



Effective innovation hubs must make a clear link between cool tech and solving business problems

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Defining Future Business Operations

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On its journey to co-locate, co-innovate, and co-create, Infosys unveils another Innovation hub in Raleigh, bustling with fresh talent

HFS Research attended Infosys' 2019 Analyst Meet in Raleigh, North Carolina (NC) where Infosys showcased its local Innovation Hub to the global analyst community for the first time since launching it in 2018. Leaders from partner universities, client, government representatives, and the Infosys leadership team were present. The Raleigh location is one of six Innovation Hubs already operating in the United States, each of which focuses on a select set of key competencies relevant to the marketplace and collaboration with local academia for research in related areas. If you're an enterprise services customer thinking of visiting one, here are our thoughts on what value you can derive from the visit.

The Raleigh hub goes deep on digital user experience

The focus of this hub is on digital innovation, open source, and data analytics catering to clients in the retail, telecom, and financial services industries. It expands Infosys' existing network of onshore offices to serve clients better. Infosys intends to build scrum-as-a-service, enhance its Zero Distance localized delivery program. It also plans to invest heavily in learning amplified by its "digital brain" its online, mobile digital learning platform in these Digital Proximity Centers by creating more human capital on the side of technology. Augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR) applications, 3D printing, and digital voice assistants are just a few of the technologies that were displayed in action around the floor.

HFS participated in demonstrations of various solutions including VR applications for the Future of Retail, which purports to eliminate the need for physical space with a seamless e-commerce experience leading to dramatic cost reductions as well as faster iteration of store design and ease of shopping. This could be a game-changer in retail, especially in cities such as New York, where rents are skyrocketing and space is scarce. Retailers can also use VR for store prototyping rather than the traditional paradigm of physically building store prototypes in a large warehouse. For retail or other brick and mortar-focused businesses, these demos can help (literally) envision the art of the possible.

Various other AR/VR applications were demonstrated:

- National Retail Federation (NRF), a Planogram AR app for retail;
- Cognitive agent and NLP-based bank of the future;
- Validation services and "Quality Clinic" to help clients navigate their digital transformation journey;
- Digital radar to figure out the digital maturity index of a company.

Some solutions are still in the development or planning phase and are not yet chargeable to any client. These are designed to support better business decision making, reduce costs, and create more meaningful partnerships by completely transforming the way businesses do things.

An application for the Australian Open 2019 was an effective demo of live technology. It leveraged VR to develop a 360-degree, live stream of the Australian Open 2019 and created a “real-life” experience similar to being present at Melbourne Park. Additionally, the application featured an immersive virtual tennis experience coupled with an integrated data analytics dashboard of player data powered by its NIA Data & Analytics Platform. It predicted the winner based on the service of a match.

A strong focus on cultivating local, onshore talent throughout the US

Infosys’ Raleigh Innovation Hub boasts of young, enthusiastic associates demonstrating solutions through impressive gadgets using state-of-the-art technologies and elegant live lab demos. Infosys strategically placed the hub near its existing clients; the location also provides access to a mix of technical and liberal arts talent from tier-one universities in the region. Backed by the NC state government and in partnership with elite schools such as Purdue, Trinity, Cornell, NC State, and Rhode Island School of Design, Infosys aims to absorb data scientists, engineers, liberal arts, and design graduates straight from school to fuel their various regional innovation hubs.

Following its strategy to “boost American innovation” and to create American jobs (not to mention continue investing in its Zero Distance program to bring resources closer to clients), the Raleigh Hub plans to hire 2,000 locals by 2023. Other locations include

- Indianapolis, Indiana-based Infosys US Education Center caters to the training needs of its employees. Supported by the Infosys foundation, it hosts K-12 teachers to help them motivate their students toward a degree in computer sciences. It plans to create 3,000 jobs by 2023 and focus on digital innovation, IOT/smart factories, and packaged apps (SAP and Salesforce.com) in manufacturing, life sciences, and insurance.
- The Providence, Rhode Island hub is a Design Studio supporting healthcare, finance, and media clients, and it plans to create 500 jobs.
- The Hartford, Connecticut-based hub will create 1,000 jobs. It will focus on smart underwriting, claims fraud, cloud, and IOT and support healthcare, insurance, and manufacturing. The Phoenix, Arizona hub will create 1,000 jobs and provide a special focus on autonomous technologies, the Internet of Things (IoT), full-stack engineering, data science, and cybersecurity and provide greater collaboration and advancement in high tech, manufacturing, and financial services.
- The Richardson, Texas hub plans to hire 500 employees by 2020 with a special focus on the telecommunications, retail, and banking sectors.

The Bottom Line: Go with the mindset of solving business problems, not for technology tourism

If you are an enterprise planning to visit any innovation hub, make sure you understand the solutions they are offering and how they could apply to your business problem or objectives. Innovation centers are not just for CIOs or IT leadership. They can be effective for any business leader with a business problem, and Infosys needs to make sure it caters to both.

It can be easy to get lost in the theatrics of bleeding-edge technology like AR/VR and its potential applications. Technology only enables business change, and, of course, it requires upfront investment and development time that you need to factor into objectives. Provided you stay focused, glimpsing the art of possible can be worth the trip.

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