

The Manufacturing Technologies Association (MTA)

The MTA exists to promote the interests, and be the voice of the manufacturing technologies sector in the UK.

The expanding scope of engineering-based manufacturing has seen the MTA broaden the range of its support to the sector with the formation of a new cluster of trade associations and events.



The MTA represents the core of engineering-based manufacturing and aims to promote the use and innovation of advanced technology in manufacturing.

To find out more about the MTA, please visit our website at mta.org.uk, email us at info@mta.org.uk or call us on 020 7298 6400



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EDITOR'S NOTES

SHAPING TOMORROW, TODAY



Welcome to Issue 02 of Digital Edge – your window into the people, innovations, and ideas pushing industries forward in this era of relentless digital acceleration.

In this issue, we're proud to feature Martin Bernier, Chief Information Officer at the University of Ottawa. Martin is not just steering a major academic institution through digital transformation—he's helping build the "University of Tomorrow." With a focus on collaboration, cybersecurity, and strategic technology enablement, his leadership is shaping a smarter, more connected campus community.

We also spotlight Ulyana Fitsa, Chief Supply Chain Officer at Kormotech. From Ukraine to over 30 countries worldwide, Ulyana's journey is a testament to resilience, innovation, and strategic supply chain thinking. As Kormotech climbs the global rankings in pet food production, her insights into logistics, sustainability, and global growth are not to be missed.

Then, we dive into the AI revolution with Dan Williams, Senior Account Executive at Microsoft. As professional services firms begin to harness the full potential

of Agentic AI, Dan explores how tools like Microsoft Copilot and Azure AI are redefining productivity and client value. From real-world use cases to emerging innovations, it's clear: those who adopt AI now will lead tomorrow.

We also bring you a spotlight feature on the evolving threat landscape of cybercrime, a decade in review that uncovers the tactics, technologies, and trends shaping digital security. And for something a little more exhilarating, check out how you can build the car of your dreams with BYD – the global EV giant that's making serious waves.

With industry news, future-focused features, and conversations that matter, Issue 02 is packed with powerful perspectives and practical insights for navigating the edge of innovation.

Thanks for joining us again. Let's keep pushing forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Williams".

JP - Editor, Digital Edge



A NEW ERA OF INFINIT POSSIBILI

A E TIES.

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FRONT COVER:
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University of Ottawa

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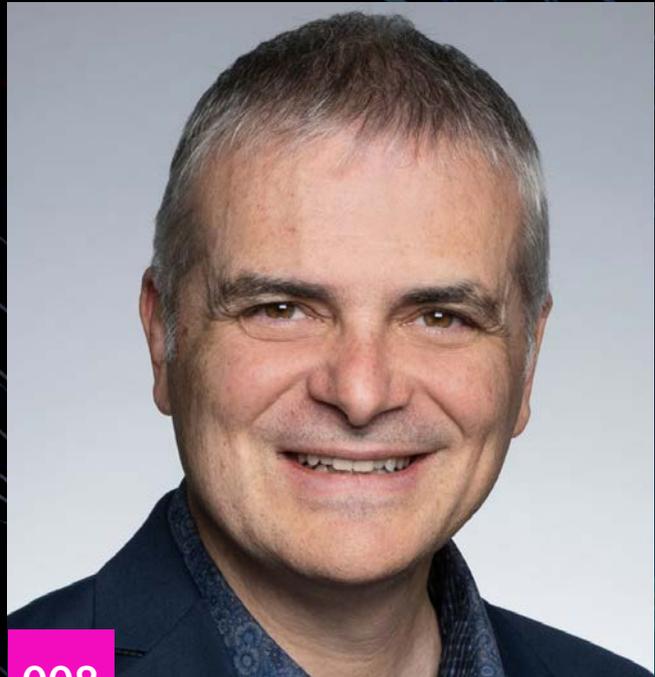
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Strategic Vision in Higher Education

MARTIN BERNIER, MBA

CIO at University of Ottawa

1 How have you aligned the University of Ottawa's technology transformation strategy with its mission to enhance education, research, and community impact?

At the heart of our digital transformation strategy is a people-first approach—designed to center the needs, experiences, and aspirations of students, faculty, and the broader university community.

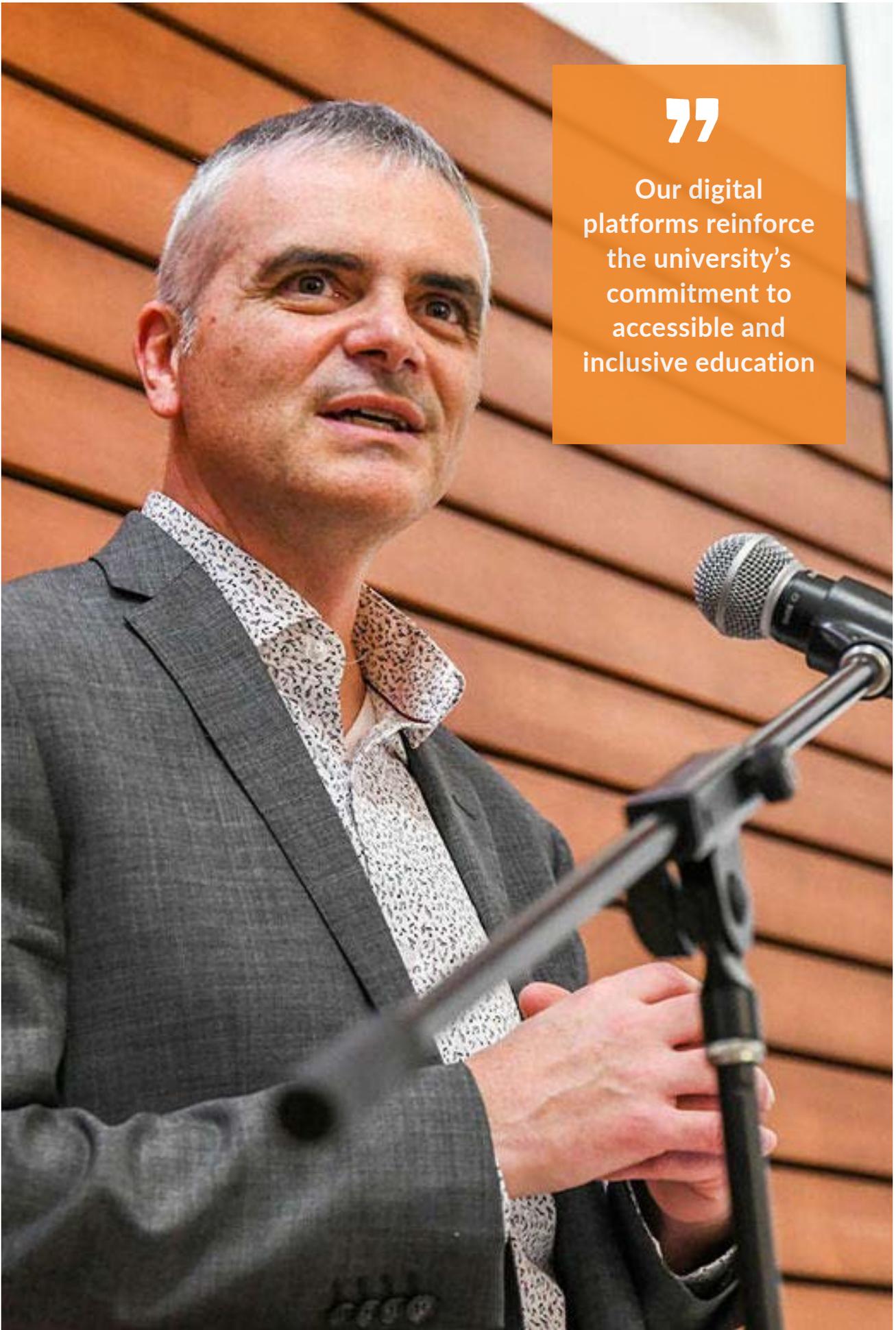
Every technological change we make is driven by the goal of supporting their ambitions and contributing to their success, both in their academic journeys and in their professional lives.

COLLABORATIVE AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH

To ensure that our technology aligns with the needs of our community, we take a collaborative, inclusive approach that involves stakeholders at every step:

• UNDERSTANDING USER NEEDS:

We conducted design thinking sessions with students to gain deep insights into their expectations and challenges of using technology and systems at the university. At the same time, we held workshops with university leadership to ensure alignment on digital priorities. Advisory committees, surveys, and regular feedback from professors and researchers helped us refine our strategies to meet the university's academic and research goals.



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Our digital platforms reinforce the university's commitment to accessible and inclusive education

• FOSTERING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

We extended our technological impact beyond the campus by integrating technology into outreach programs. By deploying virtual labs and online learning platforms, we were able to ensure continuous learning, even during unprecedented disruptions. This global reach was especially evident during the pandemic when we had to enable access to uOttawa systems for students from over 160 countries, demonstrating the resilience and scalability of our digital infrastructure.

ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL ACCESS:

Our digital platforms reinforce the university's commitment to accessible and inclusive education, providing students with flexible and innovative learning solutions that meet diverse needs.

USER-CENTRIC INNOVATION

At the core of every solution, we develop is a user-centric design philosophy, ensuring that the needs of our community are always a top priority. By fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity, our technology transformation strategy not only strengthens the university's academic mission but also solidifies its position as a leader in education, research, and community engagement.



You're known for advocating change management.

Can you share an example of a bold initiative you've led that resulted in significant organisational impact?

One of the most transformative initiatives I led at the University of Ottawa was a simultaneous technological and cultural transformation within the IT Services department. For the institution, this was a bold, complex undertaking—one that required not only modernizing IT systems but also reshaping the mindset and approach of the entire organization. This shift was guided by a user-centric philosophy, ensuring that every decision aligned with key values and IT architecture principles to better serve faculty, staff, and students.

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Let's be honest - this wasn't easy. Change disrupts comfort zones, and resistance is inevitable. However, rather than viewing resistance as a barrier, we treated it as a natural part of the transformation process. My role as a leader was to inspire confidence, foster trust, and help my team see the bigger picture—that together, we could rise to the challenge and create something better.

A key pillar of success was actively engaging and empowering IT employees. We ensured their expertise was not just heard but embedded into every stage of

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA EMBRACES A SUSTAINABLE, CLOUD-BASED FUTURE WITH SAVIYNT

The world's largest bilingual university achieves seamless app integration, universal card implementation, and management of 900,000 identities — with 42 fewer servers.

As the world's largest bilingual (English-French) public research university, the University of Ottawa is committed to preparing its 48,000 students for an increasingly digital and interconnected world. Through its Transformation 2030 initiative, the university is investing in sustainability, advanced technology, and cloud-based solutions. An important component of this transformation was modernizing its identity governance and administration (IGA) system to improve efficiency, security, and scalability.

THE CHALLENGE: REPLACING AN OUTDATED AND LABOR-INTENSIVE SYSTEM

The university's identity system relied on multiple fragmented portals, requiring separate accounts for different functions. The legacy system was incompatible with its new single, integrated platform for financial management

and human resource management, relied on inefficient manual provisioning, and operated on 49 on-premises servers — posing maintenance challenges, performance risks, and sustainability concerns.

Additionally, the outdated universal card system lacked clear classification, requiring extensive administrative oversight. Employees and students needed separate credentials for different access points, and onboarding new staff involved a lengthy manual approval process that could take up to two weeks.

To modernize its identity infrastructure, the university sought a flexible, cloud-based IGA solution capable of automating lifecycle management, integrating seamlessly with existing source systems, and supporting complex role-based identities.

“With Saviynt, it's easier to support access to our source systems and enforce policies consistently. It enables automation, strengthens security, and provides better tools for users to gain the right access in real time.”



THE SOLUTION: A MODERN APPROACH TO IDENTITY GOVERNANCE

Following a thorough RFP process, the university selected Saviynt's cloud-native IGA platform for its ability to consolidate identity management, enforce role-based access, and eliminate the need for costly customization.

A pivotal achievement of this transformation was the launch of the universal card system, which unifies physical and digital identity management across campus. Previously, students, faculty, and staff needed multiple credentials for different functions — now, Saviynt enables dynamic, role-based access provisioning, ensuring automatic updates as users change roles or leave the university.

A critical innovation was the integration of Saviynt with campus access controls, the university's physical security system. Initially, the team considered using CSV files for data transfer but instead leveraged Saviynt's identity cloud platform for real-time updates, ensuring seamless synchronization between digital identities and physical access controls.

By implementing role-based access control (RBAC), the university automated building access management. Supervisors can now instantly grant access to controlled areas, and changes are reflected across the system within minutes. If an employee or student loses their card, it can be deactivated immediately, preventing unauthorized access, while a replacement card is seamlessly linked to their identity profile.

"Previously, access approvals involved phone calls, emails, or in-person visits," explains Ronald Monette, Product Manager, IAM Modernization and Governance. "With Saviynt, we've eliminated those bottlenecks. Now, identity data flows dynamically, ensuring real-time security updates and a much smoother user experience."

Saviynt

THE RESULTS: A SUSTAINABLE, SCALABLE FUTURE

Saviynt's flexible and extensible cloud platform eliminated 42 on-premises servers while streamlining identity management for 900,000 identities — including those with multiple roles. By replacing manual provisioning with self-service automation, the university dramatically improved lifecycle management for 48,000 students, 5,000 employees, and third parties like vendors, partners, and alumni.

By adopting Saviynt's cloud-based identity governance, the University of Ottawa has significantly improved security, efficiency, and user experience. The universal card system showcases how Saviynt's platform supports university digital transformation initiatives, seamlessly converging digital and physical identities for a secure and frictionless experience.

"This is a major step forward — not just for us, but for universities and organizations facing similar challenges," Ronald added. "We've created a new model for managing identity and access that is dynamic, efficient, and built for the future. This enhances the overall user experience."

Through its cloud transformation, the University of Ottawa has positioned itself at the forefront of digital identity governance in higher education — enhancing security, improving operational efficiency, and enabling innovation for years to come.

THE IMPACT:

- 5,000 to 6,000 password resets eliminated annually through automated credential notifications for new passwords or password resets.
- 42 less (from 49 to 7) in-house servers by switching to a Software as a Service (SaaS)-based solution—resulting in operational efficiencies, reduced maintenance costs and sustainability benefits.
- 10 to 15% reduction of Service Desk calls related to initial passwords during peak periods.

Get an Ally in Your Technology Journey

Compugen's process and portfolio have iterated along with the industry to provide technology insight and foresight to organizations across North America. With an experience-focused approach, you get a responsive team and proven results.

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Leverage AI

Automate processes and enhance decision-making



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SCHEDULE A CONVERSATION

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the transformation. Through a structured change management approach, we engaged stakeholders across the university—including professors, administrative staff, and students—to prioritize transparency, training, and collaboration. At the same time, we remained flexible understanding that transformation isn't about perfection but about progress and adaptability.

MEASURING SUCCESS: KEY OUTCOMES

Transformations of this scale don't happen overnight. They require patience, commitment, and a willingness to adjust along the way. Our long-term approach resulted in:

- **A CULTURAL SHIFT IN IT**

By fostering a culture of innovation, adaptability, and continuous learning, we empowered IT staff, faculty, and students to confidently embrace new technologies. This shift enhanced digital fluency, collaboration, and problem-solving across the university.

- **USER-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS** – Regular feedback sessions and interactive workshops ensured that IT solutions weren't just technically sound but genuinely useful for the people relying on them. This approach led to more intuitive, efficient, and user-friendly systems.

- **OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY & SCALABILITY**

We modernized core IT systems to support remote work, enhance cross-

department collaboration, and improve service delivery, making it easier for the university to scale operations and adapt to evolving needs.

A LASTING IMPACT

Ultimately, this initiative transformed IT from a back-office function into a strategic partner within the university. By leading with courage, building trust, and fostering collaboration, we laid the foundation for a more agile, resilient, and innovative institution—one where technology is an enabler of progress rather than just a support service.

3 With your extensive experience in IT leadership across public and private sectors, how do you align the University of Ottawa's technological direction with its academic and research mission?

My approach to align the University of Ottawa's technological direction with its core mission is through a comprehensive and strategic framework, centered on collaboration, excellence and innovation. The university's mission drives our technology strategy, ensuring that IT initiatives directly support these core pillars while focusing on long-term goals. Our framework includes key components such as innovation, operational efficiency, cybersecurity, enterprise architecture, IT governance, and stakeholder engagement and collaboration. These principles guide every technology decision, ensuring that technology is a true enabler of institutional success and growth.

