



AI LEADERS PODCAST EP 65 THE FUTURE OF WORK: AI LITERACY AND TALENT TRANSFORMATION TRANSCRIPT

Harsha Almad [00:00:00] Hello everyone, and welcome to another exciting episode of AI Leaders podcast. My name is Harsha Ahmad and a lead Accenture's Global AI Academy LearnVantage. I'm excited to be hosting this podcast with two distinguished leaders, Girish Ganesan and Senior Vice President for people at S&P global, and Kai Roemmelt, CEO of Udacity, which is now a part of Accenture LearnVantage. Welcome, Girish and Kai. Welcome, Girish and Kai, so excited to have you on our podcast. Gentlemen, when we first connected for this episode, we spoke about making this authentic, inspirational, yet pragmatic and bringing our big, bold ideas to life. And keeping that in mind, I've organized our discussion in three key themes that will flow through our conversation. So, should I find a way to increase?

Kai Roemmelt [00:00:57] Absolutely.

Harsha Almad [00:00:58] Go for it. Thank you. Brace yourself for impact. Starting with you. With Girish. Firstly, congratulations to S&P global for that unflinching government commitment towards AI literacy. Having worked with you and your team, it's clear that this is a clear priority for your organization. Let me ask you what motivated your organization to incorporate AI skilling into your overall training strategy?

Girish Ganesan [00:01:27] Thanks. Firstly, I'm delighted to be doing this podcast with you and Kai. This is such an important topic. And I think we all agree. In shaping our industry. Businesses stand to gain tremendously. And if they can figure out how to train their employees quickly and equitably, this could be game changing. And while companies are embracing AI, which has tons of potential to become quickly efficient, and bring value, irrespective of how the organization operates today, but how companies use those systems and technologies to assist humans is more important than ever. I'm sure you'll agree that there's no question that in the job evolution is coming with over. I think I read that 12 million job switches that may happen by 2030 or so. So, we need to ask ourselves, like, who's preparing the workforce for the wave to come? Organizations have a responsibility and the opportunity to invest in upskilling their workforce and create a culture that energizes about what? I would say, a friendly future with AI. So, at S&P global, it was never a question of if. We would, incorporate AI skilling in our learning strategy, but only was about how we would go about it.

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Because we we are motivated by our goal to empower our people to discover how I can accelerate and elevate their work and also drive both existing and new lines of business. So, I am thrilled about our partnership with Accenture to roll out the generative AI training program to all our 35,000 people at SMP. You know, we know our people that underpin everything we do, and this is a key investment in their personal growth for the future, where we do believe that collaboration with intelligence tools will be essential.

Harsha Almad [00:03:25] Very well put, Girish. But I must ask you this. I'm sure it wasn't all a smooth sailing when we connected amongst the three of us. We spoke about us being I positive people. Meaning? We believe that AI has the potential to significantly add value to individuals, society at large with responsible and secured measure. However, not everyone is convinced and still begs the question is AI a reality or a hype? So how do you approach the skeptics?

Girish Ganesan [00:03:57] Well, you know, change is never smooth. And skepticism is the very human trait and caused by fear of the unknown. People are also skeptical because they fear losing relevance and losing control. I think the first way to overcome skepticism is to show what this technology already means in our daily lives. ChatGPT has set the world record of fastest growing application in history, resulting in tons of AI solutions inundating our daily lives. So, at S&P, we've got our 35,000 people using Spark Assist. It's our very own ChatGPT. They're using it to conduct market research more quickly, deepening their knowledge of customers content creation, extracting information from documents much more quickly, you name it. Generative AI may change everything eventually, but there's no harm in starting small and tracking responses to changes. Incremental improvements to existing offerings can unlock hidden value with minimal risk. At least I think so. We also need to recognize that, you know, AI continues to evolve. We need to maintain standards of quality and ethics in its application.

How we work, shop, communicate, create, will be influenced by AI and whatever stems from it, right? And so, in order to experiment and eventually leverage, this tech effectively, I would say that it's important to understand the specifics of its liabilities. And that also helps with skepticism. Responsible adoption is key, and it will be our job as humans to help I make us better. Not the other way around. So, at S&P, for starters, we have developed guidelines for using generative AI tools. Or should I think I think skepticism is quite normal. Like effective change management and communication is critical, to get over. Right. You know, focusing on understanding the fears, making your organizational approach more transparent and clearer, as much as you can. So, we've also identified individuals who can effectively communicate the value of AI. Building trust takes time. So, it's important to prioritize incremental successes and then gradually build trust through consistent delivery, transparency and results.

