



Workplace of the future: Unlocking efficiency through dynamic AI collaboration

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Hanish Patel: I am Hanish Patel, and this is User Friendly. The show where we explore emerging trends in tech, media, and telecom, and how they impact business, operations, and the world around you.

If we think about how employees really expect a seamless collaboration and connectivity experience, no matter where they're working, be that in the home, office, coffee shop, and frankly anywhere in between. Yet, many workplaces today

just aren't ready to meet those demands of a frictionless, connected experience. And the workplace of the future is being shaped by advancements in artificial intelligence (as we all commonly refer, AI), networking, and security, making it even more important than ever for organizations to adapt to these changes.

And in this episode of User Friendly, we will delve into the key trends shaping future-proofed workplaces; the

importance of unifying networking and collaboration and security; and a transformative impact of AI on workplace efficiency and employee productivity.

And joining me today to discuss these critical developments are Anurag Dhingra, senior vice president and general manager of Enterprise Connectivity and Collaboration at Cisco, and Rahul Bajpai, principal and US Connected Edge leader at Deloitte Consulting LLP. Anurag, Rahul, thanks for joining me today to discuss this topic.

Anurag Dhingra: Thank you for having us here, Hanish.

Hanish Patel: All right, so let's get started into it. And I think, Anurag, I'd love to kick off with you. If you don't mind giving us an overview of your role as Cisco's senior vice president and general manager of Enterprise Connectivity and Collaboration, understanding a bit more about what does this role entail. And frankly, if you don't mind sharing what's top of mind for you right now?

Anurag Dhingra: Absolutely. Thank you for that question, Hanish. So as the senior vice president and general manager for Enterprise Connectivity and Collaboration at Cisco, I lead a team that is building a portfolio of products for delivering secure connectivity in every workplace and then providing tools for people to collaborate with each other.

Now we take a very expansive definition of what a workplace is. It can be a traditional office environment, it can be a branch office, it can be a retail store, it can be a factory floor. In fact, any place where people work is a workplace for us. And so, my team builds technology to deliver wired and wireless connectivity. So, this includes the Wi-Fi infrastructure, the switching and routing carnet lines, and then we build a set of products to help people connect with each other and with their customers.

Core of all of this, we are in the business of delivering amazing experiences, seamless connectivity, secure connectivity, and then tools for people to collaborate with each other. And what's top of mind for me, Hanish, honestly is helping our customers meet the needs of their workplace and the collaboration today, but also helping them future-proof their environments and their workplaces for the emerging needs of tomorrow. And that's really what my team and I are focused on.

Hanish Patel: So firstly, thank you for that overview of the role. And I want to kind of just dig in a bit more about what you said around not just meeting the needs of today, but

frankly the needs of tomorrow, and future-proofing those workplaces.

So, I'd love for us to dig in a bit more around your view of that future-proofed workplace, and why is it so critical for organizations right now, even if we are thinking about where it may go in the future?

Anurag Dhingra: So, when you take a step back and think about what's happening in the world today, there's a new technology surfacing that is going to impact pretty much everything that we do. I'm talking about artificial intelligence and AI. It's already starting to show impact in several different industries, but we are still very early in this new technological shift.

And like all big technological shifts that came before this, the advent of the internet or the mobile phones and devices or cloud computing and software as a service, this is another inflection point where all organizations need to really think about the future that we will live in. And if you think about the workforce today, it's almost entirely human workforce. Obviously, we use machines to get our work done, but when you think about the workforce, we think about humans.

Going forward, you'll have humans and digital workers working side by side. And these digital workers will take different shapes and forms. Many of them will be software agents that will help us get more productive. These agents will also, we call them "agents" because they'll have agency and they'll be able to do things autonomously. They'll do humanlike work on our behalf. But this AI can also be embodied AI. And we're starting to see this on factory floors today where robots are really building things in factories today.

And you can imagine robots and humanoids entering the workforce working side by side with humans. And what that's going to do to the overall productivity of humanity is a multifold increase in output. And in

order for organizations to adapt to that future, you have to really think about the infrastructure that you're putting in place today, the tools that you're putting in place today, and the processes that you use within your organization.

