



# ACCENTURE POWERFUL MINDS

## PODCAST EPISODE 4

### AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

#### **AI as a catalyst for inclusion**

**Ana**

Hello and welcome to the fourth and penultimate episode of the Accenture Powerful Minds podcast. I am Ana, a Senior Manager at Accenture and I'm joined by two analysts – Darren and Ashley.

We are talking about all things AI and inclusion. Those are two terms that don't typically come hand in hand, but we are here to help to change that.

Darren, you mentioned that you've done really cool stuff in Accenture and I got massively jealous. Would you mind telling me more please?

**Darren**

Innovation is the place to be for your first six or seven months in the firm. A lot of the work that I would have done with the Innovation team is pretty cutting-edge technology, so VR headsets, AI chat bots, AI natural language processing technology and we look at that from a kind of, strategy and inspiration perspective, but also from a co-creation perspective. These are all jargon-filled terms, so...

**Ana**

True, so you're talking about doing it together and looking at the future – I like it.

**Darren**

We take that to clients and try and demonstrate in a very pragmatic way how they can be utilised to kind of, fundamentally re-engineer from top to bottom. To make our clients understand the utility of these technologies and how they can not only impact on their revenue, how they can be applicable in a more human context.

**Ana**

That's really key because I'm personally now involved in a project that involves chat bots. And we're talking about creating chat bots and sometimes people think that the chat bot will solve the problem and it's like a human brain behind it.

**Darren**

Sadly not.

**Ana**

It is not. And we have great teams that help you to interact and think about the customer experience. So how is that person going to interact with the chat bot? And that's fascinating, our clients/customers will be looking into those interactions with the chat bot, they want to cancel their phone contract or whatever, and they interact with the chat bot and they say "oh, funny it may be a chat bot but I'm having kind of a nice moment with this and my day is better". And it's what you said, a chat bot is a fantastic technical tool, but it's about how we implement it, how we can put that human angle, how we design that customer experience, not stopping people getting what they want because



they're talking to a machine.

The whole point of what people want to do with artificial intelligence is, not just creating that tool, it's about enabling that tool, using that tool within the real life. And that's what we really need to be passionate about.

**Darren**

Okay so I'm curious what you've done since you've joined Accenture.

**Ashley**

Right so I'm a very new joiner to Accenture, I've only been here for a few months so I can't say that I've had much personal experience with implementing AI at Accenture, but I can say that one of things that Accenture really values, on the topic of inclusion, is a variety of backgrounds and experiences. I've met people who have come from teaching backgrounds, who've come from politics, from economics, from science like myself, literature. And the great thing is that if you don't know something at Accenture, there's always someone to ask and people are so willing to help out.

I don't come from perhaps a traditional "techie" sort of background. I studied Biochemistry for my Masters and a similar topic from my undergraduate degree. So my background is more in the sciences, especially more life sciences and I think one of the things about AI and inclusion is that with diverse people involved in the design implementation, there are so many more potential applications. So, for me personally I am quite interested in what AI can do in the drug discovery field or in terms of medical trials because right now there are so many resources that go into the research and discovery of a drug and the chances of a drug making it to market is very slim. And I think AI could have so much potential in terms of helping bring these life changing or lifesaving treatments to people.

So Darren, can you tell me about any real life examples that you've come across where AI has helped promote inclusion in the real world?

**Darren**

I think AI is the most potent when it's applied to the real world. And relatively recently released in, if I'm not mistaken 2017, multiple versions later it's called "Microsoft Seeing AI". It's an app that fundamentally redefines the experience of being a blind person which is pretty amazing. It's got lots of functions and I use it on a daily basis for all kinds of stuff. But what it can do, it can read barcodes on food. So you don't want to take the dog food or the beans, you want to be sure what you're getting out of the cupboard. It's very handy for that, it can read barcodes, tell you what the item is that you're looking at. It can also do facial recognition, so you can programme it to identify people by their face. It can also navigate, it can also give you GPS information, so it's a bit like a very sophisticated GPS. You shake your phone and the app will tell you what street you're on and what number – very useful.

It can also do things like scan documents, so printed documents and also your laptop screen if you've got some kind of an issue and your screen reader has decided to have an off day, you can scan your computer screen for some kind of error message that might pop up that you can't necessarily get to by traditional screen reading methods.

