



ACCELERATING AI MOMENTUM ON CLOUD PODCAST

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

PALLAB DEB: All of this technology stuff makes very little impact unless you are able to quantify in business terms.

ARNAB CHAKRABORTY: Hi everybody. This is Arnab Chakraborty, Managing Director, Accenture Applied Intelligence. I'm here today with Pallab Deb, who is Head of Partner Solutions and AI Partnerships at Google Cloud. Previously, Pallab served as the VP of Data, Analytics and AI and Connected Enterprise Services at Wipro. Thanks for joining me today, Pallab. It's great to have you with us.

PALLAB DEB: Thank you, Arnab, it's a pleasure.

ARNAB CHAKRABORTY: So I think, Pallab, we have a great topic today. We are talking about the whole acceleration that we are seeing around AI and analytics and data with the journey to cloud for organizations. And this topic is super important and super relevant in today's time, when we are probably faced with one of the most disruptions that we have never seen probably in the last century.

So with COVID-19 and everything around us, it's been a very fast paced transformation journey that organizations are going through over the last 8 to 10 months. We have seen organizations driving their digital agenda probably five times faster than what had happened in the past. And cloud is becoming one of the most critical enabler and part of the transformation journey.

So we're starting now, let's have a chat together, Pallab, and hear from you, your perspectives on what you're seeing across the industry with the transformation for organizations as they're moving to the cloud and what kind of transformations are they going through? So maybe we can start there, Pallab, and then, we can move from the different discussions.

PALLAB DEB: Sure, Arnab. It's a great question and what an event. It's a once in a generation event, I think. And like all of us in our personal lives, the way we reacted initially, from perhaps a little bit of panic, also what happened with toilet paper rolls and so on. I think organizations experienced the same emotions.



Just to take an example, as things started shutting down and if you were booked on a flight, let's say, and your flight was no longer going to take off, what you did at that point of time was perhaps picked up the phone and called. And look at it from the airline's perspective, their agents were no longer able to get into work to handle those calls.

So overnight, there was a scenario created for organizations across industries which was unanticipated, nobody ever anticipated how to handle a spike in call volumes with no agents in your call center. And so, the first reaction firms was exactly that, how can you help us in this situation?

And so, in the Google world, just to share what happened there was, overnight we stood up a means and ways about - and made those available to customers. So that the calls would get dropped into the cloud and then to the agents at their homes. And that was set up in days and in some cases, some of these solutions were rigged together in less than 8 to 10 days.

So that was the initial phase and I think across industries, you have the same sort of initial reaction to handle this crisis that nobody had ever anticipated or were not prepared for. I think they were anticipating, but nobody prepared for it.

And so, as things went down, I think, obviously, things have settled down now. They're must more rigid solutions available. All of us have gotten used to the fact that we work with each other across the computer screens and we've kind of gotten used to it as well, as much as organizations have. But this has also given organizations a very interesting window and a respite to look at, well, if somethings are going to change in the new normal once this pandemic is over. And as you mean that's going to be the case, how do we really prepare for the future?

And I think you said it in your opening remarks, what we are clearly seeing is organizations taking a step back, looking at their fears and seeing who are the ones that have really succeeded or in some cases, some of those fears are setting the tone for the rest of the industry, which is to say, how can we really digitally transform ourselves and our ways of doing business, harness the powers that are available in the infrastructure that companies like Google have built and the capabilities that are available in the infrastructure like AI capabilities or massive data handling capabilities.

Take the advice from people who have helped companies transform, such as yourselves, Accenture being able to advise customers. And bring that in and drive forth a path to quick transformation, so that when we are out of this pandemic and there's a new normal established, companies are able to perform in the new normal and not be caught in the wrong as they were when the pandemic set in. So in a nutshell, Arnab, initial panic, quick reaction was the need of the hour. Since then, a lot of reflection, a lot more thoughtful preparation of what the future's



going to look like, a lot more calibration of how do, as an organization, how do we transform ourselves to be able to perform well in the new normal? Establish new baselines completely and get the help from experts out there like yourselves, Accenture, like Google, and be able to transform and be ready for that new normal.

