



**COMMON GROUND
WEBINAR SERIES**

WHITE PAPER

COMMON GROUND WEBINAR SERIES

SEASON 2

KEY TAKEAWAYS



PMI India presents the summary and key takeaways of each session of the Common Ground Webinar Series – Season 2 held from August to October 2020. Browse through the white paper to refresh your memory and use the handy tips recommended by the experts to become a better project manager.

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Common Ground Webinar Series

Theme: Bringing Ideas to Life

SEASON 2 | EPISODE 1

FEATURED SPEAKERS



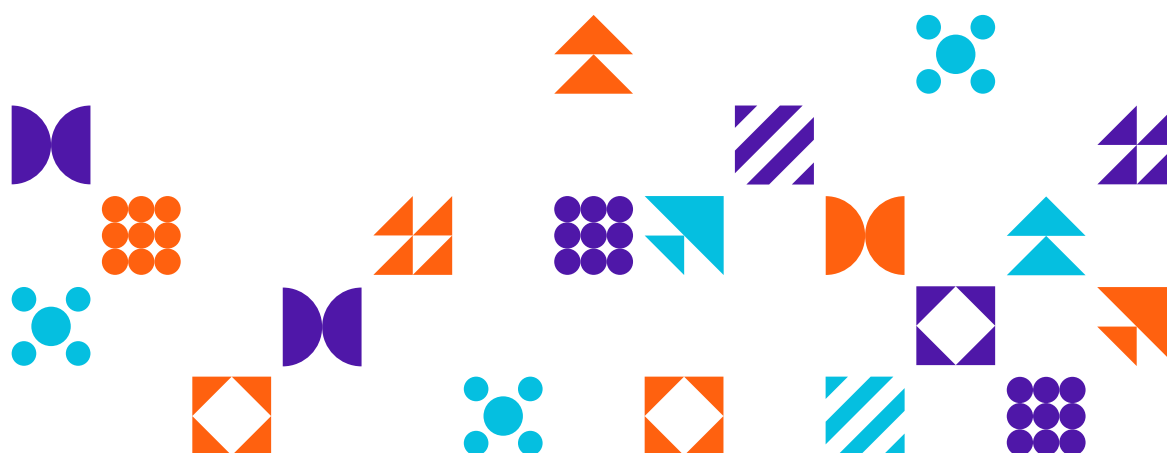
Vidhya Abhijith, PMP

Co-founder,
Codewave Technologies



Abhijith H. K.

Founder and CEO,
Codewave Technologies



Session 2: Lessons from their entrepreneurial journey



As the architect of a design thinking start-up that helps organizations and innovators bring ideas to life, **Vidhya Abhijit** applies a storyteller's eye and ear to ensure projects solve problems. In the seven years since Codewave launched, her team has helped develop a smart warmer that allows doctors to remotely monitor premature babies. And most recently, her team built its own enterprise solution to help facilitate virtual work amid the global pandemic. **Abhijith Krishnamurthy** is a computer engineer turned accidental entrepreneur. He has helped architect over a 100 digital businesses across 10 plus industries, empowering them with digital technology to serve beyond geographical & cultural barriers. Over the last 7 years, at Codewave, he has evaluated hundreds of businesses at various levels of digital maturity & helped them solve problems. He believes innovation is a mindset and can be nurtured in an organization by creating a culture that encourages agility.



Summary

It was an interactive session that had something for everyone – whether you are an engineer, project manager, entrepreneur or people manager. Vidhya Abhijith, PMP, and PMI Future50 awardee, and Abhijith H.K. shared some of the big ideas and lessons behind their entrepreneurial journey with Codewave Technologies.

“When we began, we looked at ourselves as a social experiment. We started with zero funding and zero ad spend, and looked for organic growth throughout our website, customer references and our direct connections,” says Ms. Abhijit.

After a strong 100 percent year on year growth for three years, the founders faced a drop in demand and high costs associated with a growing team as the pandemic struck. Managing the crisis has taught them new lessons in how to manage teams, deliver products and manage finances.

