Transcript – Episode 13: Democratizing AI for Effective Business Transformation

Andy (00.00.00 – 00.01.29)
Hello. Welcome to another episode of the HCL - Microsoft Ecosystem Elevate Podcast. I'm your host, Andy Packham, Senior Vice President and Chief Architect for the Microsoft ecosystem. Over the last year, it's been impossible to avoid conversations about AI, how AI relates to data, and how that across every organization is scaled. We know that it's going to change the way that we think about organizational structures, dramatically.
And for me, one of the most interesting narratives that's emerged is this concept of empowering individuals, the citizen AI user, to access technology that typically has been hidden away in IT departments. But to do that in a way that's safe, that's responsible, and critically safeguards the privacy of that data and information. I'm excited, today, to be joined by *Srinivas Kompella* from HCL, Senior Vice President and Head of the Digital and AI practice and *Jeeva AKR* from Microsoft Worldwide leader for Azure Cloud Scale Analytics.
So, I want to dive straight into that conversation by asking Sri to kick off and talk a little bit about what do Scale AI mean, and how are we working with Microsoft to bring that to our customers?

Srinivas (00.01.33 – 00.02.37)
Yeah, absolutely, Andy. So, Scale AI represents a significant shift on how we approach Artificial Intelligence within an enterprise. Instead of AI being in the domain of data scientists and tax experts, we are striving to make AI more accessible to everybody in the enterprise. It is about democratizing AI, it's no longer confined to a select few individuals but available for everybody in an enterprise to use. And our vision for scale AI includes a combination of Generative AI plus what we call as Traditional AI, because this is what we believe drives the maximum business value for large enterprises. Andy, at HCL Tech, we have a strategic partnership with Microsoft to make this vision into a reality. HCL Tech and Microsoft are committed to investing and developing offerings together and collaborating for customer success as a single objective to create business impact with AI at an enterprise level.

Thanks!

Andy (00.02.38 - 00.02.47)
Jeeva, could you sort of talk a little bit about Microsoft's perspective on this collaboration and, you know, the impact of Scale AI in today's business world?

Jeeva (00.02.48 - 00.04.07)
Absolutely, Andy. Foremost, thank you for the opportunity to share my perspectives within the HCL forum. Any time when I get an opportunity to stay in front of the partners, it's always an exciting time for me and I'm, considering the significance of the partnership between HCL and Microsoft, I'm absolutely thrilled to be part of this whole session. So, to talk about Scale AI, Microsoft Mission, in the last decade, has been to empower every single person and also the organizations to achieve more. And from that perspective, Scale AI is actually in the same direction, empowering every single individual and democratizing AI beyond the technology workforce. So, from that standpoint, this partnership with the HCL and between HCL and Microsoft is super critical in in the way that the customers can actually experience the best in breed capabilities, the industry capabilities that HCL brings in with the combination of the technologies that are actually provided by Microsoft so that we can actually put AI technologies with every single person in the company beyond the technology teams.

Andy (00.04.08 - 00.04.55)
Thanks, Jeeva. Now here at HCL, we really do appreciate the partnership as well and the, you know, the clear alignment of those those priorities to deliver the real benefits of this technology to where, I really believe, that really will be felt, which is in the frontline workers, the people that are critical to to every organization. So surely this shift towards democratizing AI, it's transformation.
You know, transformation, it's different. Can you share some insights into the kind of changes, how organizations will need to foster this environment to, you know, to encourage adoption outside of you know, we keep mentioning the traditional IT development.

Srinivas (00.04.56 - 00.06.23)
Yeah, absolutely Andy. And, you know, to respond to what Jeeva talked about, the partnership, I mean, you know, this is an incredible opportunity for both HCL Tech and Microsoft. So, you know, I think it is fantastic that we are combining so strongly together to bring in that value to our customers. Now, in terms of citizen AI development, I mean, you know, fostering an environment for citizen AI development starts with education and accessibility. With our partnership with Microsoft, the technology is available, but it needs to be, you know, made accessible, easy to use by all employees. But before that, education is paramount. So, the organizations need to invest in AI literacy programs, ensuring that employees understand the basics of AI and its potential applications, as well as, you know, the governance around AI. This includes training and resources that make it easy for non-technical staff to get started with AI tools and platforms. Additionally, companies need to create a culture that encourages experimentation where employees are enabled to explore AI to solve real world business problems.

It goes back to, you know, the culture that the leaders set, in order to ensure that the employees are, you know, incentivized for creating business opportunities, applying AI as well.

Andy (00.06.25 - 00.06.53)
Jeeva, there's cultural transition, there's organizational change, but it's also a technology change. How do you see that shift from data centric platforms to platforms that are based on AI driven insights and especially the context, you know, most of the contract is absolutely awesome for this. How do you see that transition from the traditional to the new?

