

CIO TIMES

TOP 5
REVOLUTIONARY
BUSINESS
Leaders
EVERYONE
SHOULD KNOW



LUIS GUARDADO

A Disruptive Leader Promoting
Transformation Endeavours and
Entrepreneurial Efforts



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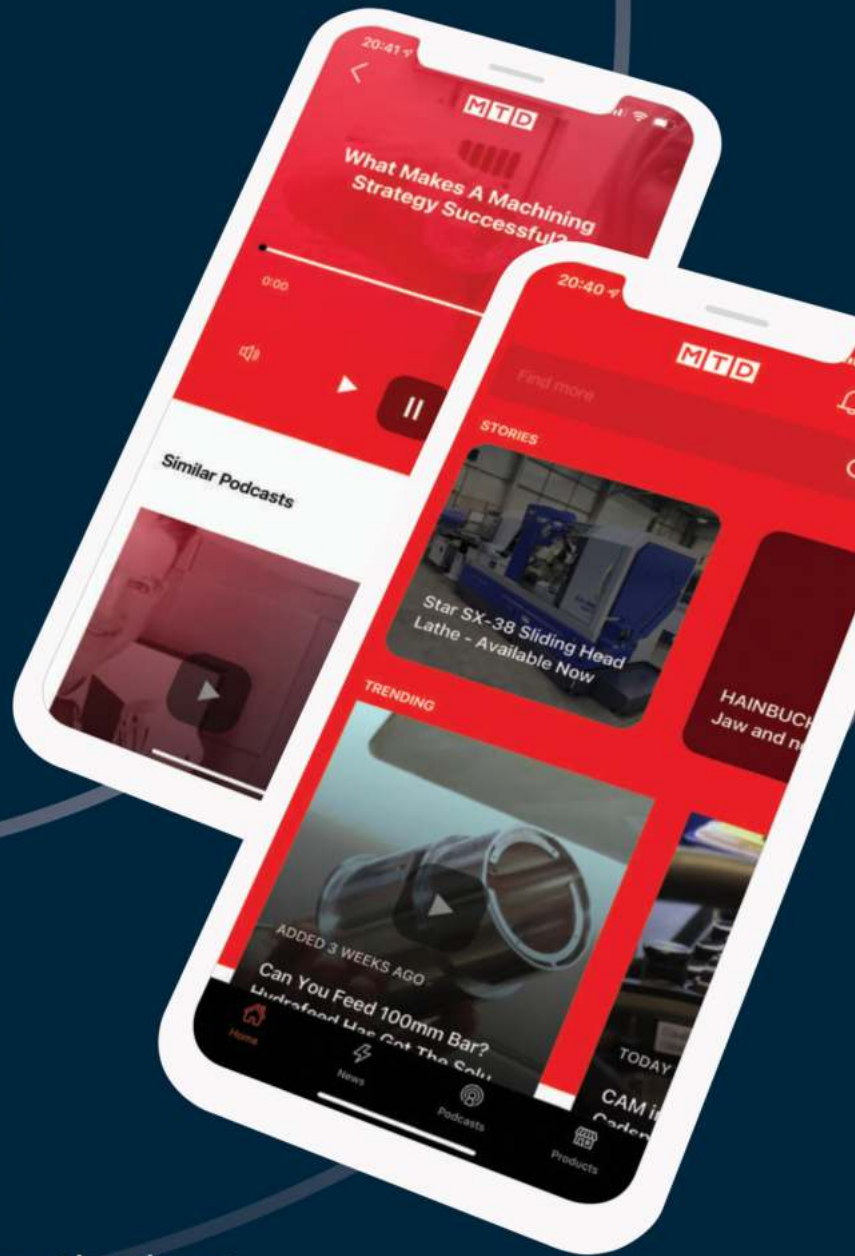
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Top 5 Revolutionary Business Leaders Everyone Should Know

The world is changing rapidly, and so are the industries that shape it. Business leaders today face unprecedented challenges and opportunities, as they navigate the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the economic lows, the climate crisis, and the rising expectations of customers, employees, and society at large.

To lead their organizations to thrive in this dynamic environment, and create a positive impact for all stakeholders, business leaders need to design some key strategies that can help business leaders bring in a revolution in their industry. Above everything else, they need to embrace innovation and disruption. Business leaders need to be constantly looking for new ways to create value, improve their products and services, and reach new markets. They need to foster a culture of innovation and experimentation, and encourage risk-taking and learning from failures. They also need to be prepared to disrupt themselves and challenge their own assumptions and business models, before someone else does.

Business leaders need to harness the power of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, blockchain, and the Internet of Things, to enhance their capabilities, efficiency, and competitiveness. They also need to leverage data and analytics, to gain insights into their customers, markets, operations, and performance, and to make informed and timely decisions.

Business leaders need to anticipate and adapt to the changing trends and uncertainties in their industry and the world. They need to build resilience, by strengthening their core competencies, diversifying their revenue streams, and managing their risks. They also need to build agility, by being flexible, responsive, and collaborative, and by empowering their teams to act quickly and effectively.

Business leaders need to align their vision and values with the environmental and social needs of the planet and its people. They need to adopt sustainable practices, such as reducing their carbon emissions and waste and enhancing their resource efficiency and circularity. They also need to promote social responsibility, by ensuring fair and ethical conduct, respecting human rights and diversity, and contributing to the well-being of their employees, customers, communities, and society.

In this edition of ***“Top 5 Revolutionary Business Leaders Everyone Should Know”***, we bring business leaders who are set to create a lasting legacy, by transforming their industry and making a positive difference in the world. On the Covers, we have Luis Guardado. Also featured are Aashi Sahu, Ketan Patel, Tuong-Minh LY-LE, and Saeed Amal.

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COVER STORY





LUIS GUARDADO

A Disruptive Leader Promoting
Transformation Endeavours and
Entrepreneurial Efforts



Luis Guardado is a highly engaged professional with 14 years of proven experience leading Project Management Offices (PMO) across the globe, serving in different multinationals such as *HSBC, TELUS, United Nations, and Onelink*.

Unveiling a Game-Changing Journey

Currently, Luis is serving as **Vice-President** of the **Group EPMO** (Global Strategy Execution) and keeping his role as **Vice-President of EPMO and Solutioning for the Americas Region at Webhelp™**. He supports the Corporate Strategy design and assures a flawless execution of the Regional Strategic Portfolio, in addition to leading the Pre-sales, Business Development, Solutioning, and Digital Transformation endeavors.