The founders take pride in the ‘signature practices and processes’ that they have developed along the way. One of that is to blur role boundaries and make every team member a user experience (UX) person. For example, a project manager is also a ‘product influencer’, which is the amalgamation of a project manager and business analyst.

The company has created a project management tool out of their own experience of remote working when not everybody in a team is available at the same time as the others. The tool comes in the form of a mobile app that shows the availability of team members, their preferred mode of communication, project progress and work distribution.



Key takeaways:

- If you want to be an entrepreneur, ask yourself if you have high tolerance for stress.
- Any role today needs these 5 Cs – curiosity, creativity, clarity, courage and collaboration.
- Learn from India's diversity; be humble and stay open to inspiration and greatness around you.
- Leaders set the tone for ethics in an organization.
- Incentivize team to adopt the greatest of human values.
- Put math and economics at the center of everything you do as an entrepreneur.
- PMP certification is highly beneficial in administering the business every day.
- Do not fear competition; fear complacency.

Learn from India's diversity; be humble and stay open to inspiration and greatness around you.



Common Ground Webinar Series

Theme: Reinventing on the Go

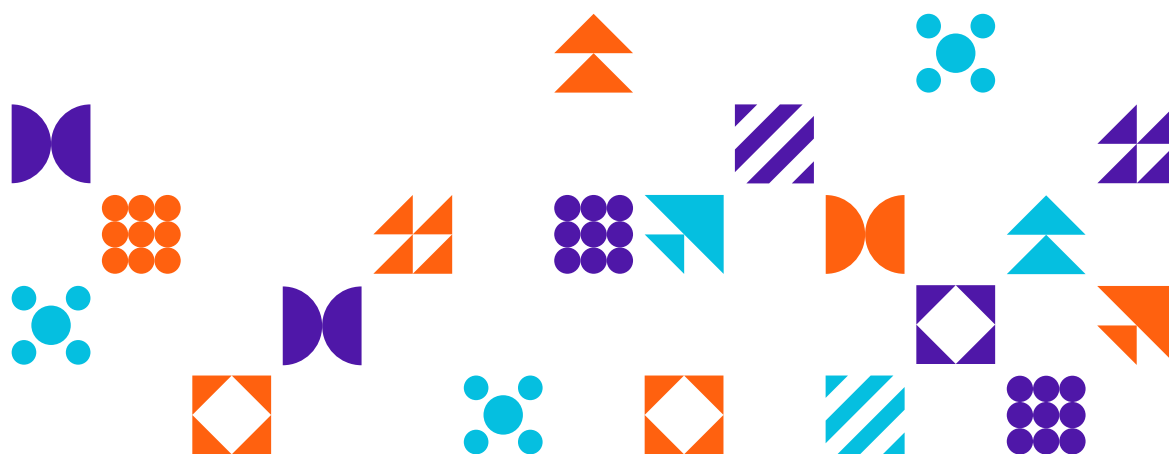
SEASON 2 | EPISODE 2

FEATURED SPEAKER



Jacob Peter Kindangath

Senior Vice President, Automotive R&D,
Bosch Engineering and Business Solutions



Session: **Insights into the future of the automotive industry**



Jacob Peter Kindangath has more than two decades of experience in the automotive industry. He leads the engineering areas responsible for vehicle computers, infotainment systems and automotive electronics. Mr. Kindangath is a futurist who is passionate about the possibilities that connectivity, machine learning and analytics can bring to the industry.

Summary

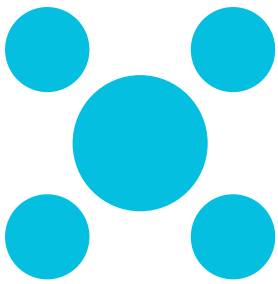
“Reinventing on the go” was an insightful session by Mr. Kindangath, who presented the future of the automotive industry that has seen major transformation in the past decade. Digital transformation has led a traditional car powered by mechanical parts into a computer-powered super machine today.

