

IT'S ALL JUST SERVICES

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Nearly two decades ago, when I was doing my graduate studies in artificial intelligence (AI), one of my professors at Stanford, Nils Nilsson, used to say that whenever a technology became interesting, it disassociated itself from AI. We called the time “the winter of AI.” At that time, it was so precisely true. AI was on the outskirts; it was considered an extreme point of view.

Now AI is everywhere around us. It’s at the heart of our discussions on innovation. Before we concerned ourselves with the fear of robots taking over the world. Today we talk about driverless cars; machines – everything from turbines to airplanes to trucks – that predict their own maintenance needs; and store shelves that trigger their own restocking.

We are now focused on using AI for broad societal good. As you may have heard, Infosys has partnered with Y Combinator, Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, Amazon Web Services, and many others, to launch OpenAI. This non-profit will conduct unfettered research in the most important and most relevant dimensions of AI, to create ideas and inventions that amplify our humanity. This will help us learn more, see/perceive and understand more, and be more.

Moreover, AI systems provide the backbone for thinking beyond software and platforms, a reconsideration of the very objects around us — how software and technology can amplify our uniquely human endeavors. We are only at the beginning. Homes, books, groceries, and more have become services,

but truly, if we think deeply about it, this great servicification can extend to anything. Objects materialize themselves temporarily, transitorily to us. They appear as just a snapshot of an ongoing activity.

For Infosys, this is truly exciting, as we can think about services in a way that brings an extreme focus on the end user, bringing intelligence to the end points, such as bringing consumers closer to the producers and blending our physical and digital worlds in a more complete way. Already, we’re seeing businesses disrupted by the disintermediation of companies that separated an end user from a producer. Today’s technology has created a true-value pricing system and an immediate feedback loop. And companies have responded by constructing an integrated experience within the digital and physical worlds. For example, anyone with a mobile device can make a reservation, hail a taxi to the restaurant, and pay the bill, all through their applications.

In addressing these forces, we put together a simple strategy of ‘Renew-New’. We must non-disruptively renew existing landscapes while discovering new opportunities, update current systems while exploring what we previously couldn’t imagine. Pravin goes into greater depth on this in the next article; rather, I want to focus on how we bring the strategy to life in ‘Aikido’ –our three complementary services, Ai, Ki, and Do.

Our open-source automation

platforms and platforms as services comprise 'Ai'. Here we harness the power of machine learning and AI. Through our Ai platforms, we have used automation on routine tasks and maintenance, to free resources. We have also optimized big data insights in real-time. For a mining company, we put our Infosys Information Platform on Amazon Web Services. Now it runs more than one million records and provides real-time reporting on the company's operations. And by using open source software and AWS, we significantly reduced the cost.

To enable non-disruptive IT landscape renewal, we are focusing on knowledge-based IT, and capturing the know-how and the spirit of an organization, which is the focus of 'Ki'. This is crucial in today's shifting landscape. By moving the know-how of a company from its people to its systems, we can make businesses impervious to change. Rather than a scramble with each shift, a company will be ready for the next 20 transitions, workforce retirements, and uncertainty in vendor landscapes.

Already, we engage in this kind of knowledge transfer. When we migrate servers, shift infrastructure to the cloud, move off mainframes, and optimize existing landscapes, we have to capture the knowledge inherent in the company. Now the Ki service allows us to embed this know-how explicitly into software with modern AI technology. From there, we can build new experiences and new consumption models, on top of the system.

We have already done this to great effect across industries — everything from manufacturing to IT. For example, with GE, we used our Panaya offering to reduce the time it took to develop IT solutions and see their benefits from 16 months to 4–6 months. By embedding the company's knowledge into software, we could reduce the most time-consuming aspects of the job, the required development, application design, and build out and testing, from 11 months to 60 days.

Finally, to find the way forward, we turn to 'Do' which relies on design thinking and a change in perspective. Arthur Koestler asked us to think in terms of blue and pink planes of context. While we typically live in a pink plane, with limited understanding, Arthur described 'blue plane' moments — when a scientist shouts "Eureka!" (Stefan Simenon discusses this later in the issue); when a comedian makes us laugh; or when an artist achieves catharsis. In each circumstance, these blue plane moments expose us to a context outside of our own. Through design thinking, we train our minds to make discoveries quickly — to find what is not there and to solve problems that we ordinarily wouldn't consider. Already, we have had more than 150 design thinking engagements. We helped employees at one IT company rapidly design, prototype, and enable user-centric solutions in rapid cycles. At an IT systems provider, we transformed the rollout experience of supply chain capability changes. And more.

We have put these three service offerings together with our deep culture of learning and training, and our 'Zero Distance' program – a reflection of our focus on driving innovation every day, in every project, for our clients. We have Zero Distance innovations in almost all of our projects, and in turn we project that our customers will save more than US\$1 billion dollars annually. Ravi will elucidate this later in his article.

When viewed in totality, Aikido and Zero Distance ask for greater innovation, and then utilize that advanced technology, in AI, machine learning, the interconnectedness of things, and so much more, to unlock our humanity — our creativity, our ability to solve problems, and our capacity to reason with empathy.

I have every reason to be optimistic: humans have shown time and time again that we have a profound

capacity to take hold of powerfully shifting dynamics, to amplify our potential with the technology around us, and usher in a new era of unprecedented value creation. With this current wave of change, our only limit is our own imagination.

By opening ourselves up to the limitless possibilities that now surround us, we will master the forces that drive us, renew our existing landscapes while finding new possibilities, and forge a brilliant path into our futures. This is a new era of services, bringing the best of technology – artificial intelligence, automation, data-driven tools, and more – to bear.

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