

ACCENTURE AND AWS: SHAHEEN SAYED AND DARREN HARDMAN VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Shaheen Sayed:

We're living in an era of unprecedented technological change. We're also living in a period where technology alone won't be enough to meet the opportunities and the challenges ahead. I'm at AWS to meet their UK and Ireland Lead, Darren Hardman and to talk about how critical forging the right combination of technology, leadership and culture is going to be.

Darren it's been really tough out there for the last couple of years for many businesses across the UK and Ireland, what have you been seeing? I mean, what's the response been like?

Darren Hardman:

Yeah, there's been a lot of instability, no question. But it's created a lot of headwinds, I would say in many businesses that we serve, but equally, I'd say there's a lot of tailwinds that we've seen out there that have been equally hard to navigate and to kind of deliver value to our customers, customers.

And if you think about travel and transportation, it's a great example of an industry that's had to dial down and maybe re pivot some of its services to its customers. Think about retail grocery that's actually had the other problem in terms of just having to scale up at speed and actually, you know,

service those customers in a slightly different way than they've done before around prioritisation and other factors.

So, lots of instability. But I think one of the common things I've seen is that, that flexibility and agility has been an important part of whether these businesses have survived or actually really thrived.

Shaheen Sayed:

What learnings have you been kind of accumulating through this? Because you're talking to lots of clients, you're talking to your own people every day you're talking to the people that are creating the products to be able to deal with some of the surge and new creativity we've had to all demonstrate. I mean, what's coming out of it for you? If you have kind of a couple of things that you would say, it really struck you, what would those be?

Darren Hardman:

Well, we've certainly got a lot of anecdotal feedback from our customers that the cloud as a platform has really helped them manage through the challenging times of the last couple of years. We've seen this kind of culture of reinvention emerge in how businesses are approaching these big problems. And those businesses that have kind of harnessed this reinvention culture are the ones that maybe coming out the other



side of these challenges will see this reinvention dividend, this kind of application of being adaptable, flexible and reacting more quickly to customer demands. And so I think that's a real kind of learning that we've seen over the last couple of years.

Shaheen Sayed:

Now, I'm really interested in what you said that this culture of reinvention and I'm curious about, what does that really mean? Because culture in and of itself, we're all talking about culture at the moment. We're saying technology only gets you part of the way there. It's a huge spine in the strategy, of course, but it doesn't finish the sentence when it comes to making fundamental change to either an industry or a specific customer so, reimagining who you are to some extent and using culture as the basis for that. Just talk to me about that. That's a brilliant term, by the way.

Darren Hardman:

The culture of reinvention, from our perspective, technology is a piece of it, and certainly the cloud is a big piece of the enabler to transform. But actually, I think it's more fundamental than that. I think it's a few things. So leadership is where it starts. As a leader in the business, are you creating the environment within your business, where you can go an experiment on behalf of your customers? Where you can take risks? And failure in some respects is rewarded. Are you creating an environment where you're asking your people right through the organisation, certainly those closest to the customer, to think big on behalf of those customers. So leadership and setting goals that allow you to change direction quickly is a really important aspect of that.

I think the other thing when it comes to leaders is just accepting that you can't fight gravity. The reality is if you're kind of pressing on with traditional business models, your customers are demanding something else, somebody else is going to come in and take that space. And I think the other thing then, is speed. You know, how fast you can move is really important. We see

this with the cloud, it's one of the benefits of the cloud. It gives you a platform to move quickly and you get speed through people and you get people enacting speed through the skills that you give them. So this concept of learn and be curious, constantly educating your workforce to go from maybe being a blocker, because of the skills they have, to being an enabler for change.

Shaheen Sayed:

Let's talk about this idea of learning because I know for AWS it's a huge philosophy and a huge precedent that the business has been setting for years. So this isn't new and it's the same for Accenture. You talked about people as kind of being the catalyst and the heart of how we make these big transformations and then being the centre to a culture of reinvention. What is it that you think we might need to do better to enable the next generation to be thinking about skilling as a continuous endeavour?

Darren Hardman:

I think we've got a responsibility to both kind of help in the education of technology skills in the society we serve. We do that for a programme called Restart. We work with you when it comes to certification and making sure you've got access to the very latest technology and skilling. And we work part of whether these businesses have survived or actually really thrived.

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Shaheen Sayed:

We've talked a lot about CEOs being CIOs and this blurring of boundaries with technology, again, being the heart of many of these sorts of discussions. CIOs and CEOs used to ask for sort of real benefits within two years, now we're talking about the nine month benchmarkers being the new normal. What is it that you see is the future for our leaders and what you think is going to be the next set of DNA, so to speak, that's expected?

Darren Hardman:

I've certainly seen customers businesses out there where the benchmark actually for change, is weeks. It's months, it's certainly not years. From a leadership perspective, I don't think every CEO needs to be a CIO, or a deep technologist, even though we're living in a very technical world, I think they have to lead by example. They have to create the environment that allows the rest of the organisation to think big, to learn and be curious, to bring those two things together and create ideas on behalf of their customers.

Shaheen Sayed:

And when you look forward and think about just even our partnership in the way that we're changing, I know the AWS Accenture partnership has always been focused on long term change for our clients, and we think about impact in that context just talk to me about, again, what you're seeing and how you feel about this idea of enduring legacy when it comes to working with our customers.

Darren Hardman:

I think we share, a strong cultural alignment when it comes to thinking about how we serve our customers with an unusually long-term perspective. We imagine the future and we work back from there and we build the building blocks to get and deliver that vision.

On top of that, we're also looking around corners. We're looking around corners to try and predict the things that our customers might not see for themselves. I think that gives us a great opportunity to help our joint customers deliver on their, you know, think big ideas and their visions for the future.

Shaheen Sayed:

It feels like quite an epic adventure that we're all on next, this is the technological epoch. I think that's the way people are talking about it again. It's lovely to be accompanied by you and I hope you feel the same, but what is continuing to excite you?

Darren Hardman:

The last couple of years have changed the rules. And I think organisations have proven that by deploying services on the cloud, by moving quickly, they can really excite and engage customers. And the thing I wake up for every day is customer obsession and how we're doing amazing things together in many instances, to really make an impact, not just on our customers, but our customers customers.

Shaheen Sayed:

I'm really excited about where we're going to take this next together.

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