

The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

You can listen to past episodes at www.TheFutureOrganization.com/future-work-podcast/. To learn more about Jacob and the work he is doing please visit www.TheFutureOrganization.com. You can also subscribe to Jacob's [YouTube](#) channel, follow him on [Twitter](#), or visit him on [Facebook](#).

Jacob 01:26

Hello, everyone thanks for joining us today for another episode of The Future of Work with Jacob Morgan. My guest today is Tiger Tyagarajan. He's the CEO of Genpact. Tiger, thank you so much for joining me today.

Tiger 01:42

Jacob, thank you. Thanks for having me on the show.

Jacob 01:44

So we have so much to talk about today. But first, I'm always really interested in, and I know the viewers and listeners are as well, to learn just a little bit more about you. Just your back story. How you grew up. How did you ultimately become the CEO of Genpact.

Tiger 02:02

Jacob, I grew up in the city of Bombay. In the early years, very focused on math and science, went on to do my engineering decided that I actually didn't want to work in a factory, designing things, I prefer to work with people did my MBA and then joined in those days a , a company that sold personal care products, cosmetics, and all this was in India. And I was there for six years, became part of Unilever globally, because Unilever, like the cosmetic company, learned sales and marketing and distribution, and people management, all of that. spent a few years at Citibank, learn financial services before ultimately joining GE in 1994. And then it's been a story that's taken me through various jobs in GE, one of the jobs I did was run this business, we then spun off this business in 2005. And here I am.

Jacob 03:10

Wow. And so what was actually the first job you've ever had?

Tiger 03:15

area sales manager for the cosmetic company, owning sales and distribution for one of the 20 plus states in India.

Jacob 03:27

And do you remember that first job well, and has work changed a lot since you had that first job?

Tiger 03:35

I remember the first job really well. And I would answer the question as work has changed a lot. From those days. For example, if I needed to speak to someone in another city, I would have to book a call and wait for the booking to come through. When sometimes depending on the city you're calling you could be calling into a city where it's a very small town, you could have five days past five before the booking comes through.

Jacob 04:05

Wow.

Tiger 04:06

So that's changed. If you wanted to send information about a new product launch to 100 people located in 100 different cities, their salespeople and your stockist and distributor, you would print it out and then put each of those into an envelope and have it mailed to those people through snail mail. So that's used. But I'll tell you a whole bunch of things haven't changed. How you motivate people, or you get teams together. How do you go after results? How do you drive change? I would say nothing has changed. All my learnings from those days still use them.

Jacob 04:49

For people who are not familiar with Genpact as an organization, can you also give a little bit of context around the company because you guys are actually a massive, massive organization?

Tiger 04:59

Yeah. So in terms of size and scale, we are not 100,000 people located in 25 odd countries, we deliver business services and technology services and digital services to large enterprises. Which is why in the first six, seven years we grew up as part of General Electric GE, delivered the same services for GE. And then in 2005, after being part of GE for seven years, we spun off. And since then, we saw 700 different enterprises across the globe. 400 of those are global 1000 companies, so we sell large enterprises, and the kind of services we provide are finance. So we do finance for a large enterprise. We would manage the information flow on supply chain or procurement. We underwrite lending, for consumer loans or for commercial loans. We manage insurance claims and processing of insurance claims. And then these days Over the last five years, we've built a significant business around bringing in new digital technologies, robotic Process Automation AI machine learning into the services that either we deliver for our clients, or the clients run for themselves and change the way those get done. That's, that's a broad, three and a half billion dollars in revenue listed on the New York Stock Exchange. And as I said, 100,000 people, most of them working from home these days.

Jacob 06:26

Yeah, I was just gonna ask you about that things have gotten a little bit crazy these days with so many things that are happening with black lives matter with COVID you know, the racism, the social injustice stuff that's going on protests. So I actually want to start with the one part of this and, and that is specifically around COVID. And when this was first becoming a thing, what was your reaction to it when you first heard about it when you were first thinking you know, you might have to close offices, everybody might have to be remote. Do you remember like what your thought process was?

Tiger 06:59

Oh, very clearly. And our first understanding of COVID-19 was through our China business. We have 4500 people based in China, local China, we deliver services for China or Japan, for Taiwan, for Korea, all of that from China. And late January, almost at the end of January is one is when we first encountered what COVID-19 means from our Chinese team. And I remember the decision we took of shutting down our offices in dalyan and 3500 of the 4200 people in China, work on galiana in our offices, moving them to work from home, not knowing how to do it. Not having a playbook, not knowing how to deal with clients. And by the way, the clients are also switching to work from home. All of us were discovering a new way of working, never having tested it learning along the way and a week later 4200 people all settled in their offices delivering services in China from home. And that's when some of us said, Are we sure this is not going to be a problem in other parts of the world? And if you remember, I think it was only fair when the press started talking about Seattle and Washington. And that's when some of us got together and said, Look, this could become a SARS or an Ebola. And what do we do? So we started preparing ourselves across the globe. And as it'll happen, fortunate, we did that. But by the time we came into late February, early March, we started shutting down all our offices, you are probably a couple of days to a week ahead of shutting down offices before any lockdown happened in most parts of the world. And that obviously, is a big benefit because it gives you time to actually switch to work from home.

Jacob 08:54

How did you actually because you said you didn't have a playbook you didn't have any process you didn't have a template. So How did you actually do? I mean, did you just tell everybody don't show up to work? You know, use your laptops, you know, because obviously, there's the logistics of equipment. There's the technology that you need to get people to work together. So how did you guys all scramble together to make this work?

