SUMMIT SPOTLIGHT 2025

Accelerating business value with AI

GFX:
[AWS LOGO] EXECLEADERS

SARAH BASSETT: Thanks so much for being here today as well. As you know I look after the software segment for Australia and New Zealand. I have the very lucky job of working with folks like you. And one of the great privileges of working with software companies is really seeing the pace of innovation, and also being able to collaborate with you and work together to kind of push each other to big audacious goals right. And at AWS we always talk about you know obsessing over our customers and we learn so much from our customers. From hundreds of thousands of customers different patterns emerge. And it's an opportunity for us to think differently. And of course with the advent of AI and the disruption and the opportunity that it's bringing it's super exciting to see software companies really embracing it and really leading the pack in terms of how they're taking it up both for productivity as well as disrupting themselves to bring new features to market for their customers. And so that's really what the discussion is about today. One of the things we observe at AWS as I was mentioning to you is that those customers that are being intentional about changing their decision processes and thinking about their teams and their people are the ones that are being most successful. So hoping to dive into that with all of you today. And it would be great if we could just start with a little bit of context setting.

GFX:
SARAH BASSETT
HEAD OF SOFTWARE Saas, AWS

SARAH BASSETT: So Alexis is the CTO of Nuix. Maybe you could tell us a little bit about your role but also where you are in the journey around AI at Nuix?

ALEXIS ROUCH: Well you know I've been in technology a long time, many years, probably too long than I'd prefer to admit to. But you know I've lived through the evolution of the internet, the Y2K, the dotcom era, the rise of the iPhone, the financial crisis, you know all those crazy things. I reckon this is the most exciting time to be in technology.

SARAH BASSETT: Yeah absolutely.

GFX:
ALEXIS ROUCH
CTO, NUIX

ALEXIS ROUCH: I think we're super privileged to be in the space we're in. And and at Nuix we're really right at the heart of that AI explosion, which is super exciting. We we build software that allows companies to solve some of the most complex problems that there are in the world, because what we do is we transform vast volumes of unstructured data into actionable insights that you know we can do at scale, at speed and with the forensic accuracy which is probably where we're a bit different to our peers. We we like to think we find truth in the digital world. So in the world of AI it's a super exciting time. So for us though I would say we're at a bit of a two speed of kind of maturity level around our AI. We've been building AI traditional cognitive AI into software for many years. And we like to give our customers a no code interface so it's very transparent and controllable 'cause that's a big kind of principle for us. But, and more recently generative AI, we've really thought quite deeply about how we do that. But because we're so focused on our customers, a bit like you said you know it's customer obsessive, we spend all our energies building our products and perhaps not as much on building AI for ourselves. So we're now really scaling that up. So it's that real focus on how do we scale up internally and take all those lessons we've had from externally to apply it to ourself.

SARAH BASSETT: Awesome. Yeah. Great we'll want to hear more about that for sure. I'll go over to you Tracy as the GM for AI and Data at MYOB. Maybe you could do the same, just share a little bit about where you are in journey?

TRACY MOORE: Happy to yeah. At MYOB we're on a mission to help small businesses across Australia and New Zealand to start, survive and succeed. I joined that mission about six months ago to help them accelerate the drive of AI features into our products for our customers. We believe that helping our customers have access to these AI products and features helps them compete and helps them sort of be the lifeblood of the economy that they are. Similarly we have a kind of two speed two ways of thinking about things. So because AI has so much potential and because it's moving so quickly we tend to think of it as a bit of portfolio play where we have a set of bets for our customer facing AI and a different set of bets for our internal productivity. So for our customers we have a few things in market that we're super proud of, and we have a few that are in the pipeline now that we're really excited to announce later in the year.

GFX:
TRACY MOORE
GM – AI AND DATA, MYOB

SARAH BASSETT: Awesome. That's exciting for sure. Doug as the CTO of Culture Amp maybe you could also add your story to the mix.

