

Mike Saunders - The tension between technology and humanity



By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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This exclusive #BizTrends2024 interview is with Mike Saunders, CEO of Digitlab.

In this interview with *Bizcommunity* Marketing & Media editor, Danette Breitenbach, Saunders shares insights from his latest publication, *Human Centric, a framework for building a Business that will thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution*.

This report looks at how people will engage with technology in the future and what it means for technology to be human-centric.

"Ultimately technology doesn't mean much unless it means something to someone. When tech succeeds in any business or any intervention it makes in society, it's always valuable to people - that is the success point for all tech," says Saunders.

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The interview is also available via downloadable [App](#) and [IONO.FM](#).

Technology: an accelerator of human potential

Human-centric is about making technology human, building it in that way, and looking at it from the point of view of what human-centricity means and how technology can learn from it.

"The human element is crucial because the ultimate reason for a lot of technology is to accelerate the human nature of who we are," says Saunders.



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He explains that technology interventions tend to take care of things that make us less human.

"So whenever new technology revolutions occur, they're met with questions like 'What are we going to do now?'"

But we always find ourselves being more human, opening the door to being more of ourselves, and doing less of the menial tasks."

For Saunders technology is an accelerator of who we are and our potential. "At the end of the day, if we weren't bringing technology into the space for human beings, then what would the point of it be?"

“ One of the most exciting things about AI, especially in the ad industry, is that it's pushing creatives to be more creative ”

Technology specific trends

Saunders says when he first got into technology and the digital space, it was the social media rush, and post that, there was a period of innovation, followed by a phase of non-innovation.

"AI is a huge trend. For me, AI is the next accelerator push. It's challenging us to say, 'What makes us more human?' It's the only place we can show our identity as human beings."

He adds that one of the most exciting things about AI, especially in the ad industry, is that it's pushing creatives to be more creative.

"AI is pushing people to become problem solvers, strategists, dealing with bigger issues, which our brains are meant to do."

He says we are not meant to just process information all day.

"We're meant to be creative and solve problems. This is why we're going to have to prepare future generations to be problem solvers and creatives, as these will be the skills that make us human."



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The role of data

Underpinning social media, the internet, information, and AI is data.

"You can't do any of it without a good understanding of data. AI makes understanding that data much easier, giving us a processing engine.

"The data conversation is that if we don't have our handle on data, we can't compete in the digital space.

For Saunders, businesses have prioritised the front end of digital – like making their websites beautiful, their social media, and customer service – but they've neglected the back end, which is where they're now struggling.

"We're going to see a big divergence of people leading the data game and AI game and a lot of laggards. There won't be much middle ground."

“ Marketing is a technology business ”

Leveraging marketing technology

The ones that are driving a data-driven strategy hard are the ones leaning on marketing technology tools.

"Marketing is a technology business. We must think about systems that can trigger off data more than just managing data."

Along with this, he says we will see more product-related skill sets, with technology-driven marketers coming into play.



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The tension between technology and humanity

"Businesses relying on data and AI to run creative and engagement would be remiss not to understand the value of human creativity and human connection points.

Conversely, he adds that businesses trying to do everything themselves and be human and gut-driven would be remiss not to understand the beauty of data and how it allows you to scale and drive your business forward.

"There's got to be a marriage somewhere in the middle. We need to find the balance between what is human and what is tech, leaning into humanness but also understanding the value of technology."



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Mike Saunders, CEO of Digitlab is an industry inspiration with over a decade of experience helping people succeed in the digital economy. His expertise and passion have made a significant impact, inspiring others in the digital economy. As the founder of DigitLab, he has empowered thousands to find their customers and build their careers and businesses. An entrepreneur, he is the author of four books.

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ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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