



EP. 58: GEN AI FLUENCY: LEARNING – A USER-CENTERED EXPERIENCE

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Speaker 1 [00:00:00] I think culture is, in that future of work and how people think about their work is really the floor and the ceiling of our ability to get value out of Gen I.

Tracy Ring [00:00:18] Welcome back to another edition of Accenture's AI leaders podcast. This is Tracy Ring. I'm our chief data officer and global head of generative AI for Life Sciences, and I'm so excited to be joined by Jeremy Foreman, the executive director of data and AI for Pfizer. Welcome, Jeremy.

Jeremy Forman [00:00:36] Thanks, Tracy. Great to be here.

Tracy Ring [00:00:37] Great. So, we obviously spend all of our time working in life sciences, but what I'd love is before we get into the exciting data and AI part, you just tell me a little bit about what portion of that broader life sciences value chain that you're working in. Where are you focused and sort of what you're famous for?

Jeremy Forman [00:00:56] Oh, yeah. Happy to. So, over the past few years,

I was, working I have been working at an oncology biotech, focused on, very specific technology called antibody drug conjugates. And our focus was, getting, cancer products, cancer drugs to patients that needed them. And now that, we, we the company was acquired by Pfizer, is now part of Pfizer with their commitment on investing in ecology and expanding global access to really these critical, critical products.

Tracy Ring [00:01:32] So I love that background. I think for all of us, working in the industry, solving for oncology is sort of the thing that makes us, most honored to be doing the work that we're doing. So, what I'd love to do is, is talk a little bit about some of the secret sauce of, of what you're working through. I spend a lot of time talking to organizations about, AI or gen AI or data fluency. Right? I love that word fluency instead of, literacy. But can you set the foundation for us and say, you know, how do you describe that? What do you think Gen AI fluency is? And most importantly, highlight the connection to how we think of the data backbone.



Jeremy Forman [00:02:15] Yeah. That's great. I love and I love fluency as well. Fluency literacy can be so off putting right. I'm literate. Right. So, I love the idea of fluency. And when I think of fluency, and I think of GenAI fluency different than just AI fluency. Because I think GenAI fluency is something that everyone, in the workforce needs to be comfortable with. Where AI gets into convolutional neural networks and computer vision, like, which could be a little bit more specialized. But I think all of us need AI fluency. To me that's understanding, developing, and applying genAI solutions, in techniques to our own work, and to the work of our teams and to our companies. The backbone is so critical, and I think of the backbone for GenAI in data, but I think of it broader. I think you and I think of it in five kinds of key aspects. This backbone for GenAI fluencies. You have to have one technology foundation, right. There has to be some standard set of platforms and capabilities that are enabling people to adopt. GenAI. There has to be, of course, the data foundation, bringing a product mindset, having reusable high value-added data products. I think one of the numbers three and of this is one of the things that I think companies could start leaning into more is, our external partnerships. The industry is changing so fast and there's so many new innovations. It's impossible for a team inside a company to keep up with everything. So, this outside in learning and that type of feedback is critical, I think responsible AI is number four. I think responsible AI is a key part of the foundation. I think you can't have the data backbone without having the backbone of responsible AI. And last but not least, and this is something that we, you and I've talked about before and I'm super passionate about is culture, right? I think that if you haven't

kind of tilled the soil of culture for GenAI to take hold, you might get some, you know, fruit, but I don't think you'll get, you know, I don't think it's scalable and sustainable.

Tracy Ring [00:04:43] I love this, sort of five-point plan that you have around it. It's extremely comprehensive and I think really contextualizes while this is important, if you don't embark on it in a way that you're thinking about scaling, the risk can actually be quite high, right?

Jeremy Forman [00:05:03] Yeah. Yeah.

