SERIES 11: EXTREME PERSONALISATION

Where tech innovation meets customer experience

OLIVIER KLEIN: Hello and welcome back to ExecLeaders. I'm Olivier Klein, the AWS Chief Technologist for Asia Pacific. In today's show we provide an outlook on the ever-changing customer experience by pushing the concept of personalisation to the absolute extreme, some might say hyper-personalisation. I guess it doesn't get much more personal than a detailed scan of your actual body. In a moment we'll discover how a made-to-order clothing company evolved into using a highly secure, precision body scanning system, effectively streamlining military uniform fittings, retail experiences and even creating exciting new opportunities in preventive healthcare. Then we'll visit one of the world's leading technology theorists, Peter Hinssen, who sees a future where AI agents could drive 90% of the web traffic. His insights on AI driven personalisation might make you rethink your entire digital strategy. And finally I'll be back to break down the five essential things every business leader needs to know about agentic AI right now. We've identified the key points that no executive can afford to ignore. So let's get started.

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CHIEF TECHNOLOGIST AWS, APJ

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ROB FISHER: My name is Rob Fisher. I'm the co-founder and CEO of Bodd.

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ROB FISHER
CEO & CO-FOUNDER, BODD

First and foremost we see ourselves as a data company. Our whole kind of purpose is to use the incredible power of human body data as a force for good. And we're capturing an enormous amount of information in a completely contact-less, light touch manner. So we're capturing your body size and shape information. So we capture over 400 ISO accredited body landmarks and circumference measurements so we've got a pretty good idea as to your body size and shape. Second to that is your body composition. So what's happening inside your body fat percentage, visceral fat, water retention, bone density estimation to name a few.

Through transdermal technology and some lenses that we've developed we can pass light into the skin on your face. We can pick up things via your blood flow. So we can determine your standing blood pressure, your breathing rate, your heart rate. We pick up on things like irregular heartbeats on our scanner all the time. So you've got anthropometrics. You've got body composition. You've got your vital signs. And then we've deployed some additional modules on the scanner recently which are incredible.

We started working in the global uniform sector by providing sizing technologies. So they were used as a productivity tool to really quickly, efficiently, productively size large workforces into the correct sized uniform. We deploy functional uniforms whether it be military combat wear, airline, emergency services, fire, police, ambulance into the correct sized uniform and we do it in a fraction of the time that it would take them manually to undertake a proper try-on process.

It's worth touching on just how big a job it is to kit a soldier out into their uniform. So we have our scanners across the entire New Zealand Defence Force recruitment and training centre network. As a soldier you're kitted out in about 150 different articles of clothing and wearables. So it's everything from headwear, eyewear, earwear, your boots and shoes, your gloves, inner wear, outer wear right through to your kind of parade wear. In a traditional uniform fitting process to do that properly you'd be looking at probably two, three maybe four hours of that soldier's time in order to measure and then undertake a series of try-ons to make sure that each of the wearables or uniform items fit functionally and from a performance and a safety where they're the correct fit. We've been able to reduce that to about sixty seconds per soldier.

Our dynamic posture assessment tool is a brainchild born out of the challenges faced with our organisations that we work with. We can determine someone's propensity for future injury by looking at landmark and joint detection and range of motion. That's really valuable information when you're working in a high performance and a preventative environment where it's better to have a staff member not become ill or not become sick.

Just about every product iteration and feature of the Bodd scanner is mostly the result of us listening to the market, understanding what their challenges are or their objectives are and bringing this back to our team to determine whether or not our product and the use of smart body data can help them achieve those objectives.

If you come back to what our vision is or our purpose it's to use really high quality human body data as a force for good. So it's collecting that information on our scanner in a way that's ethical and it's compliant irrespective of where in the world that data is being collected or whoever is jumping on that scanner. But there's a whole lot more that Bodd does for the downstream than just acquiring that information. We've built a pretty incredible data infrastructure so that we can again safely, ethically and compliantly store that data again irrespective of where in the world that scan takes place. Our infrastructure is built on AWS and we're starting to move onto their government Cloud which is really pleasing not only for us but for different government departments around the world that are attracted to that solution.

When it comes to ownership at the end of the day the consumer owns that data. We can turn on a feature where a scanned subject, the consumer themselves, can access their insights immediately by using a QR code on the screen. What we're finding in all parts of the world just about is that the pharmacy sector is being relied on as almost like frontline care for triaging and you've got different parts of the world including Australia that's experimenting with allowing pharmacists with the right to prescribe for low level drugs etcetera.