At the University of Ottawa, there are several key initiatives that demonstrate how we align IT with the university's mission:

• **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE:**

The IT leadership team is on a transformational journey that integrates advanced technologies to enable innovative teaching methods, enhance research capabilities, and elevate the student experience. By creating a robust digital ecosystem, we are laying the foundation to empower faculty, staff, and students with tools that are redefining higher education. Experiential learning plays a crucial role, helping students connect classroom theories to real-world situations. Online collaboration platforms is already being deployed to support faculty and students, and AI-powered assistants are going to be developed, paving the way for a future where education becomes even more immersive, inclusive, and dynamic.

• **OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND CYBERSECURITY:**

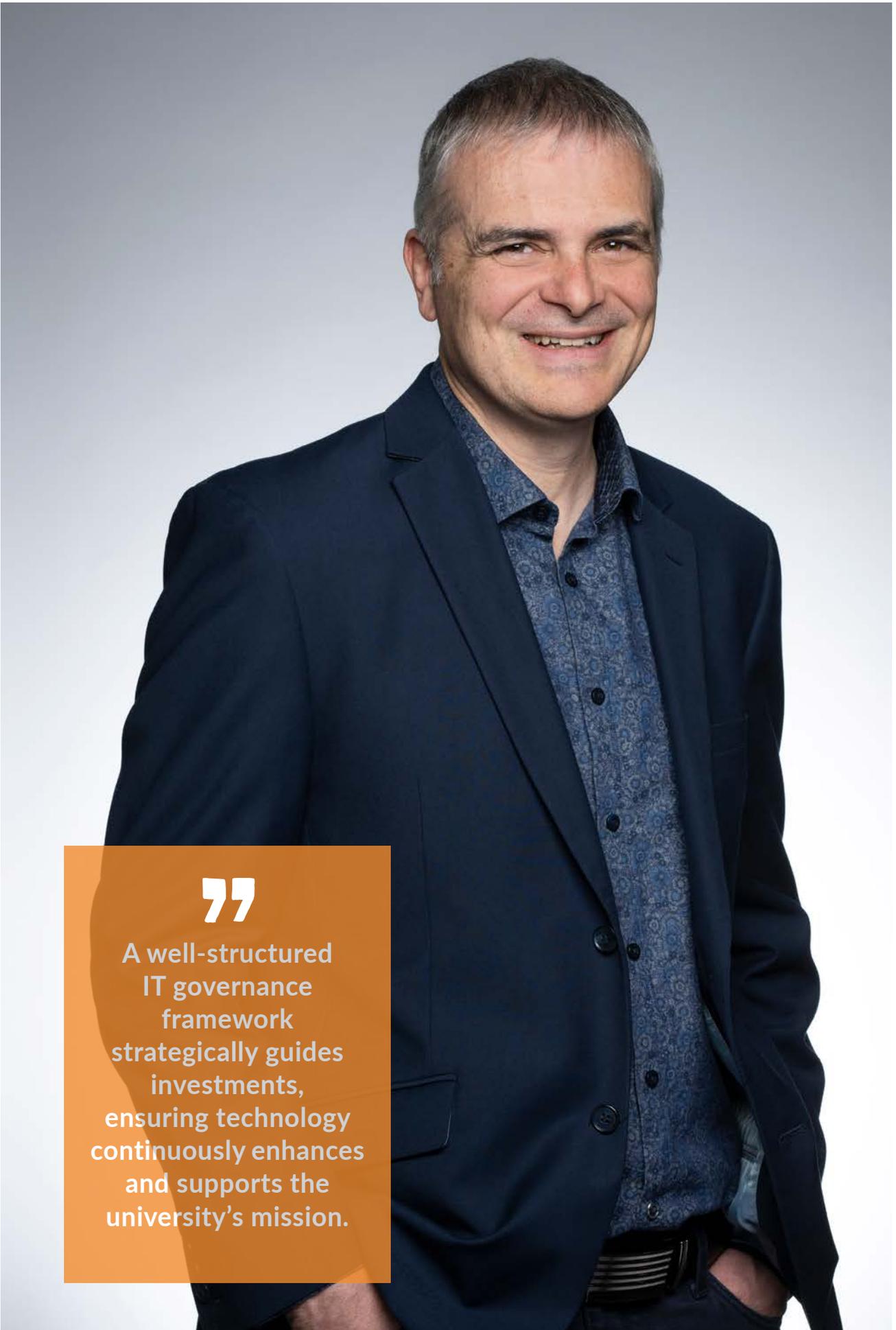
To support academic excellence, we are prioritizing operational efficiency, key to improving satisfaction, reduce costs, and ensure long-term financial sustainability. Cloud-based platforms like an integrated platform for financial management and human resource management play a central role in this transformation, streamlining operations, automating administrative tasks, and enabling data-driven decision-making. Achieving true efficiency requires more than process optimization; it demands a fundamental shift in how we operate. At the same

time, we are strengthening cybersecurity by modernizing our Identity and Access Management (IAM) systems, ensuring a secure and resilient digital environment. These efforts not only enhance efficiency but also reinforce institutional resilience in the face of rising cybersecurity risks.

• **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ENHANCED SERVICE DELIVERY:**

A user-first approach fosters a thriving environment for faculty, staff, and students while enhancing campus service delivery. For example, the implementation of a line queue management solution improves service efficiency by reducing wait times, enabling virtual queues, and providing real-time updates for students.

A core principle driving these initiatives is the critical role of enterprise architecture in ensuring sustainable growth, adaptability, and resilience in an ever-evolving digital landscape. Equally important is fostering strong collaboration between IT and academic departments to align technology initiatives with institutional priorities. A well-structured IT governance framework strategically guides investments, ensuring technology continuously enhances and supports the university's mission. Ultimately, we prioritize advancements that empower the academic community while fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation, ensuring that technology serves as a true enabler of academic and research excellence.



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A well-structured
IT governance
framework
strategically guides
investments,
ensuring technology
continuously enhances
and supports the
university's mission.





4 As a founding ally for uOttawa Women in Innovation and champion of Better and Stronger Allies Together, how do you integrate these principles into your IT strategies and organisational culture?

As a founding ally for uOttawa Women in Innovation and a champion of the Better and Stronger Allies Together initiative, I've worked to make diversity and inclusion more than just values - they are the foundation of how we approach IT. Technology isn't just about systems and infrastructure; it's about people. It's about building an environment where everyone regardless of background or identity, feels empowered to contribute, grow, and succeed.

To truly drive change, we've taken intentional steps to embed these principles into our work. We've built diverse teams that reflect the broad range of people we serve, knowing that the best solutions emerge when different perspectives, skills, and experiences come together. Our hiring practices are designed to open doors for underrepresented talent, and we've developed mentorship programs, workshops, and leadership initiatives to provide ongoing support and opportunities for growth. When people feel included, valued, and supported, they don't just do their best work—they innovate, they lead, and they help others rise.

This commitment extends beyond our internal teams. The IT services

we provide support a highly diverse university community, and we take a user-first approach to ensure that our technology is accessible, equitable, and designed with the needs of all students, faculty, and staff in mind. By focusing on the human impact of our work, we make sure that technology isn't a barrier but a tool for empowerment.

Recently, I was honored to receive the Ally of the Year award from Women in Cloud. While this recognition is personal, I see it as a testament to the collective work of our team in fostering a culture of inclusivity and belonging. This work isn't about a single award, initiative, or policy—it's about a long-term commitment to creating an environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, contribute, and lead.

I'm incredibly proud of the progress we've made, but there's always more to do. Inclusion isn't a one-time effort; it's an ongoing journey, and I'm excited to continue championing meaningful change—both within our organization and across the broader tech community.

5 Leading the University's Information Governance initiative involves collaborative decision-making. What challenges have you faced in engaging diverse stakeholders, and how have you ensured alignment on IT priorities?

Leading the University's Information Governance initiative has been both a challenge and an opportunity—

bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, each with their own priorities, expectations, and ways of working. A university operates much like a city, with its many faculties, research centers, administrative units, and student communities, all functioning independently yet interconnected. Just as a city needs thoughtful governance to keep its infrastructure running smoothly, a university requires a strong information governance strategy to foster collaboration, efficiency, and innovation.

One of the biggest challenges we've faced is the sheer volume of project proposals from across the university. While this enthusiasm for innovation is exciting, it also highlights the need for a structured process to ensure we're investing in the right projects at the right time. To manage this, we've built a governance framework that prioritizes initiatives aligned with the university's strategic goals, ensuring that resources are used where they can create the greatest impact.

To navigate this complexity, we've developed a governance model built on principles of transparency, inclusivity, and collaboration. This model now provides structured channels for decision-making and ensures that every voice is heard. Key strategies include:

- **STRATEGIC PROJECT SELECTION:**

We assess projects based on alignment with institutional priorities, available resources, and expected outcomes to ensure a meaningful return on investment.

- **ENGAGEMENT THROUGH OPEN DIALOGUE:**

Regular workshops and forums create space for stakeholders to voice their needs, align priorities and gain a shared understanding of governance objectives.

- **USER-CENTRIC APPROACH:**

We put the people who rely on our systems at the centre of decision-making, ensuring that IT priorities are shaped around real-world needs and everyday challenges

By fostering collaboration and strategic prioritization, we strengthened relationships across the university, ensuring that IT initiatives support not just operational needs but also the institutions broader academic, research mission. With a governance model that is structured yet flexible we're building a foundation that enables innovation while maintaining clarity and accountability.

6 As CIOs increasingly take on broader responsibilities beyond technology, how do you see your role evolving to address emerging challenges in cybersecurity, data governance, AI and digital transformation in academia?

Over the past 20 years, the role of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) has undergone a dramatic shift, and I have evolved with it—leading digital strategies across different sectors and adapting to the ever-changing technology landscape. Today, technology isn't just a support function; it's a core driver of institutional success, enhancing student experiences,

streamlining operations, and enabling ground-breaking research. CIOs are no longer just technology managers - we strategic leaders, responsible for bridging the gap between digital transformation and the institution's broader mission. Our focus must be on enabling innovation, ensuring security, and guiding the ethical adoption of emerging technologies.

Yet, the greatest challenge remains the human factor. Cybersecurity measures, data governance policies, and AI applications are only as effective as the people using them. The rapid spread of social media and the overwhelming volume of digital information have introduced new risks – many users adopt platforms like TikTok, DeepSeek or unvetted technologies without fully understanding their security and privacy implications. Faculty, students, and staff may inadvertently expose institutional and personal data, putting themselves and the organization at risk.

This is where strong information management becomes essential. A well-structured governance framework, clear policies, and responsible data stewardship practices, help mitigate risks related to misinformation, information overload, and improper data handling. By ensuring that institutional data is secure, accessible, and properly classified, we reduce vulnerabilities and enable smarter decision-making. My role as the CIO has increasingly been about creating systems and strategies that promote secure, informed engagement with technology – empowering users while safeguarding the institution.

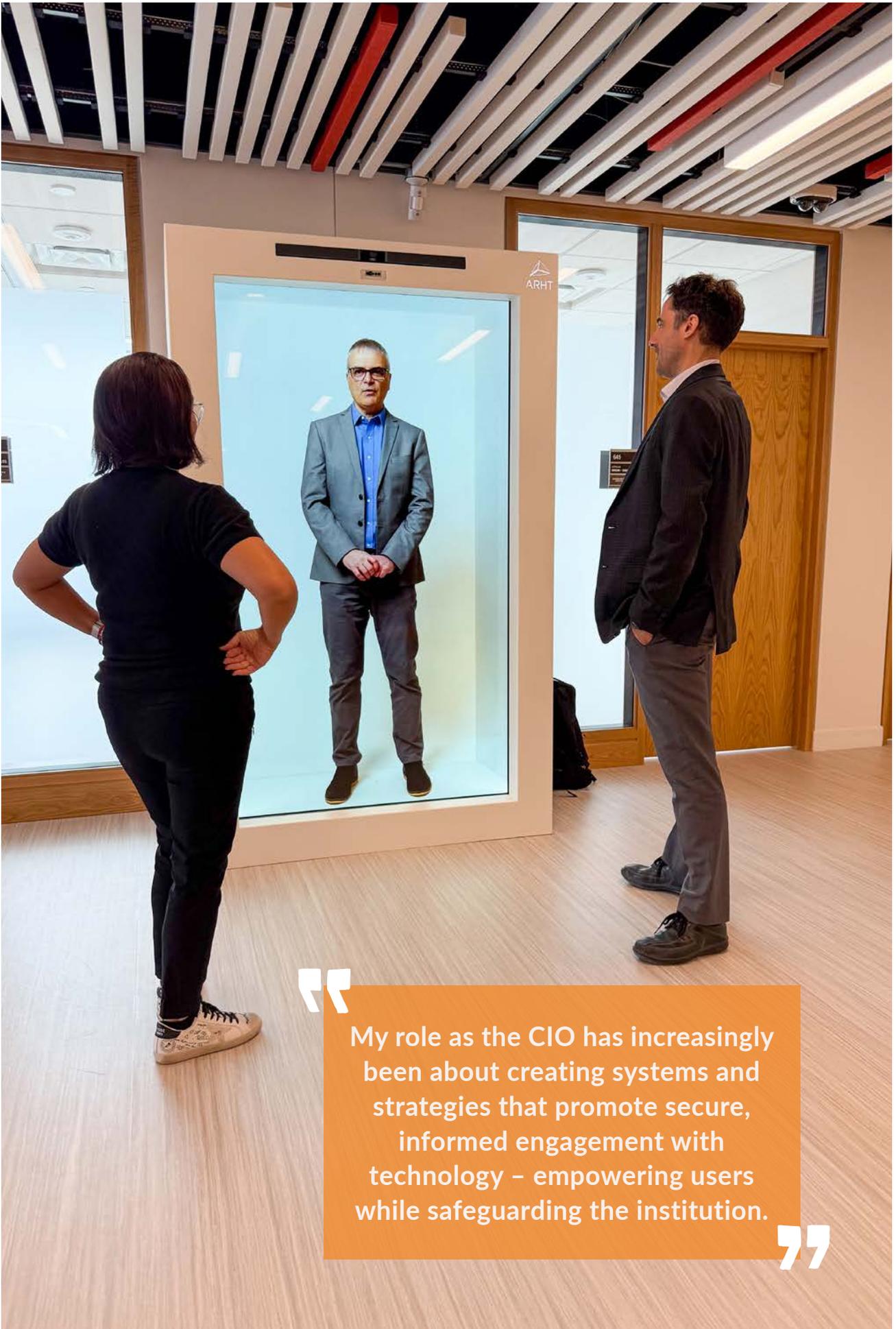
That's why training, awareness, and ethical technology adoption must be top priorities. In a higher education environment like ours, where users have widely varying levels of technological fluency, this is no small task. But, by embracing a client-centric approach, we ensure our digital initiatives build trust and strengthen institutional resilience. The key isn't just managing technology – it's empowering people to use it wisely, securely, and ethically.

7 In what ways have you incorporated sustainability into the university's technology transformation initiatives, and what impact has this had?

At the University of Ottawa, sustainability is at the core of our technology transformation strategy. For us it's about more than just adopting new tools – its about ensuring that our digital evolution is **financially sustainable, environmentally responsible, and operationally efficient**. Our approach carefully balances innovation with long-term viability, aligning with the university's broader transformation vision.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY: MAXIMIZING IMPACT WHILE CONTROLLING COSTS

One of our top priorities is financial sustainability. We take a strategic approach to IT investments, ensuring that every initiative delivers long-term value while remaining cost effective. By embedding Total Cost of Ownership



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My role as the CIO has increasingly been about creating systems and strategies that promote secure, informed engagement with technology – empowering users while safeguarding the institution.

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(TCO) considerations into project planning, we make sure technology solutions are not just affordable upfront but remain viable through their lifecycle. This level of financial discipline allows us to maximize the impact of our technology investments while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

A key initiative in this space is Solutions Rationalization, where we consolidate and optimize our portfolio of software and hardware solutions. By eliminating redundancies, negotiating smarter licensing agreements, and improving system interoperability, we are reducing costs while enhancing the user experience. Another major effort is modernizing legacy applications – retiring outdated systems that rely on unsupported servers which pose security, operational, and financial risks. By transitioning to modern infrastructure, we reduce maintenance costs, lower energy consumption and improve overall efficiency.

ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY: REDUCING OUR IT FOOTPRINT

We are also committed to reducing our environmental impact by minimizing reliance on energy-intensive infrastructure. By prioritizing cloud solutions and optimizing data centre operations, we have significantly lowered energy costs, reduced hardware investments and improved scalability. These efforts not only make financial sense but also align with our commitment to sustainability.

One simple yet impactful example is our paper reduction initiative. Post-COVID, we took proactive steps to cut print volumes by 50%, preventing a return

to pre-pandemic printing levels. By promoting digital collaboration tools like SharePoint and reducing the number of campus printers, we have streamlined workflows, reduced waste, and lowered printing-related expenses.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE DIGITAL FUTURE

By integrating financial, environmental, and operational sustainability into our digital transformation strategy, we are creating a resilient IT ecosystem that supports the university's long-term growth. Sustainability isn't a one-time achievement – it's an ongoing commitment. As we continue optimizing costs, modernizing systems, and driving strategic efficiencies, we remain focused delivering lasting value for students, faculty, and the broader university community.



In 2025, businesses worldwide are navigating a technological shift shaped by advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics, cybersecurity, procurement strategies, supply chain operations, and Manufacturing 4.0.

HERE ARE 12 NOTABLE DEVELOPMENTS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE:

1 AI ENHANCES SUPPLY CHAIN VISIBILITY

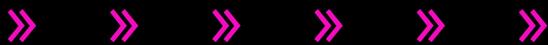
Chief executives are increasingly adopting AI-driven solutions to address supply chain fragility. Technologies such as GPS trackers, RFID tags, and Transport Management System (TMS) software are being integrated with AI and machine learning to provide real-time monitoring of products in transit, enabling companies to preempt disruptions and optimize operations.

2 ALTANA'S AI MAPS GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS AMID TARIFF CHANGES

Altana, a company specializing in AI-driven supply chain mapping, is assisting businesses in adapting to shifting trade policies and tariffs. By providing comprehensive insights into product value chains, Altana enables companies to adjust sourcing and manufacturing strategies in response to geopolitical developments.

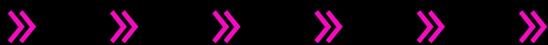
3 FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS COMBAT AI-POWERED CYBER THREATS

A survey by Accenture reveals that 80% of bank cybersecurity executives feel challenged in keeping up with AI-powered cybercriminals. Despite significant investments in cybersecurity, banks are facing increasingly sophisticated attacks that leverage generative AI, prompting a reevaluation of defense strategies.



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4 **BUSINESSES URGED TO ADDRESS AI-DRIVEN CYBER RISKS**

The World Economic Forum's Global Cybersecurity Outlook highlights growing concerns over AI's role in escalating cyber threats. The report emphasizes the need for businesses to enhance cyber resilience, particularly as AI facilitates more sophisticated attacks like deepfakes.

5 **AI ASSISTS FASHION INDUSTRY AMID TARIFF TURMOIL**

In response to increased tariffs on Chinese imports, fashion brands are leveraging AI for predictive analytics, inventory management, and logistics optimization. These tools help simulate financial impacts, adjust forecasts, and identify alternative sourcing options, aiding brands in maintaining agility amid trade disruptions.

6 **PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS TRANSFORM SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT**

Businesses are increasingly adopting AI-driven predictive analytics to anticipate demand and optimize inventory levels. This approach reduces costs associated with overstocking or stockouts and enhances operational efficiency across industries.

7 **GENERATIVE AI AUTOMATES SUPPLY CHAIN COMMUNICATION**

Generative AI is streamlining supply chain communication by automating content creation, such as reports and updates. This automation reduces manual effort and ensures consistent messaging, improving operational efficiency.

8 **AI-POWERED ROBOTICS REVOLUTIONIZE WAREHOUSING**

Autonomous robots, powered by AI, are transforming warehouse operations by performing tasks like sorting, picking, and packing. This technology minimizes errors and reduces processing times, leading to cost savings and improved customer satisfaction.

9 **AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES AND DRONES ENHANCE LOGISTICS**

The integration of autonomous vehicles and drones into logistics is enabling faster and more efficient deliveries. Advancements in AI and connectivity have improved coordination and response times, reducing emissions and transforming logistics into a more sustainable process.

10 **AI DRIVES SUSTAINABILITY IN SUPPLY CHAINS**

Companies are leveraging AI to optimize energy use and reduce waste in supply chains. AI tools analyze consumption patterns, identify inefficiencies, and suggest improvements, supporting environmental goals while maintaining profitability.

11 **DIGITAL TWINS ENHANCE SUPPLY CHAIN SIMULATION**

AI-powered digital twins are being used to create virtual replicas of physical systems, allowing businesses to simulate process changes, predict outcomes, and optimize supply chain processes. This technology enhances preparedness and stability by identifying bottlenecks and optimizing inventory management.

12 **IOT AND AI INTEGRATION PROVIDES REAL-TIME MONITORING**

The integration of IoT with AI is enhancing supply chain visibility by providing real-time monitoring of inventory and operations. This combination allows for timely adjustments, ensuring product integrity and boosting customer satisfaction.

These developments underscore the transformative impact of AI, data analytics, and advanced technologies on global business operations in 2025.

INTERVIEW » » » » » »

FLEXIBILITY IS THE NEW STABILITY.

Ulyana Fitsa - Kormotech,

Talking supply chain during Russia's invasion of Ukraine with Ulyana Fitsa, Global Chief Supply Chain Officer at Kormotech.

Managing a supply chain has been no mean feat for many companies in peaceful countries over the last five years. But when global pressures combine with war in your own country, maintaining a smooth supply chain demands a special kind of expertise. Which is what Ulyana Fitsa brings to Ukrainian pet food manufacturer Kormotech.

The reality of keeping a business operational during war means that challenges have become part of Ulyana's every day, but neither she nor her colleagues are willing to be beaten by them. Ulyana has come to accept that there will be a certain kind of chaos in her working life – a chaos that she's learned to live with and control through the key attributes of flexibility and imagination.

Her efforts combined with that of the company's 1483-strong workforce means that Kormotech is still going strong, growing and exporting to more countries than ever – almost 50 at present, from three plants based in Ukraine and Lithuania that together have a capacity to produce over 102,000 tonnes of cat and dog food.

It's an operation that demands many different raw materials, and lots of them, to be delivered on time to enable their recipes to be created. Ulyana leads a team of over 200 to help make this happen.

RESILIENCE THROUGH FLEXIBILITY

Having worked within Kormotech since its inception more than 20 years ago, Ulyana has progressed from office manager through logistics and foreign affairs roles and on to



» **"We are still in a very difficult position. Flexibility is the new stability. This is the only thing we have to remember. Because nothing is stable"**

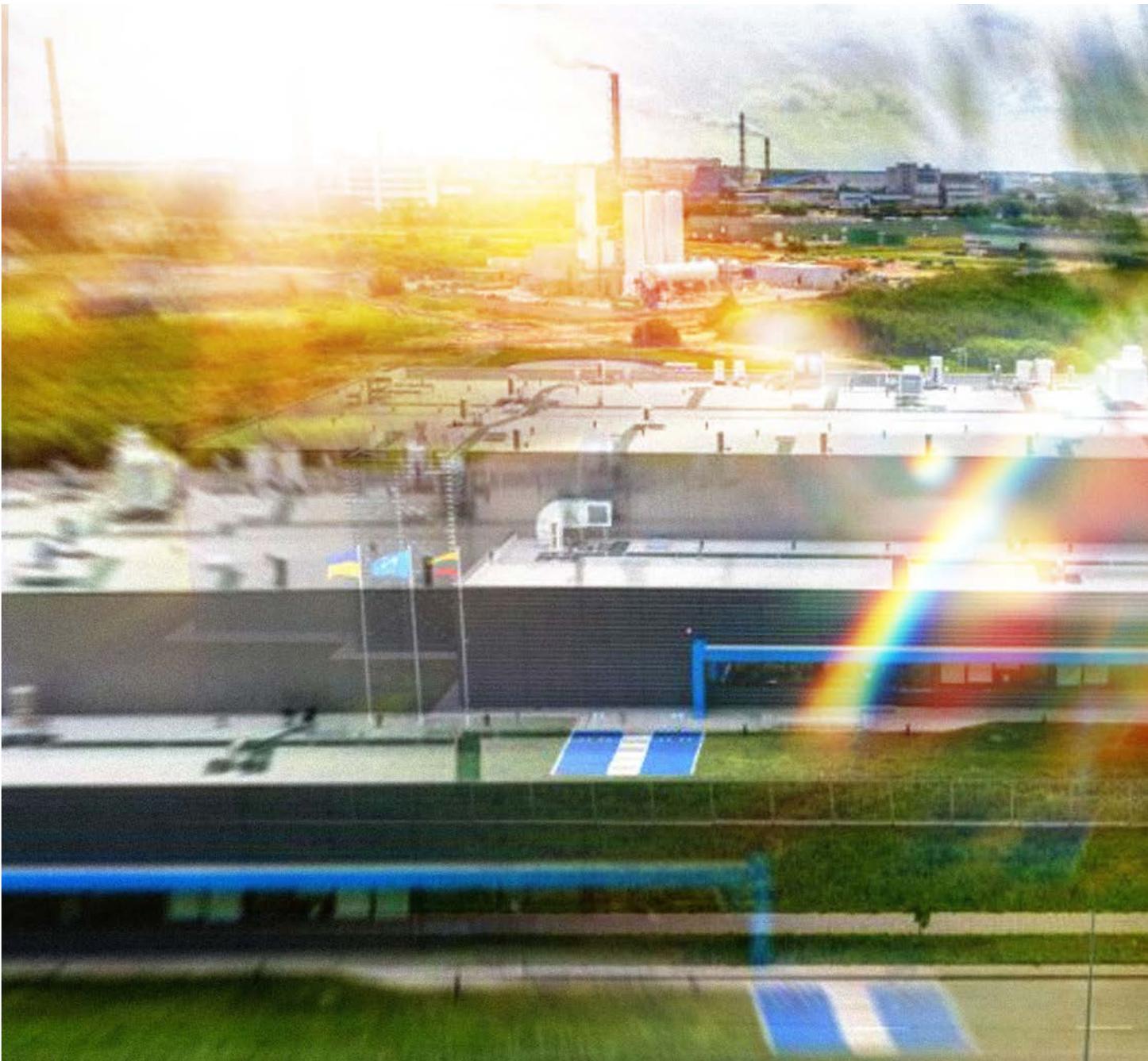


the role of Global Chief Supply Chain Officer. If you're going to ask someone how to enable supply chain resilience, she's a good person to pose the question given her extensive experience in this area through peace and now in war.

It's over three years since the invasion of Ukraine led to war, and since then, Kormotech's supply chain has been pressured from many angles – from the bombing of ports through to an inability to transport products via some neighbouring countries.

Ulyana shares, "We are still in a very difficult position. Flexibility is the new stability. This is the only thing we have to remember. Because nothing is stable – not the prices of the raw material, nor the routes of the ships arriving to Odesa port, which is heavily bombed."

"We need to change ports all the time to make sure that our product is safe, and the same with some of the raw materials. We have rerouted ways to get these materials due to safety reasons.



“Maybe for the reader who is working in some other part of the world, it looks like a kind of chaos here. But the thing is, chaos is kind of our order now. And this is also the art of management – to focus on the things which may give you a full picture of this puzzle.”

We only suspended our production facilities in Ukraine for the first two days of the full-scale invasion, due to uncertainty and safety concerns. But it quickly became clear that continuing operations was

essential – we just needed to rethink our priorities. At Kormotech, we focused on three key areas.

The first was maintaining production for the Ukrainian market. After February 24, 2022, some international competitors withdrew from Ukraine due to security policies. That’s when Kormotech stepped up – we took it upon ourselves to secure raw material supplies and adapt our production processes to the new reality. To ensure uninterrupted production, our employees installed power generators and stocked up on diesel fuel. As a result, pet owners across Ukraine continued to have access to high-quality food for their animals.

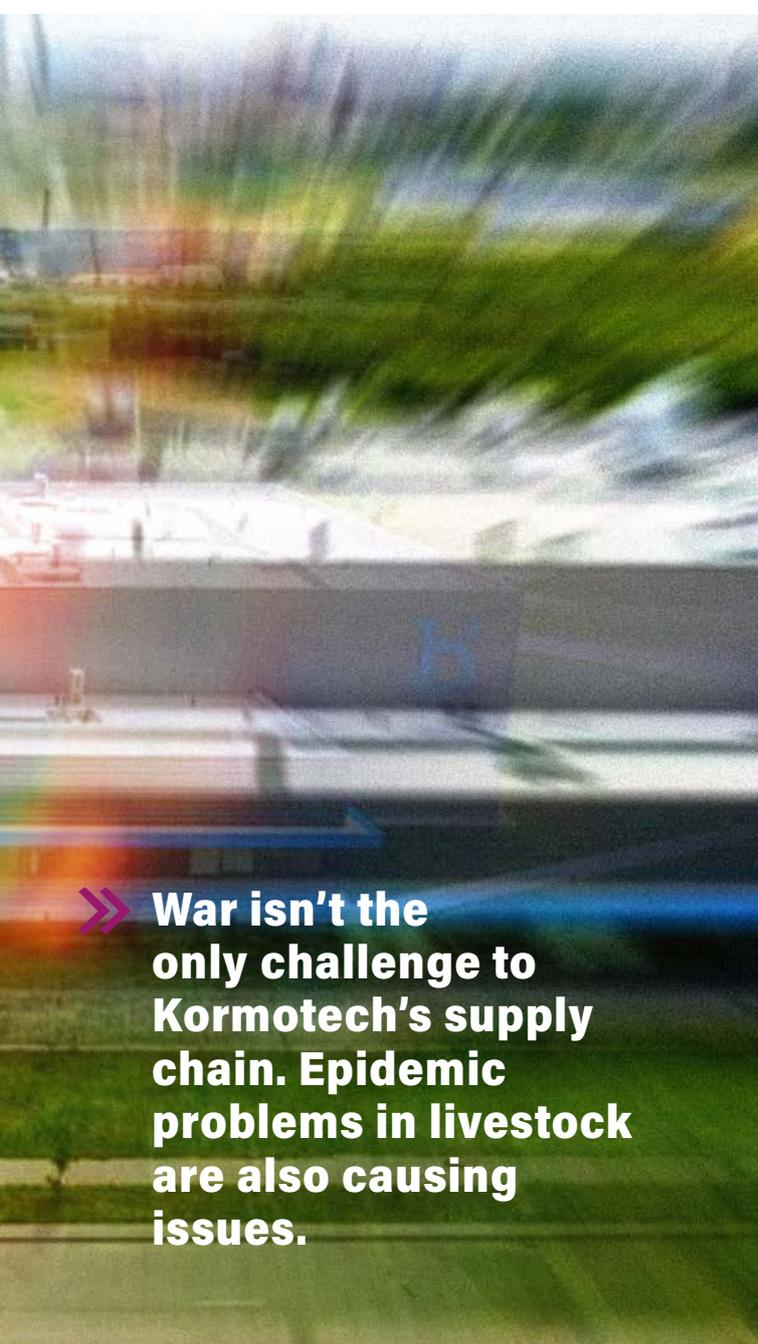
The second focus was accelerating our export strategy. Our team understood that exports would not only help stabilize our business but also support Ukraine’s economy. So we expanded our global footprint and put significant effort into strengthening relationships with our existing international partners to boost sales abroad. Today, we export to around 50 countries, with a strategic focus on Central and Eastern Europe. Back in 2020, we opened a factory in Lithuania, and we’re currently building a second wet food facility there, which will triple our production capacity in the country – from 22,000 to 60,000 tonnes per year.

The third pillar of our work is promoting a culture of responsible pet parenting and supporting rescue efforts. Over 10 years of Russian war in Ukraine, Kormotech has helped save thousands of stray and abandoned animals. For us, it’s a test of humanity.

War isn’t the only challenge to Kormotech’s supply chain. Epidemic problems in livestock are also causing issues. Ulyana shares, “Chicken flu is in the USA and in Europe, and there are also diseases affecting pigs and cows. This means I need to check the map of Europe to understand where these issues are and the distance from those areas which are safe. I also need to know the period of that epizootic.

“With this information, I’m going to choose from where I will source the next raw material for the next quarter or more.”

Diseases affecting cows are particularly difficult to plan around due to the longer lifespan of cows bred for meat when compared to chickens, causing more pressure on the supply chain. With these diseases, “Again, it’s about instability and uncertainty,” Ulyana points out.



