YEAR 2025 | ISSUE 163

NEXT GEN JOBSCAPE

WeChat

Sahil Nayar

HR Leader & Influencer
MMS Batch

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Prof. Dr. Uday Salunkhe
Group Director

Dear Readers,

It gives me great pride to introduce SAMVAD's edition every month. Our SAMVAD team's efforts seem to be paying off, and our readers seem to be hooked onto our magazine. At WeSchool, we try to acquire as much knowledge as possible and share it with everyone.

As we begin a new journey with 2025, I sincerely hope that SAMVAD will reach new heights with the unmatched enthusiasm and talent of the entire team.

Here at WeSchool, we believe in the concept of AAA: Acquire Apply and Assimilate. The knowledge you have acquired over the last couple of months will be applied somewhere down the line. When you carry out a process repeatedly, it becomes ingrained in you and eventually tends to come out effortlessly. This is when you have assimilated all the knowledge that you have gathered.

At WeSchool, we aspire to be the best and unique, and we expect nothing but the extraordinary from all those who join our college. From the point of view of our magazine, we look forward to having more readers and having more contributions from our new readers.

SAMVAD is a platform to share and acquire knowledge and develop ourselves into integrative managers. Our earnest desire is to disseminate our knowledge and experience with not only WeSchool students but also the society at large.

Prof. Dr. Uday Salunkhe,
Group Director

ABOUT US

OUR VISION

"To nurture thought leaders and practitioners through inventive education."

CORE VALUES

Breakthrough Thinking and Breakthrough Execution
Result Oriented, Process Driven Work Ethic
We Link and Care
Passion

"The illiterate of this century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn." -Alvin Toffler.

At WeSchool, we are deeply inspired by the words of this great American writer and futurist. Undoubtedly, being convinced of the need for a radical change in management education, we decided to tread the path that led to the corporate revolution.

Emerging unarticulated needs and realities require a new approach in both thought and action. Cross-disciplinary learning, discovering, scrutinizing, prototyping, learning to create and destroy the mind's eye needs to be nurtured differently.

WeSchool has chosen the 'design thinking' approach towards management education. All our efforts and manifestations, as a result, stem from the integration of design thinking into management education. We dream of creating an environment conducive to experiential learning.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the **163rd** Issue of **Samvad!**

SAMVAD is a platform for “Inspiring Futuristic Ideas”, we constantly strive to provide thought-provoking articles that add value to your management education.

We have an audacious goal of becoming one of the most coveted business magazines for B-school students as well as industry experts across the country. To help this dream become a reality, we invite articles from all management domains, giving a holistic view and bridging the gap between industry veterans and students through our WeChat section

In this special issue of SAMVAD, we explore the theme “Next-Gen Jobscape”, focusing on how technology, automation, and evolving business models are redefining the world of work. This edition features an exclusive interview with Sahil Nayar, HR Leader and Influencer, recognized by Business World & HRAI HR 40 under 40. His insights shed light on how emerging roles and operational innovations are reshaping careers in high-growth sectors.

The modern job landscape is undergoing a profound transformation. Digital platforms, AI-driven decision-making, and on-demand business models are creating new roles while redefining traditional ones. Skills related to data analytics, operations management, supply chain optimization, and agile leadership are becoming increasingly critical as organizations adapt to faster, more dynamic markets.

At the same time, the next-generation workforce faces key challenges. Rapid technological change demands continuous upskilling, while the rise of gig and flexible work models raises important questions around job security, employee well-being, and sustainable career growth. Organizations are now tasked with balancing innovation, efficiency, and people-centric policies to build resilient talent ecosystems.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Through expert perspectives, in-depth articles, and real-world industry insights, this edition of SAMVAD aims to decode the evolving jobscape and prepare students to navigate careers of the future with clarity and confidence. As industries transform, understanding the future of work becomes essential for today’s managers and tomorrow’s leaders.

We hope you have a great time reading SAMVAD!
Let’s read, share and grow together!

Best Regards,
Team Samvad.

Index

SAHIL NAYAR

HR Leader & Influencer • Business World & HRAI HR 40 under 40 • 3x TEDx Speaker • Podcaster • Happiness Coach • Professor of Practice • NLP, MBTI Certified Design Thinker

MMS, WeSchool

As technology continues to redefine workplaces, what shifts do you foresee in how organizations attract, retain, and engage the next generation of talent?

The next gen won't be wooed by ping-pong tables and craft coffee alone, those are hygiene; the magnet is meaning + autonomy.

Organizations that win will do three things well: First, design careers as portfolios (not ladders) with multiple micro-rotations, sabbaticals, "internal start-ups." Second, bake transparency into every process namely but not limited to pay, promotions, performance, because trust is the new currency and make learning visible and rewarded with micro-certifications, project-based credentials, and leader-led coach hours.

Engagement will shift from annual surveys to continuous, conversational nudges. Smart nudges driven by people analytics, peer-led cohorts, and manager-as-skill-architect.

Retention becomes about "opportunity density"- how many growth, stretch, and impactful moments you can offer in 12 months. If you can promise and deliver those, people stay because leaving would be too expensive for their soul.

WeChat

Having worked closely with both academia and industry, what skills or mindsets do you believe students must develop to stay relevant in the evolving Jobscape?