There's no reason why, and you'll very soon see a Bodd scanner in a number of different pharmacies in different parts of the world within those consulting suites as a light touch, contact-less, top of funnel device that can derive an enormous wealth of information on that human subject. And then what Bodd does with that information, it passes it to the next most appropriate step determined by either the pharmacist or the consumer in the store. We can put someone on a scanner in a consulting suite, they can be scanned. We can put that consumer directly into say a telehealth appointment. We can pass those wellness insights to the GP that's assessing that consumer or that patient. It enables that GP to be far more personal and provide far more personal care to that patient even within the context of a telehealth appointment where they could be on different sides of the country.

When you think about that in many respects we're kind of bridging the gap between a conventional appointment with your GP and a telehealth appointment which is done completely virtually. That doctor could prescribe instant script instructions to the pharmacist behind the counter and that consumers never needed to leave the pharmacy.

Bodd was co-founded by myself and my business partner Dave McLaughlin. So we went to school together. We've known each for a long time. We wanted to build you know a big business, a global business, something that would be lasting, something that would do good.

The apparel space globally is enormous. Whether it be uniforms, fast fashion, you know brick and mortar to retail. And it's got big problems relating to the environmental footprint that it creates. What we decided to do was start our own clothing business to use almost like a test bed vehicle to build different products and different technologies in order to see what would work and what would solve the problems that we knew we were bound to face.

It was a made-to-order clothing company. So menswear. So everything from custom-made shirts, jackets, chinos, shorts, polo shirts, etcetera. By making made-to-order we thought we were addressing part of the wastage problem. And we started selling clothing and products online. We had about 30,000 customers globally. Throughout that kind of five year journey we developed a number of different tech products to try and help the challenges that we faced as a business.

The reason you're going to get a custom-made jacket is because you want it to be the perfect fit. You really need the craftsmen, so the tailor that's making that jacket needs to be intimately involved between the garment and the wearer of that through that crafting and manufacturing process. The conventional problem that say tailors face worldwide now is that you've got say a customer here in Melbourne that may get measured but then the actual jacket or the suit is invariably crafted offshore. So what we did is we built really fast, rapid 3D printing technologies which meant that we could have a 3D printer at our factory either in Thailand or Vietnam in a quicker period than what it would take for say our customer here in Melbourne to jump on a flight and head to Thailand.

Whilst it's an incredible product it's a very difficult product to scale. We couldn't find a scanning solution that was adequate for our needs. So we started developing 3D scanning technologies. It was actually the scanned data that was driving more efficiencies for our own clothing business. And we certainly saw applications beyond our own business and invariably beyond clothing. And that's one of those golden moments where we discovered our own identity.

I think personalisation is a better outcome. That's what you're looking for. So how do you give someone either a better product or a better experience relative to them? And where we fit in is deducing or deriving really high quality information about that person or about that consumer to be stored safely and then used in smart ways in order to make that experience better, more efficient, more personal whether it be the product, the experience or the process itself.

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OLIVIER KLEIN: The evolution of Bodd from a clothing company to a data business is actually brilliant. By trying to solve their own scanning challenges they discovered their real value lay in capturing precise human body data. Truly the ultimate I'd say in personalisation. They're setting the standard for data ethics too. I mean as Rob said running on AWS Gov Cloud they can handle sensitive data with rigorous security. And the productivity gains are absolutely stunning. From cutting military uniforms fittings from three hours' time to sixty seconds, to delivering comprehensive health insights in minutes, they're showing how technology can deliver personalised services truly at scale even in a remote healthcare setting. Now over to the other side of the world now with a very different perspective on where personalisation is headed ExecLeaders checked in with author and visionary Peter Hinssen at his Apple chapel in Belgium for his provocative view on AI driven personalisation. So let's see it.

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PETER HINSSEN: I am a Technologist by training. I did start-ups when I was younger. And today I teach at London Business School and primarily I do a lot of keynotes around the world trying to get people excited about new things about innovation and everything that is tech related.

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PETER HINSSEN
ENTREPENEUR, KEYNOTE SPEAKER & AUTHOR

So I am a nerd at heart, but passionate about how companies can use the power of technology to really innovate. I've written five books. There's a new book coming out by the summer called "The Uncertainty Principle".

Post-COVID I think a lot of people realised the extreme volatility that was happening. We've now pretty much accepted that as the new norm. That's why I didn't want to talk about the never normal again, but I wanted to talk about how do you use that as a lever? That idea of leveraging the uncertainty is something where I see a lot of companies still struggling with because they realise the complexity that is out there. Everything seems to change every couple of weeks. How do you really organise yourself to maximise that? How do you find ways to unlock potential. And I still see a lot of companies that are trying to hedge themselves against uncertainty. Fine. I really want to focus on how you use that. How do you weaponise, how do you find the leverage mechanism for that uncertainty and I think this is where a lot of companies are still trying to figure that out.