Harsha Almad [00:06:26] That is such a great point, Girish. And I love the element of trust that you spoke about, right? Because it takes time and like any journey, any change, journey, it is, you know, putting together the low hanging fruit post, right, and trying to incrementally make those changes. I love your comment about, you know, a friendly future with AI, the responsible use of AI and taking a short but like steady step towards, you know, an AI friendly future. Absolutely. Love it. Kai, if images pose the same question to you and maybe request you to elaborate a bit about, you know, do you take a top-down approach or a bottom-up approach? Right. Because you could, like you mentioned, you could start in any direction as long as you're taking step in the right direction. But I'm curious about what would be your advice in terms of where do you get started in your AI literacy journey?

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Kai Roemmelt [00:07:20] Yeah, happy to do so. And first of all, Joshua, thank you very much for having us here. So, I think what what's interesting is that. AI has been around for a very long time, and even the term go fire good old fashioned I was framed in the 70s, but the release of ChatGPT has made the world kind of AI positive almost overnight. Not everyone, but kind of everyone all of a sudden had an opinion about it. And what really happened is that for the world of AI, the launch of ChatGPT was something like an iPhone moment for that, that industry and as a series just mentioned. ChatGPT. The speed of adoption is unmatched. ChatGPT got 1 million users in two days. And that took Facebook ten months. So, if we just look at how time frames are being compressed and how fast it moves, it's incredible. So, it's a whole different magnitude than what we've seen before and what ChatGPT has done. It's not the first AI tool. Just like iPhones were in the first smartphones. But it's been something that's tangible that people can have in their in their pockets on their phone. That's something that they can use. And that's what adds that bottom-up element. And so, these two technologies both sparked iPhones as well as ChatGPT. Yeah. Sparked a global adoption of that technology because it's now accessible to anyone, anywhere, at any point of time. So, which means now we're seeing that employee, whether you as a company, have a top-down AI strategy or not, your employees are using it. They're doing it as we speak. Which means, you probably have AI champions with a, an AI positive mindset in your companies. And they can be at any point in your, your org chart. And what's really about is making sure that you understand where do they sit in your organization, and how do you combine your top-down ideas with these bottom-up talents?

One story from Udacity is that we have, we have a technical content developer that, joined the company after doing a scholarship program back in 2020. And what's amazing is as she was doing the scholarship, her son was doing it with her and was looking into JD Python training. Yeah. And he was recognized on stage as the youngest AI engineer at the Google Developers Conference in Detroit this year at the age of nine years old. So that that level of talent and that mindset can be anywhere. It's really about finding it, incentivizing it, and bringing out that level of talent and bringing everyone on board doing, mentorship, tailoring training to different departments, job functions, skill sets, and really looking for where where's that talent and how do you bring it out?

Harsha Almad [00:10:50] I love it. I so, so I truly is, you know, beyond the traditional norms of age, location. It's available everywhere. Like you set it right. And clearly, we have to do all of this in compressed time frames. I particularly appreciate the point that, you know, you mentioned that it's often viewed that such technologies are driven top down. So, the onus lies on the leaders. But I guess what you're saying is that, you know, your employees already doing it, without necessarily you build systems and channels for you to engage in it. Right. So, so we need to facilitate that to, to, to take advantage of the compressed timelines.

Kai Roemmelt [00:11:31] Absolutely.

Harsha Almad [00:11:33] Yeah, super great points. Girish, anything that you would like to add.



Girish Ganesan [00:11:39] I can. I think I'm just going to say ditto ditto ditto. I agree with everything that he said. I couldn't agree more.