Tiger 09:17

I think scramble is the right word. We did scramble. Jacob, look, I think one of the advantages we have as a company is a pretty deep understanding of process and process design. That's the way we grew up, you know, using Lean and Six Sigma and process thinking in everything that we do. So it didn't take very long for us to say, Hey, guys, we don't have a playbook. So here's the leadership teams, a couple of my global operating leaders took charge. All of us contributed to it, but a couple of people drove this and basically laid out various work streams and teams to actually start building those playbooks. Having said that, we were clear that time was of the essence. So therefore, we were not searching for perfection. We just said, Let's build something that allows us to move and then refine it over time. And that's another belief that we have, which is quickly build something and start using it, and then allow people to improve it over time. And then we had the benefit of a lot of our clients also doing the same thing in China. So we were talking to them, I would say, probably three or four times a day with 100 such clients. So that became a phenomenal way of crowdsourcing learnings and giving them learnings as well. They appreciated the calls because we told them what we are doing. A bunch of them learned, and then we learn from them. And that's how we progress.

Jacob 10:49

And I think a lot of people don't understand, especially for a CEO, the amount of probably pressure and stress and maybe even a little bit of fear that a lot of top leaders go through when something like this happens because Obviously, you're responsible for 100,000 people at the company, you have the shareholders and stakeholders who are there. You have partners, you have suppliers. So I would imagine when this was going on, it was probably you and your team weremaybe a little stressed out.

Tiger 11:16

Yeah, I think I think I think that would be fair to say that we were stressed out. But I think a couple of things make a difference in those situations, Jacob, and we've seen this play out in many, many similar situations when you are confronted with a Wow, I didn't expect this and a Stress Stress mode, that typically one would go to an affair mode is you need a few north stars to guide you. You need a few North Stars that says, here's the way in which we're going to take decisions. And I would say values and culture play a significant role in guiding your decision making process. And as long as you are clear about that, as long as everyone is clear about that You have first of all an alignment, we everyone says that's the North Star, those are values, that's our culture. And that therefore makes decision making easier and which speed. And second, you do your best. You do our best to deliver whatever north star you defined. So for us, the North Star for us was, we always pride ourselves on incredibly great service to our customers. And we think that's what makes us different. And that's what gets us new business and growth. And we also pride ourselves on being a great place to work for our employees. So therefore, right out of the gate, we said, we want to achieve two design principles in every decision. Number one, do the right thing for our employees protect their safety, and wellness, and to make sure that we continue to find a way to deliver service to our clients because we quickly realized that a lot of the services we deliver if you stopped delivering, our clients would suffer significantly, and we economy would suffer significantly. Whichever economy it serves, so we had to balance in every decision, these two things, but it allowed us to take decisions that basically said, these are the two important things, everything else doesn't matter.

Jacob 13:11

Did you? A lot of organizations had to go through layoffs and furloughs. Did you guys have to make some tough decisions as far as people as well?

Tiger 13:20

Well, we didn't, and haven't had to go through major layoffs so far. And that's probably a little bit of strength and resilience of our business model. But but we had to take some tough decisions. So we froze some salary increases across the globe. We said that we will not hire for some time, new people into the company. And those were important decisions. The second decision was incredibly important, because as some of our clients, so let's take a few of the large global hotel chains that we serve They shrank in their business. And we do shrank. Some of the people who do that work became available. Option one, you got to you got to follow them or let them go option two, can we find a way to redeploy them into new work that we are getting from other clients? And thankfully, we have a pretty strong learning culture in the company. So we allowed our learning platforms to take over we basically made these people go through very quick training all virtual, and flip them to new clients. And that's really work. As we pick up I think about 6500 people out of the 100,000. I've got redeployed from what they were doing pre COVID-19 to what they are now doing through COVID-19.

Jacob 14:46

Wow, that's impressive. I am curious to get your take because there have been a lot of organizations that had to go through layoffs and as the CEO of 100,000 person company, you know, I hear mixed stories. You know, some people say Do you know these organizations do didn't do everything that they could they could have done better to help these employees. And then other people say, Well, these organizations didn't have any choice. So when it comes to these types of things like layoffs and furloughs, I mean, as a leader of 100,000 person company, when you see other organizations doing this, what do you think? Do you think they didn't try hard enough? Do you think it was necessary?

Tiger 15:24

So Jacob, I would start by saying, I think it's unfair to make assumptions as as a CEO of Genpact about what's been the process and thinking to a decision of any other enterprise. I would argue that most leaders spend a lot of time thinking through these decisions. It's never an easy decision. Most leaders know that one of their objectives is to build a brand for talent. After all, we've always been for many years in our situation of a talent war in the world. And I don't think COVID-19 is going to change that I think there's still going to be a war for talent for great talent. And that includes how you treat people, and includes fairness and so on. So I would argue most leaders, I think, do a amazing job going through a very significant decision making process on, you know, what's the right thing to do? Can I grow my business? Can I do other things with the people? Can I redeploy them? etc, etc, there comes a point in time when you're left with, often nothing else to do. And really it becomes how do I sustain the company for the long term while I deliver on the short term, and that includes employees, as well as by taking some actions on some people, you are able to protect a very large group of people. That's a very fair and right decision for any leader to take. So I would say, I think a lot of leaders go through that process. And I think it's not an easy process and it creates angst and that but by That's part of the leadership job.

Jacob 17:01

So we should give these leaders more credit and not just assume that just because we read about layoffs, that they don't care about their people.

Tiger 17:08

Yeah, I think so, Jacob,

Jacob 17:10

that's fair enough. So you mentioned a couple times tough choices. Do you have a framework or methodology that you use when you personally have to make a tough choice, whether it's about investing in something or hiring or firing an executive? How do you think through a difficult choice?