And all of that needs to be thought through for this new future. And that's really what I mean by helping our customers not just meet their challenges today but get ready for the future.

Hanish Patel: Around that, Rahul, I'd love to get your perspectives on that with, as you are advising many clients through this transition and getting ready for the future, so to speak, which is (one could argue) already here. How are you seeing that with some of the clients that you're working with?

Rahul Bajpai: Sure, Hanish. So, I love the thoughts Anurag shared because it brings a lot of, I would say, focus on the enabling technologies for our future workforce and how—and again, workforce, like Anurag said, is a combination of people like you and me. And Anurag will basically work in an office space, with field technicians, agents, and so on.

I would love to start with an example. So, where I pick on a couple that are very relevant to our enterprise clients. So, one is a warehouse worker. They need to get real-time alerts via AR [augmented reality] glasses at some location, a remote location, as and when the Edge AI detects some damaged packages or misrouted inventory in a typical warehouse setting.

The amount of technology that you need in there is not as important as how you integrate the different technology domains. So localized processing of data near to the source, as in on-device or local gateway, means a faster response time for that worker. But if you look at employees who are enrolled with field service, manufacturing, and even beyond to health care—detecting any safety violations, lagging inventory anomalies.

Those become a function of Edge AI, real-time inferencing. That's some of our clients' top of mind: how to enable that functionality. But that cannot happen. In another example where, let's say, a sales employee that logs in from a coffee shop: They need to get onto their back-end CRM securely. Then you need the magic of software-defined networking with some secure access, or service edge, that ensures your security policies are followed. They've actually followed the end user, and the enterprise is not compromising the access of their data from their sales employee who is sitting in a coffee shop.

So how do we help our clients architect applications that are truly Edge Cloud-orchestrated, ensuring local responsiveness and local use when needed, but then allowing an offline mode and local caching so that they can continue to work even during the brief connectivity loss. And then once they connect back, they can transpose things to the cloud.

So many different ways in which our clients are working with us, and we are helping shape some of those technology choices and those roadmap decisions to bring about this seamless ubiquitous connectivity for all types of end users.

Anurag Dhingra: So, one thing, Rahul, that you said, which I find very interesting is around secure connectivity. And as I think about the transformation that AI is going to bring to the workforce, the exposure and the surface area for security is going to grow. It's going to go through a step change here because I was talking about agents, and you were also giving these examples. These are machines that are starting to do humanlike work, but at the speed and scale of machines.

And so, you need completely different approaches to managing your security surface area, and you want to start leveraging AI to manage all of this because it's just not going to be possible to bring traditional approaches.

Rahul Bajpai: Anarug, absolutely. And in fact, security and "SASE" [Secure Access Service Edge] as they call it, is top of mind for our optimized and secured routing capabilities, which a lot of remote and mobile sort of employees would need to kind of leverage. And a similar nature is some of the more (which we take for granted) functions like IT management, employee onboarding.

How they receive a new laptop and how device consistency and security needs to be maintained with unified endpoint management. These are some of those areas where I feel that the underlying technology tone and what needs to get implemented is similar, whether you move from employee to machine to agents, but the complexity in solving this basically has to be a set function change, but we have to address it a bit more pragmatically to take the best of what is deployed today and then incrementally add on new tech stacks to make this a more future-proof offering.

Anurag Dhingra: It's a brave new world full of opportunity here.

Hanish Patel: So, I actually want to dig in a bit more on something you both touched upon, as you talked about here, some elements around security and then the collaboration, so to speak, between humans, the digital worker—be that robots, be that humanoids—and the agents who have agency to make certain decisions within appropriate parameters.

If we think about that picture that you've painted and certainly some of that activity taking place now, but also the future-proofing of that, with that continuing to evolve with a much more AI-influenced landscape, how crucial is it to unify that collaboration element around that networking, whether you are remote, whether you're in the office, in a branch elsewhere, and bring that all together as a strategy. And where does that truly benefit the employees and the IT teams when you

think of it from that perspective? And Rahul, I'll kick it to you first.