He has earned mastery in Business Administration, Innovation and Finance, Project Rescue, and Recovery expert. Wearing many hats and fulfilling the roles successfully, he is also an International Speaker and University Teacher providing Strategy, Portfolio and

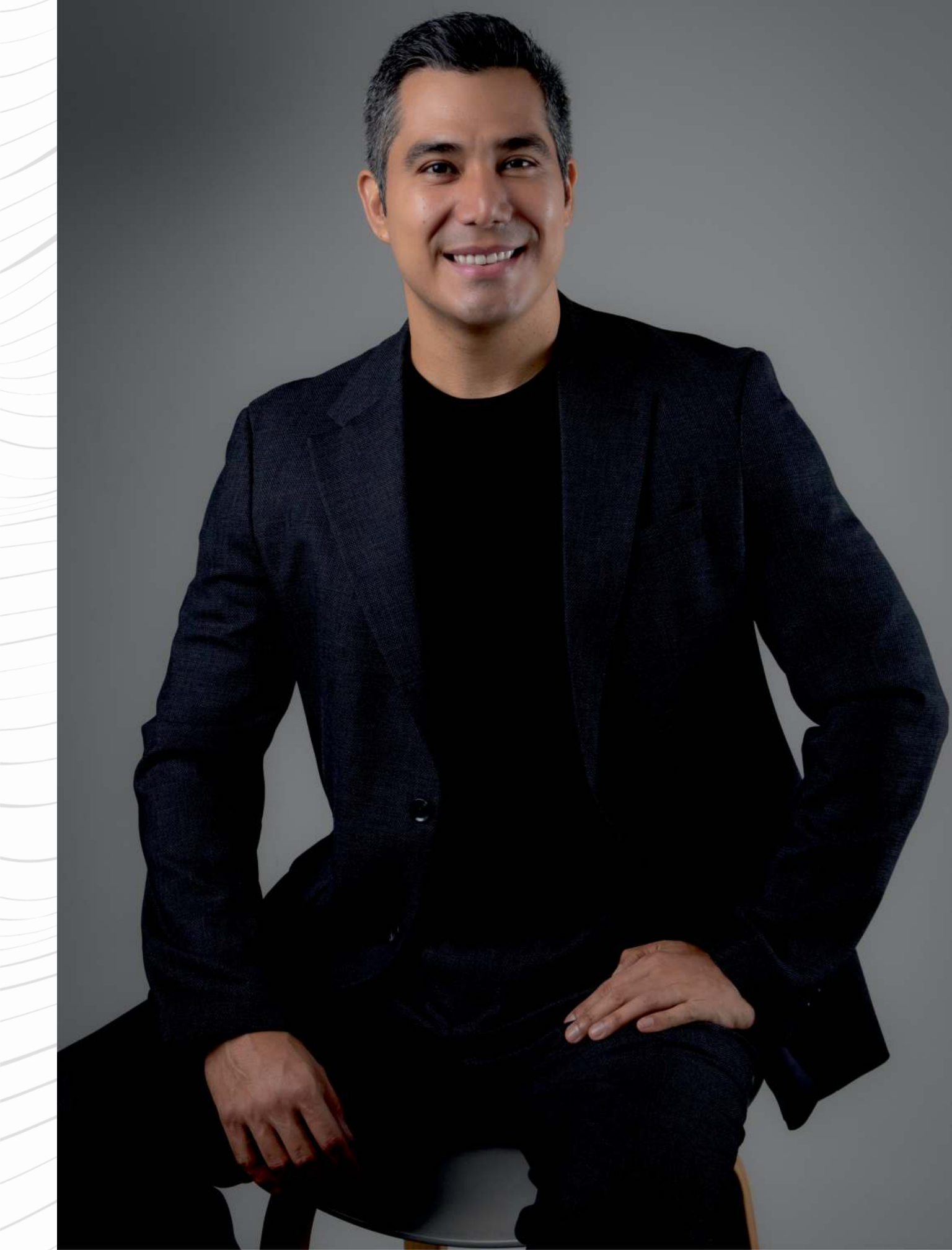
Project Management, Business Development, Design Thinking, Leadership, and Neurosemantic lectures. Currently, Luis is pursuing a Ph.D. in Philosophy. Luis also represents several boards in educational institutions and NGOs dedicated to promoting knowledge sharing, entrepreneurial efforts, and social assistance to disadvantaged communities. Additionally, he is the **Founder and President** of the **PMOex** (PMO Excellence Center), an NGO dedicated to giving back to its community of professionals by serving as a link to global knowledge networks and world-class education.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GLOBAL PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

- TEDx San Salvador, Board member since 2011
- ESEN University, Advisory Board member since 2013
- UCA University, Advisory Board member since 2013
- PMO Global Alliance, Global Awards judging committee, since 2022
- PMO Global Alliance, President El Salvador Hub, since 2022
- PMOEx, Founder and President, since 2022
- The PMO Leader, Advisory Board member since 2022
- Stakeholders.News - Specialized Magazine, Central America Ambassador 2023
- Service Management Institute, Central America and The Caribbean Director, since 2023

Best in class Recognitions

Undoubtedly, 2021 proved to be a pivotal year for Luis and EPMO's team and the professional community in their country, El Salvador. The company was fortunate to participate in esteemed competitions within the global knowledge community emphasizing the advancement of





"Portfolio, Program, and Project Management." As a result, it proudly secured several notable recognitions, including "Best PMO of the Americas" by the PMOGA™; "Best Project Manager of the Americas" by CCW™, and "Best PMO in LATAM" by BRPO™. Apart from it, Luis was RANKED #2 IN THE WORLD - Best Project Manager, Issued by Contact Center World Association in Feb 2022.

In 2022, it earned recognition as one of the "Top PMO Leaders of the Year" worldwide by the PMOGA™, as one of the "Top Disruptive Leaders to Watch" by Tycoon Magazine, and in 2023 as one of "Most Influential Masterminds to Follow in 2023" by CIO Today Magazine and as a one the "Top Revolutionary Business Leaders Everyone Should Know" by CIO Times Magazine.

Additionally, this year, Luis has been awarded the highest award worldwide for expert professionals in Corporate Strategy and PMO management, "Best PMO Leader in America," being part of the select group of best professionals worldwide, "The best of the best". This

recognition has been granted by the most prestigious knowledge institute in the world for professionals in these branches, "PMO Global Alliance™."

The Spirit of Service

The recipe for generating value as an EPMO within Webhelp is based on three fundamental principles.

- **"Keep it simple,"** allowing the company to develop adaptability and flexibility and ensure scalability while continuing to focus on generating the expected value for the business.
- **"Putting People First,"** which enables them to focus on what matters, the personal well-being of the entire team.
- To act as a **"One Stop Shop,"** facilitating the organization's transformation through the multiple services offered by the EPMO, acting as "Goalkeepers" that ensure the execution of the Corporate Strategy.

A Conscious and Connected Leader

As a distinguished leader, Luis recognizes that focusing on the roots of human behavior, both in society and business, allows one to anticipate and calculate with a surprising degree of accuracy how others will react to the plans, impulses, and beliefs. Developing human management models focused on understanding and accepting diversity in people allows one to take advantage of the most significant potential of companies and their collective ability to think and create. His focus has always been on teamwork, team spirit, and focus on the wellbeing of the game-changers.