Skills can be taught; mindsets must be forged. Students should cultivate three durable capacities:

1. T-shaped capability which is deep domain + broad adjacent skills (technical + communication + systems thinking).
2. Learning velocity; the ability to unlearn quickly, learn fast, and apply even faster. Treat every 6–12 months as a mini-MBA in a different subject.
3. Boundary-making & empathy by working across functions and cultures, while protecting focus. On the softer side: curiosity, ownership, and an intolerance for easy answers. Practically build a portfolio of projects (not grades), get comfortable with feedback loops, and **spend time in three worlds: code/data (even at a conceptual level), storytelling, and domain expertise. That mix makes you rare.**

How do you think AI and analytics are influencing HR decision-making and the overall employee experience in large organizations today?

AI is not here to replace HR; it's here to make HR accountable and faster.

Analytics surface patterns (flight risk, skills gaps, manager impact) that used to live in anecdotes. AI turns those patterns into actions: personalized L&D paths, micro-momentum nudges before attrition becomes an exit, bias checks in hiring, and scenario modelling for workforce planning. But the value isn't the algorithm; it's the governance.

Biased data creates biased outcomes; explainability and human oversight matter. The best habit: treat AI like a serious co-pilot, it suggests, humans validate, leaders own decisions. Employee experience becomes hyper-personal: learning that fits your aspiration, benefits tuned to life-stage, and career paths that are visible, not mythical.

WeChat

Do you believe traditional degrees will still hold value, or will certifications and micro learning take over?

"Degrees will remain signals of depth and social proof, but their monopoly is over."

The future will be "stacked credibility": degrees + curated micro-credentials + real-world projects. Think of degrees as the foundation, micro-learning as the scaffolding you add every 6–12 months. Employers will value demonstrated outcomes (what did you build, lead, improve?) more and more. So don't bet on one horse: get the conceptual depth from degrees where you need it, then keep stacking certificates, portfolios, and cross-disciplinary projects. The smartest CVs will read like a mixtape: one coherent story made from many short tracks.

What advice would you give students stepping into the workforce — on how to build meaningful, future-ready careers in an age where roles and industries are constantly being redefined?

My responses would be clustered as below:

1. Build a three-track career portfolio: 1 professional job, 1 learning project, 1 passion-experiment.
2. Master "small bets" strategy: try 12-month bets, not forever vows. Fail fast, iterate, harvest learning.
3. Design for options: skills that transfer across industries (communication, data literacy, empathy, systems thinking) keep your options open.
4. Keep reputation currency high: show up, finish, over-communicate, and be kind. Reputation compounds.
5. Treat learning like compounding interest: 1 hour a day, consistently, beats 3-day crash courses.

"Finally, don't confuse hustle with direction. Work hard, yes; but work on the right things. Ask yourself every quarter: "Is this adding to my capability, reputation, or network?" If not, stop. Life's too short for unrewarding effort."

How immersive media (AR/VR) will create Next-Gen Marketing roles

WINNER

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When I think about marketing, the first idea that comes to my mind is the TV ads that I watch during cricket matches, posters pasted on streets of my city and influencers reviewing products on YouTube. That is what we all grew up with. But now, the change is so fast that it feels like even Instagram reels might soon become "outdated".

The next stage is going to be immersive marketing, where brands don't just show us things but pull us into new worlds. With AR (Augmented Reality), VR (Virtual Reality), and XR (Extended Reality), we won't just watch ads, we will experience them.

This means tomorrow's marketing professionals will not only be ad-makers. They would be the experience-makers.

Eg: PwC predicts the global AR/VR market could grow into $1.5 trillion by 2030, with marketing leading the change.

