

Albert Chou:

This is IT Visionaries, your number one source for actionable insights and exclusive interviews with CIOs, CTOs, CISOs, and many more. I'm your host, Albert Chou, a former CIO, former sales VP, and now podcast host. Welcome, everyone, to another episode of IT Visionaries. Today we have a special guest. Meet Emma McGuigan. She is the global lead of enterprise and industry technologies at a little company you might have heard of called Accenture. Emma, welcome to the show.

Emma McGuigan:

Thank you very much, Albert. Thank you for having me.

Albert Chou:

Before we dive into your report, which was awesome, I read it. It's about interoperability. Those of you listening, we're going to talk about interoperability today. A little bit of a tongue twister. But if anyone doesn't know what Accenture is, we'll start there. What is Accenture? I don't know. It's got a few employees here and there, I think.

Emma McGuigan:

Yeah, we do. We do. We have over 720,000 of them globally. We operate in over 120 countries. We're basically a professional services company who help our clients to tap into digital cloud security, to unlock the promise of technology and human ingenuity. That's what we're all about, trying to unlock that value.

Albert Chou:

Exactly. For anyone out there listening who maybe you haven't worked at a major company before, that needed the services of an Accenture, but I remember working for Mondelez. At the time, Mondelez was the big snack maker. They make brands like Oreo and Ritz, and Accenture is their technology partner, helping them implement all these things that they need. They're not talking about implementing little bits of software. We're talking about massive projects, typically. They needed to bring actual manufacturing plants, supply chain plants, online upgrading systems there, integrating into order management system. Huge, huge projects. Emma, you recently put out with your colleagues at Accenture a report about interoperability. Now, we hear this all the time at the enterprise level. Some of the small businesses, interestingly, like native cloud businesses, they kind of already know about it. They're just building in that direction. But you saw an interesting factoid. I believe the lead headline was that companies with better interoperability can generate six times more revenue. I hope I have that right. Dive into that. Start there. What is going on? And how is this unlocking that much growth?

Emma McGuigan:

Well, I think you have to start, Albert, with the context that we are living in. We are living in this massively disrupted environment. Black swan events have become the norm. There's all of this unprecedented level of uncertainty. We've seen organizations need to go through a transformation to be more agile, to be more resilient, to have more flexibility so that they can respond quickly to challenges and supply chains, to needing to reduce cost spend, to unlock and drive into new business models and new revenue models. When you have all of that, you need to really focus on how you can be agile. At the same time, I mean, over the last 10 years, the average large enterprise has exploded the number of enterprise applications that they've got. They've gone from 70 or 80 up to five, six, seven,

800. Now, if you think about that for a minute and you think about all the silos that have been created, you want to be agile, and there's that many applications, and they're not talking to each other, then that's a problem.

But if we go back to what's happening, we've also got things like cloud. You've got data and AI, and that's suddenly enabling something new. If you can get those applications to talk to each other and drive that interoperability vision, then you can unlock all that value because you're breaking down the silos. Then, when the CFO wants to change something, they can understand real time how that's going to impact how the chief supply chain operator's going to be working. It's that sort of vision of having everything interconnected to drive down these silos that we see in traditional organizations that that's where that opportunity sits, and that's why you can unlock so much more value and revenue.

Albert Chou:

So for yourselves, I think that's an accepted truth. I think more companies want to be interoperable, but companies are stuck sometimes with limited capability, whether it's in talent or maybe their equipment. I guess, what are the boardrooms? What are CEOs? What are bitcoms? What are they thinking about in terms of getting and upgrading their systems so that it can be more interoperable? Is it widely accepted? It feels like it should be widely accepted, but I don't know. Maybe you run into companies that are like, "I don't think so, Emma. I don't want that."

Emma McGuigan:

Well, we see companies in the research we did, we saw companies falling into three groups. The first group were not really investing at all in interoperability and they weren't investing in the technologies that would open up interoperability because what has opened up the ability to have that interoperability is cloud. It's composability. It's having these open APIs. This first third, they just weren't investing in technologies that enabled that sort of outcome. They were stuck in their legacy world. The second third were investing in the technologies but not in the interoperability. They weren't going the extra mile. It's only a two to four percent increase in IT spend to get to the interoperability. Whilst they had put in the right technology solutions, they weren't connecting them.

