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TRADEFLOCK



**SRIKANTH
VICTORY**

CTO- AgilityInsights

**SPOTLIGHT
STRATEGIC
SILENCE**

**AI AS
YOUR
NEXT
TEAMMATE**

Most Innovative
**TECH
LEADERS**

From USA 2025

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grows ketchup
like Heinz**

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Editor Note



TECH VISIONARIES BUILDING TOMORROW'S WORLD TODAY

Innovation isn't just a buzzword — it's the heartbeat of progress. In 2025, as the U.S. tech sector rockets past the \$2 trillion mark, a new wave of leaders is rewriting the rules of what technology can achieve. These trailblazers aren't simply building systems or scaling startups — they're crafting the digital foundations of tomorrow.

This edition of Most Innovative Tech Leaders from USA 2025 celebrates the minds pushing the boundaries of possibility. From generative AI and quantum computing to cybersecurity and ethical tech, these individuals are not only driving transformation — they're doing so with purpose. Their work reflects a rare blend of technical brilliance and a deep sense of responsibility to society.

With U.S. investments in AI and automation projected to surpass \$300 billion by 2026 (IDC), the pace of change is staggering — and many of the leaders featured here are at the helm of that momentum. But their true edge lies beyond the data and devices. It's their vision, their willingness to question the status quo, and their bold commitment to building technology that benefits all.

These are the leaders who understand that innovation isn't just about what's next — it's about who we become in the process. They champion diversity, advocate for sustainability, and lead with empathy in a space often dominated by speed.

In honoring them, we spotlight not only technological progress but human progress — because the future of tech isn't just code. It's a character.

Vipin Kumar
Editor, Tradeflock

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UPCOMING ISSUES

USA's Most
Influential COOs
2025

Most Influential
Leaders to Watch
in 2025

Most Empowering
Women Leaders to
Watch in 2025

Most Visionary
Global CEOs in
2025

Visionary Global
Corporate Leaders
to watch in 2025

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MOST INNOVATIVE TECH LEADERS FROM USA 2025

NAME	DESIGNATION	COMPANY
Alireza Madi	Chief Technology Officer	International Education Evaluation
Prof. Dipanjan Pan	CTO, Co-Founder & Academic Professor	Penn State University
Gerry White	Dean of Academic Technology	ECPI University
Kanak Kanti Roy	Product Data Engineer Lead, Growth Science & Analytics	Latentview Analytics
Ravilla Kishan Babuji	Chief Technology Officer	IRI-Sys
Sally Kornbluth	President	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Dr. Shantanu Awasthi	Tenured Track Assistant Professor	MSSU (Missouri Southern State University)
Srikanth Victory	Chief Technology Officer	AgilityInsights
Tracy Cleeton	Chief Technology Officer	Saga Communications
Vivek Sarkar	Dean, College of Computing	Georgia Institute of Technology

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Chief Technology Officer,
AgilityInsights



ALIREZA MADI
Chief Technology Officer,
International Education Evaluation



PROF. DIPANJAN PAN
CTO, Co-founder & Academic Professor,
Penn State University



GERRY WHITE
Dean of Academic Technology,
ECPI University



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Latentview Analytics



RAVILLA KISHAN BABUJI
Chief Technology Officer,
IRI-Sys



SALLY KORNBLOTH
President,
Massachusetts Institute of Technology



DR. SHANTANU AWASTHI
Tenured Track Assistant Professor,
MSSU (Missouri Southern State University)



TRACY CLEETON
Chief Technology Officer,
Saga Communications



VIVEK SARKAR
Dean, College of Computing,
Georgia Institute of Technology

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Ad Astra Clinic

STORY OF THE MONTH

Zaporizhzhia's Legal Limbo
The Fight for Europe's
Largest Nuclear Plant



If you were negotiating here tomorrow



you'd wear a Rolex

When a Summit Conference is held at Geneva's Palais des Nations, the best watch in the world is there.

You can recognise its classic shape, carved out of a solid block of gold, from the other end of the conference table.

Inside the solid, pressure-proof walls of its Oyster case is a self-winding, officially certified chronometer movement.

In our own building in Geneva, there is a room lined with portraits of most of the world's leaders.

The Rolex they wear is the Datejust. In 18 ct. gold, with matching Jubilee bracelet.



Editor's Pick



TRADEFLOCC
JOURNEY OF LEADERS

CEO 2.0

Why AI Literacy is the Key to Future Business Success?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept but a present-day reality reshaping industries across the United States. A recent study by Cisco reveals that while 97% of CEOs plan to integrate AI into their operations, a mere 1.7% feel fully prepared. This stark contrast underscores a critical question for aspiring CEOs: How much do they need to know about AI? The answer is clear—more than they might think.

The Imperative for AI Literacy in Leadership

Artificial intelligence is not just a tool for IT departments; it's a transformative force influencing every facet of business operations. AI's applications are vast and varied, from enhancing customer experiences to streamlining supply chains. A survey by Workday indicates that 98% of CEOs acknowledge the immediate business benefits of implementing AI and machine learning (ML), with top advantages including increased productivity, data-driven decision-making, and improved collaboration.

However, recognizing AI's potential is only the first step. Aspiring CEOs must develop a deep understanding of AI to lead their organizations through this technological evolution effectively. This involves grasping the technical aspects and comprehending the ethical, operational, and strategic implications of AI integration.

Bridging the Knowledge Gap

Despite the acknowledged importance of AI, a significant knowledge gap persists among executives. A survey by the General Assembly found that 58% of executives have never participated in AI training or taken an AI course, and 27% are not confident in using AI tools securely. This lack of preparedness can hinder strategic decision-making and impede the successful adoption of AI initiatives.

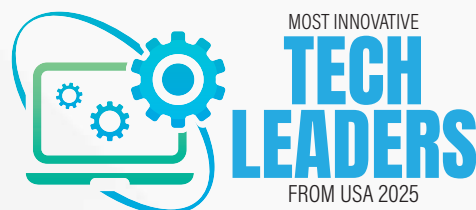
Aspiring CEOs should proactively seek education and training in AI to bridge this gap. This could involve enrolling in specialized courses, attending industry conferences, or engaging with AI experts. By doing so, they can build the necessary competence to navigate the complexities of AI technologies and confidently lead their organisations.

The Strategic Advantage of AI Proficiency

Understanding AI at a granular level equips CEOs to make informed strategic decisions that can propel their organizations ahead of the competition. A study by IBM reveals that 75% of CEOs believe that the organization with the most advanced generative AI will have a competitive advantage. Moreover, AI proficiency enables leaders to identify new market opportunities, optimize operations, and enhance customer engagement.