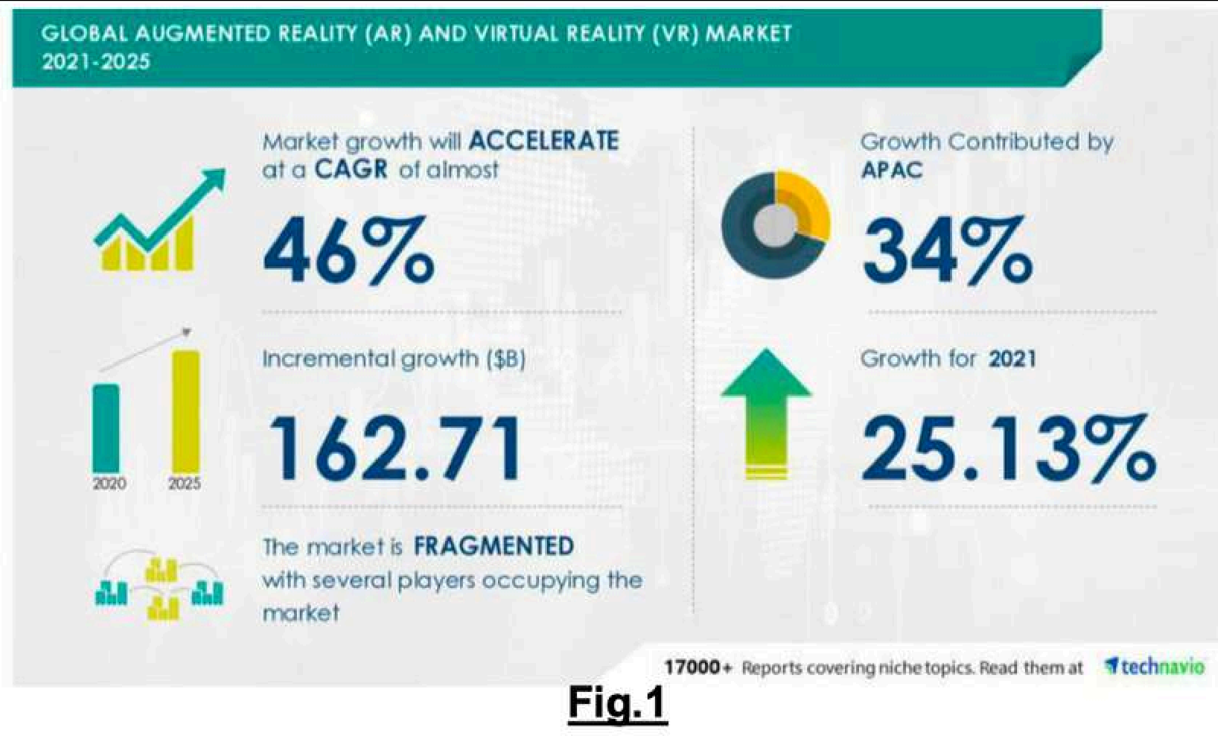

Fig.1

FUTURE JOBS THAT EMERGE FROM TRENDS

The most exciting part of immersive marketing is the kind of jobs it could create. Some might sound different now, but tomorrow, they might be as common as "digital marketer".

- **Dream Architects:** We might see them as creators, those who design brand- based dreams. Imagine sleeping with a headset and dreaming about flying over the Mt. Everest in a plane sponsored by Indigo.
- **Memory Curators:** The editors of our memories. For example, revisiting your college farewell in AR with extra effects, fireworks, or

- maybe even placements.
- **Hologram Influencers:** Those are the virtual celebrities who can show up anywhere instantly, never get tired and never grow old.
- **Emotional MultiMedia Players:** Those are the professionals who create moods in immersive ads with music, scents, and visuals.
- **Marketing controller:** The guardians who decide where to draw the line. If marketing starts controlling how we feel and think, someone needs to protect ethics and freedom.

When I imagine these roles, I feel the shift that marketers of tomorrow won't just sell products, they'll create realities and emotions.

Proof: AR/VR user engagement rates are upto 70% higher than traditional digital ads.

