Alyssa Fitzpatrick on AI leadership, open source & courage in tech

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And it was as if I didn't, I wasn't at the table.

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I thought, I'm the most senior person in this room, but they won't look at me in the eye.

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I'm your host, Ashleigh Vogstad.

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Today on the show, we have Alyssa Fitzpatrick.

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She has an impressive career spanning several technology waves from all layers of the technology stack, whether that's silicone, platforms, cybersecurity.

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She's been there at Microsoft, at Intel, at McAfee.

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and Accenture as well on the professional services side.

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We're incredibly fortunate to have her on the show today to share some of her experiences running multi-billion dollar partner organizations.

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Alyssa, welcome to the show.

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Thank you, Ashley.

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That was an impressive lineup, even hearing it myself.

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It is, and I feel very grateful that you've taken the time out.

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One of the places I wanted to start today is around fear.

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It has really impressed me in both

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with your personal and professional life, the association between fear and risk and how you've faced so many fears.

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And I'm curious what your relationship with fear is and maybe how that's served you in your professional life.

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It's interesting because when I think about fear as a driver versus learning,

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and growing.

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I think that the way I've looked at fear is an opportunity for learning and growing.

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And so I don't know that I've ever actually looked at fear as a driver, but in a way it is.

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And fear has been a bit of a driver, probably starting from my very early days and the fear of, being on the streets or the fear of not making it.

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And that probably was the biggest fuel to my fire to

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you know, continue to drive and learn and gobble up as much as I could from an education perspective, because I felt like that would stave off that fear of not being able to take care of myself.

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So I think at a fundamental level, like, you know, Mavlov's, you know, pyramid of needs, fear drove that most fundamental need to take care of myself.

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But then that started to feed other things.

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where I grew up in the outdoors in Colorado, and every time I faced a fear, I grew, and I grew confidence, and I was proud of myself, and it made me reach for more.

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And so what I learned, just without even intending to, is that facing my fears and overcoming them made me better, and made me better at facing the next fear.

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And that becomes almost addictive in a way, because you just want to keep

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learning more and trying more and getting exposed to more.

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And even back in high school, I remember coining the phrase that has shaped my whole life, which is say yes.

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And that has been a constant in everything I've done in my life.

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And that is basically facing your fears, is say yes to the opportunities that are in front of you that might scare you, but

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it anyway and see where it takes you.

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It's taken you to some incredible heights in your career.

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You know, I think we share in common a love for the outdoors and a love for adrenaline and, you know, pushing boundaries within some limits, presumably.

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One thing that I've definitely been too scared to take on, BASE jumping.

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Tell me about the experience.

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What was it like?

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like and what was happening in your mind and your body right before making that jump.

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You know, it was, it was different than jumping out of an airplane because you know exactly where you're going to land.

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You can see it.

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It's that much closer.

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And there isn't a free fall as much, at least not in my experience.

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It was a jump and release the parachute.

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Jumping out of a plane, you get this free fall and it's a completely different experience and a different kind of fear.

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What was funny is

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when it came to the time, they told me you just kind of fall and then pull your chute.

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And when you watch the video back, I took this giant leap off and everyone's like, because they didn't expect me to.

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And I was like, well, it's time to go, let's go.

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And I don't remember in my head thinking to do that.

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But when I looked at the video, I was like, you told me not to do that.

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And I don't know why I did, but I just took this gigantic leap.

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And so they just laughed.

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They're like, nobody ever does.

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And I was like, I don't know why I was compelled to, but it was a flying leap of faith that I knew what we were doing.

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I was prepared for it and I was ready for it.

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What is a risk you've taken in your career that really paid off for you?

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You know, I think the first real risk in which I designed it and I made a decision and then I had to put all the steps in place in order to make that happen.

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And it was something that most folks in my era hadn't done.

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And that was when I made an intentional decision to move to Europe.

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And I was the Oracle Sun Microsystems Global Technical

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Leader for that relationship, and when I took that global title, I thought, I've lived in the United States and I've really lived in three cities of the United States, and so...

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I can't claim global in a way that this title is giving me.

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And so at that point in time, I was like, I gotta do something about this.

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And so I very intentionally made a choice.

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I was going to move to Europe.

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I was going to experience working in another country, working across a region and get exposed to that.

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I didn't know for how long.

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I didn't know what was going to happen when I did it, but I put all of the motions in place and I signed myself up for it and I moved towards that moment of

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leaving the US and moving to the UK, and it was scary.

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And I was very fearful of putting my entire life in three boxes and moving across to a country where my family had never been, I'd never been to Europe.

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It was a very exciting time.

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And it

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It changed me.

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I grew up in a different way.

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I ended up taking on a region of 49 countries.

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Wow.

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And for two and a half years, I traveled all across the Europe, Middle East, and Africa.

