



Season 3

Unboxing Future of Work feat. Divya Rajagopal

Episode 1: From RPA to Generative AI Models

[Audio Transcript]

VJ:

So hey, Divya, great to have you on my Unboxing Future of Work. This is a special edition for me having you on the show. This is this is my third season starting. And I know before that your time did not work out. Great to have you on the show. And as you are a very, very special friend, mentor in many ways for Supervity and us, so it's great to have you on the show. And for the audience. Divya is a friend and one of the AI automation veterans in the industry, I would see very few leaders in the AI automation space actually making big impact in the, in the business to business in the toward helping business to transform their technology using AI and automation. Divya, great to have you.

Divya:

Thank you, Vijay. It is really a great pleasure to join you in this podcast. Yeah, and thank you very much for this introduction. I'm honored. But yes, I am very, very passionate about AI and automation. And in everything I do, I do infuse these technologies and try my best to ensure that these technologies can help our clients and our teams.

VJ:

Absolutely. And, it's been four, I think five years of association I've seen and back then lot many leaders wouldn't even know what AI and automation can do for organizations. And, you know, you came to our... I think we made at a show where you mentioned, hey, this is what we want to do for our clients, how do we help them transform? Like, okay, this is something that he has a leader whom we can trust, work with. And it's been a great association. And industry also transformed a lot. So it's going to be very interesting, interesting conversation for us. Yeah, we can cover the great chat.

So, Divya, now you are doing a phenomenal role as a leading the competency of hybrid cloud and transformation in IBM, just a little bit if you can tell about your personal side of it to start off with and then you know, what we are you studied, where you're from, where you live, and then you know a little bit about your role, then we'll go a little deeper into our favorite topic for the day.

Divya:

Sure, sure Vijay. So yeah, I'm basically from Kerala. And I did my engineering from NIT Calicut. And then incidentally, joined IBM. IBM was my first company I worked with, and this is my second stint in IBM. So, as you said rightly, I lead the hybrid cloud transformation agenda for our clients where we are necessarily helping our clients in, in their migration to cloud or building of applications to cloud. So everything that's got to do with digital transformation of their processes is what we are dealing with here now.

VJ:

I know. And you know, you remember the world, which was like the RPA robotic automation, journey, and then, you know, somewhere, industry has been evolving. And today, we are talking about Generative AI. So whether it's...and Cloud has become the de facto standard for infrastructure for not just for startups and tech companies, but also for large enterprises for banks and manufacturing companies. So how do you see this Cloud Gen AI, some of these evolving trends coming in and how your organization's customers who are traditionally conservative in using Cloud kind of technologies, and now AI and automation are evolving? And how rapidly it is according to you?

Divya

See, when we first saw automation, five, six years ago, it was pure play RPA, right? It was about automating the tasks. And from there, we move to actually infusing it with AI. So, we had an entire hyper automation space that we saw coming up.

VJ:

I remember that buzzword.

Divya:

So, and then, you know, at that point we thought that, hyper-automation, is it right 50 to 60 to 70% of the organizations are to be are going to be automated with this technology. But then we found that while some of the organizations did go through the whole hog and really automated their systems, some of them didn't, right, some of them actually plateaued. And some of the reasons which we saw why they plateaued, was around, not a lack of culture, aligned to using technologies, lack of, you know, a change management, per se, or even a framework, right. And primarily now with cloud and Gen AI coming in, we are again seeing the same excitement, right? Everybody wants to get into this, everybody wants to move into using Gen AI, and start moving to cloud. In fact, many of our clients, as we speak, have done their first 20% applications, which are easy once moved to cloud. And now they're looking at, you know, organizations to help them move the rest. Right. And with the combination of Gen AI, and the cloud technologies, I think these organizations are really going to make it now. They are going to go, you know, overcome a lot of barriers that they earlier saw to adoption of hyper automation.

