

Episode 18: Future of AI at Workplaces

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Hi, I'm Andy Packham, Chief Architect to Microsoft Ecosystem and HCLTech.

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I'm here today at the Global Innovation Exchange, part of the University of Washington in Seattle, and we're just spending a lot of time talking about AI, but how AI impacts the way that we were, the way that we think about work, and the opportunity for the future.

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I'm really, you know, excited to be joined today by thought leaders.

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So, like kids acted in the area.

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I'll ask them to introduce themselves in a minute, let me introduce you Apoorv he leads Gen AI for HCLTech globally and I'd kind of like to start off if you kind of quickly tell me a little bit about your role and then and then we'll walk through a censure.

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Thanks Andy. I'm a Apoorv I lead GenAI for HCLTech

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I've been working for HCLTech for almost 2 decads.

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As a part of GenAI practice we do a lot of solutioning for our customers on GenAI and AI and now across different parts of industries vertical and I believe in it.

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Happy to be here.

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Hi, I'm is Abe Thomas, I work for Microsoft. I've been there for about 14 years and I work in the digital stores business, the consumer stores business and specifically responsible for what we call enablement capabilities like product management, experimentation, data analytics and super excited media.

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I'm Doctor Max Boulder.

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I work at the Mosaic company.

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We are global fertilizer and mining company and I have a dual role as chief of mission security officer and as head of technical services.

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And I'm really, really excited about the promise of being able to solve problems with AI that we've never been able to solve before.

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And hi, I'm Allison Magary.

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I work for Eaton Corporation.

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I'm their vice president of IT for the aerospace group and I'm based in Cleveland.

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OH, well, thanks for having us today.

2:02

Thank you.

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So Allison, start off, where do you see the opportunity for AI generally across the world of our businesses?

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Yeah, I think that there is so much potential for it in the sessions this week have really highlighted just finding niche areas that you know we're having problems either having the right talent for or what we see are very repetitive within the industry.

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And where can we find some of those productivity savings, where can we elevate our team to think at a higher level, and let AI do some of the underlying foundation work.

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So I think that we are really just at the infancy and it's it'll be exciting to see what we can do to grow in this area.

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Turns to that.

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Hey, you're very, very different businesses.

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Yeah.

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Do you see the same sort of patterns or are you seeing something different for AI?

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Yeah, I mean, look, I think it's almost boundary less, right.

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I mean, I kind of liken it to when the PCR was introduced and boy, it was going to completely to revolutionize movies.

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And then think about it that BCR doesn't exist today before things have moved on.

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So we are in that early phase.

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Who knows if what we are talking about this potential for AI is going to be the real potential longer term.

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But this is where we are.

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It's pretty potential is enormous, as I was saying.

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And it's exciting to be part of this journey right now for Microsoft.

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I agree.

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This is the tip of the iceberg, or maybe just a drip of the iceberg.

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There's so much that we haven't thought about yet.

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And when we started with the Internet, we had no idea what we will be doing with it 30 years later.

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And this will still be around 30 years from now.

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And today we can't even vision what problems we might be able to solve.

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So I'm very excited to be here and to be talking about this and to think about how we best proceed and learning about the approach.

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And I agree with you, it's smarter to have small use cases and go after real problems that we can fix than to go after that one killer app or the 1 silver bullet, right?

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Go after real use case, use AI that makes sense, and then take it from there.

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Yeah, I think that's important though.

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And I keep saying this, we're all learning, you know, the nobody yet has got full answers.

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So kind of starting small experimenting finally the right the right business case where we can really show value rather than just keep your experiments really good.

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You know, you talk to so many customers.

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Yeah.

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Is this what you see?

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Do you see a consistent pattern or yes, is it?

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I think there's definitely a consistent pattern.

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And not not only that, you could look at the last two years, there's been explosion of lower alums given and customers do want to prioritize in the in the right use skills on vectors of whether they

create a maximum build impact at the same time and show that there's a risk element of implementing AI collusions.

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That's well managed, right.

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So you look at both the vectors that kind of look at the right use case.

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What we're seeing is very interesting.

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2023 was the year of Pocs.

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You got a lot of Pocs, right.

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2024 is the year of production of, you know, well defined use cases, which gets scaled.

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We are managed going forward.

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We see more and more use cases of the AI across different parts of domination.

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Some customers are using it for productivity benefits, as you mentioned it's right efficiencies and productivities.

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Some customers are using AI for creating new businesses or new products, right.

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Then the others we are using it for training their own own people on new technology, new skills.

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So I think they're different ways of implementing AI solution than AI now propositions.