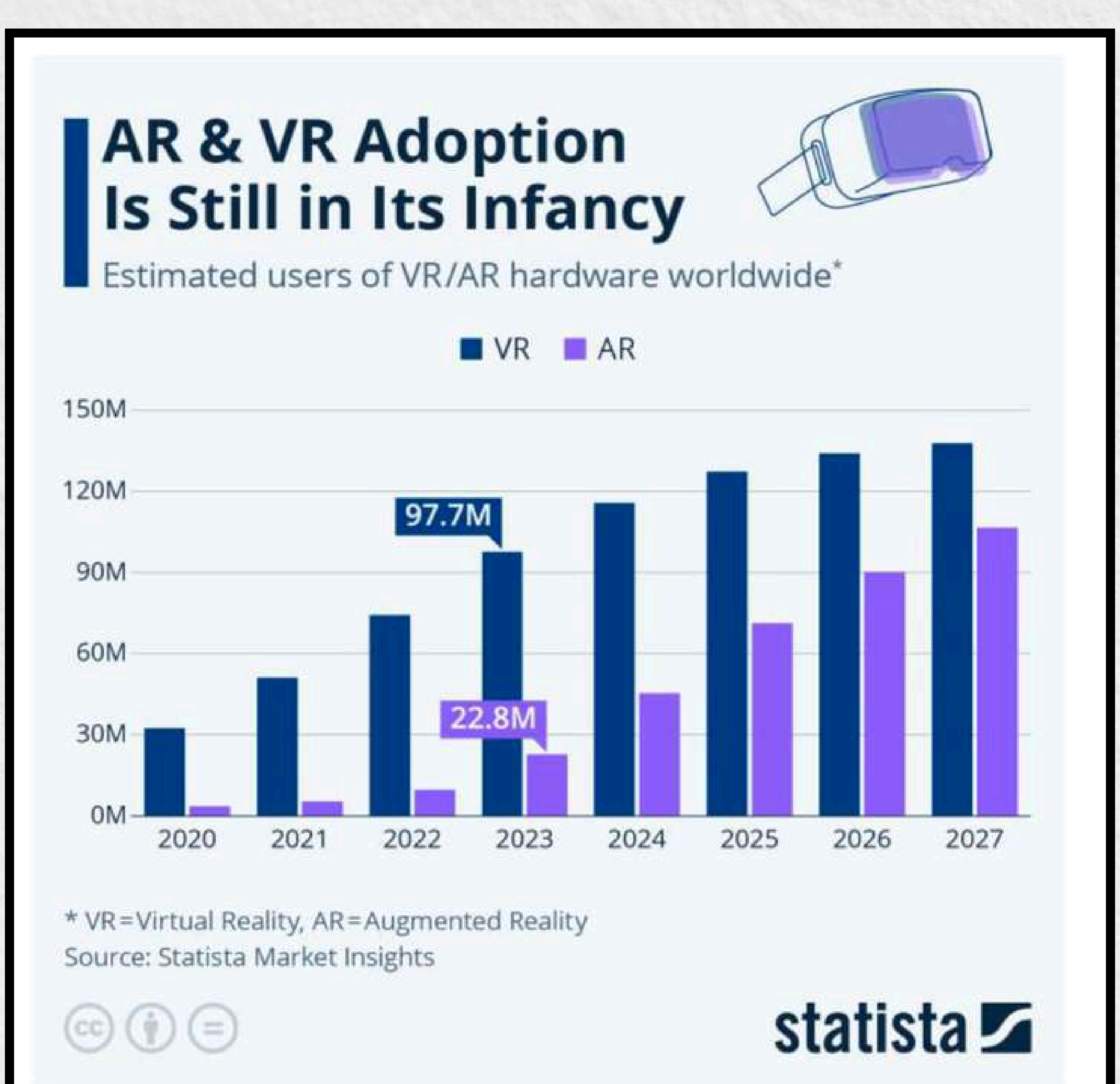

Fig 2. Courtesy by: Statista 2024

FUTURE OF ADVERTISEMENTS

Think of all the ways immersive marketing could change our lives:

- **Shopping in History:** My dream to buy clothes in a recreated Mughal bazaar or eat dishes in Karikala Chola's darbar.
- **Virtual Pilgrimages:** For people who can't travel, walking to the Kedarnath trek or visiting Mecca in VR guided by avatars.
- **Interactive Politics:** Citizens could enter into simulations showing the future of India under different contestants before voting.
- **Smart Ads:** Shoes glowing in AR while whispering your name, or a VR ad where a car reacts to your gestures.

This is more than selling — it is all about shaping how people experience reality in our future.

WHY INDIA HAS A BIG ROLE TO PLAY

I strongly feel India can lead the next trend of immersive marketing because of our culture and creativity.

Let's see how:

- **Virtual Craft Fairs:** Local artisans in villages could showcase products to global customers in Virtual Reality stalls.
- **Festivals in VR:** Holi under the ocean, Diwali in space, or Durga Puja on Mars, telling Indian traditions and stories to the globe.
- **Tourism as a new Chapter:** Explore how Hampi was during 14th-century or else Mohenjo-Daro through VR.
- **College Experience Marketing:** Universities/institutes could let students "live" a day in their campus virtually before actually taking an admission.

This not only creates new jobs but also makes Indian traditions and stories more accessible to the world.

Evidence: India's AR/VR market is projected to grow at 43% CAGR by 2028.

Fig.3

THE WEAKNESS - EVERY COIN HAS ANOTHER FACE

Every new technology has risks. With immersive marketing, the risks are even bigger:

- **What if** AR keeps changing what we see, can we even trust ourselves?
- **What if** advertisements enter our dreams, are we able to think for ourselves?
- **What if** virtual worlds are too attractive, will people lose interest in the real world?
- **What if** brands rewrite history to make it look cool, we could forget the actual truth.

That is why "**Reality Ethicists**" or ethical watchdogs will be crucial jobs in the future.

MY THOUGHTS

Sometimes, I feel the future can be told in different ways:

- The billboard of tomorrow will fly across our dreams.
- The advertisement of the future won't just sell shoes, it will sell a new version of you wearing them.
- The next marketing professional won't be a storyteller but a reality builder.

These lines remind me that advertisements won't just influence us, they actually change how we see ourselves in the next years.

MY SUGGESTION FOR MY TRIBE

As students, we don't have to wait for 2035 to think about this. We can start building the skills today:

- Learning AR/VR platforms like Unity, Unreal Engine, or SparkAR. "The time to learn started long back! "
- Understand human emotions because immersive ads directly target feelings.
- Without a story, I strongly believe even the best VR headset won't connect with people.
- Analyzing gestures, eye-tracking, and responses to immersive ads improve our experience.
- Developing awareness about the social impact of tech.

This mix of creativity, technology and responsibility is what will make us future-ready.

THE FINAL ACT

Writing this article made me realize marketing isn't just about "selling" anymore. It's about building our experiences, memories and even strong dreams. Tomorrow's jobs may be called Dream Architects, Memory Curators, or Reality Guardians and India, with its culture and young talent, could become a hub for these careers.

But the big question is not just "what jobs will exist?" It's also about "what realities we want to make?" Because the future marketer won't just design ads. They'll design worlds and that responsibility is bigger than anything marketing has carried before.

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The AI-Powered Operations Manager

From Coordinator to Orchestrator

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The world of work is changing in a big way. Automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and robotics are not only changing how things are done; they are also changing what managers do to make sure they are done. Operations managers used to be in charge of making sure that tasks were done on time and that workflows ran smoothly. But over the next ten years, these jobs will change into those of orchestrators, bringing together people, digital workers, and smart systems into one smooth system.

The Change from Coordinator to Orchestrator Scheduling, resource allocation, and efficiency were the main concerns of traditional operations managers. As AI-powered decision-making systems become more common, these tasks that happen over and over again will be done by machines more and more. Instead of managing separate tasks, future managers will coordinate a network of people, bots, and AI models to make sure that all parts of the business work together.

For example, a coordinator makes sure that a shipment in the supply chain gets there on time. An AI-powered operations manager, on the other hand, will use predictive analytics to predict problems, digital twins to simulate other options, and autonomous agents to reroute shipments—all in real time.

Numerous technological advancements are giving companies the boost they need, when transitioning to a more dynamic management system.

Coming hotfooting into the picture are Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning that enable managers to make decisions based on real-time data, instead of static reports, and knock out the need for dynamic scheduling and demand forecasting.