Harsha Almad [00:11:46] Super. Thanks. Thanks. Girish and Kai. With that, can we move on to the next theme, which is related to the talent readiness and skill development? Gentlemen, this is a topic which connects all of us in the learning business and. We have some interesting stats. Kai, maybe I'll get started. Started with you. According to the Everest Group Market Integration 2024 report, talent readiness goes through three phases. They say that the Gen AI enablement is approximately 40 to 45% of the companies fall in that group, followed by junior empowered companies, which are about 10 to 15. And towards the tail end, you've got the junior ready workforce, which is less than 1% at the Jenney Aditi stage. So clearly, while many companies are starting this journey, not necessarily. Everybody is getting the proficiency level to fully reap the benefits of generative AI. Any comments for you from your side in terms of why is that happening? Are we at a point where generative AI skilling is just a check in the box? Or do you think how might organizations fully take advantage of it to bring business outcomes and results?

Kai Roemmelt [00:13:00] Yeah. So, I think it's really interesting because if we look at where we are in the in the adoption curve. It's we're seeing like quite a bit of discrepancies. So, the we saw the 2023 World Economic Forum Future of Jobs report, that 50% of organizations are expecting AI to create job growth, 25% are expecting it to create job losses. When we when we look at what leaders in companies say is that we're seeing that. 95% of sea level executives expect to increase investments, and at the same time, the majority of leaders believe that their employees are not ready. If at the same time you look, you look at the workforce. Then you've got 94% of workers that are confident that they can develop the needed skills based on the Accenture AI Workforce Report. So, you've got this major discrepancy.

So, on the one hand, it's well aligned because the executives think they need it and the employees think they can do it. But it's. It's the confidence of the leaders in their own workforce. That's not, that's not enough. And that's not there yet. And we genuinely believe that that's wrong. We believe that people can gain the skills, they're interested in it. And we see that that people already are using AI either at work or in their private life, in many different contexts and situations. So, it's really about how can, employers build that confidence and their trust with the existing employee base who know the business, who have a baseline of skills and a capacity to get new skills on the job? Yeah. To create that level of AI readiness. One example that that I think is it is a great one that we're very proud of it. Yet Udacity is we're working with one large manufacturing company that has identified that the, the factory level staff is being reduced over time because of more automation. So, but instead of making those people redundant, they have created a program where they are allowing them to apply for a program that trains them into data scientists, engineers, AI ready, for AI ready positions. And it's an incredibly successful program. And not only do they avoid having to lay these people off, on the contrary, they now get people that are incredibly motivated. They know all the ins and outs of the business or the production processes, and they bring that knowledge and those skills into their new roles. And that's, I think, for me, a gold standard of how this kind of a transformation can work.

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Harsha Almad [00:16:06] That's just such an incredible example. Thanks for sharing, Kai. And I actually am resonating with one of the comments Girish made previously, which is organizations have a responsibility, you know, towards embracing, these, these new technologies and, you know, upskilling, reskilling and providing opportunities and programs such as these are definitely a great way in which you can, reshape your workforce and talent. Right. Like you mentioned, these employees are motivated to learn these new skills and are becoming more agile towards adoption of these technologies, which we all know will keep coming and changing. So, so it's such a great point. Girish, if I may just point up a connected question towards you, which is, you know, for your organization, how do you plan your generative AI learning programs from an investment perspective? As well, to, for, for people across roles and levels to take advantage of generative AI, initiatives.

Girish Ganesan [00:17:05] Thanks, Harsha. You know, our sort of focus in developing a learning program on generative AI, is very much related to how Kai described, in terms of different personas that exist in the society, but also within the workforce. First of all, for us, it was acknowledging the fact that one size doesn't fit all. So, we have invested in, blending learning ecosystem, which is inclusive, formal, social and even experiential journey of AI learning opportunities. In addition, you know, it was about acknowledging that we need a tailored approach that is focused on providing different training modules depending upon the role, skill level and also seniority, within the organization to ensure it's relevant and effective. So, for example, with senior executives and people leaders, they need AI upskilling. But we also know that they also need to be able to bring their people and teams along the change journey. So, we are investing in not just at the technical upskilling in understanding, their, in their understanding of the technology, but also, change management and leadership effectiveness in how they would be expected to lead in the AI human integrated environment.