As AI continues to redefine the business landscape, the role of the CEO is evolving in tandem. Aspiring leaders can no longer afford to view AI as a peripheral concern relegated to technical teams. Instead, they must cultivate a comprehensive understanding of AI to steer their organizations effectively through the complexities of the digital age. Embracing AI literacy is not merely a strategic advantage; it's an essential component of modern leadership. ♦





A Visionary and Influential Disruptor Driving AI-Digital Transformation

SRIKANTH VICTORY

CTO, **AgilityInsights**

When the world speaks of digital disruption, few leaders can claim they've helped shape its course from the very beginning. Srikanth Victory, Chief Technology Officer at AgilityInsights.ai, stands firmly among that elite. A seasoned executive with more than 25 years of experience at industry giants like Walmart, Kimberly-Clark, Neiman Marcus, and CommonSpirit Health, Srikanth has been at the forefront of innovation, building ROI-driven digital and data solutions long before they became business imperatives.

With a rare blend of strategic vision and hands-on technological mastery, Srikanth has led transformative initiatives across industries such as healthcare, retail, CPG, manufacturing, and SaaS platforms across domains including digital, revenue management, sales, marketing, supply chain, finance, innovation, and HR. He has consistently aligned cutting-edge technologies—including AI, data analytics, and cloud innovation—with real-world business outcomes. His true specialty lies in architecting and delivering platforms that are not only innovative but also pragmatic, scalable, and enduring.

Srikanth is widely regarded as one of the most innovative tech leaders of our time—not only for his ability to bring the latest cutting-edge technologies into the enterprise, but also for his proven track record in delivering tangible early wins across organizations. At AgilityInsights.ai, he is leveraging this expertise to build a next-generation, AI-driven, cloud-native SaaS platform that redefines how digital transformation is designed, delivered, and scaled. He pioneers the integration of Analytical AI, Generative AI, and MCP AI Agents into the core of a modernized user interface—making advanced intelligence a seamless part of user decision-making and ensuring these technologies are not just adopted, but fully harnessed to drive measurable business value.

Beyond his executive leadership, Srikanth is also a prolific and innovative technology thought leader. He authors the widely followed Tech Bits y Bytes

newsletter on LinkedIn, where he shares insights on emerging technologies, enterprise innovation, and AI strategy. His recently published book, AI-Driven Digital Transformation, is now available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and over 40,000 online publishing platforms worldwide, as well as in more than 50 physical retail stores across the U.S.—further cementing his influence in shaping the future of tech-enabled business.

"In Fortune 100 enterprises, driving innovation can feel like steering a freight train—deliberate, heavy, and slow to turn. At AgilityInsights, we have to move like a racing yacht—fast, agile, and always adjusting to the wind."

Today, as Chief Technology Officer, Srikanth leads with what insiders call a rare combination: mathematical clarity, business foresight, and the heart of a builder. His work is shaping a platform at the forefront of cloud-native agility, scalable platforms, and responsible AI innovation—areas predicted to define the next decade of enterprise growth.

After a careful evaluation of leadership profiles, in-depth research, and thoughtful interviews, Srikanth Victory emerged as a clear standout for this prestigious recognition. TradeFlock interviewed him to explore the journey behind the title—and the future he's already building.

Q How did your mindset shift when moving from Fortune 100 companies to AgilityInsights?

When I transitioned from Fortune 100 giants to AgilityInsights.ai, it felt like switching from steering a freight train to piloting a racing yacht. In large corporations, I moved within deliberate, layered, and process-bound systems. At AgilityInsights, I have to fully embrace a culture of speed, product innovation, and real-time customer feedback. I traded structured product delivery for fast decision-making and agile execution. The pace was electric—it reignited my builder's spirit and gave me the space to blend enterprise



Innovation and optimization aren't opposing forces; they're twin levers of sustainable change, powered by insight, context, and collaboration.

discipline with nimble action to create real, scalable impact. It's been the most energizing pivot of my career.

Q How do you decide between adopting new tech and optimizing current systems?

Choosing between adopting new technology and optimizing existing systems isn't a binary decision—it's a strategic balance rooted in purpose. It's not about chasing trends but making timely moves that create long-term value. I always start with one question: Does this technology solve a real business problem better than our current solution, and can it scale? If so, it undergoes rigorous vetting for feasibility, speed to market, and alignment with the organization's goals. At the same time, optimization often yields faster returns, especially for enterprises burdened with technical debt. Sometimes, real transformation comes not from disruption, but from reimagining what already exists. I follow the "horses for courses" principle—business needs should drive technology choices. Innovation and optimization aren't opposing forces; they're twin levers of sustainable change, powered by insight, context, and collaboration.

Q How do you filter real enterprise value amid AI, IoT, and blockchain buzz?

In a world buzzing with AI, IoT, and blockchain, I stay relentless in my focus on what truly matters—business outcomes like value, differentiation, and trust. I've seen too many teams chase hype without solving real problems. For me, it always starts with the business goal—whether it's improving patient outcomes through AI or increasing supply chain transparency with blockchain—and then I work backward to find the right technology. Real enterprise value happens where user needs, operational feasibility, and strategic fit intersect. I look for maturity, interoperability, and alignment with SPDECT principles: Security, Privacy, Data Protection, Ethics, Compliance, and Transparency. Filtering signals from noise takes clarity, discipline, and the willingness to ask tough questions early—because lasting innovation isn't built on trends; it's built on purpose.

DOING THE RIGHT THING,
AND DOING IT THE RIGHT WAY

Q How do you lead teams through ambiguity during major transformations?

Leading through ambiguity starts with creating psychological safety. Teams need to feel safe experimenting, learning, and adapting without fear of failure. During major transformations—especially with legacy systems—I'm transparent about what we know, what we don't, and how we'll figure it out together. That kind of clarity builds trust. I lean on a "lighthouse strategy": show early wins, build momentum, and prove value quickly. I bring stakeholders in early, align on the vision, and co-create solutions. To me, leadership in uncertain times isn't about control—it's about clarity, collaboration, and confidence. Ambiguity isn't a blocker; with empathy, agility, and a "one team, one dream" mindset, it becomes a launchpad for innovation.

Q Which leadership principles are non-negotiable for you across industries?

Integrity, empathy, authenticity, and accountability are my non-negotiables—no matter the industry, scale, or setting. People don't follow titles; they follow leaders they trust. I've seen firsthand that technical brilliance may get you in the door, but without emotional intelligence, it rarely inspires lasting impact. For me, it's about understanding what drives people, honoring their contributions, and building a culture of ownership and purpose.

I live by one guiding principle: "Doing the right thing, and doing it the right way." I also bring a strong bias for action—because in today's fast-moving world, waiting for perfect conditions is often the biggest risk. I believe in moving with purpose, learning on the go, and adapting fast. Whether navigating legacy transformations or leading greenfield innovation, what's anchored me is continuous learning, humility, and a belief that while tools may change, principled leadership never goes out of style.

Q How do you balance speed, security, and scalability in cloud-native environments?

In cloud-native environments, I don't see speed, security, and scalability as trade-offs—they're a unified force, and increasingly, I add responsible AI deployment to that equation. Innovation must keep pace with the business, but never at the cost of trust or long-term resilience. True velocity doesn't come from cutting corners—it comes from building smart, secure foundations from the start. That means embedding security and scalability into every layer of development through DevSecOps, automation, modular design, and microservices.