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And not only did I learn the history of all those countries, I grew and changed as a person because I was impacted by all of those people that I got to be exposed to at such a young age.

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So yes, that was a very scary choice and step.

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but the most impactful to the person that I am today.

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What would you say was the high point and also the low point?

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I'm someone who travels A lot.

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I'm currently going to school in England and...

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I think when you took this leap, the world was a different place.

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It's smaller today than it was back then.

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It's much easier to travel.

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The risk is lower.

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And yet still I find I can be in situations where because of cultural norms or just what you're used to, it can be challenging for one reason or another.

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And on the flip side, the new, you know, the joy of new experiences and adventuring.

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So is there anything that stands out to you about that period of time of a struggle that you had and then the

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converse of an upside.

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Actually, a lot happened in those few years.

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I think it was the learning of working in all the different cultures.

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And I had a wallet full of every currency.

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There was no EU, didn't exist.

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No one had thought of it.

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Every time I came through a border, I was stamped everywhere I went.

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An incredible experience.

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I did get to the Middle East.

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I went to Bahrain and Abu Dhabi and Oman.

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And

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While I was there, I had been given all of the rules, what I was supposed to do and how I was supposed to behave here and the clothes that I had to wear.

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But it doesn't change the way people behave in a meeting.

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And it was challenging.

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I was 20,

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seven years old, I think, 27 years old.

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And I was the lead for the Oracle KPMG relationship.

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And I remember when I was sitting in a meeting with my technical lead and the entire conversation was to him.

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And it was as if I didn't, I wasn't at the table.

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And I really, I thought, I'm the most superior senior person in this room, but they won't look at me in the eye.

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And I just realized that that's a cultural difference that I could not overcome.

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And it wasn't my place to try to change their culture and the way that they were.

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I needed to lean into that and give him the reins.

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And at that time, that was something that it was a smarter move.

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to go with the flow than to try to bucket.

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Because if you throw back the waves at them, then it could harm the potential of the relationship.

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I mean, one of the things that strikes me about you that I'm realizing, hearing that story, you are very fluid.

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I wonder in a beautiful way, I think about, you have to make choices in life when you're going to fight against something.

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And when you use the phrase lean in, when you're going to go with that flow and lean into it.

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And is that something that you've developed over the last few decades working in technology, or do you think that that's something more of a natural part of who you are?

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I think it's something that everyone can have, and that is watching the people around you and taking the cues and looking how people are reacting and thinking forward to what would be the best outcome

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for us.

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And sometimes it might not be the best outcome for you.

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And I think that if we all work more collaboratively and we are cognizant of each other, and I think empathy is so underrated, be more empathetic to the other people, we're all in this world together.

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I just think that that viewpoint

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can make things smoother, better, doesn't solve problems, but we can all be a little bit kinder to each other.

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And I do think sometimes it is lean in and sometimes you kind of have to swallow it, but other times there are times to stand up and there are times just to make a point and stop something that is not right.

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You say choose your battles, but I think it's more your moments and how to react in a moment that can be the best for all.

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We have two values in my business that I often find conflicting, but in a good way.

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And one of them is conscious connection, which is really our value of compassion, empathy, as a client services business that shows up as excellence in customer service.

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And then we have a value, courage and competition, which boils down to winning.

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Our clients want us to win, we want to win.

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We have a team of eight players.

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Oftentimes when I'm hiring people or even checking in at that 90-day point, what value speaks to you the most?

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They'll say courage and competition, I'm here, I want to win.

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And that balance between those two is something that I think is a lifelong pursuit for me.

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I haven't found any neat, perfect answer to it, but I know I have both and I enjoy being in both of those spaces.

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And I think maybe where I struggle sometimes in decision-making is when I don't know which of those pathways to take.

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Is this a moment to stand up and fight for what I believe in here, or is this a moment

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to sit back and learn and allow things to unfold.

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I don't know if you have any advice there, how you've navigated that in your life.

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I agree.

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It's a game of are you in a race to the finish or are you playing chess?

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And which game are you playing?

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And if it is, you got to get there and get it done, trying to close a deal.

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Sometimes you've got to

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a little bit more pointy elbows and kind of drive things to the finish.

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In the long-range game, you got to play your pieces carefully.

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So it is kind of a game time decision, but it also is what is the game that you're playing as well and what is the outcome you're seeking.

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So when you tell this story of getting on, you're in a global role and you get on a plane to have a global experience, I mean, rings of authenticity, I think that's beautiful that you recognized maybe this cognitive dissonance between where you're at and where you want to be.

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And you did something about that.

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The word that comes to mind is pioneer.

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And I'm curious, what does being a pioneer or pioneering mean to you and how does that show up in your life?

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I never really thought that word would resonate with me as a person as much as it does.