The third third had invested in those technologies, and they had really invested in the interoperability, and they were the ones who had seen that revenue increase. They were the ones who'd had the vision to really go all the way to leapfrog everybody else and think about the value they'd get because of the agility they'd then have, because of that single view of data they'd have across their organization and the value it would give them. That value, that understanding of that picture needs to come from the C-suite down. This isn't tech doing it for themselves. It's about the business being connected across on it, leading with the CEO. That's where we see the real difference.

Albert Chou:

One third of the companies in your research are completely embracing interoperability. It sounds like two thirds are either on the fence or just not doing it. So I got to know, besides tech, because I would assume it's tech companies, who is leaning into interoperability? It seems like this should be a widely accepted standard of as a way to go, but clearly, from the research, it's showing that that's not the case. What are some industries that are embracing it maybe more than the others?

Emma McGuigan:

Great question there on industry. There'll be no surprise because this is over a period of years that organizations have been investing in interoperability. Life sciences was the big winner during the pandemic because of the need to go and invest in a global solution for vaccines. Now, life sciences companies who invested in an interoperability saw a 10% increase in their revenues compared to just five percent for those who didn't invest. You compare that with an industry like travel who were really badly hit. They didn't have the money to invest during that same three-year period. Some of those industries saw their revenues decline really significantly. You could be looking with no interoperability declining. We're still seeing declines of four, five, six percent. But the ones who invested in the interoperability, their revenues increased by two percent. So even in those industries where they were really badly hit, investing in interoperability and they're still seeing that step change improvement.

Albert Chou:

You mentioned earlier at the top of the conversation that black swan events or major events that maybe shift your business models very quickly continue to happen, and they're predicted to happen more frequently. You used a great example of the pandemic, which we're now coming out of. But obviously, it was a huge part of our lives the last two, three years. During that time period, we've seen the shift to remote work. That's a big change. It changed the way businesses operate. We've seen major shifts for retail sector, for example, supply chain changes, labor changes. Things continuously change.

You mentioned the first step is, I guess, embracing cloud, modern APIs. When these industries that maybe aren't software native, what do you think it's going to take for those next two thirds to see that this is the way to adopt and change and handle this change? That is, like you said, it's going to happen probably more frequently, and if it doesn't, I think it's scary to know my competitors can be that agile. I would think so. You know what I mean? If I'm in a big business and everything's very competitive, it's scary to know that my competitor might be able to handle this supply chain disruption, but maybe I can't. That sounds bad.

Emma McGuigan:

I think the thing we've got to look at here is really what's enabling that interoperability to happen. Now interoperability is not a new thing. I've been in the tech sector for nearly 30 years. I spent my first 15 years as an engineer. I used to make my dollar off of coding in the techy middleware trying to work through all the COBA decomposing. The thing that's happened, there's been a whole load of technology change that just makes interoperability easier. But it has to be accompanied by the right behaviors and the right vision. And we talk a lot about the three Cs, Albert, so you've already mentioned cloud. The companies who've already invested in the transition to public cloud, we see their results driving forward and so cloud becomes that first step because it enables all of that data and AI across the enterprise. But the next thing we talk about is composable technologies.

And this is the thing that's really different. It's that ability with because of the openness of the enterprise platforms in a way that they weren't before. You look at how Salesforce interlocks MuleSoft to allow them to plug and play different solutions. And all of the enterprise partners have really thought about moving to this open API and that creates this opportunity for composable technology, the opportunity to plug and play like we never did could before.

And the third piece is the third C and it's collaboration. Collaboration because it's not about running in business silos anymore. And this is all about the people. It's all about human behavior and recognizing that humans, even within a corporation, they're better off working together, not sitting in their silo, but the value that they have when they can operate across the enterprise. And when you think about what do those other two thirds need to do? Well, they almost need to start with the collaboration because if

they believe in the collaboration, if they believe in the value they can share together, then the decision to move to cloud-based technologies, the decision to adopt composable technology through open API technology solutions becomes much more natural.