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is now taking over routine back-office tasks, liberating human managers to concentrate on higher-level thinking and planning.The Internet of Things (IoT) allows for pre-emptive action to be taken with the aid of real-time operational intelligence from smart sensors. Digital Twins mean that managers can test “what if” scenarios before making any changes to their factories, supply chains or processes, basically putting them in a test drive before hitting the open road.

Lastly, natural language processing or NLP brings humans and AI together in a harmonious working relationship.

We see Amazon's use of AI to effectively coordinate human workers and robotic arms in their fulfillment centers. Dynamically assigning tasks to eliminate errors and
streamline efficiency, when we look at companies that are leading the AI charge.

Tesla is at the forefront of running "gigafactories" where real-time energy flows, machine performance and logistics are monitored and controlled. The Japanese conglomerate's AI technology also drives these smart cities. IBM Watson takes the plunge, in healthcare and uses AI- generated insights to reorganize hospital and patient flow, it works behind the scenes to manage human interaction.

Infosys in India is the name of another AI-driven business that employs AI-powered processes in their IT services and allowing managers to simultaneously control a combination of automated processes and teams with human engineers.In a short nutshell, these companies illustrate how companies can be propelled into the future of high productivity when AI orchestration is carried out in a smart manner.

For the AI-powered operations manager, there's a lot more to the job than just coordination, it now encompasses four new duties. As a Systems Orchestrator the AI ops manager will be combining human teams, digital workers, and AI models into cohesive whole.

Decision Augmentation is essentially using AI to inform our decisions, with a human touch to prevent any missteps, we cant rely on algorithms alone. Capability Builder is all about reskilling the workforece we're using.

ESG, or Environmental, Social and Governance principles, will be at the heart of our daily operations, guiding us to integrate sustainability into our work. Businesses can respond in real-time to the fluctuations in the supply chain or market, when using

AI-powered orchestration.

Digital workers are able to amplify the efficiency of any process, and allow human workers to focus on more analytical, creative and high-value tasks, decision accuracy is also enhanced by the use of AI insights that remove biases and intuition, and since the orchestration is powered by machine learning, businesses can quickly add, scale up or modify their operations to outstrip fluctuations or new market patterns.

A future operations manager will need to hone their skills in four key areas, to be able to work effectively in the digital economy, when stepping into the world of engineering and management. These are AI and Data Literacy, Systems thinking, Collaboration, Ethical Judgment and Agile Mindset. With AI and data literacy, engineers and managers must be able to read, write, and apply the insights that are produced by algorithms and systems, in order to add business value.

Systems thinking is essentially planning and looking after entire ecosystems, looking beyond the separate silos of departments, and systems. The management of human-digital teams, or collaboration, is also another area that operations managers must be able to excel in. Another skillset required of operations managers is ethical judgment, where the need to deliver efficiency, is set against the background of fairness, privacy, and sustainability.

Lastly, Agile mindset allows for this constant adjustment, it's understadning that chnage is the norm and is not an exception.

Speaking of running a company in the future, sustainability will be the name of the game. Operations managers will be the ones making it happen, and they'll be doing so by marrying efficiency and accountability through Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) metrics in their orchestration. AI is perfectly equipped to sort out the waste, knock down energy consumption and monitor the finer points of international supply chains. Well-known as the backbone of any organisation, ESG is about to take a seat at the top of the table in operations, and we're seeing this played out in the creation of the Chief Sustainability Officer.

Companies will have to fundamentally reorganise, when embracing the concept of orchestration. Outdated, compartmentalised departments will be replaced with flat structures, cross-functional teams and AI-human hubs. This will lead to more innovative, adaptable, and stronger organisations.

In the case of the way the workplace is evolving, orchestration is the way of the future. The rise of the AI-powered operations manager is changing the very fabric of the modern job, propelling managers from task coordinators to orchestrators of complex systems that interweave human intelligence, machines and data.

Engineers and future leaders are given the task to adapt. Embracing AI-powered orchestration is their starting point, hybrid skills should be developed and when guiding they must rely on vision and morals. Otherwise they will miss out in the following waves of work.

Boardrooms in 2035

Balancing AI Decisions with Human Ethics

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By 2035, the boardroom will no longer be confined to polished wooden tables, quarterly reports, and executives debating strategies. Instead, Artificial Intelligence (AI) will sit at the heart of decision-making, delivering real-time insights, predictive forecasts, and recommendations that could reshape the future of organizations. Yet, even as AI becomes an indispensable advisor, the ultimate challenge lies in balancing machine-driven efficiency with human-centered ethics. The future of boardrooms will not be defined by technology alone but by the ability of leaders to align AI's analytical power with ethical responsibility.

The Promise of AI in Boardrooms

AI's growing presence in corporate strategy is undeniable. From predictive analytics that forecast global supply chain risks to machine learning algorithms that evaluate investment opportunities, AI offers unprecedented speed and accuracy.

- **Data-driven insights:** AI systems can process millions of data points across markets, consumer trends, and competitor activities in seconds.
- **Unbiased decision support:** Algorithms can minimize human cognitive biases, such as overconfidence or confirmation bias, leading to more rational outcomes.
- **Efficiency in governance:** AI assistants may prepare agenda items, run scenario simulations, and even recommend courses of action before human members convene.