Tracy Ring [00:05:04] So much of what we're thinking through, and you ended with culture, but I actually could see that, you know, driving the tech enablement, driving the data foundation, etc., is actually a cultural thing. And in particular when we think about outside partnerships etc., you know, that could be many things. I think, you guys do an amazing job of, you know, thinking about the broader tech ecosystem and, you know, advisors in a special way. But, you know, how are you taking this and applying it to how you think about the future of work or how you're transforming it? What how does that foundation, have a linkage to how you're delivering, operating or, or any of the aspects of your business?

Jeremy Forman [00:05:46] Yeah. I mean, I think, you know, goes back to the idea that GenAI fluency is everybody's responsibility and relevant for every job. And so, I think that if we approach it more as a here's a use case, let's drive this use case or, you know, Microsoft Copilot will solve all of the ills, and everybody will be flawed because of that.



I think it's really shortsighted. I think that people all of us, we you know, we suffer from our own expert bias. Right? There's a something called Einstellung effect, which is basically this idea. Right? I love it. I mean, it's the idea that our previous experience and successes limit our ability to creatively think of new ways to solve new solutions. And I think that's all of us. And so, I think culture is, in the future of work and how people think about their work is really the flaw in the ceiling of our ability to get value out of GenAI. Right, I think. And so, pushing that and helping people get comfortable with it so that the people that embrace GenAI are the people that are going to excel. Gen Ai is not going to replace people, but the people that actually are most comfortable with it are the ones that that will excel and, kind of leap forward and benefit from it.

Tracy Ring [00:07:09] Yeah. I mean, I think you've done a great job of talking about the rewards and I think what you're talking about is really hard to do though. So, you know, what were the challenges? How did you overcome them? You know, what were some of the ways for our listeners that are embarking on something so important, you know, what should they not repeat or what should they embrace.

Jeremy Forman [00:07:31] Yeah. Oh, that's a great question. And it's multifaceted, I guess. But I think the first thing to understand is this isn't a project plan that has a beginning and an end. Right? I feel like that is something culture does not do well with. It's not a fixed point. So, I think having a long-term strategy with ongoing investment in community activation within your company, bringing in new ideas and, and, surfacing new technologies and new techniques to your workforce, listening.

Right, getting ideas, in sending people to generate new ideas. Right. And collaborate with others that might be in, you know, different departments, different teams. But I think that kind of cross collaboration that idea generation is how we learn. And then being able to actually fund some investments that can take some of those ideas, prove them out, learn from them, show progress, and then feed that back into the community so that again, they can continue to learn. I just think that has to be a way of working. Right. I think we have to establish that within our companies this is how we work. This is the new norm. This isn't hey, we're going to do a yearlong project to get people, through some training. Right? It's a completely different way of approaching work.

Tracy Ring [00:09:08] Yeah. That idea that, you know, you have to constantly stay curious. You can't, you know, the learning is ongoing. I think sometimes can be popular, but it's really easy to lose the momentum around that. But the way you described it, I think is quite interesting because, you know, moving the value proposition, highlighting it, creating the culture around it is so much more sustainable. So, fantastic, fantastic lesson there. And I think the rewards probably go without saying right there seeing it. They're applying the new technology. We think a lot about, you know, how do you define what the right use case is, right? And most people are tackling the ones where the work is, you know, repetitive or annoying. I think, it's not a hard sell on the reward side but that doesn't mean that it's not challenging. So. Right.

Jeremy Forman [00:10:04] And I also think, you know, seeing people light up with ideas and then seeing those ideas, even if it's small come to fruition, I think is what, you know, in doing that repeatedly is I think what change is culture.



Tracy Ring [00:10:22] Yeah. Right. Yeah. And I think you guys take a unique approach, right? I mean, one of the first times we met was when you guys were at an employee offsite, right? And this wasn't a technology discussion. This was a business discussion about. Right. How do you revolutionize the way that you guys, you know, work in the future? So, I love the way that you guys are or, you know, again, that longitudinal continuum that it's sort of never ending. It's fantastic. It's, I think easy for us to grow up in tech to, you know, try to extoll the benefits. But getting the business on board is important. So, so at the epicenter of what you've done that you have created what a new term that I have not heard others talk about. I hear organizations talk about centers of excellence, centers of competency. But you have my favorite term, which is the center of innovation. Right. And so, can you tell me a little bit more about or sort of how that was born? And, you know, how is that a driving force for your organization?