Tiger 17:29

I'm an engineer by background. So therefore, you know, typical math and objective data, and all of that does play a significant role. So I would start with what are the objectives one is trying to achieve? And those objectives have to be broad enough to actually gravitate up to does it match the purpose of the company? Does it match the values of the company? Does it match the culture and behavior you're

trying to drive? And those become overarching principles of any decision that you take. And then on the specific decision, I would start with making sure that as much data as possible can be pulled together, the chances are no single individual has enough data. So are you able to get data from your team and from other people these days, the kind of data that you should look for not just within the company, but outside the company as well. So an ecosystem of partners, people you trust, and collect that data, and then have a debate. Because never ever is it an obvious choice. It's never an obvious choice. It's actually choice one, choice two, choice three pros and cons, pros and cons, pros and cons. And you got to weigh that. And that's where values and culture and purpose plays a big role, because some are very sharply aligned to your culture. I'll give you an values one of them. For example, when confronted with a decision that tells you that if you take path a, the client would be delighted. It may not be that great for you, but you know, your client is going to be delighted. But be the client might not be that thrilled. It will be okay. But it's certainly good for you. We are very clear our north star, who wants right for the client? invariably, our view is that that actually comes to payback for us in a positive way, in a long term sustainable relationship with the client, doing the right thing, and building long term relationships with our clients and business clients. Again, decision making group rather than single, diverse and inclusive rather than, you know, keeping out data that otherwise you would not get, not just within the company or ecosystem, and then being objective. And once you decide straight through the course, and being very honest and transparent, which is the other thing that's important.

Jacob 19:58

Yeah, I am I love that you mentioned sticking to kind of the, your your North Star because I feel like sometimes what happens is leaders have a North star, but then they compromise it for the sake of something else. And not just CEOs, but you know, could be a mid level leader and you know, the director or a VP. And sometimes they get in trouble because they have a conflict between, you know, their North Star verse is versus profit versus revenue. And it sounds like, at least according to you, it's very important that even if it does make some sort of sacrifice, you have to stick to the North Star.

Tiger 20:35

And the North Star could be profit and revenue. It could, in which case, that decision could be right. But you should stick your Northstar because if you don't, then irrespective of the size of your organization, people see it. When they see it. They say okay, so there's a values here and the purpose here, but it's not necessarily the way people are expected to behave. I think I read somewhere the definition of culture is the way people behave when no one is watching. And if you start signaling, that it's okay to behave in a certain way, then when you're not being watched people are going to behave in a certain in which case culture gets destroyed. So..

Jacob 21:18

What does a typical day look like for you as the CEO of 100,000 person company? And maybe you can

Tiger 21:23

Are we talking pre-Covid, or during Covid?

Jacob 21:26

Maybe you can give it, Maybe both? And even starting from you from when you wake up? Like do you have any particular morning rituals that you do or practices or are you just like out of bed and in work mode,

Tiger 21:38

so pre-Covid 150 days out of 365 days was travel, traveling to different cities, where our clients are located, which is typically global, and when our operating centers are located, which is 25 different countries. So that's typically wake up in the morning, often very, very early. In order to get to the airport to catch a flight, and then, you know, the next day could be waking up in that city to get ready for a meeting in that city, or catch the next flight. So, which is why I said pre COVID typical things would vary dramatically, depending on which city are in which flight they're going to catch, etc, etc. And then what timezone you're in, because they're in different time zones. You could be in China, you could be in Australia, and then you're back two days later into New York. Very different and therefore, a very tough to pin down a typical day. There are probably 10 or 15 typical days in in law 120 days, it's very different. It's there's no travel at all. We've been work from home since you know, early March in New York and across the globe and We don't think that's going to change in a hurry. There's no travel. Our clients don't expect travel, we're not traveling, we don't have travel allowed. And we're doing all our services, and all my meetings etc. On on video conferences, and therefore typical morning is waking up and getting ready for my first meeting. If you can squeeze in a run, that will be great to do it if you're dealing with a global timezone situation, in which case, maybe the better option and the more easy option is shut down at a reasonable time and go for a run in the evening.

Tiger 23:39

But the whole day is, yeah, it's called after call after call. Sometimes it's Zoom. Sometimes it's Microsoft Teams. Sometimes it's blue jeans, sometimes it says lots of different things. Read saw LinkedIn video.

Jacob 23:51

Yeah, exactly. You know, there's been a lot of debate and conversation around what work and what the world is going to look like. Post COVID Are we going to have offices anymore? Is every going to everybody going to be working from home? And I'm sure you've given a lot of thought to this. But what do you think? What does the new normal look like? After we get through this, which hopefully we will get through this? Not too far away, not in the not too distant future. But what do you think's going to be the outcome of this? How are things going to change? If at all?