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And it has kind of resonated through my life because just being a woman in tech, being a woman with a computer science degree as a coder, I keep finding myself in positions that there haven't been a lot of women before me.

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And so I'm creating new norms or pioneering.

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And

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I wouldn't consider myself an entrepreneur, but I would consider myself a pioneer.

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And so I do think it's a very different thing.

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I'm not the idea creator to go build a company and take it to public in success.

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But I can break down walls and I can create new norms and set strategies that can change direction.

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That's more of my superpowers.

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I believe pioneering is

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is critical in our world today.

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That's what the human population is for.

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We're all pioneers, we're pioneering, and some will lead the way, and we need, you know, everyone working together.

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But I love being the lead of the way pioneer, and I landed in this industry because it called to me when it started to lead the way, and it's been a really fun industry to watch

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tech pioneer for the world and then get to be a pioneer in that industry.

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This really surprised me, actually.

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So you, I think, originally had intended to go on a finance path in your career, but at some point there was a decision to dig into technology and you learned how to code.

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I'm curious how old you were, what that experience looked like, who are your classmates?

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Because I don't think it was a common experience for a woman then to die.

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dive into something like coding.

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It was, I was 18.

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So I went to school when I was 17, went off to university.

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And when I was 18 was when I had my first coding class.

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And I think it was basic.

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And it was in the School of Business.

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So it was an information systems class.

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And I took this basic class and I was like,

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So this makes sense.

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I like this better than learning French because learning French was really complicated to me.

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And like all of the different, you know, feminine, masculine, and the verb conjugation, it was just too much.

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Coding was really clean and very clear.

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And I am, I definitely could see punctuation spaces.

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It was like jumped off the page for me.

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And you're just giving a computer orders.

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So this made sense to me.

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And all of a sudden, I'm like, I could do this for a job?

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Oh, I like this.

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And then I can start to teach the computer to do things.

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And so I ended up taking a lot of computer classes.

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I went from basic to COBOL to Fortran and all the languages back then.

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And then I got into C and C++, and this was object-oriented programming.

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All my classmates were all engineers.

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There were no girls in my classes.

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I finished my coding very, very early.

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I was happy to share my code.

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I figured, hey, that's going to keep me at the top of the pile because I'm the one that's doing the code.

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If they want to borrow it and use it, they're the ones that aren't learning.

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And so I was always very free with my code.

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I don't know why, but that was just something that I thought, all right, that could be a competitive strategy, who knows?

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But then I ended up realizing object-oriented code allowed you to start to teach a computer.

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And so I ended up folding all of my energy into this idea of artificial intelligence.

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And so that's what I did my thesis on.

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That's what I focused my energy and got out of school thinking, that's going to be my future.

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I'm going to do coding.

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I'll do AI.

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And it's been

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Thirty-five years, and I've been waiting for it to be real, and we're in it we're in it now.

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It's just really struck me that you've had...

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incredible fortune, might call it luck, but I personally think there's something more there that you studied artificial intelligence so early on, that you were at Anderson Consulting before it became Accenture, before it became the force in the world that it is today, hundreds of thousands of people.

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You've come to many of these technology waves and organizations before they blew up into something

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really significant in this world and enduring in this world as well.

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And I'm curious if you have any insight there around how you've been so successful at navigating these trends or these waves?

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You know, I'd love to take some kind of credit for it.

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I feel like I've got a little bit of Forrest Gump.

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I kind of end up at the right place at the right time quite a lot.

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But you can't end up at the right place at the right time if you're not prepared and you're not putting yourself out there.

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And there were times where I thought things weren't going to work out for me, but you just keep trying.

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And always the right thing did seem to come my way.

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And I believe strongly in manifesting.

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And I didn't know that I was doing it at my young age, but by putting my heart and soul into the dream I wanted and visualizing it and creating that path for me to get there, I was doing that even in my early 20s.

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When I landed at Anderson Consulting as my first job, that was right place, right time, right connections.

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right skillset, hiring a girl to be a coder, that all kind of worked out really well.

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And my second or third project, I was the 13th employee as an Anderson Consultant at Siebel Systems.

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And I got to experience the IPO.

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I spent an hour a week with Tom Siebel getting coaching and bringing that information back to Anderson Consulting.

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I was solo at that company for six months.

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So again,

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I didn't have anything to do with it, but I landed at a company that became a force in the industry.

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And I was 21 years old at the time.

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So those are the kinds of things where I can't take credit for it, but I was capable.

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And I was at the right place at the right time so that I could stand up, throw my shoulders back and dig in.

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And

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The other thing that I would say that I've pushed on everyone that comes into my world is work on your public speaking.

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Because if you can articulate what you're trying to say and you can bring ideas together, you will become invaluable in the room and you'll be invited to the room.

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And even back to my early days when I was in Toastmasters, when I was young, I've always wanted to be a public speaker.