Jeremy Forman [00:11:22] Yeah. We, you know, again, like, there was so much excitement. The term I always come to my mind is this idea of unbridled exuberance. Right. Like, people are so excited about GenAI leaders, there's a lot of money being thrown at it. But as we're stepping back and seeing, you know, just kind of this, just this. You know, massive set of demand. But that's not rationalize demand and then it goes back to, well, how are we going to learn from this? How are we going to grow? How are we going to make this scalable, right, and sustainable? And make sure it's not just a flash in the pan. And so, we step back, and we thought about what could we do, how could we build this kind of forward thinking, inclusive ecosystem for the innovative minds across

the company, across all walks of life? It didn't finance HR or, digital, research. Everybody has ideas. Everybody, is, you know, can be and get excited and get value out of GenAI. So, we set up this, center of innovation, with the idea it had three core components. One was portfolio oversight and governance, not in a control mindset, but in enablement. How can we help shape the portfolio, get visibility across all the investments, learn from them? Make sure that we're applying responsible AI from the idea generation, not just once, the once we've implemented technology and check a box, but really baking that into how we work. And part of that is then the second piece is what we call, community activation, which is how do you build that community across a company? How do you share learnings? How do you make everybody feel responsible and empowered with responsible AI? And then the last piece is having a small, innovation incubation delivery team that could take some of the ideas that we, that we curate, from the group and then seed some almost like a venture capitalists firm right seed series a money to a couple ideas. Are they, you know, are they scalable? Okay. Get series B funding and scale. But maybe that one out of two doesn't work. So, we'll get series A money to do another one on the list. And just in that type of mindset, I think also just the three of those areas combined, you know, really help to spur innovation and also again, change the culture in the way people think about AI and GenAI.

Tracy Ring [00:14:08] Yeah, it's interesting and it hadn't dawned on me until you talked about it in the VC lens. But one of the things I see is that people get into what we call POC land, right? Or it was Talk Land the other day. But I love this idea that, you know, if it's not accretive, then the funding shuts



off, right. And hopefully that also means that all of the tech, all of the platform, all of you know, it's a scale or deprecate model. Right. And yeah, I love that idea that the way that you're channeling funding and you know, endorsement for something as a future solution is so tied to that, you know, innovation, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Jeremy Forman [00:14:49] The caveat being we're very early on. So, we're still working through this, as you know, and trying to figure it out. But I I'm excited about the direction. I believe that especially in GenAI space focus should be on speed to learn versus speed to deliver because I think that's, again, I'm broken record here, but I think that's the sustainable, scalable model versus to your point, the POC land.

Tracy Ring [00:15:18] Yeah, right. You said a term that I'm going to share with our audience that you and I share something in common. So, you said you don't want to be a flash in the pan. But we can tell everyone, both you and I are enormous foodies. And one of the things that when I first met some of your team, I was sort of laughing about the fact that everybody had these, relax, keep calm, and mise en place. And I thought, well, gosh, that's so funny that this whole team has the same sticker. The it's actually the center of the spirit of what you guys are doing for the COI. Right. So, this whole mise en place mindset, you know, the way that it parallels, you know, the way we think of French cooking and being organized and planful. But can you share with us a little bit about how you sparked that and got everybody, biting on to your concept? Yes.

