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The HCLTech trends and insights podcast.

Speaker 1 0:07

Hello, everyone, and thank you for tuning in to the HCLTech Trends and Insights weekly podcast, where we'll be discussing the latest key technology trends that are impacting and disrupting business and society. I'm Nick Ismail, the Head of Brand Journalism at HCLTech. And today I'm joined by our APAC reporter, Mousume Roy. Hi, Mousume, how are you?

Speaker 2 0:31

Hi, Nick. I'm fine. How are you?

Speaker 1 0:34

Excellent. Thank you. And thanks so much for joining us today. So we're going to be covering three, I'd say massive, topics in today's discussion. The first Women's History Month more broadly diversity, equity and inclusion in tech, the growing digital chasm or digital divide, and the technology on everyone's minds, especially with the recent letter from certain technology leaders, including Elon Musk warning of its danger, which is of course, AI, artificial intelligence. And specifically, we'll also be looking at generative AI. So let's start with Women's History Month. And while it's important to recognize and celebrate this, and of course, International Women's Day as well, which was on March 8th. I think it's also crucial to understand that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) should be considered every day, especially in technology, where women and other minorities make up a smaller number of positions in tech companies compared to their male counterparts. And I'm just going to read out some stats that emphasize the current situation. So according to a study from Deloitte in 2022, only 25% of women sit in large tech companies. And in the US, computer science.org found that only 18% of undergraduate computer science degrees were on undertaken by women. And less than 20% of all leadership positions in technology are female, according to finances online. So, that's pretty stark stats in terms of the number of women in technology. There are signs though, that things are changing. And companies like HCLTech and many other enterprises are setting themselves goals of having women make up a larger percentage of the workforce and, and this goal is also reflected in wider society. So, Mosume, you recently attended a panel that had a range of female technology leaders across different industries. Can you talk about what they said regarding this issue of diversity in tech, and what did they say regarding how the tech industry can create a more equitable future and environment?

Speaker 2 3:04

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of attending the HCLTech Feminspiration series on the #ShePowersProgress platform where women techies and leaders across the industries were present. So the discussion touched upon a variety of topics but most importantly on why it takes a village to shape a diverse and inclusive workforce. As said by one of the speakers, Megan Cross, she is actually the Global Head of D&I at Kantar. She said organizations need to step up and ensure equal opportunities for all. So that's so true, the focus should be on fixing the workplace rather than trying to fix a person or an individual. Yeah. And companies need to be proactive to meet the quality part of their DNA. I said to you about this event, which recently happened business today event in India, which celebrated the most

powerful women in business 2023 And Roshni Nadar, our Chairperson was part of that, that event, she is also in fact, the face on the magazine this year, by you know, which just talked a lot about providing equal opportunities and also by helping them return to work or after the carrier breaks, you know. So we can see that a lot of women centric programs are running across enterprises now. When it comes to HCLTech, there's this program called Women First program which strives to create an environment that welcomes more women from the industry. Now this is just one of the many programs at HCLTech. The bottom line is organizations need to step up and act.

Speaker 1 4:51

Yeah, and that that quote or reference you said at the beginning about it takes a village which I think refers to it takes everyone inside an organization to instigate change. And a lot of that has to come from the top. So, you know, the chairperson or CEO, and senior executives really have to believe in and drive the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion agenda, right?

Speaker 2 5:20

Absolutely Nick. It should start with doing the normal things like, you know, running an internal audits on, say, hiring practices, you know, or doing a diversity impact analysis on all programs to ensure equity on promotions or say benefits or pay parity, you know, though, so, these are very important topics. And I'm glad that a lot of conversation is taking place around it now.

Speaker 1 5:42

Absolutely. And as we mentioned at the beginning, it's not just reserved for Women's History Month, in March, but actually, it should be considered all year round. And the reason for that is, it's not just a nice to have diversity and equity inclusion, it shouldn't be done just to push up the perception of the company, it's actually vital to a business's success with diverse teams and companies, often performing better than non diverse ones. So can you talk about why do you think that is? Why do non-diverse companies do better than non diverse ones?