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And I've always said, look, I think that was one of the tickets to the rise.

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is being able to be articulate and show up in a room and stand up and say, I'll take that pitch.

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Interesting.

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So you mentioned being prepared, and I want to bring this back to speaking.

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You know, I was a Spark Brownie and Girl Guide, and the motto, always be prepared, is something that stuck with me through my life.

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And there's a great story from the astronaut Chris Hadfield, where Canadians couldn't be astronauts.

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You had to be an American citizen at the time to become an astronaut.

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But he really wanted to

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to be one.

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And he lined up all of these things in his life, including being a fighter pilot and doing all of the resume checklist of what it would take to be an astronaut.

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And sure enough, when the time came, the program opened up and he did become an astronaut because he was prepared.

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And in his book, he tells lots of stories about being prepared and it not going well.

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For example, he, Eric Clapton was coming to town and Chris Hadfield was known for being excellent on his guitar.

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And there was this chance he was going to get invited on stage.

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So he practiced and practiced

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and practice to play this famous song of Eric Clapton's.

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And sure enough, the concert comes and all his friends and family are there.

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And Eric Clapton does not invite him onto stage.

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But he talks about that it doesn't matter because that process of preparation, the time he spent with his kids playing music, you know, it was all worthwhile.

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And you just never know in life which direction something's going to take, but you don't regret being prepared.

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And I'm curious for you, for the people listening, I thought that was excellent advice around speaking.

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What are your tips for being prepared to go on stage or to be prepared to speak or what has that kind of journey been like for you?

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I think it's, this is going to sound like a really weird comparison and I don't know why it just jumped into my head, but it's almost like nutrition, right?

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You can't be healthy by eating an apple today.

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So it's about habits.

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It's about creating nutritious habits and feeding your body the right way for a period of time.

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And that creates health.

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And then your skin glows and your hair grows and blah, blah, blah.

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It's the same with public speaking.

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You can't get ready the day before.

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It's something that you have to embody, and part of the preparation is the knowledge and the learning, and having that curiosity and that desire to learn.

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The second piece is...

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the confidence of being able to articulate those ideas and organize them.

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And when there's discerning other ideas, how do you work with that?

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How do you understand their view and then explain a path forward?

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It's taking that knowledge and then turning it into communication.

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And then the last piece is being confident in your delivery.

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Now that takes work.

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I've done training with lots of theaters where I will go on stage and I will use my arms and will use my voice and get very loud and then get very soft.

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And I use that on stage when I'm doing those big keynotes.

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I love to shock the crowd.

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I love to walk all the way into the crowd and just take it a different way.

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And I've learned a lot of skills through taking that kind of training to craft the delivery.

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But that delivery, it's got to be backed up with a communication and the information.

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And so that's all the nutrition that has to go into being a public speaker.

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So it can't happen overnight.

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It can't be something that you take a class.

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It has to be a decision and an investment in your life.

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Because if you just have the delivery skills, but you don't have the content, then you're going to fall on your face.

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Yes, that would have been my experience as well.

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You know, when I think about investments in life, it really struck me that even back in school, giving away your code, and today you're working at Elastic in a famously open source environment.

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What does open source mean to you, and how has that kind of lined up in your career?

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This is a brand new experience for me.

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I will be honest with you.

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I had not been to an open source company before I arrived at Elastic.

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And I did not know the gravity of what that meant until I got inside and I started to experience what our challenges are, who our community is, who loves us, who buys from us, how we deploy.

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And it was a very, very good education for me.

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And it opened up a world that I didn't know, that open source community.

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I had heard of it, and I knew we could build on top of it, and didn't really know what all those guys were up to.

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Now, I do.

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That is my ecosystem.

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And I love the idea of building code for the world.

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But the world building your code and being able to take in and generate forks in the code and create new applications, and they're building on top of a platform.

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And I think that's what really resonates with me with Elastic is that it is a platform that you can build on top of.

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And yes, we have built 3 enterprise solutions that we're selling to our customers because they are robust enterprise software solutions built on top of our platform.

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But everything is customizable.

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And so an open source company does take in innovation,

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From the community, but it also delivers innovation to the community, and so every...

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Every time we have a product release, there is open source code being released, as well as innovation for our products that we have built for our enterprise suite.

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And you and I have collaborated at work in the past, and it has struck me about Elastic, how close they are to the developer community, that that's a real thing that exists as a marketer.

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we think about platforms like Google Ads or Amazon, and really the developer community has completely different platforms, forums, and Elastic has an authentic voice in that conversation.

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What do you think they've done really well as a business to cultivate that community.

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I'm astounded at how we engage that developer ecosystem and I'm learning from it to bring into my partnering motions because there's a lot that I can bring together.

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Differing and a joint community, right?