In this sense, Luis proposes a new dimension within this holistic vision, a more human one and therefore more complex, a dimension that, if ignored, can generate many difficulties within the Implementation process of any strategy, even the best structured one.

Focusing on the "*Well-being of People*" is taking care of their happiness, understanding what makes them smile, what sustains them, their set of beliefs, and their daily gasoline; is to build excellence from a sustainable model that puts the happiness of employees first, where people go first, people second, and people third.

Luis is a recognized influential figure in the Global community of PMO experts. He is honored to earn this recognition, and over the years has maintained utmost integrity in fulfilling the many responsibilities of the role.

Luis adds, "*Thanks for the compliment; I appreciate it. As a professional from such a small and developing country, it has been an honor that I have taken great responsibility. A few months ago, we reflected with some colleagues from the team, and we thought, 'What great blessings. Why us?'* After a few minutes, the question changed and became to a *What for?* And the answer we agreed on was: *To serve, to make our gifts available and give back to the society of our country, wherever they need us.*"







The Art of Knowledge Sharing

Luis has been a university professor in different educational institutions for many years. He is passionate about teaching and knowledge sharing and sees it as a virtuous activity.

Luis believes education is a gift, perhaps one of the greatest ones. Education is the ultimate ticket to success. He has been entrusted with opportunities that have allowed him to care for his family.

Teachers share their understanding and way of being. They transmit values and inspire you to be better; they facilitate your learning and enhance your skills; they give all of themselves in the classroom and make their work a true vocation of service. Certainly, a very noble role in protecting multiple aspects of society, such as culture, academia, and social welfare.

Apart from teaching, Luis is a lifelong learner, who thoroughly practices what he preaches. He is convinced that, for the professional of the future, stopping learning is a "non-negotiable"; in his particular case, studying amuses him a lot. Certainly, much of what he studies and researches is related to the knowledge areas in which he works, but other than that, since he was a teenager, he was inquisitive and a fan of philosophy.

A little over two years ago, Luis started his Ph.D. in "*History of Philosophy*," and lately, he is enjoying it a lot. Of course, he is not the most outstanding student in his classes but imagines how much fun it is for an Industrial Engineer to speak with Anthropologists, Sociologists, and Philosophers who have been contributing to these areas of study for years.

An Overview of PMOex

The recognitions obtained in 2021 and 2022 strengthened Luis's desire to put his knowledge and experience at the service of the community. That is why he and his team created the First Center of Excellence in Latin America, specializing in PMOs and Corporate Strategy. Its primary purpose stems from its responsibility to impact the societies in which it could grow and develop. The goal it wants to achieve is to provide its community of professionals with new development opportunities, linking them with global networks of knowledge and training. PMOex is sure that by increasing the competitiveness of human talent, it is impacting a critical edge for economic growth in its country and Latin America.

Its Center of Excellence has initiated the establishment of synergies with a carefully selected group of strategic partners. Through close collaboration, it strives to enhance the competitiveness of its human talent by providing them with top-notch education and valuable professional experiences. Through strong connections with renowned higher education institutions within the country and prestigious specialized knowledge institutes worldwide, its PMO Excellence Center has successfully trained approximately 1,300 young Salvadorans. These individuals have acquired corporate strategy, portfolio management, and project management expertise, with at least 40% pursuing careers directly related to project management. It also takes pride in the success stories of professionals who have secured positions in foreign companies representing El Salvador. Its young talents actively participate in designing and coordinating international leadership gatherings specifically focused on PMOs.





More about El Salvador's Current State and Progress

El Salvador, a small nation located in Central America, boasts a strategic geographical position that facilitates global connectivity. With 321 kilometers of the Pacific Ocean coastline, seaports, 17 free zones, and several special regimes offering attractive tax incentives, El Salvador can become a leading business destination in Central America and Latin America. However, there are still significant challenges to overcome on this path.

In this context, El Salvador's most valuable asset in achieving this goal lies within its human capital. With over 23,000 new technicians and professionals entering the job market annually, the country benefits from a young workforce, with 55% of the population under 40. Furthermore, 21% of graduates specialize in STEAM careers, encompassing fields related to science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. Salvadoran talent has increasingly occupied leadership positions in global companies, championing successful

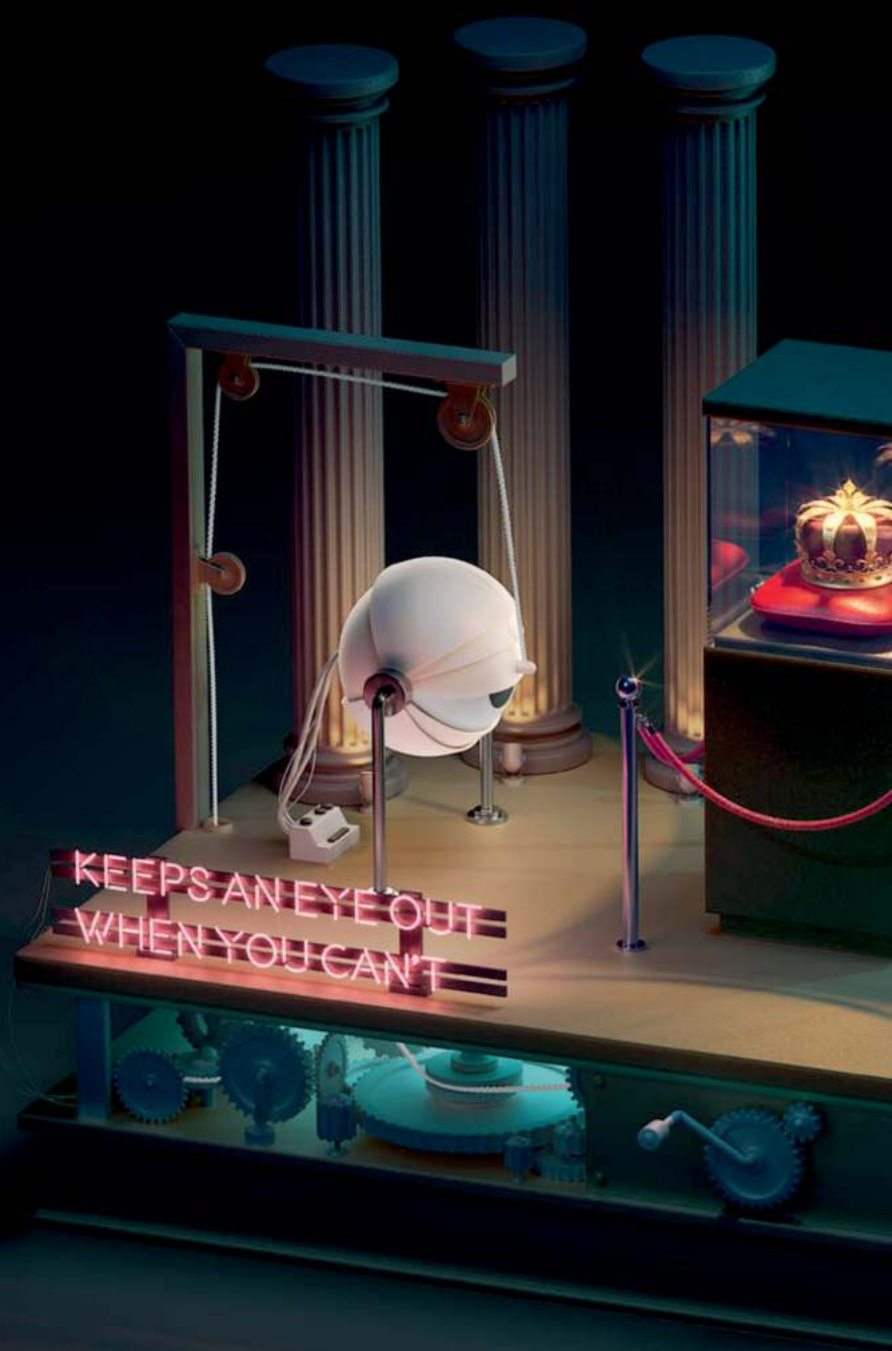
strategies that adhere to the highest quality and productivity standards worldwide.