Albert Chou:

So I love the way you say that. It's like this follows many leadership models, which they talk about the first steps to transforming an organization or building a better organization usually starts with the people. It always starts with people and technology comes after people. There is no point in having great technology if you don't have a great plan for how you're going to integrate all these systems. I use the analogy of like, hey, that's asking a bunch of subcontractors to come together with no blueprints and build a house, I guarantee it will not be a good house. It's like a guarantee you will not get what you want. For the companies you work with, when you're doing these research projects, are you also on the consulting side where you're doing advisory work or is most of your role in the research of what the outcomes for these companies at Accenture?

Emma McGuigan:

Oh no, my role is to do both. And actually that's a principle within how we work in Accenture. We like to really make sure that we are a foot in today and a foot in tomorrow so that we are thinking about how we're delivering and driving the best we can for our clients today. And we're thinking about the opportunities that are coming maybe tomorrow but maybe next week, maybe next year. So we've got that investment looking forward. And so the research we do is about reinforcing that the things we're driving today, and this is a sort of today, tomorrow piece, we compliment that with some of the other things we do, which are much more how is the metaverse going to transform the way we think and work. And actually of course if you think about what we need with interoperability, the metaverse will only be super successful if we have it.

So we definitely do as you back up we... For my role, the role I have is to drive our services, our implementation work with our clients across all of our enterprise partners. That's essentially what I do. So definitely for today and definitely when we go and run these surveys, we are working and asking clients where we're already working with them but we go broader than that and we reach out to organizations who aren't necessarily our clients too. So we can really get a good spread of input on this survey data.

Albert Chou:

That's excellent. So when the collaboration piece comes to play, because surely you've worked on projects where they're just beginning. Maybe they've tipped into, they're going to go from that lower two thirds to the higher performing upper third and they sit down and you have that first discussion, how does that discussion typically map out? Does it start with your team mapping out, hey, in industries like yours, this is what companies are trying to say yes to? How does that mapping collaboration process even begin? Because I always think to myself, if I knew the answer I would've done it and I wouldn't have called you. So you're like who should I involve? I don't even know.

Emma McGuigan:

Yeah, well, capability could be a problem. But I would say we tailor the conversation a little bit to who we're talking to because of the barriers people put in. I talked earlier about the number of enterprise applications. So if you're having the conversation with the CIO, the CIO could be talking about the technology issue. They're thinking about the challenges they have because 66% of the challenges in the

technology space were about the number of applications and the perceived technical complexity of being able to drive the interoperability. But then if you go talk to somebody who's maybe running a business unit, then it's that behavioral challenge that we talked about. It's the leadership challenge and they don't see that their business goal is necessarily tied to an application goal and they're thinking in their business silo. You then need to bring the different business units together.

So say, well, what if instead of having multiple supply chain processes when you are all producing the same product, what if we simplified it, we standardize around a single data model, we standardize around a single process or a very small number of processes, and then we can plug in these specialist applications which are going to give you the specialism that you need and we can do that easily because now we've got this digital core and we can plug in using interoperability, these specialist applications which are going to drive that value. And it's a very different way of thinking and then you can drive from that. When we have that conversation we can say, well think about the value because now you can get there quicker because it doesn't take so long because you've driven simplicity in and you can understand much more readily the impact of changing something here to the outcome over here in a way that's very different.

You can bring believers. So the CIO, you can start to work with them and you can start to work with the business leaders. But then there's a financial challenge and what we found is that 34% believe that there's still more expensive to drive interoperability through their solutions. But actually what we found is that top third, we're only spending between two and 4% more than the non. And you go, well, if you can unlock all that value then why would you not invest that little bit more? We tailor the conversations to whoever we're talking about. But Albert, I think it's really important we recognize if organizations are going to adopt this, it can't just sit with the CIO, right? And the CIO is increasingly becoming the hero and they're driving the engine of the business in any case because technology's the enabler that's driving that agility that we talked about right at the beginning.

Albert Chou:

Well, it's also because when you say that it's not the CIO's sole responsibility is the one thing that we keep hearing from all of our different guests have joined us on IT Visionaries is they continuously talk about customer or client experience. That's one of the big, big drivers. Everyone wants to improve that. They know that that's got to get better all the time. And typically that involves many, many systems working together or business operations working together from back of house to front of house no matter what kind of business you're in. When you meet companies where maybe just a handful of the team is thinking about this, whereas the other team members are not, is that an easy conversation that has like, "Hey, you need to involve more people." So I used still always use this airline example of a lot of airlines for those of us that fly, which hopefully everyone's getting to travel again.

