa replaced the product with a much more primitive model that was 10 times cheaper.

"We learnt that you really need to understand your audience

Bupa's Melbourne head office



“If people don’t understand how to use the technology, even the most advanced system is useless.”

and their experiences,” reflected Yalavac. “It’s not about the best technology, but what fits your purpose.”

Keeping employees connected

Cultural shifts in working expectations also have to be factored in when deciding which technology to use.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Yalavac observed that a majority of employees expect a mix of remote and on-site working arrangements.

“When we did surveys, we found that only a minority, around 5%, of employees wanted to come to the office five days a week,” he said. “So, we needed to think about engaging employees working from home.”

This is where technology plays a key role, with the need to design products that support and connect remote employees.

Keeping employees connected is especially important for Bupa. After all, the company has over 500 working locations in the

Asia Pacific region alone, such as optical stores and dental clinics. Its technology team also comprises employees from locations in five different countries.

As such, Bupa is intentional about connecting with employees beyond a transactional level. Even if it’s reaching out to them over a screen, the company organises activities and games to foster bonds. Also, providing health services like meditation sessions, one-to-one coaching, and psychological support based on employees’ specific needs.

The CIO as a cultural change agent

Given the importance of leadership in establishing a strong business culture, Yalavac has some advice for CIOs looking to pave the way.

“If you keep talking about the technology, KPIs and timestamps, nobody will believe you when you say that the customer and business culture is important,” he said. “It has to be consistent messages from you.”

One way to foster a thriving culture is by working in tandem with your CEO and Head of People.

“As a team, think about what culture you want to have and how you’ll support it through your processes and technologies,” Yalavac advised. “I proactively work with my Head of People and we develop strategies to do so.”

His second piece of advice for CIOs is to act as a business leader, rather than a technology leader. Besides understanding the technology, you need to understand the customer and business. Give direction and attempt to resolve the problems of employees and customers.

Lastly, be an advocate for change within the company. “The definition of CIO is changing for me – it’s no longer Chief Information Officer, but Chief Influencing Officer,” Yalavac said. “Once you know your company’s needs, influence your board and executive team to procure the right investments and solutions.”

Based on his observations, many CIOs aren’t good advocates for what they need. Consequently, they can’t introduce solutions to benefit the company.

“If you can articulate their needs and how proposed solutions will benefit employees and customers then you will have a chance to attract funding. The most effective way to articulate these needs is letting culture, and how it relates to business and customers, guide you,” said Yalavac.



Technology that ingrains culture

Tony Park, Team Leader of People & Culture, Toss

South Korea's Toss is making waves in the fintech space. It is also using technology to ingrain a flat and open company culture.

Adopting technology is second nature for South Korea's only fintech super-app Toss, having recently launched the country's third digital bank.

The firm has also adopted new technology to revolutionize how its employees work and are paid, by using enterprise applications such as Workday.

The strategy is paying off. It has successfully recruited talent that has grown its customer pool to over 22 million registered users, which represents one third of the population in South Korea.

This is a significant achievement as the best talent in South Korea typically likes working for large conglomerates or the government, according to Tony Park, Toss' Team Leader of People & Culture.

"Stability is highly prized. Working one's entire life and moving up the proverbial ladder is considered very desirable. Hierarchy is the dominant and accepted form of management," he said.

Toss' founder Seunggun Lee had a different vision. He believed that giving employees the freedom to make decisions would create strong and unique products that resonate with customers.

"This freedom is at the core of our culture, and it allows us to work while we maintain an almost flat structure. It is hard to imagine but almost nobody at Toss has a direct manager," said Park.

"Each member is what we call a directly responsible individual. They are the final decision maker

on what they're responsible for. This is a powerful way of working and it gives us a significant advantage over our competitors because it allows us to be extremely fast at taking action."

The right technology is helping Toss build this culture of freedom within the organization. This culture is key to overall business performance and growth.

"For us the right business culture is everything and I am not understating this point. Our culture and core values create all the business opportunities that have allowed Toss to become one of the leading fintech companies in Korea," said Park.

Flat company structure

There are challenges to keeping a flat company structure. "This is because many Korean employees are mentally prepared for the hierarchical nature of large conglomerates," Park said.