» **War isn’t the only challenge to Kormotech’s supply chain. Epidemic problems in livestock are also causing issues.**



MAX LOGIS





LOGISTICS



The logistics company **“MAX LOGISTICS LTD”** began its activity in 2004, as a small enterprise with only 50 employees. Today, our company is one of the largest in the logistics market in the western part of Ukraine, which can offer a wide range of services and an individual approach to each client.

“MAX LOGISTICS LTD”, located in the city of Horodok, has its own logistics park, over 80,000 m² of dry, freezing, refrigerated and production premises of classes A, A+, B, B+, the customs post “Horodok”, which carries out all the necessary operations and procedures for customs clearance of goods, its own customs warehouses and brokerage firms, as well as a subsidiary company “Prestige Express”, which is engaged in freight transportation throughout Ukraine, Europe and the countries of the Middle East. There is a large fleet of trucks, special equipment, construction equipment and agricultural machinery, as well as a service for their maintenance.

With over 19 years of experience, we are trusted by leading companies in Ukraine and the world, which motivates us to new achievements even more! We do not stop developing and improving our work, so we are happy to invite Ukrainian enterprises, as well as foreign companies, to cooperate. We are ready to work with clients with the involvement of both our own and joint capital. In addition, we offer the sale of land plots, warehouses and production areas. The logistics park “MAX LOGISTICS LTD” is located in a favorable and convenient geolocation just 15 km from Lviv, runs along the international highway E40 near the customs checkpoints “Krakovets”, “Mostyska” and the transport corridor “Kyiv-Chop”.

MAX LOGISTICS

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THE POWER OF STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

One thing that helps to ease this instability is maintaining good relationships with suppliers, and adversity has strengthened these bonds.

Many of Kormotech's suppliers in Ukraine have relocated from the most dangerous areas to places of, as Ulyana calls it, "A kind of safety, where they have shelters and they have the generators."

Although some suppliers have had to move locations, they're still very much in business. Ulyana points out, "I'm very proud none of our suppliers disappeared from an economical point. All Ukrainians understood in what situation we suddenly appeared. Each of them rebuilt their business processes, none of them went bankrupt. And it's so powerful when you can help this supplier, and the same supplier can help me."

She continues, "And that is a remarkable thing, because when you have a friend when times are so dark, it means that when you are in the lighter times, you will have the best partner forever."

Ulyana also comments on the importance of the support and understanding of overseas suppliers at the beginning of the full-scale war, "Although we had the money available, we didn't have the ability to pay money abroad at the very beginning. We actually wrote a special letter to the ministry where we explained that there was raw material which could only be bought abroad, and they then allowed us to pay."

"But in those first few weeks when I said to my suppliers abroad, 'Sorry, we can't pay you now because of bank system safety reasons', none of them disappeared. None of them started to upgrade their prices. All my suppliers from abroad were still sending me the goods. I really felt their great support. And anything that suppliers depend on from me, I've given this support to them as well."

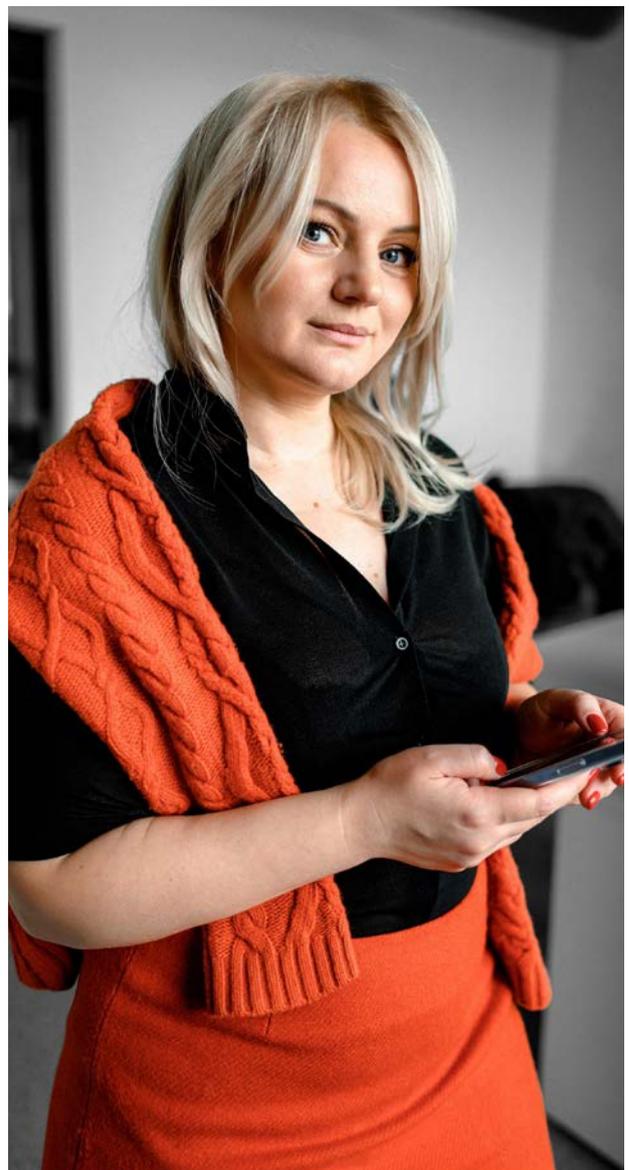
For Ulyana, this underlines how critical it is to build strong business relationships in business, "I really believe in the power of networking, of friendship, of good relationships."

One of these strong relationships has been with Max Logistik, which has been providing warehousing to Kormotech for over 10 years.

Ulyana shares the story of their working relationship, "At that time we didn't have warehouses. We didn't know where to put our products. I was driving from our factory to my city, thinking about what should be the solution and, after drinking a cup of coffee at the gas station, I saw a big billboard advertising a warehouse and I thought, 'Wow, this could be some kind of opportunity'."

She went to see the company and asked for 600 metres of warehousing, "Our relationship started from these 600 metres and now we have a modern, A-class warehouse where Kormotech has 18,000 metres. This is a good case of growing together."

"They always meet my needs. When I go to their office, the only thing I have to say is, 'I have an idea' and the manager pays attention and asks what I want. Once my answer was 'Pink shelves!'. He knows that I'm not a very typical supply chain officer, not even in those days. I'm also about emotions."





A TEAM THAT OWNS THEIR TASKS

With so many challenges both in Ukraine and from a global supply chain perspective, working together with the rest of the team at Kormotech is key. And this is something they're very experienced at doing, with the longest servers in her team having worked with her for 18 years and the newest joiner having been on the team for 12 years.

Her leadership style is based on empowering her team to take ownership of their own areas of responsibility, "I think trust is the thing on which we build all our relationships. And freedom is also important. While I'm in charge of some changes, I delegate plenty of things to my team. They really have lots of space to make their own decisions and to take responsibility from the very beginning to the very end of that result.

"For example, my team member who is responsible for the purchasing process can change suppliers and I have no doubt that if she is changing it, that means that she found a better proposal. There are plenty

of things the team can control themselves – I think that's a good motivation for the team. They don't need a mummy at work!"

"And we are also motivated by the bigger results – not only to finish the quarter or the financial year well, but in finding ways to make improvements and increase sustainability."

A FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability and responsibility are key parts of our work at Kormotech.

Even before the war, we had been introducing energy-efficient production strategies across all our facilities. One example is our plant in Lithuania, which received a "green certificate" confirming that it runs on renewable energy sources. We've signed a long-term contract to supply the plant with electricity from wind farms, and it already operates its own solar power station. By 2027, we aim to produce 15% of our electricity from our own renewable sources.

Flexibility and being prepared for any scenario that's around the corner. **This is the main thing that should be in the heads of leaders.**



We've also adopted Lean production principles to lower energy consumption and reduce waste. In some areas, we've managed to cut production waste by up to 10 times.

Another important step is heat recovery. In Lithuania, we reuse heat from the sterilization process, which saves around 10% of our gas use. In Ukraine, we recover heat from drying pet food, helping to cut gas use by about 15%.

We also pay attention to packaging. As demand grows for more sustainable solutions, we're introducing eco-friendly options – such as smaller bags with zippers, thinner linings, and a reduced bottom area – which use fewer materials without compromising quality.

Beyond production, we've been promoting the humane treatment of animals since 2013. We support shelters in different regions, promote professional veterinary medicine, and encourage responsible pet parenting.

Sustainability is a key concern for Kormotech because, as Ulyana says, "No matter that the war is outside my window, we are thinking about sustainability. We know that if we want to have the future, we need to think about it now."

"There's a double reality. We have to think about the current day, but at the same time we understand that not all of the world is at war, so they have a quite different reality. To be with them on the same level, we need to work on this and that's why we are very eager in innovation, in sustainability, and in charity projects."

Packaging is one area that has been adapted with sustainability in mind. The company conducted analysis of one of their packs and found out that reducing its height, wall thickness and base thickness was possible without compromising product quality or volume.

These savings meant lower costs for customers as well as the use of less material in packaging, to support their sustainability agenda.

MAINTAINING STABILITY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

While focused on the future in terms of innovation and sustainability, there are some areas where investing in the future is a challenge due to the ongoing war. Using technology such as AI –

something most growing companies with strong cashflow are privileged to be able to plan for – is a challenge here.

Kormotech uses advanced equipment and high production standards to make their products, and human input is key to the process in Ukraine – with good reason. "If we don't have electricity or another interruption happens, the concern is unmanned technology may not be able to function correctly.

"When the war has ended, we will be able to think about these useful new technologies, but meanwhile, my focus is to maintain a stable service level, to make sure that everything is working and to dive deep into the sales for Western Europe."

Sales is a new area of responsibility for Ulyana in addition to her role as Global Chief Supply Chain Officer. And it's a challenge she's relishing, "I must say, it's really nice to have this additional role because it helps me to have some kind of balance.

"Supply chain is like a bolt of electricity and you never know where you're going to be headed, but sales is in a different climate. I can show the world our product – and I really believe in our product. For me, this is a big ambition and I would love to achieve the figures in our 2028 strategy."

But back to automation for a moment. Kormotech is currently in the process of building another factory in Lithuania, where there's more opportunity for automation. She explains, "We are going to have a packaging machine where all the packaging process will be automated and people will only be needed at the control points – at the beginning where there's a worker putting in the recipe and at the end to check that everything is packed correctly on the pallet. I think it will be very efficient. In Lithuania, where there's peace, we can do this."

AN ERA OF ENTERING NEW MARKETS

With Ulyana now handling sales in Western Europe in addition to leading the supply chain, she's thriving on this additional responsibility and finding that her deep knowledge of supply chain supports her to talk sales with potential customers, "I'm so sure about my product that I'm selling it like you would a baby food," she explains – in other words, with the same level of care and understanding of what's important to pet health as you'd expect from someone selling baby food.

“When you think that all the scenarios are already finished, it means it’s only the beginning of another book.”



“I know each raw material that is inside, believe me. If we're talking about the lamb, it's coming from Australia. If we're speaking about some berries, they have to come from a particular location, because otherwise my laboratory will not allow them to be used in our factory.

“I'm so proud to be the representative of a Ukrainian family business. I really believe that our potential partners can grow together with us, because growing together always makes a more powerful network.”

When it comes to expanding into new markets, Ulyana points out that each country has its own customs and trends, “My first rule is respect to the culture where I want people to be my customers. And I also see that different countries have different shopping habits for pet food.

“Some countries have in their schedule once every three weeks to go to pet shops. They buy all the pet food for that period at once. Meanwhile, in another country, it's more about e-commerce. Whereas in Ukraine, we will not go to the shop specially for pet

food. Shoppers are buying for the whole family on a shopping trip – buying something for the kitchen, something for the laundry, something for the pets.”

By understanding these shopping trends, Ulyana finds it easier to make specific proposals for Kormotech's customers in those countries – for example, by adapting pack sizes to shopping habits.

For countries where batch shopping is common, they've created multi-boxes of 48 pouches that will last weeks, whereas for the Ukrainian market, the product is packaged in smaller quantities, “If you understand such things, you can make tailor made decisions for the market.”

LEADING THE LIFEBLOOD OF A COMPANY

At a time of geopolitical uncertainty and technological change, we wanted to ask Ulyana for

perspective on the future of supply chain leadership – what skills she sees as essential for leaders today as we face into the future.

She doesn't hesitate before answering, “Flexibility and being prepared for any scenario that's around the corner. This is the main thing that should be in the heads of leaders.”

“I always say that the supply chain is the life blood of everything in the company, because if something goes wrong in this area, it will affect all the other systems.”

Ulyana and her team have had to use plenty of flexibility and creativity over the last three years to keep Kormotech's production functioning and the company succeeding – from finding new transport routes that cross border blocks to finding new markets to supply and export to.

Given the complexities of sourcing raw materials and global logistics, something that Ulyana has learned is, “When you think that all the scenarios are already finished, it means it's only the beginning of another book.”





DAN WILLIAMS

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AT MICROSOFT

We speak to Dan Williams, Director of Industry Strategy at Microsoft, whose work focuses on transforming how organisations deliver value through intelligent technologies. From legal and consulting firms to accounting and advisory services, the professional services sector is under increasing pressure to innovate—and AI is at the heart of that transformation.

» YOUR TECH INDUSTRY JOURNEY

I've spent over a decade in the tech industry, and if I had to sum up the journey, it's been all about evolving from someone who's deep in the tech to someone who uses that knowledge to drive real business impact.

I started in technical and pre-sales roles—building solutions, solving complex problems, and translating business needs into tech outcomes. One of the standout chapters in that journey was serving as CTO

for Microsoft's UK aviation business. Working with some of the most operationally complex and safety-critical organisations in the world gave me a deep appreciation for the role technology plays not just in transformation, but in resilience and precision.

Over time, I realised I wanted to have a bigger seat at the table—to influence direction, not just execution. Stepping into a sales role at Microsoft was a turning point. It gave me the chance to lead transformation conversations across the wider professional services



space, helping organisations rethink how they operate, compete, and grow in an AI-first world.

Now, my role blends commercial ownership with technical depth. I'm trusted by senior leaders to help them navigate AI, cloud, and security—not just as tech buzzwords, but as practical enablers of change. It's that mix of strategic thinking and grounded execution that defines how I work.

» AI IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

AI is completely shaking up the professional services world. It's automating the boring, repetitive stuff—things like invoice processing, document review, onboarding—and freeing people up to focus on what really adds value: insight, relationships, strategy.

In finance, AI is streamlining everything from accounts payable to forecasting. We're seeing tools that can reconcile transactions in seconds, surface anomalies before they snowball, and even generate predictive models to inform decision-making. That's powerful in any business, but in services—where time really is money—it's a game changer.

In HR, AI is transforming how firms attract and manage talent. It can rewrite job descriptions to remove bias, suggest high-potential candidates based on more than just keywords, and act as a 24/7 assistant for new joiners—answering policy questions, flagging missed tasks, and speeding up time to productivity. For firms constantly competing for top talent, that edge really matters.

And in areas like tax and audit, where the volume of documentation is huge and the margin for error is tiny, AI is already driving massive efficiency gains. Instead of manually reviewing hundreds of documents, teams are using AI to surface outliers, summarise trends, and even generate draft commentary that's then reviewed and fine-tuned by a human expert. The end result? Faster delivery, greater consistency, and higher confidence in the output.

But this isn't just about automation. What we're really seeing is a shift in the operating model. AI is helping firms move from reactive service delivery to proactive insight. Rather than just reporting on what's happened, teams can advise clients on what's coming—armed with real-time data, predictive analytics, and intelligent context. That flips the value proposition from compliance to strategic partnership.

**“AI won’t
replace the
consultant,
it’ll elevate
their impact.”**



For many firms, AI is also levelling the playing field. Mid-sized consultancies or niche players can now punch well above their weight by leveraging AI to scale capabilities, personalise services, and respond to clients faster than ever before.

We're still early in the curve, but the direction of travel is clear: AI isn't just optimising existing processes—it's unlocking entirely new ways of working that are leaner, smarter, and far more client-centric.

» MICROSOFT 365 COPILOT & INTELLIGENT AUTOMATION

Copilot is a game changer because it doesn't require you to learn a new tool—it plugs straight into the apps you already live in: Outlook, Word, Excel, Teams.

For professional services firms, where time and accuracy are everything, this is massive. Picture someone in finance asking Copilot to pull key metrics into a client report, or a consultant summarising notes from a Teams call and turning them into a client-ready proposal—all in minutes.

