

AI Business School Podcast

Episode 5

Presenter: David Carmona; Andrea Temporiti; Angela D’Orazio; Saqib Shaikh

## AI BUSINESS SCHOOL – EPISODE 5

Angela D’Orazio: When you’re opening a bottle for the first time, first of all, you assess the information on the label. You enjoy it before opening it, so you watch it and you sense it, and you hold it, so it’s a sensory, visual sensory thing before opening it. And then I pour the first whiskey and I take the glass in my hand and I swirl it around and sense the first impression of it. [MUSIC] I sense the first impression in the nose.

[MUSIC]

David Carmona: Few people on this earth know whiskey like Angela D’Orazio. As the Chief Nose Officer of Mackmyra Whisky Company in Sweden, Angela’s entrusted with the recipes and development of all the whiskies that Mackmyra releases, including I have to say, one that as of last year has been developed with the help of AI. And I should also mention that that whiskey has won awards for its taste and complexity.

Hi, everyone. My name is David Carmona and I'd like to welcome you to the AI Business School Podcast from Microsoft. In this episode, we're going to talk about how to go beyond in your business AI transformation to empower every employee with AI. So, why is this important? Angela, I think answers that very well.

Angela: Well, I guess I personally would see it more as an inspiration [MUSIC] than anything else, an inspiration to innovate within your company.

David: When you extend the ability to innovate to every person in an organization, you play in a very different league. Now everybody can follow their personal purpose to drive change. To help illustrate this, I tend to go back to a book that I love. You may have read it already. It’s called “The Alchemist” by Brazilian author Paulo Coelho. In short, in this book a young shepherd, Santiago, has a recurring dream that is telling him that he will find a treasure inside the pyramids in Egypt. The author refers to that dream as a personal legend, and it's an allegory of our purpose in life. He sells his sheep and embarks upon a journey where he, of course, will experience lows and highs. But then one day he will meet an alchemist who

will inspire this shepherd to pursue his dream. He will teach him the secrets of the desert and walk with him in this journey.

[MUSIC]

We usually think that we're the shepherd in this story and after reading the book, you will probably get motivated to pursue whatever your dream is, and that's fine, don't get me wrong, if that's what you want to do, but what I typically say to leaders is that they are not the shepherd, they are the alchemist. They should be the ones inspiring others in the organization to find that purpose, that personal legend, and help them achieve it. Purpose driven employees are the most powerful force in any business.

Saqib Shaikh: I find that when you are driven by that purpose, it really doesn't make it feel like work. I feel like I'm so lucky because I'm going to work every day, but I really pursuing this purpose trying to help as many people as possible. And so when you hit those roadblocks, actually, it feels like business limitless spark. Not limitless, but lots of motivation because you know that there are people depending on your work. So, that really gets me through.

David: I'd like you to meet Saqib Shaikh. At one of our internal Microsoft hackathons several years ago, Saqib led a team that created an app called Seeing AI. This was an innovative mobile application that used your phone's camera and AI to describe people and objects around you and even read documents. It sounds a really cool concept, but it has a greater purpose. Saqib actually lost his sight at the age of seven. Such an app allows him and tens of millions of other, sight impaired people in many different languages to change the way that they experience their world around them.

Saqib: I often talk about this idea of disability being a driver for innovation and what I mean by that is we can look in history and see how many of the everyday technologies we have came about as a result of solving the challenges of someone with a disability. Because this community has these interesting challenges we're often early adopters of technology.

David: This is innovation that can truly change people's lives, like a testimonial that Saqib received from one user who puts Seeing AI to a very unexpected use.

Saqib: It's all the little ways that people have used the app in their daily lives. For example, there was a lady who told us about how she was using the handwriting feature [MUSIC] to go through papers in her drawer and she found some memories from her mother who was passed away, but she could access that information from decades past.

[MUSIC]

David: But then you may think that as heartwarming that Saqib's story is, it may not be aligned with your company's business, but you'd be surprised.

Saqib: If you solve for someone with those extreme needs, then you can actually make solutions which scale for everyone, and that's something we always have on our mind at Seeing AI. So as we are developing new technologies to empower people who are visually impaired, then how do we build those enhancements back into our platforms for all customers?

David: You don't necessarily have to go that far though. Anything that makes employees' lives easier can also have a big impact.

Andrea Temporiti: The artificial intelligence can really fast create, understand what is most likely the cause of the problem, so it can enable people to in a very fast way to address a problem in the field, even if they are not the super expert.

David: That was Andrea Temporiti, the Electrification Business Area Digital Lead for ABB. ABB develops automation, electrification, robotics, and motion equipment for industrial and manufacturing customers. Andrea has found that using AI to mitigate some issues that individual employees are encountering in a business like that has become very useful.

Andrea: The real power on artificial intelligence is when you start from the problem and you find something, an algorithm or a solution, that can help people to realize better or faster their target, their job.