Tiger 24:22

I think Jacob, the world has changed completely on many dimensions, so many dimensions, as it relates to the way people will work and and the work life, where, how, etc. It's changed forever. Does that mean that a lot of work is going to be done from home? And that's going to be the way work gets done? No, I don't think so. I think it's too simple to assume that therefore 50% of the work is going to be done from home from now on. No, that's not going to be the way it looks. I think the answer is far more nuanced. In terms of what kind of work I'll be talking about. So for example, if it's work that requires dealing with highly privacy, private and confidential information that requires people to be in a incredibly secure environment, let's call it an office. And I suspect work will be done in an office and the office environment will still be the way work gets done in those situations. If on the other hand, work is, let's

say closing the books for a large enterprise, which is some of the work that we do. Typically finance teams work, literally five days without a break at the time of a month or a quarter close. Now, all of that used to be done from an office. Wouldn't it be great to say, hey, you 100 people are closing the books for this client. You have flexibility. You can work from all of us from office, completely flexible. These times have such high I stress and work with almost non stop midnight work. Go ahead and sit up, sit at home and work. And the technology is set up, the collaboration tools are set up, we've tested it during COVID-19, it actually works. And our client actually has no problem in us doing it. So I think by service, there's going to be a mixture of how much work can be done from office and how much from home, there is going to be a distribution of work. In terms of where it gets done from an office environment. Our campuses going to be the way work gets done. I wonder a campus have 10,000 people, is that really needed? Or is it better? Maybe 10 campuses have thousand people and distribute them in different places even within a city. How much commute time can be reduced how much time that is wasted in traffic can be can be attacked. Isn't that one way of dealing with climate change? And then the last one, I would say is It's pretty cool to be able to say that I'm going to go to the state of Montana, and find the five people there who are absolutely the best at something, let's say, supply chain in consumer goods. And those five people really don't want to leave Montana. I don't have an operating center or an office in Montana. But I can now pick the brains of those five people as part of the company. They're growing the company, they live in Montana, they work for McDonald's, they deliver great service to our clients in the consumer goods, retail space in supply chain. that's a that's a home run. And then of course, it opens up a huge talent, opportunity for people who don't want to commute diverse populations in different parts of the country and the world. Who you can then access without having to have an office there. I think it changes a lot of things.

Jacob 27:50

So you don't think that offices are going to disappear, but work will become more flexible?

Tiger 27:55

Work can become flexible. People will love that flexibility. Yeah, I think there's a lot of people Who wants to work from an office? They're itching to come back. So it's going to satisfy such people as well. It's going to be more distributed than concentrated. There's no reason for it to be concentrated. That actually allows risk mitigation, talent taxes, a lot of other things. And in a very weird way, attack climate change.

Jacob 28:23

Yeah, and I totally agree with you. Because, you know, whenever I, you know, I have some friends who say I in offices are going to disappear and no one's going to work from an office. And I'm like, That's not true. I know a lot of people who are very excited to go back to an office and you know, I think there will be more flexibility for people who want to work, you know, maybe certain days, certain hours, but I definitely don't think that this is going to be the end of the office. I mean, people have talked about this for many, many decades, even with CO working facilities, people said, you know, we're not going to have offices anymore. And look at organizations like, like a Cisco or an apple or Samsung, you know, they're creating new billion dollar offices. So I think when we get through this, we will see more flexibility, but people will be back in the office. So I completely agree with you

Tiger 29:10

Of the proportion of work. If you're just a count amount of work that's going to be done in a non office environment that's going to go up. That's not good for AI. That's good because it could have gone up. Without COVID-19. All policies were available. People just don't like change in general. Change has been forced on us. Now we've experimented it works. So we're going to mix it.

Jacob 29:33

Yep. You guys obviously do a lot of digital transformation work at Genpact. So, have you have you had some clients who have been trying to do digital transformation for many, many years and all of a sudden COVID happens? And they're doing in a couple of months? What they've tried to do for like five years?

Tiger 29:49

Oh my god. I think some clients I would say a lot of clients, a lot of clients in every industry are really going through a very significant compression of time for digital transformation, decision making is faster. They get it, they understand it, they are able to get changed through the middle layer of the organization. The leaders always got it. But it is tough to drive change to the middle layer of the organization. The middle layer of the organization now gets it. And I think a lot of companies are off to the races. In terms of a variety of changes that you can pull, pull it all together and say that's digital transformation, including the pressure from their customers from the consumer. As more and more work, sorry, more and more business gets transacted online, irrespective of the industry. That means you need digital transformation to actually transact online. If that's not your normal mode of business.

Jacob 30:55

Why do you think it took something like COVID for a lot of organizations to speed up their business? transformation? Because Did you know this isn't a new concept? We've been talking about it for years. And companies have been saying, Oh, yeah, we're gonna do it maybe. So why did it take something like COVID For them to force this change? Why couldn't they just do it before this?

Tiger 31:14

It's human, Jacob. It's human. It's human, and social. And therefore it's human. Because social is all human. And it's about things are working. Why do I need to change? There are so many things that are to deal with when I drive this change, that I don't want to deal with those things. How do I build camaraderie with my team? How do I build, How do I actually deal with new employees who come in and build a culture? If culture is important for the company and describe why it's important? How do I build a culture? If everyone is going to be working from home? Those are challenges.

Tiger 31:50

I think, I think when when humans encounter resistance, different people react differently, different things. situations they react differently if you're forced. you react in one way, which is you drive through the resistance. If you're not forced, then you say, Hey, you know, we'll drive it over time. So there is a luxury of driving over time. There are other priorities that become important. People explain to you why things may not work. And then you do the math and say, okay, maybe it doesn't work. We'll see it over time. There's no hurry. All of that. The moment you put a constraint, and say, I'm not going to allow you

to do this, you find a way to do it. You innovate? What, what what COVID-19 has done is created a couple of constraints that has forced innovation and experimentation. It's the single biggest experiment, people are calling it as the biggest experiment that humans have done considering the timeframe. And, and I wonder whether other intractable problems in the world are actually solvable, by actually deliberately putting constraints on. So for example, climate change What if all cities in the world declare that on weekends, there will be no traffic inside the city? That's going to create a lot of problems. But I would never say okay, I'm gonna wait. I'm gonna run the city without traffic on Saturdays and Sundays in the world.