Working for a startup, however, comes with risks. Toss also encourages employees to challenge each other and make decisions that have a potentially large impact, which may not come naturally to employees.

"We've created an environment of culture evangelists to ensure that the entire organization is constantly thinking about culture. I faced a similar challenge in previous positions because the companies scaled so aggressively," Park said.

"But I would say the current challenge is more daunting

Emigrating to the US at a young age Tony Park began his career in Human Resources working across large F&B and retail organisations. In 2016 he made a career change focusing on Silicon Valley startups before returning to South Korea and the fintech space.

because we lack that managerial level at Toss. A manager can typically provide guidance on performance and reinforce company values. Here, it's up to the individual and fellow team members to keep each other on track."

To reinforce this culture, the company does not have traditional performance reviews while striving to lead the market in terms of compensation.

Viva Republica, which operates Toss has a commitment to pay top salaries across all industries. They have a unique compensation system which allows employees to request salary increases based on increased competencies. It also encourages its employees to interview elsewhere so they can see what it is like at other companies in terms of culture, compensation and benefits in order to challenge itself to keep its overall compensation value proposition very high. It already offers experienced joiners 150%

"For us the right business culture is everything and I am not understating this point."

of the pay received at their previous workplace, according to Pulse News Korea.

"We allow our team members to tell us who the best performers are, and we're constantly gathering peer feedback on team members. We recently changed our program on salary reviews and employees can request changes twice a year (vs anytime). The real impact is negligible as almost no one makes consistent on-going requests," said Park.

"As the company becomes more successful in terms of our business metrics, the

Toss Office in Seoul





Toss Office in Seoul

obvious pressure is to revert to more traditional models of management. But our trust is deeply rooted in our core values.”

Utilizing technology

Unsurprisingly, transparency is a huge core value in the set-up. And the Workday applications have helped Toss replicate its culture in the systems it uses.

For instance, Workday broadly allows workers to have access and visibility into their own data and make changes to their employee files.

Toss wants to take this further. “Transparency is very critical to us. Ultimately, we want to create a future where employees will not only have access to information that is theirs, but also information that might be related to them, to make their employee

experience more satisfying and open,” Park said.

“Transparency is critical to ensure our employees have a strong voice and the ability to shape our culture will be a significant competitive advantage.”

The migration process was a straight forward and seamless.

“The post-implementation process was very smooth, especially as Workday was able to work independently to get the job done,” said Park. “Workday has been rock solid and user-friendly, which is what I love about the product. I don’t believe we fully utilize all the benefits as yet, but we’re planning on expanding our relationship to further empower our employees.”

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How HR can leverage technology to enhance business culture

Kent Cabrera, Global Head of HR Optimisation, Aesop

For many companies, establishing a strong corporate culture falls largely in the hands of HR. But in today's digital era, technology – and therefore IT – is playing a bigger role in creating a space for business culture to thrive.

Kent Cabrera, Global Head of HR Optimisation at luxury skincare brand Aesop, believes that technology can be leveraged to enrich business culture. “You can use technology to communicate your organisation’s purpose and reflect that in the actual experience,” he said.

This is particularly true in a world where working remotely has become the norm. Companies can view this as an opportunity to showcase their unique culture through technology.

“For new starters, especially those who are being hired virtually and not being inducted in the office and getting that feel of the culture, their workspace is the technology,” Cabrera said. “So whether it’s your intranet or your HR system, it needs to feel and breathe like the company.”

As an example, Cabrera cites Aesop’s work to spruce up its HR platform. The company added a video of the CEO’s address and other collateral that employees would normally get in-person in an office environment. “We’ve taken efforts to make sure it doesn’t feel like a typical HR system when you enter that workspace, so people feel like they’re part of that workspace,” he said.

The brand is applying a similar approach to its digital learning environment, ensuring the way they communicate is reflected in the content. “Our retail training team put a lot of effort into making sure the digital content is curated in such a way that

Kent Cabrera has worked across several sectors including insurance, government, petroleum, public health and retail. As Global Head of HR Optimisation for Aesop, he drives the development of people analytics to inform HR strategies, actions and processes.

new starters can definitely feel it’s Aesop,” he said.

