

**Nicholas Ismail:**

Hi everyone and welcome to the HCLTech Trends & Insights Podcast, where we're going to be discussing human-centric transformation. I'm joined by Praveen Bhat, EVP and Global Head of SAP, Digital Business Services at HCLTech. Praveen, how are you doing today?

**Praveen Bhat:**

I'm doing pretty well. Other than the train strikes which let me down this morning, I'm okay.

**Nicholas Ismail:**

Amazing. Let's get into the questions. When we talk about human-centric transformation, what does that mean in practice for enterprises today, beyond being just a good aspiration or slogan?

**Praveen Bhat:**

Fundamentally, human-centric transformation means designing transformation around people – how they actually work, how they decide, how they eventually collaborate and create value. It's not just about technology deployment or process standardization, which is generally the ethos of any large transformation programs.

In practice, it fundamentally means three things.

First, organizations need to move from system-centric thinking to experience-centric thinking. Instead of asking questions, "How do we implement AI or ERP faster?", they can ask questions, "How do we make decisions faster for employees, easier for customers and probably more intelligent for the business?"

Second, it means augmenting people rather than replacing them. I think that's the key crux of human-centric transformation. The most successful organizations are using AI to remove repetitive work or improve or simplify workflows. But you cannot replace human judgment when it comes to customer engagement, innovation, risk management or strategic decision-making.

Third, transformation today is continuous. It's no longer a one-time "go-live" event. Enterprises must continuously invest in capabilities, adoption, leadership alignment and the effective use of platforms and tools.

Ultimately, technology alone will not create competitive advantage anymore. The advantage comes from how effectively people adopt, trust and use technology to drive better business outcomes.

**Nicholas Ismail:**

Thanks, Praveen. How should organizations balance technology-led efficiency with the need to preserve human judgment, empathy and employee experience?

**Praveen Bhat:**

I think we need to do a balancing act, you know. AI is a co-pilot, right, for all of our activities and whatever we do across the value chain of enterprise. But, I think, we need to start by recognizing that efficiency and humanity are not opposing goals. In fact, the best transformation improves both of them simultaneously.

So we should look at three layers:

There are tasks that can be automated task which can be automated, of course, you know that's the lower end of the stack you can get away with that. But there are decisions that can be augmented with human Intelligence and there are experiences that should always remain deeply human.

For example, AI can automate invoice matching, predict risks or generate any recommendation. But negotiations, customer interactions, ethical judgments, leadership conversations or any complex trade-offs, they require human-centricity, right, and empathy in that context.

One common mistake organizations make is pursuing process efficiency without understanding employee friction. If transformation creates faster systems but more frustrated employees, organizations eventually lose productivity, adoption and innovation capacity.

The best enterprises measure transformation success not just through cost reduction or cycle-time improvements, but also through employee experience, decision quality, adoption rates and customer satisfaction.

**Nicholas Ismail:**

You mentioned mistakes organizations can fall into. Can you elaborate on the biggest mistakes organizations make when they try to transform too quickly without bringing people, operating models and culture with them?

**Praveen Bhat:**

One of the biggest mistakes is treating transformation purely as a technology program. In reality, transformation is fundamentally about people and organizational change management.

At its core, transformation changes how people interact, collaborate and make decisions.

Another major issue is change fatigue. Many enterprises are running multiple transformation programs simultaneously – cloud, AI, ERP modernization, cybersecurity and data initiatives – while expecting employees to absorb all of it without sufficient enablement.

A third challenge is failing to redesign operating models. Organizations often pursue digital transformation without rethinking end-to-end value streams, accountability and decision-making structures. Humans need to remain at the centre of that evolution. There's also a tendency to prioritize go-live dates over adoption quality.

Finally, leadership alignment is critical. If executives are not aligned on outcomes, governance and priorities, transformation becomes fragmented very quickly.

Organizations that succeed move with urgency, but also with communication, capability-building, sponsorship and cultural alignment.

**Nicholas Ismail:**

Where are you seeing the strongest examples or use cases of human-centric transformation delivering real business value – whether through better employee experiences, customer outcomes or stronger change adoption?

**Praveen Bhat:**

There are several industries where this is already reshaping the value chain.

In manufacturing and supply chain operations, organizations are using AI and SAP technologies to provide frontline teams with real-time insights, enabling faster operational decisions and reducing complexity. The value doesn't come only from efficiency gains – it comes from empowering employees with real-time intelligence.

In customer service, AI-assisted service models are significantly improving resolution times.

In finance, automation is reducing manual reconciliation and reporting efforts, allowing finance teams to spend more time on forecasting, scenario planning and strategic decision support.

Another important area is employee experience. Organizations investing in end-to-end workflows, self-service capabilities, learning platforms and AI-enabled support are seeing faster adoption, faster onboarding and stronger workforce engagement.

**Nicholas Ismail:**

Looking ahead, what should leaders prioritize if they want to build a transformation agenda that is both AI-enabled and genuinely human-centered?

**Praveen Bhat**

There are four or five priorities leaders should focus on.

First, AI strategy must be business-led. AI should connect directly to business outcomes, customer experience and growth.

Second, organizations need strong data foundations and governance. Human-centric AI depends on trusted, transparent and responsible data ecosystems. Without that, the entire AI layer becomes ineffective.

Third, companies need to proactively redesign skills and workforce models. The future workforce will require a blend of domain expertise, digital fluency and decision intelligence.

Fourth, organizations must simplify the employee experience.

And finally, leadership behavior is critical. Employees adopt transformation more effectively when leaders actively communicate and demonstrate new ways of working.

**Nicholas Ismail:**

Finally, as HCLTech and SAP continue to work together, how does this partnership help clients turn the idea of human-centric transformation into something operational, scalable and measurable?

**Praveen Bhat:**

SAP is the world's largest ERP provider and most large enterprises run on SAP systems. They also have one of the strongest innovation roadmaps when it comes to data and artificial intelligence. Recent developments around business data cloud and AI are shaping the future of the autonomous enterprise. That vision already exists. What's equally important is helping enterprises execute that vision – and that's where human-centric design becomes essential. Adoption is a key part of both SAP's and HCLTech's narratives.

Every organization has its own culture, behaviors and complexities. HCLTech's role is to help enterprises navigate transformation with a human-centric approach, ensuring employees feel part of the transformation journey rather than excluded from it. People need to become an intrinsic part of AI-led business transformation – not observers sitting outside it. That's where SAP and HCLTech come together effectively. SAP drives the technology roadmap, while HCLTech helps drive the people transformation roadmap by bringing together culture, data and technology.

**Nicholas Ismail:**

That makes sense. Praveen, thank you so much for your time and insights.

**Praveen Bhat:**

Thank you for your time, Nick. Take care. Bye-bye.