Jeremy Forman [00:16:14] That's yeah, great Segway from flash in the pan that wasn't even intentional. Great, pick up. So, my background is,

you know, I grew up in the restaurant business and went to culinary school, trained under master French chef. And when I was about 29, 30, I changed careers. But, you know, you can take the chef out of the kitchen, but not the kitchen. I'm the chef, so to speak. Like the thing that always stuck to me in when I started my career in IT, it was all around data and I got, put on a project that was, this is right around 2000, 2001, which was multi-terabyte multimedia, project data, database, basically database. And I had to figure out how to actually organize all this data and then surface it in, online, in a virtual drive of all of the routes across the state of New Mexico. And here I am. I'm just this kind of guy out of the kitchen trying to figure this out. And the thing that always stuck with me is museum plus, like, you can't cook unless you have things organized. You can, but it's costly. It's really hard to repeat. Quality goes down. So, I really always carry that mindset through is especially as I think about kind of from a user centered perspective of data, data professionals is that in order for them to have the most flow to the work, do their best work, focus on innovation. Things need to be in place. Things need to be organized. Your technologies, your techniques, your data, your mindset. The more those things are in place, the more there's flow to the work, the faster you can go, the more repeatable you can be. The cost goes down. Very, very importantly to me as the employee experience goes up. Right. Yeah. And, and so we've, I've just carried that through and then I just, you know, it gave talks on this idea of think like a chef because museum place is just core to who I am. It's just been instilled in me. And it's just something that's been really helpful as a grounding mechanism for my team, and myself, to think about when we're making investments and we're doing things again, going back to this



idea, are we getting things in place? Are we getting organized so that we can continue to scale and do better and better and better work? Or are we just doing, you know, a fast POC that is, going to be thrown away because we have built any sustainable foundation for it. So, it's both a mindset. But also, the kind of the, the idea of how do you organize your kind of the place of work for data, right. Is data findable, accessible, interoperable, or reusable? Or is it, you know, secure? All these things just all can be summarized for me in this idea of mis en place.

Tracy Ring [00:19:28] And that's fantastic. I love it so, so much. And many more conversations, to talk about, cooking. But I think that it really lays the foundation of that culture. And I also like one other concept that's just sort of, making me think is that, you know, in technology, we don't always have these enormous budgets. Right? And so similar to a restaurant having a sort of margin thin. it's difficult as well. It's really amazing. So thinking about how we have this sustainable culture that you talk about, and, you know, one of the things I'm saying is, you know, every once in a while, I'll get a call from an organization that says, hey, we'd like you to come give a presentation, and almost my worst nightmare, but it's, oh, we're giving you 3 or 4 months notice, right? And I think, oh, gosh, this means that I'm rewriting my presentation 3 or 4 times because everything's changing so fast. Right? And even POCs that we have organizations that have abandoned because it wasn't possible. The technology is changing so fast that now it is possible. Right. So, the pace of change is, relentless. And I'm really curious. I know you guys do a good job of, of working with your external

partnerships, your cloud partners, etc., but, you know, tell us a little bit about how you were managing that because, you know, there's obviously a component that everybody wants to talk about this, but how do you focus in on the ones that are going to give you guidance, you know, foster that, you know, outside in, thinking but also in, in a creative way.

Jeremy Forman [00:21:06] Yeah. It's, something that has just become more and more apparent to me over, of course, my career, but especially now since the innovation is accelerating so much and I don't think it's going to slow down. Right. At least our perception of it is still going to be really fast over the next few years. And knowing that, and also being in in the pharma biotech industry, you know, domain experience really matters. And we can't keep up with it within. I don't think anyone organization can keep up with all the change. And so, I think you really have to, you know, nurture relationships outside of the organization in probably three different areas, I think definitely, system integrators, consulting partners who see a lot of solution, see a lot of use cases, a lot of solution development across a wide berth of companies that you can learn from. I think software vendors, the people that are building, these technologies, keeping up with their features, the new products, the acquisitions that they're making because there's so much acquisition happening across the industry keeping up with that. And I think the third thing, our industry partners, right, other, you know, in our case, other life sciences are farmers who are relatively open. Was sharing innovation, innovation, and ideas, not necessarily data or algorithms or that sort of thing. But there are a lot of



forums where you can keep up to date on, on what different, competitors are doing and share in learning and I don't I think if you don't do that, you'll really get stagnant. Right. It's changing every few months. I think the shelf life of ideas and solutions is dramatically decreased. You could be working on a POC or an MVP for six months, and by the time you finish that, one of your strategic vendors probably has that feature built into a plan. Yeah. So, what are you going to do? Right. You can't have some cost bias. You have to know that going in, but you also have to be aware of the landscape around you. Yeah. And if you again, if you don't, I think you're going to spend a lot of money. And I also think that you'll, miss opportunities because your opportunity cost from focusing on something that potentially is a commodity in six months versus something that's really unique in a competitive advantage for you as a company. You'll miss.

