CIO CHAT WITH CHETNA: RAJENDRA PRASAD

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Chetna: Hi everyone. My name is Chief Knot and I'm excited to welcome you to our CIO chat series where I have the unfair luxury of chatting with some amazing CEOs. Before we start chatting, though, I want to talk to you about foresight. You know, that ability to predict what has happened or will be needed in the future. And I have this amazing story on foresight that I have to share.

Chetna: So Einstein was traveling to Japan to deliver a lecture series when he heard that he'd been awarded the Nobel Prize in physics. So now news of the award spread quickly to avoid the attention. Einstein sequestered himself in his room at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, so one can imagine him right sitting in his room, he starts writing his thoughts and perspectives on the hotel stationery.

Chetna: A bellboy then knocks on the door. Einstein takes the delivery, thanks the kind bellboy and wants to reward him, but realizes he does not have enough change to tip. So in lieu of cash, Einstein gives the bellboy two sheets of paper on which he was writing. Now, Einstein had foresight. He was aware that his stock in the world was rising.

Chetna: So he tells the bellboy the notes will be more valuable than any tip. The Japanese bellboy gracefully accepts the tip and leaves. Well, fast forward many decades to just a few years back. Those notes were auctioned by the Bellboys nephew. One note went for $250,000, and the second that contained a single sentence on the theory of happiness for a staggering million and a half dollars.

Chetna: Now, that's foresight, knowing that words scribbled on hotel stationery would be worth a fortune. And our guest today comes with a lot of foresight. I've known him for years, and he's always been forward looking. His constant evolution of perspective and what he has implemented as Accenture has really kept us a step ahead. So with that, I'm thrilled to introduce Rajendra Prasad, who goes by R.P., Accenture's chief information and asset engineering officer.

R.P., Welcome.

Chetna: Thank you, and thank you for having me in the session. And that story that you just articulated puts a lot of pressure on the speakers, and it's very difficult to kind of match that story. I will try my level best, but I'm honored and humbled. But having this discussion with you.

Chetna: I'm confident you will do amazingly well. R.P. So let's actually stick to that notion of being forward looking. Give us your take on where you believe past concepts have served us well, but they now need to be more of to be more forward looking, especially in the context of today's ever evolving technology landscape.

RP: I think that is an excellent question. Right from the time the computers came into existence to various technologies, bead programing, languages, be it, you know, the networking cloud, the data analytics are all the platform business that we have within the world today. If you look at all of the technologies, every time there is a technology evolution, human beings always feel that their jobs will be taken away, they will have no opportunities.

RP: But every technology has provided more opportunities for humans to go along with the technology. And, you know, even in the current world, when we have automation, it will be, yeah, I do generate we are where we are today, which is also part of the AI. You can see that, you know, human in the loop driven by, you know, that technology gives them more and more opportunities to drive where we are.

RP: So if you look at from every technology evolution, it is the way I look at it is it provides more opportunity and how we get ready to drive that is critical.

Chetna: I love that. I love that. And I agree with you. And you know, you're talking technology right now. R.P., I would be remiss if we don't talk about Genie, right? You are the CIO and the chief asset engineering officer of Accenture, and our business is human centric. So how do you look at the genie and human relationship not only within Accenture, but also outside?

RP: So I was right. This is my last week scored genie I happening now we all have to figure out how. So it is very critical to identify and adopt new technology like generate the AI and you know like you said, everyone is talking about generated by the most important aspect of generating AI or any technology is if you can if you just apply technology for the sake of technology, it's not going to provide any benefits.

RP: It has to be relevant to the life are relevant to the context of the business, relevant to the context of enterprises that we are working with. That is when it can provide a phenomenal growth, both in terms of business growth and driving opportunities to the next level. So agility, it has been proven applicable and it can provide use cases across the field right everywhere, including for example, a bigger than example.

RP: If there is a, you know, in my role as a CIO, many clients ask me that if there is a large technology depth within the organization, how can we apply reverse engineering to the application, analyzing the technology, identifying the roadmap and drawing the generated AI based pick, the elimination? That can be one of the biggest applicability within the technology.

RP:I know a lot of people are looking at coding, testing and, you know, traditional software delivery and software engineering methodology. No DNA can apply in the industry space. We can apply to banking, to insurance, to any financial sector, to healthcare, to retail, to consumer goods, supply chain. There's been use cases that have been tested across the business lines, across the technology lines, across the tech landscape that can help us to drive generating AI to deliver the benefits.

Chetna: That makes excellent sense. Now I'm going to jump to my favorite part. Get to know our CIO. Five Rapidfire Questions for you. R.P.. The first one is your favorite drone over the years.

RP: I've been I've done a lot of roles within Accenture, and I know my previous role. I used to be Global Automation Lead. And then I speak to the clients, you know, as you know, everyone calls me RB Dubai. My name is Rajendra Prasad, and I used to do automation, so it helps me to say I am Dhabi. So that's one of my favorite, favorite role as I did.