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So there's kind of a Venn diagram between this developer ecosystem and the partnering world.

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Because that developer ecosystem is also a student.

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It's also, you know, people that are working for other companies that are using it to run, you know, different projects within

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company.

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I think what we've done really well is not only feed that community, but we listen to that community.

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And so we do developer meetups all over the world in every city, together with other companies.

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We're always doing different topics.

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And every time I've gone to a meetup, and yes, I do go to the meetups, there's 50 or 60 people in there, and they're ready to go.

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They got their backpacks or laptops, and they're ready to engage.

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It's it's a very rich and

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And well-run ecosystem, and I think that is why there's so many developers really enjoy Elastic.

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I'm excited for the enterprise companies to really enjoy Elastic as well.

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So, enterprise companies, I mean the biggest of the biggest on...

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on the planet in artificial intelligence right now is NVIDIA.

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And they have selected Elastic.

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There's a meaningful partnership there.

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What can you share about that?

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Yes, we're very excited.

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They chose Elastic to be embedded on top of their GPU for their AI solution.

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And basically what that means is when you want to get your organization prepared for AI, you need to have your GPU, you've got hardware, and we're working with another

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company around a hardware solution and the proper software, together with Elastic and there's other solutions, we provide the vector database.

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And so we vectorize your data to get you ready for AI.

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And that's all powered on the NVIDIA chip.

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And so we have just pre-released that chip, and we will be going live at the Nvidia GTC this year as well.

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And so it is a pretty big investment together between both companies.

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And we asked Nvidia, what was your selection process?

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And they said, there was none.

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It was always Elastic.

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You were the only game in town.

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And believe me, that made me smile.

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But it also allowed us to really engage in a meaningful and a trusting way between Nvidia and Elastic as we go forward.

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I think part of Nvidia's success, I was listening to an interview, Yensen Wang, CEO of Nvidia, he was one of Time Magazine's People of the Year.

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And in his Time interview, he continuously went back to first principles, which I found really interesting.

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And if I

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I think about what you just described in terms of this foundational need to vectorize data and this clarity around there is a company whose single excellence is in that capability and that they were very clear on that partnering motion.

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I think that lines up with what I saw in the interview from him, which is, I find really interesting.

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So what do partnerships mean to you and where do you see partnerships going in an age of artificial intelligence?

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So partnering has always meant the same thing to me.

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And I did not realize as I set out in my career that I would spend 35 years in the world of partnering.

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But partnering to me, it really started to evolve probably the most

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when I moved to Europe, but it did originate when I was the Accenture, it was Anderson Consulting, the one person that they dropped into Siebel Systems.

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And it was my job to build that relationship and understand the technology and what was their go-to-market strategy.

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And that all came down to human relationships.

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And I had to build a relationship with each one of the functional leaders of the company to understand what they were doing.

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I was coding at the same time, and then report that back to my company, being Anderson Consulting.

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And that's when I started to realize when a company that is 13 people, together with the power of Anderson Consulting, we can really make something happen.

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And so

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it dawned on me the power of human relationships to make company partnerships happen.

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And so that's been the foundational currency of everything I've done, is it's all about the human relationship.

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And don't ever think there are partnerships between companies, because that is not the case.

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It is partnerships between the people that

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create those engagements between the companies.

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And so that is how I've always run my career.

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And it has been everything that defines the choices I've made, how I've set up partnering organizations, how I've built our motions, how I run my teams, how I work with the sales organization.

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It all comes down to people making people relationships.

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So fast forward to AI.

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AI cannot replace that people relationship.

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And so if we start to move into a world and we say the computers are going to do it for us, then we're eliminating that human to human interaction.

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And the best part of my career, and I arguably of anybody that's out there building relationships or selling or having face-to-face relationship building conversations, that cannot be replaced by a computer.

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And so we can get better at our communication and accelerating it and making it more constructive because we're powered by AI telling us the great ways to have this conversation, but AI can't have those conversations.

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What is

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different, important, will remain of humans in an age of artificial intelligence?

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Like what qualities?

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You know, there's active conversations around things like creativity or judgment.

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We want to have a human in the loop in the process of artificial intelligence.

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But what do you see as kind of those core human attributes that will continue to stand out?

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Well, I see AI as a tool.

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And it's a tool for humans to propel our mission or the things that we're trying to get done.

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The calculator didn't replace a human.

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The hammer didn't replace the human.

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It's a tool.

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And it's all about how do we power that tool to make us better.

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And so if we get fearful of

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I don't wanna know what it is, it's too scary, then that tool will not serve us the way we need it to.

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And so we have to get engaged.

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We have to understand it.

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We've got to really figure out where we can take AI, not where AI is going.

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AI isn't going anywhere on its own.

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We've created it.

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This is our thing.

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And so where are we taking it?

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And who is taking it there?