Luis fondly states, *"In our experience, we have also played a role in advancing new benchmarks of excellence in Project Management."*

Turning a Dream Project into Reality

"Memento Mori" is a Latin phrase that recalls the mortality of human beings and the transience of life; Luis and the team decided to name this new project that way. "MM" is an interview format program that will launch in 2024 for an American communication network; currently it is just finishing recording the first season.

"MM" is a space to share with exceptional human beings and devotees to service who seek to leave a better world than they found, honoring life with purpose. Additionally, the program includes special guests with whom Luis and the team will discuss philosophical topics, books, and more than one music lover.



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What inspired you to become a business leader, and how did you get started in your career?

My journey into the realm of business leadership, particularly in the field of advanced automation, has been a dynamic evolution rooted in a blend of passion, technical expertise, and a strategic business mindset. It all began after completing my Bachelor's in IT engineering in India in 2017 when I secured a placement with one of India's leading services and consulting MNCs.

Introduction to RPA:

Upon joining the firm in Chennai, my introduction to Robotic Process Automation (RPA) marked a turning point. Despite my proficiency in coding and programming, my childhood fascination with robots led me to choose an RPA project. Back then, RPA was a relatively new technology with limited online resources. Undeterred, I took on the challenge, leveraging my critical thinking to create innovative automated solutions for various business processes.

Tech to Business Integration:

As I honed my technical skills in process automation, my interests naturally expanded beyond the development realm. I found myself drawn to the intersection of technology and business, particularly in managing customer relationships and addressing clients' challenges with repetitive and mundane tasks. This shift ignited a realization: *"I wanted to bridge the gap between the technical and business aspects, becoming a conduit for efficient automated solutions."*

Educational Pursuit:

With this vision in mind, I decided to further my knowledge of business dynamics. This led me to London, where I pursued post-graduate studies in business and management. The goal was clear—to combine my technical expertise with strategic insights, preparing myself for a role that seamlessly blended technology and business leadership.

Current Role as Head of Automation Services:

Today, as the Award-winning Head of Automation Services at a UK-based automation firm, I find myself at the forefront of technology and business integration. My role extends beyond the technicalities of automation, encompassing the orchestration of collaborations between our technical team and clients. This ensures that our automation solutions not only meet but exceed the unique business needs of our clients.



Vision for the Future:

Looking ahead, my vision extends beyond the confines of traditional leadership. It encompasses a commitment to fostering a culture of innovation within and outside of the organization, where technological advancements are harnessed to solve complex business challenges and build better connections internally and externally. This entails continuous learning, collaboration, and a dedication to pushing the boundaries of what intelligent/advanced automation can achieve in diverse industries.

Furthermore, the integration of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and advanced automation will open new frontiers, transforming the way businesses operate. As a leader in the automation space, my commitment is not just to keep pace with these changes but to lead the way, driving innovation contributing to the ongoing evolution of the industry and creating positive social impacts.

As the realms of technology and business continue to converge, I remain steadfast in my commitment to steering the course of automation leadership, driven by the belief that the future belongs to those who can seamlessly navigate the nexus between technology and business. Notably, being recognized as the winner of the UK

AASHI SAHU

TechWomen100 consecutively for 2022 and 2023, and listed among the most influential UK TechWomen has further fueled my determination to continue driving positive change and innovation in the digital era.

What do you think are the key qualities that make a business leader successful, and how do you cultivate these qualities in yourself?

Embarking on the path to successful business leadership involves cultivating essential qualities that distinguish exceptional leaders. Vision and strategic thinking lay the foundation, guiding decision-making and unifying teams toward a compelling future. Effective communication fosters open dialogue and teamwork, while adaptability and resilience are crucial for navigating the dynamic business world.

Decisiveness and accountability balance careful consideration with timely action. Most importantly, empathy is foundational for relationship building, fostering environments where individuals feel valued. Furthermore, continuous learning, self-reflection, and mentorship undoubtedly enhance growth.

Leadership is seen as a journey of evolution, requiring ongoing investment in personal and professional development. Weaving these qualities together creates a dynamic blueprint for leadership, emphasizing continuous refinement and a lasting impact on individuals, teams and organizations.

What is your leadership style, and how do you think it contributes to the success of your business?

My leadership philosophy is a dynamic tapestry woven through unique experiences, shaped by personalized growth. Embracing a transformational approach, I echo the sentiment of Peter Drucker: "*Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.*" I empower individuals by transcending mere task management, fostering a shared vision through tailored communication and accessibility.

At the heart of my leadership is empathy, appreciating diverse thoughts, fostering inclusivity, and nurturing an advancing ecosystem. My style aims for a resilient, responsive organization thriving amidst challenges, fostering an environment where individuals actively contribute to a shared vision and emphasize personal growth. Leadership, to me, is an ongoing journey of refinement and adaptability, a commitment to the unique well-being and growth of each individual in a thriving organizational culture.

How do you stay up-to-date with the latest trends and developments in your industry, and how do you incorporate this knowledge into your business strategy?





In the dynamic realm of digital technology and automation, my strategy revolves around continuous innovation and staying abreast of industry shifts. Utilizing platforms like LinkedIn, I actively engage in global networking, connecting with industry leaders and participating in discussions on emerging trends. Tech publications such as TechCrunch, Wired, and The Verge provide diverse insights, complemented by firsthand exposure at industry events.