VJ:

Well absolutely. I think, if you remember, in many of our own customers, we have seen these baby adoption, right? If you look at some of the customers have really embraced and from what customers just use it, could not scale because I think it's about the mindset and the culture and the organizations and which is changing, thanks to Gen AI, and some of these technologies, which are creating that awareness and buzz in the market, which, you know, now AI is mostly on cloud first, right? Whether it's going to be on the public clouds, or solutions, like Open AI and Google Bard and many other you know, Generative AI solutions. But at the same time, IBM has come up with a hybrid approach there as well, were working with Lama kind of solutions and Hugging Face. So, a lot of private cloud, hybrid cloud combinations are emerging in the whole Gen AI. So how do you see companies implement, you know, in some of the top three trends, if we can say for next one, two years, what's going to happen, where we start, where you're from here to in the hybrid cloud space, and the Gen AI space.

Divya:

So, Vijay I think the next three years is going to see a huge uptake in Gen AI models, right? For large enterprises, it could be mostly around leaning around trust, around scalability. while also looking at energy efficiency, I've seen most of the organizations now get on the sustainability, you know, agenda, they want to make sure that while using Gen AI models, while using 5G technology, the sustainability is maintained, right, they don't want to harm the planet. And that is a big trend that we are going to see sustaining. Also, what we are going to see is a lot of requirements for portability. While we are seeing people move to cloud, nobody wants to stay on a single cloud, we are going to see people wanting to move from one cloud take the best of all right, everybody wants the best of all the clouds. So, there will be a hybrid situation, there will be a multi cloud situation. And a combination of the 5G technology, the Gen AI, sustainability and portability to cloud, that is what I'm seeing coming in the next few years

VJ:

You beautifully articulated. So if you look at the world it has it's a multilateral priorities happening right. One on the technology side, there is a huge disruption and digital transformation happening. And then the other side, if you look at, you know, in broader, bigger picture, there is like things like sustainability, which has become almost now the thing, right, from the business's point of view, they have transformed their supply chain, they have to change the way that they are making products and you know, the waste is managed. And that's going to be a big, big business driver change driver, which will be a lot of technology change as well and Gen AI. And some of these technologies can add great value, because, you know, it's if you look at where we see Gen AI happening, you know, making big impact. You know, in a very simple business functions wise, there's an engineering space software development, which is being disrupted as we speak where a lot of companies who could not afford cloud engineers or you know, full stack engineers, using now solutions like copilot, GitHub, Copilot, and many other solutions that are coming there in the market. That space is fast disrupting, right. And developer productivity is the big thing happening on the software engineering side. On the other side...

Divya:

You are also moving your product right around this area and we spoke about this so you know, it may be useful to you know, explain how you're going about it the digital skill industry, right? Because I think you're actually really nailing it by using those skills as the root of...

VJ:

The way that we are approaching this problem, it's a big opportunity for all of us together, if you see the digital scaling space, we at Supervity, you know, the way that we started rebranding and putting our solution in the market as an AI Coach, the idea is to provide a personal coach for everyone to adopt digital technologies. Right. So, we are approaching it a very structured manner, we are working with some of the, you know, more industry bodies like NASSCOM and Harvard where they're putting how digital skills and AI can augment value to organizations. So, layer one level one is basic digital life, like, you know, something that we all need, as simple as using email, as simple as you know, using some portals, That's level one, digital skilling. And then level two comes at the technology skills, which are very, very basic nowadays, you have to start using creating presentations, you have to start doing, you know, videos, editing is all become a part of new digital life for me. So, using technology to next level, that is level two, and level three comes very, very industrial industry specific solutions, right. So that is how we are looking at, you know, the digital skills, and how an AI coach with powered by generative AI to bring the knowledge and ability to guide the users on these applications between level one, level two, and level three. And most importantly, when it comes to enterprises, giving the capability for them to deploy this in a very secured data private environment in a you know, supporting hybrid cloud architecture. So that's where we are really, I think, the last six, seven years of work that we did in engineering, in AI, in our private AI solution for customers is scaling. And thanks for asking, by the way, and it's

Divya:

I think it's very helpful, right, we have a lot of our clients asking for enterprise knowledge management solutions, because, you know, they want to retain the knowledge that they have in their organization. And they don't want to write pages of documents for that. So, I think that is one place where I really see the fit for this, you know, product in terms of it being the, you know, assistant, or be augmenting what the person already knows, and making sure that all these people who joined the organization are using the same tools, the same ways, the same processes. And I think that's a really good way of using the digital skill and the Generative AI.