Presenting ‘the story of a car’, he said the change goes far beyond the physical aspects of an automobile and rests a lot on design and software engineering. Automotive designers and engineers are today using virtualization and simulation for testing and validating. The complexity of software platforms in cars is comparable to that of Google, which is at the highest end of complexity across product categories such as smartphones and aircraft.

Autonomous cars of the highest level, which are driverless vehicles and will be the future, are controlled by around 10 microprocessor controlled systems. These are not based on written software but self-learning, machine learning systems.

However, the industry is experiencing slowing growth due to the popularity of ride sharing and the changing attitudes and aspirations of the new generation. Growth will come from services related to a vehicle. The future will see a lot more collaboration across industries and the emergence of new personalized services.





Key takeaways:

- It takes about 100 networked computers to run a modern-day car.
- Over 100 million lines of codes are used in an autonomous car's software.
- Silicon Valley, and not Detroit in the US or Germany, is driving transformation of the automotive industry.
- Your car will be your third personal space after your home and office.
- The future will be about integration and personalized services to vehicle owners.
- Look out for collaboration across industries with amazing opportunities for startups.
- Track the industry for ideas and new opportunities.

The future will be about integration and personalized services to vehicle owners.



Common Ground Webinar Series

Theme: Leadership in the Post-Digital Era

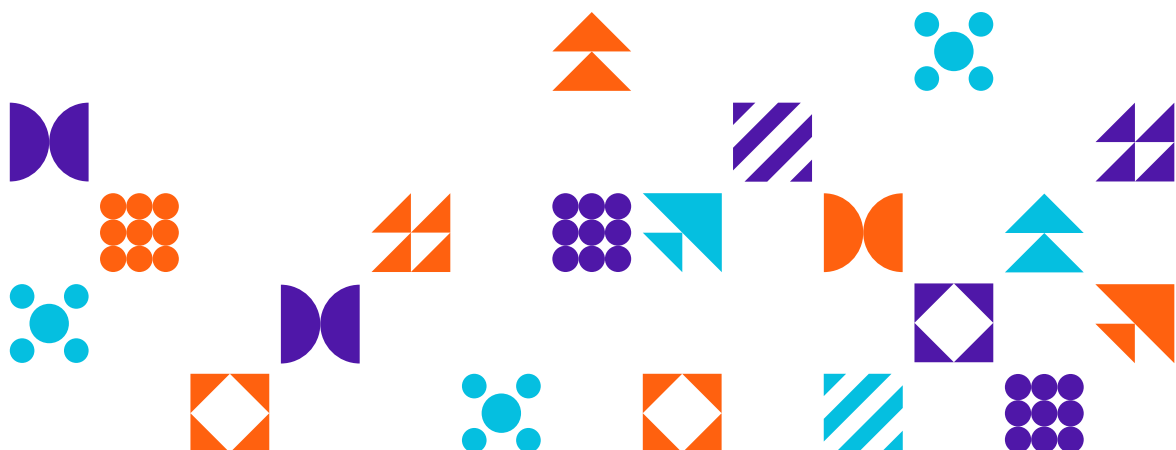
SEASON 2 | EPISODE 3

FEATURED SPEAKER



Srikanth N. R.

Managing Director-Human Resources,
Accenture India



Session: A good leader is one who is agile and receptive to changes



Srikanth N. R. is a seasoned human resources leader with over 22 years of experience working in technology and consulting organizations. As Accenture's managing director, HR, in India, he is responsible for the overall talent strategy and transformation of over 100,000 professionals. He has been instrumental in designing and executing strategic people transformations at scale for Accenture and a newly designed career architecture for Accenture Technology.

Summary

Srikanth N. R. delivered an impactful talk on "Leadership in the Post-Digital Era." He touched on the topics of evolving leadership and the changing definition of success in an increasingly tech-powered world.

