

Steve Basra's Innovative Eye

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“We have such a long history of innovation at Toyota,” says Steve Basra, Executive Vice President of Toyota Connected and Vice President of Toyota Motor North America. While most people think the company’s roots lie in the automotive industry, he notes, its first technologies developed by Sakichi Toyoda were actually to improve

weaving looms.

“An innovator is simply someone who can turn a new idea into a solution that can add value to a customer or to society,” says Basra, who heads up numerous initiatives – from vehicle connectivity to shared mobility – aimed at making vehicles safer, and more convenient. His goal is to use new forms of technology, data science and machine learning to enable amazing customer experiences.

“Technology should improve people’s lives,” he says, emphasizing that Toyota Connected is hard at work developing new customer focused solutions, services, and new forms of mobility. “For example, because we can anticipate your driving behavior, we can warn you of traffic when you are driving and give you a new route, even if you didn’t type in your destination. If you are going to be late to a meeting because of this new route, we can inform the meeting organizer automatically and then dial you into a voice conference if needed. These are just examples of the many predictive and contextual solutions that we are building to create customer value.”

Basra recognizes the importance of cultivating talent at Toyota. “Our goal is to hire talented individuals and then to place them in a culture that allows them to experiment and innovate. In addition, we empower our employees by giving them authority to make decision. This is the key to creating agile and motivated teams.”

But he says innovation is never a given. Besides, major technologies aren’t always recognized as game changing, at least not at first glance.

“Toyota implemented hybrid technology when the whole world was against it,” Basra states. “Nobody thought the Prius was ever going to be successful, yet Toyota had a vision to bring Hybrid technology to the world. It is this same passion and drive that we have for the innovative technologies we are building today”

To view Steve Basra’s Toyota Tech Talk, click [here](#).