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And we're seeing in FCL tech, we're seeing a variety of new skill.

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Max want to come back to you as somebody in, you know, you've got this dual roll.

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How do you as a seaside sing this?

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You know, do you do you see this a lot of challenges, a lot of risk?

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Or, you know, how are you seeing the opportunity versus the risk?

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Both.

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I agree it's not very comforting that AI has all these advances.

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There's this old saying, don't take a knife to gunfight, don't take a human to an artificial intelligence fight.

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So it is very important to stay abreast of the threat landscape and use artificial intelligence to defend against threats that include artificial intelligence.

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So it goes both ways.

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And we need to be aware of both sides of the coin.

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So, Anderson Piercy, I mean, your, your business, you know, you really do want to minimise risk.

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How, how do you think about that in terms of kind of balancing that desire to search forward with the concern also to make sure that it's it's done safely?

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Yeah, I think that education piece is really important.

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Within the aerospace business within Eaton, we're about 50% commercial and 50% military.

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So obviously that military data we have to hold incredibly closely and make sure that we don't leak any of that data.

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So a lot of my time is really spent educating our workforce on what is the proper use, are good use cases, where can we make advancements, but also keep the data safe.

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So I think it's really starting with that foundation of planting that seed, just getting people on the mindset of we don't have to make 100% progress, but those little incremental pieces can start to add up over time.

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No thanks.

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Again, you know, I'm coming back to this.

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The difference you see you're looking at marketplaces.

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So it's, you know, you kind of we go, we go from big, big things.

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So very, very broad things.

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So it's a threat landscape for AI.

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Different for you or don't you see the same sorts at it?

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Yeah, I mean, look, it's multifaceted, right?

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I mean, obviously when you think about from a skill set standpoint, you've got to upskill the people you have right now.

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And how do you do that?

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How do you do that at scale?

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How do you do that with so much noise around the AI?

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And when do you start doing that?

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Because the signal to noise ratio is really hard to figure out because there's so much noise.

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Yeah, I think, you know, I'll give you another example of like I, I was looking for somebody, a director of analytics.

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I had more than 900 resumes that were sent to me to that role.

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And I thought maybe, hey, you know, it's Microsoft.

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Maybe that's what.

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And then I kind of started looking into it and I noticed that a lot of the resumes, a lot of the resumes had a lot of the exact same things I was looking for.

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And then I spoke to somebody else in a recruiting agency and they said, like, you know, there's AI agents now that can flood a customized or create a customized resume based on what you have in the job description.

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So I was like, this is going to be a really hard job for me to finally go there.

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But this is a threat, you could call it because all of a sudden it's really hard to, you know, delineate what's good quality first and to hire what's not.

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So these are just small examples, but important examples.

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I think I've been incredibly bored and will change the way we need to think about.

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Yeah, things, you know, suddenly what was very hard to do 900 suddenly becomes very easy.

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Yeah.

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Do you do you see that there's kind of this risk that the almost the opportunity of AI, which is to do stuff we've not been able to do before.

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It's the problem with AI, it's we can now do stuff that we should be absolutely right.

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And I think that's why it's very important to what you know hasn't talked about.

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There's one part of responsibility I heard of and all which is focused on the models and the technology, but the larger part which is on and all acceptable usage, right?

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How do you use AI properly, efficiently in a policy framework?

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So it's extremely what train your workforce to ensure you the right policies, you have the right user adoption and all frameworks that drive your usage of AI more responsibly within the organization and create the right usage.

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So I would completely with you, you need to have the right training to following employees to ensure that they're using it in the right way most effectively without breaking any rules.

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Right with that very point.

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But just to continue on that point that, you know, this is some what's your advice in terms of implementing all of this?

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You know, how would you, how would you kind of, you know, talk to a customer who's thinking beyond they know they need to do this.

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There's pressure.

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We've also a lot of scrutiny, on responsible AI and investment.

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Where, where, where's the, where's the advice to you?

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I didn't know what you know, we talked about it's very important to not make it like an ocean, but focus on better reduce cases, but the aim, but at the same time have the right philosophy, framework and policy, which is enterprise wide, right?

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So you don't need to go for a killer app as you mentioned, but you do need to have some kind of framework on which you adopt AI across the enterprise, which is kind of uniform to some aspect.

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The use cases could be, you know, based on where you see the maximum with impact and all worse is the risk that the use case might all might be having.

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So it would be on the two methods you can decide the right use cases, but definitely have a framework which it will prompt.

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Yeah, I was just going to say that, you know, you're starting to see separation between people who are a little bit more advanced on this topic and people who are novices.

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And I take for the novices.

