



AI360 podcast

Season 1, Episode 16: Reflections from Deloitte's AI Ecosystem Summit

Host:

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Guest:

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Rohan Gupta: Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of AI360. I'm so excited for this one because we have Jim, our head of Applied AI joining us. Jim, do you want to do a quick intro?

Jim Rowan: Yeah. Hey, everyone. Jim Rowan. I head up our Applied AI SGO here at Deloitte. Really excited for this opportunity and love the podcast. I've been listening to it [since] last year and am really excited about where we're going to take it this year. One of my roles is helping our clients drive value from their AI solutions in the marketplace, so spending a lot of time with clients having those conversations. I also am helping our firm think through how we transform Deloitte internally with the use of AI and Generative AI technologies. So I'm sure that might be a hot topic for us in the future. And then finally, I'm working with our teams to think through innovation. So how do we innovate around this really cool technology and incorporate it into our services going forward? So a lot of great topics for us to cover in the future. Rohan, thanks for having me on.

Rohan Gupta: Absolutely, Jim. So in this role also, you hosted our first-ever AI Ecosystem Summit. So do you mind telling us a little bit about that?

Jim Rowan: Yeah. Wow, what a great event. So if you think about what our alliances do, they have great events—you know, the major conferences—and we get to join and attend and be part of those

conversations. Well, in this case, we turned the tables; we invited our alliances sort of to “our house,” if you will, and brought 500 of our PPMDs [partners, principals, and managing directors] together to have a great conversation about what we're seeing in the marketplace. What are the client challenges that everyone's facing, and how do we better understand the alliance roadmaps that they have so that we can incorporate that into our advice that we give to our clients? So, really cool session that we had just a couple of weeks ago.

Rohan Gupta: That's awesome. What were some of your takeaways from that session? I know we were together for almost three days.

Jim Rowan: Yeah, there were a lot of takeaways. I think number one, that I'm hearing from our clients—and from our alliances—is the need to focus on vertical solutions. And what I mean by that is really thinking about how do we take from a subsector to sector to industry level of depth and incorporate that into our client's solutions, so that when we're going and suggesting ideas we're bringing that level of expertise? So that's number one. Number two is product roadmaps. This space is getting a ton of R&D, and so really understanding from our alliances what's important for them? Where are they innovating new feature sets, new products, and new capabilities in their tools? [It] really helps us become better strategic advisers. And so that was just an awesome opportunity for us. And the third big takeaway was that getting everyone together is just so important. I know we've been off Zoom for a while, but just having that chance for everyone to get together to talk about clients, talk about issues, and think through those as a group was tremendously valuable for the team. Maybe, Rohan, I can turn the table on you. What were some of your key takeaways from the session?

Rohan Gupta: Yeah. Personally, I completely agree with all three of yours, especially the one on verticals. Because, you know, as a practitioner in the software space, this is coming up as a big deal. Maybe two more I would add to that: one is the degree of commitment in the enterprise. You know, being someone in AI, I kind of naturally assume that I am indexed overly towards AI. But to see the rest of the market actually be exactly where we are and as excited as I have been for the last couple of years is amazing. The second was the time to get to production-ready was a topic that came up a lot. But it dawned on me that it's not just the people who have the best talent or the best data. It's those who are also willing to take the risk and actually traverse into a space that they haven't done before that are moving the fastest.

Jim Rowan: Those are really good insights. I mean, I feel like it was a little bit cathartic, too, just to have everyone sort of say, “Yeah, this is hard. We understand that scaling is going to be a challenge and these are some things we can really try to tackle together as a team.” I think it was a great sort of moment for everyone.

Rohan Gupta: Absolutely. So, Jim, you know, our friend, Chief Futurist Mike Bechtel, mentioned at the summit that as AI moves from startup to scale-up, multi-party alliances and ecosystems will be crucial for AI. Do you have any thoughts on how this will happen?

Jim Rowan: Yeah. I mean, we've been having great conversations, and if you think about sort of the evolution of the AI value chain and sort of where clients are spending their money and where their investments in R&D are happening, there's this stitching together of different capabilities. And some of our alliances have these capabilities built together on single platforms—other parts of our alliances and best-of-breed solutions for different elements of this AI technology stack. And so what we're going to really be trying to do is help clients understand where to bundle these technologies together and where to get the most value for their investments in this space. And I think it's really important to understand which alliances differentiate in different areas. And so I think that's a super important aspect of our role as technology strategists and advisers to our clients going forward.

Rohan Gupta: Yeah, it makes sense. You know, for someone like me who works primarily in the software sector, I think for a hot second there were people who suggested that SIs [systems integrators] and

software companies didn't need to work that much together anymore in a world of Generative AI. But actually we've discovered it's completely to the contrary. You know, the ability to combine technical depth, industry expertise, and just a raw capacity to drive these business outcomes is now more critical than ever. The other thing is that software companies are now evolving their relationship with us. For example, they need access to high-quality training data. They need access to high-quality eval data sets. And so I find us collaborating even more, not just on the commercial aspects but now even on product. So I think, we're getting deeper and deeper together with our alliance partners. I

Jim Rowan: I think you make a great point. I love the fact that people were thinking we wouldn't need a systems integrator to help figure out how these solutions get together. I think the more we innovate in this space, the more we're going to find the importance of a business-to-technology translator to figure out how these things fit together and get the requirements right. There isn't an easy button for AI that you just click and suddenly you're up and running across the enterprise. And I think that's where SIs like ourselves play a really critical role for our clients.

Rohan Gupta: Absolutely. Well, Jim. This has been an amazing episode. Thank you so much for joining us. And I also know that you're going to be coming back as a host very soon. So we'll have you on the other side of this conversation. And we're going to have a few of our industry leaders join you as well. So for all of our listeners, stay tuned. And Jim, thanks so much for being a part of this episode.

Jim Rowan: Yeah, thanks so much. I'm really excited to be hosting with you this year, and I'm really excited we're going to spend a lot of time with our industry leaders because, as we mentioned, this industry level of depth and understanding and tailoring of solutions is really important in terms of driving value for AI. Thanks again. Really appreciate it.

Rohan Gupta: Take care.

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