A 2023 Deloitte survey found that **67% of global executives already use AI for strategic planning**. By 2035, AI will likely become a permanent "digital director" in every major boardroom.

Human Ethics: The Irreplaceable Factor

Despite its strengths, AI cannot resolve the moral and ethical dilemmas that define leadership. Boardroom decisions often extend beyond numbers, touching lives, societies, and the environment.

- **Layoffs and workforce transitions:** An AI may suggest large-scale automation to reduce costs, but humans must weigh the ethical implications of displacing thousands of workers.

- **Sustainability trade-offs:** An algorithm might prioritize short-term shareholder gains, while leaders must consider environmental and social impacts aligned with ESG principles.
- **Privacy and trust:** Decisions around data monetization, surveillance, and consumer rights demand human judgment to safeguard trust and fairness.

Emotional intelligence, empathy, and moral reasoning—qualities intrinsic to human leaders— remain irreplaceable.

The Balancing Act: Hybrid Decision-Making

The most effective boardrooms of 2035 will embrace a hybrid governance model where AI serves as an advisor, not the ultimate authority.

- **AI as a Strategic Advisor**: Providing multiple scenarios with quantified risks and benefits.
- **Human as Ethical Arbiter:** Evaluating consequences through the lens of fairness, responsibility, and long-term sustainability.

For example, in environmental strategy, AI can model the cost savings of reduced emissions, but human leaders must decide how aggressively to pursue green initiatives, considering the broader societal impact. Some corporations are already experimenting with AI Ethics Committees, which could evolve into a standard feature of governance frameworks.

Risks and Ethical Concerns

The integration of AI into boardrooms also brings risks that cannot be ignored:

- **Algorithmic Bias:** AI is only as unbiased as the data it is trained on. Historical biases in hiring, lending, or investment data could perpetuate systemic inequalities.
- **Accountability Gap:** If an AI recommendation leads to catastrophic financial or reputational loss, who is responsible —the algorithm, the developers, or the board?
- **Transparency Issues:** Many AI models are "black boxes" whose logic is opaque even to their creators, raising concerns about explainability in critical decisions.
- **Over-reliance on AI:** Leaders risk diminishing their own critical thinking by treating AI recommendations as infallible.

These challenges underline why human oversight will remain central to governance, even in AI-driven boardrooms.

The 2035 Outlook: A Possible Future

Looking ahead, several trends may shape the landscape of AI-augmented governance:

- The Rise of AI Chairpersons: By 2035, some companies may experiment with AI as a "virtual chair," facilitating meetings and synthesizing complex inputs, though humans will retain veto power.
- **Skillset Transformation:** Future board members will need not only business acumen but also AI fluency —the ability to interrogate

- algorithms, detect biases, and interpret outcomes.
- **RegulatoryEvolution:** Governments may enforce **AI governance codes**, requiring boards to disclose when and how AI influences decisions.
- **Ethical Leadership as a Differentiator:** Companies that integrate AI responsibly, prioritizing human values over pure profit, will gain trust and long-term resilience.

A McKinsey report projects that by 2035, **AI could contribute $15.7 trillion to the global economy**, but the real winners will be organizations that harness this growth while ensuring ethical alignment.

<u>Case Illustration: Human + AI Collaboration</u>

Consider a multinational energy company in 2035 facing pressure to cut costs. An AI model recommends scaling back renewable investments to maximize short-term profit margins. However, the board, guided by ethical leadership, recognizes the societal cost and long-term risks of climate change. Instead of following the AI blindly, they combine its insights with human judgment, opting to invest in renewables while adopting phased cost-saving measures. This balance—**AI for insight, humans for impact**—will define successful governance in the decades ahead.

Conclusion

The boardroom of 2035 will not be dominated by machines nor constrained by tradition. Instead, it will be a dynamic arena where AI's precision intersects with human ethics. As automation transforms the mechanics of decision-making, the essence of leadership will shift from knowing the right answer to asking the right questions—questions about fairness, responsibility, and the kind of future organizations want to shape.

Ultimately, the most successful boardrooms will be those that recognize a simple truth: **AI can guide decisions, but only humans can make them meaningful.**

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How digital currencies and CBDCs are reshaping the Global Financial Landscape

NATIONAL FINALIST

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The first time I heard about The digital rupee, I thought it was all about digital banking and the already existing UPI system. It was back in 2022, during an Economics debate competition on whether or not to adopt the digital currencies. Many students used the term digital currency as if it's similar to UPI, however I later realised it was something entirely different: A Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) is issued directly by a central bank of a country. Digital currencies are distributed directly into peoples' wallets as registered with the reserve bank or indirectly through commercial banks. The amount of CBDCs to be issued is carefully determined based on monetary policy objectives in the same way monetary operates for traditional currency. Central banks digital currencies ensure financial inclusion and enhance monetary policy effectiveness for a stable financial landscape due to their utilization of block chain and distributed ledger technology to ensure real time settlement and precise tracking of transactions
This reduces chances of liquidity mismatches as common in traditional fiat currencies issued on the basis of cash based transactions and fractional reserve banking which are susceptible to currency manipulation and inaccuracies. The most important feature of a digital currency perhaps is its integration with biometric authentication and Know your customer protocols (KYC) this makes it resistant to use for illicit activities, money laundering and terrorist financing.

