



AI LEADERS PODCAST – DATA AND ANALYTICS INSURANCE

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

David Atkinson [00:00:00] Data analysis really helps us to interact with clients proactively and at a personal level, helping to give them nudges towards the right services and products that meet their needs.

Krish Banerjee [00:00:17] Hi everyone, welcome to yet another episode of Accenture's AI Leaders Podcast. I'm your host, Krish Banerjee and joining from the beautiful city of Toronto, Canada and the country lead for Accenture's Applied Intelligence Business. We do help our clients and the community with data analytics and artificial intelligence. I am very pleased to have with me David Atkinson, Vice President of Sun Life. David leads Sun Life's data and analytics efforts. I am very excited to have David with us and lesson from him what Sun Life is doing in this space. David, welcome and welcome to Accenture's AI Leaders Podcast. Would be very happy to hear from you what Sun Life is doing in applying data and analytics to help your customers as well as your organization internally.

David Atkinson [00:01:08] Hey, Krish, great to speak with you today. Thanks a lot for having me. So, Sun Life has been born out of the insurance industry over 155 years ago. And so data has been core to what we've done for that length of time. What we see now is a real push for digital engagement with clients, and that really necessitates a big focus on data and analytics, especially in making client experiences that are exceptional. And our focus is really to help our clients achieve lifetime financial security and live healthier lives. Data is

a big part of that journey. So, a lot of our investment in time and focus over the last few years has been on leveraging data to create really exceptional client experiences and drive meaningful impact in their lives.

Krish Banerjee [00:01:58] That's wonderful, and I can personally kind of think about like, you know, being a life insurer, like how you leverage data and analytics to have people think about how to interact. And you know, from a customer experience perspective, it is always something that I wonder like how would you make your customers think of life insurance as in place where they could go for advice and, you know, get an experience that they would actually be able to apply to their lives and make their lives better. So, we'd like to hear from you how you are seeing data and analytics being applied to from an experience perspective and especially in the context of in life insurance.

David Atkinson [00:02:42] Yeah, sure. And just to be clear, I mean, while our our history is certainly born out of the life insurance market, we're now a financial services company, multinational, working in many different countries and offering many different financial services and products to our clients. We really see data helping in two ways address the client experience. It allows us to analyze the broader client experience and understand where can we have the most impact in helping clients achieve their their goals. That comes through products and services and making sure that we're meeting their needs in that way.



And then secondly, we can use data to really understand the personalized opportunities to individual clients. So how do we understand who they are, where they are at their life stages, and what products and services best meet their needs to achieve their financial goals and their wellness goals.

Krish Banerjee [00:03:35] That's fantastic. And I'm sure, you know, we have all seen how the expectations of the customers have also changed over the, you know, not only over the pandemic in the last couple of years, but in general over the whole kind of the transition from an, you know, a digital to a very different type of time that we are living in now. So, David, if you look back maybe five years and kind of, you know, the whole digital transformation wave and then looking into the pandemic, I'm sure we have all kind of experienced how the customer expectations have changed, how our customers are expecting different things from us. You know, it is it is no longer that I only reach out to you when there is a need, but there will be a requirement for a much intimate kind of an interaction needed. And I know that Sun Life is doing a number of things in this phase from a digital experience perspective and applying data and analytics. What have you seen as a change from a customer expectation and how are you preparing and reacting to that?

David Atkinson [00:04:43] Yeah, great question, Krish. Clients expectations they are informed by digital experiences that reach far outside of our direct competitors. And to meet those expectations and be considered a digital leader, we need to look at best in class experience, you know, how does clients interact with Netflix or Amazon or Uber? And really think about, you know, how can we step in and create similar digital experiences? Data analytics really helps us to interact with clients proactively and at a personal level, helping to give them nudges towards the right services and products that meet their needs at the right time. It also helps us better create a lower friction experience when purchasing products through accelerated underwriting and better price optimization against their specific needs. So I think, you know, the digital experience is really evolving quickly and client expectations are also evolving quickly formed by all sorts of digital interactions that they have in their daily lives.

Krish Banerjee [00:05:47] That's a great insight, David, and I can completely kind of appreciate the amount of change that we are all kind of observing in the client experience space and expectations, honestly. And it's difficult to sometimes keep up with how that has been changing. Like now we're hearing about things like, you know, metaverse and you know, some of those newer technologies which will be important in the coming years, which wasn't even something that we have looked at in the past few years. So, the pace at which this industry is moving and the technology is moving is amazing. And what I always wonder is that it is not always about just the technology, right. It is also about how the people are reacting, how the processes has to adapt. And I'm curious to kind of hear your thoughts on how do you see this amount of change that we talked about, the expectations that are changing, what Sun Life is planning from a digital perspective, how does it relate to, kind of, people process and technology and how we are addressing each of those dimensions?