Our expectations are rising every single day. I remember years ago when we would have the first algorithms that would cater to us as consumers. We thought wow this is amazing, it's fabulous 'cause I've shopped with that company a few times and they already know me! And look at what suggestions they have. I remember in the early days of Netflix people were wowed by the idea that the algorithm would get them and that they would suggest content that people said "oh my god this is exactly me!" Now most people are intensely frustrated with Netflix. They say oh yeah it's terrible and there's nothing interesting for me, it doesn't suggest anything that is even remotely what I want. And I don't think it's the algorithm's fault, I think it's that our expectations have been rising significantly. I mean the bar is rising every single time.

We constantly have to adapt as companies to live up to those expectations. But the idea of personalisation is a really old idea. I remember when the first websites started to appear back in the mid-90's of the last century people said "oh this is not just going to present stuff to you, this will be able to be completely tailored to your tastes." And this idea has been around for 25-30 years. The expectations are rising, and the capabilities are increasing, so it's a constant game where you have to make sure that you really hit the mark.

I honestly believe that generative AI is maybe the most exciting technology I have seen in 30 years. The interesting thing is that AI as such has been around for a long time, but it's now culminating into something which is main-streaming in a way that I have never seen before. I mean it's not just technology for the few happy nerds out there. This is becoming a mainstream movement and every time we have one of those mainstream movements it has the capacity to fundamentally change things, like the web did you know 25 years ago or mobile did 15 years ago. I also believe that we're in a phase where we're now over-hyping so much that we're probably only going to get disappointed in the short term. But that is typically how it happens. The S-curve is slow and then fast and then normal. And in the beginning we tend to over-hype so you know we're disappointed but don't underestimate the medium to long term impact of this.

When you look at companies they have built databases and data warehouses and they have really focused on getting the structured side of things absolutely right. If you have an address of a customer you want that address to be completely correct. The orders that they have made are the data side. The content side is the documents that are floating around. These might be different versions of emails. These might be different, you know iterations of documents. And I call it the Jaws effect because what we've done is we've kept buying bigger boats. Every time that a file server was full we said "oh let's buy a bigger boat." Most data structured environments in companies are well maintained. But the content side is a mess! It is something where we've never really cleaned it up. It has been a continuous growing Jaws phenomenon of bigger and bigger boats. But now we see that the quality of content is going to be as important as the quality of data. And I think if you really want to leverage the power of information it's those two sides of the coin. It's data and content at the same time.

And I think companies who can really understand that spectrum of information will be able to harness the power of AI and will be able to deliver these personalised experiences to customers that I think are absolutely necessary. There is an immense business opportunity because I really believe that if you take the time as a consumer to engage with a company, with a brand, where you like their service, the way that they approach you want to invest in that. And I think if you see that these companies actually take the time, take the effort to maximise that relevance there is a gigantic business opportunity. But it will mean that companies have to evolve, and probably faster and faster. I'll give you a very practical example.

I've been using eBay for 25 years. I can buy something somewhere on the planet that somebody has in an attic and get it delivered to my house that is just brilliant. But I'm getting more and more frustrated with the interface. I still have to manually type in what I would like to have and then see if there's some sort of an you know textual match, where I might want to just talk to eBay, or have a conversation, explain what I really want, or even show things that could you find something that looks like this. These technologies could bring a whole new level of interaction and therefore unlock an extreme potential of personalisation.

I really believe that agentic is not just a buzz word. I think agentic, the fact that it's not only capable of generating but actually performing, actually executing, doing something, is going to be revolutionary. I've tried it a few times now where you could ask a generative AI to not just generate an image or a text but actually perform a task and the first time you have a little bit of an uneasy feeling in your stomach you think really. I mean I honestly think the moment I'm going to give my credit card to an AI agent and say book me this and just make it happen that is going to feel a little awkward in the beginning. But honestly when I typed in the first URL back in 1995 and I was typing http:// I also thought oh what am I doing here so I think it might be a natural threshold that we have to get over. I think we're going to get used more and more to not just you know generating things but asking it to execute things and I honestly think it's probably very soon going to feel as natural as just opening up a web browser.

I like the comparison of it's like the personal shopping experience, which used to be something that was only for the very elite that you would have people who would run around and look at all the different stores because you didn't have time to do that they would do it for you and they'd say we found the perfect suit for you, we found the perfect bag for you. I think agents could be out there scouting for you what you really want. And I think the better that we as consumers can tailor our demands, that we can really articulate what we really want, then the better these agents are going to be in actually finding the stuff out there.