DOUG ENGLISH: Yeah absolutely. So yes Culture Amp we we're really helping companies to build sustainable high performance cultures and it's we've been I guess as a company running for about 15 years or so. And I think particularly with AI I think one of the things that's genuinely exciting for us is that the challenge in building the sustainable high performance culture is it's, the easy part is actually working out what's working and what's not, the really hard part is driving the behaviour change and to do that you really need to be connecting with every manager where they are at and helping them to move forward, and I think that's where some of the technology has finally caught up to the mission of the company in some ways. AI our journey I think we've been leveraging different parts of AI for at least six-seven years I would say. So well before the rise of the LLMs. Originally it was more in the NLP space. So doing things like sentiment analysis and topic clustering and those sorts of things. It was really helping us to make sense mostly of large bodies of comments coming in engagement surveys to help from the reporting side. And then of course with the rise of LLMs it's I think initially we were using them to introduce summarisation which really did actually unlock a whole heap of new insight because it was the first time we could treat the quality of data the same with the same filters as the quantity of data. So originally the challenge with comments is if you provide people with too many filter options it becomes really easy to triangulate and identify an individual which is not the intent of the platform but with summarisation suddenly we can we can provide a greater level of confidentiality but still help managers to get a deeper understanding of what's going on within organisations. And then probably the thing that we're most excited about is the work that we're doing in the AI coach space which is much more going into MCP and RAG architecture and really multi agents and really helping, that's the part that is kind of connecting the manager to where they are and helping them to move forward in the ways that they need to.

GFX:
DOUG ENGLISH
CO-FOUNDER AND CTO, CULTURE AMP

SARAH BASSETT: Yeah awesome. So some very diverse customer sets and offerings. So thanks for taking us through that. I think you've all kind of talked about where you're concentrating some of your AI efforts and things but I think it's fair to say whatever research kind of we're all subscribing to in the AI space that we still see quite bit of analysis about customers or organisations trying to work out where's the best prioritisation or you know concentration of their energy, where do you begin, how do you think about prioritising and selecting what you go after. So maybe I'll start with you again Tracy just if you could share a little bit about you know how, what's the decision kind of framework within MYOB? You've mentioned both internal decisions as well as some customer facing features as well.

TRACY MOORE: Yeah happy to share. So I think in the early days my experience at other companies and I know what they were doing at MYOB last year was trying to work hard to pick the right bets. So lots of analysis about like customer desirability, viability and feasibility, and all sorts of canvasses and hack-a-thons. And what we found that now after lots of kind of learning and soul searching is thinking about the portfolio of bets. And we think about the portfolio in terms of a sort of triangle of trade-offs. So I think maybe most people in the room are old enough to remember the iron triangle of trade-offs in time and cost and quality. So we think across all of the AI bets that we're making, especially in the customer space. We think about the first part of the triangle as building capability. So we believe that AI is here to stay. Like this isn't you know the kind of thing that you would get in a consulting team and ask them to build your AI and pop it over there and then leave. Like...

SARAH BASSETT: It's not a fad.

TRACY MOORE: ...That's just not the thing. So we have to put in the effort to. I nearly said train the teams but it's not training it's kind of you know grassroots learning, embracing, adopting. So the first part of the triangle is what money and time and effort are we putting into building capabilities. The second part is shipping value. So you know I deeply love learning. I'd like to spend all of my time building capability. We're a commercial organisation. We believe the stuff we're building is genuinely helpful for our customers. So where are we shipping. So that's the first sort of element of tension. And the third part is thinking about risk. And the way that we think about risk and calibrate our attitude to risk again keeps changing.

So in the early days there was a lot of thinking about reputational risk and all of the you know the airline chatbot with the bereavement policy or the you know there was car dealership that sold a car for a dollar. So originally there was a lot of thinking about what if we ship something imperfect and we look silly. And over time that has been with the pace of the change and the potential of AI it is so dynamic. It's the biggest change in tech in our lifetime possibly ever. So maybe the risk thinking needs to be more existential. So what is a non-negotiable, cyber risk. What is negotiable, well TechDay. You know normally you would have really slow kind of thoughtful deliberative processes. Whereas now our appetite for TechDay is way higher than it's ever been before. So yeah, balancing, learning, shipping, and consistently calibrating what we mean by risk.

SARAH BASSETT: Yeah that's awesome.

