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THE GREAT INTEGRATION

Technology, Talent, and Transformation in Asia

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Executive Summary

The Hyderabad edition of the SpeakIn Asia Dialogues Forum '26 convened 50+ distinguished leaders from technology, healthcare, manufacturing, financial services, government, and consulting sectors at the prestigious Taj Falaknuma Palace. The forum revealed a critical paradox facing organisations today: while 93% of Indian businesses expect positive ROI on AI investments, nearly 90% of global AI investments fail — not due to lack of capability, but due to misplaced intent and lack of strategic focus.

The Hyderabad dialogue synthesized complementary perspectives on what separates successful AI integration from failed investments. The forum explored how critical thinking and talent create competitive advantage, while simultaneously challenging participants with an uncomfortable truth — technology by itself creates no value without clear business problems to solve.

#3	#2	93%	90%
Stanford AI Vibrancy Index	**Global AI Talent Pool**	**Expect Positive AI ROI**	**AI Investments Fail**
India's 2025 global ranking	375,000+ AI professionals	Within 3 years	Due to misplaced intent globally

KEY FINDINGS

- **India's competitive advantage lies in critical thinking:** Despite criticism of the education system, it has produced global CEOs who thrived by learning to think independently and challenge assumptions
- **Technology creates no value without purpose:** Nearly 90% of global AI investments fail due to FOMO-driven adoption — boards demand AI, investors expect it, even when simpler solutions would work better
- **Strategic focus matters more than technological sophistication:** The real question isn't 'what technology are we using?' but 'what problem are we solving?'
- **The AI readiness paradox:** India ranks #2 globally in AI talent with 252% growth since 2016, yet 64% of organisations cite incomplete AI training and 48% report fragmented investments
- **Integration trumps adoption:** Success belongs to organisations that integrate technology with talent, tools with thinking, and innovation with clear business objectives

India's AI Landscape: Strength Meets Challenge

India has emerged as a global AI powerhouse, climbing to #3 on Stanford University's 2025 Global AI Vibrancy Index — jumping four places in just one year. However, this remarkable talent strength exists alongside significant execution challenges that the Hyderabad forum directly addressed.

The Capability-Execution Paradox

India's position reveals a compelling contradiction that forum participants grappled with. The country has the talent and capability, but organisations struggle to translate this into successful AI outcomes. Understanding why requires examining both the foundational capabilities needed and the strategic discipline required for execution.

Strength	Data Point	Challenge
#2 Global AI Talent Ranking	375,000+ AI professionals	64% cite incomplete AI training
252% talent growth (2016–2024)	Highest globally	48% have fragmented AI investments
93% expect positive AI ROI	Within 3 years	90% of AI investments fail globally

This paradox formed the foundation of the forum's discussions: India has the talent and capability, but organisations struggle to translate this into successful AI outcomes. Understanding why requires examining both the foundational capabilities needed and the strategic discipline required for execution.

Key Insights from the Hyderabad Forum

Key Insight 1 **Critical Thinking: India's Enduring Competitive Advantage**

A central insight emerged that challenges conventional critiques of India's educational framework. While there is widespread criticism of the higher education system, many global CEOs and leaders came through that very system — not because it was perfect, but because those who thrived learned to think independently, adapt quickly, and challenge assumptions.

Key Insight	Implication
The system produced leaders not because it was perfect, but because successful individuals learned to think independently	**Success is less about the system and more about individual capacity to adapt, question, and challenge assumptions**

India's employability rate has risen to 54.81% in 2025, with the country expected to account for over 40% of the global skilled workforce. The education system produces 3.8 million tech professionals and maintains the world's second-largest AI talent pool.

"We are training our students in a particular framework, telling them 'this is the job you're always aspiring for.' That's not what we need. We need to teach them adaptability, give them better avenues, and ensure people match their passion."