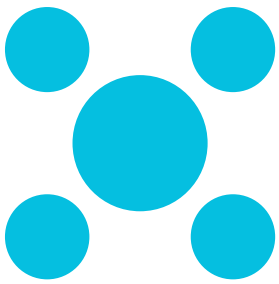
The world today is different from the past, where business plans lasted anywhere from five to 25 years. However, any decisions made today needs to be reviewed on a quarterly basis due to the volatile nature of the world that is changing at the speed of a hurricane.

Leaders of today and tomorrow must inculcate the right skillsets to lead three core aspects: workplace, industry and people. Mr. Srikanth said the future of the workplace will shift from siloed teams to cross-functional teams who focus on agility and innovation.

Even the autonomy of decision-making has evolved. While earlier the senior management team would make decisions, now the process includes more people from the team who add their voices. Inclusivity and diversity will also remain important themes. Mr. Srikanth added that companies need to practise and create an inclusive and diverse work environment.

He called on leaders to learn the skills of humility and client-centricity to thrive in the 'post-digital era.'





Key takeaways:

- A good leader is one who is agile and receptive to changes.
- Learn how to use data to make decisions.
- Inculcate a consumer-first mindset while building anything.
- The ability to move across functions and integrate experiences matter more than the years of experience one has.
- Benevolence is a trait that complements strong leadership skills.
- Practise and embrace the inclusive, diverse world of tomorrow.
- Treat clients, employees and people around you with humility.
- Organizations will have a flatter structure in the future.
- Storytelling and critical thinking are valuable traits in the post-digital era.

Storytelling and critical thinking are valuable traits in the post-digital era.



Common Ground Webinar Series

Theme: Fuel your creativity through divergent thinking

SEASON 2 | EPISODE 4

FEATURED SPEAKERS



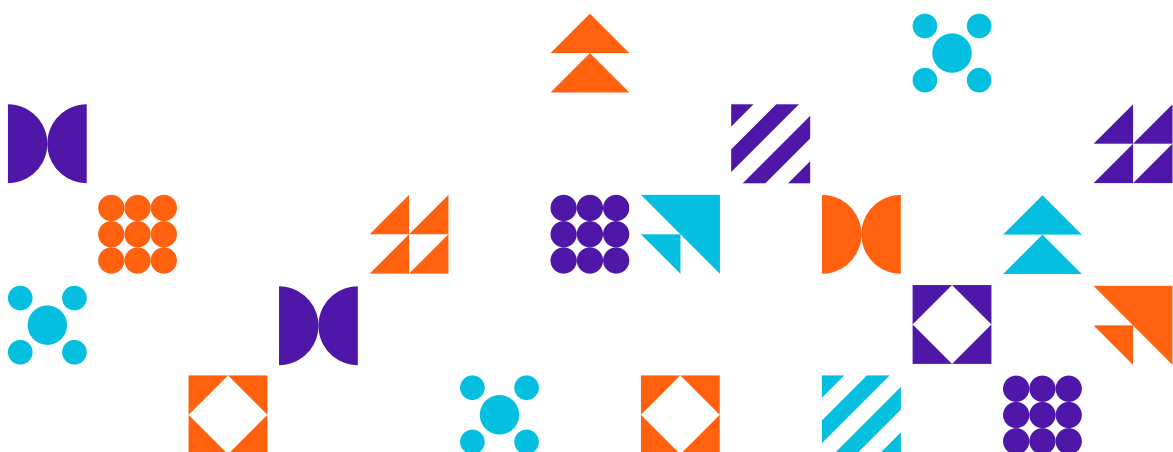
Neelacantan (Neel)

Founder,
Outthinc Consulting



Charusmitha Rao

Lead, Learning and
Development-APJ and India,
Akamai Technologies



Session: Learn to create many concepts from one idea or trigger



Neelacantan is the creator of 108% Indian, a divergent thinking toolkit, and is an advisor at Leadpro Simulations. He has over two decades of experience across talent development, innovation and organizational development. **Charusmitha Rao** has over 16 years of experience as a learning and talent development professional. She has won over 10 awards including HR40under40, Zinnov Next Gen Women Leaders and BrandonHall Gold for initiatives across talent development and building inclusive cultures.



