DIGITAL LEADERSHIP
Leveraging the uniqueness of Digital

Human Capital interacted with HR professionals from various domains to gather an understanding on the impact of 'Digital' in the realm of leadership, and the role to be adapted by leaders of today in the wake of a perennial shift in the technology landscape as also the enhanced presence of a tech-savvy and younger workforce in today's organisations.

BY SHRUTI CHADHA AND S. AJAY KUMAR

Being a leader in the digital age means understanding technology as much as leaders understand money, HR, operations, business and law. Given the rapid changes in the way people communicate and organise their lives, leaders and organisations need to adapt to digital technologies in order to become data driven, and thereby inspire teams to engage in rapid experimentation that drives transformation and business outcomes.

What are the key skills needed by a leader to establish productive digital processes and technologies?

ANIL KUMAR MISRA: We are in the digital age where technology is changing at a fabulous rate. During such times, it has become important for leaders to keep pace with this change or become irrelevant. For leaders, it is either evolve or evaporate! New age leaders need to

be digital savvy. In my opinion, leaders have to play the role of a digital evangelist. To start with, leaders must possess five key things for setting up productive digital processes.

- They must answer which technology to adopt and why
- They must have a vision and a roadmap to adopt it
- They must experiment and should not be afraid of failures

Our Expert Panel

Anil Kumar Misra
Chief Human Resource Officer, Magicbricks

Ritu Agast
Director HR, Pearson India

Ashima Deepak Kaul
Head, Human Resources, Blackberrys Menswear

Subhashini Sriram
Senior Director, Human Resources, Unisys India

Pramod Kumar Tripathi
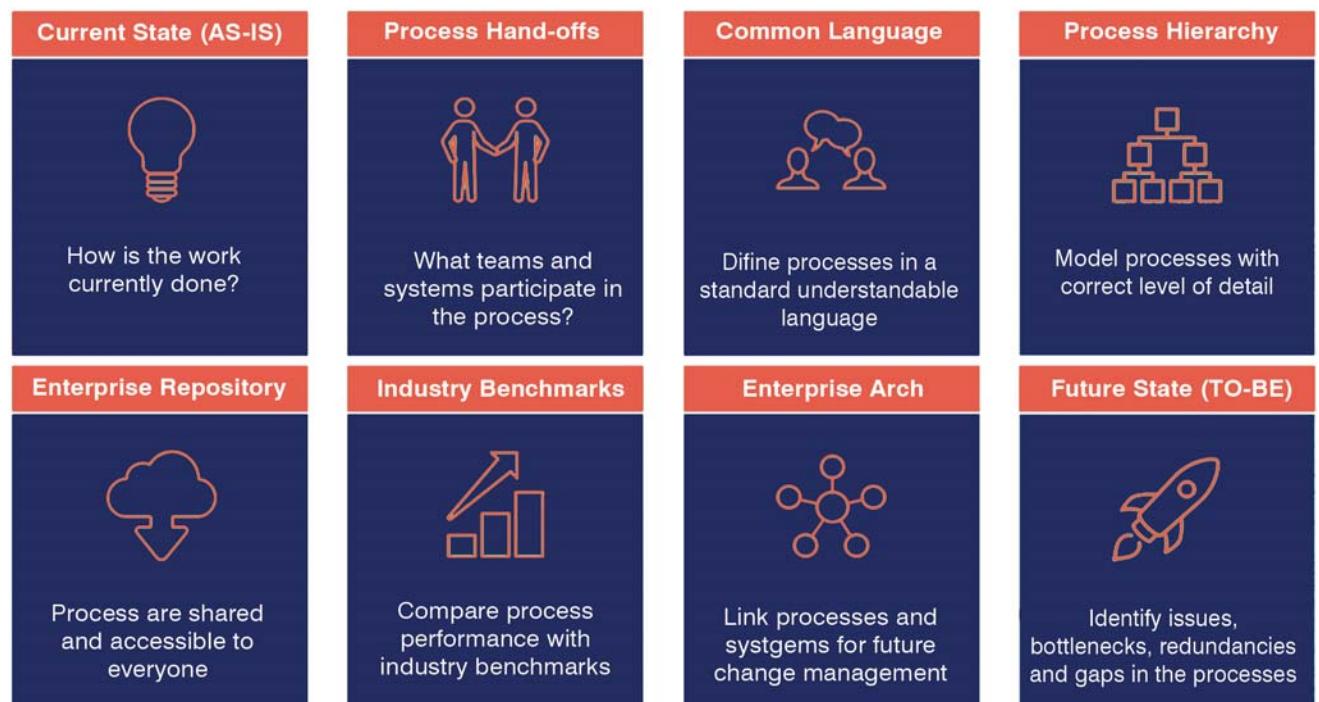Asstt. General Manager-HR, Bajaj Energy Limited