RP: Now I'm applying automation in my role as a civil. And, you know, this is provided a lot of learning opportunities from the mainframe days to generally the technology days. I love technology. So every role has been phenomenal and my automation role, I give a little bit of a special on my all the roles that I perform.

Chetna: And I bet you people will not remember RPA because of RPA. All right. Second one, you're importing the important traits in folks looking to join a technology company like Accenture. What would those traits be?

RP: That is a brilliant question. You know, you said that technical as a company like Accenture. I strongly believe that when you are in technology field, you have to learn every day. Learning is the core DNA. It is not that everyone knows everything, but how quickly you can learn a new tech today. Yesterday it was data analytics. Today it is generated.

RP:
By tomorrow it will be something else. So keeping and learning, you know, ahead of the technology's come at the time it they come and the ability to learn. That's the most important skill that is required to work in a company like us to to drive technology transformations to our clients. Learn technology ability to learn at speed is the key.

Chetna: That makes perfect sense. So the third one, your favorite way to give back to society.

RP: This is very important question. Right. Like, you know, I always feel that whatever you are good at that is that is something that you can give to society back. So if you are a very good person as a technologist, you can actually help society. And you know, going back to my previous response to learn technology, so if you can help people to learn technology from, you know, where they are to somewhere they can apply in their life, make their life better, that provides better job opportunities, the ability to apply in their day to day life and do what better.

RP: I know if they are doing something without technology, by adding technology, they can the human can help to drive their work more efficiently. It is not. We can help society by providing what I call the technology as a currency to the field.

Chetna: I actually took notes on that one. The next one, your favorite sport or activity?

RP: I what? I used to play soccer for a long time when I was in college. I still I continue to play once in a while, but I today my most favorite activity is watching movies. I watch a lot of regional language movies that I come. I know I originally come from India to promote the U.S. There are a lot of movies that are made in regional languages in India.

RP: I watch most of the movies.

Chetna: I just made a note to self. Your Christmas gift fandango tickets. Got it. Last one, R.P. on this around here is innovation or diversity.

RP: Having a diverse team helps us to drive higher level of innovation. So that is very critical. So it is very important that you build a talented, diverse team so that it drives innovation, gets different perspective within the team. So it's diversity. That light that leads innovation.

Chetna: I learn something new every time I talk with you. So, R.P., going to our final question, you know, CIOs have a very complex role. There are numerous vying areas for their attention. Right. We're talking cyber security data privacy, as well as data transparency, cloud adoption and the ROI from it. Right. We're talking digital transformation, facilitating business agility, talent retention, employee experience, innovation, cost optimization.

Chetna: And the list is endless. What do you see as the top priority of CIOs and how do you suggest they address that or why?

RP: That's a lot of a lot of topics that you definitely said and those are all the most important topic for any i.t. Leader. But let me simplify to two things, right. When I speak to any CIO or my field leaders within the IT in the field, two things that always comes to discussion. One, a never ending list of technologies that they have to deal with.

RP: How do we optimize them? How do we keep it simple? The second one is cyber security, avoiding threat from threat actors from the field. These are the two important aspects. Let me talk about technology. Right. If you look at all of the aspects that you say to every and the whole technology landscape that we have, we have to always make sure that we are not worried or afraid of shooting of something that is not required.

RP: I take a very simple example. Right. Most of us have a habit of backing up all our emails. And I wonder, I keep asking many people, when is the last time you went to when? Back to six months before the email and read it again. It's quite rare, but we never believed them just for a simple scare that we may need.

RP: It again is the same philosophy for a variety leader that a lot of technology is. They're always worried about taking on something, thinking that it will collapse something. So it is very important to take that what I call as a bold decision to optimize your tech depth, turn all the technology that is required, not required. The second aspect is cybersecurity.

RP: And you have to always be on the top of, you know, avoiding threat actors, getting into the environment and in the cybersecurity, most of the any, any. So I speak to the fear that keeping basic discipline in everything that we do is as good as 99% of the time. You will be able to say to a query safely that is required for your business and you can continue to create software and all those things.

RP: But getting basics like right is very important. So optimize in tech landscape cybersecurity are the top two priorities for me.

Chetna: That is excellent. And you know, R.P., time flies, but you're having fun. I actually can't believe we reached the end of our conversation. Always a pleasure talking to you and really thank you for your amazing insights.

RP :Thank you very much for having me in this session. Thank you very much.

Chetna: There you have it. While the CIO role is complex, with many competing priorities, focus and foresight go a long way. We've heard from RPA and how CIOs and technology leaders can navigate through today's landscape. We talked about leveraging Jenny AI while keeping humans very much involved and also the various use cases that come with that. And RPA, you shared how appreciating the past, learning from it while evolving our thinking with a sharp focus on the future is key and learning every day is important as well.

Chetna: Basically, that foresight that separates the barely surviving from the thriving. And while that foresight, which was relatively intuitive for Einstein, might not turn our scribblings into millions of dollars, it could be a game changer for us CIOs. Thank you for watching and be well.