Summary

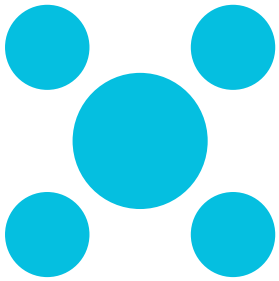
“Fuel your creativity through divergent thinking” was a motivational session, jointly conducted by Mr. Neelacantan and Ms. Rao. During the first segment, Mr. Neelacantan compared divergent thinking to a muscle; the more we think divergently, the more it will help grow our creativity. He shared the story of Malcolm McLean to demonstrate the power of divergent thinking.

McLean owned a truck company in the 1930s and wanted to earn more profits by inventing a way to make his trucks send goods in the fastest way possible. He began by questioning and breaking rules. Due to his divergent or out-of-the-box thinking, he revolutionized the way we transport things around the world today, that is in metal boxes.

In the next segment, Ms. Rao demonstrated divergent thinking through an activity. She asked project managers to select a question. She shared different images and asked them to guess what the pictures portrayed. The different responses to a single question shows that many ideas can be born from one trigger, which is the basis behind divergent thinking. She also explained various steps involved in this process such as identifying missed opportunities and the baggage we carry that can impact the ideation process.

The session showed that when we break the rules, we are able to think of different possibilities for one situation, thus coming out with creative solutions.





Key takeaways:

- Learn to create many concepts from one idea or trigger.
- Divergent thinking is like a muscle that grows as we practice it more.
- Learn all the rules and have the courage to break it when needed
- Abstract images can act as metaphors to unleash one's creative thinking, something words alone may not be able to achieve.
- Being curious is the most important thing in divergent thinking.
- Divergent thinking combines rigor and creativity to produce new ideas.
- Identify aspects like core values and the baggage you carry to lead to creative ideas through divergent thinking.

Divergent thinking is like a muscle that grows as we practice it more.

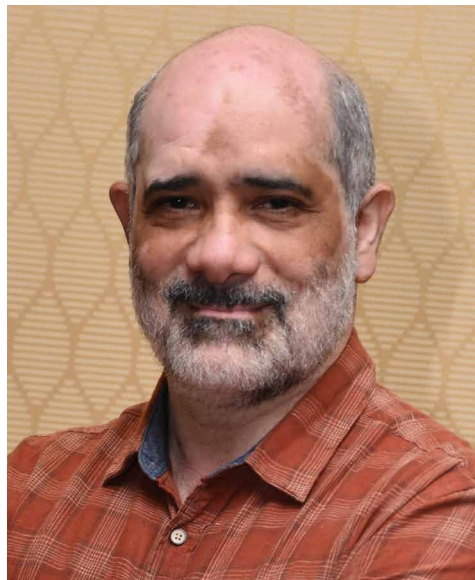


Common Ground Webinar Series

Theme: Revisiting the Road Ahead for
Product Design in the Era of Cloud and Digital