I think that's what we are seeing. So a lot of transformation programs on the (inaudible) as much as you reflected on.

ARNAB CHAKRABORTY: Yeah, I think that's very interesting, Pallab. I think the airline example that you were just giving and I was just reflecting, a lot of us had holidays planned and those things changed overnight and we had to adapt. And the same thing happened with us in our homes with kids going to start school, the home becoming the new school and our appointments with our doctors, they all got changed. And I will say talking to our doctors over screens and getting the treatment is a completely new paradigm. And to your point, I think it opens up new opportunities for organizations to think about servicing customers, doing business in a completely new way, almost reimagining the future of business and the way we will work and live and how cloud can become a critical enabler for that.

If you think about that, Pallab, it would be interesting to understand how you see that from a value – unlocking the value quotient because a lot of the discussion, as you said, with organizations trying to react as the pandemic hit and activating the journey to cloud, a lot of that was about modernizing their infrastructure, modernizing their legacy technology on cloud. And what we are seeing from the outside is as we talk to the CEOs, that 10% to 20% of the value comes from that because it has to streamline, it reduces the cost and all of that from an infrastructure and application perspective. But then, 80% to 90% of the value really comes from the business unlock. What kind of business possibility are we able to unlock?

So as you were working from a leading cloud provider in the ecosystem, what is the kind of value unlocks that you are seeing, you know, that businesses are able to do that was not possible before? So loved to get your thoughts on that.

PALLAB DEB: Sure. I think you nailed it in your remarks just now, Arnab, that there is certainly a lot of value that was available for unlocking just by being able to get out of what was holding you down the shackles. The shackles of infrastructure that you were relying on that you managed in your data center, that you depreciated and you focused resources on to keep it up and running.

You could just unlock all of that by letting this infrastructure be managed by folks like Google, who are doing it at scale for many, many years, for billions of users. Think about the infrastructure that Google runs on, Google Cloud runs on. It's exactly the same infrastructure only Google search is running is on, YouTube is running on and Google maps and everything that we use in our daily lives.



So certainly, Google's got the ability to handle infrastructure. So getting that out from your on prem environment onto the cloud was the first area of unlocking.

And finally, Arnab, yes, you are right. That perhaps unlocks maybe 5%, 10%, 20% of the value that is there to be unlocked in an organization's value chain. But a lot of companies haven't even done that. So there is certainly a tsunami who have to say of people trying to get that initial bit done, so that they are able to unlock the value that is for the left to be unlocked.

Now the benefits further left to be unlocked when I think about that, it's really in the area of unlocking the business complexities. So if you're used to doing your business, running a procurement in a certain way, running your supply chain in a certain way and now, when you move into the cloud, you have the opportunity to open your eyes and widen your apertures to look at, hey, what are the other ways we can look at our demand forecasting or our inventory management. What are the other signals that we can consume in being able to forecast better? And those signals are perhaps available in the cloud where providers like Google, perhaps, providing you – you know, for example, logistical data or what's happening in the road transport system or for that matter, what's happening to the weather and what's happening to the other extraneous factors?

So if those signals are easy to now consume and look at a completely new way of forecasting your demand, that unlocks a tremendous amount of value. You no longer, perhaps, need to forecast and hold inventory for X days when you can do it for X minus a significantly less number of days and still be able to serve all the demand that's out there, no matter how the volatility is in the demand itself.

And you see that across industries. I mean, you were just talking about the healthcare scenario. Think about the fact that telehealth has almost become the norm now. All of us have accepted it and there were a lot resistance to that initially, but that's also now opening up the fact that, yes, the video infrastructure is one thing. Now how about trying to also bring in your EHR and EMR records? How about integrating all of that into the telehealth experience, so that this is now a ubiquitous experience for the user.