Jeeva (00.06.54 – 00.11.39)
Great question, Andy. So, in order to better help others to understand the the the significance of the question that you just asked, I want to start with providing a context about where we are actually at from industry perspective, right! So, if you think about it, in the last ten years' time, most of our customers actually made lot of investments as part of the digital transformation initiative, right! And if you think about it, all the investments that our customers did as part of digital transformation was all focused on modernizing their entire application environment. And and we have seen tremendous amount of both technology and also the process maturity evolving out of this whole investment, both in the terms of microservices becoming defacto standard in the way that the applications are being built and from methodology standpoint, we saw DevOps becoming the standard but agile development methodologies governing the way that we are developing applications as well. But if you look at all the research reports that are actually published by organizations like Gartner, IDC, it's very clear that 70% of those investments are still yet to provide value back to those customers. And, and if you try to peel the layer and understand why, it is very clear that as part of those investments, the technology maturity of the app environment is in a completely different level of maturity. And but the underlying data and the data infrastructure is still sitting in legacy architectures and legacy technologies and all that, right! So, when we talk about AI, it is super important for every customers to understand the value of the data and the data liquidity. And the data liquidity in the means in, in and what I mean by that is about how ready is your data for applying AI for any kind of use cases that the customers are looking for. So, from that standpoint that I have been part of nearly 100 plus briefings since the emergence of ChatGPT 3.5 in the, in March of 2023 and across all these 100 different briefings, one common denominator that I'm actually seeing from observing from my all the customers is that, that all of these customers are very excited about leveraging AI to fundamentally transform the way and bring efficiency in the way that they are actually functioning, number one. But, also the common denominator is that, almost every single executive is actually focused on taking this opportunity as an

opportunity to think about how they can actually clean and also get their data as straight ready. Because if you think about it, the large organizations inherited data over a period of last 30 years' time. And today many of the many of the times, even when for when we are trying to do analytics 70% of the time is being spent just on cleansing and preparing and and bringing quality to the data. So, what we are trying to achieve here is that unless we address that critical component to bringing data liquidity, the customers will not be able to fully realize the value of AI within the specific time, that time stipulations that auto use case might warrant that, warrant that. So, from that perspective, so that's the context of it. Now, from that perspective, we think about it, Microsoft has actually provided the platform and also the capabilities for customers to take the data directly from the lake all the way to the business user in the most seamless and integrated manner so that the customers don't have to do every single AI initiative, starting with the system integration work or otherwise the data quality or the data preparation work. So, Microsoft technologies and platforms that are being announced during the Build Event and also that in its role in the form of the AI announcements, it makes it easier for customers to focus on getting value out of the data and applying AI to that data rather than having to do the fundamental shift in the work. So, considering that I already mentioned that 70% of the time is being spent on in analytics is on the data preparation work, I think, the technologies that we provide significantly provides that thrust and also the acceleration for customers to focus on getting value out of the data rather than the fundamental structural work related to the data state.

Andy (00.11.40 – 00.12.44)
Ya Jeeva, thanks there. I think you are spot on. It's focusing on the value of the data, that's key here, not that's what drives, you know, true business outcome. It's not so much about AI or a specific technology, it's about delivering a real benefit. And you know, those Gartner's numbers, they are you know, they're, they're significant in terms of the the amount of effort, the amount of investment that is being built into, you know, digital transformation over the years. But we're still not always seeing that true flow through to real, measurable outcomes. So, surely, you've been in this business for a long time, you know, super experienced and I'd like to talk in to hours in the customers continuously, and I'd just love to hear from you, what are your, what are your insights, you know, the top things that enterprises should be doing in this transformation to really drive success?

Srinivas (00.12.45 – 00.16.55)
Yep, absolutely Andy! You know, we are, we have entered the age of AI, we are in the age of the AI now. AI has become mainstream, you know, it's caught the imagination of the entire population of the world. So, you know, enterprises now, you know, are challenged in terms of how to get business results, you know, from AI. And there are