Rahul Bajpai: So, the intersection of, I would say, networking, which is picking the right network fabric. It could be Wi-Fi 6, Wi-Fi 7. In a more contained environment, it could be commercial 5G, private 5G, whatever the mechanism is of connecting endpoints. Endpoints like you and I, or endpoints like machines, laptops, or even sensors and devices.

So that I'll call it one bucket. The second one is bringing instant, I would say, now that these sensors are talking, you can bring the data that they are exchanging onto a common local platform and start drawing some insights. But to your point, Hanish, ultimately this has to benefit the end user.

So, the more real-time example I would give is an employee is working in a remote location, and let's say the AR or the camera, the computer vision, is basically detecting some safety violations. To help that end user so that they don't fall into trouble, or they don't do something that compromises their well-being, their health, or maybe the equipment.

That near real-time alert back to that individual can be game-changing from making a mistake that could potentially harm themselves or those around them in that work environment. So, it's more of a safety compliance but a proactive way of alerting to avoid that safety hazard that could have happened if we didn't harness the technology better, as in the sensor devices, the advance networks, and the Edge AI inferencing on the premise.

Ultimately, the ability to avoid some of the potential hallucinations of AI, the ability to provide a stronger baseline of [an] enterprise data set to make better decisions through insights that are learned and trained on those data sets?

All that will require a lot more user collaboration inside an enterprise setting and a field operations collaboration in a larger distributed sort of environment where you have oil and gas or health care or automotive industries kind of struggling with how do I harness intelligence from the disparate endpoints under very dynamic conditions and start bringing intelligence that can truly start impacting change or decision-making for those individuals, those employees, those cars, and ultimately for people who are actually working in the workforce, in the field, and so on.

Anurag Dhingra: I wanted to apply a different lens to this because, Hanish, you asked the question around how do we bring networking and collaboration security together, and why is that important?

And this is where I wanted to share a little bit of how we think about bringing these things together in a platform that really connects the dots across these different products and different technologies to ultimately deliver an amazing experience that helps employees get more productive, but also gives IT the tools to manage this going forward.

So let me take an example. All of us have come to rely on online collaboration tools like meeting tools and so on. And these days it's almost a table stakes expectation that there's some sort of an AI assistant working in that meeting for you, transcribing the meeting, taking notes, producing summaries and action items at the end of that.

So, you're starting to see how AI is helping us get productive, and we can actually focus on the meat of the conversation versus note-taking and things that can be automated. So, from an experience point of view, that's a huge benefit for employees. Just a very small example of that.

But then when you think about what goes under the covers to deliver that seamless experience, the network and the connectivity plays a big role there. And then if something goes wrong, if you have a blip in audio

experience or video experience, the IT teams are usually on the hook to explain what happened and to make sure it doesn't happen again.

And how can they stitch information telemetry that is coming out of the network, with telemetry that is coming out of the application, and make sense out of that to explain what happened and how to proactively avoid that from happening again? And this is also an area where we're seeing AI now helping them really explain what's going on.

There's so much information, there's so much data, that sometimes it's not possible to make sense out of that. AI can be a copilot for IT in that scenario as well. And as these AI applications proliferate, as agents proliferate, the surface area for security threats is going to proliferate and expand as well.

And I think that will require different approaches where you can't just have centralized security enforcement points. You will have to sprinkle the security enforcement points throughout your infrastructure. You have to embed that security into the fabric of your connectivity, and your network becomes an enforcement point for that security policy as well.

And because you're doing it in such a distributed massive fashion, you have to apply machine learning and AI techniques to this. It is not humanly possible to manage hundreds or thousands of distributed mini firewalls in your environment. You're going to have to bring AI tools to bear.

Rahul Bajpai: So, Anurag, all those sort of security and connectivity with AI enabled in the whole IT system ecosystem as well as the employee interaction ecosystem, they're all fair. The one thing that has started emerging is choices for connectivity as well.

So, a lot of the large factory-based entities are thinking about, "Hey, should I even have a neutral host-type network in my facility?" A private 5G that I control that allows me

not only to connect my sensors, devices, and endpoints, but if it's a large enough campus where 10,000, 15,000 employees are sort of distributed across different buildings and facilities.

