

Foreword

SHUMEET BANERJI

Chief Executive Officer, Booz & Company

In the years that Booz & Company has been involved with the World Economic Forum and the *Global Information Technology Report (GITR)* series, we have seen information and communication technologies (ICT) offer the foundation for major leaps forward in almost every area of human activity. Governments, businesses, and consumers have a fundamentally different understanding of technology and its potential than they did 10 years ago, when the GITR was first published.

For each of these groups, the purpose of technology and the way they interact with it has changed. Governments, which once focused on the concrete issues of building infrastructure and providing access to citizens, are beginning to recognize that technology itself is not as important as the socioeconomic achievements it can engender—via e-health programs, e-government services, and smart grids for utilities, for example. Businesses have recognized that ICT is not just an avenue to cost-cutting and more efficient operations, but a critical way to open a dialogue with consumers and other stakeholders via all kinds of digital communications: mobile advertising, digital marketing, social networks, e-commerce. And consumers inhabit a new, always-connected digital world—particularly Generation C, those connected, communicating, content-centric, computerized, community-oriented, always-clicking consumers born after 1990.

As digital economies steadily become the norm, our goal at Booz & Company is to continue exploring the economic and social benefits that ICT can bring—and the ways in which they are increasingly interconnected. An e-health system built upon electronic medical records can improve bottom lines for hospitals, but it also offers social benefits by allowing for better patient care. Smart grids allow utilities to deliver a new range of smart home services, many of which also offer a greater environmental good.

More and more, various groups of stakeholders will need to collaborate on ICT projects in order to ensure that they are designed in ways that allow all of them to reap the potential advantages.

Furthermore, ICT's socioeconomic benefits are not limited by national borders. Technology allows the best and brightest minds in every nation to have access to each other in a way that was never before possible. Young people who may once have tried to clean up their cities can now form global communities of

like-minded peers—and work together to clean up the planet. Talented entrepreneurs can launch their ideas in a global marketplace and tap into capital from halfway around the world.

Some might say that this sense of optimism, about the potential that can be created by an interconnected world, is misplaced. The theme for the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2011, “Shared Norms for the New Reality,” acknowledged the pervasive challenges facing leaders and institutions—the aftermath of several demanding years in the global economy.

We choose to be relentlessly positive in the face of these challenges. Around the world, technology can help nations and individuals to level the playing field, to turn ideas into reality, to overcome generations of stagnant development. No nation and no region has a monopoly on innovation and new thinking. There is no area on the globe that has an inherent advantage in asking new questions, or exploring new areas. Digital economies, unlike the industrial economies of the past, do not rely on natural resources but on smart, ambitious individuals. There are many places on earth that can aspire to be the next Silicon Valley, the next Nanjing-Beijing corridor, the next Singapore.

It is based on this assumption that Booz & Company creates our vision for a world with seamless connectedness, always-on access to knowledge, and unrestricted openness to innovation. We are honored to contribute to *The Global Information Technology Report 2010–2011* and to continue shaping this vision for the future.