ALEXIS ROUCH: I think you're right to say it's existential, right. I think we were probably initially a little bit cautious about generative AI because for us responsible and ethical AI is just one of our absolute core values. We part of our purpose is to be a force for good. So we're-we're very deliberate about how we choose things. So you know I like your framing. It's really thinking through that and I think we were a little bit cautious. But I think when you look at the, I think the numbers are we spend, the big tech companies are spending a billion dollars per day on AI, on generative AI. Like it's just crazy right. So we really had that a-ha moment where we went it is AI or die, we really need to apply it to ourselves not just to what we're building. And so we kind of went from cautiously build, let's build it properly, let's build the right compliance framework, to like right we're all out. So we're now running a programme we call HB Squared which is Human Brain Squared. It's kind of building on the Kahneman's think fast and slow kind of model. But all about from the top down. So your question around you know do we, where do you start, we actually just started at the exec level. So CEO, execs, we're all in. Everything we do every day, how we're using AI and that's kind how, in fact I think Matt Comyn kind of referred to that too, that's how it...

SARAH BASSETT: Strong leadership.

ALEXIS ROUCH: ...Kind of cascades down yeah.

SARAH BASSETT: Yeah. Any kind of big transformation it's really dependent on that strong leader isn't it. That's great. That's great. Do you want to chime in Doug and share how epiphanies or anything that changed along the way with the advent of AI?

DOUG ENGLISH: I think, I mean with eh with any new change in technology I think for most companies like I think what's really important is to be really clear about what is your competitive advantage and what is not and you know what's commodity essentially. And I actually think like AWS is actually a fantastic example for us because as a company we've been cloud native from day one. So we've been a AWS customer from 15 years ago onwards. But when we first stated it was on EC2 servers. And for quite a number of years we had an internal one of our development teams was dedicated to building out an infrastructure layer to standardise the way that we managed all of the all the servers that we were building and managing. And we actually at a certain point decommissioned the entire team and switched across to-to use much more of the managed services that AWS was building because we realised like AWS was building it at a much faster pace than our team could keep up with trying to build the just for Culture Amp solution. And I think the I've seen the same thing happening with AI. We've really just gone through exactly the same journey where before the rise of the LLMs we had internal teams that were working on our own AI models that were doing things like the sentiment analysis and so forth. And in that world you know we were hiring deep experts that had the specialisations that were required to build and train the models and manage the models and make sure they weren't drifting and all of the work all the framework that needs to be around managing AI well in that world. Now that we have LLMs essentially we're not building our own models anymore. We're instead we're focusing on our prompt engineering and on RAG architectures and MCP architectures and you know building agents and things like that but leveraging the LLMs that exist and so essentially we've kind of treat-treated that part of the stack as a commodity that's not going to be differentiation for Culture Amp. The differentiation is our deep data. It's our people science. So really our expertise in the domain. And it's our, it's our benchmarking. And so we can use all of that to build differentiated AI products but leveraging as much of the infrastructure as we can. And I think that's, yeah, that's definitely been the shift we've seen over the last couple of years.

SARAH BASSETT: Yeah that's great. And being you know a bit malleable I suppose as new things come to market and weighing those decisions about where you spend your energy and what you take inhouse and you also shared before I think when we were chatting around having some tenets around decision making for AI. Do you want to share those?

DOUG ENGLISH: Yeah. The first three bench- or the three principles that we put in place when we were first looking at I guess it wasn't so much first looking at AI but it was really as we as we started to look more expansively at where we could be using AI through the whole platform, and those tenets were build trust, keep control, and expand value. And so really when we're looking at where do we introduce AI in the platform we're looking, we're using those three tenets. The build trust is it's partly for us it's incredibly important to keep private data private. But also where we're using AI how do we do so in a way where the end our customer has high faith in what we're putting in front of them. Like if it's a summarisation of comments how do we how do we ensure that the that summarisation can be grounded and proven, like here are the examples the examples of comments that are coming from that summary. The keep control part is, I think it's particularly important as we're introducing more and more AI into applications, is that we remember that actually it needs to be incredibly human centric. It's, we're really trying to amplify the human that's at the at the core of it and if we forget that I think it's a it's a really dangerous world to be in. And then the expand value is really focusing on where are the biggest, the biggest value opportunities is for the customer or if its internally for reducing workloads, for driving efficiencies. Rather than for example just trying to put AI into a product as a part of a gimmick. It's you know, I think, it's probably to do with also the hype curve. As AI explodes everywhere I think really it's going to be the applications that are genuinely creating value that are the long term differentiators and so that tends to be a big part of the focus for us as well.