This kind of intelligent automation is especially powerful when you think about the pressure consultants are under. They're often only able to bill 8 hours a day, yet the workload routinely stretches to 12–14 hours. There's a gap between what's expected and what's sustainable—and AI can help bridge it.

And at its core, that's what makes Copilot so important. It's not just a tool—it is the UI for AI. It's how people access the power of large language models without needing to understand how they work.

That shift—from complicated tech to conversational experiences—makes AI truly accessible at scale.

It's like giving every employee their own digital assistant. You're not just working faster—you're making better decisions, reducing manual effort, and creating space for the kind of work that actually energises people.

» THE RISE OF AGENTIC AI & MICROSOFT AGENTS

Agentic AI is about giving AI the ability to go beyond answering questions—it can now reason, decide, and act on your behalf within set guardrails. Unlike traditional automation, which is rigid and rule-based, Agentic AI operates more like a digital colleague that understands your objectives, adapts to your context, and executes tasks with autonomy.

The real shift here is that you're no longer telling the system what steps to take. Instead, you're defining an outcome—like “prepare a project risk summary”—and the AI agent figures out how to get there. It might pull data from different systems, interpret documents, send reminders, or escalate decisions. It's orchestration, not just execution.

In professional services, this is huge. Workflows are fragmented across emails, spreadsheets, and legacy systems. Coordinating that manually eats up time and mental bandwidth. Agentic AI dynamically stitches those workflows together in real-time.

It's also context-aware. Agents don't just complete tasks—they understand your organisation's language, your past

interactions, even who owns what. That enables smarter decision-making and reduces friction in everyday work.

“AI won't replace the consultant—it'll elevate their impact.”

Critically, Agentic AI also introduces continuity. When people go on holiday, leave a firm, or simply switch roles, knowledge and process ownership often disappears with them. Agents can provide continuity of execution and awareness across projects, teams, and even departments—something no traditional system or workflow tool can replicate.

We're just scratching the surface, but what's clear is this: Agentic AI won't just make individuals more productive—it's going to fundamentally rewire how companies operate. It allows businesses to scale decision-making and action-taking in a way that's never been possible before, while still keeping humans in control of the strategy and governance.

» OVERCOMING AI ADOPTION CHALLENGES

For all the excitement around AI, the reality is that adoption in professional services is often slower and more complex than people expect. There's plenty of ambition, but turning that ambition into something operationally meaningful is where the real friction lies.

The biggest issue I see is organisational readiness—and that's not just about technology. It's cultural. It's structural. It's human. Many firms are still operating with legacy mindsets and fragmented data estates that simply weren't designed to support intelligent systems. There's a belief that AI will fix inefficiencies—but

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in truth, AI shines a spotlight on them. If your workflows are unclear or your data is all over the place, AI won't solve that—it'll surface the pain.

Then there's the trust gap. In a sector built on reputation, accuracy, and compliance, many professionals are understandably cautious about handing over too much control to AI—especially when it comes to client work. There's a fear that the tech will make mistakes, or worse, erode the human value proposition. That's a legitimate concern—but one that can be addressed with transparency, education, and responsible AI practices baked in from day one.

Change fatigue is another factor. Many firms have gone through wave after wave of digital transformation projects that never fully landed. So when AI comes along, it can feel like just another shiny initiative. The challenge is to ground it in reality—not big-picture “transformation” language, but practical, value-led use cases that make someone's Monday morning easier.

Here's a real-world example. I worked with a professional services firm that wanted to deploy AI to streamline its proposal process. On paper, it was a quick win—use AI to summarise meeting notes, surface relevant case studies, and auto-generate the first draft of a pitch deck. But when we dug in, we found that content was stored in inconsistent formats, spread across different systems, and often out of date. The proposal teams also had no single owner of the process end-to-end. So before we could talk AI, we had to help them clean up their content, define ownership, and rethink their knowledge workflows. Once that foundation was in

place, the AI piece slotted in smoothly—and the results were immediate: faster proposals, higher win rates, and happier consultants.

One of the approaches I've seen work well is shifting from a tech-led to a business-led AI strategy. That means starting with problems, not platforms. We look at high-friction processes—manual reporting, compliance reviews, proposal generation—and design AI use cases that solve real pain points. From there, we focus on pilots that prove value quickly and build internal momentum.

Just as importantly, I always recommend firms invest in AI fluency across the business. That doesn't mean everyone needs to become a data scientist. But they do need to understand what AI can (and can't) do, how it affects their role, and where their judgment is still critical. AI isn't replacing people—it's reshaping what people are responsible for.

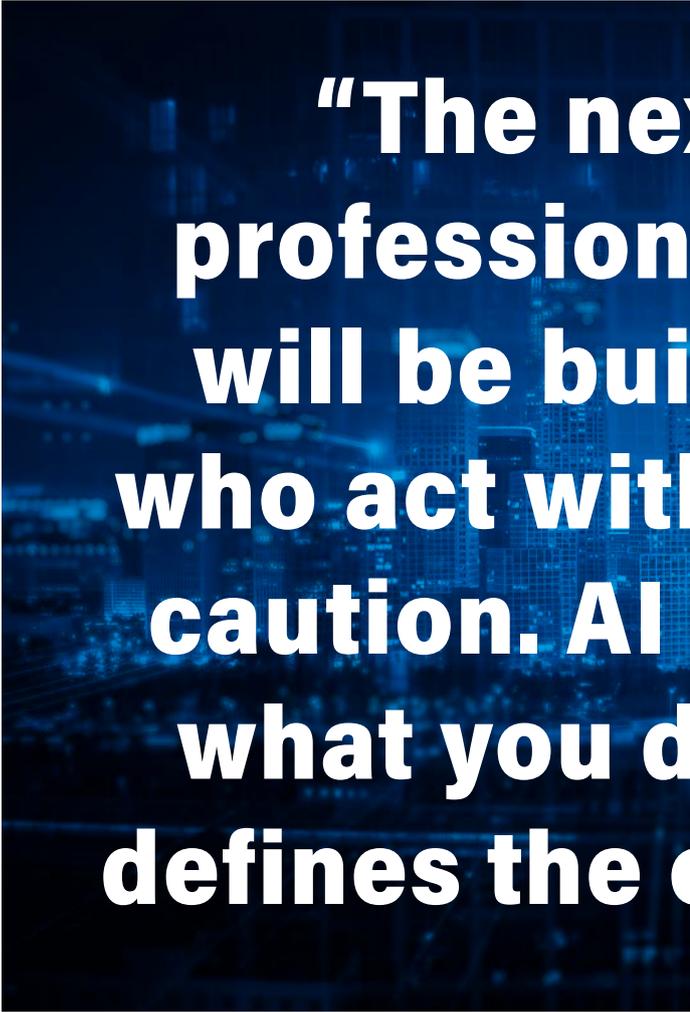
And finally, we can't ignore the ethical dimension. Professional services firms operate in regulated, client-sensitive environments. Any AI deployment must be responsible by design—aligned with data privacy, fairness, and transparency principles. If that foundation isn't in place, the trust just won't be there.

The good news? Once firms get past the initial blockers, the flywheel starts to turn fast. Confidence builds, use cases expand, and AI becomes not just another IT project—but a

strategic asset woven into how the firm delivers value, inside and out.

» THE FUTURE OF AI & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The AI we're seeing today—Copilot, automation, intelligent workflows—is just the beginning. Over the next 5, 10, 15 years, we'll see deeper shifts that don't just enhance



**“The next
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how firms operate—they'll fundamentally reshape what professional services look like.

In the next 5 years, AI will move from being a productivity tool to an embedded part of delivery models. We'll see firms deploying internal AI agents that operate like digital team members—monitoring workflows, drafting outputs, surfacing insights—freeing up

human consultants to focus on strategic thinking and relationship building. AI won't replace the consultant—it'll elevate their impact.

We'll also see the rise of firm-specific foundation models. These are AI models trained on a firm's own intellectual property—case studies, methodologies, playbooks—so they can deliver advice and

and more efficiently, clients will expect pricing to reflect outcomes rather than time spent. That doesn't devalue expertise—it puts a premium on it. Advisory services will be judged less by how long they take and more by the quality of insight they deliver.

New types of firms could also emerge—AI-native, agile, and global from day one.

But established firms have a huge advantage: trust, reputation, and deep client relationships. The opportunity is to combine those strengths with AI-native thinking—rethinking how value is delivered and where human expertise adds the most weight.

Looking 15 years ahead, we may see clients using AI tools that mirror the logic and IP of their advisors. But this isn't about disintermediation—it's about deepening relationships. Imagine clients having access to their own secure, always-on advisory assistants that are powered by your firm's thinking, trained collaboratively, and constantly learning. That could actually

increase reliance on the firm—not reduce it—because the AI is only as good as the expertise it's built on.

What's clear is that the nature of work will evolve. AI will change the pace, the expectations, and the way services are delivered—but the human layer will remain critical. Trust, empathy, judgment, and creativity will

become even more valuable, not less. The firms that lean into this change—thoughtfully, strategically, and with their people at the centre—will be the ones that lead the next era of professional services.

» YOUR ADVICE FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

If you're leading a professional services firm and looking to make AI part of your growth story—not just a short-term efficiency play—here are a few principles I'd recommend:

» Anchor everything in real problems. Start with use cases that matter to your people and clients—don't chase trends, chase impact.

» Design for scale from day one. Don't treat AI as a series of pilots. Build a clear, strategic roadmap that connects today's experiments with tomorrow's operating model.

» Focus on firm-specific intelligence. Your IP is your edge. Make sure your AI reflects your voice, your logic, and your standards—not just generic insights.

» Invest in AI fluency, not just tools. It's not about training everyone to prompt perfectly—it's about building confidence, clarity, and culture around how AI is used.

» Build trust with responsible AI. Governance, transparency, and ethics aren't side considerations—they're the foundation for sustainable adoption.

» Lead the change, don't just manage it. AI is not a productivity tool—it's a leadership moment. The firms that embrace that mindset will pull ahead.

**Next era of
professional services
led by those
with clarity, not
AI. It's here—it's
the next that
is opportunity."**

outputs that reflect the firm's unique thinking and tone. That's not commoditisation—it's amplification. It ensures firms can deliver value faster and more consistently, without losing what makes them distinctive.

By 10 years, traditional commercial models may come under pressure. If AI enables work to be delivered faster



Q&A

TIM SHEPHEARD-WALWYN

SPRINT REPLY

AI Innovation: Revolutionising Business with Sprint Reply

Q How does Sprint Reply ensure that AI initiatives are aligned with business outcomes rather than just becoming technology experiments?

At Sprint Reply, we are committed to cutting through the AI hype to deliver tangible business value. Our approach begins with a deep understanding of our clients' strategic priorities and operational challenges. We define clear KPIs and measurable outcomes for every AI initiative, ensuring that technology investments are always grounded in business impact. Our experience-led design methodology

embeds AI seamlessly into workflows, enhancing performance and unlocking new value streams. As an insight-driven consultancy, we position AI as a catalyst to optimise operations and elevate human potential.

Q What strategies do you use to help clients transition from AI pilots to full-scale production, ensuring long-term impact and adoption?

Our strength lies in scaling AI from pilot initiatives to enterprise-wide adoption through a structured, agile

methodology. We guide clients through a phased journey—from ideation and rapid prototyping to full production deployment—with scalability built in from the outset. We invest heavily in capability-building within client teams to ensure sustainable, self-sufficient AI adoption. Tailored change management, continuous business analysis, and targeted engagement strategies are integral to embedding AI into the organisation's DNA, creating a culture that champions, rather than merely accepts, AI-driven transformation.

Q Sprint Reply champions the #dontwastehumans philosophy—how do you balance automation with human expertise to maximise business value?

The #dontwastehumans philosophy is central to our mission. We believe AI should augment, not replace, human expertise. Our solutions focus on automating repetitive, low-value tasks to enable individuals to focus on high-value activities such as creativity, strategic decision-making, and human-centred problem-solving. We ensure a deliberate human-in-the-loop approach, particularly for customer-facing applications and critical decision points. In every deployment, we are committed to amplifying human potential and delivering enhanced outcomes through thoughtful human-AI collaboration.

Q CoPilot-style self-service AI tools are transforming everyday productivity. Where do you see the biggest opportunities for enterprises to adopt these solutions effectively?

CoPilot-style self-service AI tools are revolutionising how employees engage with information and execute workflows. We see substantial opportunity in applying these tools to knowledge management, team collaboration, and accelerated decision-making. By embedding AI directly into daily activities—drafting communications, summarising meetings and actions, and extracting insights from organisational knowledge—enterprises can significantly reduce time spent on low-value tasks. Ultimately, effective adoption enables knowledge workers to focus on strategic, high-impact activities, driving measurable productivity gains across the organisation.

Q Despite the rise of self-service AI, where do you see the need for expert-led AI delivery, and how does Sprint Reply differentiate itself in this space?

While self-service AI delivers tremendous value at the individual and team level, enterprise-grade AI requires expert-led design and integration. Complex deployments—such as advanced analytics, regulatory compliance, and cross-system orchestration—demand precision,



scalability, and alignment to broader business strategies. Sprint Reply differentiates by embracing a “self-service first” mindset, only scaling into bespoke, expert-led solutions where a genuine technical or strategic need exists. Furthermore, we often employ hybrid strategies, leveraging common foundational elements between self-service and bespoke solutions to maximise efficiency and value across the enterprise.

Q In the past year, what shifts have you seen in how enterprises approach AI adoption and investment?

Over the past year, we have seen a decisive shift from AI experimentation to enterprise-scale value realisation. Competitive pressures and the demand for measurable ROI have accelerated strategic AI investment. Organisations are embedding AI innovation teams, developing robust governance frameworks, and placing AI at the heart of growth strategies. Increasingly, companies are reassessing operational models and structures to unlock new value through AI. Sprint Reply is proud to be partnering with forward-thinking enterprises as they reimagine their future in an AI-enabled world.

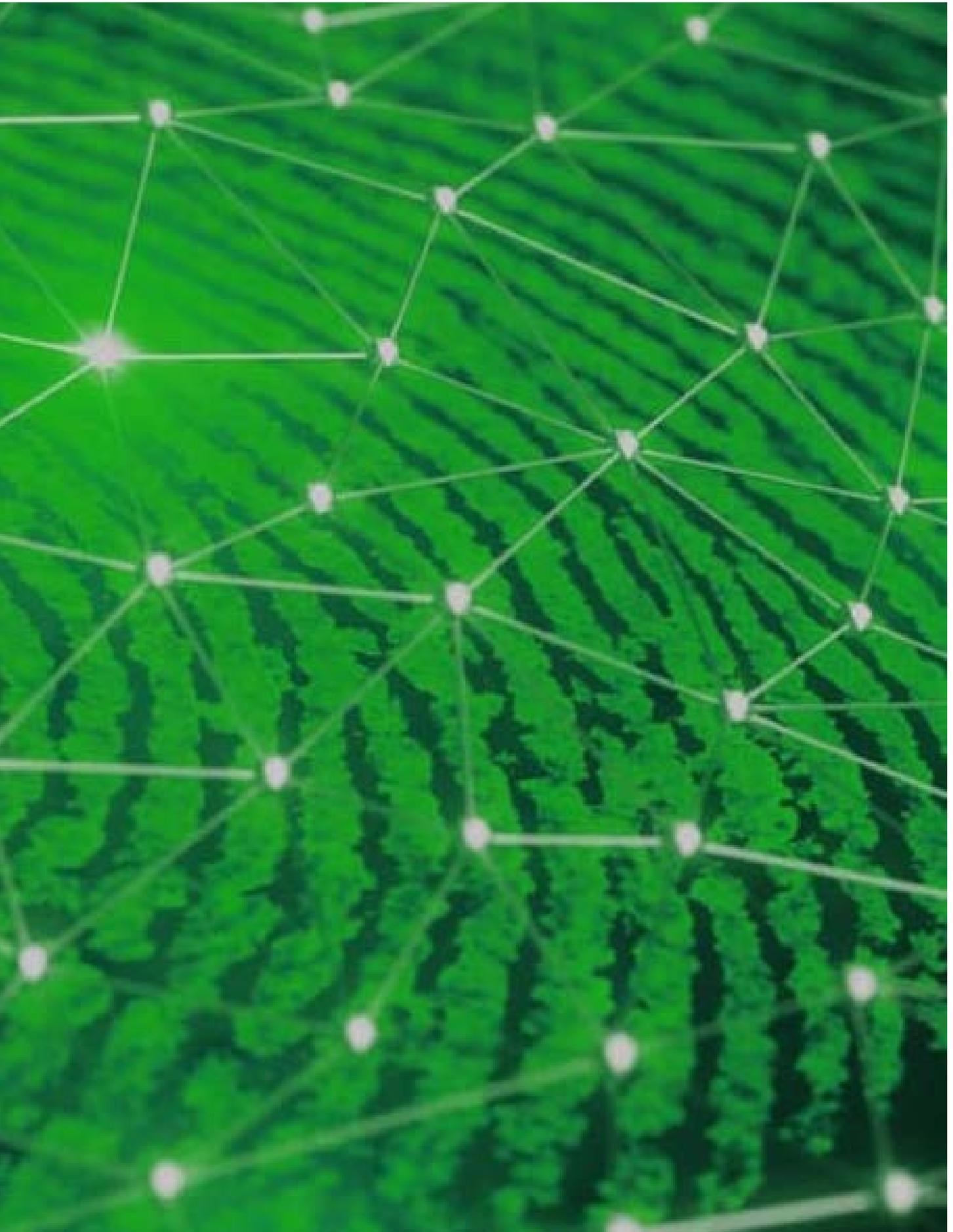
Q Are there any AI use cases that were previously considered unfeasible but have now become standard practice?