David: Right now as Andrea has pointed out, the use cases of AI have been somewhat limited to helping employees save time with repetitive tasks. But as we think about what it

truly means to empower every employee, we're going to see AI helping us, augmenting our reasoning and co-reasoning with us.

Andrea: For me, AI is synonymous of augmented intelligence more than artificial intelligence, and the reason why I'm saying that because typically artificial intelligence need to work to help people solving the same problem in a fast time, fastest time.

[MUSIC]

David: I completely agree with Andrea's view and definition. This idea of augmented intelligence is particularly relevant for knowledge workers, so those who are focused on their knowledge or expertise. One example of knowledge workers are medical professionals. These individuals have spent years studying, learning, and training in preparation for their profession. But in addition to that, they need to ensure that they are up to date on the latest medical advancements. And to give you a sense of what that means, in the 1950s, the medical knowledge was expected to double every 50 years. So if you were a medical professional during that time, that means that during the course of your entire career, more or less, you were expected to double your knowledge. And that sounds doable, right?

Today it is estimated that the medical knowledge doubles every 73 days, so medical professionals would need to learn everything that they have learned roughly every couple of months. That sounds very, very difficult, right? In the first months of the COVID-19 crisis, for example, we saw like 50,000 papers published just on COVID-19. That means that if you are researcher, you will need to read and understand those papers. Again, a task that sounds impossible. And that's the perfect scenario for AI. AI won't find the next vaccine by itself, but it can help researchers co-reasoning with them on top of that vast amount of knowledge available, just like it helped Angela develop an award-winning whiskey. In Mackmyra's case, the AI algorithm was fed with ingredient lists, previous recipes, awards, customer satisfaction, testing notes and many others.

Angela: There were several thousand parameters that went into the designed program that we were designing together with the AI machine officer.

David: The result of this algorithm were new recipes for Angela to evaluate. That's when Angela's domain expertise played its role.

Angela: I discarded hundreds and hundreds and hundreds, especially in the beginning. Many of them were absolutely not interesting for me.

[MUSIC]

David: In an interactive co-reasoning cycle, Angela would discard recipes and feed more information to the AI, and then again and again until she felt that she had a solid group of recipes to test.

[MUSIC]

Angela: We continued like that about ten times until I saw that I had five recipes that I thought were meeting my expectations for a good recipe to try to do.

David: When the project started, Angela's colleagues were initially worried that someone so dedicated to a craft might feel like intimidated or afraid of losing control of the process. In reality, though, she had a very different point of view.

Angela: I had to decide, was this something intimidating for me initially when we started it? And I immediately thought it was a fun challenge. Mackmyra is not a very traditional company, so we're one of the modern whiskey companies, and we don't do it the traditional way. So, we don't have traditional people on board.

David: Once she embraced the challenge, she soon realized that the process of developing and choosing the eventual recipe gave her something different: empowerment.

Angela: In the beginning, I was more like assisting the machine officer with all the information. And the more we got along, I realized that I was the person with all the power and AI was my tool. And when I chose the recipes and I test blended them, I thought they were cool and they were great and I really like them. And then I thought, well done, Angela. You've chosen these.

[MUSIC]

David: Angela used her expertise to narrow those hundreds of AI generated recipes down to that final five, then call upon her mixing and tasting talents to reach what became the Intelligens blend.

Angela: I did choose the casks, the ones that we were going to use and I test blended again, and it was really beautiful and I was really happy with the results.

David: That sentiment, that excitement, from a subject matter expert to be able to achieve more and feel that they can do more because of AI is the first step for a purpose driven journey, and that is empowerment. Fully embracing empowerment with AI helps developers like Saqib bring their innovative ideas to life or drive people like Angela to create an innovative, award-winning whiskey. And it's helping medical researchers, manufacturing experts, marketing professionals, and many, many others amplify their ingenuity. And all of it ties back to the intent—that purpose driven mindset that you have to cultivate. Just like my favorite character in Coelho's book, "The Alchemist".

[MUSIC]

Before finishing, let me thank our guests for this episode, Angela D'Orazio, Saqib Shaikh, and Andrea Temporiti.

I hope you enjoyed this podcast series as much as I did recording it. The AI Business School Podcast would have not been possible without the help of Tania Arciniega, Sarah Greenwalt, Jaime Perena, Melissa Porter, Loan Gerhke, Joel Magalnick, and, of course, the engineering provided by Microsoft Studios.

We've met a lot of people in this journey with their own purpose driven mindset. They have shared with us how they're transforming their businesses with AI from defining their strategic approach to fostering the right culture, integrate responsibility, empower everyone, and manage the entire process.

I'd like to leave you with a final note from Saqib with a recommendation for leaders.

Saqib: There's a phrase I like, strong opinions, weakly held. So at some point, someone needs to be making a decision. And you need to put a stake in the ground and say, you

know, this is the direction we're going and this is what the trends are. So, you might listen to all the data points, but at the end of the day you need to find the trend and set the direction as a leader. So, listening to everyone I think is key.

[MUSIC]

David: A good dose of optimism and a great dose of humility. Thanks to all of you for listening.

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