

BOOK REVIEW

Satya Nadella (Ed.) 2017. Hit Refresh: The Quest to Rediscover Microsoft's Soul and Imagine a Better Future for Everyone. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 272 pp., £ 25, ISBN 978-0-00-824765-2

Hit Refresh is quite a refreshing book candidly written by Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella. Satya a well-respected senior leader of Microsoft managed to write this book in spite of his busy schedule to imprint his thoughts, ideas, ambitions, childhood memories, passions, concerns, suggestions and even some philosophical questions.

The book in the beginning portrays the early life of Satya Nadella and his childhood memories, especially his passionate sport cricket. Satya shares an anecdote of his college days cricket, his bad bowling in one particular game; and his captain's intervention to take him out briefly; then reposing his confidence again by letting him to continue. Satya connects this particular incident reminiscing leaders and their need to infuse confidence in shaky performers. Hit Refresh stirs readers of all ages. Satya talks about empathy and compassion citing his own son Zain who was born with Cerebral Palsy; and narrates his family's reaction and interventions in raising his son. He particularly talks about his wife Anu's resilience and acceptance of her son's physical challenges and Satya's subsequent changes in his perspective of looking at life and people around him with empathy.

Hit Refresh is a book written in a very lucid manner and readers can easily connect with him. Satya narrates his Microsoft journey of so many years and his interjections with many people who mattered to him right from the founders Bill Gate, Paul Allen, immediate predecessor former CEO Steve Ballmer, Nobel laureates, Economists, senior leaders from governments, NGO's and technological geeks of his rival companies. Though Hit Refresh may appear a quick-read book in the beginning, it is not. The book is written after a considerable research with many scientific facts from diverse scholars.

Satya quotes in the ensuing chapter, like any other new CEO's concerns that generally boggle a new incumbent who takes his company to next orbit. When Satya was inducted as third CEO of 40 year old Microsoft, he was swamped by many problems - sagging growth, internal politics, complacent colleagues and progressive rival companies. Fortunately, Satya was fully supported by his Board and senior mentors Bill Gate and Steve Ballmer, giving free hand to refresh Microsoft. Satya made conscious efforts to change the culture. In his efforts to change the culture, his senior colleagues Kathleen Hogan- Chief People Officer, Kurl Delbene -Chief Strategy Officer ,Chris Capossela -Head Marketing etc. teamed up with him in infusing his vision to successfully move the giant company from its somber siesta to brisky sojourn. Satya

also reminisces some of the acquisitions he made and successes and failures of these acquisitions. Microsoft's Nokia acquisition was a bitter lesson and somewhat financially dented the company as noted by Satya. He indeed shares his lesson that he had learnt from this failed acquisition. Satya's candid confession about Microsoft's failure to lead cloud computing space that was taken away by Amazon is a clear reflection of his insatiable growth mindset.

Hit Refresh gives a glimpse of Microsoft accelerated growth after Satya's ascendancy as CEO. Satya has made some bold acquisitions that fostered the financial strength of the company. He talks about Microsoft's acquisition of LinkedIn for 26 billion dollars. The culture fitment that augured LinkedIn Microsoft's smooth journey giving free hand to Jeff Weiner, the CEO of LinkedIn, is yet another example of Satya's efficiency in handling successful acquisitions. Satya quotes many such successful acquisitions that contributed to Microsoft's growth and development. Hit Refresh in the subsequent pages delves deeper into new developments in technology. Satya's version of mixed reality, artificial intelligence, internet of things, cloud computing, quantum computing offers some intriguing pictures in the minds of the readers. Readers may rejoice to learn the fruits that these technological advancements may yield in the years to come. At the same time, Satya also promptly cautions the possible side effects and pitfalls of new technological advancements.

Hit Refresh in subsequent chapter discusses the need for technology coalition among giants like Samsung, Intel, Amazon, Google, Facebook, Apple in the pursuit of uplifting people's standard of living and life style. He confidently argues that there is enough space for all competitors to jointly collaborate as well as fight independently to add value to consumers.

Satya goes on in his maiden book about discussing trust issues that challenges technology companies. He deliberates the conundrum of companies like Microsoft's customer data and the demand of governments to share such data for legal investigation. Microsoft's home country USA on several occasions reportedly demanded customers' data for certain investigations and Microsoft stalled governments attempt to take away such data through legal intervention. Satya also shares similar opinions raised by many senior leaders. He even quotes Tim Cook of Apple's voice against such issues related to privacy of their customers. Safeguarding customers' private data is of paramount importance of any successful company in Satya's opinion.

Satya then moves on his focus on humans and machines in the following chapter. He brings scientific evidence to argue his points about the ability of Artificial Intelligence to match human brains in the near future. He further proclaims Artificial Intelligence would surpass human brains by 2100. Also, he touches upon the caution raised by critics, the pitfalls that might damage human beings if Artificial Intelligence takes over human brains in any destructive manner.

Hit Refresh reminds the need to find one's soul again. Satya has been widely credited not only for reinvention of Microsoft culture; but also for bringing 100 percent growths ever since he

became CEO. Satya confers his strong belief in four basic elements for any successful company. He lists them in the order of priority – Employees, Customers, Product and Partners. Any reader can read his mind very easily as he gets engaged in this book. His Hit Refresh ‘Push’ is primarily meant for Microsoft Employees. He emphasizes unambiguously that employees have to refresh again to take Microsoft in the next higher orbit.

Satya is also a consummate businessman one can easily infer from reading Hit Refresh. Satya has been religiously expanding customers’ base through very much product range. Microsoft’s acquisition of companies like LinkedIn, Xamarin, Acompli, Mile, Minecraft is a clear reflection of his insatiable hunger for customer base extension. As a quintessential professional, Satya has been religiously meeting partners of Microsoft’s various product ranges. Satya understands and values the contributions made by Microsoft partners who enabled Microsoft’s customer acquisition. In one of the chapters, Satya recounts how he on-boarded some of the partners in Microsoft annual get-together to discuss various suggestions pertaining to new product development defying some employees strong conservative reservations.

Hit Refresh in the end chapter talks about different ways of restoring economic growth for everyone. Satya like any other revolutionary IT leader strongly believes that Internet and technology is further set to enrich human life in many ways. He is quite convinced that today’s human beings are much better in having better facilities and standard of living rather than few decades before. Though he agrees in many parts of the world income inequality prevails, Satya opines governments can play constructive roles in bringing much desired improvements in the areas of education, manufacturing, poverty alleviation, employment generation, healthcare with the support of IT revolution!. In other words...in so called fourth industrial revolution!

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