So it's very potent and it was developed by a blind software developer in Microsoft. It's had multiple iterations now and multiple downloads.

**Ana**

That reinforces the point of having a diverse workforce that helps you to actually create diverse products rather than the same thing, because no-one might have thought of those things if you actually don't have those difficulties.

**Darren**

Absolutely.

**Ana**

That's quite cool, that's super cool. Excellent examples on how we have changed lives.

**Darren**

So actually, leading on then from my example of how AI can fundamentally transform peoples' lives. Do you have any examples yourself or any



experiences of how AI can be used in a positive sense for good in the world?

**Ashley**

Yeah, so just recently I read an article about how this robot is being developed to help out the elderly in care homes. Around the world, certain countries are facing challenges with aging populations and a lack of enough care takers to help care for them in homes. So, this team developed a robot and initially the team's intent for the robot was to help with tasks like bringing food or checking up on them to see if they needed anything. But what they realised was that the elderly actually wanted the robot to stay and interact, and even though it was a robot it provided them with a sense of interacting with a human and improve their moods.

**Ana**

You're talking about older people and I just came across something that is relatable with the younger generations. I don't know whether you read that Geena Davis was involved with some Disney work with Disney. And she probably, I don't know how many Disney movies you have watched, but some of them might not be the most inclusive towards women, LGBT. So they tend to be quite biased towards certain family stereotypes.

And they are trying to address now with machine learning and some NLP trying to address those issues and see where those biases are coming through and then we potentially stop it. That's one of the powers of machine learning – trying to address mistakes from the past by machine learning and try to change those stereotypes. It would really help kids, because if you are a child and you're brought up by having a Disney princess that is wonderful and needs to be rescued by a man, it's not really going to help you and then you think that the only possibility is to have a man and a woman getting together. You want to see something else if you have a child and try to address that and the fact that Disney are thinking of using AI to prevent those biases, I think is brilliant.

From a personal experience, ending up in a company like Accenture that is very focused on

tech, I thought that would never happen, when I was a kid that never crossed my mind. So as a female peer, how did that happen to you from that childhood that may not have been the idea that you had to eventually be coming to work for us.

**Ashley**

So like you, Ana, as a child I didn't really consider engineering and technology as a future career, and I remember so strongly when I was applying for undergraduate degrees, I was like, no physics, no maths, those are scary topics, I don't want to go near them.

But it was actually, in my first year of undergraduate, doing one of my chemistry lab courses where we were doing a project, and I realised I really enjoyed the problem solving, the logic, the analytical parts of it, and the more I thought about it the more I was like, this sounds like engineering, maybe I'm wrong.

**Ana**

Exactly, that's kind of it. They get you scared with those computers and you think it's something you can never touch. And then, as you said, when you actually get to solve the problem and use your brain you realise that, ok hang on this is not about laptops this is about using my brain and being clever.

**Ashley**

It's about the way you think and the way you approach a problem, and not necessarily about all the intimidating numbers or figures and things like that that might come to mind.

**Ana**

Myself, I hate calculus but I still love doing data science, it's not about numbers it's about the way you're thinking.

**Ashley**

Exactly. Two important things to get more women into tech. One is the way that technology is portrayed and the way that technological roles and careers are portrayed and just the skills that are valued within it. And the other thing that's great at Accenture and increasingly around the world is being able to see women leaders in



technology like yourself Ana, and like many others that we have at Accenture. It's really inspiring and it shows that you do have something to bring, you can have a place at a technology firm and be in a leadership position.

### **Ana**

Yes it's true, if you don't see people that look like you in those leadership positions, you will never think that you will get there. I think we have, we're very lucky in Accenture to have leaders from different backgrounds and diverse from many different angles, it's inspiring and makes you want to believe that you can be there.

### **Ashley**

Exactly. It's been absolutely fascinating talking to you Darren and Ana but unfortunately, that's all we've got time for today. If you want to keep on hearing about the technology that's changing your everyday world, tune into the rest of this podcast series.

As always, keep the conversation going over on our social media channels. And if you want to work with us and play a part in shaping the future, head to our website to find out where you can apply your powerful mind.

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