Can their respective cell phones, from their respective carriers in the US, all latch onto my private 5G as an enterprise through multi-operator core network or radio access network sharing-type technologies, which then as an enterprise allows me to provide that very seamless experience to my employees, to my machines, to my endpoints, because I have now the full breadth of that wireless network config, service management quality of experience, that I can better control while my employees are on my campus.

So that's another emerging team that has just started with neutral host and the ability to bring telco subscribers onto my private 5G in the enterprise.

Anurag Dhingra: That's an important callout, Rahul. And when I talk about platforms, I don't mean locked-in and closed platforms. We are big believers in an open ecosystem. I believe that we have to allow for interoperability. Our company was founded to connect this network together. So that's sort of in our DNA. But I think this is an emerging area where new standards are yet to be defined in terms of how agents will talk to each other, how agents will collaborate not just with humans but with each other.

And I think it is in our collective interest as industry to define these standards together and build systems that are interoperable because at the end of the day, the customer gets more value out of that and if the customer wins, then we all win. So, I completely agree with that, that callout you made, Rahul.

Rahul Bajpai: Very well said.

Hanish Patel: So just want to go where you started to touch upon there, Rahul, where you kind of mentioned campus and what's emerging. But just off the back of what you were talking about as well, Anurag, that whole

networking piece and just kind of bringing it all together. Would love for you guys to spend a bit of time talking about some of the trends that you are seeing that are shaping, say, campus or branch networking and how that's evolving. Would love for you guys to sort of paint that picture for our listeners and maybe, Anurag, I'll kick it to you first.

Anurag Dhingra: So, I think one thing that's here and now is more and more devices are connecting to these networks. It's not just people, it's not just our laptops and mobile phones that we use to get work done. But it's a number of sensors and all sorts of devices. There's an explosion of IoT [Internet of Things] devices connecting to these networks, and that causes us to think about the use cases that you're trying to solve with these devices, and then the latency and the bandwidth and the throughput requirements that those use cases place on these networks.

And as agents and AI applications start to proliferate, they will probably shift those requirements. And when you think about branch, specifically there was this sort of shift to SaaS-based consumption model and people started talking about these coffee shop-like experiences in the branches where most applications, if not all, are hosted in the cloud.

And so, you have a direct connectivity from the branch to the cloud, and you're not necessarily here bringing traffic to your main headquarters from a networking architecture standpoint. But what we're starting to see now is a repatriation of some of the traffic back to the enterprise data centers.

And what's driving this trend is this very clear change that is happening with smaller models, the cost of inferencing falling, enterprise data sitting in enterprise systems that just makes sense to bring inferencing close to that data. And so, we are starting to see that a lot of these AI workloads are

starting to move back into the data center for the enterprise. So that will require to kind of rewire network traffic from branch to campus locations as well.

And then as agents and AI applications start talking to each other, you'll see a lot of traffic going, what we call in networking parlance, "east-west direction"—staying local on the network versus going out of your environment to a cloud application.

And so, there's going to be a need to enforce security for that type of traffic, in addition to sort of traditional firewalls that are placed in a DMZ, or demilitarized zone, at the edge of the corporate network. And so, you're going to have to rethink how to design these networks.

And then finally, I think, Rahul, you mentioned this earlier, but I see huge applications of Edge AI and Edge compute, and that will also drive. So, I'm thinking about what you run in a branch, what you run in the data center, and how you can offload some intelligence from smaller language models to larger language models, and sort of these cooperative models trying to emerge that will have new requirements for how campus and branch networks are built.

Rahul Bajpai: I completely agree, Anurag. In fact, if you look at it from our enterprises' lens. That is it, right? It's multimodal inferencing, multimodal AI, which is driving a lot of the in-campus, in-venue. And when I say campus venue is just not limited to a university or a sports stadium. I'm calling manufacturing facilities, health care locations—all those venues.

The ability for enterprises to really combine intelligence from different modes or from different sort of like, "Hey, I've got a text transcription going on. I have to analyze an audio." There are some fusion models that are needed to combine and interpret data from different sources like merging visual and spoken inputs for better context.