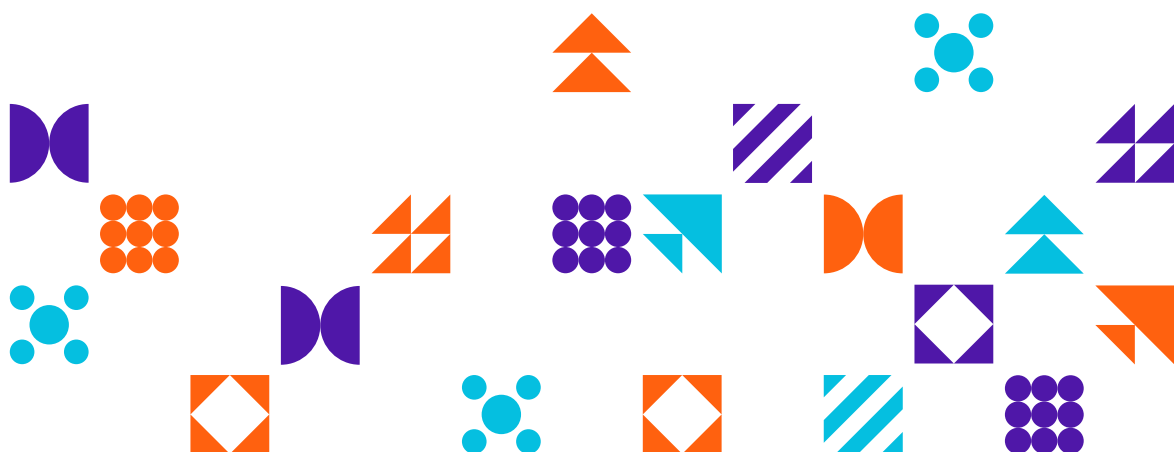
SEASON 2 | EPISODE 5

FEATURED SPEAKER

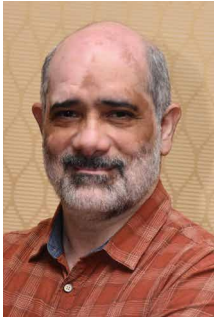


Ashish Khushu

Chief Technology Officer,
L&T Technology Services



Session: **Keep in mind the big picture while working on a project**



Ashish Khushu drives the Company's technology roadmap to develop IP's, Products, Platforms and Solutions to address strategic high growth investment areas in Digital Engineering. He has over 30 years of experience, in Technical, High-Performance Computing and Product Engineering Services. The experience of working in cross functional roles in both a product as well as a service company, has helped him develop a holistic view of the dynamics of business, technology direction and operational priorities.

Summary

Whether you are an engineer trying to solve a client's problem or a project manager leading that project, you need to understand the business context to be able to deliver the right solution. Ashish Khushu took the audience on a journey criss-crossing eras and geographies to explain how product development has fundamentally changed in today's times, and with that has changed the role that a project manager plays.

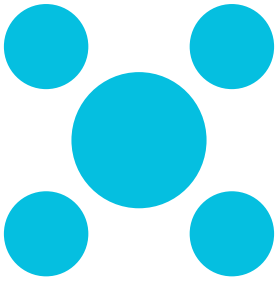
In today's highly interconnected world, external forces including major events taking place in another part of the world could impact our lives at a personal level. Our projects too are getting influenced by geo-political developments and socio-economic changes in the world. Successful project delivery requires these factors to be incorporated into the project strategy.

As consumer demand grows in India and China, product designers will need to rethink their strategies for these countries since the per capita income in this region does not match those of western countries. There will be a greater demand for technology-backed services that break language and literacy barriers by offering services in local languages or through voice-enabled services.

Mr. Khushu spoke about some of the biggest technology developments that will impact product design and project management such as 5G telecom networks, immersive technologies, cloud, and the focus on user experience defined by digital technologies like artificial intelligence, data analytics and internet of things.

He urged project managers to be prepared for the 'participation age' where engineers and the end customers will interact with each other, and customers will participate in product design and development.





Key takeaways:

- Do not ignore the big picture while working on a project.
- The role of a project manager is critical to take a project, a dream or a strategy to fruition.
- Product designers must rethink strategies and customize products to cater to new markets in Asia.
- Innovation will be valued highly as companies seek to create differentiators in products at a time of commoditization.
- Be prepared for the big opportunity of rewriting software – from browser based apps to cloud based apps for massive scale.
- This is an era of integrated systems, where complex systems come together to deliver user experience.
- Don't get taken in by jargons; technology is evolutionary by nature and constantly maturing.

The role of a project manager is critical to take a project, a dream or a strategy to fruition.