SARAH BASSETT: Yeah. Very, very similar you know themes emerging. Very different companies, you all are in different markets, but you know this everyone was focussed on value. Shipping value I think is your term. Being conscious of what risk you can take and what risk you can't. So it's great to share that. And definitely some patterns emerging there. I think also just acknowledging that it requires a very agile kind of reinventive sort of spirit and culture. So we'll talk about culture in a bit. But I did want to come back to, if these kind of your foundational values that are you know creating your decision framework, there's also some big dependences and I know Alexis we've talked a little about you know data quality and thinking about some of that. So maybe you just want to chime in on how that's affected your kind of decision making as well.

ALEXIS ROUCH: Yeah. Well absolutely. And I think it comes in different forms. You know the-the when we look at models and what we would be prepared to build into our products or use ourselves internally we do look all the way back to what data have you trained this model on, and are we comfortable with that, are we comfortable with the ethics of the of the business and how you've built that into the way that you train your models and then use them. So we do take it all the way back to that kind of route cause when we assess the tools that we're prepared to use. But then if you play that forward in terms of how do we then use that in earnest we'd all know that, we all know the phrase that you know the models are only as good as the data you train them on and rubbish in rubbish out. So even when you have selected your large language model that you might use as your base you still need to think about if you're using that internally how are you curating the data that-that you're going to run that model on and then how do you use that as an enterprise. So, and of course that's a sweet spot for us. So we like to think that we can drink our own champagne so we-we're doing it to ourselves as well. We use our own software to curate the data that then that we run our AI models on internally for our own enterprise. And you know that's kind of nice a really nice combination and because we do really look at that data at a very forensic level and as we know with a lot of large language models the risks around whether it really is true or whether it's hallucinating or whether it's actually giving you data that might be you know old versions of data that doesn't really help you. All of that is super important, 'cause it really is all about, ultimately it's all about the data.

DOUG ENGLISH: Totally. Yeah I think what I find really interesting especially the data governance or the management of data across is it's it particularly, I mean we're obviously looking at it within, we're managing it within the product, but also internally as we're using AI. And some really interesting discussions that were coming up internally as we started to introduce tools for doing things like enterprise search and summarisation across the top of that around oh but what if there's a document that's supposed to be only accessible to execs and now it's been discoverable. I think the reality of it is that those problems existed before AI. It was always possible for someone to find something that had the wrong permissions, but really we're shedding more light on it now. And it does make it probably more important to make sure that we've got all the controls in place. But yeah I think it's the same for things like the recency of data as well. Like you know every company is struggling with their Wiki pages that are six years out of date. I think it's increasingly important now to actually be managing that properly and deleting or archiving content that's no longer relevant because soon as we put an AI layer over the top it can obfuscate you know what is current and what is not. And so yeah I think definitely the whole data governance especially internally is and more important that's ever been.

ALEXIS ROUCH: And it's probably got PAI data in it and all kinds of stuff right.

DOUG ENGLISH: Yeah.

ALEXIS ROUCH: So having options to redact that data and then save what's actually current particularly in the world of agentic AI right. If your, the difference historically is you had humans in the mix, but the extent to which your automating now with agentic AI it gets more and more important that it's accurate yeah.

DOUG ENGLISH: Yeah.

SARAH BASSETT: So governance, guidelines, best practices might have always existed but it's amplifying the need for them at scale.

DOUG ENGLISH: It amplifies the need. But I also think in a way it's actually a really good thing because it's shedding light on areas that were always a concern and really forcing companies to actually ensure that they uplift their data governance in order to manage it properly. So I think it's got efficiency benefits but it actually has good data governance benefits as well.