Cross-modal learning: how the AI can learn to relate one mode of data to another. They're basically describing images and text and answering questions about videos. All that starts helping through large language or small language models. All that starts helping some retail functions and some medical diagnostic functions.

I can give you one example of retail where a visual plus a barcode plus a customer voice for self-service kiosks is now being POC'd or prototyped to see whether that can actually make the experience a lot more efficient in terms of checkout, but also reduce the overall cost of running and operating a certain store with a point of sale that connects to five different systems to bring insights back to the end user.

So those are some of the areas where I feel that customer service agents that see and listen in more of an environment where there's a lot of customer care going on in real time; where surveillance and security with smart interpretation of video feeds onsite can allow streamlining of the ingress, the egress of a lot of people coming into a large stadium-type venue; AR, VR, and some assistance that can help identify right patterns and start to route traffic better or route consumption patterns a bit differently.

I think all of these specific to large venues, stadiums, or enterprises will start emerging in terms of key capabilities needed to drive that operational technology-led change. I'm not talking as much IT now as I'm trying to focus more on the OT side of things, as an enterprise starts consuming some of these tech for bettering their operations.

Hanish Patel: Let's stick with something both of you mentioned throughout, which is around AI. You both also touched upon edge. So, what are the possibilities that are unlocked by the application of AI at the edge?

Rahul Bajpai: For us, AI at the edge is all about enabling real-time insights, low latency,

and just better privacy. So, if you look at the core characteristics of Edge AI as our clients and our customers are kind of thinking about local data processing—so AI models running directly on the device on the Edge node, extreme low latency.

Because we're talking millisecond-based decision-making without sending data to the cloud. And privacy. A big thing about all this operational technology-led transformation is we have to protect sensitive data, and we cannot let it leave the premise or the device.

So, if you take those kind of three, four building blocks, then in the world of manufacturing and industrial IoT, as an example, defect detection via cameras on assembly lines becomes big. Because it's a clear savings and actually it enhances the production line, but it also helps reduce the number of hands or number of human intervention needed to go fix the problem with some predictive maintenance using sensor-based data.

If you start looking at health care: portable diagnostic tools with AI; ultrasound imaging on tablets, as an example; talking to one of our health care clients. Or real-time monitoring in an ambulance for rural clinics or rural health care. That's another example.

And then in our own worlds, smart cities, and utilities. So, using traffic lights, traffic signals embedded with AI for congestion control. Or for utility and power generation, I would say grid asset monitoring with Edge sensors to better manage the distribution of energy resources and plan for outages, fire hazards. Any weather-related disruption to power.

Those are some of the examples that I can think of from an enterprise and consumer setting that would truly be enabled at the intersection of Edge AI, with of course, some back-end advanced connectivity.

Anurag Dhingra: Those are some really good examples. I wanted to add a couple

more, starting with the privacy-first aspect of Edge AI. That's actually near and dear to my heart as well.

When we started thinking about how are we going to do noise removal in meetings or virtual backgrounds in meetings, and we would clearly have to apply machine learning algorithms and we'd have to do a bunch of audio and data processing in order to do those type of things.

We took very much of an Edge AI approach here where we do all of that processing to clean your audio, make it sound nicer and richer, or make your video look good on your laptop or in your mobile phone.

And we deliberately took that approach versus applying this AI in the cloud where our back-end services run because if you do this on the devices on the edge, then we can do this while maintaining end-to-end encryption, which is very much of a need in a privacy-conscious organization.

And so that's—just to explain, Rahul, the point that you made about privacy-first approaches—it's very, very critical. And then I wanted to talk a little bit about some of our customers who are applying Edge AI in a factory setting. And what we're seeing there is that as they are deploying more and more robots, these robots are starting to move around these factory floors; they're not fixed robots anymore. They work off of these AI models, and the latency becomes super critical there in that environment.

They really just can't afford to go all the way to a cloud-based service and come back because that causes too much latency. And so that's driving not just a need to host these models closer to where the robots are. It is also driving a need for better wireless connectivity. When you and I are moving around in an office building and we go from one access point to another access point as we are roaming within our office building, there's a momentary break in Wi-Fi connectivity, but our devices, our applications are able to deal with that.