But the way airlines want to treat diamond members or high status members, they want to bring their bags out first. That is actually quite a feat. It's quite a feat because you have the gate agent, you have the luggage handlers down below. If it gets lost and rerouted, then you probably have delivery systems. And so multiple systems have to all talk to each other just to give you that great service that, "Hey, I'm going to bring you your bags first." And so when you hear of companies that want to talk to you but maybe they're not quite ready to have all their team members involved yet, is that an easy conversation to have or is it when you help them map out the process that they want their customers to experience, that becomes quickly self-evident that it's not just a CIO problem like you suggested, it is a company problem that they have to solve together in order for all these systems to work? Because the systems, like you said, they're the end of the solution, not the beginning of it.

Emma McGuigan:

Exactly. I couldn't agree more with that statement. So we talked about tailoring the conversation for who you're talking to, but I think it's really important we don't get too far down the line with one part of an organization before talking to everybody, all the stakeholders, who are going to be impacted. It's like any change. There's a human person sitting in that change and they need to feel part of the decision-making, otherwise it's being done to them and they reject. And this goes to the collaboration. If we talk about the cloud, the composable tech and the collaboration, it has to be done collaboratively. So it's not being done to this person. They're part of the decision, they're part of the moving forward. So I think the first thing I would say is you don't want to get too far ahead because you certainly don't want to create barriers in an organization where one half the organization is all in with the approach around driving interoperability and the other half are going, no, no, no, that's waste of money.

So you have to take everybody together. But the most important thing here is that it's leader led. If it's the whole organization that's going to move, then the CEO needs to recognize why this is important and it becomes an executive board discussion so they understand the value that you can unlock. And at Accenture, we talk a lot about total enterprise reinvention and the need to drive this transformation very much quicker if we talk about compressed transformation. When you are driving multiple areas of transformation simultaneously, you are only going to be able to do that if you use interoperability because you and I both know it'll never work otherwise. So you think about how you're going to create that digital core and then you can start to plug in the different pieces which are the specialism for the different business units or the different functions that you're working with.

And that's really how we think about this and that's why the executive board needs to understand the value of it and the CIO needs to understand the how and then you can get to a position which can really work and then you get to a place where your application strategy, it doesn't just align to the business strategy, but the two are tied together. So the business strategy and the application strategy are in complete lockstep driving each other. And I think that's a really important thing. And when we talked about the third who were furthest away from this value, they're not thinking about how to link those two things together and they're still remaining very disparate. And that's where we see the need to bring those two things together, align that business strategy with the application strategy so together they can move the organization forward.

Albert Chou:

Yeah, there's no doubt about it that complete alignment has to be necessary. Right now, most companies are very uncertain, murky about the future. There's definitely economic changes in front of us. The other thing that we know that's going to happen is more CEOs and CIOs are going to be asked, "Hey, what is my time to value on these projects? Hey, what are the costs going to be? How long is it going to be before I get an ROI?" I'm sure these questions get hit with you. How do you address these types of things? Because like you said, there's a two to 4% increase in cost potentially, it sounds okay, right? It sounds like that's a good threshold but I'm sure these questions get asked to you. So when you think of these great projects in their well run, what is my time to value? How fast can I see an ROI? How long is it going to be? How effective is it going to be? And of course everyone wants to know how much is it going to cost? You already answered that, 2%, you're good.

Emma McGuigan:

So let me maybe take a step back because actually I would say one of the key parts of why you would drive the interoperability is data. Data is the core of why you're doing it because you want to be able to have all this data running through and the quicker you can get to the data being connected, the quicker

you can unlock the value. And normally I would say we've worked with different clients and there is a definite path to value. I mean, I worked with a telco many years ago and they had a specific issue where they couldn't get iPhones delivered to their customers on the day the iPhones were released. And we know that's fairly often, right? Pretty much once every 12 to 18 months there's going to be a new iPhone and there are certain customers who want to get those iPhones on that day.