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So I think AI has got a massive power to the human race, and it's not to be feared.

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We created it.

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We can figure out how to power ourselves with this tool that we have created.

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And so it's not about giving more power to the tool, it's giving ourselves the power that the tool can give to us.

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And I think information is power.

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And that's really what it does is it allows us to get to information faster than we can on our own.

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But what I don't believe AI can do is not only the conversation and the human interaction, but also those cues that those flashes of brilliance where you don't even know where that idea came from.

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And all of a sudden it all makes sense.

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And everyone's had those.

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They happen all the time.

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And when you're really plugged into what you're doing, then you get a lot of those.

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And I just don't think that's something that can be replaced, because you can't train a computer to do that.

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Everything that AI is today is something we've trained.

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And we can't train ourselves to have those brilliant flashes, or we'd have them all the time.

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Yeah.

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I happen to agree with you.

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There's lots of conversations around.

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Is AI actually creative?

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And you get all the pros and the cons, and they're good arguments, strong arguments on both sides.

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But I think what's missing is that whether or not the AI can be creative, it doesn't have to take away from the human need and contribution of being creative and having ideas.

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And as somebody who has a creative agency, one of the things I find can be fun to do is a beat the bot exercise, where you have AI generate all your creative ideas, and then it's who in the room can out-pitch the AI?

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You know, where does that kind of insight come in?

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I'm curious where you find, like where do you use AI in your day-to-day life, be it personal or at work?

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Gosh, I would love to say that I'm A prolific user after all of this.

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I feel like the old dog having a hard time with new tricks, so I use a little bit here and there.

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It's obviously in Geminis everywhere or ChatGPT.

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There's Grammarly showing up and all the different apps to help you write better.

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And I do a lot of writing.

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So those show up a lot.

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I have been, I've heard about these apps that you can do the images and you can actually send out your pitches that look like you and speak like you.

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And I love that idea.

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I'm just not quite there yet because I still like the, I like to touch it.

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I like to do it.

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I like to be the one that's actually doing the delivery.

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And so maybe I will get scalable with that.

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I heard of another one the other day where I actually was excited, a little scared, was something that it's like it's your brain, like Alyssa's brain, where you get interviewed and you load this thing up with like, it has all these algorithms it runs, and then you can turn it on for your team and they'll go and ask Alyssa's brain these questions.

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And at the end of the day, you find out all the questions and the decisions that were made by your brain so that you can be scalable.

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And I thought, that's brilliant, but, we slack each other.

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We, we're pretty right on.

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And I don't like, I don't know that feels safe.

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That's interesting.

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You know, what kind of decisions is it going to make based on my inputs?

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It would seem like it would be.

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So I think there's all these things that are, they're growing up.

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And they're starting to see where they go.

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And I see a parallel back to my early days in my career when we were all building little websites.

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And we were all trying things, and oh, did you try this new thing?

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And oh, I can build a website really fast.

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And then everyone had a website.

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And then there's all these ghost websites out there, and the internet gets filled, and now we're building agents, and we're building all these cool little AI apps.

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And it's all about that experimentation.

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We've got to do that.

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You know, we're like the toddlers running around and falling on our faces, but we got to get up and we're like, oh, that's good.

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Oh, that's great.

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And it's just, it's experiment time.

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And this is how humans learn.

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And I think this is a, it's a very exciting time to be in AI and it's moving so quickly.

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You know, it's 10 years has dropped down to one year, but we're still going through the same phases.

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You talk about humans are still humans, and something that comes up for me with artificial intelligence, I found it shocking.

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It was maybe six months ago now, but Harvard Business Review put out an article that the number one use case for AI is therapy.

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We're talking about generative AI chatbots like ChatGPT.

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It was number one, therapy.

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Number 2,

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life organization, and #3 was something like around life purpose.

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And even just the number one use case being therapy, I think speaks to this human condition where that is what's front and center.

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It's not coding, it's not building applications, it's not doing this promise of AI that's all these different things in the technical world.

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It's actually how do we get more in touch with ourselves and how do we navigate the emotional

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world.

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I'm curious, as the parent of three Gen.

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Zers now, who are kind of at this age where they're on the brink of university and then shortly thereafter will be going into careers, do they have concerns around AI?

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And do you as a parent, you know, some parents are, you know, thinking about brain rot coming from too much reliance on AI apps, but what are your thoughts on that?

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You know, it's been interesting kind of watching them navigate because as ChatGPT came into the

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and then the teachers had to figure out how to deal with that.

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And so it's affected their current education and then it affects their choices on what classes to take and how do I get prepared for this world that I'm going to be in.

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And of course they go, Mom, what do you think?

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And they kind of take my advice 50/50 and like, Well, she might know something because she's in the industry, but then again, she's to

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She's too old.

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She doesn't know anything, right?

