Roundtable Statement

The Asia Cloud Computing Association (ACCA) held a roundtable discussion on the future of work in Manila, Philippines. This closed-door roundtable aims to provide a vendor-neutral platform for industry leaders and government officials to raise key issues that need addressing in current-day Manila, Philippines. The roundtable was also for private sector players, academics, cloud service providers and regulators to engage and share information, working together to co-create a society that is future-ready in Asia-Pacific.

I. Key observations

Observation 1: Technology Changes the Way We Work

With the introduction of cloud-powered software at the workplace, workers learn to adapt and change the way they work. Tasks which can be automated and done by software and machines frees up time to work on other tasks. For example, officer managers who previously spent time tracking projects by getting updates from individuals learn to use cloud-powered services to manage project flow with input provided virtually by employees. The change pervades workers in other sectors like manufacturing, where factory workers who assemble parts can now allocate more time to upskill themselves, and train other workers. More than two-thirds of employees retain their jobs while changing the tasks done in their jobs. The speed at which technology is adopted at work will be limited by the willingness of individuals, businesses and governments to try new ways of working.

Observation 2: Automation Creates Opportunities for New Jobs, and More Fulfilling Jobs

Automation allows for routine tasks to be done by machines, so that humans can focus on tasks that they are better fitted for, such as spending time on interpersonal skills; creative and decision-making and information synthesis. Lower-skilled workers will experience the largest increase in job satisfaction as work moves away from simple tasks. For example, a healthcare business process outsourcing centre in the Philippines that previously took 17 minutes to do a comparison of 500 business rules reduced the process to two minutes after a machine was used to read through all 500 rules. Employees at call centres can spend more time on resolving customer problems and finding solutions. Jobs in the future will spend more time on more complex functions and less time on routine tasks.

New, novel jobs will also be created. One participant noted that his young son (under 12) had career day in school, and had decided that he would go as “A YouTuber” – i.e. a person who makes money from his YouTube channel. Technology will create new, unheard-of job opportunities, and allow us to forge novel career paths which are unknown today.

II. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Embrace Changes in the Way We Work
A majority of governments worldwide are a few steps behind in adopting the latest technology at the workplace. They risk increasing the gap between the pace of change occurring in business and society with government policies, making them functionally irrelevant. For example, a participant noted that for the Philippines, government departments are required to notify the central authority when new types of positions are created for approval, slowing down the process of creating a new position to meet current service needs in the government sector, and therefore also slowing down hiring people with relevant skills. Being aware, attuned, and responsive to the changes in technology (cloud; cybersecurity; data management etc) will change the way governments work, and increase their service delivery effectiveness.

Recommendation 2: Government to Structure Policies for a Future Society
A new approach is needed in designing policies, taking into account task automation and the changing nature of work and business. Workers will increasingly need to be reskilled in a shorter span of time (eg: 3 to 5 years vs 8 to 10 years before), and the education system will require reconfiguration to match business needs. One participant noted that in Singapore, a USD400 grant called SkillsFuture is given to each citizen to take on courses in new and relevant skills. Another risk in the new economy is that more and longer structural unemployment will occur, which requires a rethinking of social safety nets to possibly provide support and retraining to the unemployed, particularly the lower-income and elderly. At the same time, support of businesses to adopt technology would be welcomed, for example, by creating incentive programmes for adoption and encouraging businesses to reskill their workers.

Conclusion
The ACCA presents these observations and recommendations for the government of Philippines to take into consideration when debating and discussing the Future of Work in the Philippines. As a business association, we are ready to engage in public-private dialogue to further this discussion, for the betterment of Philippines’ future. We look forward to hearing from you.

Do contact us at info@asiacloudcomputing.org, or contact us on LinkedIn at at http://is.gd/accacloud, or tweet us at @accacloud.

About the Asia Cloud Computing Association (ACCA)
http://www.asiacloudcomputing.org

The ACCA is the apex industry trade association that represents the stakeholders of the cloud computing ecosystem in Asia Pacific. The ACCA’s primary mission is to accelerate the adoption of cloud computing in Asia by helping create a trusted and compelling market environment, and a safe and consistent regulatory environment for cloud computing products and services.

The association works to ensure that the interests of the cloud computing community are effectively represented in the public policy debate. For more information on the ACCA, membership and partnership opportunities, visit http://www.asiacloudcomputing.org, or email info@asiacloudcomputing.org.