- They must act as digital evangelists
- They should always put the interest of human capital ahead of everything

Leaders must realise that a company does not become digital merely because it has digital technologies at its disposal. If we look at successful organisations, they thrive in a digital environment. Digital processes can function as enablers, but the success is dependent on the people who adopt and accept it.

RITU AGAST: A digital leader must be proficient enough with digital processes. However, true digital literacy goes beyond the basic skills and evaluation of information. A digital leader should be a "Change Leader" in order to be able to use technology effectively, and access resources to build a platform to bring about a significant change. One of the most important components of digital literacy is the ability to understand the role of technology, and its implementation to herald innovative digital processes within the organisation. It is essential for a leader to look for solutions through the lens of technology and benefit the employees by way of easing processes.

ASHIMA DEEPAK KAUL: Digital transformation is on everyone's radar right now and a majority of industries and companies are working towards digitising their organisation. It goes without saying that good leadership in the workplace is crucial for success. A leader can be successful only when he acts as the champion of the project. Firstly, an innovative approach leading to out of the box thinking helps to better define the key skills in the profile of successful leaders and showcases to challenge the status quo in a person. A great idea and imagination not only define a leader's success, but also enhances the team spirit towards dedicated goals.

Secondly, every industry is changing today at a fast pace, and one must have the ability to lead and manage change in the flow of the environment. In other words, 'change is the only constant.' Thirdly, we have come across such an environment where a leader influences his team along with his colleagues. In this age of digitalisation, we look forward to the ability to handle a volatile environment in a productive leader that gives an edge over others in the process. Lastly, it has been an

Current State (AS-IS)	**Process Hand-offs**	**Common Language**	**Process Hierarchy**
How is the work currently done?	What teams and systems participate in the process?	Difine processes in a standard understandable language	Model processes with correct level of detail
Enterprise Repository	**Industry Benchmarks**	**Enterprise Arch**	**Future State (TO-BE)**
Process are shared and accessible to everyone	Compare process performance with industry benchmarks	Link processes and systgems for future change management	Identify issues, bottlenecks, redundancies and gaps in the processes

Source: adeeljaved.com

Our Expert Panel

Anil Kumar Misra is the CHRO, Magicbricks.com. He brings over 19 years of experience across various brands like Tesco, Patni Computers, East India Hotels, and others. Anil has played multiple specialist/generalist roles within HR across sectors, in both fortune 500 Global MNCs as well as Indian corporates with over 10,000 employee base.

Ritu Agast is Director Human Resources, Pearson India about the relevance of Learning and Development in today's organisations and the inclusive role HR is required to play to transform an organisation into a "learning organisation."

Ashima Deepak Kaul is Head, Human Resources, Blackberrys Menswear. She is an HR Professional with over 15 years of experience and specialises in HR operations, including designing and implementing policies and processes, Talent Acquisition, Talent Management, Retention, Appraisals and Job Evaluations. Ashima has also successfully handled Compensation and Benefit, restructuring, and analysis.