So there's a lot of value to be unlocked by bringing in aspects that are not just infrastructure oriented, but are now highly leveraged on the data that you have out there within the cloud and within your premises of the artificial intelligence and machine learning that you can use on the data to make much more intuitive decision making. Those are factors that I think most companies are now starting to focus on and that's where the big part of the value unlock lies.

ARNAB CHAKRABORTY: Well, I think that's really – I think something we are seeing across industry that you said, in terms of unlocking value in like two or three different horizons. Horizon 1 is the example you just gave about improving our customer experience or improving our supply chain effectiveness across the enterprise. It could be all round that and that's kind of Horizon 1 and doing that at scale, no longer as a pilot, doing that at scale, doing that at speed.



The second thing that you talked about health, for example, health is becoming a topic that is relevant for every industry and that is creating partnership between retailers and pharma companies and insurance companies and how do you leverage data to actually create this new business partnerships across your value chain. I think that is becoming another big opportunity to take all of the Horizon 2.

And then, there's Horizon 3, which is actually completely new business models, new revenue models, that are becoming data powered. And I think that's really creating opportunities for utility companies, for example, or life sciences companies or even public service and government to come together and work on new data driven initiatives that can have a meaningful impact, not on the business community per se, but also the social community and how a greater impact on the society.

So I think you're spot on, Pallab, in terms of unlocking and innovating all of these opportunities.

The question comes, Pallab, is how to make it happen? I mean the challenge that I see in a lot of the corporations is that this is definitely very inspiring, but how do we make it happen? What are the critical components of the data driven transformation on cloud that we need to put in place, so that we can actually reap the same benefits and sustain those benefits over time? So any thoughts on that, Pallab, especially what you're doing at Google? What are the critical building blocks you're investing in from a data and AI perspective to help companies go through that journey?

PALLAB DEB: Yeah, sure. I mean I think their first order of change or element that organizations need to bring to bring about new business models, so as to say, is honestly was the mindset change. Before the pandemic, you had people making the tour of Silicon Valley and spending a lot of time here to understand what's there in the Valley that they can take back to wherever their organization was situated and drive that? And more often than not, they did make a tour of – stop by at Google to see what is going on here. There is a lot of innovation going on.

So I think, first of all, of course, is the mindset element. And that, I think, is the essential ingredient for driving about this change and worrying about how to get this done.

The second part that is, again, we have touched upon it is get rid of the stuff that others can run better and so, that includes the infrastructure, that includes the elements that there are companies like us who are just doing it at scale and at a level which is a fairly profound.

So which leaves us to now worry about what else do I need to do, the how question that you laid out. And I think a lot of it has to do with the data and it's not a cliché that they say is the new oil, but it is a new currency, correct?

The value of the currency is in the data that you have, with you which you have accumulated over the years. There's also value in the data that you could go and procure or the data that you can just consume from the environment around you.



And so, we realized that and Google's done that for years. I mean, again, to make it real, think about it, the ability to go and now search within Google Maps, get reviews of businesses within Google Maps, being able to get alerts as to whether there's a traffic congestion ahead of you. Those are kind of like real time activity events that are all underpinned by huge amounts of data that Google's consuming and surfacing up in terms of – surfacing in terms of insights to drivers on the road and so on and so forth.

You want the same experience for businesses. And that means being able to leverage infrastructure that allows you to look at the data that you have out there, being able to really use technologies that can look at the data, can analyze what's out there and provide insights that are actionable and are available to you at the point of time and at the point of action.

And that, I think, is easier said than done. There's tons of data that people have accumulated over the years. It's messy in many ways than not, but with the technology that's available today, you do not need to just put human power behind it, you can use a lot of machine-driven power to unravel the data, to get sense out of it, to create ontologies from it, to be able to use ontologies and then drive machine learning models that can perhaps drive a lot of insights that are then put a loop back into your workflow chain. So that there is kind of a closed loop cycle.

And I that I think is key because that's where you're seeing a ton of activity today across industries, like we talked about healthcare, how do you integrate and make the customer experience better, including your ERM, EHR records? How do I look at imaging data and be able to predict diseases and make sure that you, as a consumer, are aware if you are at risk of any disease or anything of that sort?