Technologists, on the other hand, might want deeper, than foundational AI knowledge into more new and advanced applications. So, we have we have had to take that into consideration in the developers might want to concentrate more on AI driven code generation and debugging. And on the other hand, it's also about ensuring that all of our colleagues at school can leverage AI to its fullest potential within their specific context. So, our formal training includes generative AI training that we recently rolled out in partnership with Accenture that I talked about earlier. And that includes AI for everyone. It includes a people Leader module. It also includes a boot camp for our senior leaders. In addition to that, we're also providing curated content and certification paths, which are more role based, and skill based. So that allows people to go beyond experimentation on the social aspect. We've done AI Expo. We've established engagement channels so people can exchange ideas, their prompts. So that weaves into the culture of the organization. And then on the experiential side, I had mentioned spark, which is our, internal ChatGPT, but also leveraging tools like Microsoft 365 Copilot or GitHub Copilot, so that it also gives people with higher level of proficiency, to go beyond experimentation. It comes down to, like I said at our show that, it's really about acknowledging that we targeted skill development is important in order to meet the specific needs of an organization. And it also allows for meaningful learning experiences and better outcomes.

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Harsha Almad [00:20:19] Absolutely. I love that point. I mean, I guess today's talent is not just looking for a place where they can get to work 9 to 5. They're looking for purpose led journeys and targeted interventions, meaningful experiences, experimentation. Right. And I would say knowledge sharing. Think tank I think these are the right, ingredients, which makes for a successful learning experience. So really appreciate both of yours. Your comments towards how do we get, you know, the talent ready and the skills developed. Moving on to my favorite thing, if I may, if I may have one, which is around AI, adoption and culture. This is the last theme for our podcast here, but something which, you know, three of us. Again, I know we connect to this in January. Shall I get started with you with a client story of mine, if you will. I was, you know, working with a global pharmaceutical giant which was heavily invested in data, AI and automation capabilities. Great line. We seem to be doing all the right things in terms of investing in the right tools and the people, the works. And yet when the program was launched, the adoption rates were abysmal. And, you know, that's when we came in. And it for us, it was a bit, you know, surprising to find that one of the key challenges was the reason of the poor uptake was businesses weren't trusting these new tools and were not getting ready to change their ways of working. And, you know, given, again, the investment and the commitments made to the street, it seemed a little strange to us. But I was just curious to hear your perspective. Have you experienced situations where there is a lot of commitment up top and, you know, there have been steps made to do this, but somewhere there is a bit of a trust gap, something we spoke about earlier. Right, which hinders and doesn't allow you to drive adoption. Especially with a new topic like I, your thoughts.

Girish Ganesan [00:22:17] I love this question. And so, you know how much, emphasis on culture and change, is near and dear to me and how passionate I am about that. Have I experienced it? Maybe in pockets. We're still in the infancy of this journey, so I think we'll see how things go. But, you know, change aversion is absolutely natural. With huge shifts like this, it's easy for people to be overwhelmed and fall back on how we have always done it. In addition, if you think about it, the sort of tailored learning approaches mentioned above, it has to be supplemented with an end-to-end engagement strategy. Otherwise, you know, investments will fail. Adopting AIS, you know, not just about integrating new technology. It requires a cultural shift. Employees may feel overwhelmed by the new technology, confused by the behavioral shift. We're trying to introduce or simply resist the change. So, encouraging. What I want to say is an AI aware culture where curiosity and learning and is very key. So, for example, at S&P we have focused on celebrating efforts, not just outcomes. It's about recognizing our people for their experimentation process and providing constructive feedback to encourage continuous innovation. You know, we have also involved our people in enterprise AI showcases with demos on AI adoption to foster, buy in and ensure that they understand both personal and collective benefits. There's no doubt you know, AI is going to revolutionize not just the workforce, but our society. It's seeping into our lives. You know, as I talked about it earlier. It's going to change how we shop. You know, where we buy things, how we communicate, how we create.

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But also, a deep understanding of that fact that, it's not just about a company's capabilities, but also about the culture.

Harsha Almad [00:24:38] On all great points. I love, you know, if we can think of a future workforce where experimentation is recognized and rewarded, people have the opportunity to showcase their new innovation thinking. Curiosity is encouraged, like you mentioned, incentivized. And possibly that's, you know, it paves the way for AI and human like that. The blend of human plus AI becoming the new normal. I know in many parts of our day-to-day life it is becoming. But even at workplace, I think there is tremendous opportunity. And I guess the programs like we've got is this is definitely paving the way forward. Quite perhaps expanding on crisis response here. You know, particularly I've seen that, as a change practitioner when it comes to New age topics like AI. There's a lot of investment needed and behavior and mindset shifts. I know many people think that it is the soft, touchy-feely topics, but some where I really, you know, pay a lot of attention to this because that is what makes a difference between, you know, a good program to a great program where you have a thriving culture of, you know, AI, innovation, adoption and culture. So, just wanted to understand, from your perspective, what could be the key ingredients towards bringing this behavior and mindset shifts?