Aesthetics and experience

Going beyond the aesthetic level, technology needs to work hand-in-hand with business process design. This means relying not only on digital ways but also adding analogue methods to demonstrate corporate culture. For instance, an organisation can send new hires an electronic contract to sign, but if it’s supplemented with a welcome kit containing personalised company swag items, then it creates a more meaningful starting experience.

“If you believe the experience of a new joiner is important, then your business process design needs to reflect that,” Cabrera said. “A lot of it will be digital, but part of it

“Sometimes, people rely on technology as if it’s the silver bullet, but it’s the vehicle. To me, it’s more about design thinking”

will be more analog. A recruiter will want to design a system or process that will make their job easier but providing a stellar employee experience means not all steps will be automated.”

He added: “Sometimes, people rely on technology as if it’s the silver bullet, but it’s the vehicle. To me, it’s more about design thinking, and the true effort lies with your business processes. And that’s an area that is not invested in the most.”

Design thinking

Having a clear idea of business process design is key to HR and IT working together to strengthen corporate culture. “Ideally, you have partners who understand process design because if you don’t have that, you’re constantly reacting and you’ll be too dependent on things like audits that force IT or HR to change,” said Cabrera.

“My ideal relationship with IT, in any organisation, would be that

Kent presenting at Workday Elevate



we're looking at a process end-to-end where we all know we have different contributions to that solution," he added. "We might agree that an interim solution will suffice for the next two years, but we always have our eye on the broader solution at some point in time. We need to make sure we're aligned on what the methodology or framework is for creating a solution."

"Similar to how HR functions and finance functions have moved toward HR partners and finance partners who look after and deeply understand a portfolio within an organisation, I'm seeing a similar trend within IT. Sometimes they're called partners, other times it is consultants or product managers."

A cross-functional future

In the future, Cabrera suggests a cross-functional experience so IT can better understand how to more effectively work with HR in improving corporate culture. "Before I was in the HR tech and HR systems side of things, I was a talent acquisition manager, then a HR director. So now, when I'm managing a HR technology project or leading a discussion, I can challenge the different teams. And if they're not clear on what their future design will look like, I'll chime in on what a recruitment team or hiring manager will typically want or need," he said.

"And because you've had that deeper exposure, you've got more transferable skills that you can take to your role. You can also speak their language and avoid technical jargon while enabling

you to challenge the design," Cabrera added.

Gaining experience in both HR and IT could lead to increased awareness of how technology can impact business culture and vice versa.

"As seen in many businesses, talent can be moved from front line roles into corporate or specialist roles within an organisation to develop and broaden them. I have not seen this much in the various industries I have worked in, but it would be really interesting to see IT people moving into business-type roles to acquire the knowledge that gives them a more holistic view of the organisation and gain a different perspective of the business problems, so they can broaden their toolkit of design options," he said.



Formula 1 goes full throttle on digital acceleration

By Steve Dunne, Workday EMEA Staff Writer

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested many businesses to the fullest. With six new races to schedule across 16 new global venues, Formula 1 has had to find technology and logistical solutions on a scale that is unimaginable for many. In this article, I caught up with Chris Roberts, Head of IT Infrastructure at Formula 1 to learn more about the organisation's digital journey both on and off the track.

Q: Can we start by getting a bit of background on you, Chris and how the IT function at F1 has developed?

A: I joined Formula 1 back in 1999, and it was one of those jobs you come into and think, 'Right. I'll come here and I'll do a few years,' but then you join and get a little bit hooked. At F1, change is just part of the engine, and there is constant evolution here. I talk to my peers in similar organisations and there's a lot of keeping the lights on. It's quite different at Formula 1. It's very much an innovation machine, and a real change animal, which has kept me busy.

Three and a bit years ago now, they merged what were two separate IT departments – the race IT department, and the business IT department, and they had a very separate focus within the organisation. As the organisation grew, it actually became harder to administer these two separate silos. So the decision was made to merge them into one department, which totally made sense.

Q: Alongside the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, you had 17 races, in 11 locations, including five new venues, to deal with. From a tech perspective, how do you start to think about that?

