



NASSCOM India Leadership Forum 2018

Panel Discussion: **Will Platforms define who will win with Digital?**

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Today, our world has become a digital economy, built on the free flow of information, services, and goods. Technology is rapidly reducing the gap between producers and consumers. Businesses must adapt to the new opportunities and challenges it presents, as well as expand to new markets, segments, geographies, and demographics it makes accessible - all at a pace set by a new breed of competition built on disruptive, digital technology and platform led paradigms. Sonata was privileged to host an august panel of leaders under the aegis of NILF 2018 on the topic – Will Platforms define who will win with Digital? Read a quick snapshot take away of the exciting discussion here.



Srikar Reddy
MD and CEO
Sonata Software



Harishankar K
Vice President - IT
Enterprise Applications
Unilever



Ravi K
Head of Global
Delivery Applications
Sony



Phil Fersht
CEO
HFS Research



Kiran DB
Senior Director
Solutions, Microsoft

Will Platforms Define Who Will Win With Digital?



Context Setting: The Impact of Platforms

Born digital' companies such as Amazon, Airbnb, Uber and Alibaba have built multi-billion-dollar business at a never-before-seen speed in the corporate world; thereby posing serious challenges to traditional incumbents. The driver of their success can be seen as Platforms - more completely interpreted as a connected ecosystem of customers, business, vendors and partners, intelligent decisions driven based on data generated by the ecosystem and open, flexible scalable systems that enable innovation and execution. The focus of this panel discussion was on understanding the power of the platform and its future, especially for traditional companies, that are still in the throes of fully absorbing the impact of digital transformation.



The secret to success of the best and biggest 'born digital' players is their ability to think and execute on platform-based digital businesses backed by building technology platforms that are unique.

Srikar Reddy
MD and CEO, Sonata Software



Discussion Deep-Dive

Why Platform-based Digital Businesses?

- Concept of 'Platform' is not new. In CPG industry, the 'brand' itself is essentially a platform that brings together commodities under one umbrella. However, the rise of the digital platform has been a game changer because of the massive multiplier effect of technology.
- Cloud, for example, has increased the reach to customers exponentially, at a speed and agility that was previously unavailable, enabling a powerful ecosystem that was not possible earlier.



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Our ability to touch customers is much higher today. Digital platforms are being used for speed, agility and to unearth new markets.

Phil Fersht
CEO, HFS Research

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- CPG, Retail and Supply Chain have had maximum uptake on creating digital platforms. In these industries, if you don't build digital platforms to get into the digital ecosystem, then you are not in the game. Adoption is slower in industries that are still trying to figure out what digital means to them. In utilities, energy... since compliance and such issues are key, the focus is on automation and similar areas.
- IT and business lines need to come together for digitalisation. That will be one of the biggest barriers that need to be broken. Experimentation with small iterative projects where rate of failure may be higher but there is a chance to align with the business quickly will be needed - because businesses themselves don't know what will click.



Experiences with & examples of Platform

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At Sony, the transition of physical to digital entertainment has been the biggest driver of change. Sony is evolving from being just a content creator to becoming a content curator, which is a big role change.

Ravi Krishnamoorthy,
Head of Global Delivery – Applications, Sony

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- Change management has been a critical aspect to ensure the success of a platform-based approach at Sony. The key is to build the balance between the business and technology aspects. Good relationship between business and IT teams has been key. Joint POCs have translated into real tangible business outcomes.
- Zume is an example of a non-born-digital' business that used robotics, automation, ML, analytics to revolutionize the Pizza delivery market. Lower production cost and, at the same time, increased scale and improved productivity, meeting customer demands effectively. The company now utilizes its resources on how to improve customized offerings during big events such as the SuperBowl.
- At enterprises such as Unilever, creating a platform and using it to digitize at the core is quite significant. It is about using existing strengths and capitalizing on them. New architectures, such as APIs, lend themselves well to using the existing tech as building blocks to build a platform that is scalable. Ensuring that your business operation is frictionless with the outside world, given the pace at which outside world is evolving, is important.

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Unilever focusses on creating great consumer experiences, and the current strategy to build platforms will have great pay-offs.

Harishankar K
Vice President - IT - Enterprise Applications, Unilever

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- In banking, organisations are exploring Blockchain for aggregated cash management and asset management operations. Technologies such as Voice over LTE (VoLTE), will give a huge momentum to create a 100 % digital contact center framework, where analytics and machine learning can be used to boost productivity and operation efficiency.
- A manufacturing company is enabling better Customer experience using a digital bot.



The Future of Platforms

Currently, the big Cloud platforms- Azure, AWS, and Google- don't talk to each other adequately. So, a Cloud 'broker' platform will be created for Cloud Lifecycle Management. Similarly, a trend towards industry standard platforms for core functions and differentiated processes will emerge.



Standardization and interoperability will be the biggest challenge...

Kiran DB

Senior Director –Solutions, Microsoft



- The transition from product to platform will be challenging, but it is the future we are heading towards. For instance, the physical store needs to transform into a true customer experience centre married to the digital experience and create a better customer-centric organization.
- Wider understanding of the industry will be pivotal on how platforms will evolve. For instance, as banks reduce the number of branches, the stress load will move to call centres, which need to be better equipped with the capability to drive higher level conversations with customers to deliver value. Newer digital banks will emerge by keeping the millennials in focus. Business will soon start figuring out what will be the core and what part can become platform. Essentially, the change in business will change behaviour to make business more productive.
- Flexibility is important in building platforms, so that they remain relevant irrespective of what functionality they might eventually be required to perform.



Takeaways

- Whether you part of a platform or create your own platform, but you need to be part of the ecosystem to survive in the future.
- The power of platforms and cloud is allowing us to do things that would be unimaginable half a decade back.
- The technology is here. The question is: How can businesses keep up with it?

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