Speaker 2 6:22

Um, absolutely. So, there's a lot of conversations and surveys happening around this Nick, on why diverse teams are considered smarter or say more innovative. The reason for this is with diversity comes multiple perspectives. So, when members come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures and experiences, they're more likely to bring new ideas, solve problems and be innovative. Now, this leads to more thoroughly vetted results as well as a decision making. Also, it has been seen that inclusive management also optimizes talent and productivity, leading to say higher performing teams. Now, implementing D&I is not just about representing a particular race or gender or ethnicity, it's also about promoted cognitive diversity, because people who think differently blend perspectives for stronger collaboration and problem solving.

Speaker 1 7:15

Yeah, and I think the wider topic of Diversity and Equity and Inclusion in a business or in a technology company, can be applied to the whole of society. And now we're talking about the topic of an equitable future. And this brings up questions of something called the digital divide, which is the growing gap or chasm between people who use technology and those who can't or don't have access to it or are unable

to afford it. And it's really systemic of the age-old problem, right, where wealthy individuals and countries have access to all the best services, like healthcare, or amenities, and tools, and the latest tool being technology. It's something that's not affordable or accessible in lower income countries in lower income households. And as technology advances, as it gets more expensive, it gets more unreachable. And that's creating a schism in society where only the wealthy are being able to take advantage of technology or for the most part, they're being able to take advantage of technology. So, what's your view on this digital divide? What exactly is it and why do you think it's growing?

Speaker 2 8:45

I'm so glad that we're discussing this digital divide topic as a very current, everyone is actually concerned about it. With the explosion of smartphones, which enabled 95% of the world's population to connect to a mobile broadband network. Still, you'll see 3.6 billion across the world do not use the internet. Now, that's because of varied reasons, you know, from socio-economic, geographical to say attitude factors as well. I've been reading this survey by the state of mobile connectivity report, which mentions the connectivity gap and usage gap as the main challenges of today's digitally excluded population, but as we can see, you know, the COVID earned it and accelerated the digital growth by giving access to say information, you know, better healthcare services, even jobs. However, the unconnected population who are mostly living in the low- and middle-income countries, but completely excluded from playing an active role in the digital world. So, you can see the rapid shift in digitalization open to issues of the urban and the rural digital divide, and that needs to be addressed by future economic and digitalization policies. I'll give you an example. A recent UNESCO report shows, during COVID-19 31% of schoolchildren worldwide can't be reached by digital learning programs, you know, either due to a lack of remote policies or equipment. Even in America, you know, there's a wide digital divide, you know, as per the States, all 50 states, you know, during the pandemic 70% of children in Kansas City School did not have any internet access at home. So, you can see it runs very deep. It's just completely it's not just rural and urban divide, but it just goes much deeper into, you know, into the future, like how will education or say information or the job opportunities will be equal to the growing generation?

Speaker 1 10:46

Yeah, it's almost like a utility now, right? Access to technology, it's almost as important as access to water, or electricity and, and things like that. It's becoming such a core part of everyone's lives, and by having certain groups of people unable to access that in a fair environment is wrong. And, you know, you mentioned there some of some of the some of the stats, which are quite shocking. What are the risks of birth or ignoring this situation? I imagine it has something to do with the gap growing further, but also, you know, it's going to have an impact on innovation around the world, if only say 50% or 60% of the world have good access to technology, have good access to the internet, that's a significant portion, who are going to be unable to participate in the digital economy, and bring their own innovations, their own thought processes, to solving some of the most pressing challenges for society?

Speaker 2 11:59

Absolutely, and exactly labor crisis is one of the dire consequences of it. Apart from that, there's one more fact which is like you're out of the world 7000 languages, English and a handful of other language dominate the internet, which leads many cultures without a voice online. So, you can see it's just not it's a much more deeper. And it's a very valid issue. And you can see, there's a lot of talk happening in UN

and WEF about it as well. You know, digital literacy and access to equal employment apart from that, the main and major division should be social isolation, that will be a wall which will be left behind. Right access of information. So that's really scary.