CBDC vs UPI vs Cryptocurrency

Unified payment interface (UPI) is an Indian originated system for mobile digital banking launched in 2016 by National Payments Corporations of India (NPCI) to facilitate Bank to bank instant money transfer. Contrary CBDCs act as money itself issued and controlled by the central government. UPI therefore is a railway for the movement of money just like the Ali pay used in china or the Eco cash used in my beloved country Zimbabwe although the India's' UPI system is unique in many other aspects such the push based payment architecture were the payer initiates the transaction and the payee receives which is opposite in Ali pays' pull based payment structure were the merchant initiate the transaction. Not to talk of the how significantly cheap the UPI interbank transaction fees are comparatively.

Many people wonder if Digital currencies are actually similar to the infamous cryptocurrency which is gaining huge traction in recent years. They look similar but unlike cryptocurrencies, CBDCs are centralised, state-backed, stable and off course boring for those engrossed in the crypto rush caused by the drastic volatility and anonymity. Perhaps the backing by central governments will attract the multitude who have earlier opted for crypto in search of an alternative for the SWIFT (Society of Worldwide Interbank financial telecommunication) which has long facilitated cross- border payments, but it is comparatively slow and expensive. CBDCs promise faster, cheaper, and more transparent international transfers by enabling direct settlement between central banks across the world. With their potential to increase financial inclusion, reduce transaction costs, and improve monetary policy implementation,CBDCs are poised to become the future of money, leaving cryptocurrencies to cater to a niche market of speculators.

Is India and the World Ready to Embrace CBDCs?

The Atlantic Council's Geo-economics Centres' (CBDC) Tracker publication report that around 134 countries and currency unions are exploring CBDCs, and dozens are already piloting pilots or development programs — a rapid expansion since 2020. This sweep covers nearly all G20 economies and represents roughly 98% of global GDP, signalling a genuine movement rather than isolated experiments. This is same locally as reported by the times of India "The RBI's e-rupee retail pilot has expanded to multiple banks and millions of users." Press reports and RBI summaries show retail adoption reaching about 6 million users across 17 banks, with circulation rising to ₹1,016 crores by March 2025 this is strong traction at the consumer level. But adoption numbers alone don't equal readiness. It is important to consider the structural hurdles that persist in India:

Financial literacy & usage gaps. Although account ownership in India has grown due to the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), a national mission to provide universal access to banking, insurance, and pension services, actual use of financial tools and digital financial literacy remain limited. Multiple surveys point to low financial literacy rates data. Recently the National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE) showed a similar situation, with only 27% of Indian adults meeting basic financial literacy requirements which constrains meaningful CBDC uptake and informed usage.

There is lot of good news with regard the RBIs' digital rupees ever since the RBI Fintech department published the Concept Note on Central Bank Digital Currency in October 2022.The most fascinating one being the press release by the Economic times "Soon, offline transactions can be conducted using the RBI's Digital Rupee. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has stated that its Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) can be used offline in its RBI monetary policy meeting." The Digital Rupee's offline functionality is a game-changer for financial inclusion, allowing transactions in areas with no internet, mirroring cash's benefits for remote populations and those lacking reliable connectivity. This feature, in a pilot stage where solutions are still being explored Offline transactions are expected to be recorded on local ledgers on user devices. The settlement of these transactions will happen later, when the user's device reconnects to the network and reconciles with the main system.

However, Integration & infrastructure gaps still exist, Popular mobile banking apps such as Paytm, PhonePe and many others are where everyday payments happen unfortunately the e-rupee is not yet fully integrated across those platforms, which limits convenience and network effects that drive mass adoption. Without seamless integration into the apps people already use, CBDCs risk being an optional rather than the default medium of exchange.

Global readiness show similar attributes as indicated by the Atlantic Council "Advanced economies are wrestling with privacy, legal and monetary policy trade-offs; developing countries often view CBDCs as a path to financial inclusion but face digital infrastructure gaps and limited backend readiness.. Wholesale CBDC pilots point to efficiency gains in interbank settlement, but results remain mixed and require careful cross-border coordination to avoid fragmentation of global payment rails"

However, the universal truth is currency is a matter of trust, the adoption of Central Bank Digital currencies is inevitable and undeniably noble but a good objective with poor strategy always result in adverse results. So the big question is" Are governments across the world doing enough to tick all the missing boxes in the adoption of this novelty and are we as citizens well informed?"

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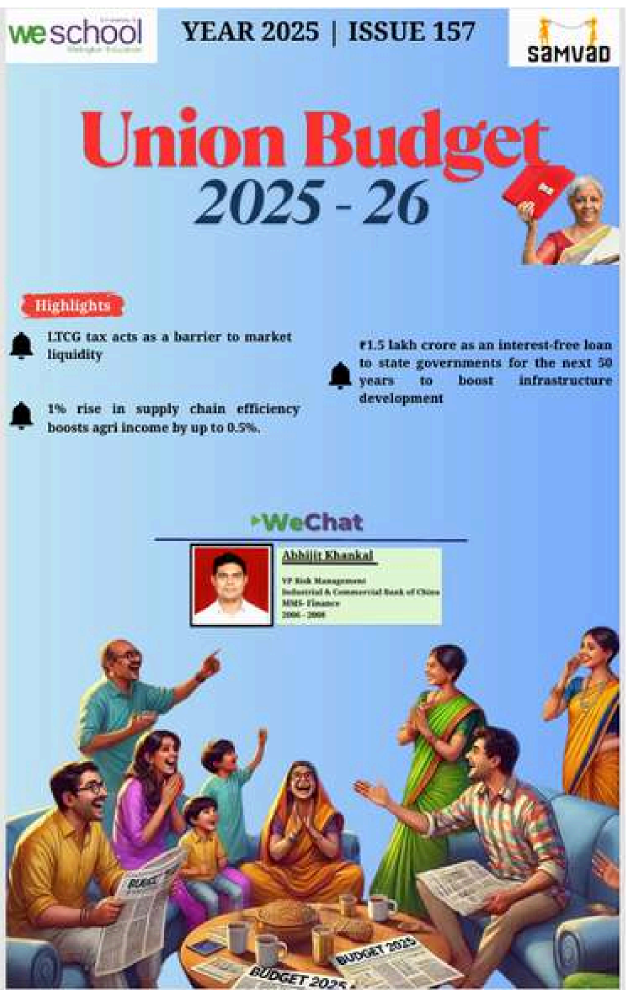