David Atkinson [00:07:05] Yeah, you know, it's a fast-moving time for sure. You see everybody, all the different companies talking about digital evolution, digital experiences, and, you know, this is a very competitive time for people. Technology is evolving very quickly and processes are trying to keep up with the growing regulatory and governance need that's also in place. So maybe we'll unpack each one of those just one at a time, starting with people. So certainly, you know, what we want is digital and data to become part of our DNA as a company and think about how do we deliver digital experiences and really act like a digital leader and provide clients with what they need in a in a timely manner. And we recognize that, you know, to do this, we need to have the best people and culture to really attract top talent. And we've invested a lot in building out capabilities and technology to support our people and attract and retain top talent. We think that one of our competitive advantages is really our culture, which is focused on empowerment and taking by us for action, agility



and an openness that is reinforced right from our CEO on down. Another key insight is that, you know, top talent in the tech space want to work with the best tech and Sun Life is been really active in modernizing our technology stack and building our capabilities, leveraging a cloud-based analytic ecosystem, building at a modern data science workbench. And this is really attractive to the analytics community. Data scientists want you to focus on solving problems, not on trying to stitch together data and find data across the ecosystem. So, the technology and the processes can really help us attract and retain top talent by removing some of the irritants. When it comes to technology, as I said, we've been investing heavily in cloud capabilities and really taking a cloud first approach and monitoring our ecosystem. We do recognize, like many large companies, especially ones that are as old as we are, that we can't start greenfield with technology and just sort of, you know, remove all of the mainframe systems or distributed on premise systems and go fully into the cloud. But we are investing heavily in building out our cloud architecture and migrating capabilities to the cloud as a transition. And we're also developing capabilities to continue to leverage our legacy systems in a more flexible and agile way going forward. So we've developed some really cool data patterns to, you know, unhinge ourselves from some of our legacy mainframe. Systems and really increase our agility and our ability to deliver quickly. So, technology is evolving amazingly quickly in the industry and we're keeping pace quite well. When it comes to processes, you know, one of the things that I think people are starting to realize in the data space is that, you know, data governance is super important, always has been from a protection and from a privacy and from a regulatory perspective and doing the right thing with our clients data and protecting it very carefully. And that's always been important to Sun Life right from day one. But what we're seeing now in the data space in the digital world is that data is also, you know, good data governance, good data hygiene, is not only defensive in nature but it's also on offense. If you think about, you know, what it takes to understand and protect your data properly, understanding your metadata, data

classification, having good inventory, having good data quality practices, understanding lineage and managing your data lifecycle management. All of those things are extremely helpful in data governance and the defensive side of managing data, but they're actually foundational to the offensive side. So, if you think about want to build a new analytic models, develop new insights, you need to understand what data you have, you need to be able to get access to that data, you need people to use that data, you need to be able to trust that data for quality, understand where it comes from, and be able to use it in an ethical way. And so, a lot of the processes that we're putting in place from a defensive governance perspective, while foundational, are also super important to our aspirations when it comes to artificial intelligence and machine learning. And so, we see a real benefit to investing heavily in our processes and our controls as well. From a business development perspective.

Krish Banerjee [00:11:48] Yeah, I mean it's a great point and I have personally seen that when one of these kind of legs of the three legged stool doesn't work properly, then then it's always a bit of an imbalance that, that has caused challenges to other organizations. And I think at Sun Life I see that there is an equal amount of focus in all of these three dimensions. Definitely on the people side, I think there is a great culture that I personally kind of observed and, you know, people love to come and work and that's just great to see kind of, you know, the team that you're building with. I mean, it's fascinating. And in technology, obviously, you know, you have made investments from kind of the best of the breed, state of the art, when it comes to cloud, artificial intelligence and processes as well. So, these three things are extremely important when it comes to any organization, financial services, insurance, or for that matter, anyone thinking of a major transformational kind of a next step. So you very well articulated the importance of those three dimensions. Now kind of thinking how do we,



how do we bring this together? How do we bring this back into what we often get asked? Like, you know, we like to do something different. We like to do something bolder. What is the value? What is the value of doing this? How do you articulate the value internally as well as to our kind of the shareholders and to the street? What has been your approach, David, in terms of sharing value, articulating value, because I'm sure, you know, this is a question that you get asked, right? Why am I going to spend this kind of investment? What am I going to get in return in terms of value?