Hari Chandana Dasari— Indian Administrative Service (IAS),Government of India

The Three Pillars of Critical Thinking

In an era where AI can process information faster and at greater scale than humans, the forum identified critical thinking as the differentiating factor. Forum participants identified three core components:

"I decided to use AI as my thinking buddy. When I joined Microsoft long back, Brian Valentine wrote a blog post asking 'What do we look for in people?' The blog ended with one line: We need people to think. That's it."

Ashish Babbar — Vice President & General Manager, Microsoft

- **Exposure:** Diverse experiences and perspectives that broaden understanding beyond immediate domains
- **Questioning:** The ability to challenge assumptions and seek deeper understanding, even when solutions seem obvious
- **Experience:** Practical application and reflection on outcomes that build judgment over time

"The fundamental starting point of critical thinking is intellectual humility. Our brain was evolutionarily designed for solving simple, dangerous problems needing immediate solutions. But contemporary problems are complex, not so dangerous, and solutions can wait. How do we train young minds for this?"

Dr. Padmakumar Nair — Vice Chancellor, Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology

Critical thinking isn't something we can assume or define away. It's built through exposure, questioning, and experience — and it matters now more than ever.

Key Insight 2 **Why 90% of AI Investments Fail: The FOMO Factor**

The forum delivered an uncomfortable truth: nearly 90% of global AI investments fail not because of lack of capability, but because of misplaced intent. FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) drives adoption — boards demand AI, investors expect it, customers ask for it, even when simpler solutions would work better.

90%	64%	48%	27%
AI Investments Fail	**Cite Incomplete Training**	**Fragmented Investments**	**Dept-Led Initiatives**
Globally — not capability, intent	As primary barrier to AI adoption	Piecemeal rather than enterprise strategy	vs. enterprise-wide coordination

The Root Causes of AI Investment Failure

- **Technology-First Thinking:** Organisations ask 'what technology should we use?' instead of 'what problem are we solving?'
- **Pressure-Driven Adoption:** Boards demand AI, investors expect it, competitors announce it — creating adoption without purpose
- **Lack of Problem Clarity:** Without clear business problems, even advanced AI becomes just another expense
- **Fragmented Implementation:** 48% of organisations report piecemeal investments; 27% pursue department-led initiatives rather than enterprise strategies

"Every model we were building had one significant gap—context. Technology without context creates no value. Nearly 90% of global AI investments are write-offs because of FOMO. Boards demand AI, investors expect it, customers ask for it—even when simpler solutions would work better."

Ritesh Dogra — Gen AI Innovation Head

Technology, by itself, creates no value. Without a clear business problem, even the most advanced AI becomes just another expense. Progress doesn't start with tools — it starts with clarity.

"A lot of AI and ML conversations happen to reduce cost. But that is the problem. It should be about decision velocity—how many decision points have you been able to reduce? The problem with India-related GCCs is running after cost rather than reducing decision nodes."

Rupessh Goel — Managing Director & Head of Credit, Data & Analytics and Product - India, First Citizens India

Key Insight 3 **The Discipline of Strategic Focus**

What stood out across forum discussions was the discipline of focus. Organisations that succeed with AI don't necessarily have the most advanced technology — they have the clearest understanding of what problems they're solving.

The Critical Questions Every Organisation Must Answer

- **What problem are we solving?**
- **Are we driving revenue?**
- **Are we improving outcomes?**
- **Are we creating real, measurable impact?**

"It's a certainty of action and certainty of speed at which we act. Today we see an encroachment, tomorrow it is removed. That discipline—the speed, the certainty—is what creates impact. Organizations must act with the same clarity."

AV Ranganath —Commissioner, HYDRAA, Telangana Government

Forum participants emphasised that technology must follow purpose. When organisations reverse this order — adopting technology first and searching for use cases later — they join the 90% of failed AI investments.