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So I'm like, I'm both.

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She's mom at the end of the day.

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So it's challenging because my son is a sophomore in college and he's in engineering and trying to make this transition in the middle of college where the teachers are trying to understand what do they teach?

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What should we be enabling these kids on?

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I heard about there were prompt classes.

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Well, now we're beyond that.

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already a year later, that's ridiculous.

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Move on.

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So it's just moving so quickly that they're scrambling, from what I can tell, to figure out what is that curriculum that's not only its current, but will arm the kids within two years of graduation.

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And then my girls are, you know, they're graduating high school now about to embark on four years of college.

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And one wants to do business school, one wants to do engineering, both very AI infused.

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And

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It, you know, they're going into brand new curriculums.

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And so I'm really curious what the offerings are going to be, but we all know that the effect of AI now in their studying is not acceptable, right?

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Like they know, like the teachers already know what a AI generated answer looks like.

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And so it's very, very clear how they're able to understand how to do that.

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And I think that's good that within two years, they've figured out at least,

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what I've seen, they've figured out a way to get the kids to understand, no, you can't just regurgitate what ChatGPT gives you.

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You've got to learn the content.

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Yeah, I think about agility.

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Like what are the skills that you think people at that stage in their career should be cultivating?

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I think agility is great.

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I think

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Obviously curiosity, this desire to bring ideas together.

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I think that's really critical.

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I think it's also this long-term kind of strategic thinking.

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And I don't know that we talk about that enough as we are sending our kids off to college and even new in career.

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As people get into career, we want them to learn, here's how we do it, here's how we do, how you get compensated, here's your objectives, and here's how you meet your goals and blah, blah, blah.

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What we don't do is give them that long-term view or that top-down, this is what the company does and here's your piece and this is why you're so critical in the company and what your job will look like in three years and why that will take place and giving that understanding of the bigger picture.

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And I think that's really important because

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Those are the skills that will allow them to start to see where things are going and pivot and have that agility.

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Because if they don't know what's coming, what we teach them now with that agility or the thinking on their feet or being prepared, and it's not going to matter because it will already be there.

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But if we can teach them strategic thought and looking ahead by arming them with the bigger picture and opening up their aperture,

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I think that really would help with how AI is going to affect our youth.

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One of the things I love that I'm hearing kind of behind the words, I've maybe been reflecting on it, is life purpose.

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Because if you can understand your place in the world or in a company, in a job, what that unique value is that you're bringing, why you're there, then

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I think that brings some intrinsic life motivation, contentment, happiness, hopefully.

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And, you know, the Japanese have the term ikigai.

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You know, what is that kind of purpose that you want to contribute?

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And I do wonder if artificial intelligence does end up doing more and more of our jobs and there are less jobs to be had, what happens to people if we don't have a sense of purpose?

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I mean, you're someone who's very active and outdoors and probably for both

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Both of us, we both love our jobs, we're both driven by our work.

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But if we had that taken away for some reason and tomorrow had no job, I think we would go and find a different purpose.

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And maybe I'd catch you out sailing in Alaska.

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And you know, we'd be skiing together.

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Exactly.

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But that's probably a life skill.

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And it sounds like that might be some of the advice that you're giving to your kids.

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Does that sound, does that resonate with you?

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It does.

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It does.

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But it makes a lot of sense when you think about putting kind of an anchor on it, on what that, what is that strategic thought?

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What is it that you're trying to stimulate?

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And that is, yeah, that cognitive understanding of your purpose or why you do what you do or being asked to do what you do, whether that's your purpose now or it's feeding into what will become your purpose.

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I think if I asked my kids right now, what's your life purpose?

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They would all look at me like I was crazy.

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But if I start talking about, where do we want to go?

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What are we going to do?

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How are we going to get there?

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What is it that you want to be?

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I know one of my daughters is very clear with who she wants to be and working on the path to get there, but she knows what she wants.

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And I love that because I feel very confident that she's going to work her way towards that path.

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And she will continue to take those steps and make those hard choices because she's got her path in mind.

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And if there isn't an end goal, if there isn't this path, this life purpose, then it can become wayward.

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And asking an AI or utilizing AI to help you find that path

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path.

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I think it's more around what it is that you're seeking for assistance.

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Don't tell me what my path is, but if this is what I like and this is what I get joy from, is there a purpose there that I can turn that into a path?

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Maybe that's where it becomes that assistant.

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If there was a little girl version of you, and speaking of AI, this is a meme that maybe some of our listeners have participated in where you could upload a photo of yourself at your current age and a photo of yourself at as a child and the AI would put you in a photo that looked like you're sitting there or hugging or holding the younger version of yourself.

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Oh, some of these popped up on.

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This is all for the therapy, right?

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Exactly.

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I mean, when I, a friend made mine actually, and I sent it to my mom, I think I literally gave her a heart attack.