Or for that matter, in retail, being able to provide that experience where you're able to buy online, ship it out to the store or pick it up from the store and so on and so forth. It's fundamentally bringing the store level inventory data available to decision making and being able to provide that experience to the user. We could go on and on with examples, Arnab, but I think you get the drift.

ARNAB CHAKRABORTY: Yeah, I love that. Absolutely, Pallab, and as you say, data is the new oil, the new currency, whatever you call it, but that's the future and the ability of you bringing cloud technologies from understanding what are those critical data element that have a direct impact to the business KPIs and then, establishing gold standards to go on in those critical data elements and establishing their underlying platform and the AI tools that can actually build and scale predictive models and industrialize those into your business workflows to drive those outcomes is a tremendous opportunity.

And this was not possible. I mean organizations were able to do pilots, but they were not able to scale that in a non-linear manner across 100+ different programs, across 10 different markets within weeks and months before. And cloud is making that possible and that's I think is a tremendous opportunity for organizations.



ARNAB CHAKRABORTY: So having talked about that, Pallab, I think for the audience and I want to also leave some takeaways based on this conversation. What would be your advice to organizations that are taking the data driven journey? What are the things that they should be watching out for as they take the journey?

PALLAB DEB: Yeah, I think I always start by saying that to open your minds – I mean open your mindset to what you can drive in regards to the transformation. It need not be shackled down by what was possible yesterday. So that's point number one.

Point number two is rely on the experts and the infrastructure that's available instead of trying to recreate it yourself. And by the way, that today, allows you to do some remarkable things, for example, if you have data residency constraints or regulation driven constraints, there's awards that prevents you from moving all your data to the cloud. You can leave the data where it is and, yet, leveraging part of the cloud to process what's in the data within your infrastructure, within your premises and yet, be able to surface up insights from the data, match it up with insights that's available in the cloud and be able to make decision making as we've talked about in our last experience.

So it's about opening up your mindset, it's about being able to embrace the technology that's out there, be able to define the journey with experts, such as yourselves, Accenture, being able to say, okay, if we have to get from Point A to Point B, what are the complexities that are out there in terms of let's just say defining a master data architecture, being able to define a distributed data processing architecture, being able to define the lineage, being able to secure the data no matter it resides, being able to look at the lineage of the data and being able to track that back, no matter again at what point of time you want to start your lineage tracking from.

Those are basic things that enterprise's need to have to be able to have trust in the data that they surface up to make decisions on. And so, there are experts and expertise out there that are both manifested in technology terms or in people expertise terms and they should leverage that at the help.

And last and the most important point, all of this technology stuff makes very little impact unless you are able to quantify in business terms. So bring your business stakeholders into the conversation. They are part of the journey, let them start contributing as to what the data can possibly do for them and then, start embracing that entire journey on their own, which makes the change process so much more easier. Be still there for the power of the cloud. They're able to think about new work business models.

And I think where we have seen the business and technology teams working together in companies, almost in



an engineering mindset, amazing things have been produced by those organizations for their businesses.

ARNAB CHAKRABORTY: So that is great, Pallab. I think the takeaway that I'm having from this discussion is accelerating the momentum of AI on cloud. It's a change journey. It's a change journey that is an aspect around business value creation that we need to drive and more importantly, it's actually about our people. It's actually about the humans, right, and how we are actually reskilling and upskilling the human and the talent around organizations to drive this journey.

So thanks a lot, Pallab, for sharing your perspective with us. It's really great to have this dialogue. I would say for the listeners, if we have any questions, feel free to share that back on this podcast and share this with all of your friends. And thanks, again, Pallab, for spending the time with us today.

PALLAB DEB: Thank you, Arnab. Always a pleasure to talk with you and with your colleagues out there. There's a ton of things that we have – exciting things that we are doing together and the future is super exciting in terms of what data and analytics and AI can do for our customers. Thank you for having me.

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