



**BCC&I (Bengal Chamber) Business IT Conclave – 24th May 2017, Kolkata
“Bridging Automation and Society”**

**Valedictory Panel- Discussion
on “Adaptation of Automation – Turing Challenges into Opportunities”**

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my privilege to be with all of you today.

I will speak from an “Average Citizen’s” perspective, as to how Automation affects a Citizen’s daily life and as a CSO Partner of the Government of Maharashtra.

I and our Trust, work in partnership with the Government to develop sustainable solutions and engage all the stakeholders in the workings.

My Focus being, Citizens and Public Services and the Processes, the User Experience Journey as well as how it impacts the Citizens requirements and needs.

In context of today’s Conclave we need to look at Government of India’s two focus Campaigns: -

Digital India - with it’s three key vision areas:

Digital Infrastructure as a Core Utility to Every Citizen

Governance and Services on Demand

Digital Empowerment of Citizens

Quote

“In order to transform the entire ecosystem of public services through the use of information technology, the Government of India has launched the **Digital India programme** with the vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy”.

Unquote

Accessible India Campaign - which seeks to create an accessible environment for persons with disabilities, including senior citizens and understand that Digital Accessibility is as important as Physical Accessibility.

Most important of We must be mindful of the interests of all sections of society!

Automation and Society, are the two key words of today’s Conclave.

Automation is inevitable and the journey from Manual to Automation is moving at a galloping speed and the impact of technological innovations on Society is naturally foreseeable.

Without a doubt the new technological revolution will create tremendous societal benefits, greater productivity, creation of new goods, services, markets, jobs, etc.

I would like to share a Reading from Jill Wong – Prime Minister’s Office, Singapore Government, The Centre for Strategic Futures, a think-tank within the Singapore Government, about;

“The impact of Automation on Jobs and Society
What Roles might Governments play?”

Quote

At times, it may seem as if technology is a force greater than humans, forcing workers and businesses to adapt – or perish. Yet governments play a key role in shaping how technology advances. The sooner governments, in partnership with the rest of society, examine the future impact of this structural shift, the sooner they can act to ensure the shift benefits society.

Unquote



Both Civil Society and the Government, have a natural tendency to accept promptly international systems. However, we need to be aware that,

- The evolution of the Automation requires to be a gradual progression and not a knee jerk system with appropriate conceptualizing and implementation so that it becomes sustainable.

Considering I am in the field of social innovation and social engagement, I discovered Citizens are giving a lot of data, and are, in various ways telling everybody a lot of things. So the Smart thing to do is to pay heed to what the citizens are saying and engineer it back to the Citizens for the improvement of their everyday life."

Finding Solutions to problems lurking in all spheres of everyday life, will result into business opportunities. With the solving of a challenge, comes a business opportunity.

There are 3 areas I would like to share today, which has Automation- Digital empowerment of citizens. These are areas of my direct work and has my hands on involvement.....

The first one is VCAN's Web Portal and Interactive Live Talk Show -

In 2014 we launched A Citizens Engagement Digital Forum titled "**www.togethervcan.in** which deals with multiple issues that affect a Citizen's daily life on a single platform, with the motto – "**We will not do it for you, you must do it for yourself**" as well as a live talk show series titled "**TogetherVCAN's SOCIAL SANCHAR**" with the motto "**Interact with your Government from wherever you are**".

Whilst the creation of Web Portals are not new, an interactive Web Portal addressing multiple issues and engaging the Government Bodies, is not common. Usually efforts are made to engage on a single issue, but this Web Portal brings many if not all such issues that touch a person's daily life on a single platform. Particular emphasis is on addressing a "how to do" situation.

It is in the Spirit of Partnership, that the information is given for the use of Citizens.

In Summary – Simplicity and user friendliness are the key components utilised for this Digital Engagement to empower citizens through Automation which is beneficial to all Citizens.

The technology is already out there – but are we smart enough to use it appropriately? Similarly many business opportunities exists in the problems of daily life, can you identify it seize it and turn it into an entrepreneurship. **I believe you can....**

Soon after the launch of our web portal, Govt. of Maharashtra launched a citizen's portal called "Aple Sarkar" so now let us look at the Government side, especially since we, our web portal, are dependent on the Government for the information related to the Government services and changes etc.

Considering all services are becoming "online" so with the focus on Accessible India Campaign ICT Section and Digital India, with Bengal Chamber as our collaborator, we had launched a special campaign "VCAN Make IT Accessible". So let us see:

- How easy are Government websites to navigate, by all sections of Society?
- How is our web portal compatible/complimentary with these websites?
- What are the gaps?
- What are the solutions to deal with the gaps?
- Are the main Authority websites linked seamlessly with their sub web-sites e.g.
- Mumbai Police is the main Authority Mumbai Police – sub web-sites are; Mumbai Police Traffic Division/ Mumbai Police - Cyber Crime Division



Focus on two groups;

- People with disabilities - disabilities are of different types, hence the requirements will differ
- People who are elderly and need assistance as they may be challenged technologically - Once these two groups challenges are addressed, the solution, will by default, benefit the general public

In summary - Any digital platform especially governmental ones must have easy Implementation of the Solutions.

It is fundamental before developing any product/platform/service, that it is user centred, including for people with special needs and assisted digital.

The second is - Use of Technology in the area of Transport of our most precious commodity – our school children! The Positive and the scaling of technology as is seen today.....

Year 2002 – To decongest Mumbai Roads, especially the approach roads to the schools, I conceptualized and implemented the Model School Bus Project in partnership with the Mumbai Traffic Police for the Cathedral and John Connon School, and it was with a long term horizon that it would become a State Policy for the Safe Transportation of school children. In 2008 I was invited by the Government to transform my project into the State Policy. In 2011 it became a reality and I remain connected till date with the Government in the Implementation Process of the Policy.

Without going into the full project, there are 2 points I will highlight which are the technological aspects; the logistics including the routes, fee collection, entire student data and the evolution of the GIS Mapping and tracking of the buses.

In 2004, I worked with a very competent and exclusive Tech Team to work on tracking the movement of the buses in real time. The whole software component was working but the hardware was compromised.....

Today, in 2017, in the same school, the entire tracking is running smoothly, as I had envisioned!

About APPS – Today with Automation, there is an App Application for nearly all services and yet the challenges are clear. So why are issues compromising the services? You create an Automated System but when the Support System is weak the service is compromised. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure the support service is robust before launching an APP!

Conclusion – From the morning various aspects of Automation has been put forth, however, the “Bridging” of Automation with Society, remains to be fully addressed.

Whilst all of the discussions related to Automated Services, would have been understood by many Users, the larger demographic must be able to use such Automated Processes and Systems. Only when all sections of Society can become Users, the “Bridge” would be successful of Automation and Society.

I believe Automated Services is a reality but it needs a Human Reality Check to make it successful and serve us, as it is supposed to! Get the Balance Right!!

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