Absolutely. Recent advances in large language models have dramatically improved performance, scalability, and cost-efficiency, making previously unviable use cases now standard practice. Real-time applications—such as digital humans for instant support or video stream analysis triggering automated business workflows—are now feasible without extensive model training. The ability to deploy zero-shot learning for complex, dynamic tasks is redefining the economics of AI deployment and opening up new frontiers across industries.

Q Looking ahead, what do you see as the next big frontier for AI in enterprise—whether in terms of technology, governance, or business impact?

The next frontier for AI in enterprise lies in embedding intelligence across every layer of business operations—from customer engagement to operational optimisation. We anticipate a renewed focus on data quality, unstructured data processing, and knowledge architecture innovations such as graph databases and Graph RAG pipelines. Governance and ethical AI frameworks will become critical to manage trust, risk, and compliance as AI permeates core business functions. Furthermore, the rise of multi-model orchestration—where multiple AI models collaborate to solve problems—will drive superior outcomes and mitigate risks. As agentic architectures mature, organisations that master hybrid intelligence ecosystems will unlock unprecedented competitive advantages.

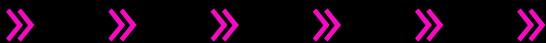






TOP 10

"The top 10 online frauds, cyber security breaches, and tech-driven scams that defined the digital threat landscape of 2024."



1 AI-DRIVEN CYBERCRIME: A NEW ERA OF THREATS

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into criminal activities has ushered in unprecedented challenges for cybersecurity. Europol reported that organized crime networks are leveraging AI to enhance the efficiency, speed, and sophistication of their operations. This includes the creation of sophisticated malware and realistic synthetic media for deception, impersonation, and blackmail. Such advancements have transformed cybercrime into a digital arms race, with attacks becoming more politically motivated and precise, often targeting governments and critical infrastructure.

2 AI VOICE-CLONING SCAMS: IMITATING THE FAMILIAR

Advancements in AI have enabled criminals to clone voices with minimal audio samples, leading to a surge in scams where victims are deceived by familiar voices. These AI-generated impersonations have been used to request money or sensitive information, making it challenging for individuals to distinguish between genuine and fraudulent communications. The rapid development of this technology has outpaced the establishment of effective safeguards, leaving consumers vulnerable to these sophisticated deceptions.

3 SMISHING ATTACKS: TEXT MESSAGES AS VECTORS

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) issued warnings about a significant increase in "smishing" attacks—fraudulent SMS messages designed to trick recipients into divulging personal information. These scams often involve fake toll payment and delivery service alerts, prompting users to click on malicious links. With over 10,000 domains registered for such scams, cybercriminals have refined their tactics to bypass security measures, emphasizing the need for heightened vigilance among mobile device users.





From data breaches to deepfake scams, 2024 was a landmark year for cybercrime. This roundup reveals the top 10 online frauds, security breaches, and digital deceptions that shook the tech world and put millions at risk. Whether it was phishing at scale or ransomware on the rise, these are the threats that dominated the headlines—and the hard lessons they left behind.

4 DIGITAL WALLET FRAUDS: EXPLOITING CONTACTLESS PAYMENTS

A sophisticated scam emerged where criminals transferred victims' bank cards to their own digital wallets, facilitating unauthorized online and in-store purchases. By convincing victims to provide bank details under false pretenses, fraudsters could set up digital wallets linked to the victims' accounts. This method allowed them to control the cards, often delaying transactions to avoid immediate detection, thereby exploiting the convenience of contactless payments.

5 RANSOMWARE-AS-A-SERVICE (RAAS): DEMOCRATIZING CYBER EXTORTION

The proliferation of Ransomware-as-a-Service (RaaS) platforms in 2024 made it easier for individuals with minimal technical expertise to launch ransomware attacks. This model allows cybercriminals to purchase ransomware tools and deploy them against victims, leading to widespread disruptions across various sectors, including healthcare and finance. The accessibility of RaaS has contributed to a significant increase in ransomware incidents, emphasizing the importance of robust cybersecurity measures.

6 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETPLACE SCAMS: FAKE PROFILES AND NON-EXISTENT GOODS

The rise of social media marketplace scams has been notable, with criminals creating fake profiles to advertise non-existent goods. These scams often involve luring victims with attractive offers on platforms like Facebook Marketplace, only for the purchased items to never arrive. This trend highlights the need for caution when engaging in online transactions and the importance of verifying the legitimacy of sellers.

7 CRYPTOCURRENCY SCAMS: EXPLOITING DIGITAL GOLD RUSH

The popularity of cryptocurrencies has been exploited by cybercriminals through fake cryptocurrency platforms and fraudulent investment opportunities. Scammers have posed as prominent crypto influencers to lure victims into investing in non-existent or malicious schemes, resulting in substantial financial losses for unsuspecting investors.

8 DEEPAKE SCAMS VISUAL DECEPTION AT ITS PEAK

The use of deepfake technology reached new heights, enabling cybercriminals to create convincing audio and video impersonations of public figures or company executives. These deepfakes were used to deceive employees into transferring funds or releasing confidential information, presenting a serious challenge to identity verification processes and organizational security.

9 FAKE PARCEL DELIVERY TEXTS: EXPLOITING E-COMMERCE BOOM

With the surge in online shopping, fake parcel delivery texts became one of the fastest-growing scams. Scammers sent fraudulent delivery notifications prompting recipients to click on links leading to phishing sites designed to steal personal information or install malware. This scam capitalized on the expectation of package deliveries, making it particularly effective.

10 AI-GENERATED CHILD ABUSE MATERIAL: A DISTURBING TREND

The misuse of AI to generate child sexual abuse material has emerged as a significant concern. Europol highlighted cases where AI was used to create realistic but entirely synthetic images, complicating efforts to combat child exploitation. This disturbing trend underscores the need for enhanced regulation and technological solutions to detect and prevent the spread of such content.

The year 2024 underscored the evolving nature of cyber threats, with criminals rapidly adopting new technologies to perpetrate fraud.

As these threats become more sophisticated, individuals and organizations must remain vigilant, adopt robust cybersecurity practices, and stay informed about emerging scam tactics to protect themselves in an increasingly digital world.





Q&A

KIERAN POYNTON

DIRECTOR OF DATA AND ANALYTICS AT BROMFORD

Talk to Kieran about data and you'll not only see his eyes light up, you'll also feel his passion for the subject flow through to you.

His thrilling career so far has seen Kieran building data platforms for household names, living and working in Germany for adidas creating their data mesh concept, and now using data to enable his customers to thrive at BromfordFlagship, one of the biggest housing associations in the country.

Kieran talked to us about the importance of people, purpose and bringing data teams closer to customer-facing functions to drive the most value.

You've had a varied background across many industries and roles. Can you explain a bit about your background and some of your learnings along the way?

My love of data and computers really started with computer games. I became fascinated with how computer games were designed and built and I always wanted to learn more. I was an average student at school and never really excelled. I was always told



that I don't apply myself enough, the truth is, I was getting bored with the subjects I was learning. This caused me to leave school at sixteen and move to my local technical college where I started on a NDC in Computer Science and later carried on to a HDN and then a top-up degree.

I loved being at college, I was able to focus on subjects that excited me and I finally got to understand the effort that goes into programming, building computers and technical design concepts. Not just for games, but also applications. I learned how to focus on user requirements, create designs and then finally build applications that could be used by others. Over my career I've held positions as a software developer, architect, engineer, manager and now I focus on the leadership of all those disciplines

What did you learn from your time at college and university?

My key learnings from being at college and University were that they don't always prepare you for the real-world. I was expecting to take everything I learned and apply it all to work, in short this doesn't match up one on one. In academia, you are given a brief and can treat this like waterfall development as the requirements are

set in stone and never change. In the real world, you often have to deal with shifting stakeholders, requirements, priorities and resources. This requires a different approach, mindset and requires a lot of resilience. Ensuring that you take your data product owner on the whole journey, from design to final development is crucial to build accountability and ownership and also guarantee that the product will be used in the end.

You've also worked abroad, how did that come about?

I had just finished up building a new data platform for a large food retail company. This was my baby and my first end-to-end responsibility of driving data strategy, business case approval and design and development of the data platform. I poured my heart and soul into getting this right.

One day, I got a message on LinkedIn from an internal adidas recruiter who was impressed with my profile and wanted me to interview for a few new roles they had. A month or so later, I was offered one of the roles and my wife and I were packing up to move to Nuremberg, Germany. I feel so lucky to have worked for adidas. It was a great experience to work on a campus of over 6500 colleagues, to get to

experience so many different cultures and also be so far out of my comfort zone having to learn a new industry, language, technology, processes and ways of working.

At adidas, I gained experience in three distinct teams: initially in Global Master Data Management, followed by Global Business Intelligence, and finally in Enterprise Architecture. My experience across these teams gave me a really interesting perspective across the whole company and I was able to use this to grow my skills and understanding in business architecture.

What did you learn from your time at adidas?

Adidas has an incredible culture of so many passionate people all united under a common purpose that “Through sport, we have the power to change lives”. adidas was the first company I worked for that seemed to really see tangible benefit from detailed documented architecture, processes and governance. I now realise that this is needed due to the scale of the company and the number of colleagues that need to be aligned to company goals. My time at adidas made me realise that even companies of a smaller scale need to think like larger organisations and this will enable them to be faster in the future.

Not enough focus on processes alignment, management and governance is where I see so many companies fail when it comes to introducing new technology or data into their ecosystem. Large-scale companies like adidas avoid this by having teams dedicated to keeping this critical information up to date and available, which in turn, allows them to run a global operation with many markets all aligned to the same purpose.

Why did you return back to the UK?

During my six years at adidas, I learned a great deal and was fortunate to be involved in numerous exciting workstreams. I completed their internal

leadership program, was responsible for Global BI Reporting focusing on key strategic initiatives, documented the first global Consumer conceptual data model, and began laying the foundations for their global data mesh concept. While there, my wife and I had two children and were able to enroll them in the adidas nursery on our campus. Unfortunately, just as our life became stable,

COVID-19 hit and everything locked down. Working from home while caring for two young children created significant mental stress. Without a family support network nearby, as my parents were in the UK and my in-laws in Poland, we felt stuck. When it became overwhelming, I decided to look for a new job back in the UK, which led me to my role as Head of Data at Halfords.

From sports and fashion to car parts, bikes and camping at Halfords? As a retailer, did they have the same sort of challenges?

Halfords had similar challenges, as do most retailers, but they didn't align perfectly. At Halfords, we essentially rebuilt their entire data platform. When I started, all reporting and analytics were running directly on SAP, the ERP platform, which was built for speed of data input, and focused on operational reporting. We transitioned that to a modern data lakehouse, using SAP to focus on the operational ERP tasks and using the lakehouse to focus on the analytics. This allowed us to build interactive dashboards for real-time reporting and implement predictive analytics.

To give you an idea of the change, when I started, store managers were printing out daily KPIs and sticking them on their desks. By the time I decided to move to Bromford, they had automated dashboards with a 45-minute sales data refresh, giving them near-instant visibility into their performance and empowered them to hit daily targets and drive team motivation across shifts. I can't take the credit for this though, I was supported by a great data team and managers.





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Let there be change





Moving from the fast-paced world of a global sportswear retailer to a UK-based housing association might seem like a big shift. What attracted you to Bromford's mission, and how does data play a crucial role in enabling their purpose?

What truly excites me about Bromford, much like my experience at adidas, is the unwavering commitment to a central purpose: to invest in homes and relationships so people can thrive. This isn't just a tagline. It's the driving force behind everything we do. My focus right now is on leveraging data to further this mission. This involves a strategic overhaul of our data landscape – decommissioning legacy systems, ensuring our reporting and analytics directly support business objectives and regulatory demands, creating a holistic "customer 360" model to tailor our services effectively, and establishing a cutting-edge data lakehouse to empower self-service and advanced analytics.

We've spent the last twelve months hiring, building, and insourcing a great team after being supported by Accenture for a while. And we have defined our data strategy, detailed ways of working and we are now ready to execute. We are at a very exciting time at Bromford and my overall aim is to make Bromford the most data-informed housing association in the sector. Bromford has now also merged with Flagship Housing to become BromfordFlagship, an even bigger housing association that merges the benefits of both companies.

Looking back at your varied journey, what key principles have consistently guided you that you could share with us?

1) BE DATA INFORMED NOT ALWAYS DATA-LED. At Bromford, we recognise that we work with individuals who possess diverse feelings and emotions. Rather than categorising customers based on limited information, we equip our colleagues with data to inform their conversations with our customers. This ensures our decisions are rooted in understanding, not solely on statistics.

2) FOCUS ON BUILDING THE BEST RELATIONSHIPS Operate under the assumption that everyone acts with good intentions, even when their behavior suggests otherwise. There will always be underlying reasons for their actions. Take the time to understand them, empathise with their perspective, and offer support.

3) FOCUS ON DATA PRODUCT OWNERS, NOT JUST USERS THAT ASK FOR DATA For data product ownership, I want someone that will be fully accountable for a product they request. I want them to manage it, to support it, to shout about how great it is. We should review everything we create, be sure about the teams that will use it, the number of users, the refresh frequency, the value it will create and also track that value over time. Proper data product management is often more important than the creation of the product itself.

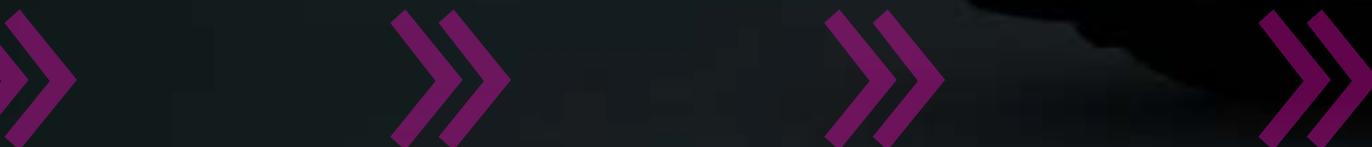
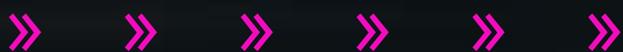
4) UNDERSTAND AND TRACK YOUR DATA MATURITY Follow the DAMA DMBOK data governance wheel and assess your maturity of each of the elements. You want to be very open and honest about this to ensure you focus on the right areas. Pick a few to scale and mature within a year. Each year, assess and document your progress.

5) GOOD MASTER DATA MANAGEMENT IS KEY Master data is the key to unlocking your transactional data. Take time to create, manage and govern your master data and reference data. Build processes around the governance and define ownership from exec down to data stewards.

6) ARCHITECT NOW FOR SCALE AND SPEED LATER When you design or architect platforms or solutions, be mindful that there are often tactical solutions and also longer-term strategic solutions. Never create tactical ones without understanding the impact on a strategic option. You need to be sure that a tactical option will unlock the benefit required within a short timeframe. Multiple tactical solutions will eventually lead to a patchwork architecture that may need a complete overhaul in the future.