Subhashini Sriram is Senior Director-Human Resources, Unisys India. She comes with an experience of about 20 years of experience and has worked in organisations such as Northern Trust, India, Perot Systems TSI, Telelogic India Pvt Ltd. and Philips India. Subhashini holds a Masters in Electronics from Bharathidasan University and a Strategic Human Resources Certification from eCornell University.

Pramod Tripathi is the Asstt. General Manager-HR, Bajaj Energy Limited and is associated with Bajaj Group since 2011. He carries a diverse experience of more than 18 yrs.in entities such as Aditya Birla Group, Jaypee Group, Visaka Group Sahara India etc. He can be reached at pktripathi.kdk@bajajenergy.com

observation that any business or system cannot grow without a skilled workforce. It is widely accepted to introduce fast and effective training platforms within the organisation to produce more trained workforce.

SUBHASHINI SRIRAM: Setting up productive digital processes and technologies by a leader implies that they must possess new age digital leadership skills and be open to exploring new technologies as per the digital vision. To effectively lead an organisation towards digital transformation, it needs to carry out predictive analysis to ensure clarity on the vision it is looking forward to. The digital leader should be able to convince the sceptics to adopt technologies and be able to drive results amid complexities. A leader should set a benchmark for inspirational leadership and recognise that digital transformation is not about projects, but transforming people and work culture.

One should enable collaboration through boundary-less ecosystems and relentlessly seek disruption while energising and influencing people to execute and achieve the shared vision. The leader should strategize open-sourced, multi-dimensional talent teams to move seamlessly through operational challenges and address them effectively. The 'digital' leader should also expand his/her

conceptual thinking and decisiveness to address issues in need, and keep changing the adoption patterns with respect to complex and changing interpersonal demands within the organisation. The leader should drive and respond to change, embrace the uncertain, and focus to achieve new and changing contexts. Another important aspect of adopting digital transformation, which is the end product of the vision, is to be really able to transform people and their lives.
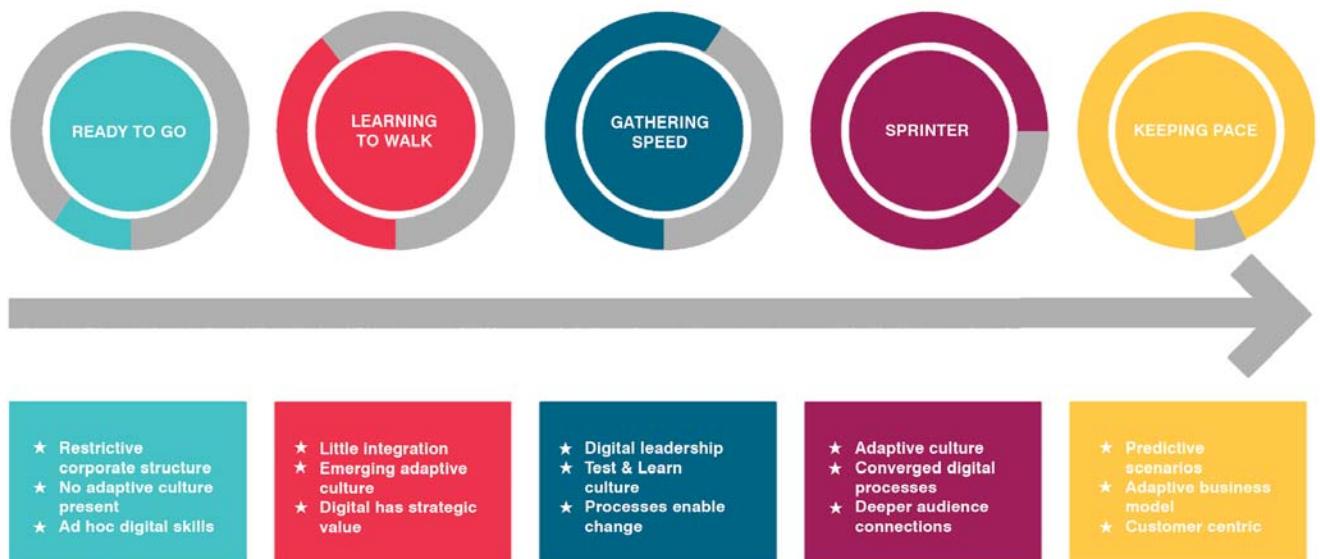
PRAMOD KUMAR TRIPATHI: It is rightly said, "culture starts with leaders", and culture is shaped by the actions and decisions from the leader. In an accurate know-how, leaders must classify and emphasise the needed mind-set to make the right decisions over the accuracy and the speed of scale of processes and technologies. Leaders should mentor the workforce to work in a different way and be more flexible, to provide the right assignment controls, and its delivery. Leaders must comprehend the accuracy, speed, and strategic goals in driving an opinionated approach towards individuals. The shifting environment of processes and technology, in all aspects of existence, compels the adoption of business transformation. The realignment of, or fresh speculation in, technology, business models, and

