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TWO PRIORITIES FOR SUCCESS IN 2021

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As the weather turns slightly milder, and the clocks spring forward to signal summertime, life is hopefully starting to feel slightly more positive. It is hard to find the time to pause and reflect on the past 12 months; what it has meant for us personally and what it has meant within the organisations that we work in and interact with.

As I look across the whole landscape, there are some key challenges that we see facing the market right now. I summarise these into 5 words, simple to say – but complex and multifaceted in their nature. SPEED, RESILIENCE, DISRUPTION, EXPERIENCE and SUSTAINABILITY are the headline challenges to be faced, and form the fundamental backdrop to our perspective on the market moving forwards.

We've spoken about "pace of change" – SPEED – for several years now, mainly as a phenomenon affecting the technology landscape – but we're all swept up in that with the dramatic pace of life now. And never has our personal steel, and that of organisations large and small been tested like we've seen this past year – (RESILIENCE). All the while, survival for many businesses has been based on an ability to react to the DISRUPTION facing them and a need to rethink the EXPERIENCES they offer. Sadly, it must be noted, many industries and businesses have been prevented from making these adaptations and continue to look ahead to a very uncertain future.

Retaining the optimism from the start of this blog, I see two key priorities to maximise the chances for success in 2021 and beyond. Success may be a strong word, for many, revival or rebirth may describe the reality they face in the immediate term. The key priorities are Operational Efficiency and Agility and Growth. The reality is that both priorities are required for Enabling Success.

Operational Efficiency

A key imperative, always, is the management of the cost base and ensuring effective usage of existing capacity (technical or otherwise). Never more so has this been a key priority and the evidence we're seeing is of a relentless focus in driving operational efficiency. This currently ranges from looking at facilities footprint in the face of a "hybrid" workforce, to assuring the security, availability and compliance of core systems to support the continued business operation, in many cases still delivering at a scale that was not originally designed for.

In an environment where revenues and profits continue to be challenged across many industries, making the best of what you currently have – or "doing more with the same, or less" is a focus.

But there are limits to this, and efforts to optimise existing footprints need to be balanced with ensuring that you can continue to deliver your services efficiently by making targeted investments in technology, processes and people to modernise your capabilities. In the long run spending now could be the enabler and driver of further efficiencies and cost savings later – perhaps in the form of automation, reduced support costs or the delivery of extra capacity and performance from the same technology footprint.

Agility and Growth

If ever there was a need for boldness in looking forwards, then it is now. The ability to adapt and innovate to generate new possibilities and opportunities will be critical to delivering future success. Increasing agility and growth into your business, not solely in terms of what you do for your customers but in how you do it, internally and externally requires strong consideration and decisive action planning.

The benefit of technology is the seemingly infinite array of opportunities it exposes to us. From exploiting existing data assets better and driving real business value from unlocking the insights that your data holds so you can make more informed decisions, to the opportunity for new services and capabilities leveraging the ubiquity of public cloud or the explosion of use cases at the Edge.

Powering your business forwards is enabled by significant transformation of not only what you do, but every aspect of how you do it, and by a culture of innovation and exploration to embrace new opportunities and generate new experiences and value for your customers, employees and partners.

Summary

Both objectives need to be prioritised and fulfilled. Driving Operational Efficiency to deliver cost and quality management within your business and Increasing Agility and Growth to identify and embrace opportunities ahead. The balance may be a challenge at times, and the pace unrelenting, but the course must be set to deliver both to help deliver success.