I lead with a "secure by design, scale by default" mindset, ensuring every product and platform team moves fast, but with clear accountability. When done right, speed, security, and scalability don't just coexist—they amplify one another, enabling us to deliver cloud-native solutions that are fast to market, trusted by design, and built to grow.

Q What mindset blocks do you often see in tech teams, and how do you overcome them?

One of the biggest mindsets blocks I see in tech teams is perfectionism—the belief that innovation must be flawless before it's shared. That delays progress and stifles creativity. I foster a test-learn-adapt culture where speed of learning matters more than perfection. In fast-paced, AI-driven environments, waiting for the "ideal" solution is often the riskiest move. Siloed thinking is another blocker—treating tech and business as separate. I encourage cross-functional empathy, product ownership, and a shift from task execution to value creation. I emphasize a multidimensional mindset: Business + Data + Core Expertise + a Tester's Curiosity. Technical skills matter, but they're just one piece. My kite analogy says it best: character is the kite body, competencies are the wind, and tech depth is the thread. When balanced, that's what makes careers truly take flight.

Don't chase titles chase skills. The titles and compensation will follow.

Q What legacy would you like to leave as a leader?

I hope my legacy isn't measured by code written or systems launched, but by the confidence, clarity, courage, and honesty I sparked in others. I want to be remembered not just for leading teams, but for lifting people—spotting talent early, making room for every voice, and leading with trust and care.

If I've helped even one person lead with both head and heart, take bold steps, and stay true to themselves, that's success. More than building systems, I strive to be an inspirational leader—shaping thinking, building culture, and helping others grow into their full potential.

To me, leadership means leaving people stronger, braver, and more driven than when we met. That's the ripple I hope to leave behind. ♦

“ When Technology Fails People, Leadership Must Step In. ”

Too often, the biggest barriers in global education aren't ambition or talent—they're systems. Outdated, opaque, and impersonal, these systems turn dreams into delays for millions of international students and working professionals each year. Alireza Madi knows this all too well—and he's working to change it.

As Chief Technology Officer at International Education Evaluations (IEE), he leads a digital transformation that puts people back at the centre of credential evaluation. With over two decades of experience across high-stakes, regulated industries like healthcare and education, his track record speaks volumes. From designing secure systems for brain imaging centres to introducing ethical AI into academic credentialing, he has consistently turned complex challenges into accessible, scalable solutions.

His leadership is defined by empathy as much as expertise, whether he's embedding compliance into tech architecture or sitting alongside team members to understand workflow pain points. What drives him isn't just innovation, but equity: creating tools that open doors for the overlooked, the underserved, and the globally mobile.

In this TradeFlock feature, we explore how Alireza Madi is not just building better systems but reimagining what global education can look like when human dignity drives digital design.

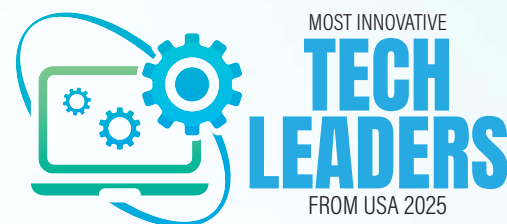
Q How does your work connect healthcare and edtech?

What looks like a sharp shift, from nuclear medicine to credential evaluation, has been a continuous journey shaped by a single question: how do we build systems that serve people in moments that matter?

In every role, I've worked within tightly regulated, high-stakes environments where trust is non-negotiable. The common thread has been designing platforms that are compliant, scalable and deeply human.

What drives me is the opportunity to create clarity and access, especially for those often overlooked—patients needing culturally sensitive care, internationally trained professionals navigating opaque systems, or students pursuing dreams across borders.

My focus remains the same across everything: building technology that enhances every user experience with confidence, connection, and dignity.



Designing Tech with a Human Pulse

ALIREZA MADI

Chief Technology Officer,
International Education Evaluation

Q What's a surprising leadership tactic you use that really works?

One of the most effective things I do as a leader is something people rarely expect—I shadow my team members.

Instead of the usual top-down approach, I spend time with QA testers, support staff, or credential evaluators to understand how our systems and decisions are playing out on the ground. I'm not there to audit; I'm there to learn. I ask questions like, “**Where do you feel friction?**” or “**What do you silently work around daily?**”

This reverse shadowing gives me honest, real-time insight that dashboards and reports can't. As I've learned, “It's not scalable in the traditional sense—but it's transformational in a cultural sense.”

It also sends a powerful message: every role is strategic, and curiosity from leadership can spark innovation from anywhere. Especially in fields like healthcare and edtech, that kind of empathy-led feedback is often where the smartest ideas begin.

Q What's an overlooked skill future tech leaders need, and how do you foster it?

In tech leadership, especially in complex sectors like healthcare and education, I've found adaptive empathy to be the most overlooked yet vital skill. It's the ability to shift perspectives in real time, without losing clarity



The real challenge is building systems that can scale without losing sight of the people at the heart of them.



or conviction. I firmly believe that “Adaptive empathy isn't a soft skill—it's a leadership multiplier.” Thus, I nurture it through context-based communication drills, cross-role shadowing, and leadership reviews that value emotional intelligence alongside outcomes. When leaders can interpret nuance, navigate resistance, and communicate across silos, they don't just build systems—they build trust. And trust is where real, human-centred innovation begins.

Q What excites or concerns you most about tech leadership in mission-driven sectors like education and immigration?

What excites me about tech leadership today—especially in mission-driven sectors like education and immigration—is the shift toward ethical design, cross-disciplinary thinking, and purpose-led innovation. We're finally asking, “Who gets left behind when we scale?” and that's reshaping how we build.

I see more leaders embracing their roles as stewards of equity and trust, not just builders. But I worry about the erosion of domain empathy—when leaders enter new spaces without understanding the lives behind the data. Over-automation concerns me too; AI can amplify bias if misused.

As I often remind my team, “Not everything that can be automated should be.” True progress demands inclusion, intentionality, and integrity—because in these sectors, tech done right can truly change lives.

Q How do you ensure ethical and inclusive AI use in credential evaluation?

They call AI the future, but I believe its real power lies in how responsibly we use it today. As a CTO in credential evaluation, where our work can shape someone's education, career, or immigration journey, I don't see AI as a silver bullet—I see it as a tool that must earn trust.

I ensure ethical and inclusive AI adoption by embedding human judgment at the core. AI helps us with tasks like OCR and classification, but final decisions always rest with trained professionals. We rigorously audit models and their training data to reflect the global diversity of academic credentials, because “you risk embedding systemic bias into automated systems if you don't interrogate the data.” Cross-functional ethics groups review every AI use case to catch unintended consequences before they reach the user. And most importantly, we're transparent—people deserve to know when AI is used and have a clear path for human review. ♦

STRATEGIC SILENCE

MICROSOFT & NVIDIA'S CALCULATED APPROACH TO TRUMP

While some corporate giants have made their stance on President Donald Trump loud and clear, two of the biggest names in tech—Microsoft and Nvidia—are taking a far more subtle, calculated approach. Unlike companies such as Apple and Google, which have publicly clashed with Trump over issues ranging from immigration policies to tariffs, Microsoft and Nvidia have opted for a strategy of quiet engagement rather than outright confrontation. But why are these two powerhouse companies choosing discretion over drama, and what does it mean for their future in a politically volatile landscape?