If you think about how you do that, that's about customer experience and it's all about customer. But to be able to do that, you're in supply chain. It's all going all the way through the organization from marketing and the customer services all the way back through to supply chain to distribution to do that, which sounds like a pretty simple thing. If you are in the business of getting phones to people, you'd be able to do it in a way that you can plan it the day an iPhone comes out, you can do it. Well, if you pause and think about the complexity of what needs to be all the pieces that need to be joined together and it's data in the middle of all of that that's going to allow that to happen. Now in that example, you can measure success based on the NPS scores and the stickiness of the clients because the customers are going to keep coming back, if you can meet their demand.

So you can quite quickly tie value to it. And what you might find, and we've done this with some clients, is you can connect the data quicker and then maybe do some of the core transformation below the covers whilst you're already starting to unlock some of that early doors of value. And then as you finish the implementation of your new solutions which are all connected, you no longer have to pull the data out. The data is all connected real time. So there are pieces that we do to help unlock value quicker whilst under the covers you're changing the engine if you like under the covers. And I think the technologies we have today allow us to do these sorts of things and create these data aggregation platforms at the same time that we're driving that interoperability. And then you could say, well, why don't you just stick with the data aggregation platform?

Why would you go through the whole transformation? And you go through the entire transformation because it's giving you that sustainability for the long term. It's giving you that resilience because as your applications change, then it's all being connected real time rather than every time you make a change you've got to go back to the data aggregation and make another change, make another change, make another change. And so that's how we start to think about that to accelerate the path to value. It's like what could we be doing to help start to drive some of the value, whether it's a saving or it's a different opportunity quicker and we start to think about it differently.

And then of course depending on the levels of complexity, depending on the level of simplification and standardization clients are prepared to take, then we can continue to work at how... The more simplification clients are prepared to make, Albert, the more we can reduce price. Because I said at the beginning, we're a professional services business. So that's sort of how we think about it. And it depends how many pieces you're trying to connect. But what we're all about with this interoperability piece is about standardizing how we plug things together like a reusable framework to plug things in or having pre-built solutions within industries that we can just deploy straight out.

Albert Chou:

I think that's one of the reasons why Salesforce platform is growing the way it's growing is because of the fact that you can plug so many things in and becomes that data flow layer that you talked about. I liked how you addressed it, it's not clear what the cost or time to value is, but it's pretty clear if you can get data flowing on the same rails everywhere, your chances go up, your ability to deliver services, add services, remove roadblocks, just goes up so much higher. That's like the first project to tackle. For yourself, we did a little homework on you. We found a podcast that you had been on previously where you mentioned, hey, when you were younger you wanted to be prime minister because you wanted to

fix the world. It sounds like you're kind of doing it. Give us an idea, were you always a problem solver? What did you mean you wanted to fix the world? It's one of those things where we find that a lot of people in tech, they often have this itch. They think I can build something that changes this.

Emma McGuigan:

Well, I would say I've definitely always liked solving problems. I can remember taking a series of bikes apart, always managed to rebuild them so that was okay.

Albert Chou:

Motorbike or a pedal bike?

Emma McGuigan:

Pedal bikes but from quite a young age. I used to. My mum would come out and my bike could be in pieces all over the garden. For me, it's sort of ingrained. There's want to understand how things work, how we can make them work better, how we can solve a problem, how we can fix something. Also, just a strong motivation to try and make the world a little bit better in the time that you're here for. And you're right, there's a whole load of reasons why I didn't go into politics.

I sometimes wonder that they're not always the most effective people at driving change. I do feel very lucky in what I do because we are able to affect a lot of change and it's everything from culture to opportunity to solutions that we create which make it easier for people to have a healthier and better life experience. And I'm not trying to say everything we do is that, but I mean just the number of people that we employ for example. And there's a whole load of things where I feel very privileged in terms of what I get to do every day for sure.

Albert Chou:

How did you first get into coding? Because you mentioned before also though sounds like your hands are on the keyboard, coding, building applications. How did you first get into coding?

Emma McGuigan:

So my dad was a contractor, an IT contractor. In fact, he graduated as a mechanical engineer. He didn't really enjoy it, went to work for mechanical engineering company. One year in, they were standing up their first IT department. He had to go and deliver something to them and they said, "Oh, we're looking for people to come and join us, try this aptitude test." He did the aptitude test and he was employee number one in the IT department. So I grew up in an environment like that and we had a desktop computer at home and I taught myself to code on it using some old accountancy package. And I have the master's degree out of the University of Edinburgh. And the stuff I loved most was all the coding. I was the only person in my class who actually liked machine coding, but somebody has to. I ended up at Accenture, very long story short ended up here and I spent the first half of my career, the first 15 years really doing coding, architecture, engineering, all of the stuff at that backend of things.

