



AI summary

Technology Leadership Playbook in Asia's Evolving Enterprise

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Participants

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Summary

The session explored the evolving role of technology leaders in Asia's enterprises, focusing on their transition from back-office operators to strategic business enablers. The panellists from Unilever, 1X Exchange, and PepsiCo shared their experiences in leveraging technology for operational efficiency, supply chain visibility, and market innovation. They emphasised the necessity of integrating AI, IoT, and blockchain technologies to meet business objectives, scale operations, and address inefficiencies. These technologies were discussed as critical tools to optimise operations, enhance customer experiences, and predict future trends while aligning with organisational goals and market demands.



Key initiatives highlighted included AI-driven supply chain management at Unilever, blockchain-based platforms for financial markets at 1X Exchange, and PepsiCo's focus on IoT and AI across its value chain. For instance, Unilever underscored its emphasis on ensuring 24/7 factory operations and predictive maintenance, while 1X Exchange focused on solving inefficiencies in capital markets through tokenisation. PepsiCo discussed its strategy of collaborating with startups and using IoT to enhance agricultural productivity and maintain quality standards. All panellists agreed on the importance of using data for actionable insights, operational efficiency, and customer-centric strategies.

The discussion also addressed the challenges of integrating emerging technologies. Panellists noted the rapid pace of innovation and the need for nimble and adaptive systems. Sheena Lim from 1X Exchange described the fast-moving blockchain landscape, requiring constant evaluation of new chains and solutions. Meanwhile, PepsiCo and Unilever highlighted the importance of balancing innovation with sustainability, ensuring that new technologies contribute tangible, long-term business value. They stressed that solutions must not only address immediate problems but also align with strategic objectives and governance frameworks.

In terms of partnerships and collaboration, PepsiCo shared its experience with PepsiCo Labs, which scouts startups to implement innovative solutions across its operations. This programme has facilitated over 400 pilots, with 10% scaled successfully. Unilever, while not yet in venture capital markets, highlighted its partnerships with firms like Gartner and McKinsey for research and innovation insights. The panellists collectively endorsed collaboration with startups and partners to accelerate innovation, emphasising the importance of evaluating solutions based on impact, scalability, and sustainability.



The panel also discussed workforce development and organisational change. Technology adoption necessitated training employees in AI, AR/VR, and other emerging tools. Unilever and PepsiCo implemented AR/VR-based training to enhance workforce readiness, especially for temporary and trainee staff. The speakers stressed that equipping employees with relevant skills and fostering a culture of continuous learning were essential for adapting to technological advancements. Sheena Lim noted how AI tools improved inter-team collaboration and efficiency, enabling quicker decision-making and operational alignment.

In conclusion, the panellists shared their leadership philosophies, emphasising the importance of aligning technology with business needs and customer demands. They cautioned against blindly chasing new innovations and recommended focusing on fit-for-purpose solutions that address real problems. The panel underscored the need for robust governance structures to manage compliance and risk, particularly in regulated industries like finance. They advocated for a proactive, flexible approach to innovation, ensuring that businesses remain competitive while effectively managing both current operations and future growth.

Takeaways

Technology Must Align with Business Needs to Drive Value

The panel emphasised that technology should not be adopted for its novelty but must address specific business needs and solve real-world problems. Organisations should focus on strategic alignment, ensuring that technology investments create measurable value and contribute to long-term growth.

Collaboration with Startups and Partners Drives Innovation

Large enterprises are increasingly engaging with startups and innovation partners to address unmet needs and accelerate technology adoption. This approach allows organisations to explore emerging technologies, pilot solutions, and scale impactful initiatives in a more agile manner.

Workforce Adaptation and Training Are Essential for Technological Transformation

The panel highlighted the importance of upskilling employees and using tools like AI, AR, and VR to facilitate training and improve operational efficiency. Continuous learning and collaboration between technology providers and workforce teams are critical to ensuring successful adoption and long-term sustainability.

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