A Deliberate, Low-Key Strategy

Microsoft and Nvidia have mastered the art of maintaining strong government relationships without making headlines. Satya Nadella, Microsoft's CEO, has consistently positioned the company as a politically neutral force, prioritizing long-term strategy over reactionary corporate activism. Similarly, Jensen Huang, Nvidia's CEO, has largely avoided political controversy, focusing instead on maintaining Nvidia's dominance in the artificial intelligence and semiconductor industries.

In contrast, other tech CEOs have openly opposed Trump's policies. Apple's Tim Cook has publicly criticized Trump's stance on climate change and immigration, while Meta's Mark Zuckerberg has engaged in a highly publicized battle over social media regulations. Microsoft and Nvidia, however, have adopted a more pragmatic.

Microsoft's Tactical Engagement

Microsoft's relationship with Trump has been carefully managed. Unlike Amazon, which clashed with Trump over federal contracts and faced public attacks from the former president, Microsoft strategically

while ensuring compliance. This approach has allowed the company to maintain access to key markets without becoming embroiled in political disputes.

The Risks and Rewards of Staying Quiet

By opting for a quieter approach, Microsoft and Nvidia have reaped significant benefits. They have continued securing government contracts, avoided becoming political punching bags, and maintained steady growth in their respective industries. However, this strategy is not without its risks.

In an era where corporate activism is increasingly expected, some critics argue that Microsoft and Nvidia's silence on controversial political issues could be seen as tacit approval. For example, while other tech companies took a strong stance against Trump's handling of the Capitol riots, Microsoft and Nvidia remained relatively restrained in their responses.

Moreover, as Trump remains a dominant figure in U.S. politics, there is always the possibility that staying silent could backfire. With Trump returning to power in 2025,

tech companies that have been vocal critics find themselves at odds with the administration, while those that have taken a quieter approach—like Microsoft and Nvidia—are better positioned to navigate shifting political landscapes.

The Future of Corporate-Government Relations

Tech giants' strategy of staying quiet offers a case study in corporate diplomacy. Rather than engaging in public battles, they have demonstrated that working quietly behind the scenes can be just as effective—if not more so—than making bold political statements.

As tech regulation, AI governance, and geopolitical tensions continue to evolve, Microsoft and Nvidia's ability to maintain a balanced, non-confrontational approach may serve as a model for other corporations navigating uncertain political terrain. While companies like Apple and Google make headlines for their political clashes, Microsoft and Nvidia are proving that the quietest voice in the room can sometimes be the most influential. ♦

WE DON'T NEED
TO GIVE BILLIONS
IN SUBSIDIES WHEN
**TARIFFS CAN DO
THE JOB JUST AS WELL**
—IF NOT BETTER.

~Donald Trump, President of America



Microsoft

navigated government contracts with minimal controversy. The company secured a \$10 billion Pentagon cloud computing contract (JEDI), edging Amazon Web Services. While Trump's involvement in the bidding process was questioned, Microsoft avoided public spats and focused on government partnerships.

Additionally, Microsoft has maintained an open line of communication with policymakers

on issues such as cybersecurity, AI regulations, and digital infrastructure. This approach has enabled the company to shape policy discussions without alienating key political figures.

Nvidia's Calculated Approach to Policy

Nvidia's ascent as a leader in AI and semiconductors has coincided with heightened US-China tensions. Unlike companies like Tesla, which

faced Trump's direct scrutiny over manufacturing decisions, Nvidia has sidestepped political landmines by focusing on innovation and staying relatively quiet on divisive issues.

One of the biggest challenges for Nvidia has been navigating U.S. export restrictions on advanced AI chips to China. Rather than openly opposing Trump-era trade policies, Nvidia has worked discreetly with policymakers to mitigate restrictions



Bridging the Gap Between Lab and Life

PROF. DR. DIPANJAN PAN

📁 CTO, CO-FOUNDER
& ACADEMIC PROFESSOR,
🏢 Penn State University

In a world where millions still die waiting for blood in ambulances, for early diagnoses, for treatments science hasn't yet delivered, innovation in healthcare remains both urgent and uneven. The problem isn't a lack of ideas, but the gap between discovery and deployment. Bridging that gap is where Prof. Dipanjan Pan thrives.

A scientist, entrepreneur, and educator, he has dedicated his career to translating complex research into life-saving solutions. As the Dorothy Foehr Huck & J. Lloyd Huck Endowed Chair Professor in Nanomedicine at the Pennsylvania State University, and the co-founder of startups like KaloCyte, VitruVian Bio, and Insight Tech, he has pioneered synthetic blood substitutes, tear-based diagnostics, targeted nanomedicine therapies and point-of-care infectious disease diagnostics. With over two decades of academic leadership—from Washington University and the University of Illinois to Penn State—his journey reflects a rare blend of compassion and complexity.

TradeFlock spoke with Prof. Dipanjan to understand how he's closing the gap between breakthrough and bedside—one innovation at a time.



Q What inspired your move from research to building startups, and what were the toughest hurdles?

The transition didn't happen overnight. The more time I spent in academic research, the more I felt the urge to push ideas beyond publications—to make a tangible difference in people's lives. That's what drew me to translational research. It's the bridge between groundbreaking discoveries and real-world impact.

I've always believed that research should improve human health. That belief led me to focus on speeding up the path from lab to clinic—from diagnostics to therapies. But the shift brought significant challenges: technical validation, human trials, market acceptance, securing capital, and most critically, building a cross-functional team that could turn theory into scalable, regulatory-compliant products. Each challenge tested the vision, but they also made the outcomes far more meaningful.

Q You operate in a rare intersection of nanomedicine, engineering, and innovation. How do you balance depth in research with the agility required of a tech leader?

Working at the intersection of basic science, engineering, and innovation means I'm constantly shifting gears—and I love that. My goal has always been to make a real and immediate impact on human lives, which is why translational research drives me. I build multidisciplinary teams—chemists, biologists, engineers—to keep the research depth while aligning with real-world needs. I lean on rapid prototyping and data-driven iteration to stay agile. To me, rigorous research and fast execution aren't opposites—they're partners in progress.

Q How do you build tech roadmaps that are both cutting-edge and clinically relevant?

Serving as a CTO while also holding an academic role means I'm constantly straddling two fast-evolving worlds. My first step in building any roadmap is to understand the clinical challenge. That means engaging early with physicians, end-users, and stakeholders to align our innovations with real unmet needs.