And then in the second half of my career, it's really been much broader into more of the business end. So that's my little quick potted history as to how I got into the coding and it's always there. I remember trying to teach my kids to do... You know when they do the Hour of Code and do some stuff and then they're like, "Can we do this?" And I was like, "Oh hang on." They'd done their error code and I spent the rest of the day coding up this super fancy thing and I was super pleased and they were not very impressed.

Albert Chou:

That's the curse of being the mom. No matter what, they're not going to give you credit until later. Maybe later, but when they're young they're not going to give you credit like, "Mom, this sucks." The interesting thing about being a software engineer in the last... Shoot, I guess it's like the last, it's weird, okay, I guess 25, 30 years is you also got to see the rise of interoperability opportunity because the reality is when you were getting started, most systems were closed, most systems were closed. When they started opening up, did you foresee what was going to happen or I guess when did you really say like, "Okay, the more things that we can connect best of breed services, this is going to be the future."? Was it when the rise of cloud? Was it the rise of APIs? Were there any hints for you where you're like, "Wow, this is going to fundamentally change everything."?

Emma McGuigan:

Well so there was a particular project that stands out for me and I went to work for an insurance company and everybody else was doing Y2K work. So everybody thought the world was going to end when we clicked over the new century.

Albert Chou:

I remember, yeah. Oh yeah. I was an intern doing Y2K work too.

Emma McGuigan:

And I was working on creating an e-commerce solution for general insurance. So general insurance is car and house insurance. And at the time, essentially the ability to quote sat on mainframe codes in a mainframe system with green screen access. And they were pulling all the data off the green screens and they were pushing it through some Microsoft power tool to drive a call center solution. So that in itself is quite clever for the time, not wildly anymore. But actually if you think about where we were at the time, it was quite exciting and we were asked to create a e-commerce solution. And at the time, you couldn't do an awful lot, because it was one you could first really put transactions through browsers. We ended up using a beta version of IBM component broker to plug mainframe, these green screen stripping mainframe plugin.

We were using an adaptation of what had been built in VB for the call center. I was using the IBM component broker to manipulate it all. We were having to write these wrappers between Java and C++ because it was the only way you could get everything to talk to each other. And I remember we went to do a demo of the prototype to the client and my boss at the time, he said, "Well you've got to come because it's your work." And I went, "No, I'm not coming because I don't think it's going to work and then real time I can fix it." And it's really funny, Albert, because that was the point when we had delivered that and it had gone live and you could not just do quotes but you could do sales and write it back to the mainframe.

I was like, "Actually, this is amazing." It's amazing and this is where it changes. And that was pre-cloud because it was at the time of Y2K and that was the moment when I thought there's something really interesting cooking up here and obviously it's taken a long time to get because you have to have that open API and that was all closed. It was all closed within the systems of that particular client. But you think about that today and it's pretty amazing where we came from to where we are today.

Albert Chou:

Yeah, I love how you name like six languages. We had to use C+. We got to use Java. VB, I haven't heard VB since days of CS101 circa 1998. That's where I was interning. That's why I got to do Y2K work. For those that don't know, it's Visual Basic, don't look it up. You're not going to be impressed.

Emma McGuigan:

Definitely not. It's not doing anything for my credibility.

Albert Chou:

Don't download yourself a copy of Visual Basic and try to do something. Don't worry about that, okay guys? But for the CIOs and CTOs and engineers that are around that '98 to 2000 timeframe, everyone remembers, we all remember. We were doing that thing. The reason why I ask that is because I want to talk about what you see for the future now because certainly there's more technology and opportunities, services, microservices, cloud service, like things that you just didn't exist just a handful of years ago, maybe a handful of months ago.

Right now we got ChatGPTs all over my screen. Everyone's talking about ChatGPT, I downloaded a copy and played with it. It is pretty crazy. It's pretty crazy. For yourself, what are you most excited about? What are some of the technologies you think are going to possibly change your field in the next few years? These prediction conversations happen all the time at the end of the year and here you are, we're asking you. What's going to change? What are you most excited about? What are some of the things that you'd love to invest more time and energy and learning about that you think is going to change interoperability or just business in general?