Common Ground Webinar Series

Theme: The Rise of Design

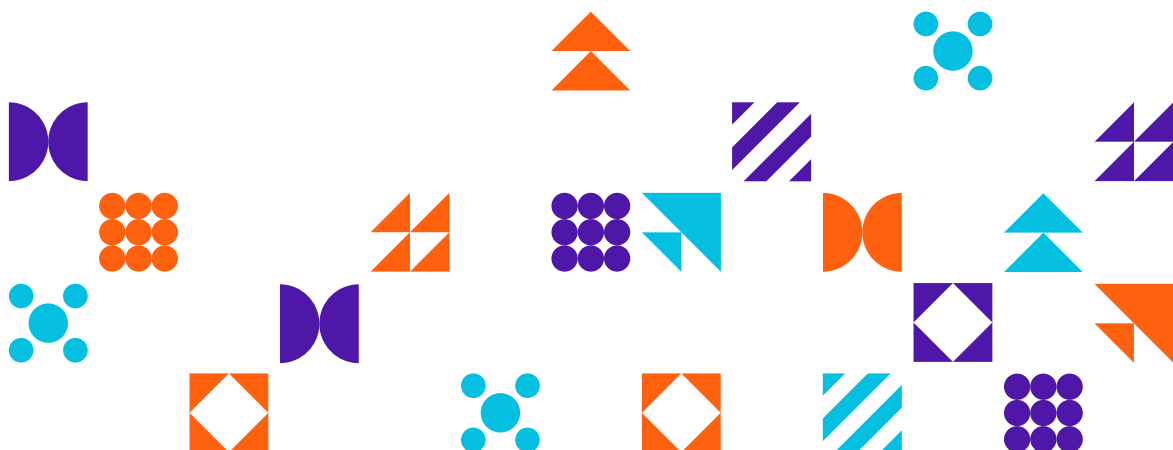
SEASON 2 | EPISODE 6

FEATURED SPEAKER



Padma Parthasarathy

Senior Vice President, Global Head Of Consulting
and Digital Services, Tech Mahindra



Session: Design is about understanding human beings



Padma Parthasarathy has more than 25 years of experience in the financial industry. Her diverse expertise spans from business and P&L management, business development to client relationship management. Ms. Parthasarathy was featured on Forbes magazine's Indian Women Power List of Self-Made Women for 2020.

Summary

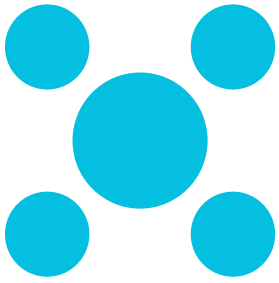
Design is part creativity and part scientific thinking. It is about understanding human behavior and incorporating that into a business solution. In "The Rise of Design," Padma Parthasarathy used examples from her experience of working in technology companies to illustrate the use of design thinking in creating solutions.

Engineers sometimes make the mistake of designing products by looking at it from the perspective of the technology, and not the user. She recalled a project in which software designers developed a great concept for a dispenser for Gatorade, the sports drink. An IOT device would instantly calculate an athlete's salt loss and customize the drink. But the project failed to take off. Subsequently, the company reworked on the concept and launched the product. In this case, the product design was user-friendly; it was not tech-led but consumer-led.

She spoke about the need for companies to develop not just user personas but also create scenarios and map them to different human characteristics to define user behaviors. Only then can they drive customer behavior. Design plays a big part in not just creating a good product but also defining how a process must be structured to deliver a service.

She believes design has a big part to play in driving sustainability, whether it is an Aeron office chair by Herman Miller that predominantly uses sustainable materials or OV Bikes by Dutch Railways that has solved the last mile connectivity problem of train users and cut down carbon emissions.





Key takeaways:

- Design is about understanding human beings.
- It's not enough to ask questions; also understand the context and observe how people use a product.
- Use journey maps with scenarios to understand what customers are going through, and identify touchpoints and pain points.
- Do ideation as if there are no constraints; apply the constraints while designing the solution.
- The best design can also be sometimes the most cost-effective.
- Good design is not static but evolutionary.
- User persona + scenario + characteristics = user behavior

Good design is not static but evolutionary.





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