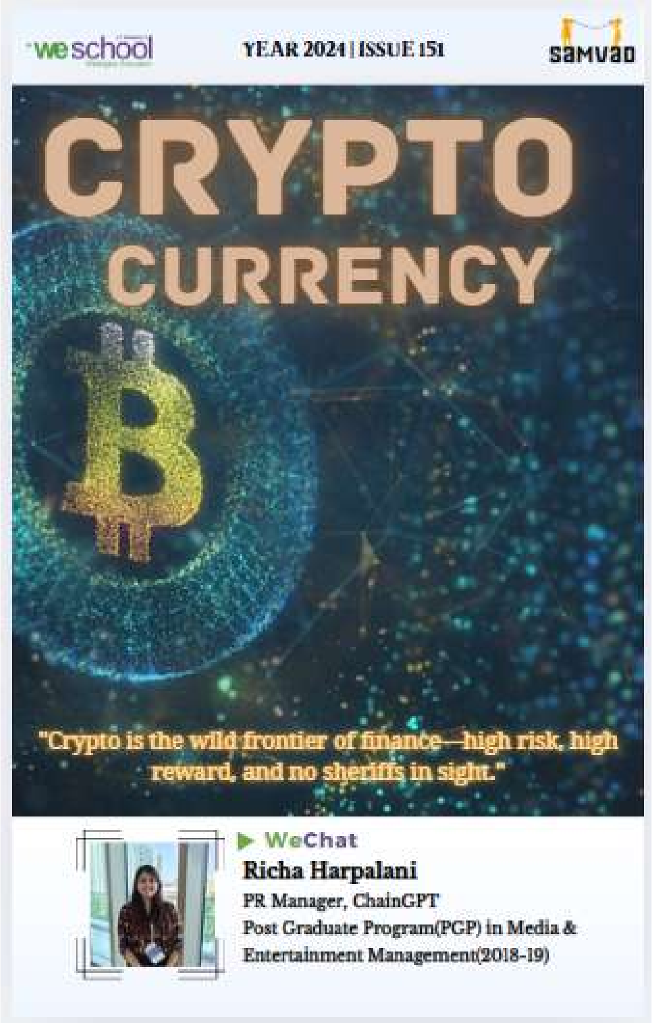

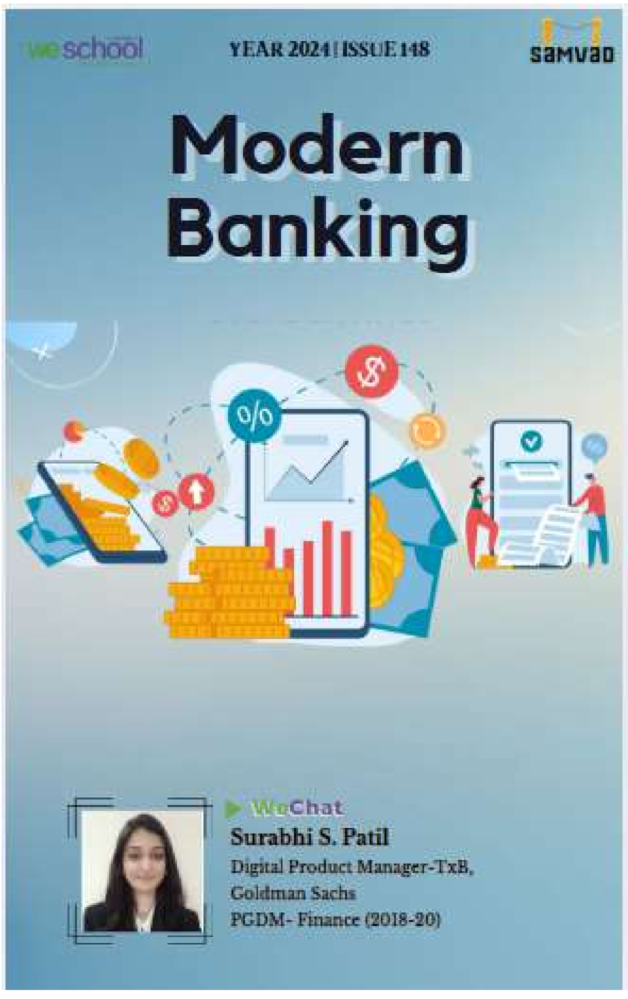

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