Now if you are working with a robot that is moving around a factory floor and it loses a connection even momentarily, it stops in its tracks. It grinds to a halt. So, we've had to invent new wireless technologies to make connections before we break connections as these things move around. And so that's like the other thing that is happening as these AI models start to move towards the edge. They're also putting new requirements on connectivity.

Rahul Bajpai: Absolutely. Constant challenge and opportunity. In terms of, yeah, we have to advance our networking, like you said, make connections before you break, but also figure out the interoperability with existing networking technologies, and then create sort of that seamless operational layer that can help drive some of this innovation we need at the edge with AI.

Hanish Patel: So, I'm going to stick with the AI topic and it's well documented, well discussed, but I do want to get both your perspectives on responsible AI and specifically as you were both talking about organizations "making before breaking," how should organizations actually think about responsible AI? And frankly, what governance structure should be in place? And so, if I think about governance, what role potentially does government have to play in that as I think about responsible AI?

Anurag Dhingra: Hanish, very good question.

The first thing that I would suggest is for each organization to kind of think about are they a consumer of AI or are they building products that incorporate AI? And these days, more and more organizations are in both of those buckets. They're doing both of those things, but the concerns from a governance point of view can be slightly different.

So, when you are consuming AI in applications, whether those are agents or copilots or assistants or whatever you have, you have to think about information

that you host and where that information goes. IP production becomes a concern. So, you really need to think about how are you going to ensure that you're empowering your employees to have the latest and greatest tools while protecting the assets that are most important to the organization.

When you're building applications with AI, the heart of those applications, then you have these other concerns around how do you protect these models from bias coming into these models, from security threats coming into these models, from these models starting to drift away from the performance characteristics that you had put in place.

So, I typically suggest organizations to think about some core principles that are really reflective of their values and then codify those in tools and processes to allow their developers, to allow their employees to use these tools and build these tools in a safe manner.

And then, Rahul, I'll let you add your color there before I address sort of the role that governments have to play here.

Rahul Bajpai: Absolutely. I'll just add a few thoughts, as again, interacting with our clients, what is top of their mind?

So, top of mind is governance and strategy. How to establish the AI ethics policies, and how do you define the principles of privacy, transparency, and so on? Whether it's creating the right cross-functional teams committee with legal data science, risk compliance, or appointing an accountable sort of leader in the organization. So, the broader enterprise's responsibility—that's kind of number one.

A close second would be the whole life cycle integration. And, I would say, ethical data collection. Monitor any sensitive attributes and make sure it's cleansed or masked before it's being used. How do you develop

models, AI models, I should say, to interpret the ML algorithms where possible without getting into any PII [personally identifiable information] type information?

How do you test and evaluate these models before you start to deploy them and then monitor them for accountability? The third would be largely around technology choices and tooling. And while not on the government—I'll let you say, Anurag, about that—but a big aspect of our work with our clients is about regulatory and compliance.

So, depending on which enterprise we are working with, are they in compliance with the EU AI Act or the NIST [National Institute of Standards and Technology] AI framework? How GDPR [General Data Protection Regulation] plays a role in the whole decision and data rights and consent mechanisms that need to be in place?

And then for an organization to truly understand and imbibe responsible AI in action, there's a lot of culture and training that needs to be put in a different lens. Where, again, it's through ethics workshop or RAI [responsible AI] trainings, or AI literacy even, to help understand some nontechnical stakeholders. What are the risks associated with AI and the outcomes?

So, a lot of things go around in actually educating the workforce and bringing about that cultural change to increase that level of transparency and maturity and using AI responsibly and conforming to some of the standards as defined by regulatory and compliance boards. But please do tell us more about the perspective you're sharing on government.

Anurag Dhingra: Now another thing that you touched upon, Rahul, which is very important, is these evolving emerging standards that are really a place where governments are taking a very active role. And I truly believe that this is going to be a public-private partnership that will set the

right guardrails around building AI systems, especially as we move towards artificial and general intelligence and AI that is more and more powerful and even maybe cognitively more powerful than humans are in the future. It is very important to kind of think about the implications of that technology. And I don't think that the industry can really do this without partnering very closely with governments.