SARAH BASSETT: That's great. Awesome. I'm going to shift a bit to a kind of a cultural and people component. We're kind of limited on time so I'm going to kind of go round the room and just ask you know we know that you know the kind of democratised introduction of gen AI has been a big needle mover right. So you've got potentially a lot of people in your organisation wanting to make technology decisions that didn't always before and then you've got your whole technical community as well. So could each of you kind of share one thing that you've found really impactful to kind of you know bring the organisation on your journey whether it's enablement or more of a cultural dynamic. And maybe we'll start with you Tracy.

TRACY MOORE: Yeah. I might share a story about DAISY. So we set up DAISY. So it's a great acronym and now I need to remember it on the spot. The Design Authority for AI. So yeah, the Design Authority for AI Systems with a Y. And it has its own Slack Thread and it has lots of beautiful little emojis. So this kind of emerged from the world of everyone wanted to make decisions about how to build a thing or how to use a thing or what tool to buy or how to share practices or. And almost we've kind of tried to flip the old world of like enterprise architecture governance on its head and saying we don't have any, beyond cyber, we don't have any rule set in stone to govern against does your thing meet these rules.

Well we haven't written rules yet. And if we had written rules they'd be out of date by the time the ink was dry. So DAISY is this kind of bottom up evolutionary architecture forum that comes together with all the leaders who are in any way involved in making decisions. And it's almost kind of trying to write the practices by sharing what we're all learning. And then any given decision or practice is current until it's not. So it's sort of almost an evolutionary architecture rather than a sort of deliberative one. But yeah I think whoever my lovely colleague who came up with the name DAISY has really set the tone for it, rather than being rule is this, as learning and building together.

SARAH BASSETT: It's a real good cultural signal to say this is how we're doing it, we're evolving literally by the week.

TRACY MOORE: Yeah.

SARAH BASSETT: Yeah that's great. Would you like to go too?

ALEXIS ROUCH: We we have put a kind of responsible and ethical AI kind of policy in place. But it is very much principles based. So to your point it's not prescriptive, it's principles based. And I think what we're trying to do is take the angst out of it you like. 'Cause what-what, you'd be surprised actually how cautious a lot of people are. It's not just us 'cause we're very passionate about responsible ethical AI, but actually eh you know we-we talk a lot about how it's moving so fast but actually you go to a lot of businesses and there are a lot of people holding back. So what we tried to do is say well you don't worry about it, we want to democratise it, we want everybody using it, if you've got a tool you want use just run it past us, we will check that it's responsible and ethical and meets our principles, we'll just give you the nod and then go. To try and take some of that kind you know we don't want to slow that down ah we want just really enable people. And I think that's really important 'cause what we're trying to do is say yes you need to be cautious, but you also need to be bold. So it's kind of like okay yes just check that it's kind of not going to leak our data where shouldn't and it's you know it's meeting ethical principles, but let's go for it right. We should, we need to imagine what can the world look like you know a few years ahead and then work back. 'Cause this isn't just about productivity benefits right. This hits everything. This hits how do your strategic plans, how do you charge, what's your coach as you as you said Doug, you know the-the coach the AI coach it can touch absolutely everything that you can do.

DOUG ENGLISH: Totally.

ALEXIS ROUCH: To really kind of help us leap frog. So yeah I guess that would by my, kind of what we're trying to encourage is that cautious but bold.

SARAH BASSETT: But also like leading by example, by quickly making decisions and showing that you kind of have a little bit risk appetite as an organisation as in the leadership. I mean it's a sending a signal right. That's great top down leadership too.