processes to steer in new value and experiences for clients, employees, to ensure that they compete successfully in an ever changing economy.

Some of the most significant skills required by a leader to manage a digital process and transformation are:

- New transformation technology skills which embrace the fundamentals of new transformation technologies
- Crafting a design mindset
- Designing and delivering new digital experiences, digital communication, and computational thinking.
- Critical adaptive thinking and agile approaches skills
- Adaptive thinking
- An embryonic and a responsive mindset

Mere upgradation of technical skills will not be adequate. To ensure longevity of core business values, culture, communication, leadership, soft-skills, and the operational model are also needed to be evolved. The searching of innovative capabilities for understanding what talent is necessary to start with, what capabilities digital processes and businesses necessitate, which will

READY TO GO	LEARNING TO WALK	GATHERING SPEED	SPRINTER	KEEPING PACE
★ Restrictive corporate structure ★ No adaptive culture present ★ Ad hoc digital skills	★ Little integration ★ Emerging adaptive culture ★ Digital has strategic value	★ Digital leadership ★ Test & Learn culture ★ Processes enable change	★ Adaptive culture ★ Converged digital processes ★ Deeper audience connections	★ Predictive scenarios ★ Adaptive business model ★ Customer centric

Source: medium.com

Digital transformation: the five essential elements of exceptional execution

| Take your digital capabilities to the next level | Build agility into the right digital processes | Invest more in digital than your competitors- but not too much more | Focus on efficiency and growth at the same time | Enlist enough employees in your digital reinvention campaign |

Source: McKinsey&Company

diverge by market and topography. The other key skill needed by the Leader will increasingly be able to slot in with wide ecosystems, encompassing a range of businesses and technologies as well as position themselves to take advantage of emerging productive digital processes and technology.

Further, the key skills needed by leaders are, superior skills in communication and conviction, crafting and rolling out plans to shore up agile processes across the business, and put in place quantifiable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and metrics for a development pathway. In order to triumph, they must be comfortable training people across different functions and levels in the organisation, including senior executives. They must remain focused on the impact and construct organisational influence around measuring growth.

Technological changes in organisations often lead to islands of innovation. What is the best way to lead and start the digital transformation wave within the organisation?