Participation in global networking initiatives, online forums, and webinars offers varied perspectives on industry challenges. Continuous learning through platforms like Coursera and edX enhances my skills, fostering a culture of perpetual learning within my network. Agile strategic planning is vital for navigating industry changes, enabling swift strategy pivots.

My client-centric approach, informed by global insights, positions me as a strategic partner deeply invested in client success. Integrating knowledge into my business strategy aligns technological trends with organizational objectives. In essence, my multifaceted approach ensures not just staying current, but also anticipating and capitalizing on emerging possibilities in the ever-evolving tech landscape.

What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced as a business leader, and how have you overcome them?

As a business leader in advanced automation, my primary challenge involved seamlessly integrating cutting-edge tech into existing frameworks. Overcoming disruption fears required comprehensive training and fostering an innovation-embracing culture, contributing to a vital cultural shift towards agility. Addressing data security, I implemented robust cybersecurity measures, including data encryption for confidential data and proactive threat adaptation.

Also, managing upfront automation costs involved meticulous analyses, phased implementations, and a focus on long-term returns. Significantly, AI and machine learning integration demanded technical collaboration and a

data-driven decision-making culture for intelligent automation. Navigating regulatory compliance involved dedicated teams and proactive engagement. My leadership approach centres on innovation, resilience, and continuous learning for sustained success in the evolving automation landscape.

How do you motivate and inspire your team to achieve their full potential, and what strategies have you found to be most effective?

Motivating and inspiring my team (internally in organisations, or externally in tech communities) is not just a professional mission; it's a deeply ingrained commitment that defines the core of my leadership philosophy. I firmly believe in cultivating a workplace culture where every member not only feels valued but is also empowered to unlock their full potential. Open communication serves as the bedrock of this approach; I prioritize understanding each individual's aspirations and challenges through conversation and mentoring and creating a supportive environment that encourages transparent dialogue.

In essence, my approach to motivating and inspiring my team is not a one-size-fits-all solution but a dynamic and personalized strategy that evolves with the unique dynamics of others. It's about creating an environment where everyone not only flourishes in their professional journey but also finds fulfilment in contributing significantly to the collective success story.

What advice do you have for aspiring business leaders who are just starting out in their careers?

Embarking on a career in advanced process automation is an exciting challenge for business leaders. To succeed in this rapidly evolving field, aspiring professionals must prioritize key aspects. Firstly, building a robust foundation in automation technology involves understanding relevant tools, software, and a bit of programming languages and automation frameworks. Pursuing certifications and continuous learning through online academies, workshops and conferences is vital for staying current.

Secondly, developing business acumen is crucial.

Understanding the broader business context and market trends aligns automation initiatives with organizational goals. As Bill Gates clearly stated: *“Automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify efficiency”*. Also, *“Automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify inefficiency.”* Furthermore, cross-functional projects and collaboration enhance insights into automation's impact on business value.

Maintaining a student learning mindset is the third essential piece of advice. Followed by cultivating strong communication skills, especially the ability to translate technical concepts, is the fourth key aspect.

Gaining practical experience through hands-on projects, fostering a collaborative leadership style, prioritizing ethical considerations, and developing resilience, and adaptability are subsequent recommendations. Networking, seeking mentorship, staying passionate, and cultivating a long-term vision round out the advice which usually puts me in the leading game.

What are your goals for the future of your business, and how do you plan to achieve them?

My future business vision centres on utilizing advanced automation to propel sustainability goals and foster positive social impacts. The plan involves integrating cutting-edge technologies for heightened efficiency, reduced environmental footprints, and responsible resource management. By streamlining workflows and optimizing energy consumption, I aim to save time and money, allowing people to focus on more fulfilling pursuits, and enhancing overall well-being.

Additionally, my strategy envisions automation as a force for social change. This includes initiatives like fostering creative job creation, upskilling the workforce, and actively supporting local communities through mentorship and awareness programs on the positive aspects of digital technologies. At the core of this approach are responsible automation practices, involving collaboration with stakeholders, investing in community development, and adhering to ethical standards. By intertwining advanced automation with sustainability and social responsibility, my vision extends beyond operational excellence to make a meaningful impact on the community and contribute significantly to global sustainability efforts.

How do you balance the demands of running a successful business with your personal life and other interests?

As a tech enthusiast deeply committed to sustainability, mastering the art of time management becomes my catalyst for change. I meticulously balance the demands of my tech career, personal life, and eco-friendly initiatives, creating a harmonious symphony of efficiency. My secret weapon? Advanced automation, seamlessly woven into both my professional and personal spheres, crafting not just a work-life balance but a purposeful one.

My sustainability commitment extends beyond rhetoric—for every automated solution delivered, I contribute to planting a tree, an eco-friendly footprint etched into the digital landscape. This dynamic equilibrium requires steadfast boundaries and a meticulously organized schedule, ensuring every second contributes to a greater cause. In the ever-shifting landscape of my tech career, adaptability reigns supreme, allowing me to navigate the delicate dance between ambition, personal pursuits, and impactful contributions to sustainability. Through my relentless pursuit of *“technology for good,”* I strive for awareness and a tangible and transformative social impact.

What are some of the most important lessons you have learned throughout your career, and how have these lessons shaped your approach to leadership?

My journey from India to the UK has instilled profound leadership insights. Embracing cultural adaptability emphasized the need for diverse perspectives, fostering effective collaboration. I champion a mindset of “No Competition Only Collaboration.” Balancing technology with a people-centric approach, I strive for efficiency that benefits people, profit, and the planet. My leadership lessons prioritized empathy and inclusivity, which are essential for fostering innovation.

These experiences collectively shaped my leadership, grounded in continuous learning, technological adaptability, and an inclusive approach. Engaging with advanced automation has enriched my perspective, fortifying my commitment to cultural understanding and collaboration.

In this dynamic tapestry, my quote emerges: *‘Innovate with diversity, lead with empathy, and collaborate with purpose — for in unity, we find the strength to shape a future of collective growth.’*



KETAN PATEL

What inspired you to become a business leader, and how did you get started in your career?

I joined Mswipe in 2021 after 18 years at Kotak. I've been a part of 4 business set ups from scratch, starting as a management trainee at [kotakstreet.com](https://www.kotakstreet.com). When the bank was set up, I set up housing finance. Post that, I was a part of setting up Kotak's private banking's offshore business and was instrumental to their growth journey for 8 years. After that, I came back to India to set up Kotak's e-commerce business where I oversaw management, business development, operations and the use of emerging technologies to disrupt the finance industry. I became a start-up specialist.

What inspired me to move out from an institution like Kotak, to join the start-up world directly is to test myself whether I am good or not. Is the visiting card doing its magic or do I have it in me.

