

Digital revolution ‘polarizing’ leaders

by Rachel Ranosa

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The influence of technology on global business has sparked a new kind of digital divide.

On one hand, there are those who see nascent technology as an opportunity; on the other, those who see it as a threat.

A study by Dell Technologies and the Institute for the Future (ITF) shows global business leaders have divergent views of what emerging tech, such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing and the Internet of Things, means for their future.

‘Polarized business community’

Fifty percent of executives surveyed are uncertain what the next 10 to 15 years will be like for the workforce and for business in general. The same number of respondents recommend establishing clear protocols should intelligent machines and IoT suffer a meltdown.

Half of the respondents agree automation affords workers more free time for higher order pursuits such as education and strategy. But with a range of jobs from logistics to customer service being automated, nearly 60% are skeptical that offloading tasks to robots will bring higher job satisfaction.

“You can understand why the business community is so polarized,” said Jeremy Burton, chief marketing officer, Dell Technologies.

“There tends to be two extreme perspectives about the future: the anxiety-driven issue of human obsolescence or the optimistic view that technology will solve our greatest social problems,” he said.

Challenges of the digital workplace

Executives believe in the need for digital transformation, but not everybody can keep up, findings reveal:

- Only 27% have digitized all aspects of their business
- 57% are struggling to keep up with the rapid shift
- 93% face hurdles to becoming a successful digital business by 2030

Lack of a digital vision and strategy, lack of workforce readiness, and technology constraints are three of the biggest barriers to a full digital shift, the study reveals.

Still, business leaders are hopeful: 94% say they will have raised cybersecurity defenses in the next five years; 89% expect to transition to a software-based business strategy; and 81% plan to incorporate AI into their customer service.

The Dell-ITTF survey uncovers the insights of 3,800 business leaders from mid-sized to large enterprises across 12 industries and 17 countries.

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