

Technology Connects People

Jan Muehlfeit, Chairman of Microsoft Europe explains how technology is changing the way the world lives and works together.

By Jeremy Slater

What do you think is the most important development in society today and in the future?

"I think that people governance is a key for the 21st century. But first, I will go back to 230 years, to one of the fathers of capitalism, Adam Smith. I read *The Wealth of the Nations*, and if I remember one thing which we should apply in the future, it is that profit and taking care of each other can work together. Adam Smith was saying that the first thing we as human beings do is take care of ourselves, but the second thing, is we care about others. And with caring about others I don't mean only people in the company, I mean society in general."

But the world and governance is changing in other ways too?

"Obviously, globalisation has changed the world a lot. Countries like China and India have a huge impact on the world economy. The evolution from G8 to G20 is creating a new governance. China today holds over \$2 trillion in reserves and there is a huge interdependence among the countries."

How is technology changing governance and society?

"The 2008 US Presidential Election



was the first time during a big election where technology and the Internet helped a candidate win. I like Barack Obama very much, but I think 60% was content and vision and 40% was a very smart use of technology. Barack Obama outspent John McCain, by three to one, and 86% of Obama's money was collected through the Internet.

This is the first time in history when the young generation understands and uses technology in a much smarter way than the current generation. This never happened before, it was always dads and mums teaching the kids, now it's the other way round. And I think that will change politics, that will change the economy and that will change all businesses.

Are there any other ways technology is changing the world?

"In *Who's your city?*, Richard Florida figured out that there are 40 mega

cities or mega regions worldwide. Twenty five different populations live in those mega cities, but they represent two thirds of the GDP worldwide. And 90% of the innovation. Florida asked the question what did those regions or countries do well compared to others and concluded that they followed a "3T Strategy", standing for talent, technology and tolerance."

Can businesses help make positive changes too?

"I think that the way we will solve the big societal issues, the way we will compete as companies, and the only competitive advantage we will have will be our ability to unlock human potential.

Part of this is due to the digital paradox. The more technology you will have the more important human brains and your people will be. And the ability to unlock the human potential will be only one point of the differentiation for long-term strategies."

How will technology make us healthier?

"I recently met a scientist who was doing research on a certain disease through the internet. She told me she had created a game, put that game

Jan Muehlfeit

Jan Muehlfeit is Chairman Europe at Microsoft Corporation. He is responsible for representing Microsoft Corporation and engaging with governments, large corporations, key partners and academic elites both within EU and on an international level.

Jan Muehlfeit is a board member of the European Academy of Business in Society (EABiS) and of the Junior Achievement Young Enterprise Europe (JAYE). He is also a Co-Chairman of the European Industry Leadership Board on e-Skills and a member of the Board of AIESEC, world's largest student-run organization and an international platform for young people to discover and develop their potential. Jan Muehlfeit also represents Microsoft on the TABD, the Transatlantic Business Dialogue. He is a regular speaker at various European and global events.

Jan Muehlfeit continues to support several charities, including «PCs Against Barriers», a joint initiative of Microsoft Czech Republic and Charta 77 Foundation, where he serves as a member of the supervisory board. Over the past almost two decades, he has received numerous public awards as recognition of his industry and social contributions.

on Second Life and after one week 5 million people were playing the game. If she would do that research in reality, it would take like 5 years!

"Almost 7% of the European GDP is spent on chronic diseases. If you could do a smart job, you connect your healthcare with your lifestyle, the way you behave. You will get notifications on your mobile phone about how you should behave. You can save a lot of money and, as a society, you can use that money somewhere else.

"Or, consider another big challenge: energy and environment. Again, 40% of current energy consumption is heating and lighting our houses. So, can we think about scenarios that might improve this management problem? If, we are successful this is an example of how you can apply the power of technology."

Are companies changing the way they motivate people?

"I'm always saying that the hands of the people and the brains of the people you can buy for money, but you can never buy their heart.

"Ten years ago if we talked to a candidate about what are the conditions we would offer in a job, probably 70%

was about the money, stock options, etc. Today it's a very balanced discussion. I'm getting asked very often the question: 'Okay, if I join you, will I be able to change the world for a better?'

What motivates you then?

"I'm always talking about the bigger purpose. For me, as a European that's how I'm personally getting fired up. One thing I would like to make Europe is more sustainable, more competitive and I believe that Europe needs to move out of its comfort zone. Europe has got two hearts: one is the social heart, which will laugh, the other one is the liberal heart and I think those two hearts can live together. Right? I'm always using the Danish flexibility model, security for the people and flexibility in terms of the market. That's where I think – if I go back to Adam Smith – profit and care can live together.

"We also need to balance between the IQ, traditional intelligence, and the EQ, emotional intelligence. And I think emotional intelligence will be more and more important for the future."

What about your work-life balance?

It's not just about a balance between

work and life, it's also about a balance between wealth and the purpose.

I travelled a lot with Bill Gates and there are two reasons why I'm still here at Microsoft after 17 years. Firstly, there's the Microsoft people. People who I can learn from every day, and people who are determined to change the world for better. Secondly there's Bill Gates. Bill is a great example of a human being who was very successful. However, he became happier when he started sharing his success, his money with others, with people who need his money.