Another thing that I think we have to start thinking about is the societal impact of some of these things. And we hear a lot about the risk of job losses and a lot of people getting nervous around that. And it is fair; this is completely grounded in what we're starting to see today in several industries. AI is starting to impact jobs in a way where you will see a loss in jobs, and then newer types of jobs will emerge, and these transitions are not going to be easy.

We've seen this with previous technologies, and I think this is, again, where I believe governments have a role to play to prepare the society for these types of transitions and make sure that the workforce can actually go from where the jobs are today to where the jobs are going to be tomorrow. And that requires a lot of investment in education, in training, in building social safety nets.

Hanish Patel: So firstly, thank you both for that, and that gives me a great springboard to probably the final question as we bring it home. I would love to get your perspectives on what future advancements in AI do you foresee frankly having a significant impact on workplace efficiency?

Rahul Bajpai: From an impact perspective, personalizing I would say through AI—personalizing the efficiency, the gains for all of the employees, whether they're in different settings, or like automotive, health care, manufacturing, and so on. But personalizing it with a couple of things. Real-time decision intelligence—how AI systems can generate recommendations

from live enterprise data. The future state of whether it changes commerce in a way that, hey, AI helps manage how to adjust pricing or staffing or supply chain and response to changing conditions that we all see quite dynamically happening today.

Connecting workers through better augmented tools. So, onshore workers when they get real-time assistance via any mechanism—mobile devices, smart classes. How do they use vision AI to make sure they can work in a safe operating environment and start kind of making decisions to guide their repairs, their restoration efforts better.

I would say also if you start looking at autonomous or continuous automation, AI agents coordinating report generation, approvals, any CRM updates that quite frankly all of us don't have the time to spend. We should be investing our time in better business creation or value creation activity. So maybe that's the third one.

And then finally, I'll also add that in terms of just knowledge management, eliminating the time spent searching for information. Getting newer employees in the workforce to come in, onboard, and seamlessly have access to the wealth of information that's probably documented, as well as not documented, through better internal processing via small or large language models.

I think those are some of the areas where I feel the biggest impact of AI will be seen and will be appreciated in an environment, which largely—it's a federated workforce, and we're

still trying to figure out how best to uniformly drive efficiency and bring collaboration to the next level.

Anurag Dhingra: So, Rahul, you've said a lot of things that resonate with me, especially the last couple of points around being able to find the right information when you need it and also the value creation point that you made.

In fact, from my point of view, I think the promise of AI is to automate a lot of things so that we can free up mental bandwidth, our brain power focused on higher-value activities that are uniquely human. And I'm hoping that with more and more autonomous agents starting to offload us and starting to do things that we typically spend our time on that collectively not only will our throughput and our productivity and society will improve, but it'll give us the capacity and the space to do things that we all enjoy doing and things that are uniquely human. Where things like empathy and things like connection and what makes us human—those types of skills really shine.

And then I'm also quite hopeful that it generates a new wave of creativity for all of us. When you have the space and time to think properly and not really be just doing busywork, then lots of new creation happens, lots of new innovation happens, and I think that's really what I'm looking forward to.

Rahul Bajpai: Anurag, absolutely right, I completely resonate. And one thing I'll add is some of my own colleagues, who are software engineering by profession, they say that, hey, because the advancements of AI are bringing more developer productivity, fewer bugs, faster releases, we're able to think about what outcomes we can drive as opposed to how many syntax changes I need to make or code revisions that I need to do.

So, like you said, creating that gray matter capacity to focus more on the outcome, less so much on the tasks that can be automated with AI.

Hanish Patel: As I reflect on our discussion, it's clear that the workplace of the future will be a dynamic space. As we've explored today, the integration of advanced technologies is not just about enhancing productivity but also about creating environments that foster innovation and human connection.

This has been an insightful journey into the future of workplaces where AI, connectivity, and collaboration are reshaping how we work. So, for that, Anurag, Rahul, thank you for sharing your expertise and perspectives, and joining me on the podcast today to really discuss these transformative trends. And to our listeners, thank you for joining us. And, until next time, happy listening.

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