A: From my perspective, if I put on a purely IT hat, COVID-19 was a time where we absolutely pulled it all together. Everybody across the company did massive,

massive amounts of work. But we used COVID-19 as an opportunity to accelerate what was a three-, four-year plan, and we squashed it into about eight weeks. We took our full broadcast infrastructure and we cut about 80% of it off and decided to keep it all in our technical facility in Biggin Hill.

We do the acquisition part of the racing at the circuit, and then the production piece is done back in the UK now. I guess it was about eight weeks of work which should have taken about three years to design. COVID-19 gave us the opportunity to take that risk, and actually, it was a springboard where we thought, 'We need to do something. Let's just ramp up'. The plan was already in the back pocket, so we kind of knew what we wanted to do. We just really accelerated that.

We're talking about massive infrastructure changes with regards to separating something

that had been glued together for the last 20 years, pulling that apart, and actually separating it from different continents. Without the connectivity piece, we are absolutely dead in the water, so we put a lot of work and a lot of effort into getting the fastest network that we can with the lowest possible latency.

Q: F1 and innovation have gone hand-in-hand throughout the history of the sport, but which technologies are you prioritising as you kind of look to keep up with digital innovation or keep pushing things forward?

A: Off the track, it's all about customer focus, so customer data platforms are very high on my list, and they're certainly on the radar. We're looking at a number of programmes right now as we review our whole martech stack. What we want to be able

Chris Roberts joined Formula 1 in 1999 and believes that technology drives innovation within an organisation. He was part of a major overhaul of Formula 1's IT structure, in which the company merged its race IT department with its business IT department.

“The key learning for me was to get ahead of the game and be as flexible as humanly possible because user requirements were many and varied.”

to do is we want to be able to give Formula 1 fans the content they want, and as much of it as they want to consume. Without being too intrusive, we'd like to understand who our customers are better so that we can service them better. It's a big area for us at the minute to ensure that what we're putting out there is the right content that people are searching for and looking for. I would say that's probably the biggest priority at the minute and it is all around our martech stack.

Q: Cyber security is obviously a big priority in F1, but from a corporate perspective, can you tell us about some of the initiatives you have been working on?

A: When Liberty took over Formula 1, they came in with a very strong agenda. Bernie [Ecclestone] did a really good job at making handshakes and deals. However, Liberty's view was, 'We haven't got a

marketing department. We need a commercial department. We need all these elements that you would consider natural in many businesses.' So they set about spinning up all these new departments.

Sponsorship's a very good example. It's very new for Formula 1. These groups went away and started working on all of these projects. People think of Formula 1 as a massive global brand, but actually, we're 500 people. And sometimes people assume there are thousands of us, but actually, we have to utilise a lot of third parties and a lot of partners to achieve what we want to achieve. So the cyber or the information security programme was spun up to put a bit of a net around some of these third parties to help us work with those third parties that we entrust with some of our corporate data and things like that.

People and awareness are always at the core of cyber security, particularly during COVID-19, where people have been working from home. They might get a little sloppy, use a personal device or do something that isn't quite in line with security requirements. We've certainly done a lot over the last 12 months to ensure the security of the data and making sure we know the value of that data.

Chris Roberts, Head of IT Infrastructure, Formula 1



Q: Given the focus on ESG right now, I know your 'Race to Zero' initiative has been working towards reducing F1's carbon footprint. Can you tell us about that?

A: Cloud has certainly had a big impact on the way we work. The ability to spin up and actually shut down services much faster where we didn't have to make a capital investment on hardware that's just going to sit there whirring away has been quite a big game-changer. Our motorsport team have been doing a massive CFD project which utilises the cloud. That would have required a whole comms room in itself if we decided to build out that infrastructure internally. But we can spin it up, they can do the work on it, and if they've finished, we can turn it off, saving us who knows how much.

I mentioned earlier that we now do remote production, so we're only shipping 20% of what we used to with regards to our broadcast facility. It's allowed us to reduce the headcount that travels and reduce the amount of freight that gets sent around the place. And even on top of that, the lifetime of the hardware has become extended because it's not being shaken and rattled or it doesn't get frozen on the plane and then sweat at 50 degrees on an airport runway for three hours. We found the longevity of the kit which used to be about three years and then thrown them in the bin, has now been considerably extended. I hadn't predicted this, but it's quite a nice fringe benefit.