The Hyderabad Integration Framework

Synthesising insights from the Hyderabad forum, a comprehensive framework emerged for successful AI integration that balances capability with clarity, talent with technology, and ambition with discipline:

Technology-First Approach (90% Failure Rate)	Purpose-First Integration (Sustainable Value)
Adopting latest AI tools without purpose	**Define clear business problems first**
Following market hype and board pressure	**Build critical thinking capability at all levels**
Pressure-driven decisions, not problem-driven	**Integrate technology with talent deliberately**
Technology seeking problems to solve	**Measure real business impact, not tech adoption**

THE GREAT INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK — THREE PILLARS

- **Critical Thinking:** Exposure + Questioning + Experience → builds judgment that AI cannot replace
- **Technology Integration:** Tools + Thinking + Systems + Strategy + Scale + Purpose → drives value realisation
- **Adaptive Leadership:** Navigate ambiguity + Drive integration + Foster culture → sustains competitive advantage

Technology-First Approach	Purpose-First Integration
Adopting latest AI tools Following market hype Pressure-driven decisions Technology seeking problemsResult: 90% failure rate	✓ Define clear business problems✓ Build critical thinking capability✓ Integrate tech with talent✓ Measure real impactResult: Sustainable value creation

"The question is: are we creating environments where people are users of AI, or are they becoming dependent on AI? If human beings become just users rather than thinkers, we've failed. AI should enable us to think better, not replace our thinking."

Sudipto Mandal — CHRO & Head - Human Resources (L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad), Larsen & Toubro

"AI is not something that will take over. It's more like how we transformed from handwriting to keyboard. It's not taking anything away—it needs to become part of you. We need to understand it's an enabler for us to think better, moving from delivery to design."

Dileep Narayan — Director - HR, EPAM Systems

Strategic Recommendations for Organisations

Based on integrated insights from the Hyderabad forum and validated by industry data, organisations should adopt a comprehensive four-pillar approach to move from the 90% that fail to the 10% that succeed:

1. Start with Problems, Not Technology

- Conduct rigorous problem definition workshops before technology selection
- Establish clear success metrics: revenue growth, outcome improvement, or measurable impact
- Challenge every AI proposal with: 'Would a simpler solution work better?'
- Create governance frameworks that prevent FOMO-driven technology adoption

90% of AI investments fail due to misplaced intent. Technology-first thinking is the primary cause.

2. Build Critical Thinking Capabilities

- Create structured programmes for exposure to diverse perspectives and challenges
- Foster cultures that encourage questioning and constructive challenge at all levels
- Design experiential learning that goes beyond technical AI training to include strategic thinking

- Recognise and reward employees who demonstrate independent thinking and challenge assumptions

64% of organisations cite incomplete AI training as a barrier. Training must extend beyond tools to include strategic thinking and judgment.

3. Move from Fragmented to Focused AI Strategy

- Consolidate the 48% of fragmented AI initiatives into coherent enterprise strategies
- Prioritise fewer, higher-impact use cases over numerous pilot projects
- Move from department-led initiatives (27% of organisations) to enterprise-wide coordination
- Focus on moving the 53% of organisations from pilot to production at scale

4. Integrate Technology with Talent

- Design roles that leverage both human judgment and technological efficiency
- Build cross-functional teams that bridge technical expertise and business acumen
- Align with the 78% of organisations already integrating AI into workforce planning
- Recognise and reward problem-solving and business impact, not technology adoption

"If organizations can carefully invest in technology to amplify human judgment while allowing speed and decision quality—that's when we succeed. The biggest impact isn't coming from automation. It's coming from our people having time to do real advisory work."

Swetha Vissapragada — Director - APAC, Global Talent Acquisition Electronic Arts (EA)

Sectoral Implications

The Hyderabad forum brought together leaders from multiple sectors, each facing unique manifestations of the talent-technology integration challenge. Understanding sectoral readiness helps contextualise where different industries stand:

82	78	68	62
Technology Sector	**BFSI Sector**	**Healthcare Sector**	**Manufacturing**
AI Adoption Readiness Score	AI Adoption Readiness Score	AI Adoption Readiness Score	AI Adoption Readiness Score

Technology & IT — 82% Readiness

Despite leading in readiness, technology companies face the paradox most acutely: having the most advanced capabilities while still struggling with the 'what problem are we solving?' question. The sector must move from showcasing AI capability to demonstrating business value. Forum participants from Microsoft, Electronic Arts, and EPAM Systems emphasised that even with technical sophistication, strategic clarity remains the differentiator.