Emma McGuigan:

So I think interoperability is like the fact it's becoming easier is really going to change because it lifts off some of the restrictions that we have today in how we think about things. And so I think it becomes one of the key enablers for today. One of the things which is not new, but it's grossly underused in my opinion because we don't quite worked out why it's great, it's the technology that sits around distributed ledger. Because I really don't think we've really thought about what it means to not have to go and store something in one place. And the fact that you can drive the whole history of an object on that distributed ledger. And there's something around that I still don't think we've really tapped in. And so I think there's still a whole load of untapped opportunity.

And the third thing that I'm really excited about at the moment, I have three kids, but I have two teenage boys who spend an inordinate amount of time on gaming platforms in a highly sociable way. And they are, in many respects, so far ahead in terms of collaborating, in terms of using immersive tech, in terms of thinking about avatars and how they express themselves and collaborating in team building in a virtual way than businesses, than any of our industries that we work within. And there's something around that whole culture. And then you think about the scope of what's available within the metaverse within Web 3.0 as those kids who've grown up. And we used to talk about kids growing up as digital natives, this is a whole level beyond because this is a whole level of sociability that we-

Albert Chou:

Yeah, connected natives.

Emma McGuigan:

Yes. I love that. And I think as they come of age, I think they're going to open up a whole load of opportunity. So I think for the next 10 years, that's where... And then all of that coming together is going to transform, the pace with which we see AI, all these different things. We're all going to have an agent working with us, helping us do our roles, whatever our roles are. You can see all of that. You can almost see it happening to you. And then if you go the time beyond that and you think about everything that is going on with biotech and that whole science tech and how tech tech is going to influence science tech to get to different bio outcomes and the whole personalization around that. I'm also widely excited about that. And if I keep going, I'm going to cover everything.

Albert Chou:

Well, myself, I have three kids, I only have one teenager. My other kids are younger. But what's fascinating the way you described it is because I see it as well, I see in my kids and I call them native, meaning they're not native digital, they're like native communicators, meaning there's never been a time in my kids' lives or nor your kids' lives where they haven't been able to communicate with just about anyone in the world over a device in real time. It's pretty fascinating. The thing that I've observed probably that's going to mean the biggest change in the future is how fast kids now can, let's say, address their desire to learn. So growing up for me, my parents didn't make me learn stuff. I wasn't a naturally curious person. I didn't do well in school. I think I was curious, but I didn't do well in school. But my kids, the stuff they're teaching themselves, one of my kids is teaching himself how to program on Roblox like you just talked about secondary worlds.

Another one, learn how to solve Rubik's cubes. The other one isn't more of an athlete, but he's constantly researching how do I get better at ice hockey. These are things that are fundamentally going to change. They're changing the world right now as we speak. Now what it's going to lead to, I don't quite know, but I do know this. Schooling now doesn't know how to handle this. You know what I mean? Kids now, they're at completely different arenas of intelligence in a single grade. It's crazy.

Emma McGuigan:

I completely agree with that.

Albert Chou:

Well, Emma, it was awesome having you on the show. Hearing your story of where you came from breaking down bikes to now leading global teams, helping companies adopt interoperability, it's pretty fascinating. Now I know why you weren't in mechanical engineer. You mentioned your dad didn't really like it because I was like, "Oh, you would be mechanical engineer, you're building the bikes and stuff." But for those who are interested, the name of the report is Value Untangled. It is Accelerating Radical Growth through Interoperability. It is published by Accenture. We'll link the show notes below so you can check it out for yourself.

Emma, I want to say thank you for joining us today on IT Visionaries. Thanks for sharing your story. Thanks for giving us some factoids about what's going on. And if you're one of those companies out there that's the two thirds that aren't there yet, to me this is a default standard. You have to adopt a way to embrace the technology and changes that are about to happen in your future. Like Emma said, these changes are certainty. It's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when, and it's probably tomorrow, honestly. Tomorrow there's going to be something that you're going to have to account for.

Emma McGuigan:

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Brilliant. Well, thank you very much for having me on, Albert. It's been my absolute pleasure to join you. So thank you.

Albert Chou:

Thank you for joining us on IT Visionaries.