I joined CASHe, a credit-enabled financial technology platform that offers a wide range of consumer lending products and services, which I helped transition from a startup to a profitable and future-ready business. Now I am the Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Mswipe. Mswipe has gone on to become one of the fastest growing digital payments supporting increasing the digital footprint of the merchant community across India including in the smallest town and village.

What do you think are the key qualities that make a business leader successful, and how do you cultivate these qualities in yourself?

I firmly believe that the key qualities defining a successful business leader extend beyond industry expertise. Three core qualities have been instrumental in my leadership journey.

Key qualities that make a good leader are maintaining the highest standards of integrity, hunger to learn and transparency with all your stakeholders - be it your team, be it investors and be it customers. I have always believed in placing the team and the organization before me.

- **Maintaining the Highest Standards of Integrity:** For me, integrity is the core of any successful business. Consistently adhering to moral and ethical principles comes from your core values and for me that's the most important - not just for myself, but also for the team. I reinforce operating with this across all teams.
- **Hunger to Learn:** I ensure that I keep myself updated on the changing landscapes in the industry, and encourage the team to do the same too. What I feel is most important is that I learn from my teams across all verticals. I engage with people across all levels and love to hear their views. People's perspectives are critical to build an open culture which leads to better organisations.
- **Transparency across Stakeholders:** Whether interacting with the team, investors, or customers, open communication is crucial. It helps manage expectations, addresses concerns proactively, and reinforces a sense of shared purpose. This also helps create an environment of open culture and a secure comfortable environment for all.

What is your leadership style, and how do you think it contributes to the success of your business?

I am a sum total of my team. All the good that the people see in me, is how good my team is. The bad thing is my own undoing. I believe in delegation and giving accountability to the team. And the team knows I have their back. Trust is the key factor that plays the most critical role between my teams and I. We imbibe that same culture further into the teams all the way to the junior-most employees. I also follow an open door culture where people across all levels have access to me and I am available to hear every single person and I

learn through the journey. Value employees and they will give you your all. Give credit to the right people. This is what hugely contributes to the success of the organization. I believe in building the right team that has the passion to build just as you.

How do you stay up-to-date with the latest trends and developments in your industry, and how do you incorporate this knowledge into your business strategy?

We are constantly researching current and future trends within the industry as well as keeping an eye on events happening outside the industry. Innovations and new products that get developed come from the consumer needs and hence it is very important to stay connected to the roots. I meet at least 50 shop owners apart from at least 20 channel partners every month.

We are constantly understanding the way the global shifts are happening in the payments industry and keeping up with the evolution. I meet industry bodies and peers on a regular basis. We have a very strong futuristic government - keeping an eye on the rising aspirations of the country and being able to contribute to digital India. Having said all this, our teams and innovations are fast and agile.

What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced as a business leader, and how have you overcome them?

Customer - Being able to consistently offer top notch and evolving products and services for the customers. I regularly interact with them and get first hand insights into what they are looking for.

Employees - At every step, ensuring the employees get the best career and growth.

Investors - Making sure the investor does not lose the money. Later it is about having the fiduciary responsibility towards the investors. The investor who has trusted you with his money, gets his return. You cannot deviate from that trust.

How do you motivate and inspire your team to achieve their full potential, and what strategies have you found to be most effective?

Every leader in my team is an entrepreneur who runs her or his vertical independently within the parameters of what is acceptable to the firm. I have been blessed with a great team. I have a team that trusts me blindly and I trust them blindly. All the success we achieve is attributed to the team members and for the failure the buck stops at me. I look at myself to be a facilitator. My job is to help people execute and be there for them when the going gets tough. And giving them the free hand to do things and let them learn. Even if they fail, every failure leads to new learning. As a good mentor, you can share your experiences but as a good mentee, one will know both, what to do and what not to do.

What advice do you have for aspiring business leaders who are just starting out in their careers?

- Embrace a mindset of continuous learning. The business landscape is dynamic, and staying informed about industry trends, market dynamics, and emerging technologies is essential.
- Be adaptable and open to new experiences. The ability to pivot and adapt to changing circumstances is a valuable skill in the business world.
- Focus on value creation and not valuation. Develop a long-term vision for your business. Building a lasting and impactful company requires a focus on sustainable growth.

What are your goals for the future of your business, and how do you plan to achieve them?

We are working on being a listed entity in the next 5 years. While we strengthen the position of Mswipe Technologies in the Indian market and cross a million transacting merchants in the next 3 years, we plan to expand our reach to multiple other countries in the near

future. We recently partnered with Etisalat, the largest telecom player in the UAE, and have already started operations in Singapore, with plans to launch in other countries as well. My aspiration is to create at least 20 millionaires in the company.

How do you balance the demands of running a successful business with your personal life and other interests?

I believe that following a proper routine is the key and brings in the required discipline. I start my day at 4:30am in the morning and switch off by 9:00pm. I do not miss my work-out since it is my fuel for the day. It stimulates me with a lot of energy. Since I do not work after 9:00pm, I do not encourage my team to work either. I believe, if you cannot finish the work in the stipulated time, you are not efficient. On Sundays, I diligently focus on giving time to my passion and my family.

What are some of the most important lessons you have learned throughout your career, and how have these lessons shaped your approach to leadership?

Mentioning a few:

- I focus on learning what not to do as much as what to do. This one is critical
- Put people before yourself
- If people are happy, you will automatically be happy as the leader. Team is what builds the business.
- I believe in leading by example. One has to be real. Be aware and sensitive to your team. If you can't do it, others can't either. So one must not set unreal expectations
- Communicate, communicate, communicate. This is the most important across all levels. Even for a leader to communicate and be available for teams across and for all levels.

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earth to save a life.





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To date, 4,521 lives have been saved. You can save another.



Give a brief overview of your professional journey. What made you choose your current industry?

I'm Prof. Saeed Amal holds a Bachelor's degree in computer science from the Technion, where I was recognized with the dean's honor for my exceptional academic performance. My passion for leading innovative research that can positively impact people's lives drove me to pursue a Master's and PhD in Artificial Intelligence from the University of Haifa. At the age of 26, I embarked on my entrepreneurial journey by establishing a startup called Focal Pursuit, which was based on my thesis research. The startup aimed to utilize Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing to detect scams and malicious interactions between organizations, particularly to prevent Ponzi schemes like the one orchestrated by Maidoff.

During my PhD studies in 2013, my focus was on automatically generating profiles and representations of entities for achieving equity on the World Wide Web,

ensuring inclusivity without biases. As part of this research, I developed a tool for relational social recommendation that employed various AI techniques such as Generative AI, information extraction, machine learning, and deep learning. The tool extracted relational facts about individuals of interest from the web and generated an associative entity-relation social network based on their personal profiles.

In 2014, I had a strong desire to make a significant impact in AI for healthcare, leading me to become the Vice President of R&D at a cardiology medical data startup. The company developed AI-based algorithms for detecting Sudden Cardiac Arrest and a Portable Miniature defibrillator for treating patients.