Jacob 33:18

Hmm, yeah, no, I like that idea. Because you're right. When we are forced into a box, we, we innovate and we think of something. But when we don't have those constraints, or when the time horizon is too far out, we tend to just push things off and say, you know, it's not a big deal. So, yeah, this really has shown what what what a constraint can do to our decision making process.

Tiger 33:41

The other thing, Jacob that struck me as I was saying, that is one of the interesting things about COVID-19 is that it kind of struck through the world. So there is no one in the world who hasn't been impacted, and hasn't had to take decisions that are similar to each other. locked down everywhere, not being able to go to office everywhere, leveraging technology to work from home everywhere. So as a result, when I speak to my client, and I tell them, Look, I'm not going to be able to travel. This is what my team is going to do is that I get it, but I'm doing the same thing. So no reason to sell anything to anyone have unconvincing anything, on any topic to anyone. That's a cool thing. So in climate change, wouldn't it be great if 100 cities came together all the mayors and actually said together, we're going to do this, versus five cities doing it. And the other 95 cities say no, I don't care. That doesn't work, actually.

Jacob 34:40

Yeah, no, totally agree. I'm also really curious how has leadership changed as a result of COVID because usually, like you said, you're traveling you get to see people and you could do all hands meeting you know, you can do all these things where people can see you and interact with you. And now you and the rest of your team. You're being forced to move and engage and inspire and empower people to screen. Has that changed leadership for you at all?

Tiger 35:07

Yeah, so I just thought that the, the leadership team level, we've always been a very you know, high percentage virtual leadership team. So if you take the top hundred leaders in the company, they are distributed across many cities in the world, there is no single office, they work out of many of them actually don't work from offices have never worked from offices. We get together in an office once in a while, but actually they are distributed across. They spend a lot of time with clients. That's the nature of our business. So for us to do what we are doing today didn't require that much change to work with each other. The one change of course, is we aren't able to get together even that once in a while, right? So every quarter we would get together as a team. Every, you know, every month, a few of us will get together depending on where close tri-state area people would get together, the European team would

get together even that is not possible now. I think the change is much bigger as you cascade down to 100,000 people. And as leaders, dealing with 100,000 people, there's a lot of change. Clearly, my ability to go to an operating center with 10,000 people and spend time with that team for three days and immerse myself in that team. And do big townhalls is gone. So what are we doing, we've done three or four things we've dramatically increased the frequency of our virtual communication. And when I say dramatically increased from once a quarter, in some cases global townhalls a quarter, once a week. Our leaders are sending out video blogs.

Tiger 36:50

Once a month, we are doing global town halls. From global town halls having a participation rate physically of 5000- 7000 people We now have 20,000 people at least joining in on a combined videoconference. During a local town hall, the number of such interactions as you cascade down, the number of times I'm getting together with my team gone up five times because all of it is virtual.

Tiger 37:21

The so that's one big change. That's the second is, I think you've got to really empathize much more. As a leader you need to empathize in any case. But in these times, empathy becomes incredibly important. How do you empathize when you actually physically can't see the person other than through a video or you pick up body language? How do you pick up? By the way, there are a couple of benefits that that the current situation has thrown up. It democratizes meetings dramatically when you have 100 people on videoconference Everyone is equal when you have 100 people in a meeting, but 30 of them are in one place, and the other 70 are distributed in 20. Places. The 31 one place actually take over the conversation. And the other 70 feel a little left out. That cannot happen. It's much more difficult. And therefore, I've had reactions from people that I feel more included now than I used to.

Jacob 38:28

Interesting. Very cool. Yeah, I mean, it's, it's been very, very interesting. And I suppose even when you start meetings, you mentioned empathy. And I suppose nowadays, with being completely virtual, I mean, you leaders can't start off their meetings by saying like, Hey, how are those numbers? You know, how are you doing in the project? They need to be much more like, Are you safe? Are you okay? How are you doing? How's your family being much more kind of human first?

Tiger 38:55

Yeah, and it's, it's fascinating and say that one it's true. But if you think about a physical meeting, When people get into a room for a meeting, the first five minutes they're greeting each other. they are. They're figuring out Okay, do Where did you get caught in the rain? You know what happened last evening? In all of those before people finally sit down and say, Okay, let's start the meeting. You know, videoconference if you're not careful, you flip the switch, everyone is in. And as a leader, you can jump in and start the meeting saying, what are the numbers? Unless you pause and say, No, let's actually have some airtime on just shooting the breeze. Talking about other things. understanding what's the mood of people? And you realize, oh, this person is going to be stressed for this reason. So it otherwise we would watch body language. I'd say John, what's happening? I'm looking. You can see that now.

Jacob 39:59

Yep. Have you had to train your leaders a little bit on that and give them some guidance and coaching on how to be more effective leaders in the virtual world.

Tiger 40:10

So as I said, because we've looked in in the leadership team, as you cascade down in very significant cohorts of virtual teams, it's been less training requirements that otherwise a company would need. Having said that, I think we are all using these tools 10 times more than ever before. We are using new tools that we hadn't used. So for example, we now conduct virtual workshops. So think about 20 people from our team, sitting in 20 different homes. By the way, they sit in five different cities between Tokyo, India, London, New York and Palo Alto and on the other side, there are twins. People from the client, and they are sitting in Atlanta, Boston, you know, Shanghai and Australia. And the 40 people have a three day workshop, eight hours, followed by eight hours followed by eight hours. The way they will have a workshop except that it's non physical, it's virtual. So one of them, it has a whiteboard. It has post it notes. It has the ability to go up to the whiteboard and say, No, no, I don't agree with this. I this is the way I would think about it. It has the ability to say, Okay, why don't we all disappear for the next one hour and break up into five groups into breakout rooms, and then come back after one hour? Well, on the videoconference, you can actually immediately break off into five groups. And you can set that up. You can actually do posted pad, workshops, value stream mapping and things like that virtually. And then at the end of three days, you come up with a solution for problem solution for working capital problem a solution for insurance claims problem along with your client.