Staying current is non-negotiable. I regularly serve as an expert on scientific boards and review panels for the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health, and Department of Defense. I collaborate with innovation hubs and speak at international conferences. This helps me stay ahead of what's next—AI, smart materials, new delivery systems.

Importantly, I don't do this alone. For all my startups, we adopt a phased, team-driven approach. We validate

ideas with pilot projects, adjust based on emerging evidence, and design with both scalability and regulatory compliance in mind. Innovation is only impactful when it's paired with relevance and readiness.

Q What's a surprising lesson that helped shape your company's success?

I've been involved in founding or co-founding five startups. Founding these entities taught me that even the most groundbreaking ideas can stall if you don't understand the path ahead. One is transforming eye exams with tear-based diagnostics, the other is creating synthetic blood for trauma care—two completely different missions. But the surprising insight? Innovation isn't enough.

Understanding and appreciating the long, complex regulatory process of bringing a product to market was the greatest lesson I learned.

It's not glamorous, but that knowledge shaped how we plan, build, and push forward—because brilliant science only matters if it reaches the people who need it.

Q What's a common myth about nanomedicine you often have to debunk?

People often think nanomedicine is some futuristic invention, but it has ancient roots. The Egyptians used nanoscale gold, and Ayurvedic medicine used metallic powders like bhasma, which we now understand had nanoscale properties. One myth I frequently address is that nanotechnology is a brand-new, one-dimensional field. In reality, it's deeply interdisciplinary and built on decades—even centuries—of knowledge. **Nanotechnology doesn't offer simple fixes to complex problems—it demands rigorous research, experimentation, and precision.** And despite fears, it's not inherently dangerous. In fact, over 50 nanomedicine drugs are already approved for human use, with many more in clinical trials.

Q What's one surprising synergy across your roles as professor, founder, editor, and CTO?

Honestly, switching roles so often taught me one big thing: complexity only works if you can make it simple. Whether teaching, building companies, editing research, or leading tech teams, I rely on one core skill—synthesizing complex ideas and communicating them effectively. That's the real glue across disciplines. It helps people collaborate, innovate, and solve problems that one perspective alone can't crack. ♦

Bridging AI and the Arts to Build a Better Tomorrow

GERRY WHITE

 *Dean of Academic Technology,*
 **ECPI University**

In a world where algorithms are evolving faster than we can track them, the question isn't just what machines can do—it's what humans should still do. As AI becomes more deeply embedded in every facet of our lives, the true innovators are not just those who master the technology but those who leverage it with purpose, empathy, and meaning. Gerry White is a shining example of this rare breed of technologist who bridges the future with the wisdom of the past.

A teacher, writer, artist, and technologist, Gerry has spent over two decades helping students navigate the space where code meets culture. At the intersection of humanities and machine intelligence, he sees not a conflict, but an opportunity to elevate AI by embedding it with the qualities that make us human: creativity, critical thinking, and ethical insight. Whether leading academic initiatives at ECPI University, preserving memories through AR with Life Preserve LLC, or building ethical AI frameworks through AIM-HR, Gerry's career is a testament to the power of blending technology with soul.

His innovative leadership in AI education, immersive tech, and digital storytelling is not just preparing students for the jobs of tomorrow—it's preparing them to ask why those jobs matter.

TradeFlock interviewed Gerry White to delve deeper into his journey, the challenges he's faced, and the transformative initiatives he's leading to shape the future of education through technology.

Q What connects your background in literature and music to your work in AI and academic tech?

I've always been driven by creativity—that spark when ideas come alive and connect with people. I knew by sixth grade I wanted to be an English teacher, and I immersed myself in literature, philosophy, and the arts. While teaching at ECPI University, I unexpectedly fell in love with technology. Programming felt like a new art form—creative, interactive, and powerfully useful. It let me build experiences others could directly engage with. Since then, I've worked with emerging technologies that expand what's possible, while staying grounded in the human urge to create, communicate, and connect. That's the bridge across both worlds.

Q What's the biggest challenge in blending humanities with AI, and how do you tackle it?

I've always believed the heart matters just as much as the code. The real challenge? Convincing people, especially students, that the humanities aren't obsolete in an AI age. For years, we've struggled to defend their relevance. But now, it's clear: "You might be brilliant at building technology, but what are you building for?" Empathy, creativity, ethical reasoning—these "messy" human traits are where AI still falls short. That's our edge. The humanities give us purpose, perspective, and the power to ask better questions.

Q As a Dean, technologist, and founder, how do you balance academic rigor with entrepreneurial agility?

I often joke that my calendar looks like a chessboard mid-game—everything in motion, but with purpose. Balance, for me, isn't stillness; it's staying nimble without losing direction. Sometimes you change lanes; sometimes you pick a new destination. That mindset helps me navigate both academia and entrepreneurship. When I built Fix It Your Damn Self, an AI-powered cooking app, it began as a fun side project—but it quickly became a classroom tool. Now, students in our R&D club help refine similar ideas. That loop—real-world testing meets academic insight.

Q How do you preserve reflection, curiosity, and empathy in your classrooms and teams in a world obsessed with speed and efficiency?

I love moving fast, but I've learned that speed can turn into autopilot without reflection. So I build in pauses. Just breathe to ask, What am I doing, and why? That moment changes everything. It's not about slowing down, it's about tuning in. It's okay to do nothing sometimes—but do it with intention, I tell my students: ask if you can't see how your learning connects to your life. That question sparks awareness, purpose, and real curiosity. In a culture of constant motion, those tiny pauses keep us human—and help us build things that matter.

Q How has your background in music and art shaped your approach to systems design and educational innovation?

I don't separate art from development—they've always spoken the same language to me. Visual art is the truest mirror; what you see doesn't come from the canvas, it comes from inside you. That idea—of searching for meaning, reading between the lines—informs how I approach systems. Music adds another layer: it's physics you can feel, a language of emotion and energy. When I design an app, a learning experience or a framework, I think like a composer. What's the rhythm? What's the story? What will the user feel? Like the best art, the best systems invite people in and move them.

Empathy, creativity, ethical reasoning—these "messy" human traits are where AI still falls short.

Q What thinkers have recently inspired your thinking as a tech leader?

Philosophy grounds everything. I'm drawn to the "why" behind how we think, especially now, as AI shapes more of our world. We're at a cultural and technological crossroads; without reflection, we risk losing what makes us human.

That tension inspired *The Last Modest Proposal: Saving Humanity, or Losing It, in Our Final Bargain with the Machines We Made*, a book that explores three urgent futures for artificial superintelligence: one that heals, one that defends, and one that ends the game before it's lost. ♦



aiESG

SMOOTHING THE WRINKLES OF SUSTAINABILITY WITH TECHNOLOGY

In a world striving for economic affluence, the relentless march towards prosperity has often left deep "wrinkles" on the fabric of society—environmental degradation, widespread poverty, and inequalities that challenge fundamental human rights. These "wrinkles" demand solutions, but finding a clear, quantifiable basis for sustainable corporate activities has been anything but simple. This is the gap that aiESG, a cutting-edge startup, has boldly stepped in to fill.