VJ:

Absolutely, we could not have put it better the way that you articulate. So, this is exactly where we see, AI can play a perfect role. I mean, we don't see any better role that AI can play than an AI coach to augment business users to adopt these new technologies and also the common citizens right common citizens and people to use. So many digital portals and technologies are coming up. So, very excited to see Gen AI playing a big role in the knowledge management space. And if you look at from just enterprise point of view, when software engineering, we just talked about which companies like

even as our you know, changing the way that we are developing products, understand that enterprise side you have you seen business teams, right like on the customer support, side, employee support, application support, and knowledge management, these are all the simple, quick winning use cases that we see in Gen AI which companies can start and get going.

Divya:

So, primarily, in IBM, we are not looking at just, you know, supporting with conversational chatbots. But what we are also doing is using these Generative models to be able to deliver high quality software code. So if you actually look at it, you know, in our offerings, where we are helping people to migrate, or modernize their applications, we actually are trying to use these generative models, so that the code can be moved maybe from a COBOL application to a Java based application using generative AI without actually having people doing code that is really helped in improving the quality of the delivery for us.

VJ:

No, it's amazing, and the way that you guys are transforming the traditional offerings, right? Whether it's as simple as application management and support, you know, the code refactoring, legacy code refactoring, these are all, you know, they're very expensive problems to solve, but very less business ROI, if you really want to spend so much, but having AI to immediately help users to be very effectively productively and with less resources, can mean companies can, you know, quickly, effectively each and transform their technology, and that itself in a lot of productivity addition to the organizations and the world, if you look at how companies can transform.

Divya:

Absolutely, what we're also doing is, in fact, you know, using generative AI to create synthetic data, that helps us to build more robust and trustworthy AI models as well. So, it's actually going a full circle while you're doing that,

VJ:

And with your people adding the additional value in the entire data ecosystem here in the training data. So having using AI to synthesize the data is a great way to cut down the model training times. So interesting, and how are you? How are you looking at, you know, the business side of it going right, if you look at you mentioned about one of my favorite topic's sustainability, right, do you see in India and some of these Asia Pacific regions, which you are leading at a competency? How sustainability coming any playing in the, in the in the world? And how do you see any technologies which are making some quick impact there any specific insights? Because it's very favorite topic of mine.

Divya:

Right, right. So sustainability is becoming very favorite topic in all boardroom conversations, right, everybody wants to know, and one of our favorite ones I would talk about is where we are using the micro services based architecture, right? And the use of Quarkus as a technology that tremendously reduces the energy utilization. Right. So this is something you know, our distinguished engineers talk about day in and day out. But yeah, this is something that we use in almost every digital transformation engagement now, where we have a microservices based architecture.

VJ:

That's the new learning for me today, right? And this is where we look up to companies like IBM, where you innovate at a scale, which makes impact, right? And these are the kinds of research that you guys do which can really proclaim to companies learn from you guys to you and we can take these messages back to our customers and how things can All right.

So, Divya, now it's come to my favorite section of the entire session is the rapid fire. So I'll keep asking questions you have to answer. There is no right or wrong here, but you just have to be faster.

Divya:

Sure.

VJ:

So, what's your favorite app?

Divya:

LinkedIn.

VJ:

Is it the first app that you look at once you get up in the morning?

Divya:

After Outlook.

VJ:

So, Outlook still, Outlook still is the first one.

Divya:

Ya, Outlook is the first one, but not really the favorite one

VJ:

For all of us. Hopefully, with Gen AI, maybe it will start becoming a little more favorite one,

Divya:

Maybe maybe if it is able to prioritize things for us much better.

VJ:

Then favorite book.

Divya:

I'm now reading Indomitable by Aarthi Bhattacharya. And I'm finding it very inspiring, while also the way that with a lucid vein, which is written that book. You know, it is, it is fun. And at the same time really inspiring. So yeah,

VJ:

You just added a book for my reading list.

