Collaborative platforms seen to boost firms' operations

DESPITE the rapid adoption of technological solutions, a human-centric approach is integral to any business aiming for customer success.

Kissflow CEO Suresh Sambandam told *BusinessWorld* its Community Platform aims to let users collaborate, which will be used by firms to improve their operations.

Kissflow, a SaaS (software-as-a-service) management solutions provider, designed the aforementioned product for companies to build their business around a customer community.

"The biggest value our Community Platform brings to customers is that they can help each other and can rely less on customer support executives," he said, adding that the platform's features allow companies to collect feedback, understand issues, and facilitate more encompassing types of discussions.

Customer engagement is one of the challenges that SaaS businesses encounter, Mr. Sambandam said, and building communities helps boost human-centricity.

"Well-managed communities can drive engagement, facilitate peer-to-peer learning, and convert customers into loyal brand advocates," he added.

Kissflow is also rolling out its low-code platform for Asia-Pacific in the coming weeks to allow citizen developers to create applications at scale.

"By the end of this year, we aim to onboard over 25 channel partners in the Southeast Asia region who share our vision of supporting customers in accelerating their digital transformation journey," Mr. Sambandam said.

In the Philippines, Kissflow has five channel partners, two distributors, and customers that include a retail chain, a bank, and an oil and gas corporation.

The company's other offerings include a digital workplace platform that can integrate different tasks and projects like budget requests, advertising campaigns, and customer inquiries.

Founded in 2003, Kissflow's name was derived from the principle, "Keep it simple, stupid." Mr. Sambandam told *BusinessWorld* that the complexity of rule engines in the 2000s made him want to pursue the dream of democratizing rule-based computing and application development.

The post-pandemic SaaS landscape is bright, he said. The widespread adoption of the cloud has only expanded the utility of SaaS products.

"What SaaS is doing for business is the flexibility to choose solutions based on the [business'] needs and demands," he added. — **Patricia B. Mirasol**

Activision to delay next year's planned *Call of Duty* game

ACTIVISION BLIZZARD, INC. will delay a *Call of Duty* game that had been planned for next year, the first time the franchise will be without an annual mainline release in nearly two decades, according to people familiar with the plan.

The company is pushing off the release after a recent entry in the series failed to meet expectations, leading some executives to believe that they're introducing new versions too rapidly, said the people, who asked not to be identified because they weren't authorized to discuss the deliberations. The decision was not related to Activision's agreement to sell itself to Microsoft Corp. for $69 billion, the people said.

Activision is working on other projects to fill the gap next year. A *Call of Duty* game set to come out this fall will receive a steady stream of additional content, and there will be a new, free-to-play online title next year, said the people. Treyarch, the Activision-owned studio working on the now-delayed game, will also help with the free-to-play title, the people said.

"We have an exciting slate of premium and free-to-play *Call of Duty* experiences for this year, next year and beyond," a spokesman for Activision wrote in an e-mailed statement. "We look forward to sharing more details when the time is right."

The delay will have a massive effect on the video game industry. Every fall since 2005, Activision has put out a new, premium entry in the lucrative shooting series. *Call of Duty* games regularly top yearly sales charts and have sold more than 400 million units since the series began in 2003.

Last year's entry, *Call of Duty: Vanguard,* failed to meet Activision's sales expectations, leading executives to suspect that it had been cannibalized by the previous year's game. A free-to-play version released in 2020, *Call of Duty: Warzone,* remains a massive success and may have drawn players away from the premium entries.

Activision remains autonomous, and Microsoft could decide to change these plans after the acquisition, which is expected to be finalized by the summer of 2023 pending approval from regulators. The shares declined as much as 1.4% in extended trading on Tuesday on news of the delay.

Call of Duty games are developed by a rotating stable of Activision's development studios. This year's entry, a new *Modern Warfare* game, will be made by Woodland Hills, California-based Infinity Ward. Bloomberg earlier reported that Activision executives were seriously considering skipping a year of *Call of Duty.* — *Bloomberg*

Digital upskilling beyond technologies

The demand for digital upskilling is currently evident across organizations to prepare their people for the digital future of work. And for a successful digitally upskilling of the workforce, the requisite that first comes to mind is having the right technology and tools in place.

What needs more emphasis is that digital upskilling deals with people, not machines. The human and cultural aspects of digital upskilling were the highlights in the BusinessWorld Insights online forum, in partnership with Tata Consultancy Services, titled "Digitally Upskilling the Workforce" held on Feb. 17. It's the second leg of the four-part series on "Mapping Out Successful Digital Journeys."

Philip Gioca, country manager of JobStreet Philippines, noted that there are roles that may be of high risk in the future as digitalization and automation may make those irrelevant.

"We need to look at the future to be very soon because of this digitalization and transformation," he urged. "It's really important for everyone to upskill, together with the leaders, the staff, and our organization needs to create a culture and an environment so that we will be still relevant in the future."