Speaker 1 12:47

Yeah, definitely. And it's not only detrimental to the individual, but also to the wider society. Right. This is the issue that we're dealing with, and looking at some potential solutions now. Can you talk about what governments and enterprises are doing to help bridge this digital divide?

Speaker 2 13:07

You can see a lot of conversations and initiatives happening around closing the gap of digital divide. The UN included the reduction of digital divide in its Sustainable Development Goals, with a plan that requires targeted action around affordability, accessibility, adoption by all stakeholders. Now, the stakeholders include everyone from mobile operators, policymakers, international partners, governments, and of course, the tech giants and the broader private sector. So out of this tech organizations can play a very pivotal role and accountability, you know, you can see a lot of actions taken by organizations around the world, for instance, so Google, and the state of California collaborated to connect 100,000 households, rural households, also HCLTech grants program like TechBee, which is an initiative that offers digital skill training to help men and women in India enter global careers in technology. More recently, HCLTech and Xerox donated laptops to local schools in Guatemala, through the Indian embassy to bridge the digital divide in Guatemala and support education for the next generation. So, there's a lot of conversation happening around digital divide now and people and organizations are stepping up regarding this.

Speaker 1 13:42

Yeah, I think I mean, I think it's an issue now that people and organizations are aware of so it's something that can now be acted on and hopefully solved in the near future. So, I just want to now move on to our next topic. And I think the issue of bridging the digital divide and how to overcome it brings us nicely on to it, which is generative AI, which can be described or might be described as the great technology equalizer, meaning that it could help create and foster a more equitable society in terms of access to technology and all its potential, and it's certainly the most trending topic in the world of tech right now, generative AI its meteoric rise and its impact on the future of business and digital experience and experience as a whole was heavily discussed at Adobe Summit, which I'll highlight in our events roundup section at the end. But fuel been further added to this conversation recently, with the open letter that was signed by technology rockstars, like Steve Wozniak and Elon Musk that calls for the development of artificial intelligence in general, to be halted above a certain capacity, warning that AI systems with human competitive intelligence can pose profound risks to society and humanity. I mean, this warning is nothing new. I think Stephen Hawking back in 2014 said that, you know, AI poses the greatest threat to the future of humanity. And I would say that, while this letter is, of course, important it's coming from the greatest coming from some of the greatest tech minds in in our society, but it does seem a little strange that it was released given that they are all working in this space and quite heavily I would imagine. But it does of course have to be acknowledged that any technology that will pervade and impact on society must be kept in check, and it must be monitored, and it must be regulated. So, I'd

also be interested to hear your thoughts around this letter you know, the usage of AI, generative AI specifically and the potential dangers but also opportunities, Mousume.

Speaker 2 16:58

Well, yeah Nick there is quite a frenzy swirling around the program now, everyone's talking about it and it's usage, apart from all the potential dangers. It's like any other new tool that comes in the market, you know, that we face the same kind of questioning and challenges when automation came in into picture some more than 10 years back and there was a lot of questions about it did eating away people's job and how it's going to you know, align with you know, usage like in manufacturing or say, or banking or retail and insurance. The same frenzy surrounding generative AI now, which is actually which, if you if you talk to me about what it is about it is actually it creates new content as they say, it creates new content including images, text instant, you know, simulations and videos. Now, with with a frenzy surrounding marketing and brand positioning, it's just the usage of is immense. And it's definitely scary, for people from that background. With generative AI, computers can now produce original content in response to queries, drawing from data they have ingested and interactions with users. I was reading about it in the morning and by the way have you used it, Nick, by the way, have you ever used ChatGPT?

Speaker 1 18:22

I have used ChatGPT and it is I would say it's, based on my limited use of it, you know, you type in some questions, or you ask it to write you a story or something, the speed at which it can produce content is quite alarming. And you know, it's interesting for people in our profession who are writers and you know, if you write if you type in the title of your article and have a program that can write it within two or three minutes that does have implications for people in the profession or copywriting editing you know, journalism and of course beyond those professions, so it's interesting how it's going to develop I'd say and we just have to keep our eye on it, specifically for us.