several things that would, you know, make an enterprise successful with AI. But if we have to distill it, I mean, there are three critical things that, we believe, the enterprises need to focus on to truly become successful AI driven companies. The first is having an AI strategy with a specific focus on literacy and self-service initiatives. The second is a robust modern data and AI platforms. Jeeva talked about the importance of data, you know, so AI cannot function without, you know, high quality and easily accessible data. So, the second one is robust and modern data and AI platforms. The third is AI governance and guardrails. While there are significant benefits with the AI, there are some risks and challenges that enterprises need to be aware of. So those are the three things that could differentiate between an enterprise being very successful with AI versus others who are still trying to catch up. Now the first one around, the AI strategy with the specific focus on, you know, literacy and self-service. So, the AI strategy is critical because, you know, any technology initiative needs to be linked with business outcomes. Technology cannot be for technology's sake. Hence there needs to be a strategy that is a combination of IT and business that focuses on, you know, creating real world business impact. Now, once the strategy is in place, well, thanks to our partnership with Microsoft and our Scale AI propositions, we have technology that is available. A big part of the, you know, the execution is people and process. So, which is where the literacy and self-service AI initiatives become extremely critical. The leadership commitment to champion and enable this change in the culture is one of the most critical success factors. So, where the employees feel rewarded for not just driving the adoption of AI but driving, you know, success at an enterprise level and feel proud about. The second aspect in terms of, you know, modern, you know, data and AI platforms. Again, the technology is available, but, you know, there needs to be a significant modernization. Jeeva talked about the importance of modernizing data platforms. Cannot, you know, emphasize the criticality of it because without modern, robust data platforms, AI initiatives will not succeed or will not get the kind of results that enterprises are looking for. And this is all about, you know, making sure that there is a high level of trust in data that is easily accessible to, you know, any user who wants to, you know, deploy AI
and the tools are made available with the right trainings for self-service. And eventually, once the AI models are built, they need to be integrated with, you know, the systems of, you know, recording systems of engagements that people use every day could be Microsoft teams, Microsoft 365 and other enterprise IT systems. So, having this robust data on AI platforms is the second critical factor. The third is AI governance. And this has, you know, focus in terms of making sure that AI development is responsible, you know, making sure that the AI is explainable all the way into data. It is not just about explainability of the models, you know, the enterprises need to ensure that there is observability and explainability of data as well, because a lot of the bias in AI comes out of the bias in data. And, you know, and establishing those best practices are extremely

critical so that, you know, right from data to AI there is traceability and explainability to ensure that, you know, the AI that is developed is being not just responsible but impactful. Also critical to establish security and compliance measures because it is critical to safeguard the interest of the enterprise successes. So again, to, you know, to summarize three critical factors, the AI strategy with a specific focus on literacy and self-service. The second, you know, robust in modern data and AI platforms. And third, you know, AI governance and guardrails.

Andy (00.16.56 – 00.17.28)
Ya Srini, thanks for that. And I mean, that's a that's a complete overview. So thanks! There's one area I'd like Jeeva to start to dig into. So, I think, it's an area where Microsoft has made a really strong stand.
And, I think, it's really, really important, is the focus on responsible AI and ensuring the reliability and effective effectiveness of AI. But within a broader, you know, organizational framework, let’s take your views about how Microsoft working on here in the criticality of that.

Jeeva (00.17.29 – 00.21.15)
Awesome! Andy, not just Srini provided a comprehensive overview of AI, I think, he provided a complete operating model for operationalizing the AI.
So, that's very thoughtful coming from Srini. So, from the questions you asked me has two fronts to it. One is the technology side of it, and then there is the cultural side of it, right! So, Srini covered it, but I will try to provide a little more granular detail to it. Any time when customers actually embark on an AI journey, one of the things that we advocate and a company in partnership with HCL, one of the biggest push that we have made is to have customers to think about this holistically from people, process and technology, right! Microsoft can actually provide the technology, but technology alone cannot solve the problem. In fact, actually, MIT actually recently did a survey and we figured out that 8% of the problems in an organization can be solved by technology, and then the rest 92%, will be related to the people and not solve the process and the culture. And from that standpoint, upfront, just throwing in the AI technology into the organization and creating this capabilities will not or will not solve the problem by itself, right. And fundamentally, the companies have to upskill their entire technology workforce and they need to change their process and what is the conviction and they have in there in the in the insight that they are actually getting from the data to transform their entire business processes.
I think, that's a maturity curve that every single organization needs to go through. And from that standpoint, there are two things. One, the reliability of the model which you talked about will play into a very, very important role about how reliable is the model and how do you actually refine all the model, how do you score all this model effectiveness

and how do you monitor for all these things. And we all know that the global normal is not a local norm, and you cannot take an AI model that is actually working flawlessly well in a particular geography or in a particular business unit and take that to a completely different geography for the same business unit as well, because the circumstances that work surrounding that on the business unit could be a lot different than the other one. So, in in all these things, I think, maintaining the model effectiveness and observability plays a very important role. From that perspective, Microsoft actually enables that with, with a lot of different technologies. And then the second thing, which is about the cultural aspect that you talked about, bringing in responsible AI, Srini, actually, kind of mentioned in a very nicely, elegantly, that data, the bias actually comes from the data. And from that standpoint, what kind of data that you actually feed into your AI system or apply AI for and what kind of, you know, what is the, the ethical guidelines that the organizations need to adopt, is something that Microsoft has been actually focused on educating our customers and we have made some significant investments in that, Andy. So, both are very highly relevant and responsible AI is something that is dear to Microsoft up to the heart of all Microsoft employees and also knowing the partnership with HCL, we know that this is something that we try to preach to every single customer and it all comes down to how we actually get that data ready that doesn't have any biases. And, also, to making sure that there is a good observability in the AI models to catch for all these biases and inaccuracies and ineffectiveness and all that, so that, yeah, appropriate model can be deployed across the organization.