DOUG ENGLISH: I think maybe I'll talk from like the internal engineering team perspective 'cause I mean there's also kind of how do you, have AI be adopted across the whole organisation which is a big topic I, yeah I think, I mean actually for both, I think the main thing is the whole space is moving so fast that you can't just rely on training people because there aren't any experts in this space yet right. So I think the main thing we've focused on is how do we create a culture of play and experimentation and how do we make it safe to do that. So yeah internally all of our engineers have got access to tools to help with code generation and we've set up forums for engineers to sort of share their learnings, what's worked well. You know maybe someone's tried using it to generate tests and written a code or tried the other way round or you know. And so just opportunities to kind of present and share what's worked and what's not. And then I think the other thing is you know especially as we've gone from having specialist teams building AI capabilities to an expectation that actually almost every of and almost all of our engineering teams will be doing some level at least prompt engineering,. We've also been focusing a big focusing on really upskilling all of our engineers. We did that at the start of the year through a hackathon. And what we did with that was, it was a core team originally that spent a fair bit of time really building out the infrastructure to make that work really well. So actually using AI to generate a whole heap of synthesized data so that we could you know so that we weren't using production data but we had real life you know life like data for our whole platform that the engineers could actually play with and leverage. We we curated some training courses and we had two different streams actually. One for engineers that wanted to go deeper and then for those that were less technical that wanted to really focus more on prompt engineering. And then it was really just hackathon teams coming up with their own innovations and playing and experimenting and then presenting back and making videos and those sorts of things and we found that was a fantastic way to give people the space to actually feel you know to learn in a space that they hadn't been in before and be novices again even though in a lot of cases they're you know 10 years 15 years experienced software engineers in a space that you know totally new to them. And off the back of it we saw a lot more comfort in adopting AI roadmap features.

SARAH BASSETT: I think you had mentioned to me previously that you kind of had this realisation that it was being treated like a specialty area AI you know for a long period of time and now it was time to make sure that was you know people were proficient across the board.

DOUG ENGLISH: Yeah, totally. I mean we talk about the T-shaped engineer. And you know I would say it used to be the one of the specialisations. So the depth of T, we're now increasing, but of course there's still some levels of specialisation but it also needs to be part of the breadth of the T for an engineer now.

SARAH BASSETT: That's great. Awesome. I'm just conscious of time since I told everyone they could not get up from their seat. Such an engaging conversation and yeah loved the linkages across the different companies and that's really kind of what this ExecLeaders portion of the summit's about is to learn from each other so thank you so much for sharing. I would like to wrap up though just going around to each of you. There'd be people in this room and listening that are at all different stages of their journey with AI and some maybe not quite getting started. And so if you could maybe give, you know if you have any parting thoughts but also maybe just a word of advice maybe from your own lessons or learnings to share with the audience that'd be great.

ALEXIS ROUCH: Yeah I think I there's an oft quoted piece around which I do subscribe to that you know that AI won't replace humans but AI, humans with AI will replace humans without AI. So I think it is beholden on all of us to yeah to lean into that and to embrace it and yes be cautious 'cause yes there are absolute pitfalls. There's a lot of bias in the data which is one of the things I feel very passionately we have to guard against. But there's so much upside. So really just looking at those use cases. Particularly if you're starting out, look at those uses cases where you really can make a material difference to start, pick four or five, and just go for it, and then just build from there.

SARAH BASSETT: Awesome. Thanks Alexis. Tracy.

TRACY MOORE: Picking up on theme of just go for it I think just get started. So we've had lots of conversations about this isn't the kind of thing that you can learn from books and courses and tutorials and YouTube videos and all the ways that you can do kind of passive learning. This is the kind of thing that there is no substitute for actively trying something and trying again and again and stubbing your toe. And sort of learning in that like almost physical visceral way rather than a sort of one step removed passively. So yeah just get started.

SARAH BASSETT: Get into it. Love it. Doug.

DOUG ENGLISH: Building on that I think I think probably the main thing to focus on is you're not alone and you know every company is grappling with the same challenges at the same time and so leverage your network. Leverage events like this. Find people that are doing things in interesting ways, learn what they're doing, share what you're trying. I think that's definitely, given how innovative the whole space is I think that's actually the best, the best path at the moment is just learning what other people are, learning from others and sharing.

SARAH BASSETT: And it's fun.

DOUG ENGLISH: Yeah. Totally.

SARAH BASSETT: Make it fun. That's right. Awesome. Well, thank so you much again for your candid openness and for engaging. And I think you know it'll be great, you'll be hanging around in the afternoon, so I'm sure we'll continue to connect and others can connect to you as well. So a big round of applause for our panel. Thank you.

GFX:
[AWS LOGO] EXECLEADERS