Founded by visionary entrepreneurs Daikichi Seki and Alexander Ryota Keeley, aiESG is on a mission to revolutionise how the world understands and acts on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles. Their innovative approach leverages

artificial intelligence (AI), academic research, and unparalleled data resources to "visualise" corporate performance, turning the abstract ideals of sustainability into tangible, actionable insights.

The story of aiESG began when Daikichi Seki, a sustainability strategist with a deep commitment to solving global challenges, teamed up with Alexander Ryota Keeley, a technology expert passionate about using AI to drive social good. Both founders were frustrated with the lack of transparency and consistency in ESG evaluations. They realised that many companies wanted to align with global sustainability goals like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but lacked the tools to measure their impact accurately.

Their vision was to create a solution that could empower corporations, consumers, and policymakers alike. "Our mission is to remove ambiguity from ESG evaluations," explains Daikichi. "We want to ensure that companies striving for a better society can make informed, responsible choices while empowering consumers to base their decisions on objective assessments."

At its core, aiESG aims to be a compass for a wrinkle-free society where corporate activities align with the collective good, fostering happiness and sustainable development without leaving anyone behind.

Visualising the Invisible
aiESG stands out by turning the invisible into the visible, providing

the tools needed to uncover the real impact of corporate activities. Its core services include:

ESG Analysis and Evaluation Consulting - Backed by the world's largest ESG database and cutting-edge AI technology, aiESG offers comprehensive assessments of a company's sustainability performance. The insights are not only academically rigorous but also actionable, helping businesses identify areas for improvement.

ESG Assessment and Improvement Cloud Service - The world's first AI-powered cloud service for self-driven ESG assessment and improvement. This platform empowers companies to take ownership of their sustainability journey, providing real-time insights and actionable steps to enhance their ESG performance.

By combining advanced AI with robust research, aiESG has created a transparent and reliable framework for evaluating corporate sustainability, setting a new standard in the industry.

Key Metrics

Foundation: Established in 2022 by Daikichi Seki and Alexander Ryota Keeley

Total Funding: \$3.34M in 2 rounds

Latest Funding Round: Conventional Debt, Dec 04, 2024, Undisclosed

Investors: Nissay Capital, Japan Finance Corporation and JAFCO

Ranked: 5th among 151 active competitors

Financial Performance and Growth Trajectory

Since its inception, aiESG has demonstrated remarkable growth, driven by the urgent global need for sustainable practices. On 4 December 2024, the company secured significant funding that underscored investor confidence in its potential:

An undisclosed amount in Conventional Debt from JFC (Japan Finance Corporation).

\$3.34 million in Series A funding led by Nissay Capital and JAFCO, two prominent venture capital firms known for supporting innovative startups in technology and sustainability.

These funds have bolstered aiESG's ability to scale its operations, refine its AI algorithms, and expand its reach globally.

"This funding is a vote of confidence in our mission to make sustainability measurable and actionable. We're excited to use these resources to drive greater impact," says Alexander Keeley, Co-founder, aiESG

A Human-Centred Approach to Technology

While aiESG's technology is sophisticated, its approach remains deeply human. The company's ultimate goal is to enhance corporate practices and foster a culture of accountability, empathy, and collective responsibility.

"We believe in a future where every decision—corporate or individual—contributes to a better world," says Daikichi. This ethos also extends to aiESG's internal culture, which values inclusivity, innovation, and a shared commitment to making a difference.

A Wrinkle-Free Tomorrow

At a time when the world is increasingly demanding accountability and sustainability, aiESG is not just a startup—it's a revolution. By enabling companies to measure and improve their ESG performance and empowering consumers to make informed choices, aiESG is paving the way for a society where economic growth and social equity go hand in hand. Through its undying dedication to innovation, transparency, and human-centred values, aiESG is helping to smooth the wrinkles of a fractured world and guiding us towards a sustainable, harmonious future. ♦

ESG analysis
and
assessment

Human rights
due diligence

Nature
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TNFD



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THE REGENERATION ECONOMY

How Healthcare is Moving from Repair to Renewal

A profound shift is underway in healthcare—one that is quietly moving us beyond the age of “repair” and into an era of renewal. Regenerative medicine, once considered futuristic, is rapidly becoming one of the most promising and investable frontiers in clinical science. And it’s redefining not just how we age—but how we live, perform, and thrive.

As a board-certified physician with over a decade exclusively dedicated to longevity, regenerative medicine, and medical aesthetics, I founded Ad Astra Clinic in 2021 to serve a growing population seeking more than reactive healthcare. Our clinic was built with one purpose: to deliver evidence-based protocols that restore, optimize, and future-proof the human body.

From advanced cellular therapies and exosome infusions to age-modulating peptides, mitochondrial enhancers, and epigenetic diagnostics, our patients—executives, high-performers, and forward-thinkers—aren’t waiting to get sick. They are investing in resilience. And in doing so, they are part of what we now call the regeneration economy.

This is not a niche. It is a booming global sector projected to exceed \$150 billion by 2030. The demand is already here, driven by a growing awareness that the old sick-care model is unsustainable—financially and biologically. Regenerative therapies promise not only better outcomes but fewer hospitalizations, lower long-term costs, and a new vision of aging—where prevention and rejuvenation replace deterioration and delay.

At Ad Astra Clinic, we believe longevity and aesthetics are not separate disciplines but two sides of the same coin. True health is visible, measurable, and enduring. As more people take charge of their biological future, regenerative medicine is poised to become a cornerstone of 21st-century healthcare—not just adding years to life, but vitality to every year. ♦



DR. ALEXIS ORTEGA
Founder & CEO of **Ad Astra Clinic**

Redefining Business Growth Through Intelligent Data Systems

KANAK KANTI ROY

*Product Data Engineer Lead,
Growth Science & Analytics,*
Latentview Analytics




As digital platforms become more intelligent, the fuel behind their evolution isn't just clean code or smart algorithms—it's data. Not just any data, but systems that interpret, learn, and drive meaningful action at scale. In today's tech ecosystem, where products serve billions and marketing is as predictive as it is creative, data infrastructure has quietly become the backbone of innovation.

At the heart of this shift is a new generation of builders—people who don't just work with data but shape how it's understood, applied, and scaled across global platforms. Among them is Kanak Kanti Roy, Product Data Engineer Lead, Growth Science & Analytics at Latentview Analytics, who blends technical mastery with strategic clarity.

From architecting scalable solutions at Infosys to reshaping digital strategies at Apple, and now leading product data engineering at LatentView Analytics for YouTube (Google), Kanak Kanti Roy has quietly driven some of the most sophisticated data systems behind today's most-used tech platforms.

At Apple, he pioneered causal inference systems, improved user onboarding with machine learning models, and led high-impact collaborations across engineering and marketing. His work focuses on decoding user journeys and building data infrastructures that inform YouTube's growth strategy.