David Atkinson [00:13:40] Sure. Yeah. It's definitely a question of the top of mind. Data and analytics is not a cheap endeavor. And becoming a digital company is a long road that requires a lot of support right from the board on down. And we've got tremendous support from our CEO, and from all of our senior leadership, that data and analytics is critical to our success. Where we started and where we're seeing is, I'll give you an example, both externally and internally. As for leveraging data and seeing some great results externally, we've got a digital assistant coach slash coach named Ella. And Ella's proactively reshapes clients in 2021 to more than 3.7 million times providing recommendations such as topping up retirement savings or taking better advantage of existing benefits. And so this helps clients really navigate what's a fairly complex ecosystem we think about all the different things you need to worry about, are you saving enough, are you using your benefits? You know, is there something in the health care space that you're not aware of to take advantage of? And it's really built on our mission, which is to help our clients achieve lifetime financial security and live healthier lives. And Ella is a great digital experience for, you know, helping nudge clients in that direction; helping them to figure out how to navigate these very complex ecosystems. And we're seeing great response and engagement with our digital coach. And so that's sort of an external place where we're seeing, you know, clients have better experiences and better client experience and certainly help the clients to achieve their goals. But they're also lead to better outcomes for our shareholders and for our employees as well. Internally, you know, we're drinking our own champagne, as the saying goes, leveraging data

and analytics here for multiple use cases. Internally, we've built some analytic models that help our HR team to predict retention and identify and proactively engage with clients who are at potential risk of leaving the organization. We've actually seen a really good accuracy of, you know, somewhere between, you know, 90-97% accuracy on identifying employees who are likely to exit the organization. And this gives us an opportunity to, you know, proactively engage with the employees and see if we can, you know, head that off before they leave. It's certainly much easier to keep a high-performing, high quality employee in the organization than it is to attract them, especially nowadays. So again, an internal use case of where we're seeing great value of leveraging data in the works today.

Krish Banerjee [00:16:23] David, those were great examples. And maybe if we think about a few others, are there other areas that you can think of where maybe there will be an additional value that you see would be coming up in the future? That will be some of the things that you'll be looking forward to?

David Atkinson [00:16:41] Yeah, we're doing some pretty, pretty exciting things in sort of our traditional business, but accelerating parts of the process. So, if you think about life insurance, applying for a life insurance policy, traditionally this can be, you know, a somewhat lengthy process with underwriting, nurses coming, taking fluids, etc. And, you know, one of the things we've discovered is that data and the data that we have, as well as industry available data, allows us to accelerate parts of the underwriting process for many of our clients. So, leveraging data, we can actually avoid having to come and collect blood and other fluids as part of the life insurance process and really accelerating the underwriting aspect. And so, clients can get, you know, underwritten for life insurance policies quicker and we can offer them better, better, more personalized pricing based on who they are, and what we know about them. And so this is a real advantage to our clients. We're also using AI and machine learning to help



address crime issues. So we use voice analytics to identify when clients are likely to escalate because their problems are not getting solved quickly and proactively reach out to them and address their issues before the escalation happens. And what we've seen is actually an ability to address a client issue in about 12 minutes on average, in some cases, which is down from almost an hour and a half of interaction over a course of five days, once a client actually escalates the issue. And so that type of, you know, leverage of data and analytics to create a better client experience, help resolve their issues, and lower the friction with clients has been a real benefit as well that we've been able to achieve. And we see a lot of benefits or opportunities in areas such as voice analytics. Certainly document and image handwriting analytics, we see a big opportunity to tap into unstructured data. We see a big opportunity in looking at, you know, broad voice analytics and AI areas where natural language processing and so forth, where we can create better client experiences, more timely opportunities, better nudges, and better, better overall results for our clients.

Krish Banerjee [00:19:10] Yeah, I think those are two great, great kind of examples and use cases that I can absolutely see how that will again go back to the point of customer experience or digital ambitions. So it's all very relevant and you do have an built-in asset management business as well. Anything on that aspect, which is kind of the nontraditional side of an insurance business, right. So, do you see anything, David, on the wealth and asset management side that you think will be relevant?

David Atkinson [00:19:44] Yeah, you know, there's a tremendous amount of information in the asset management space. It's very quick moving. So, you know, we're starting to leverage AI to evaluate market trends, get early insights and economic forecasts and, you know, help identify some of those early warnings to help us reduce our risk and exposure. And this can help us internally manage client expectations and impart investment performance as well as our overall risk exposure. And so, data and analytics, both within and external to Sun Life, just massive amounts that are available. We're really trying to

figure out like how do we, how do we work with all of that data and get the insight as quickly as possible. And it leads us to better actions earlier and helps reduce risk and create better results for everyone.

Krish Banerjee [00:20:32] Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate the discussion and your time. This has been an amazing conversation. I'm sure our listeners should have learned quite a bit and I personally have enjoyed working with you, working with Sun Life, and I've seen the culture there and how people have chosen Sun Life as their career. So, I definitely wish you and the Sun Life team all the best. And thanks to our listeners for listening in and joining the Accenture AI Leaders Podcast. Don't forget to subscribe from wherever you listen to your podcast and look forward to getting back to you with another episode very soon. Thank you.