But there's another side to this because it also means that companies are going to have to find ways that these agents can actually talk to them really easily. Today most internet environments, websites are really good for humans to browse. But if you want agents to quickly understand if what they're looking for is in your environment then we're going to have to build websites that are really good for agents to be used. And that's going to be a whole new opportunity because it means that we're going to have to redefine e-commerce, rethink how we engage with AI and we might get into a situation where maybe only 10% of the traffic on a website will be human traffic but maybe 90% of the traffic will be agents browsing what we have. Today we don't have websites optimised for agents but I think this is something that we might see very soon.

What I believe is going to be crucial is if you can take your unique content and knowledge signature, the thing that makes you special, and then graft that with the power of AI then I think we're going to see magic happen. And it also means that as a business leader you need to understand what is necessary to get you to that point. Maybe you're good in data but you have to beef up on content. Maybe you have to rethink your knowledge architecture to really enable AI to flourish. But I really believe that out of the box it's going to be meagre gains, but if you can really build a journey to really graft your unique content and knowledge with the power of AI then you have an absolute goldmine in front of you.

It's certainly not easy also for technology leaders just to keep up. I spend a lot of time with CIO's and CDO's and CTO's and they say my god this is crazy because we need to work on building the foundations at the same time the market just keeps changing all the time. One thing is clear is you need to have an open mind. You need to experiment as much as possible. And I think in the end you're going to have to double down on partners that are reliable, that are going to have that sustainable open mindset going forward.

What I'm extremely excited about is where I see these technologies crossing over into domains where we haven't made progress. I mean healthcare is one of the domains that have been the slowest moving in terms of making progress in digitalisation. But if you can unlock the potential of helping patients with the power of information, the power of intelligence, and if you think what AI could do to just completely put healthcare into the 21st Century that is amazing!

Of course I don't want my personal, deeply personal information that is encoded into my genetics to hinder me in some way. But at the same time if I could share my experiences as a patient with a lot of other people and that could help find mechanisms, unlock cures, I would love and cherish this idea that by sharing more that I could contribute to actually advancing science or you know making the world a better place. It's a balance between me and the we. And I think this is also deeply cultural. You have some cultures who hate to share, while others find sharing the most natural state of actually doing that.

I think this is not a hardline. This is not something carved in stone. I think this is also going to become much more flexible over time. But in that whole me and we debate there is one guiding line, you will only share more if you feel that it's going to benefit you, benefit you know society at large, benefit the company you work for. I think that is the balance that we need to have. If there's no balance then I think it's going to be a very hard sell. We're now in a situation where consumers, I think they're happy to give you more insights, but only if there's something in it for them.

But it's not enough as a company to be essential for your customers, you have to continuously raise the bar in terms of relevance. And what you've seen in a number of markets is that you're essential but if your relevance goes down you become a dumb pipe, you erode and you really can't make the difference anymore. How can you use the power of information technology to be more relevant, how can you personalise the experience, I think relevance is the game certainly in the age of AI.

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OLIVIER KLEIN: Peter's perspective on agentic AI is fascinating. We're seeing a world where AI agents will drive 90% of all web traffic. I believe this has huge implications for your digital and technology strategy and potentially reshape your entire business model. Historically I often talked about being on the channel of comfort of your customer, be where your customer is, so to speak. But moving forward there might not even be a channel anymore. Agents might be the one just directly engaging with us and our company. And look to no surprise my day to day conversations with customers lately are all about agentic AI. So I figure let's do a top five of what you should know right now about agentic AI.

First, what actually are AI agents? AI agents are autonomous software systems that leverage AI to reason, plan and then complete tasks on behalf of humans or other systems. They can fulfil actions end to end, like performing code reviews, compiling research, processing claims, planning a trip or maybe even managing complete enterprise applications. And the main point is they can act autonomously, to some extent, which brings me to my first thing to be aware of.

Generative AI has been a great advancement that allows us to be more creative in both the visual and the linguistic space. It is however output oriented and generally requires you to prompt something against the AI. In this next evolution of agentic AI that we're building AI agents can act completely autonomously and they are goal oriented. They basically break down the tasks into smaller steps effectively mimicking human logic and reasoning and then either execute those step by step tasks by themselves or hand it off to other agents to complete that job. And this by the way is already a reality and it allows us to have AI take actions on our behalf.