In this exclusive conversation with TradeFlock, Kanak discusses his transition from India to the U.S. tech landscape, his evolving philosophy on data leadership, and what it takes to turn information into innovation.

Q What connects your journey from Infosys to Apple to Google?

The common thread across Infosys, Apple, and now Google has always been this: using data to drive meaningful impact at scale. At Infosys, I built the foundation—learning analytics, data science, and how to execute with discipline. At Apple, I applied that knowledge in a deeply product-focused environment, solving complex challenges with user experience at the heart of everything. Now at Google, it's about pairing that technical depth with a platform mindset—building for scale, speed, and global reach.

In each role, I've bridged data and business, engineering and strategy. Whether optimising the App Store products or building systems that power critical decisions, the goal has always been clear: turn data into something that makes a real difference.

Q What surprised you most when moving from India to the U.S. tech world?

Moving to the U.S. wasn't just a location change but a mindset shift. What stood out most was the deep sense of ownership. Here, you're expected to challenge the status quo and take initiative. And the collaboration?

It's like a creative studio—everyone has a seat at the table from day one, whether you're an engineer, analyst, or designer. That synergy still fuels the innovation I'm lucky to participate in.

Q What matters more in data leadership—architecture or alignment?

Architecture is the engine, but alignment is the compass. I've seen firsthand that even the most elegant systems can miss the mark if they're not solving the right business problems. At Apple, we built for scale, but what truly made the difference was staying close to cross-functional teams, translating goals into data solutions. It's about speaking both 'data' and 'business' fluently. That's what turns good architecture into real impact.

Q What major challenges have you observed in scaling data infrastructure in today's cloud-first era, and how have you tackled them?

In building scalable analytics systems in today's cloud-first era, the real challenge isn't just ingesting data—it's turning it into trusted, actionable insights at scale. At Apple, we tackled this using metadata-driven pipelines and automated data validation to catch issues early.

We also focused on making data accessible, but with guardrails that ensured everyone used consistent metrics without compromising governance. Scalability isn't just about tech—it's about building systems that people across the business can trust and use effectively.

Q As a bridge between data and business strategy, how do you ensure your insights drive real impact, not just dashboards?

Dashboards are just the starting line - impact happens when insights shape decisions. As someone bridging data and business strategy, I focus on deeply understanding the 'why' behind each request. What's the actual decision at stake? What metric moves the needle? That perspective changes everything.

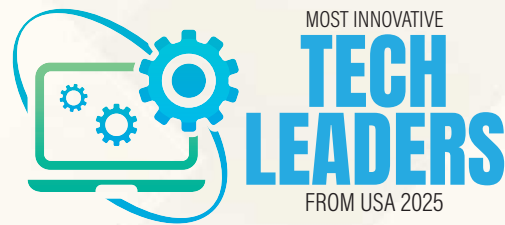
Every analysis has a story: what the data says, why it matters, and what action it points to. It is also critical to track how insights are used, whether they influence roadmaps, and what outcomes they drive. That feedback loop ensures we're not just reporting data but changing outcomes.

Q What keeps you grounded outside of work in the high-intensity tech landscape of the U.S.?

In a fast-paced tech world like the U.S., it's easy to get consumed by deadlines, metrics, and the next big launch. What keeps me grounded is staying connected to things that bring me clarity and perspective, outside the noise. I'm a big fan of watching sunsets—there's something about those quiet, golden moments that instantly resets my mind and also helps me reflect on my journey.

Hiking and spontaneous adventures in nature are my go-to therapy. Whether it's a mountain trail or a forest path, being outdoors reminds me to breathe, slow down, and zoom out from the day-to-day rush. I also love road trips—just hitting the road with no strict agenda, some good music, and a sense of curiosity.

Honestly, spending time with my pet, Kulfi, is the ultimate stress-buster. No matter how the day has gone, she brings a kind of calm and presence that's hard to match. These things help me stay grounded and creative and start each day of work with a fresh perspective. ♦



Setting A New Standard For Transformative Tech Leadership

RAVILLA KISHAN BABUJI

Chief Technology Officer, IRI-Sys

The role of the Chief Technology Officer is no longer just about keeping systems running—it's about leading change from the core. As businesses race to stay ahead in a technology-first world, CTOs are stepping up as Chief Transformation Officers, helping organizations rethink how they work, build, and grow.

At IRI-Sys, that role belongs to Ravilla Kishan Babuji, a new-age tech leader with calm confidence and a clear vision. His journey began not in a boardroom but in labs and classrooms at the University of North Carolina, where he blended computer science with real-world applications.

He later joined Sonos, first as an intern and then as a full-time software engineer. At Sonos, he led initiatives that enhanced product integration and remote collaboration systems—efforts that improved performance and laid the groundwork for smarter, more connected solutions. Now, as CTO of IRI-Sys, he aligns innovation with impact, introducing intelligent automation and building systems that scale with purpose.

In this exclusive with TradeFlock, Babuji shares his journey, insights, and what it takes to lead through transformation.

Q How did your journey—from Sonos intern to CTO at IRI-Sys—shape your leadership style?

Starting as an intern at Sonos, I learned the power of precision—how thoughtful engineering and user-centric design can turn everyday tech into something people truly love. That experience taught me what quality looks like at scale. But it was the messy, fast-moving world of startups that really shaped me. I discovered the importance of speed, iteration, and staying obsessively close to the problem.

Excellence is in the details, but progress lives in momentum.

Today at IRI-Sys, that contrast defines how I lead: build fast, listen closely, and evolve constantly. I don't just value user feedback—I rely on it to guide every major decision. It's about marrying technical excellence with adaptability, and never losing sight of the people we build for.

Q What major technical or team challenges have you faced as CTO, and how are you handling them?

One of the biggest challenges has been scaling a complex technical vision while staying lean. As a bootstrapped startup, we can't afford waste—so we hire for grit and ownership, not just resumes. Our systems are designed to evolve, but in our highly regulated space, “move fast and break things” doesn't fly. AI for regulatory compliances needs to be stable, traceable, and audit-ready from day one.

To address this, we've built targeted optimizations that reduce variability and improve reliability, ensuring our platform is capable and compliant. But staying lean isn't just about code—it's about culture. We move fast together, with clarity, trust, and shared purpose. That alignment is our real velocity.

Q What's one project you're most proud of, and what impact has it made?

I'm especially proud of Regi, our AI-powered compliance agent. It taps into our proprietary dataset of 30,000+ cosmetic ingredients and regulations from over 70 countries, turning a once-manual, opaque process into something smart, fast, and transparent.

Clients can now instantly see how compliant their formulations are and get clear steps to fix issues. This is slashing costs, speeding up launches, and giving brands real confidence in a space where errors can be costly. Innovation isn't just about what you build—it's about

what you change. With Regi, we're not just keeping up with regulation—we're helping the industry rethink how compliance fits into product development.

Q Which emerging tech—AI, edge, or quantum—excites you most, and why?