Q: As a technology leader, what have you learned from the pandemic that you can take forward into the future?

A: Flexibility has been one of the keywords from this whole pandemic. Being able to support 500 people from home, especially during the first lockdown when nobody could move anyway, was really challenging, but we did it.

We are quite fortunate as an organisation in that we were ahead of the curve anyway. Because of the amount of people that travel with their job, 90% of the company works from laptops. So there wasn't a massive build. I was fortunate enough at the start, when things started to unfold in China, I thought, 'Well, this looks like it might come our way,' and I managed to get ahead of the game in as much as I ordered 100 laptop devices and started getting them spun up before the supply lines ran dry, which happens pretty quickly.

The key learning for me was to get ahead of the game, and be as flexible as humanly possible because user requirements were many and varied. Also, having comms into the building. We were already on it with regards to VPNs, but having the right comms, the right equipment and being able to spin those services up fairly quickly were all key to our success.



Building business culture through technology

Alex Choy, Senior Vice President of Technology Products, Workday

Alex Choy joined Workday in 2020 as Senior Vice President of Technology Products. Overseeing platform products and technologies including Machine Learning, UI Platform, Productivity Technology, Business Process Workflow, Enterprise Frameworks, and Universal People Cloud.

Prior to joining Workday, Alex was a CIO at a large healthcare platform technology company where he oversaw their digital transformation and public cloud strategy. Alex held product development executive positions at leading software companies including Oracle and Adobe as well as successful start-ups including Veritas and Interwoven. He recently took some time out to discuss the use of technology to build a strong business culture that allows for real employee engagement.

Q: How do you feel technology can enhance business and employee culture?

A: Building an empowering and sustainable business and employee culture has always been one of the greatest challenges for many growing companies. It has become even more challenging due to today's rapidly changing global environment. The pandemic has exacerbated this by forcing many companies with a primarily office-based workforce to go fully digital; fundamentally changing social interaction and engagement which are pillars to a strong culture. Further compounding the situation is the Great Resignation, where companies have seen unprecedented levels of employee churn and talent competition that have created instabilities in the fabric of culture.

To overcome these challenges, we can and must look to technology to continue to build on and enhance our cultural foundation. Workday was founded from the

beginning with the idea that great companies must have a "soul," which is defined by a core set of principles and values that can scale and grow with the rapidly changing business landscape and economic environments. As a technology company focused on optimizing the potential of human capital, we live and breathe the belief and mission that technology can and does play a crucial role in enabling companies in their digital transformation to define and develop a strong company culture. We have used the technologies, automation, and innovations that Workday has built to enable not only our own transformation of business and culture but also our customers.

Q: When building or implementing tech solutions what consideration is given to the employee experience?

A: Technology solutions exist to solve a problem or deliver on an outcome which to us includes a focus on amplifying

human potential and enabling employee experience. But, we recognize that not all technology solutions are created equal. Employee experience requires a vision, understanding, and a passion for amplifying human potential to ensure we are building the right solutions. To enable employee experience and get the right outcomes, you need a combination of the right data, insights, and technology. Therefore, as we build and implement technology solutions, we keep our outcome in mind and focus on building architecture to maximize our value creation now and in the future.

Q: How have you seen technology bring employees together? How have you seen technology create obstacles between employees? How do you ensure the former?

A: Technology is a double-edged sword that can serve to connect, enable, and support or cause friction that creates separation,

Prior to joining Workday in 2020, Alex Choy was CIO at a large Healthcare IT company that managed a third of all US national healthcare transactions. He also established himself as a senior leader of cloud and mobile-first products while at Adobe and Oracle.



Alex presenting at Conversations for a Changing World

un-empowers, and builds barriers. Technology can provide tremendous potential if we can harness its power, but technology for the sake of technology is a trap. Not having the right tools or data to make the best decisions or not having access to technology is a barrier to both individual and organizational success. Finally, not knowing how to use or not having the opportunity to be trained on technology is equally a barrier to success. These examples create an environment that can become separated and disengaged, resulting in low morale, higher turnover, and a negative impact on the organizational culture.