Speaker 2 19:16

Absolutely. I was just reading about its usage and no use cases you know, so for marketing and sales and copywriters you know, it's crafting personalized marketing materials and social media technical sales content, even for a risk and legal, it's answering complex questions and pulling from large amounts of legal documentation and drafting and even reviewing annual reports. So it's whilst the usage is vast, but if it when it when you talk about it taking, you know, just coming after everyone's job, you know, apart from this, I was just reading the survey by Zip Recruiter, which says that 62 percent of job seekers and they are concerned that artificial intelligence could derail their careers. And models like ChatGPT. And its rival, we do have ChatGPT-4 four and picture now, which is much more advanced version of it, it could disrupt the labor market, including replacing routine jobs in some sectors. So, overall technology could also enhance productivity and complement human workers, you know, instead of leading to employment. So, this is very similar to what happened with automation. It kind of generated much more jobs, you know, like, we are automating the repetitive task, but it has created a lot of opportunities and digital opportunities to be specific, marketing looks completely different from what it looked earlier. So, there's a lot of positives, and we must like actually to wait and see how it unfolds. And what the future entails. Yes.

Speaker 1 21:02

Yeah, I agree. And just before we round off, I think that point is important because the letter that will go back to that will go back to highlights its dangers. And of course, something as big as an AI that's gonna have such a massive impact on how we live, how we interact with each other. How we work is needs to be checked and regulated, it can't get out of control. But also the opportunities for goods that AI is doing is incredible. Looking at even like a simple use case in a police force. It can help police officers do their job better and quicker. It can reduce administrative burdens of writing reports and even small things like that can free up people in the police force context or in any other context to actually focus on impactful work, whether that's to citizens, or whether that's to customers in an enterprise setting. So thank you most very, very much for those insights, always interesting to talk to you on them.

Speaker 2 22:15-22:16

Thank you so much. Thanks for having me here.

Speaker 1 22:16-25:49

No problem. So now I just like to finish our podcast for today with our event round up. And I'd like to highlight that HCLTech took part in two events this year back in February, Mobile World Congress, and Finextra the financial cloud summit in London, England. At MWC, We discussed how to deploy and crucially monetized 5G solutions in the telecommunications industry, while at Finextra two leaders explored how to acquire and retain the best tech talent in the really challenging hiring environment, while looking at the inextricable link between cloud adoption and digital transformation. Also, more recently, we attended Adobe summit in Las Vegas, where the impact of generative AI was discussed, especially on content creation and marketing and, you know, building a new experience for consumers and businesses. And also it was discussed how enterprises are shaping the future of digital experience, and how organizations can scale innovation and much more. And because we spoke about generative AI, earlier, I'll just give some highlights of what some of our leaders said during the event. Let me just get it up. So one leader Scott Miller, who's the AVP XD for North America, at HCLTech, described generative AI as a game changer and it is going to offer us a potential bright future for significant reduction in business process friction, allowing customers and employees to dramatically reduce their time and energy to complete their tasks and bring great efficiencies and return on investment to business. Another leader Virender Singh called it a core ingredient for the future of digital transformation. And I'll give another example. Lester Lam, Executive Vice President and Global Leader for Consulting predicts that it will actually start to redefine roles and the future of work, the actual process of work could be shaped by generative a AI. And the democratization of the technology will enable those in departments like marketing to reach into more technical focus roles or creative roles and the lines will actually begin to blur. And so it's just a really interesting way of looking at it. Its potential to disrupt everything we know really not just in a social context, but also in a work environment. And all the content from these events, including what I just mentioned about generative AI is available on our HCLTech trends and Insights page. And you can find a link to this in the description below. So do check it out and take a look at all the content from those events. Up next, in events terms, we'll be visiting the go to cybersecurity conference RSA in San Francisco at the end of April, where we'll be discussing the latest innovations in cybersecurity and how organizations can better protect themselves against evolving intelligence driven threats. So with that, I'd like to thank Mousume again for her insights. And thank you to the audience, for tuning in. We'll see you next time. Goodbye.