Tracy Ring [00:23:51] Yeah. That's I mean, I was with a, a set of leaders two days ago, that work in the high-tech industry, and they were just sort of soliciting, you know, other industries and, thinking through what was important. And I said, for those that are in high tech, I actually think it's the most exciting time to drive some customer intimacy here, because never once have I ever been in a situation where I'm telling my clients to stay as close as possible to your cloud partners, your ERP partners, your CRM partners, etc. because if you're building into what is not truly differentiated white space, then to your point, it is commoditized. And, you know, a lot of this GenAI work is not an insignificant investment. And so, I think, you know, your approach, and the way that that Pfizer has been and working around this and staying

so, so close to their partners is paramount. And I think industry leading you know, this I'm bullish. I told someone the other day that, you know, I'm seeing barriers break down within organizations. Right? R&D is talking to commercial talking to supply chain at a rate that's never, ever happened. But I think that we're going to get to the point where we see some broader industry consortiums. Right. Like, I'm not going to share my algorithm like you said, but I am going to share, you know, things that that could advance, you know, patient care, which we're all obsessed with, right. So.

Jeremy Forman [00:25:19] Yeah. Well, I think one of the things I'm so excited about just drafting off of that is this, you know, ability for federated learning there. I've been just doing a little bit of research and there are some organizations that are actually putting, you know, building platforms that are, places where especially in the life sciences, we can train our models but completely obfuscate the underlying data, protect the underlying data so you don't get access to the data that you can benefit by building your own models. And I think that is the potentially there's an accelerator there, right now and, and I've just seen a few of these. Again, where the dam is protected. It's kind of a clean room concept, right? So, you can get analytical value, but you can't see the underlying data. Everything stays private, but you can benefit from the learnings and knowledge from others. It's your point because it's all about patient care, right? It's all about patient experience and helping people.

Tracy Ring [00:26:28] Yeah. That's superb. Jeremy, I will say, I know you just are at the beginning of your journey. And as I alluded, and in 90 days you'll be in a very different



part of your journey. I think there will be so much to discuss, and I hope you'll come back with us before we close out, because I know we could talk for hours both about, GenAI as well as about cooking. If you had one word of advice for an organization that might be thinking about their journey. You know, not yet starting, you know, anything that that based on where you are in the incredible, I think, momentum that you've harnessed. If they wanted to catch that same fire. What do you suggest?

Jeremy Forman [00:27:10] It's tough to focus on one. But I will. Okay. Can I get three?

Tracy Ring [00:27:16] Three words? Yeah. Three. Three words. Because it's yours.

Jeremy Forman [00:27:19] Three areas, I think. Business value. Value. Business value. Business value. I gotta focus on business value. I'll do two. Business value. But don't underestimate the power of culture.

Tracy Ring [00:27:34] Perfect.

Jeremy Forman [00:27:34] Again, I think culture sets, the floor, and the ceiling of the value that you can get from any AI and GenAI. And you have to be really conscious of that. And so, if you focus on business value and at the same time, you're investing in the culture that's needed to really accelerate your work and do that in a scalable way, I think you'll be on a good starting point.

Tracy Ring [00:27:58] Fantastic, well, I can't thank you enough. And I hope that, our listeners are able to also harness the unbridled exuberance that you've been able to catch.

And I hope you'll join us back soon so we can hear what's next and all the amazing things that you are doing.

Jeremy Forman [00:28:13] Absolutely. I'd love to be back. Thank you. Tracy. Great. Great talking to you.

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