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DENZA Z9 GT

Denza's European Expansion:

BYD's Premium EV
Brand Enters the EU
Market

The global automotive industry is undergoing a radical transformation, with electrification at the forefront of innovation. Among the key players driving this change, BYD (Build Your Dreams), China's leading electric vehicle (EV) manufacturer, has been aggressively expanding its international presence. The latest chapter in this expansion is the launch of Denza, BYD's premium EV brand, in the European Union (EU). This move signals a direct challenge to established luxury EV manufacturers such as Tesla, Mercedes-Benz, and BMW, and underscores China's growing influence in the global EV market.



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THE ORIGINS OF DENZA: A BYD-MERCEDES COLLABORATION

Denza was originally established in 2010 as a joint venture between BYD and Daimler (now Mercedes-Benz Group). The collaboration aimed to leverage BYD's advanced battery and electric drivetrain technology alongside Mercedes-Benz's expertise in luxury and automotive engineering. While Denza initially struggled to gain traction in the Chinese market, the brand was reinvigorated in recent years with a refreshed lineup of premium electric SUVs and MPVs that appeal to discerning customers looking for a blend of luxury and sustainability.

In 2022, BYD took a majority stake in Denza, increasing its ownership to 90%, while Mercedes-Benz retained a 10% share. This restructuring allowed BYD to have greater control over the brand's direction, pushing Denza towards aggressive expansion beyond China.



WHY THE EU? A STRATEGIC MARKET FOR PREMIUM EVS

The European Union is one of the most competitive and lucrative markets for electric vehicles. With stringent emissions regulations, generous EV incentives, and an increasingly eco-conscious consumer base, the EU presents an ideal landscape for Denza's entry. Additionally, European luxury car buyers have demonstrated a growing appetite for high-end EVs, making it a prime target for Denza's premium offerings.

Several factors make the EU a compelling choice for Denza's expansion:

- » **EV Adoption and Policy Support:** The EU has some of the world's most ambitious climate policies, including a planned ban on new internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles by 2035. This regulatory framework creates a favorable environment for new EV brands.
- » **Luxury EV Market Growth:** Companies like Tesla, Porsche, and Audi have seen significant success in the premium EV segment. Denza's entrance adds a new competitor that blends Chinese innovation with German engineering heritage.
- » **Charging Infrastructure:** Europe boasts one of the most developed EV charging networks, making it easier for new brands to penetrate the market without range anxiety being a major concern for consumers.
- » **Brand Perception Shift:** Chinese EV brands have traditionally faced skepticism in Europe, but the success of brands like NIO and XPeng has started to shift perceptions. Denza, with its Mercedes-Benz ties, is well-positioned to overcome these initial hurdles.



BYD'S SUPPORT: A KEY ADVANTAGE

Unlike Tesla or Mercedes-Benz, Denza lacks brand recognition in Europe. Convincing consumers to switch to a relatively unknown brand will require significant investment in marketing, dealer networks, and customer education.

European automakers such as BMW, Audi, and Mercedes-Benz have been rapidly electrifying their portfolios. Denza will need to differentiate itself through pricing, technology, and unique features to carve

out a market share.

Despite these challenges, Denza benefits from BYD's formidable resources. As the world's largest producer of EV batteries and a pioneer in vehicle electrification, BYD provides Denza with a cost advantage and technological edge. Moreover, BYD's existing European presence, including its growing network of showrooms and service centers, will facilitate Denza's market entry.



CONCLUSION: A BOLD MOVE WITH HIGH STAKES

Denza's expansion into the European market represents a bold move that could reshape the premium EV segment. With a strong product lineup, technological backing from BYD, and a strategic approach to overcoming market challenges, Denza has the potential to disrupt the luxury EV landscape.

However, success will depend on how well Denza executes its market entry strategy, navigates regulatory complexities, and builds brand trust among European consumers. If it manages to do so effectively, Denza could become a formidable competitor to established luxury EV brands and a key player in the global electrification race.



Vishal Gandhi

JOYSPACE AI.

Pioneering Multimodal AI Systems for Real-World Impact:

In Conversation with Vishal Gandhi

In a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence, Vishal Gandhi, Co-founder of Joyspace AI, offers a clear perspective: “AI creates value when the surrounding systems are equally intelligent.” This belief has guided his work across tech giants like Amazon, Yahoo, PayPal, and Indeed, and now anchors his vision at Joyspace AI.



Vishal has spent his career at the intersection of machine learning and large-scale systems, developing tools that don't just analyze data but generate insights. At Joyspace AI, he led the creation of a multimodal content platform that integrates visual, textual, and audio data, streamlining workflows for enterprise teams in marketing, sales, and beyond.

"AI is moving from novelty to necessity," he says. "What's next isn't about chasing the next model, rather it's about making intelligence reliable, fast, and useful in the real world." Vishal led his team in building infrastructure and AI models that powers real-time video transformation, intelligent captioning, and dynamic content generation, bridging the gap between complex models and everyday usability.

What distinguishes Vishal is a focus on systems over standalone models. "Most people focus on the model. I focus on the overall system," he emphasizes. This philosophy reflects a broader shift in AI: from experimental tools to operational platforms that drive measurable impact.

Recognized for both his technical contributions and mentorship, Vishal continues to influence the AI landscape as an advisor, judge, and advocate for practical innovation. He's been invited to speak at numerous AI conferences and workshops, offering expert guidance to both emerging startups and established enterprises.

We at Digital Edge, following a review by our editorial board, were thrilled to sit down with Vishal to discuss the future of AI, where innovation is headed, and why the next wave of progress might just come from intelligent infrastructure rather than models alone. He shared his insights on how AI is evolving, why blending human insight with machine intelligence is key, and how companies can create tools that don't just push boundaries but solve real-world problems with intelligence at scale.

Q You've led high-impact teams at Amazon and other companies. How did those leadership experiences influence your vision and decision to launch Joyspace AI?

 **Joyspace**
Storytelling With AI

Vishal: I've been fortunate to work with exceptional teams throughout my career. At Yahoo, I led the Data Insights team for video advertising, managing petabytes of data. Amazon taught me the value of customer obsession, operational excellence, and simplifying complex problems. At PayPal and Indeed, I launched impactful, innovative products with diverse, high-performing teams.

The consistent theme in my journey has been solving hard problems that deliver real value. In 2023, inspired by those experiences, my co-founder and I launched Joyspace AI. I saw a gap: while large enterprises rapidly adopted AI, SMBs lacked the resources to do the same. Video, though high in ROI, remained complex to produce and scale. I identified that multimodal AI, especially for video, could save SMBs significant time and cost. With my expertise in search, AI, machine learning, and video processing, I set out to bring practical, scalable AI solutions to underserved businesses.

Q How did your early work on Alexa's voice systems shape your current thinking around multimodal interaction?

Vishal: At Amazon, I began by building large-scale data systems, then led voice-based authorization for Alexa, contributing to the launch of Echo Buds, Loop, and Frames. We had to process account authorization in under 100 milliseconds requiring innovations in NLP, NLU, and real-time identity matching. That experience taught me how critical speed, accuracy, and context are in voice-driven interactions.

It also became clear to me that voice and video would define the next era of user experience. We now expect real-time AI support in voice clarity, video rendering, captions, and transcription without even noticing it. At Joyspace, I led the development of infrastructure that handles multimodal data, i.e., text, audio, video, and images at scale. My work on Alexa gave me both the mindset and technical foundation to build AI systems that feel seamless, responsive, and real.

Q How are your innovations at Joyspace AI redefining the integration of multimodal AI in content creation, and what unique challenges have you addressed in this domain?

Vishal: While LLMs have advanced text processing, video and audio present far greater complexity due to size and structure. When I built our Captions and Short Clips products, we had to process data 100x larger than text, such as combining transcripts, facial cues, scene transitions, and visual signals to extract meaningful moments.

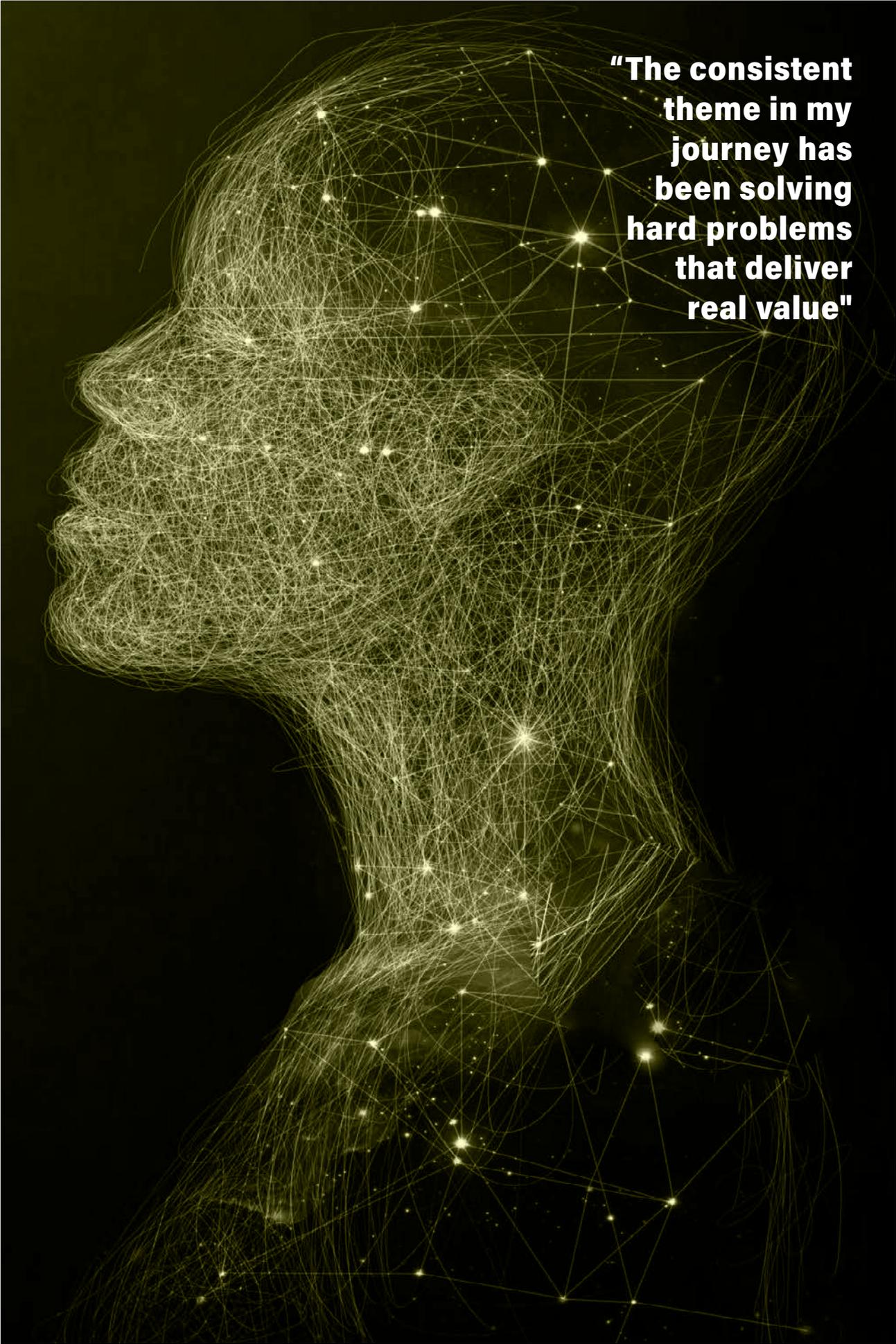
I led the backbone of a real-time search engine that analyzes hundreds of data points per video, enabling instant retrieval of highlights, insights, and interactions. My team's ML pipelines run massive parallel processing across dynamic, multi-cloud systems, scaling automatically based on load. We have a top-tier transcription and rendering engine. Additionally, we've optimized our cloud costs, balancing speed and scalability without overspending.

What sets us apart is that I treat multimodal AI as a first-class citizen, designing systems that are fast, scalable, and aligned with real user needs. The result is high-quality content generation at enterprise scale.

Q How have you shaped and scaled high-performing teams, and what unique practices have you introduced that drove both innovation and industry recognition?

Vishal: At Amazon, I learned the value of hiring for long-term impact, prioritizing adaptability, collaboration, and long-term thinking while leading large initiatives. At Joyspace AI, I scaled our core team in under a year by launching a research-to-product rotation program that paired AI researchers with engineers in cross-functional pods. This cut our feature development cycles by 60%.

To fuel innovation, I introduced a monthly "Innovation Day," bringing in AI experts and clients to critique prototypes. This direct feedback helped



"The consistent theme in my journey has been solving hard problems that deliver real value"

push two concepts into production in just six weeks. I also championed internal Tech Talks and peer-led workshops, increasing knowledge-sharing by 75%.

These efforts improved our release cadence by 40%, achieved 99.9999% uptime, and earned us the 2025 Business Excellence Award. Our collaborative structure, continuous learning culture, and customer-first mindset have positioned Joyspace AI as a leader in multimodal AI and helped us attract top-tier talent.

Q Which industries and flagship customers rely on Joyspace AI today, and how has collaborating with them enabled you to establish new best practices or technical standards in multimodal AI?

Vishal: Joyspace AI's multimodal platform is used across various industries, including SaaS, digital services, healthcare, travel, and education. B2B marketing, sales, and product teams rely on our platform to transform long-form videos into branded short clips in minutes, boosting engagement. Influencers use our captioning and transcription APIs to enhance accessibility in 39 languages.

I've shaped new best practices. For instance, co-developing with an enterprise customer, we learned that two-line captions of ≤ 32 characters maximize readability on mobile. This insight led to guidelines and a caption-template library adopted by multiple startups, reducing rework by 50%.

Additionally, I introduced a validation pipeline for syncing text and video, ensuring accurate captions. My focus on accessibility has helped customers enhance adoption while maintaining compliance with WCAG 2.2 standards.

Q You've seen NLP evolve dramatically. What shifts have surprised you most in how teams now build with language models?

Vishal: I am an active judge for many conference papers and awards. The biggest shift has been moving from massive, monolithic language models to modular, task-specific components. At Joyspace

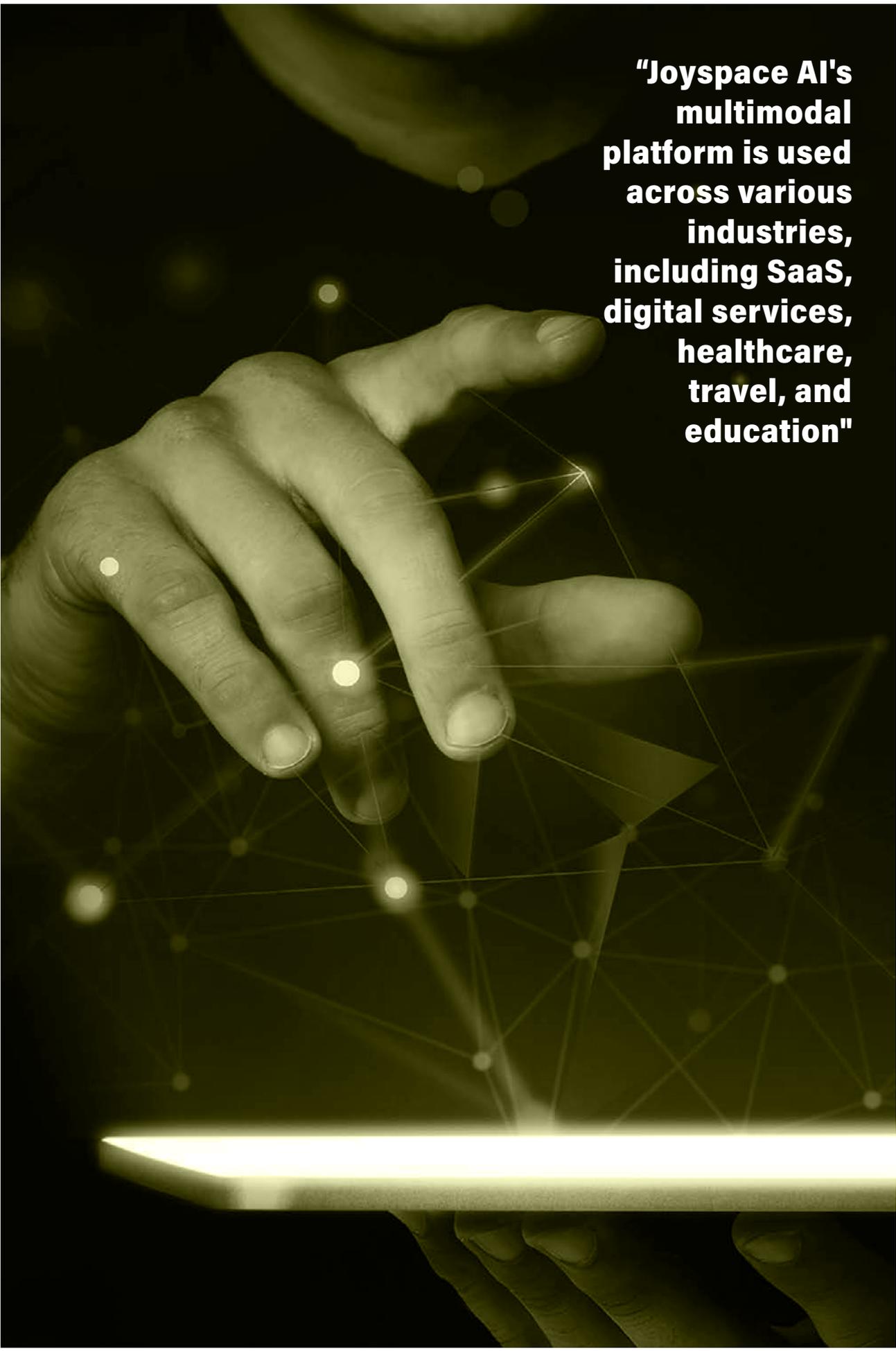
AI, I pioneered an adapter architecture that breaks multimodal pipelines into modules, improving efficiency and reducing latency by 40%. I've also seen teams move from silos to more collaborative structures, with tools that bridge data and ML teams. Additionally, low-code platforms have democratized model deployment, allowing non-ML teams to create workflows. Lastly, the focus on ethical guardrails has become standard practice, reflecting the maturity of the field.