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I would say just play around with it, with it.

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You know, this is not like, you know, some of these other technologies that have come our way or will come our way like quantum computing or whatever else.

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This is actually accessible to all of us.

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So just experimenting with it.

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This is one of the biggest things that we do is like act like an entrepreneur in a large company.

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How do you do that?

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You can, but tools like AI and then when you get to a little bit more maturity, we get to what he was

talking about, which is like, you know, having more focused kind of small things that you are going after in a more directed manner, which actually then yield opportunity in a more clear way.

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So and Allison, you spoke about this the starting this one, How do you decide what to prioritize what, what to choose?

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And you can yeah, by default them what not to what not to do.

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Yeah, I think the space can get very overwhelming because we've talked about this week too that I mean, AI is embedded into everything now or it's the buzz trim that you hear everywhere.

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But really, I think the focus comes back to really what are you, what's the outcome that you're trying to get to?

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Can you prioritize based on business outcome, whether it's a problem that you're currently experiencing, something it's been a pain point maybe in the organization for a long time that is working good enough, and so you just kind of have left it for a while.

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So really being honest, I guess I'm looking at all the possibilities and then just being very blunt with what can the potential outcome be?

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Can this create a good story that will help then create a narrative in the organization to show real growth and real change and spur other ideas?

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So I just always try to stay back with the outcomes.

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Is it saying yes, it's similar, right?

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I just want us to be careful to not consider AIA solution.

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Looking for a problem.

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It's an arrow on your quiver.

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So if you're facing a problem, let's consider AI.

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Maybe let's establish criteria of what will be good candidates for AI.

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Not every problem needs to have AI as a solution.

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However, when I do have candidates, I want to use something that has a low risk and then multiplier effect.

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Success is contagious because I want to start out with something that I know we can make successful.

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If that works, I'm done selling it.

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My customers will sell it.

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That's what I'm looking for.

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So if there is a problem for which AI is a good approach and needs to be one, that AI will sell itself.

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So that is my success criteria.

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No thanks.

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I've heard just kind of drawing some conclusions.

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You know, you're right in the middle for so many customers about their how they're prioritizing, but actually how how weak as in, you know, at PGL tech have been prioritizing our investments.

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Have you seen that?

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Have you seen the difference between the way we think about it and the way our customers are thinking about that?

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Actually, you know, we see quite a bit of similarity between what customers think and how we look at it.

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When you look at CS tech Internet option, actually we are a tech services major.

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So it you know generate AI and AI have direct impact on how we deliver our service, right.

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In fact, all of our customers expect us to have some AI or some automation in our service portfolio.

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So that's something that is very relevant to us and we are adopting it from profitability option fee and all game standpoint.

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But the other aspect is how do we choose the right to this you skip this adopt internally for our this processes like they would be hiring, it could be no Canon, it could be supply chain.

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What can we do there for those are not the position schedules on which we are kind of implementing AI within ATL.

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We do a lot of work and it's very interesting to see that where we've seen some impact for customers is when they choose to choose or not you skip it to your point and make it successful, right?

15:04

Make the news kids successful as what customers should not do is have 10 things going on and five things fail and then you don't you put you stop, right?

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And that's what you don't get down to because you will adopt AI, right?

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So that that part is on.

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You just need to ensure that you're on the right final comments.

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Yeah, no, look, I see this is one of those things where ton of excitement, ton of opportunity and ton of anxiety as well.

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Could be it's kind of bad to bad to overuse the word polarization in this environment, But that is exactly how a lot of people are feeling about this.

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And it's understandable, but but I, I, I always think, you know, I'd like to be very optimistic of any new technology that's come in the many, many years that we've had these technology trends.

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And I I look at in a very bullish way, which is I think it done properly that the right guardrails, this can be a not just an incremental opportunity, but a monumental opportunity.

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Yeah.

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Thanks.

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Any, any final words?

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Exciting times, Exciting times.

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It'll be interesting to see even a year from now, you know, how far we've come and what good stories we can evangelize about the use of AI too across all industries.

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So your panelists will be an AI?

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Yes, maybe, maybe I'll be, I'll be sitting on the beach.

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And look, everyone, thank you.

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I, I, yeah, I, I do believe that we're at a pivotable point for all of our industries.

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There's this significant challenge, but there's also a big opportunity both for our businesses and for society.

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And I think, you know, it's for us to think through responsible AI and the risk of it and then how we deploy that across our businesses and and be leaders in that.

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So I said thank you very much.

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I really enjoyed this this session.

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I hope you have too.

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Thank you.

17:01

Absolutely.

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Thank you.