Financial Services — 78% Readiness

BFSI faces regulatory complexity alongside innovation pressure. Leaders from First Citizens, DBS Bank, and other financial institutions highlighted that success requires balancing automation efficiency with human oversight, risk management, and customer trust — exactly the integration discipline emphasised throughout the forum.

Manufacturing — 62% Readiness

Traditional industries show the widest gap between AI potential and execution. Participants from Larsen & Toubro, Align Technology, and Coromandel International noted that these sectors need critical thinking development combined with focus on clear operational problems — not technology for technology's sake. The integration challenge is most visible here.

Healthcare — 68% Readiness

Healthcare exemplifies the forum's core message: AI can assist diagnosis and treatment, but medical judgment remains irreplaceable. Representatives from CARE Hospitals, Keolis Hyderabad, and HealthTrust Healthcare emphasised that the sector requires deep integration of technology with clinical thinking — not technology replacement of clinical thinking.

Conclusion: The Path to the 10%

The Hyderabad forum revealed a complete picture of what separates successful AI integration from failed investments. The answer isn't more advanced technology or larger talent pools — it's the integration of capability with clarity, tools with thinking, and ambition with strategic discipline.

The data tells a compelling story: India ranks #2 globally in AI talent with 252% growth, yet 90% of AI investments fail worldwide. This paradox isn't unique to India — it reflects a global pattern where capability consistently outpaces strategic clarity. Organisations invest in technology hoping it will reveal its value, when success requires the opposite: clarity about value that guides technology selection.

Forum participants synthesised these realities into actionable insights: organisations succeed not by having the most advanced AI or the largest talent pools, but by starting with clear problems, building critical thinking capabilities, consolidating fragmented initiatives, and genuinely integrating technology with human judgment.

As Asia accelerates its AI journey, the organisations and nations that thrive will be those that master this discipline — combining India's remarkable talent strength with strategic focus on real problems. Technology enables scale, but people create value. The future belongs to those who resist FOMO, embrace clarity, and understand that AI's greatest potential lies not in what it can do alone, but in how it amplifies human capability when integrated with purpose.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES — TIET PERSPECTIVE

- **Problem-first governance:** Every AI initiative must begin with a documented business problem, success metric, and ROI hypothesis — no exceptions
- **Embed critical thinking in curriculum:** Thapar's competency framework — Knowledge + Skills + Values + Attitude — must drive every programme design
- **Close the intent gap:** Industry partnerships that convert real business problems into academic capstone projects build graduates who start with purpose
- **Integration over adoption:** Measure technology success by business outcomes realised, not tools deployed or pilots launched
- **Build judgment, not just skills:** The AI era demands people who can question, challenge, and decide — not just execute on instructions

Additional Voices from the Forum

"Based on research, nearly 90% of global AI investments are write-offs. There is a fear of missing out — boards demand AI, investors expect it, customers ask for it — even when simpler solutions would work better. Technology must be judged on one question: is it going to increase revenue or improve outcomes? If the answer is no, there is no value in pursuing it."

Bipin Chandra Dutt Pendyala — General Manager, Appen

"Integration is misunderstood by most organisations. They try hard to integrate systems but fail to integrate the decisions of the board or the leadership. The gap is in determining who owns the outcomes and responsibility of transformation, and how fast decisions are made. Integration needs to happen at the human level — at the leadership level — to make technology effective."

Kalyan Kumar — Managing Director, Nexer Group India

"Instead of asking 'Are we AI-first?', organisations should ask 'What is our core business and how can AI augment it?' Start team by team, not organisation-wide. Let AI act as a copilot — product managers write better user stories, developers code faster, testers improve precision. Everyone continues doing the same job, but with higher productivity and quality. ROI should be observed through real usage, not calculated upfront on theoretical models."