Kai Roemmelt [00:25:58] Yeah. No, I think these are absolutely key points. And we know this, and we see this everywhere in our life that, a library of content and giving people access to it is great. But unfortunately, if we look around in the world, there's, there's, really any lines in front of libraries and waiting for people waiting to get in. But there's a, there's a purpose.

So, I think what Jerry said about objective strategy and what's in it for employees and the org, I think those are really key points that he's mentioning. I want to I want to elaborate on the last one. It's that why for the learner, why are they doing something? Because if if you just tell them, hey, there's courses somewhere, take those courses and they don't know why and there's no benefit for them. Why do they do it? And you'll ultimately this is going to lose steam very quickly. What we see with our client organizations that are the most successful is that they address these piece first, and they make it a key part of the strategy of a program to make the learner understand and the employee understand. What opportunities are you going to get and what is going to be available to you if you learn these skills? And that makes it relevant and that completely changes the game. So, I think that's where it really starts. You start with the learner and you, you show that this will give them access to the most exciting projects that will give them the opportunity for a boost in their career, because there will be new jobs, new things that will be available for them if they have certain skills. And then at the same time, it's important to empower them and also let them let them apply the knowledge, and not create an environment that's so restrictive that, well, they have the skills, but they can't do anything with it because there's nothing more frustrating than that. And combined with really not only giving them theoretical skills, but also hands on experience, again, part of trying things out and, and testing, testing, testing. That's what creates an environment where, where adoption is going to rise.

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Harsha Almad [00:28:14] Absolutely. And I know, I know, we do this at Udacity right on the capstone program where, you know, you learn, but you also get into these capstone programs where you practice and then you really prove your proficiency level.

Kai Roemmelt [00:28:26] Exactly, and especially if these capstone projects are tailored to the needs of the organization, then often we see that that people work on capstone projects that they can directly apply in their work environment. So not only do they get build the skills, but it comes while building something relevant for the company. And again, like relevant for the company also always needs to mean that it's relevant for the employees and their career.

Harsha Almad [00:28:54] Fabulous. Gentlemen, this has been amazing. We have discussed the three themes very well, and now we move to the funniest part of our podcast, which is the quickfire questions. So, in here I'm going to find a way with some, some quick questions. Any fun bold comments are very welcome, but you have to keep your comments under 30s. We ready for this? And who should I get started with?

Girish Ganesan [00:29:20] Let's go.

Harsha Almad [00:29:22] Let's go. Yeah. So, I want to go with Girish first or Kai first or you guys will. Yeah. Who wants to go first?

Kai Roemmelt [00:29:31] I don't mind. Either way, I may. I think Girish seems to. So, let's have him take the first stab at it.

Harsha Almad [00:29:39] Nice way to move the needle. Well done. But there I give you. We'll get started with you. Okay. My first question is, how would you teach an elder family member to be an AI enabled?

Girish Ganesan [00:29:55] I think. Start small and start with experimentation and make it fun. I think ChatGPT has such an endearing and fun aspect associated with it. Start with, you know, maybe going back to their childhood and what kind of questions they would want to ask ChatGPT if they were to relive their childhood.

Harsha Almad [00:30:14] Very cool. Same question for you, Kai.

Kai Roemmelt [00:30:18] Yeah, I, I can actually tell a real-life story. And, I remember one night I was, sitting with my parents after dinner, and my mom told me that she still had to write an obituary, and I've been telling her, I've been using generative AI previously, and, so I took out my phone, I pulled out the ChatGPT app, and, I showed her kind of. And we we use this to write an obituary, and she was like, wow, this this is amazing. The quality to have this as a starting point, to work from. And she immediately asked me if I could install this app on her phone. And because she saw the power of the product, this is what kind of coming back to this. Ifeoma. Right? It's tangible for anyone.

Harsha Almad [00:31:10] Super exemplify. But you do know that all the poems and the birthday wishes that are coming to you are written by openly what you are now writing.