ANIL KUMAR MISRA: I do not see technological changes or advancements slowing down in the near future. In fact, with every passing day, it would only become faster. To ensure technological advancements are not merely restricted to silos in any organisation, the thumb rule is to encourage cross-functional collaboration.
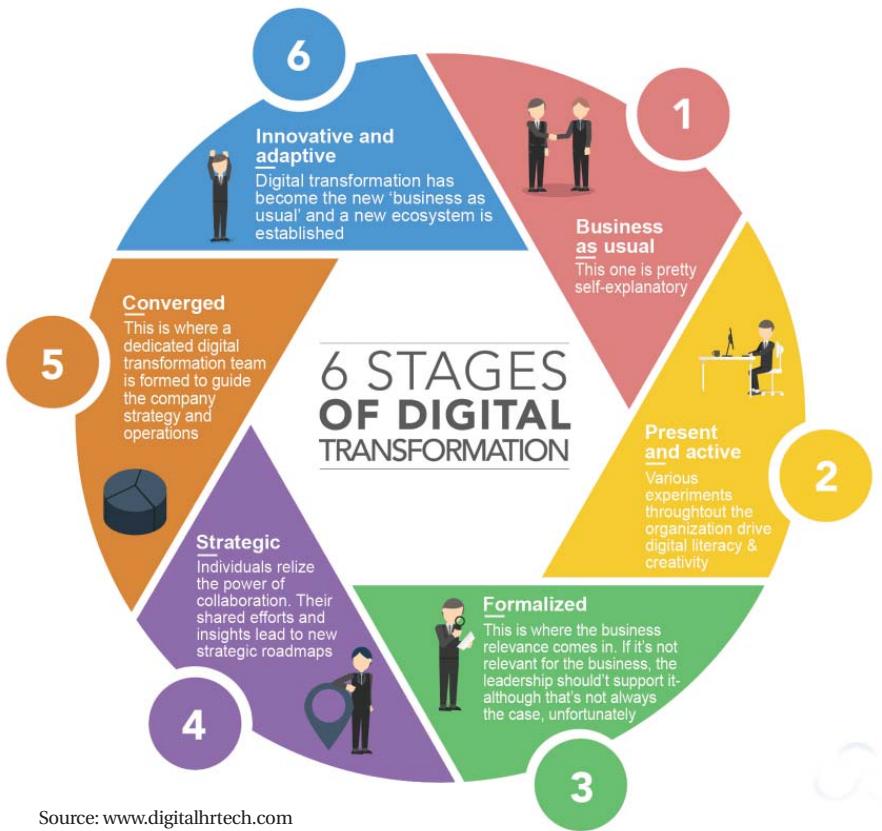
However, it all starts with broadening your imagination in understanding why and how technology could be a solution to your business problems. This involves cross functional operations between the business and tech teams, and would create a wave of thoughts over how technology can solve business challenges. In current circumstances, companies must also invest in identifying appropriate platforms and putting processes ahead of tasks. A lot of this can be learnt from what is happening in different industries, the challenges they are facing, and how new tech-aided solutions, are being thought of to deal with different issues. Proper training in the right direction and full disclosure of important technological advancements and opportunities are two things that act as catalysts in making the organisation open and keen towards digital transformation.

RITU AGAST: Digital transformation reshapes the business models and processes within the organisations. In the digital age, a leader must be a hands-on digital person so that they can understand the convenience technological capabilities offer in creating a better structure, along with faster and more innovative processes. To lead and start the digital transformation wave within the organisation, employees should be cognisant of how digital transformation will aid their productivity and execute tasks within the organisation.

ASHIMA DEEPAK KAUL: While digital transformation is a necessary

element for the success of any organisation, it is important to have a definitive plan of implementation to ensure its effectiveness. There needs to be an agreement on strategy and programmes that deliver improved customer experiences, empower the data-driven activities of the organisation, and engage the workforce on driving change. The initial year and two is bound to bring its own challenges, and hence it is important to engage employees in a regular discussion - by way of using small focus groups for important discussions and transformations, taking regular feedback, and addressing the problems. Cross functional teams are the best forms of focus groups that can be utilised in such a scenario, since they help address a broad range of psychological and emotional issues which might occur during the process of transformation. It is important to note that digital transformation is not merely restricted to technology, but is rather an on-going process that alters the very functioning of the organisation. Hence, it is important to view every aspect before implementation.

