

## **Exclusive Interview**

**Neil Ackerman, Head of Advanced Technologies,  
Global Supply Chain, Middle East and Africa,  
Johnson & Johnson**

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## Neil Ackerman

Head of Advanced Technologies,  
Global Supply Chain, Middle East and Africa

*Johnson & Johnson*

In this exclusive paper, Neil Ackerman shares fascinating insights and points of view on corporate innovation in light of Cognitive Automation.

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## Executive Summary:

### The Essential Innovation Funnel in the Digital Economy

In this new digital economy, it is essential to have an innovation funnel, and, when a particular innovation is successful, scale it fast across the organization. Every company and its supply chain face increasing expectations from its customers who want products quicker with consistent on-time and in-full delivery. Therefore, fostering this innovation funnel is not only essential but an existential requirement to compete in the digital reality where agile and nimble players win.

The critical challenge for most organizations trying to innovate is that they move way too slowly with a narrow bias for action, combined with a failure to leverage partners (including startups). Innovation is a real skill that can be developed, learned, and applied - a very complex science that can be accelerated by forging the right partnerships with the right startups, ultimately delivering measurable business impact and customer value.

In partnership with Aera Technology, Cognitive Automation is one of the powerful innovations that J&J is in the process of adopting and scaling for identifying available-to-promise dates for its products. It's a better way of creating a business impact by having machines do the work while being guided by people. It's quite different from robotic process automation (RPA) and is knowledge-based, involving various aspects of data, science, process, and change management working in tandem. Ultimately, Cognitive Automation is about making smarter, faster, and timely decisions.

## Cognitive Automation at Johnson&Johnson

With Aera Technology, J&J has successfully leveraged Cognitive Automation in determining the available-to-promise and capable-to-promise dates for medical devices for our customers. This requires addressing three critical challenges. (1) Understanding and controlling our master data, which is complicated to manage as there are anomalies, multiple control systems, and a lack of homogeneity. (2) Ability to recruit, retain, and learn from the best employees in a market where the right talent is hard to acquire. (3) Developing clarity on what is on-site, what is on-cloud, and cybersecurity. With Aera, we started with an ATP pilot for a small subset of medical devices whose accuracy rate went up to 90%, and we then scaled it broadly across the organization. Aera is agile and flexible and simultaneously compelling because it adapts to customers' needs to enhance the overall experience.

## Cognitive Automation - a Sustainable Strategic Advantage

Today, people are typically looking for specific use cases and deploying tools that would address and enhance the underlying enterprise processes. While these lead to definite efficiencies, they are not strategic, as they alone would not lead to future product innovations and address future consumer needs. Incremental programs and siloed optimization approaches will not unlock significant global issues.

***Cognitive Automation has a unique potential to unlock some of the most intricate problems with supply chains and complex operations.***

For example, you are not going to solve climate change by viewing more data that identifies your carbon footprint problem. Instead, you would have to leverage multitudes of disparate data sets and signals that may be seemingly unrelated but which have critical correlations that the human mind cannot comprehend. This is where Cognitive Automation fills in a strategic gap. As you deploy this widely, it will allow you to ask questions about the data and processes and give you the freedom to make those processes more efficient. It helps you arrive at "newer questions" from the data and discover many significant answers rather than preconceived solutions.

## The future is already here. Start NOW!

Cognitive Automation has a unique potential to unlock some of the most intricate problems with supply chains and complex operations. The worst thing to do in this volatile and testing time is to hesitate continually or forever sit in pilot purgatory. Find the three problems that everyone would agree are the most significant. Invest in a small team, budget, and schedule. Get out, and don't let anyone get in the way. Finally, to maximize the impact of Cognitive Automation, to optimize what Aera Technology has established as the digital brain behind the supply chain, people need to put their hearts in the mix. Even in the toughest situations, the most successful companies and supply chains are the ones that act based on what customers want. Ultimately, those who can balance their brains and hearts will be the victors.