In 2021, I was granted a Postdoctoral Fellowship at Stanford University's School of Medicine. During this fellowship, I made noteworthy contributions to the field of science and healthcare by developing highly accurate AI-based algorithms that utilize Artificial Intelligence, Deep Learning, and Machine Learning. These





SAEED AMAL

algorithms aimed to detect Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD), a common cardiovascular disorder that is often underdiagnosed. My research involved analyzing Electronic Health Record (EHR) data, genetic data, and polygenic risk scores (PRS).

Building on my achievements during the Postdoctoral Fellowship, in 2022, I was appointed as an Assistant Research Professor in the bioengineering department at the College of Engineering in Northeastern University. I also became a member of the Roux Institute, which focuses on research and entrepreneurship.

Describe your working style in a few words?

I have a strong passion for conducting research and imparting knowledge in the field of artificial intelligence, particularly its impact on healthcare and its influence on the upcoming generation of researchers. I actively engage with my students and colleagues in collaborative research projects, which fosters a mutual learning environment where we can exchange ideas. To stay abreast of the latest advancements in artificial intelligence for precision medicine, specifically in relation to cancer and cardiovascular disease, I regularly attend conferences and workshops.

When it comes to teaching, I employ the most recent methodologies and techniques, ensuring that my courses, such as the engineering for precision medicine course at the Roux Institute, Northeastern university incorporate cutting-edge approaches. I am dedicated to supporting my students throughout their academic journey, offering regular office hours and being readily available to address any inquiries they may have, whether through email or communication platforms like Slack.

Brief us about your current role. What unique or fresh ideas have you introduced in your capacity?

As an Assistant Research Professor in the bioengineering department within the College of Engineering at Northeastern University, and as a member of the Roux Institute, which emphasizes research and entrepreneurship, my primary role involves leading the "Amal Lab for Precision Medicine, counting 22 researchers." The core objective of my lab is to bridge the gap between AI/Generative AI research conducted in the laboratory setting and its practical application in medical clinics. Our research efforts primarily revolve



around the following key areas of investigation:

1. The use of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Pathology for Cancer diagnosis, grading and patient care
2. The use of Artificial Intelligence, Generative AI and Multimodal data as EHR, medical imaging and Genetics for improving Cardiovascular disease care including personalized treatment recommendation

What is the biggest challenge you have faced in your career? How did you overcome it and what did you learn from it?

One of the major hurdles I encounter is finding a balance among the various research directions I pursue. As each direction holds great significance and captivates my interest, it becomes quite challenging to prioritize and allocate my efforts accordingly.

The pandemic disrupted the global education system without parallel. Your views about it and suggestions on guiding students on the path to recovery?

Although I did not initially join Northeastern University at the onset of the pandemic, I became part of the institution later on. Northeastern University actively confronted the challenges posed by COVID-19, rallying the community to provide assistance and creating new avenues for student growth and development since the start of 2020. Despite facing restricted travel and closed borders, we remained engaged with the global community. Our students exhibited remarkable achievements both inside and outside the classroom, making significant discoveries and fostering innovation. The Northeastern Huskies continued to thrive and succeed, and despite the global pandemic, we still found ways to enjoy ourselves and have fun.

What, according to you, are the current trends that will positively or negatively impact the educational system?

The educational field has witnessed several favorable advancements in technology that contribute to improved access to information, interactive learning experiences, and enhanced collaboration among students. However, it is crucial to ensure proper integration of these technologies; otherwise, there is a risk of inadequate digital literacy among both educators and students. Furthermore, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as an additional positive trend with the potential to revolutionize education. AI can bring about significant changes through





intelligent tutoring systems, automated grading, and personalized learning platforms. Nonetheless, there are legitimate concerns regarding data privacy, the ethical utilization of AI, and the potential displacement of human educators.

What positive changes would you like to see in the education industry in the next few years?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to bring about significant positive changes in education. Firstly, AI can personalize learning experiences by analyzing vast amounts of data and tailoring instruction to individual student needs. Adaptive learning platforms can identify students' strengths and weaknesses, providing targeted support and

personalized recommendations. Secondly, AI can enhance the efficiency of administrative tasks, such as grading and data management, allowing educators to focus more on teaching and mentoring students. This automation can save time and resources, enabling teachers to devote more attention to individualized instruction. Additionally, AI-powered virtual tutors and intelligent tutoring systems can offer personalized feedback, guidance, and support to students, promoting independent learning and improving academic outcomes

What is that one quote you absolutely live by or find helpful?

“you never fail until you stop trying”





TUONG-MINH LY-LE

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Give a brief overview of your professional journey. What made you choose your current industry?

My professional journey has been quite a transformative one. As the Founder and Managing Director of EloQ Communications, a boutique PR and marketing agency in Vietnam, I have the privilege of leading a company that combines my academic background with my passion for the industry and my home country. I hold a Ph.D. in Communication, which has been instrumental in my agency and academic career. My journey started with formal education in the West, and I honed my skills and expertise in the United States and Australia. However, my ultimate goal was always to contribute to developing my career in Vietnam.

The inception of EloQ Communications was driven by my deep-rooted passion for the industry, my love for Vietnam, and a commitment to Southeast Asia, often considered an emerging market in marketing communications. I aspire to showcase Vietnam's professionalism in PR to the global community.

Interestingly, my entry into PR and communications was entirely unexpected. Initially, my academic focus was on Chemistry, and I was on the path to becoming a pharmacist. However, as time passed, I realized that my true interests lay in observing people, solving their problems, delivering information, and nurturing relationships rather than remaining confined to a laboratory. This realization prompted me to explore alternative career paths that involved conveying messages and information to people. At this juncture, I stumbled upon the communications industry. As I delved deeper into this field during my internship and subsequent professional experiences, I became increasingly convinced that I had made the right career choice. Over the past decade, I have dedicated myself to this industry, continually learning and growing.

Describe your working style in a few words.

My working style can be summed up in three words: inspiration, passion, and self-recognition.

Inspiration: I constantly desire to learn and stay informed about the latest industry trends. This curiosity fuels my continuous self-improvement as a PR practitioner.

Passion: My motivation and sense of achievement are derived from my love for the field. It propels me up the career ladder and sustains my commitment to ethical standards, especially in the face of the stress associated with PR work.

Self-recognition: I take immense pride in being a PR professional, even in a landscape where PR often stands in the shadow of advertising and marketing activities. I am dedicated to advocating for the essential role that PR plays in our community and the value it brings.

How does your company uphold its uniqueness in the market?

EloQ Communications has firmly established its uniqueness in the market by successfully serving as a PR boutique agency dedicated to supporting multinational companies in Vietnam. We pride ourselves on being the trusted local partner for these global brands, effectively bridging the communication gap between them and Vietnamese consumers.