Divya:

A really good one to read, how she actually, you know, overcame her obstacles and will have million books, which had people overcoming obstacles, but this one stuck with me.

VJ:

So, it's more on the personal side. Or it is on the business side of it?

Divya:

Both Right, right from the way when she started to actually how she was able to grow the ladders and the kind of hardships and challenges she had to face. You know, but everything was written in such a manner it didn't sound like it was a hardship that she faced it actually look like how she overcame it.

VJ:

The point of view is, is important in terms of how you're predicting and the tone is important. So it looks like it was more inspiring than telling personal story. Yes. Amazing. And if you look at, you know, very, very few men who actually are coming forward and in these new technologies, and, you know, a lot of inspiring women coming and you know, people like you who are leading, and it's not just now, right, you guys are there for almost four years. And it's very inspiring to look at you and many of your colleagues, you know, in it's just sort of a woman, your leaders who are driving change, and inspiring many other people like me, and yeah, many other woman as well, to get into technology, and you know, the AI and automation space, kudos to them. Yeah, that brings one more important question - Who is your favorite colleague? It's a tough question. You got to pick one.

Divya:

There are many colleagues, mentors, bosses, whom I've had, who are my, you know, who are my favorites. But, you know, if I had to pick one, it would be one from my very early days, you know, in IBM, the first 10 to an IBM or person who, you know, who was my manager as well, at that point, armor, Pascal, who actually pushed me into doing things, you know, be the first person to do something, right. So, yeah, I would say that was a, he was one person who actually pushed me to do things differently.

VJ:

Absolutely, we all will have that one person who changes our perspective from, you know, as we start building blocks of our career, right, and showing the path that you can be something and put us into that path. And from there, we made a great to learn from about Mo, and how. So this, this concludes our rapid fire you did amazingly well. The last and most important part is, you know, why all this disruption happening. India and many other countries will still continue to produce or lot of engineers, right? Every year, not just in the US and many graduates as well. So what's your message as somebody who's pioneering and championing new ways technologies, for businesses to transform? What's your message for the New Age workforce who are joining in the in the IT or technology world? And what would be some, you know, not to worry about all these technologies happening, but how do they put themselves ready for disruption?

Divya:

So, Vijay, that's an interesting question. Right? And interesting also, because yesterday, I met with a new cohort of graduate engineers who joined IBM very, very recently, they were a very bright, you know, excited bunch, ready to deep dive into the technologies right, and I had only one advice for them. That whichever technology they're doing, they need to learn some In every day, if you keep learning, you keep asking questions you keep being, you know, in IBM, we say Be curious, right? Always. So keep asking the right questions. It doesn't matter which, whether you're doing COBOL, or you're doing microservices, whether you're doing Java, you're doing Angular, what matters is keep learning. And keep, that will make sure that you will keep, you know, improving in your career.

VJ:

Absolutely. And that is the, you know, that it's about the growth mindset, right, you keep learning means you're being relevant. And if you're being irrelevant, it doesn't matter you will be, you will be moving, transforming yourself with the technology and industry. So I think that's a message for all of us. And many of us who just not for freshers, not, you know, because technology now has changed so fast. And all of us have to continuously learn. It's a beautiful message. And great if you can summarize, you know, sustainability portability, two major trends that are shaping the newest digital transformation. And then keep learning. Keep learning something every day. As simple as that mantra for everyone.

Divya:

Well, thank you Vijay and I enjoyed this conversation.

VJ:

Absolutely. It's a very special edition to me a special episode for me having you because I feel the kind of, you know, recognition and the support that you gave for at least at least eight startups. And now we are a growing startup. But there are very few leaders who can really sense how startups can add value in the enterprise ecosystem, not just you know, big companies can do everything. There is a role and play for everyone and how you beautifully put us into by listing the customers and by making them when making everybody a win-win is not everybody's cup of tea. And we need leaders like you in industry to promote innovation while making you know, value being delivered to customers. Thank you very much. Great to have you.

Divya:

Appreciate it.

VJ:

Bye

Divya:

Bye

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