## About the Company

Aera Technology delivers the Cognitive Operating System™ that enables the Self-Driving Enterprise™. Aera understands how businesses work; makes real-time recommendations; predicts outcomes; and acts autonomously. Using proprietary data crawling, industry models, machine learning and artificial intelligence, Aera is revolutionizing how people relate to data and how organizations function.

### Understand.

Continuously crawls enterprise systems and provides end-to-end visibility  
Secure, low impact, and programmable Crawlers  
Internet-scale data management and processing  
Data indexed for search

### Recommend.

Suggests ways to improve financial and operational performance  
Opportunity and risk analytics  
Analysis at any granularity

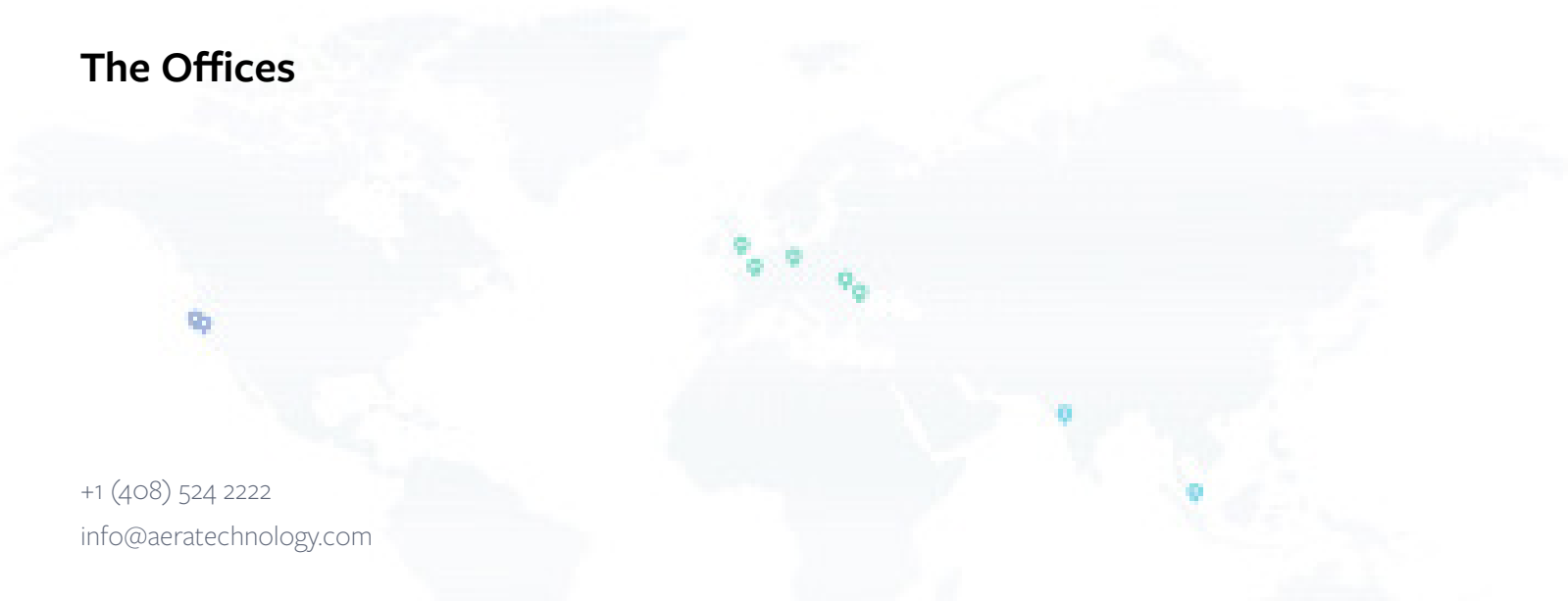
### Predict.

Leverages real-time data and AI to accurately predict business outcomes, risks, and opportunities  
Embedded AI and machine learning

### Act.

Proactively engages relevant users and drives the execution of their decisions  
Autonomously take action  
Pre-defined process library

## The Offices



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