Now this brings me to my second point. In the future, and to some extent already today, our end customers might be using agents to complete their day to day tasks. And one thing that made that possible is that AI now has visual understanding. This probably started with Anthropic's feature called computer use which allows an AI model to control a computer screen and reason from it. Just like that video that you see playing here the model autonomously navigates through a Google sheet within a web browser. It then opens up a web form and extracts the right and relevant information from it. It then eventually fills that into another vendor request form. And all of that within a standard web browser interface which was actually meant for humans to fill out not artificial intelligence. And again everything you see here is clicked and typed in automatically using an AI. And that effectively allows AI to use any system that wasn't even programmed or meant to use prior from an AI.

And we also recently launched a new Amazon Nova capability called Amazon Nova Act. With Act you can give an AI model intelligent control of human interfaces. Just like what you see here, Nova understands the interface and tries to then think about using that interface to complete the task it was asked to do. In this scenario it's using Google Maps to find the biking distance and time between two locations.

Again allowing AI to think and act on a graphical user interface that was designed for humans to actually use. And it obviously doesn't stop there. We already start seeing some of our customers implementing this new way of interacting with websites and apps. Just like we said before and predicted a good chunk of traffic will come from AI agents and not humans anymore against your applications.

What you see here is Perplexity, an AI powered search engine, but more specifically you see the Perplexity Assistant which can become your default assistant on your android phone. What is really interesting here is that it is multimodal meaning it can take in text, images, videos. But more importantly beyond just referencing its own knowledge that Perplexity has it can interface with other apps on your phone. This means you could say I want to go

home for example and it automatically would open up your Uber app, book you a taxi via that third party app, without integration to happen just to the app that was interfaced by the AI here. All that to say, the future engagement channel of your customer might not be your application but rather an assistant that they use that is talking to you.

This goes back to the old saying of the promise of AI, the promise of AI is no UI. And now my third point is about extending AI capabilities into many systems.

First this means it's not one model that's going to rule them all, but it also means that we start seeing multi-agent collaborations, specialised AI agents that are specifically trained to do one task.

Such as, for example what you've seen earlier of using a graphical user interface. And as part of this shift towards autonomous systems we're also seeing a rise in multi-agent systems that can reason and collaborate with other AI agents and humans to accomplish more complex tasks. But apart from just training agents together though we also want to integrate agents into other SAS platforms.

This is where another interesting new protocol comes in which Anthropic recently proposed, the model context protocol or MCP in short. The idea is that we want AI agents to talk to our SAS platforms that we are using, maybe your Slack channels, your Salesforce records or even your Google Drive. Now instead of building integration for every agent into all of these platforms we can use MCP, a standardised way for AI models to connect and interact with external tools, data sources, and services, in a simple and unified manner.

I'd say think of it like a USB-C port but for your AI. Just as USB-C allows to plug in many devices and connect them easily to your computer with one plug, MCP allows AI systems to access various external resources to a single and consistent protocol without needing to custom code for each of these connections. Pretty cool hey. Okay time for my fourth point now.

I believe that agentic AI will allow us to be proactive rather than reactive. Agents should anticipate needs before they even arise.

So let's take an example, Alexa+. Alexa+ is proactive, and just like a real live assistant it improves and becomes more personalised over time. You can even delegate tasks and it will take action on your behalf. But look instead of me talking through it let's have a quick look at how it works.

And this is a wonderful segue into my fifth and last takeaway about agentic AI.

Agents can become like assistants that you hand work off to do. But the final decision might still be done by a human. And we start seeing many companies build onto this idea of having an AI complete tasks in the background for oneself but with traceability and visibility of what's actually happening. Take for example Manus. Manus AI is an advanced autonomous artificial intelligent agent launched in early 2025 by a Chinese start-up. Unlike traditional AI that needs constant human input, Manus can independently understand, plan, and then complete complex tasks from start to finish.

It acts like a digital executive managing a team of specialised sub-agents to break down and handle those multi-step workflows such as hiring, such as data analysis or apartment hunting. Manus integrates multiple of those powerful AI models to enhance its reasoning and decision making, works asynchronously in the Cloud, and notifies the end-user you only when the task is done. And as you see in the video that's playing here it allows us to visually track what the AI is doing. It evaluates every step, if we want to remove for example that black box effect by seeing what's going on using that AI, and we now fully understand how it comes to those conclusions, and obviously to the final output eventually. And this is great because now we can treat AI agents as our new assistants whilst having control over what they are actually doing.

So those are my five things to be aware of right now when it comes to agentic AI.

One thing that strikes me is how quickly customer expectations are rising. And as Peter Hinssen noted, what wowed us just a few years ago now feels completely basic and is actually expected. And companies like Bodd are discovering what true personalisation could look like when you combine precise data with ethical practices. And that brings us to the end of today's show. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I have. I'm Olivier Klein. And until next time.

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