Q You've been early in voice and multimodal AI. What's your take on where this space is headed next?

Vishal: The future of voice and multimodal AI is driven by three key developments: the rise of Agentic AI, where systems proactively manage tasks; integration of multimodal capabilities, enabling AI to process text, voice, images, and video for deeper context understanding; and personalized, context-aware interactions that adapt to individual preferences. At Joyspace AI, I'm focused on shaping technologies that enhance user experiences. I don't think AI will replace humans completely. Rather, it will be a powerful companion to augment tasks and unleash unprecedented productivity.

Q What advice would you give founders building AI-native products that blend infrastructure with creativity?

Vishal: When building AI-native products, focus on creating modular, scalable systems that can adapt as technologies and user needs evolve. This flexibility allows you to integrate new features without overhauling the entire system. Embed creativity into your product, ensuring AI enhances the user's creative process with intuitive, inspiring interfaces. Implement feedback loops and Human-In-the-Loop mechanisms to keep systems relevant. Ethical considerations such as data privacy, bias mitigation, and transparency should be integral. Balancing strong infrastructure with a commitment to human creativity ensures your AI-native products are both powerful and customer-centric.



**"Joyspace AI's
multimodal
platform is used
across various
industries,
including SaaS,
digital services,
healthcare,
travel, and
education"**



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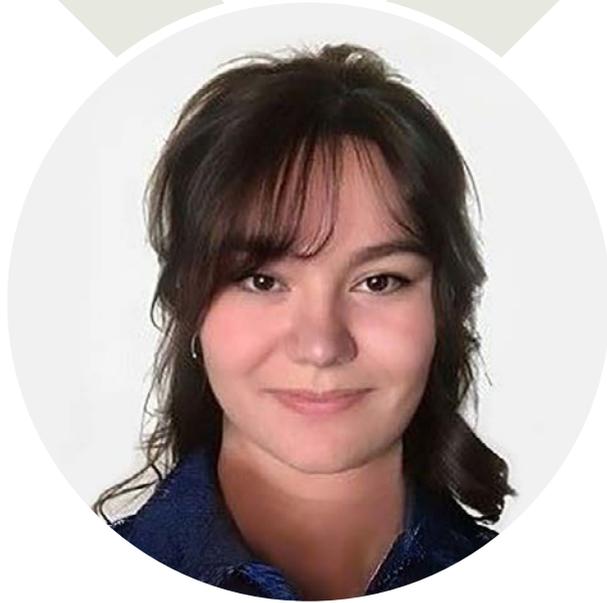




technology

esses

experiences



Dr. Sena Kizildemir

PROJECT ENGINEER AT THORNTON TOMASETTI

Bio: Dr. Sena Kizildemir is a project engineer at Thornton Tomasetti specializing in computational mechanics and simulation of structures under extreme loading. She holds a M.Sc. in Civil Engineering and a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering.

Her doctoral research, funded by the Federal Railroad Administration, focused on fatigue fracture in steel rails. She now leads FEA-based investigations across sectors including transportation, infrastructure, energy, and life sciences.

FINITE ELEMENTS, INFINITE SCENARIOS:

Engineering the Extremes Before They Happen

In a world where engineering success is often measured by what's built, Dr. Sena Kizildemir is making her impact by mastering what never happens.

Her work doesn't live in headlines of collapsing bridges or derailed trains—it lives in the quiet spaces between prevention and precision. As a project engineer, Dr. Kizildemir specializes in simulating failure before it ever happens, using advanced finite element analysis (FEA) to replicate how materials and structures behave under extreme, often life-threatening conditions.

"Imagine being able to understand a failure before it exists—to step into that moment and change the outcome before it ever unfolds," she says. "That's the power of simulation. I don't wait for structures to fail—I model the failure first, so it never has to happen."

Through high-fidelity, multi-physics modeling, she approximates how materials behave under extreme conditions—whether it's a bridge exposed to a blast wave or a microscopic stent under repetitive arterial strain. Her work demonstrates that the fundamentals of stress, strain, and failure transcend scale. By applying the same core principles of simulation to both large-scale infrastructure and delicate biomedical devices, she proves that finite element analysis is not just a structural tool—it's a universal language for engineering resilience. These digital experiments empower engineers and decision-makers to explore highly-consequential “what if” scenarios safely, guiding smarter design, targeted maintenance, and safer outcomes across industries.

One of Dr. Kizildemir's most compelling examples lies beneath the surface—literally. In her doctoral research, she investigates a phenomenon in modern rail systems where seemingly minor internal cracks evolve into catastrophic fractures. By modeling how residual stress from manufacturing affects crack growth deep inside rail steel, she shows how unseen forces lead to failure long before visible damage emerges. Her work directly informs rail safety practices today, offering insight that traditional inspection methods cannot provide.

But Dr. Kizildemir's contributions go beyond technical breakthroughs. She represents a new kind of engineer—one who brings together analytical rigor and human impact. Her simulations are not theoretical exercises; they are tools for protecting lives. By modeling how structures might fail, she helps ensure they don't.

What makes her story remarkable is also what makes it quietly powerful: most people never know the scenarios she prevents. That's by design. When simulation works, nothing happens. And yet, that unseen success holds enormous value—not just for safety, but for the profession itself.

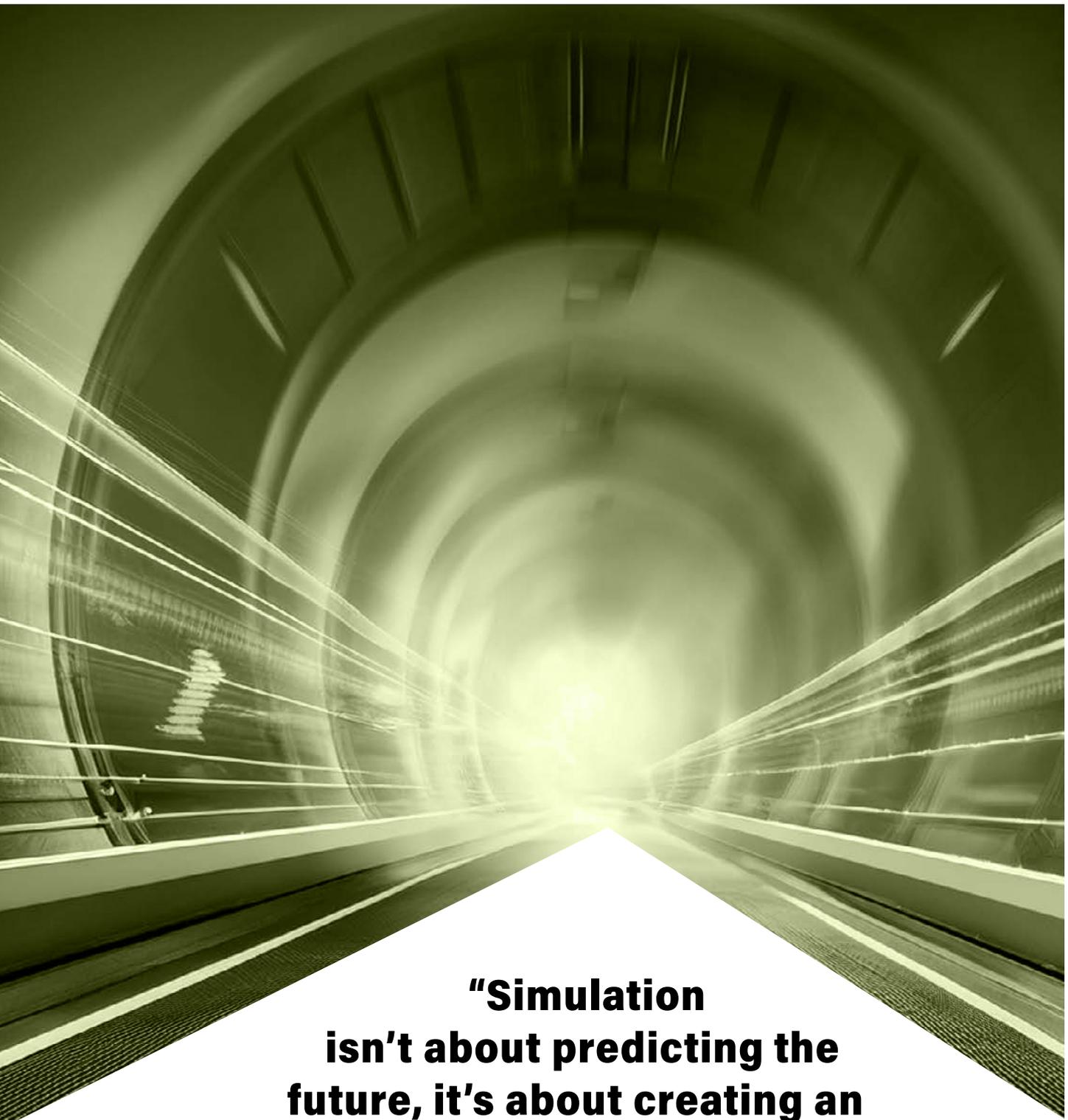
Dr. Kizildemir's work invites a rethinking of what engineering can be. In a field that often prioritizes what is built, she champions the importance of what is understood. She says: “Simulation isn't about predicting the future—it's about creating an evidence-based mirror of what could go wrong, and designing with that knowledge in hand. It's where creativity meets calculation, and foresight meets responsibility”

Her path also serves as a powerful example for emerging engineers who may not see themselves in the stereotypical image of the profession. Her leadership in technical communities, mentoring of early-career professionals, and commitment to visibility within underrepresented groups in engineering reflect her belief that innovation is strongest when it is inclusive.

In a rapidly evolving world, we need more engineers who don't just ask how to build—but how to build better, safer, and more resilient systems. Engineers who are unafraid to explore failure, because they know that doing so is the first step toward preventing it.

Dr. Sena Kizildemir is one of those engineers. And her work not only safeguards infrastructure — it inspires a generation to look deeper, think broader, and design with the unseen in mind.





**“Simulation
isn't about predicting the
future, it's about creating an
evidence-based mirror of what could
go wrong, and designing with that knowledge
in hand. It's where creativity meets calculation, and
foresight meets responsibility”**

THE **BLA'S** «

BUSINESS LEADER AWARDS

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN DATA & AI

INTRODUCING THE BLA'S

Digital Edge Magazine is proud to announce the launch of the Business Leadership Awards (The BLA's) – a prestigious recognition of innovation, leadership, and impact in the fields of Data & AI.

These awards will honor organisations and individuals driving transformative change, fostering a culture of innovation, and delivering outstanding business outcomes through data-driven strategies.

The winners will be officially announced in the August issue of Digital Edge Magazine, with voting to commence on May 14th.

**DIGITAL
EDGE**

MEET THE JUDGES



GARETH POWELL

Group Data Officer & Partner at Irwin Mitchell, LLP



EFFIE KILMER

Director of Data Governance at Microsoft



CAROLINE CARRUTHERS

Author & CEO of Carruthers & Jackson



LEE FULMER

Creative Disrupter and Data Sorcerer; Senior Advisor @ McKinsey

CATEGORIES



THE DIGITAL EDGE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN DATA & AI

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THE PEOPLE & CULTURE IN DATA & AI AWARD

Celebrating organizations and leaders who champion diversity, inclusion, and a strong culture of innovation within the Data & AI ecosystem, fostering talent and driving meaningful change.

KEY DATES

VOTING OPENS:

May 14th, 2025

WINNERS ANNOUNCED:

August 2025 Issue of Digital Edge Magazine

HOW TO VOTE

Public and industry professionals are invited to vote for the most inspiring leaders and organisations in Data & AI. Stay tuned for details on how to submit your votes!

Are you ready to celebrate the future of Data & AI? Stay connected with #TheBLAs and be part of the movement!

For sponsorship and partnership opportunities contact:

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**AI
CYBERSECURITY
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BIO.

DR. VANJA LJEVAR

Chief Data Scientist and Co-Founder
at Kubik Intelligence

Dr. Ljevar is a data scientist, a Board Member at University of Nottingham Business School, a keynote speaker, a published author, and a serial entrepreneur. She holds a multidisciplinary Ph.D. in Computer Science and Psychology and specialises in customer profiling using psychological and behavioural theories and patterns in big data to generate best-in-class customer insights. Vanja has carried out over 50 international projects across multiple sectors, including retail, telecommunication, healthcare, fashion, and media. She has published multiple peer-reviewed academic papers, mostly on topics related to the use of big data for social good.

Founders of Ku

Kubik Intelligence, a data
is partnering with Game Ch
focusing on AI, Cybersecurity
in London on



BIO.

PATRICK FAGAN

Chief Behavioural Scientist and
Co-Founder at Kubik Intelligence

Patrick is an applied behavioural
scientist with 15 years experience
turning minds into money.

He is a university lecturer at top
universities like UCL and Sunday
Times bestselling author: as well
as published academic work and
the marketing classic *Hooked*,
Patrick's insights are featured in
The Guardian, *The Economist*, and
beyond. He's a renowned speaker,
appearing at events like Nudgestock
and Talks at Google. Patrick used
to be the lead psychologist at
Cambridge Analytica.



Kubik Intelligence

behavioural psychology consultancy,
Game Changer London, a tech event
series, and Big Data taking place
May 8, 2025





WHY GAME CHANGER?

Following the success of our tech events **GAME CHANGER** across CEE Zagreb (Croatia) -Ljubljana (Slovenia) - Tivat (Montenegro) and our **Aftermovie** from the event in Zagreb in October 2024

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Our debut event in May 2025.

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GAME CHANGER LONDON



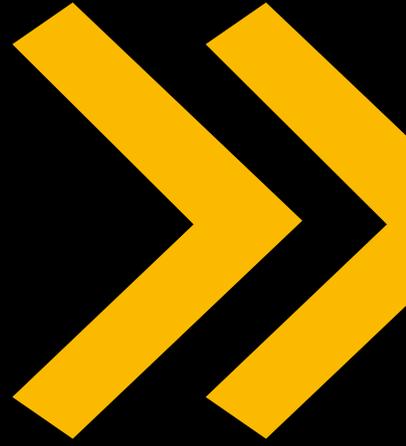
OUR MISSION IS TO:

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Coming Up in Issue 03 of Digital Edge

The next issue of Digital Edge goes live **6th June**, and it's packed with exclusive insights from industry leaders who are shaping the future of technology, procurement, supply chain and manufacturing.

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Inside Issue 03:



Exclusive Interview:

James Selka, CEO at the Manufacturing Technologies Association (MTA), on the future of smart manufacturing.



Exclusive Interview:

Rab Scott, Director of Industrial Digitalisation at The University of Sheffield Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC).



Exclusive Interview:

Faizal Shabeer, Senior Country Manager - UK and Europe at EC-Council.



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