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She didn't know what it was that she was looking at and just short circuited.

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But if you had the opportunity to sit down with younger you, what advice would you give her?

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Well, you know, what's funny is I do get to sit down with my younger me's because my daughters, they, they've got, they've

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They've got a lot of me, a lot of my husband, but a lot of themselves as well.

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But when I do, I talk to them about being fearless and holding to who you are and not changing because of the environment and making sure you're true to yourself.

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And I believe in their hearts, who they are and the girls that they've become as they've grown up.

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And I think it's just really important that you believe in that.

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And don't let that faith in yourself wane, because when you stop loving yourself is when things start to go badly, when you don't have respect and you...

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respect for yourself.

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When you lose the self-respect or you lose the self-love, that's when you are not as healthy to yourself.

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And so I think that's probably the most important thing is to stay true to yourself and be fearless in the sense that you are, you know, you are who you are and you're no one else and you're supposed to be that person.

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And it just doesn't work out when you try to be someone else, even when you want to be, I find.

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You know, in my younger career,

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my mentors and I'd never reported to a woman before.

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So my bosses were always men and I had some great bosses and some terrible bosses.

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But that was my, that was what I looked up to and that's what I tried to become.

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And I just found that through trial and error and a lot of try, I simply was different in many ways than in my leadership style.

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And it took a really long time to find my feet with that.

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And I think when I heard you give that

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answer.

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It felt very true for my life experience.

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And I think the younger that you can learn that, like it just does it, you can find so much confirmation bias or the opposite of that online.

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There is every story on the planet and it can be very challenging with that deluge of information.

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I think the 2025 word of the year slop is the fact that all this AI generated media, I mean, there's literally anything you want to find, you can find on the web.

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You have to have that center of gravity that is the self.

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I think that's really powerful advice.

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I agree, and I think the other piece to that, and when you brought up your managers and your mentors, that was something I struggled with as well going through my career.

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And every time I would sit down with a new mentor, I never had a female mentor, and I couldn't find one.

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in the industry to even cold call, right?

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I was in the first, you know, 100,000 members of LinkedIn.

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And so I'm prevalent on LinkedIn.

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I mean, I enjoy LinkedIn very much, but I would seek out like, oh, interesting.

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But I could not find her.

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And I never found that mentor of the woman that I wanted to become.

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And so it actually finally dawned on me at one point, I'm like, well, then I just have to be her.

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because I can't find her.

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And I don't want to be like, I want a little bit of her and a little bit of her.

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And I'm like, I got to be me.

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I got to be my own mentor.

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And I've got to be the woman that I want to become.

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And so I decided that I wasn't going to find her.

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I just had to be her.

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And that allowed me to have my mentoring work better because I wasn't seeking that perfection image.

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because she didn't exist.

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And so then I could lean into the mentorship of the male leaders in my organization or just some of the group mentoring sessions in a different way.

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But it took me a while to realize she might not be out there, so just be it.

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Just do it, self-reliance.

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So rapid fire.

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Okay.

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Number one, I'm a marketer.

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We've collaborated in marketing go to market.

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So a tagline for this phase of your life.

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What would that be?

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You could take a moment to think about it.

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I'm entering volume 2.

00:54:36

Volume 2.

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I love that.

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That's different.

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Do you care to expand?

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No.

00:54:43

Okay.

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Volume two will make itself very present at some point.

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Well, I'm extremely excited to hear about that.

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Next question.

00:54:54

What's one value that you would refuse to negotiate on?

00:54:58

One value that no matter how high the costs are, you would hold on to that value.

00:55:05

Honesty is always the most important.

00:55:07

I feel like you can't do anything wrong if you're honest.

00:55:09

As long as you are honest in intent and you can honestly explain what's going on, yes, you could make a bad call, but you're not wrong.

00:55:21

When you live in a world of honesty, it's a very good world.

00:55:24

I love that.

00:55:25

And I think we're about to see

00:55:27

what honesty means in a machine to machine world as well.

00:55:31

The world is becoming increasingly transparent in some ways.

00:55:36

It's something I've been thinking about.

00:55:37

What is truth?

00:55:38

What is honesty in a machine version?

00:55:42

Stay tuned.

00:55:43

So Alyssa, I just want to say thank you so much, truly, for coming on the show, for being one of our first guests here.

00:55:50

It means a lot to me personally.

00:55:52

Thank you.

00:55:52

And I really do think you live your values of supporting other women in the technology ecosystem, and it's truly been a delight.

00:55:59

Thank you so much.

00:56:00

I really appreciate being here.

00:56:01

I enjoyed the conversation greatly.

00:56:03

Thank you.

00:56:05

That's it for today's episode of Transcending Tech.

00:56:08

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00:56:15

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00:56:20

Thank you so much.