Jacob 42:07

A lot of it leads to the digital world. Yeah,

Tiger 42:10

it's all using digital tools that existed for collaboration. I think there are new tools that are being created, because the US has gone up so much that people are innovating more. Yep. The reaction of our people and our clients doing all of this is it's obviously not the same as physical. You missed the human emotion element of being together in a room. You miss the fact that at the end of the day, you can go for a drink and dinner. Yep. You clearly miss that. However, there are some clear benefits. I don't think 20 of our people would have flown in into one city to do this workshop. Neither Would 20 of our clients, clients stakeholders flown in. It would have been probably five and five in one room and everyone else on videoconference. I don't think you do justice to the people on videoconference in that kind of a meeting. Second, Our ability to drag experts into that conversation from our team. Hey, I need you for one hour, because you are the expert in this one topic on financial crimes and risk in fraud in this small business lending space, and I need you to spend one hour in this workshop. Okay, I'm available for one hour. Are you going to fly down to Tokyo for that one hour meeting? No. I like so. So I think I think the use of these tools technologies has really explosively grown. And all that is good. And I'm sure both cobit will continue to use these in a hybrid mode.

Jacob 43:39

So I wanted to shift gears a little bit because I know things like diversity and inclusion are also very important to you. You've also been doing a lot to commit to advancing putting more women in senior leadership positions. And I know obviously, with what's been going on with black lives matter. This is

another huge topic of conversation. So can you share a little bit about the impact that that has had on your company and maybe some of the things that you have been doing as a result.

Tiger 44:04

So, for many years, we've always believed that in our business, which is all about talent, we are a professional services organization, we drive digital transformation. We don't make things. you know, so for us, talent is the most important ingredient for success for us. We've always believed that our ability to attract the best and brightest talent in the world is a winning proposition and a differentiated winning proposition for us and the more we can do that, the better. Therefore, we always believe that if we can create a differentiated value proposition for diverse talent that is cool for our business. And therefore, more than 15 years ago, at the, at the top of the company, we said, Can we attack gender diversity, as an incredibly important thing to drive in the company? And if we get better and better at driving gender diversity, then we become a magnet for some of the best leaders of women leaders in the world. And that will create a differentiated value proposition. Because I believe as the more diverse the team you have, the better the solution you build for our clients. And we've been on the journey for 14 years, we've made significant progress. In my leadership team now. I have five women out of 15. It used to be one. We have four board members on our board, it used to be zero. And this has been all five year journeys. And that cascades right down through the organization. And we all feel very good though we still have a long way to go on gender diversity. And then George Floyd happens. As a leadership team, we get together and we decide that it's time for us to add racial equality as the top of the house agenda for the entire company. decision was taken over a one one virtual meeting on a Monday morning. One our meeting was

Jacob 46:06

Wow, so it was done quickly it wasn't like yeah, let's talk about it for months.

Tiger 46:10

No, of the weekend, most email traffic between us Monday morning nine o'clock meeting 10 o'clock decision taken by the evening we are announced that we are adding racial equality as an equal diversity and inclusion pillar to gender equality. And then we announced a leader for that, Hope Cooper

Tiger 46:33

She's one of the rising leaders in the company, African American, and she's taken charge of it. A bunch of the playbook that we had used and developed on gender equality, we are bringing it into the racial equality world. Some of them are the same. So for example, how do we remove subconscious bias in our hiring process? How do we make sure that in our training programs that become the gateway for promotion in the company, we make sure that we have diverse, racially equal diversity inside our training classes.

Tiger 47:16

Two examples where the playbook that we use on gender diversity, we are rolling it out in racial equality program. However, there are some that are different. One of the big differences was, we decided that we will first conduct a whole bunch of listening sessions across across the US. And we have a significant population in the US and a significant, racially diverse population, though potentially

not racially diverse as you get to leaders in the company. So we had a, I think, a significant number of more than seven or eight, pretty large group listening sessions. We collected all of that with only three...

Jacob 47:55

When you say listening session was this just like anybody could join and they could just talk to you and share what they're thinking and feeling and what's going on within?

Tiger 48:01

Well, no this is this is the African American black population and like, you know, black population in the in North America. And the leaders who hosted these were a few leaders from my team, and a couple of the diversity leaders. And our objective was just to listen. We didn't talk much we actually absorbed and listen. And that was very important because we want to hear what's on people's minds. What are their experiences? What are their fears? What are the things they don't like one of the things they like a whole bunch of things that then helped us sharpen our agenda. So we now have a proper agenda. We've defined our metrics. And we've defined goalposts for a bunch of those metrics, similar to the way we did it in the or we conducted during the gender diversity program. And then we defined a few organizations outside the company to work with who are You know, who do a lot of work in this space? We know one of the organizations we've connected with is the NAACP. We are in dialogue with them. We think we can bring our capability around process, and digital, and education and programs to teach and use NAACP to reach out to high schools and colleges to actually drive those programs in those communities that can create talent for the world and create talent for companies like ours

Jacob 49:33

Yeah, no, that's important. You know, it's crazy. And I posted about this on LinkedIn as well. So I interviewed a couple Chief Human Resource Officers, I think, almost five years ago now from some big global brands. And both of them ended up coming under extreme fire lately and losing their jobs because they didn't take these issues serious enough. One of them was caught saying inappropriate things in the Bay Area at a park. Another one Said she, she was addressing racial issues. And she said it was just noise. And I mean, these are, you know, Chief Human Resource Officers and a lot of people really looked up to and admired. So it really goes to show that there's a lot of work that still needs to be done for big global organization and the heads of HR behind them. So it's and I was totally blown away completely shocked.