Mr. Gioca also noted that the pandemic brought opportunities for digital learning. Several free tools are also available that can enable learners to develop themselves.

"There are tools out there that we can use for free. We have our time to consume whatever we need to improve ourselves. But we also have to look at a very focused learning system for ourselves to say, 'Okay, this is something that I would need to learn in my job or my future job so I might as well invest my time and effort to it already today,'" he said.

Furthermore, Mr. Gioca considered 'the future is in your fingertips' in digital upskilling.

"The future is really up to you. If you want to use your fingertips, you need to learn, you need to unlearn, and you need to face the challenges that upskilling would require an investment of your time, effort, and yourself if you really want to be part of that relevant future that we're talking about. A lot

In photo during the BusinessWorld Insights (clockwise, from top left) are panelists Philip Gioca, JobStreet Philippines country manager; Ellen Imasa, AIA Philippines chief human resource officer; moderator Santiago Arnaiz; and panelist Clark Fernandez, TCS Philippines head of Cognitive Business Operations.

of it in the company culture, in the support team, the government, all of them are there. But if you do not willingly embrace that challenge, opportunity, and future, you will not be relevant," he said.

Fostering, embedding a culture of learning

Talking about her organization's goal of becoming a digital insurer, Ellen Imasa, chief human resources officer at AIA Philippines, mentioned that their people have to upskill while undergoing culture change to keep up with the needed demands towards this transformation.

Their objective is to make certain that employees take charge of their growth through ensuring accessible learning, the availability of opportunities for upskilling, and presenting career opportunities open to them. "We have to come up with strategies to help people see the value in investing in their soft and technical skills. It is not just about teaching them but creating an environment where there is a mutual agreement that it is the right thing to do," she added.

"Digital transformation is not just a matter of learning and having the new trends and technology in place. It is about creating an environment that fosters or supports a learning culture and setting the tone for people to be better and see the value on developing themselves," she considered.

Yet, Ms. Imasa noted that transformation also involves several considerations to look into.

"First, is the organization set up to be able to adapt to the changes that it would like to implement? Are the people actually ready to be able to cope with the changes in terms of the roles and responsibilities, the programs that will be implemented for them, and will they have the appreciation to be able to embrace all these changes? And will they be able to answer the question of what's in it for them? What will be the sense of purpose for these people if they will actually embark on this digital transformation?" she asked.

Introducing new technologies to the organization for digital transformation is "just the tip of the iceberg," Ms. Imasa further emphasized. "What matters at

the bottom is the adaptation of the employees, the adjustment or transition of the culture in the organization, and embracing that kind of mind-set that makes the organization embark into a learning journey that will be able to sustain the requirements of the business," she said.

Also talking about change management, Ms. Imasa reminded to heed to how the people is adapting and accepting the changes thrown in their way. "Most often than not, we are so focused on just pushing a lot of initiatives, not really taking into consideration that it's not landing properly, therefore not achieving the target or the goal that we have intended it to be."

Clark Fernandez, Cognitive Business Operations head of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) Philippines, Inc., shared how his organization reinforced learning.

TCS year on year invests thousands of hours for its people to learn and take advantage of its technology platforms, according to Mr. Fernandez. "Those trainings that our employees are getting from web-

based courses or face to face, we have an on-the-job deployment that gets facilitated by their respective supervisors. TCS Philippines utilizes various motivational tools to promote continuous learning," he explained.

The company also created a career path to motivate its workforce to upskill themselves proactively. "This helps TCS Philippines ensure that our team on the ground will have access to the latest technology that they can utilize in their day-to-day job. This also helps us attract talent, given we offer a certification that is recognized in the market," he said.

Mr. Fernandez also said that "to be able to actually reap the benefits of upskilling the workforce, you need to have that embedded [and] integrated into your day-to-day. Because otherwise, it will be a great program that HR will or learning to implement, but there's no application and reinforcement."

"For change to actually happen, it needs to be applied on a daily basis. Digital upskilling is so broad. But unless you apply that, that's the only time that an organization, even employees, will be able to see the change in them," he explained.

Furthermore, responding on the way to launch digital learning programs to make certain that people would pursue and apply to their day-to-day work, Mr. Fernandez highlighted the need for a holistic approach.

"We're trying to actually embed this to our usual culture. And for that to be successful, you need to take a holistic approach. There's no such thing as just one action then everything will just follow through. It's not like that. It's a journey. Every organization would need to consider, 'What are some of the pitfalls? How do you make sure that there's a constant follow-through of those objectives that you set, digital upskilling wise?'" he explained.

"TCS created a holistic approach that would cover various roles [and] different departments so that we all speak the same language. We develop that in-house for learning so that everyone would have access to it," he shared. "You don't need to actually force the learning, it needs to be coming from someone," he reminded.