Done right, access to and use of technology can bring employees together and empower them to leverage their strengths to achieve success. A great example is that in a largely office-based environment, remote employees who were not in the room are typically disadvantaged. Due to the pandemic, many organizations shifted to being fully remote, video conferencing technology created equal opportunities, which in turn shifted our thinking on how to use technology to create better engagement. Technology is a key enabler, but you need the right digital workplace strategy to be successful.

Q: What does real-time performance data mean for employees and their job? What is the most effective way to use this data?

A: In a merit-based and performance-orientated company, our outcomes depend not only on our ability to attract high-potential and diverse talent but also on how we continuously cultivate a strong culture where people can flourish. To achieve that, we need to create the right environment and understanding to support our employee's growth and performance. Real-time performance data creates the opportunity to gain key and actionable insights that enable real-time feedback for employees and leaders.

It doesn't stop there, those insights guide and empower employees to reflect on what they are doing, how they are



doing it and to think about areas of investment or their career journey. This allows employees to have awareness and be accountable for their own self-improvement, career advancement, and promotion. In addition, the insights help leaders understand how their employees are performing so that they can celebrate their success or have timely conversations and actions to leverage an employee's strengths, improve outcomes, and potentially identify alternative career opportunities.

Q: Is it difficult to get employees to embrace a workplace culture in an increasingly digital work environment?

A: When we think about the challenge companies are facing, we need to ask a different question. The question is, what

is the new workplace culture? I would suggest that it is still evolving. While employees are working towards embracing a new culture, there are forces that are pulling us back to our old one (as it was good) and forces that are still shaping what the workplace and future of business will look like. That means our culture will continue to evolve for some time, and in that, we will need to address technology overload, achieve sustainable work-life balance, and help our people to avoid burn-out and negative sentiment.

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To be successful companies must be nimble and proactive in advancing and creating a digital workplace culture that takes into account the considerations of an increasingly distributed workforce. That workforce is now equipped with unprecedented communication capabilities and virtual connectedness, and will not hesitate to challenge a traditional workplace culture based on a different paradigm that they may find questionable. While technology has changed the nature of work and has evolved the workplace culture, that change has created new challenges for employees. The lines between work and life have become blurred, and our always-on, always-connected world has impacted our work-life balance due to the balance or imbalance between productivity and flexible work hours, and the potential stress it can add to employees' personal and family lives.

Q: During recent lockdowns what sort of solutions helped drive engagement and efficiency amongst the workforce?

A: We believe that business thrives when employees feel that their voices are heard and that their leaders are responsive to their needs and challenges. The most effective solutions must help enable employees to connect with their leadership and colleagues, making them feel supported during critical moments in their lives and presenting them with growth opportunities. These solutions must leverage technology tools

and platforms that are designed with employee experience and engagement as their core mission.

Employees today are well versed with personalized consumer engagement platforms and social media that use personalization as a core driver for getting attention and engagement. Employee experience in the enterprise must also be delivered with these capabilities that leverage a personalized approach, are empowered by machine learning and rich data to provide individualized and just-in-time insights and guided actions.

Q: Automation creates business efficiency - how do you think this efficiency helps create a better workplace culture?

A: There is no question that automation can help improve business efficiency. Automation can augment or replace repetitive, mundane, or complex tasks which in turn allows employees to focus on engaging work that has high value and impact on the business. In doing so, we can then turn our focus to helping our employees up-skill, reskill, or pursue new opportunities which increases our overall organizational dexterity and ability, and creates a positive workplace culture. That said, automation can also have a negative impact on culture, so we must think holistically about our changes, carefully harnessing and channelling automation to ensure a positive impact and carefully manage and mitigate any potential downsides or side-effects.

Building on the impact and the potential downsides of automation, there is a common misconception that automation in any form will eliminate jobs. However, the data points to a different reality where automation does eliminate tasks, the business evolves and that results in new types of work and many new jobs down the line. The challenge lies in how proactive a business is in forward-thinking about the impacts of automation, and how it focuses its energy on employee training and development. That direction of thinking puts people at the centre of the change, thus enabling the business to support employees through the change, and creating a positive workplace culture.



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