



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Rajendra Prasad, **Accenture Global Automation Lead**, interviewed by Paco Nathan

Paco: Hi. My name is Paco Nathan and we're here at the O'Reilly Artificial Intelligence Conference in New York City. It's a pleasure today to be joined by Rajendra Prasad, who is the senior managing director and global automation lead at Accenture. Rajendra.

Rajendra: Paco, nice meeting you.

Paco: Very good to meet you. One question; what are the challenges for implementation for a successful AI adoption strategy?

Rajendra: We've been doing AI conversations, AI implementation, AI discussions with lots of our clients in the technology organizations. One of the biggest challenges that they all talk to me when I speak to them is they first get really excited with this newness of AI, and then say let's try it out. But then they try to do, use case by use case, one use case here, one use case there, and over a period of

time they have built silos of AI implementation. Some have gone so far, some just in the initial stages. I call it as building silo implementations within an enterprise, not having a holistic view of AI implementation. My biggest suggestion and advice to most of the leaders who I speak to is do not do AI if AI is not required. Understand what are your business challenges, and do not build a silo based AI adoption, build a holistic approach.

Paco: Wonderful. This kind of work, architecting AI, does this need rethinking from more conventional architectural approaches?

Rajendra: Absolutely. Over a period of time, we know that the technology of AI, data signs, all of that, exists for a long period of time. However, the last few years we have got a lot of development, improvements, and a lot of things happening in the AI world.

I come from software engineering background. You know software engineering has a very traditional discipline approach, be it a traditional waterfall

development or an agile development kind of concept, so what we have then done very successfully, talking to our IT leaders and systems leaders and the technologists and the business users who are responsible for AI is to embed what I call the discipline and the methodology aspects of software engineering and drive that with an engineering mindset in AI.

Let me give a simple example. If you want to run AI using an agile development, how do you define *sprints* within AI development? Be it data curation, data consumption, data capture, data harvesting, data analysis. Any aspects of the data that you want to do, what is your sprint? Do you want to do all of them in a sequence, or do you want to do, each of those are the different sprints. How do you approach that?

Tomorrow I will be also talking about microservices as an aspect within AI, how you apply that. DevOps, the new concepts of dev and ops together running through the run part of AI. All of these software engineering

principles can do a better handshake with AI, and then that's what I call applying, looking at AI development in a slightly different lens, and applying more proven, if I can say that, software engineering techniques on AI.

Paco: So in a sense it sounds like taking these notions, which are well-known in engineering, and the value of this, and eventually you're going to have to cross that bridge anyway...

Rajendra: Correct.

Paco: taking those principles and moving them, reflecting them into it. How about the value realization from implementations of AI? How do you track that?

Rajendra: Absolutely. We have created a concept called AI value *wallet*. The way we ask our implementation teams and the people, the engineers who takes AI use cases, AI aspects to the field is to identify up front what's the effort? What's the business benefit? Are we behind speed to market? Are we behind cost optimization? Are we behind customer experience? And if you convert that into an equal length quote/unquote dollar value, how much of that are you going to deposit into value wallet? We have a segmentation by automation AI data analytics, data

science aspect and you measure the value around that. As you go through that, the investments into AI has to offset the value that you put in, then you start making profitable AI, you can say.

Paco: Fantastic. So starting out though, understanding that contrast of where the organization is currently, versus where they could be.

Rajendra: Correct. That's a very good point, because the way I say, if you know around the quality guru, *Walt Humphrey* he says that if you do not know on a map where you are, the map won't help you. So an important aspect of this value realization and value creation is to make sure that you can identify where you are with AI use cases, and most importantly, always remember if it is not required to be AI, it doesn't need to be AI. It can be a simple automation solution, and that kind of drives the value generation.

Paco: And the key to this holistic view.

Rajendra: Absolutely, a very holistic view.

Paco: What do you see, or rather, how do you see the future workforce transforming though, with respect to this AI revolution that's going on?

Rajendra: As you have you seen in the keynote

presentations today in the morning, one of the biggest challenges for the AI community as we move forward will be creating the community and the expertise competencies, skill dictionary, that is required for AI, and it was very interesting stats that I saw in the morning, so while the things that we do in the organization is we focus very specifically to build AI skills.

We have a pyramid of AI expertise building. At the bottom of it, I call it as AI *prime*, or data prime, data scientists or data expert prime. It is very simply two to three years of experience, you pick up a specific technique, like the NLP, if you want to do data science, particularly descriptive, prescriptive, predictive or regression models. One specific area, but build a deep expertise in that area.

Then once you do that, you can build some algorithms, some models, and then you go to the next level, which is called AI architect. Then you architect a solution that can actually seamlessly fit into the ecosystem of the technology landscape of an enterprise. And then you graduate to AI coach, wherein you can then identify the use cases, the value valid aspect of it, where you are, and also taking the deep expertise you built in each of those areas and then get there. Finally you become an

AI champion.

We built this career model very consciously, and we drive all of our workforce, employees, through this to get graduated to that, and we give them certifications and we recognize them. We capture their competency and proficiency within the system, so that they can actually build a road map of learning across the data signs, across AI, across the software engineering, bringing all three aspects together, and then be able to deliver AI in an efficient and effective, and with the focus of user experience and customer experience impacting business experience.

Paco: Fantastic. This is building the individual, but also building the organization, and the linkages between them.

Rajendra: DNA, yeah. I call it organizational talent fabric that we built, and that's the AI fabric, and a very conscious effort, very conscious investment. Learning, being part of the community, like the one that we are in the last two days and the next two days, we are giving the sessions. This is an important aspect of building that expertise in our organization.

Paco: Fantastic. What are some of the practical tips or considerations, in terms of implementing AI at scale in

enterprise?

Rajendra: Whenever we approach AI, it is like a big change effort, right? Once you get through the yes, it is good, it's interesting, it's fancy, it's a new thing, then when you get to the reality, you need to drive change within the organization. You have to. It is like any technology change that we managed in the past, starting from computers to data to AI, every transformation that we have seen. Change management. What are the three key aspects of change management? People, process and technology. In my view, technology is easy, because you can learn ML, you can learn deep learning, you can learn your own networks, you just have to learn it.

Paco: So much open source.

Rajendra: Absolutely, and process, you can define the business processes, the AI development processes, and tell people that this is the process. What's the toughest part? People. Building a constant AI expertise change management program, co-opting them. I call it applying AI in very simple steps. Identifying where it makes immediate impact. Does this use case really make an impact? Can I apply simple discipline links, microservices, data engineering? Then you make, without disturbing your

enterprise ecosystem of technology, then building the people capability. Then continuously putting the innovation back into the system, right?

So it's like a cycle. I call it a simple, seamless, scalable and sustainable approach. You have to go through those steps. Make it simple. Don't interrupt the technology ecosystem, and then scale it by involving everybody in the organization, creating a talent fabric within the organization, then put up a mechanism where you can get continuous innovation back into the organization.

Paco: Right, that feedback. Fantastic. Thank you, Prasad.

Rajendra: Thank you very much. Nice meeting you.

Paco: Very good to meet you too.