Tiger 50:22

No, no, there is. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done. But I have I have deep optimism that I think for the first time ever, we're going to solve it together. It's not going to be an easy solution. It's not a flip the switch and we solved it, it's going to be a journey. But I think the way leaders in the corporate world have jumped on to this more than ever before. Which so much commitment and determination, and have been so public about it. That I think the needle is going to move you

Jacob 50:59

Yep, yep I hope so too. Well, we only have a couple minutes left. And towards the end, I wanted to ask you some fun, rapid fire questions. But before we get into that one thing that we haven't touched on really, actually haven't talked about this in a little while on this podcast just because you know, COVID,

and so many things have changed. And that's the impact that artificial intelligence might have jobs and I hear very different perspectives and thoughts on that. Are you an optimist when it comes to AI in jobs? Or what do you think the impact is going to be on us humans?

Tiger 51:29

So it's actually funny to say to say that we haven't talked about this in your podcast much these days. Until COVID-19. It is the single biggest topic I will be talking. It's not been a big conversation at the moment. I'm an optimist in general, on all topics, broadly, so therefore on AI and machine learning and those types of technologies as well. I'm a big optimist and the optimism comes from it. What people need to understand is technology solves problems.

Tiger 52:07

Technology solves problems that have been very, very difficult to solve in the past. If you take education, healthcare and financial inclusion would argue anywhere from one and a half to 2 billion people in the world don't think they are financially included enough. They don't have access to a bank. They don't have access to health care very difficult. And they don't have access to very simple education. Just simple reading and writing and math, but at basic levels, and what AI machine learning potentially can do is create the opportunity to build solutions using those that at the fingertip allows someone deep inside a village in Africa to be able to access those few things at a cost that is close to zero, and therefore, the person can actually access it. If you think of a bank account, it takes quite a few 10s of dollars \$50, maybe to open a bank account and transact. So if my objective is to save 50 cents a day, which by the way, is the savings potential for many people in many parts of the world, then I can't have a bank account because no bank wants to open an account where I save 50 cents a day. With AI machine learning, we can actually create a platform that then connects to the bank that actually does that at such low costs. So I think the potential for game changing, lifting people out of poverty, and what that does, Jacob is what lifting out of poverty does not only lift those people out of poverty, but people who actually provide those services can actually create value. I think there's value creation for are doctors to be able to sell billions of people using dynamic learning and telemedicine for teachers to teach large groups of you create content and then goes out? Like all technologies, unfortunately, you can misuse it. And that's the worry that I think the world should have which is going to be misused. Can wars be fought using AI driven weapons? And the answer is yes. Well, can can can the world be taken over by a warlord? Who then has AI driving, you know, conquering territories? The answer's yes. And so on. But I think the warden has done a good job, you know, meandering around a little bit, whether it comes to nuclear energy or it comes to various other technologies to find a balance and create a dialogue that prevents bad things from happening, but it's required ethics and AI is a big topic.

Jacob 54:56

And one of the things I love about the conversation with you today is not Once Did you say that your goal is to make more money for Genpact, you always talk about these big goals like climate change and diversity and inclusion and ending poverty. And so I really love that you obviously you understand that as a leader you're you know, you need to grow the business but you grow you have these other goals outside of the business that positively impact the world which I which I really love to see, you didn't once to say like, gotta make more money for the business, we need more dollars and cents. So I

think more leaders need to kind of embrace that mentality of, you know, positively impacting the world and ending very human and real challenges that we're all faced with.

Tiger 55:38

Yeah, and Jacob my, my deep belief is that they're not mutually exclusive. You can sell for stakeholders, which I think is one of the big changes that COVID-19 is driving your clients, your employees, your community, and your investors, shareholders. And finding an answer that serves all four is often the right answer. Long term sustainable businesses. So yeah.

Jacob 56:04

So just so we only have like four or five minutes left, so I just have a couple fun rapid fire questions for you to wrap up, starting off with what was the one moment in your life that most influenced your approach to leadership?

Tiger 56:19

Whoa,

Jacob 56:21

if you have one like experience, or interaction, maybe not them,

Tiger 56:26

so many of them, but I would say being, being with a team, when I when I took my second job, my second role in the first job, my second role within a year of my journey, when I took over a team that had, you know, 10 of the best sales people in the company that I was in, and I was a rookie, but I was their boss. I somehow have found a way to basically get a bunch of them to Teach me. So they were working for me, I was their boss. They took instruction from me, but actually they were teaching me and they told me that they're going to teach me and I told them you got to teach me. And, and, you know, that drove success for the entire team. I became successful, they became successful. I think such a life lesson because I continue to believe that the role of a leader is also to learn from the teams they have more so today than ever before. Because that 30 year old that 25 year old, who is actually inventing the next new cool technology that's going to do something if I don't learn that, I'm going to be redundant tomorrow.

Jacob 57:45

I love that. So having

Tiger 57:47

the thing that it taught me is ego has no role to play. Humility is such a cool quality to have and embracing that and living our everyday is incredibly important.

Jacob 58:00

Yeah, I was just gonna say humility and vulnerability. And I love that you call it a cool quality. Next question for you What has been your greatest business failure?