SUBHASHINI SRIRAM: The key to successful digital transformation of the workplace is to review the present work culture, decide the future work culture with maximum impact, employ experienced professionals to sketch out an achievable roadmap, and a strategy to reach the future state of work culture. I would say that the best way to lead and incorporate the wave of digital transformation in the organisation is to walk the talk. The leader should be a standing example of being the first to adopt digital transformation and help others understand the ease and its shared benefits. They should have the ability to attract and energize the experts in this space to integrate disparate services, systems, and platforms. While disruptive technologies such as cloud, artificial intelligence, and blockchain promise to bring forth efficiency, and thus help gain competitive advantage, companies and governments alike are realising that every transformation journey is

Source: www.digitalhrtech.com

- **Vision:** Launching of a strategic vision for a product and line up the organisation around an apparent outlook of what is requisite to accomplish business success.

- **Value focus:** Imbibing a mind-set among all stake holders with a focal point on delivering reckonable business value, delighting the customer, and optimising return on investment (ROI).

- **Decisiveness:** A culture of collaborative approaches of making decisions and prioritising inventiveness using data and facts rather than perception and sensation. Inspires all stakeholder about world of complex organisational business adoption as well.

Putting speed and innovation ahead of tried-and-tested business practices is often considered too risky. What strategies can a digital leader use to reduce the actual and perceived risk to the organisation?

ANIL KUMAR MISRA: The success of the entire momentum depends on the leader's risk taking ability. The leader's ability to take risks will actually come handy when they try to experiment in their bid to drive excellence. Hence, the leader should also be open to change and innovation. The leader should also be able to walk the talk and foresee the future, and act like a Gen Z in a new technology era.

Leaders often make the mistake of undermining the degree to which digital would be disrupting the industry and the business. At times, it is amazing to see how technology has blurred the lines between industries. To combat this rapid pace of evolution, leaders must focus on gaining digital knowledge, increase their technology IQ, and identify blind spots to beat the competition. Leaders' who are not abreast with technology, commit to the adoption of a 'cool technology' that may not serve the purpose of the business. Leaders must possess relevant knowledge of how technology will generate value in

unique. A digital organisation is brought to life by its HR and predictive analysis. As digital transformation is not a digital leader's typical change management, it is advisable to predict the changes to have a clear insight. Also, in an ever-changing industry such as IT, the leader must be agile and flexible to course correct when predictions go wrong so as to meet the end results.

For digital transformation to work, it must be well-planned, with security on top of the mind and cultural alignment throughout the organisation. Being digitally transformed is not a destination, but rather an evolution that requires constant re evaluation, and market shift based on the needs and technological advancement.

PRAMOD KUMAR TRIPATHI:
"Transformation is a mindset" of what the business is demanding to achieve, rather than focusing on the technology, or technology activation. If you do not have a process, any talk about digital transformation relics only that talk. The progression

is agile, and agility permits everyone to observe both the forest and the trees, but focus on the trees. A lot of modernisation comes from that mindset and encourages conducting tests. Creating the right work environment for such a digital transformation within the organisation is the key. "Get them the tools to start, allow them to fail a bit, give them the time and cushion to work out on new digital technologies and challenges they are trying to master." The key to successful digital transformations within the organisation is to understand what data can do to its own flourishing performance, the team desires to gather significant data, convert it into metrics, look for trends, and prioritise enhancement. Learning from data is imperative, but even more vital is chipping in the learning as the essence of group effort among the team associates. A leader needs to display collaborative practices so that it can be followed by managers, teams, and individuals. The other ways to lead and start the digital transformation are:

terms of revenue and processes.

In a complex business situation, leaders must encourage collaborative and cross functional projects to inspire others. The leader must be able to impact others' thinking and actions to drive larger business objectives and improve productivity and performance. This can only be possible if the leader is aligned with the organisation's strategic vision. He must foster a culture where employees can feel the optimism in achieving the long-term mission.