Our distinctive approach centers around catering to overseas clients while capitalizing on our in-depth understanding of local business practices, culture, and nuanced strategies for connecting with the target audience in Vietnam. This approach has been a cornerstone of our success throughout the years.

As local experts, we go beyond the conventional PR model. We provide valuable insights to our clients, encouraging them to adapt their key messages and engage with local media outlets in a manner that respects and embraces the rich diversity present in Vietnamese society. Our commitment to equality and inclusivity is reflected in our work culture, where we actively promote advancement opportunities for women in the workplace. This sets us apart and aligns with our broader mission of fostering a more inclusive and progressive PR landscape in Vietnam. As a result, our company gained the trust of overseas clients to act as their media representatives in Vietnam, including Rakuten Viber, AstraZeneca, Intel, Hong Kong Tourism Board, etc. EloQ also started to get recognized by international clients and colleagues. At the moment, we're the first Vietnam agency able to join the prestigious Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA). We're also a part of the Public Relations Network (PRN), comprising PR agencies worldwide to execute regional PR campaigns.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced in your career? How did you overcome it, and what did you learn from it?

Not delegating, hiring too many staff, and over-promising with our clients and stakeholders are the three mistakes I made early in my entrepreneurial journey.



Over-hiring and over-promising came from a need for more experience. They were solved when I understood my employee's capabilities and allocated their workload more logically.

For delegation, agency founders like me have a solid attachment to their agencies. As a result, I am often involved in every business aspect and multitask across functions in the company instead of entrusting those tasks to my subordinates. But the truth is that it wears you out in the long run.

Just like the saying: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together," nowadays, we often work and move forward as a team.

By discussing and delegating the right task to the right person, EloQ Communications has amplified its success and achieved national and regional awards for our well-rounded PR and marketing services.

In 2021, we were recognized as the Best PR Agency at the third ASEAN PR Excellence Award by The ASEAN PR Network.

It's like a dream come true (or at least a part of it).

How do you, if at all, encourage diversity and inclusion in the workplace?

I've grown to firmly uphold the belief that a comprehensive understanding and genuine respect for all cultures are

essential prerequisites for any successful global-scale campaign. This is where the significance of diversity comes into play. Embracing diversity within the workforce enhances creativity and equips public relations agencies to comprehensively connect with a broader range of clients, ensuring that campaigns are inclusive and culturally sensitive.

As I lead my public relations agency, I actively encourage my colleagues to foster an environment that values and welcomes diversity. Regardless of one's background, educational background, demographics, or any disadvantages, they may have faced, anyone can excel in this field if they possess the right attitude and determination to learn. This commitment to diversity is reflected in our company's policies, recruitment procedures, and our unwavering commitment to total non-discrimination across our workforce, clients, and suppliers.

Enlighten us about your take on technology. As a modern-day entrepreneur, how are you leveraging the power of technology to benefit the industry?

Technology plays a pivotal role in shaping the present and future of our industry. We recognize its power and are committed to leveraging it to benefit our agency and the broader field of public relations.

Social media and social listening have revolutionized how we engage with our audience. We actively employ social media platforms to connect with our clients and their target audiences. These platforms not only offer a direct line of

communication but also provide valuable insights through social listening. By monitoring conversations and sentiments surrounding our clients' brands, we gain a deeper understanding of public perception, enabling us to tailor our strategies effectively.

Incorporating AI into our public relations practices is another critical step. AI tools can create content, check sentiments, and analyze vast amounts of data at incredible speeds, helping us track and measure the impact of our campaigns. This not only saves time but also provides data-driven insights for decision-making. However, it's important to note that AI should complement, not replace, our human expertise. The human touch, creativity, and intuition remain invaluable in crafting and executing PR strategies. AI can assist us in streamlining processes, but the human element is essential for understanding nuances, developing relationships, and responding to complex situations.

By embracing technology, especially in social media and AI, we aim to stay at the forefront of the industry, providing our clients with innovative and effective PR solutions in today's fast-paced, digitally driven world. We are dedicated to striking a balance that maximizes the advantages of technology while preserving the unique qualities of human expertise in public relations.

What is your advice to young entrepreneurs?

My favorite quote: "A bird sitting on a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking because its trust is not on the branch but its wings." As the bird believes in its abilities, we must believe in ourselves. To establish this unwavering self-belief, there are a few things to keep in mind:

Continuous Learning: Commit to lifelong learning and skill development. The business landscape is ever-evolving, and staying current is vital to success.

Networking: Build and expand your network of relationships. Meaningful connections can open doors, provide valuable insights, and offer support when needed.

Community Engagement: Give back to the community whenever possible. Contributing to the well-being of others not only enriches your own life but also fosters goodwill, which can be an asset in your entrepreneurial journey.

Believe in your abilities, invest in your growth, and remember that your success, like the bird's trust in its wings, ultimately lies in your capabilities.

How did you handle the challenges the pandemic brought

along? How did it change the way you operate now?

Challenges inherently carry opportunities. As the pandemic presented its lows, EloQ Communications took a proactive approach by pivoting our client focus. Instead of faltering, we shifted our attention to sectors such as technology and healthcare, which were experiencing growth during the pandemic. This strategic change helped us weather the storm and brought new opportunities to our agency.

And the opportunity had come, our most extensive CSR campaign: AstraZeneca's raising awareness about Covid-19 that saves millions of lives. We're proud to be a part of this. The campaign focuses on communicating the importance of vaccination and promoting inclusion for the immunocompromised community who require alternative options for COVID-19 prevention. As AstraZeneca's representative in Vietnam, EloQ works with healthcare partners such as medical associations, professionals, and doctors to promote scientific data about vaccination and improve public perception. We aim to educate the public about pandemic precautions, their responsibilities, and basic medical information through talk shows, media content boxes, and thematic documentaries. With those efforts, we were honored to win Gold at the 2021 Agency of the Year Awards organized by Ad World Masters. This award joins the achievements that EloQ received in 2021 after winning the titles of 'Best PR Agency' and 'Best PR Practitioners' at the third ASEAN PR Excellence Awards.

We also redirected our efforts toward internal training and the reorganization of our team. This commitment to enhancing our capabilities and expertise allowed us to remain agile and well-prepared to serve our clients effectively when the epidemic eventually subsided. As a result, we emerged more substantial and adaptable from the pandemic, with a broader client base and a heightened ability to navigate challenges with resilience.

What do you plan next to accelerate growth at your organization?

While we value growth, we prioritize manageability to ensure the quality of our services remains consistently high. Our next steps involve refining our niche and industry expertise, strategically expanding our client base, and enhancing our team's capabilities. We're also exploring collaborations and partnerships that align with our values and goals. By focusing on sustainable growth, we aim to deliver exceptional PR services, maintain a close client relationship, and continue positively impacting Vietnam's dynamic PR landscape.



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