

TRAILBLAZERS TALK

Q&A with Ravi Kumar S.,
President, Infosys, and
Joanne Berger-Sweeney,
President, Trinity College

Link to conversation: <http://bit.ly/2N0Qvku>

Q: I was gonna ask just some clarification on like the four major skills you mentioned, being able to interact with people and learning to learn, but I kind of got confused. You separated data analytics versus other data skills. Can you go to a greater depth, I mean like what other data skills you mean?

J. Berger Sweeney (JBS): Actually, I was trying to separate kind of data skills from other kinds of analytical skills. [Okay] But, there's also a different set of skills and manipulations with data [Okay] and we really have to be able to do both and I was saying that both are important. My guess is that the data skills are a little faster to acquire once you have some of those other broader analytical skills. If, for example, you are a digital technology company and you think all of your talent should come through the kind of data analytics area, you're missing an entire stream of talent and we want to make sure that we take that stream of talent that may not have learned all the data skills and introduce the data skills they need, because we believe they have all of those other kinds of basic skill sets that are important and maybe even better than some that were trained more strictly in just the data sciences. Do they have the ability to work well with other people, care about things outside of themselves? Do they have the talent to really learn how to learn? Do they have those analytical skills that allow them to analyze text as well as the data?

Ravi Kumar S. (RK): In fact, during the conversation, I was speaking about this transition and that's real. You know, we underestimate what's going to happen in the next 10 years, we overestimate what's going to happen in the next two years. Today, all large corporations, all corporations have humans and that's the workforce. We deal with like, humans. Some have pets as well, the transition is pretty fast, happening to humans plus machines plus gig. So, the humans are going to do the creative, the gig is going to give the scale and agility because it's on-demand available you go to Upwork, Upcounsel, any of these companies, they are all available. And the machines are going to do a lot of problem solving and problem finding will be done by humans and that's why the creative and that's a pyramid because the humans are still going to be high. So, you're going to move from humans to a pyramid where humans are at the bottom, there is gig and then there are machines. As you go forward, you are going to flip around the pyramid, humans are going to become the least, you're going to have the gig and then you're going to have the machines. So, that's where we'll end if the promise of the digital age is real.

JBS: And I think that the machines are actually going to make some of the learning of those data skills easier.

RK: Absolutely.

Q: I was just wondering, for different age groups, are there any different methodologies which are more effective for that age group... to train as such?

JBS: So, I'm one of these neuroscientists who believe that fundamental learning is very similar. I, even though I think some people find it easier to learn with visual versus written words, I actually think it's the same fundamental process of learning. So, I actually don't believe that people are really pure visual learners or auditory learners, I think there's a fundamental learning process that's important. Now, as a neuroscientist I can assure you that learning can happen throughout the lifetime, okay? And, what, you know, are there certain tools that make it that I want to have... you know... the learning for a 50-year-old versus a 20-year-old, I would say fundamentally, not that different. Fundamentally, it will be, you know, the same, but being on the older side myself, it may be that you have to repeat it a couple more times for me to remember. But, fundamentally, the process is the same and probably the single most important thing I understand as a neuroscientist today that I did not understand one or that the field didn't appreciate at the beginning was how much flexibility and plasticity there is in the older brain. So, know when I say that I'm talking about relative, I'm not talking in an absolute.

Q: You mentioned unlearning so like while you're like unlearning and learning stuff at the same time is it like are you trying to direct people in a certain way of thinking? Because you said that there are certain skills that you want to learn especially within that age group of like 15 or 25. Is it like do you think like a certain education plan is more effective?

JBS: I say and that is, really [yeah] that's a really good question. And, here I'm going to go back to what I think we're doing in the liberal arts and that teaches people how to learn, not what to learn. So, it's not really so much the specific skill set that I'm referring to as what I'd prefer to talk about as higher-order learning, connecting things that at a level of sophistication that you can't do when you're five.

RK: You know, whenever I get this opportunity to speak about Infosys, my favorite responsibilities I do is the foundation, the Infosys foundation. If I had enough money in the bank, I would have done that full-time and not do a corporate job. In the foundation, we work on evangelizing computer science to K-12 teachers and we did a fascinating job last year, and now we're going to step it up. The teachers have an innate desire to learn. A lot of them in school, primary schools as well. Last year, we ran an event where we got 600 teachers from 45 states in the US and we sponsored the airfare, stay and immersive training. So, we got hundred instructors to create an immersive training in computer science and that was the most... that was the best event I did in the last 12 months. I felt so accomplished because these teachers were so grateful to us... they embraced we did and they were, you know, you should see that video on the Infosys Twitter handle, Infosys foundation Twitter handle, Infosys foundation USA twitter handle, and you will notice how these teachers will, you know, enjoy seeing the robots they created and they were like running and we did a little bit of research after they went back to schools and they came back and told us, "Look, you taught us all of this but we have to continue on that learning. Give us post-training support, so that, you know, you give them equipment, you give them computers, you give them things because these are also serving the underserved parts of the US. So, this year we are stepping it up again and we're doing an event in July. It's already up, any teachers you know from your schools, please ask them to apply for it. It's a fully-funded Infosys program. We hope a thousand teachers sign up and we want to do this at least two or three times a year. Hugely impactful, we are the top three foundations in the United States in the last 12 months on computer science education and we focused on k-12 schools and teachers. I think that community needs a little bit of embrace of all of what we do and I think they're more eager than we are to embrace it.

JBS: There are some things you know the teachers will know, better than the students and somethings that the students will be bringing to the teachers, you know I say that as a parent too, my son does a lot better on video games than I do, lot more practice, but there are certain things that I do a bit better than him

RK: Thank you, thank you so much for joining us today

For more information, contact askus@infosys.com



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