RITU AGAST: Recently developed digital technologies lay the foundations for disruptive business models to create new experiences. Digital processes offer flexibility and can be tweaked basis user feedback. So initially, a digital leader should evaluate and experiment with the process to take feedback from the employees. Accordingly, business models can be implemented and adopted.

ASHIMA DEEPAK KAUL: The transformative age is increasing the complexity of the organisational ecosystem at a speed never seen before. New digital technologies are driving an intense focus on developing a disruptive new business model and creating a new experience. It is not only the pace of change, but the underlying approach to change and our increasing reliance on being connected - data, people, communities and experience.

On the flip side, speed and innovation have brought in a certain amount of risk in the business as well, which could be prevented through a gamut of practices as an organisation. A digital leader shall strategically identify and underline the business critical role of the organisation and ring-fence them against possible attrite. Employees play a pivotal role in the strategies developed by a digital leader to reduce the actual risk, because they are the root of speed and innovation in the ecosystem. Thus, in order to be cautious in every practice, imparting the right training to the employees comes as a first. Greater number of trained workforce lessens the risk to the organisation. We are

transforming every day and so are our businesses and organisations. It has been observed that digital transformation is directly proportional to the workforce, and is at high risk if they are not part of this transformation. Consequently, a leader should make the workforce spearhead in the organisational transformation process. Once they are involved, surely the business risk is reduced.

SUBHASHINI SRIRAM: While processes, procedures, and people have all been victims to the evolution of technology, poor management, and oversight is putting long-term business successes in jeopardy. Organisations risk their productivity when they continue to buy into the hype of workplace technology. Instead, they need to focus on setting up staff with a functional workspace that allows employees to get the job done. Organisations can map out the technological solutions that go hand in hand with those requirements. Only then is it possible to identify the tools and applications needed to help deliver on results and objectives.

Before starting the process of digital transformation, it is advisable to have a predictive change analysis, so the digital leader can chalk out the benefits, challenges, and ways to address digital failures. While, it is similar to the usual risk assessments dealt by HR managers, the strategies to address the actual and perceived risks include extensive understanding of various digital tools. One of the biggest gaps in organisational change is overlooking the existing systems and applications working with the new technological advancements. To improve organisational change processes and ease the digital transformation, digital leaders should support and cater to various age groups among the employees and their respective technology adoption capabilities.

PRAMOD KUMAR TRIPATHI: Uncertain approaches of yesteryears are no longer valid, and complete lucidity about demands, electrifying leadership, unparalleled agility, and the determination to bet boldly have emerged as the trends of today. It is

possible to achieve a win-win situation by adopting a strategic business foresight to seek the causes behind the lethargy rooted in individual comfort, group dynamics, and cognitive biases, and to put forward a way out to study the real odds of strategy, and revamp your forecast processes to transport the big conquerable moves. All this hold doubly true for business strategy, which strain unusual awareness.

They underestimate the degree to which business strategy is disrupting the economic under-pinning of their businesses overlooking the speed with which business ecosystems are blurring industry borders and shifting the spirited equilibrium. Moreover, countering to edifice new businesses and variable resources away from old ones can prove to be menacing. In the industry parlance, the only way for leaders is to cut through lethargy and take gallant steps to scrap and win on all fronts They must send a message to all the teams to overcome their ignorance using pragmatic techniques, and refrain from old ways of thinking.

Effectiveness programmes must be also organised so as to incite senior executives into action. As business leaders, they need to develop plans that need to be amplified and shielded from other executives. They should also help collect those plans into a project wide digital strategy that every business leader understands and thereby aided in its creation. Upon exposure to newer realities, speeding up the process of perceptive approach to be aware the way in which other companies respond. An important element of such a nimble approach was breaking up big bets into smaller, staged investments. The fail fast mindset was embedded from the outset since it allowed an organisation to learn quickly from mistakes and to minimise overheads. The other takeaway is that the core team could synergise, which endorses the development investments to be shared rather than borne by a single business. 🅗🅒

To be continued......