Kai Roemmelt [00:31:19] Yeah, it's. But it's the same. It's the same effect that, when everyone congratulate you for the birthday today. Right. You know, today that that it's not. I mean, it's just means they're well organized and got this, in the, in the calendar.

Harsha Almad [00:31:33] Got it. Great one. And then, a great example of teaching a family member how to be journey, enabled. Move on to the next question. What's the most fun or surprising way in which you've encountered with AI? Generative AI?

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Girish Ganesan [00:31:50] Hi. You want to go first?

Kai Roemmelt [00:31:52] I'm happy to take it. So, I mean, there's an endless amount of users and use cases. One that that I found striking was one of our customer organizations. We did together with them a kind of like, Shark Tank, conference for ideas. And one of the teams came up with the idea to use AI for counterfeits, be a part detection, which I thought was really counter-intuitive. I didn't think about it before, but it makes it makes a ton of sense. Something that really kind of excites me as well is I read, recently about, robotic bees that are being used for pollination. As you all know, kind of, unfortunately, the bee populations are shrinking. Hopefully that can be fixed, but if not, the fact that we can use robotic bees, trained with AI, I find that quite fascinating.

Harsha Almad [00:32:51] Wow. Didn't know about that. But hey, you learn everything. Something every day, right? So. Great example. Greece.

Girish Ganesan [00:32:59] I love this question, Harsha. And you know internally this is the HR professional in me coming out. I've loved the use of AI to be able to get deeper insights on our employee engagement and what we can do differently based on what is important to them. But in general, I'm fascinated by the use of AI algorithms to analyze medical images for early detection of conditions like cancer. I've also heard that, you know, there are systems that can diagnose eye diseases from retinal scans with high accuracy. So, the progress that we could probably achieve in life science going forward with the utilization of AI. I'm fascinated by that.

Harsha Almad [00:33:43] That's such a great example in a use case and honestly, a reality, you know, happening every single day as we, as we mature in our capabilities. Thanks for sharing. Okay, moving on to our next question. How would you describe an engaging learning program in three words?

Girish Ganesan [00:34:03] I can go first. I would say empowering, relevant and tailored.

Kai Roemmelt [00:34:12] So then and I'll add, purposeful. Incentivized to answer that why and dynamic.

Harsha Almad [00:34:22] All great commons. One edition from my side. Fun. I think, engagement and fun would be really great. Especially, you know, as we mentioned, new technologies keep coming in, so I think we should always find the fun in, in learning new things. Which brings me to the last question for, rapid fire, which is, you know, according to you, which industry or industries offers the most strategic advantage for newish topics like generative AI? I mean, we've heard some use cases in, in, in life sciences, retail finance. But anything exciting that you've seen, which provides a very good strategic advantage for the use of generative AI.

Kai Roemmelt [00:35:05] So maybe I'll go ahead. We, it's interesting because we really see it across the board in, in all kinds of industries. And I think the examples that we just talked about show, like how diverse and varied this can be. I'm probably personally most excited about, similar to what Girish just mentioned around health care because I think it will allow. Billions of people access to a level of quality health care that they don't have today. I'm really excited about education as well, because I think it gives the opportunity to have individualized tutors, especially for people that don't necessarily have access to this today. But I could give examples from, from every single industry, but these two are ones that particularly excite me because of the impact that it will have on the world.

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Girish Ganesan [00:35:59] Yeah. Let me add two. And I know I think it's a trick question, because I think all three of us would agree that strategic advantages abound across industries, just like what Kai said. And that's what makes it such an exciting time. I would echo what I said. I'm also quite intrigued and fascinated and excited about those two industries. The other sort of, aspect that really excites me is an equitable environment that I can help us create if it's deployed correctly, because it has mechanisms to detect bias early in the process. And that is also not specific to industry, but it could benefit, particularly the corporate environment across the board.

Harsha Almad [00:36:43] Well, said Girish. I think that's definitely a future which, which, you know, such amazing new technologies. Promise. So. So, thanks for sharing with us. And thank you, Guy and Girish for such a lovely discussion. It's been fun, engaging and insightful. Thank you for taking the time, on our AI Leaders podcast.

Kai Roemmelt [00:37:04] Thanks for having us. It's been great. Thank you. Girish.

Girish Ganesan [00:37:08] Thanks, Kai. Thanks, Harsha. This was great.