Anthil Anbazhagan — Managing Director, Entain

"Know your customer first. Giving an iPhone to a child versus a grandmother — the technology is the same, but the use depends entirely on the user. AI adoption must be designed around who is using it and what they are actually trying to solve, not around what the technology can theoretically do."

Sirisha Deevi — Director of Engineering, Experian

"We isolated a small team, gave them a 3x package, and put them in a lab with a mandate to experiment. That experiment yielded Cloud 4C, which was eventually acquired by Capgemini for a billion dollars. The lesson: budget 110% of what you ask for — the extra 10% goes into R&D experiments that become standalone P&Ls within two to three years. Innovation needs a protected space."

Anil Nama — CIO, CtrlS Datacenters

"Technology itself does not innovate — people do. Nearly 44% of job skills are expected to change in the next four years. Manufacturing companies using AI are seeing 40–50% reduction in predictive maintenance costs. Banks using AI are achieving 25% savings in fraud prevention. The investments are real — but their success hinges entirely on clear profitability outcomes, not experimentation for its own sake."

Gautam Jain — Managing Director, PwC India

"The question is no longer whether AI will transform everything — that is done. The question is: do you want to be an agent, or do you want to be just the subject? If you are an AI-forward company, you have to decide where your next 20-year vision sits on this curve and start acting now."

Puja Khemka — VP & Board Member, Schrödinger India

"When there is a major incident, AI does not come and solve it. Our engineers still have to brainstorm, handle ambiguity, and actually resolve the problem. The tribal knowledge — the human part — remains vital. Stability is not only about preventing failure; it is also about preventing knowledge loss."

Shalini Priyadarshi — Director, Cloud Support Operations, NTT DATA

"We try to encourage people to own their own individual responsibility of developing themselves — a combination of technical and behavioural skills. Career progression is flexible: people can grow vertically, laterally, and even change functions. With us, people know they have a future in this industry — not just in India, but potentially globally across Asia."

Dr. Reena Das — CHRO, Keolis Hyderabad Mass Rapid Transit System

"While AI is an enabler and a buddy, it is also automating — especially at the entry level. Responsible AI is not just about context-setting. It is also about how we reimagine entry-level roles. We need stronger partnerships with institutes — project-level and strategic-level opportunities that prepare people for these reimagined roles."

Rajeev G — Vice President & Managing Director, Blackbaud

"We have a strong talent pool. But we have to nurture it and make it employable faster — and that needs collective effort from industry bodies, GCCs, and institutions making real investments, not just hoping ready-made candidates will show up."

Harish Kumar Chukka Bhasker — Senior GCC Leader

"GCCs typically have a low appetite for investing in development — they prefer ready talent who is domain-ready, technology-ready, with great communication skills. But GCC leaders have a responsibility to build the layer below the initial unicorns and groom them. Every employee, regardless of function, must have a base understanding of data, the basics of AI and prompt engineering, and a strong understanding of the business they serve."

Richa Jain — Managing Director, Northern Tool & Equipment India

"The question is always: what if I train them and they leave? But the real question is: what if I don't train them? HR must create a business case that shows return on investment — if investing X million delivers Y in business outcomes, finance will be the biggest supporter. We need to stop treating talent development as a cost and start treating it as the single most critical investment we make."

Amit Arora — CHRO, VST Industries

"Technology helps deliver the tools. Talent helps use those tools effectively. Transformation happens when the two come together to actually transform the business. These three elements are not sequential — they are simultaneous. Organisations that treat them as separate workstreams consistently underdeliver."

Anish Bansil — Head of MNC Segment, DBS Bank India

"The nine top pharma companies within four kilometres of each other in Hyderabad are running a war for talent — rotating the same people between themselves. Instead of competing, we should be working together to grow the next generation. The integration of the ecosystem is more powerful than any single organisation's talent strategy."