Andy (00.21.17 – 00.21.54)
Yeah, thanks. Thanks Jeeva. I think that's, that's key. That, I think, is something that everybody needs to focus on, building trust across the quality of data and trust in AI. I think, we, it's a key area to focus. So last question, and Srini, I think, this might be the hardest question. We've all spoken Jeeva, yourself, me. We've spoken about business outcomes, it's all about the outcome. But how do you actually measure the effectiveness and the reliability of these outcomes?

Srinivas (00.21.55 – 00.25.11)
Great question! I mean, you know, I think Jeeva alluded to it early on, that you know, historically the success rates and ROI of a lot of the data analytics programs, you know, have not been the greatest, right. So, now that we have a game changing set of technologies, you know, and the, you know, the imagination that that's out there, you know, the art of the possible of the AI, it is even more critical to make sure that, you know, we are measuring the effectiveness, you know, right up front. It has to be embedded as part of the AI strategy that I was alluding to. Now, so far, we've been taking an approach of, you know, starting with data and going into analytics and then

developing AI applications and, you know, then potentially into the business goals. So, what we are now talking about with our Scale AI proposition and with the kind of technologies that Microsoft brings to table is that we can now start with the outcomes, start with the business goals, you can call them KPIs or high level objectives and work backwards to figure out what kind of AI applications are needed or kind of AI solutions are needed, and then work backwards to access the data. With Microsoft, you know, data fabric, you know, technologies. I mean, it makes it a lot, lot more easier to access data wherever it is. So, you don't necessarily need to, you know, take a data out approach of, you know, consolidating all of the data and then eventually get to the outcome. So, the first point really is to clearly define those, you know, business goals, objectives and where possible, you know, KPIs and then work backwards, right, to get to the data. This. Then the second aspect is to make sure that, you know, the organizations are actually tracking these KPIs and, you know, constantly evaluating how AI solutions are impacting these business goals, objectives and metrics. Because, you know, it's not just about, you know, developing an AI, you know, solution and put it out there, but it's also about that continuous monitoring and tracking to drive not just improvements, but also changes, right. Then the third aspect is to make sure that there are feedback loops, because once the model is out there, I think Jeeva was talking about that, you know, operationalizing AI aspects, you know, and there is a technology aspect to it, but there's also the people process aspect to it, you know, how how much is the impact on the users, how much is the impact on the business? So, there needs to be a, you know, closed feedback loop with the AI models to make sure that the effectiveness is not just measured once, but it is continuously measured. This is what drives the continuous improvement cycle because the AI models get better and better with time, get better and better with, you know, new data that is coming in better and better with usage and hence these continuous improvement cycle is extremely critical to ensure that the AI solutions are delivering value and not just meeting the organization needs but potentially creating new opportunities for the organizations. Now, how exactly to go about doing this is goes back to that paper process aspect that Jeeva was talking about. And there are technologies that, you know, we leverage from the Microsoft, you know, technology stack to help organizations, you know, measure the effectiveness of AI going back into the data as well.

Andy (00.25.13 – 00.26.56)
Thanks Srini, thanks very much. I think, you know, to sum all this conversation and it has been an amazing conversation.
And, you know, Srini and Jeeva, my thanks for both of your insights today. And it'll be really important, I think, if you kind of try to summarize all of that Scale AI is a combination of sort of democratized capabilities, responsible outcomes and effectiveness, measured in terms of business outcomes. And, organizations to be

successful, need to focus on three things - getting the right skills, the right capabilities, getting the right platforms in place, and making sure that we've got the right processes around, you know, the responsible, the right quality of data. And ,the key, this is this is really, really complex. And, I think, the real value of our relationship between Microsoft and HCL is. it's ,we help our customers resolve complexity by leveraging that ecosystem, by that partnership and collaboration. So, you know, I think this partnership is really a fantastic step towards creating this vision of citizen AI where, you know, access this technology is something that's no longer a privilege, but it's a it's a tool that's accessible to everybody.

So, everyone, thank you for tuning in to this episode. Please stay tuned for more. This is ever evolving and I'm sure we're going to have a lot more to say over the next few months. If you have any questions or feedback, do reach out to to us. And until next time, this is Andy Peckham signing off. Thank you very much.