Tiger 58:09

Again, a lot. I would say, not pulling the plug fast enough when you know something is not working is a lesson that you keep learning. And in the world of digital and analytics and all this cool stuff, people talk about fast failure. And people talk about experimentation. I've come to believe that the problem that a lot of people have that problem that I think I have had, and I've learned is not that I don't experiment. But when the experiments stops working, and you know, it's not going to work. Can we get together and pull the plug and move on to the next the next idea? Rather than thinking about oh, we spend so much time I'm going to try and find a way to make it work? No, it's okay.

Jacob 58:55

What has been your most embarrassing moment

Tiger 59:00

Oh

Jacob 59:02

if you remember one

Tiger 59:04

Within 30 days of landing in, in Connecticut, when I moved to the US in 2002, I was invited to be a special invited guest amongst 25. up and coming leaders of GE to have dinner with Jeff Immelt in in the boardroom, in GE's headquarters in Fairfield County in Connecticut. This was, I guess, early November. I got caught in a snowstorm driving from Danbury to Fairfield, which any google map will say is about a 20 minute ride. I got lost. It was snowing at five in the evening It was dark. I got lost. I landed one hour late for the dinner. And there were 29 people along with Jeff are sitting on our That soup when I walked in

Jacob 60:03

that's a good one. I like that one.

Tiger 60:06

And the response I got from Jeff was he looked at me and said, welcome to Connecticut.

Jacob 60:14

I like it. That's a great one. What are you most proud of?

Tiger 60:19

I'm proud of the of the team we have in the company. The you know, and I think I've always been proud of that. But I think the last five months has demonstrated the simplicity with with everyone approached. You know, your your description of what do you do when you want to create a playbook but none existed in China? And then the simplicity with which people approach and zero debate on what's the right thing to do, literally debate around, here's what's right for the client, and here's what's right for the employees, nothing else matters. The fact that everyone in the company did that, by the way, in many cases, no one told them to do that we didn't have an opportunity to tell people. It all happened so

quickly. Which is why I think culture is so important. So the culture that we've created in the company around that kind of a topic and around the topic of learning, if there's one word that all of us love, it's curiosity. We deeply believe that humans are driven by curiosity. And humankind is about being curious. Nothing else actually makes us as different from all other animals as curiosity, both individual curiosity and group curiosity. It's amazing social curiosity, and therefore greater learning culture. So I would say that's, that's the proudest thing.

Jacob 61:43

Okay. And last couple for you. What's your favorite business or non business book?

Tiger 61:48

Ah, the one I'm reading now, which is for the second time, which is grit. Grit by Angela Duckworth. Okay. I do believe it's a it's a not fully understood concept, but it's a deep concept. Yeah. As leaders should embrace.

Jacob 62:10

Unless two questions for you, who's the best mentor you've ever had?

Tiger 62:14

Oh, I don't think that the best I think many. You know, a lot of my bosses have been great mentors. I look for quality A behavior B, skill C, from almost anyone I meet. I have the privilege of meeting so many leaders in my job because of the nature of our business where we deal with large companies, and I meet the leaders of those companies. For me, every one of those meetings is Wow, I didn't know that. I learned that I was with I want to name I won't name the person I was with the CEO yesterday of a large of a company that we are that we are partners of and basically the senior said In the US, there are three stressors that we all need to be aware of that every single individual is going through in the US, stress, number one, working from home dealing with everything, that working from home, including kids and dogs, and cats, and all of that, and the technology and not being able to meet people, etc. Stress number two is the racial, the racial equality, strife, that clearly creates stress in the system. And the third is, as you get closer, he said, As you get closer and closer to November, the stress of elections, so So he said, when you have all three stresses, people are sensitive people are and I thought that was great. That's such a big learning. Yeah. So when you speak to someone, keep those three stresses in mind.

Jacob 63:50

I love that. And last question for you is if you were doing a different career, what do you think you would have ended up doing

Tiger 63:59

teaching

Jacob 63:59

teaching love it. That's a great one.

Tiger 64:03

Why? Because as a teacher, the biggest joy of teaching is that you're with people that want to challenge you. And therefore you learn. Yes, no better place to learn than hundred. You know, university kids are high school kids, whatever, kids, there's two kids, but let's say college kids, challenging you. And at the end of that, you say, wow, I never thought of that. That is a question I never thought of now I have to figure out an answer. I don't know.

Jacob 64:32

I love it. Well, thank you so much for taking your time taking time out of your day to join me. Where can people go to learn more about you? I know you're on LinkedIn, but anything that you want to mention for people to check out about the company or yourself, please feel free to do so.

Tiger 64:46

Yeah, so the company, www.genpact.com. It's actually a very cool website. Three years back, we changed it.

Jacob 64:57

It is, it's super cool

Tiger 64:59

and I love my own website. So that's good. LinkedIn. You can you can do a search my name. There aren't too many people with that kind of a name. So you'll get it. And Twitter handle, same name, you'll get it.

Jacob 65:14

Very cool. Well, Tiger, thank you so much for taking time out of your day again, I really, really appreciate it.

Tiger 65:19

Jacob his will be a fascinating conversation. Thank you. You covered a variety of topics all over.

Jacob 65:26

Yeah, we tried to get to a lot of stuff. So looking forward to getting this out there for the world to listen to and watch. So thanks again.

Tiger 65:33

Thanks, Jacob.

Jacob 65:34

And thanks. Thanks everyone, again for tuning in my guest Tiger Tyagarajan, CEO of Genpact and I will see all of you very soon