Manish Arora — Associate VP & General Manager, Eli Lilly India

"Technology and talent must come together for the next big leap — to contribute to the overall global corporate ecosystem. Hyderabad had a vision to capitalise on the future pressures companies would face, and it built the ecosystem in advance. That foresight — not reaction — is what made this city what it is."

Sairam Nair — Head, Global Competency Center, Sandoz India

"Business cases today are not approved unless they define a clear outcome — reducing manual efforts by a specific percentage, increasing speed by a defined measure. We created a separate governance team and made leaders accountable for outcomes, not just implementation. Confidence is high that future investments will yield better results because the accountability is now in the room."

Krishna Praveen Polavaram — CFO & Site Director, Berkadia Services India

"In top-down driven organisations, technology investments succeed when leadership builds trust, defines clear accountability, and aligns the investment with strategic objectives. In decentralised organisations, the biggest challenge is outcome ownership — ambiguity about who is responsible for value realisation is the single most common reason AI initiatives stall or are paused."

Dinesh Kalluri — Managing Director, Deloitte

"After we faced near-bankruptcy, leadership had to reassess what customers genuinely valued. Pure cost-cutting and offshoring alone leads to diminishing returns, not growth. The recovery came from focusing on real business value — integrating technologies in ways that created differentiation beyond what large partners could offer. Technology must be financially feasible and commercially sensible."

Chandra Boddoju — Country Head, ConvergeOne

Forum Participants — Hyderabad Edition 2026

Participant	Designation	Organisation
(Dr.) Padmakumar Nair	Vice Chancellor	Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology
Amit Singh	Chief Human Resources Officer	CARE Hospitals
Amit Verma	Managing Director & General Manager - India	The Citco Group Limited
Amit Arora	Chief Human Resources Officer	VST Industries Limited
Anil Nama	CIO	CtrlS Datacenters
Anish Bansal	India Country Head - MNC	DBS Bank
Anthil Anbazhagan	Managing Director	Entain
Bipin Chandra Dutt Pendyala	General Manager, India	Appen
Chandra Boddoju	Country Head	ConvergeOne
Dinesh Kalluri	Managing Director	Deloitte
Gautam Jain	Managing Director	PwC India
Hari Thalapalli	CEO	CallHealth
Kalyan Kumar	Managing Director / CEO	Nexer Group
Lakshmi Narayana	Managing Director	Daicel Chiral Technologies India
Manish Arora	Associate Director and General Manager	Eli Lilly and Company
Krishna Praveen Polavaram	CFO & Site Director	Berkadia Services India Pvt Ltd
Richa Jain	Managing Director, NTE India	Northern Tool + Equipment
Sairam Nair	Head Global Competency Center	Sandoz India
Sirisha Deevi	Director of Engineering	Experian
Sudipto Mandal	CHRO & Head, Human Resources (L&T Metro Rail)	Larsen & Toubro
Ritesh Dogra	Head, Growth and Partnerships	Multiplier AI
Arun Palivela	India Director, Align Innovation Center & Invisalign R&D	Align Technology
Suveka Tammireddy	Managing Director	Kroll
Hari Chandana Dasari	Indian Administrative Service (IAS)	Government of India
Harish Kumar	Vice President, HealthTrust	HCA Healthcare
AV Ranganath	Commissioner of HYDRAA	Telangana Government

Participant	Designation	Organisation
Puja Khemka	VP and Board Member	Schrödinger India
Rupessh Goel	Managing Director & Head of Credit, Data & Analytics	First Citizens India
Ashish Babbar	Vice President and General Manager	Microsoft
Dileep Narayan	Director - HR	EPAM Systems
Swetha Vissapragada	Director, APAC Global Talent Acquisition	Electronic Arts (EA)
Rajeev G	Vice President and Managing Director	Blackbaud India
Reena Das	Chief Human Resource Officer	Keolis Hyderabad Mass Rapid Transit System
Shalini Priyadarshi	Director, Cloud Support Operations	NTT DATA
Amit Rastogi	EVP & Chief Technology Officer	Coromandel International Limited
Venkat Korada	CFO	Lloyds Technology Centre India

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