AI excites me most because it blends everyday utility with extraordinary scale. It's not just about automating tasks—it's about reimagining how we think, decide, and solve problems that were once too complex to touch.

What really moves me is how AI can turn friction into flow. Things that were slow, error-prone, or manual suddenly become intelligent, adaptive, and scalable. That doesn't just boost productivity—it removes barriers, unlocking new possibilities we hadn't even considered.

But with that power comes responsibility. As AI becomes embedded in how we work and live, we have to grapple with big questions around transparency, ethics, and human alignment. That tension—between promise and accountability—is what makes building in AI so urgent and thrilling.

Q Do you see yourself staying on the CTO path or exploring other tech leadership roles?

Right now, I love being a CTO—it puts me right where product, engineering, and strategy meet. Especially with AI evolving so fast, it's an incredible time to be building.

That said, I'm less focused on titles and more on solving real problems. In the long term, I could see myself stepping into a founder or product-driven CEO role. What drives me isn't the seat—it's the chance to build meaningful tech with impact and great people.

Q What's your top advice for early-career engineers or future CTOs who want to create real impact?

Don't just chase cool tech—chase real problems. Get close to your users, feel their friction, and build from that place. The best products don't start in code—they start in context.

One of the most overlooked yet critical skills in technology leadership is communication. The most effective leaders are not only strategic thinkers but also skilled interpreters—capable of translating complex concepts into clear, actionable insights. By articulating a compelling vision and aligning teams around it, they do more than deliver solutions—they influence meaningful, long-term outcomes. ♦



AI AS YOUR NEXT TEAMMATE

How to Adapt, Innovate, and Lead in the Hybrid Era?

In 2025, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the workplace has become a defining feature of modern organization. A recent survey by The Conference Board reveals that 56% of U.S. employees are now utilizing generative AI tools for work-related tasks, with nearly 10% employing them daily. Despite this widespread adoption, approximately 74% of companies lack a clearly communicated AI policy, highlighting a significant gap between usage and governance.

This rapid infusion of AI into daily operations is reshaping traditional work dynamics, cultivating a new era of hybrid organizations where human employees and AI systems collaborate seamlessly. To navigate this transformation effectively, businesses must adopt strategic approaches. To navigate this transformation effectively, businesses must adopt strategic approaches that harness the strengths of both human ingenuity and machine efficiency.

Cultivating an AI-Ready Culture

Building a hybrid organization begins with fostering a culture that embraces AI as a collaborative partner rather than a replacement threat. Research from the MIT Sloan Management Review and Boston Consulting Group indicates that 60% of employees

perceive AI as a coworker, not a job threat. Moreover, organizations where employees derive personal value from AI are nearly six times more likely to achieve significant financial benefits.

To cultivate this mindset, companies should invest in comprehensive training programs that demystify AI technologies and demonstrate their potential to augment human capabilities. Encouraging open dialogues about AI's role can alleviate fears and promote a collaborative atmosphere.

60% of employees perceive AI as a coworker, not a job threat.

-MIT Sloan Management Review and Boston Consulting Group

Implementing Flexible AI Policies

As AI technologies evolve, organizations must establish adaptable policies that govern AI integration without stifling innovation. A study involving over 50 corporate leaders emphasizes the importance of flexible AI policies, allowing companies to pivot and incorporate the latest AI tools and methodologies, thereby maintaining a competitive

edge. These policies should address ethical considerations, data privacy, and provide clear guidelines on AI usage, ensuring that AI applications align with the company's values and strategic objectives.

Redesigning Workflows for Human-AI Collaboration

The advent of AI necessitates a reevaluation of existing workflows to maximize the synergistic potential of human-AI partnerships. AI excels at handling repetitive and data-intensive tasks, freeing human employees to focus on strategic decision-making and creative problem-solving. For instance, Microsoft has introduced "autonomous agents" capable of managing routine office tasks such as monitoring emails and performing everyday functions, thereby enhancing productivity and efficiency. By delegating mundane tasks to AI, employees can engage in more meaningful work, increasing job satisfaction and innovation.

Investing in Continuous Learning and Development

The demand for new skill sets escalates as AI continues to permeate various job functions. Organizations must prioritize continuous learning and development to equip their workforce with the necessary skills to thrive in an AI-enhanced environment.

A World Economic Forum report estimates that 50% of all employees will require reskilling by 2025 due to technological advancements. Companies can address this by offering training programs focused on AI literacy, data analysis, and other relevant competencies, ensuring employees remain competitive and confident in their roles.

Due to technological advancements, 50% of all employees will require reskilling by 2025.

-World Economic Forum

Establishing Robust AI Governance

Effective governance ensures that AI integration aligns with organizational goals and ethical standards. This involves continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment of AI initiatives. The Mayo Clinic, for example, has established an AI governance board comprising experts, ethicists, and

business leaders to regularly review AI projects, ensuring they adhere to the organization's objectives and ethical considerations. Such governance structures help mitigate risks and foster responsible AI usage.

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in AI Deployment

Ensuring diverse representation in AI development and deployment is essential to prevent biases and promote inclusivity. However, a significant gender gap exists in AI engagement, with men more likely to use AI tools than women. Organizations should create inclusive AI training programs to address this disparity and encourage participation across all demographics, fostering a diverse and equitable AI-integrated workplace.

Enhancing Employee Well-being Through AI

AI has the potential to alleviate workplace stress by automating tedious tasks, thereby allowing employees to focus on more fulfilling activities. A survey by Tech.co indicates that 59% of U.S. business leaders using AI report

improved job satisfaction. By thoughtfully integrating AI to handle routine responsibilities, companies can enhance employee well-being, reduce burnout, and improve overall morale.

59% of U.S. business leaders using AI report improved job satisfaction.

-Tech.co 2024 survey

Towards a Transformative Shift

The rise of AI coworkers signifies a transformative shift in organizational structures and workflows. By embracing flexible policies, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and promoting ethical AI practices, businesses can construct hybrid organizations where human and artificial intelligence collaborate effectively. This harmonious integration drives operational efficiency and cultivates an environment where innovation and employee satisfaction flourish. ♦



Founding The New Era of Tech Leadership

SALLY KORNBLUTH

 President,
 MIT

Before we knew how to label an era by its algorithms, cloud computing, and carbon targets, we simply called it “the future.” Today, innovation is often framed in sleek interfaces and AI-powered everything, but what if true innovation resides not just in code or climate models, but in our primal, human urge to ask “Why?” and the courage (and brilliance) to find out? At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where “mind and hand” is more than a motto, it’s a mission. This idea comes alive daily in labs, classrooms, and maker spaces. And at the helm of this curiosity-driven ecosystem is someone who, ironically, never set out to be a scientist. Meet Sally Kornbluth, MIT’s 18th president, a living example of what happens when boundless curiosity collides with relentless determination. Kornbluth doesn’t quite fit the mold, and that’s exactly why she thrives.

Science, Serendipity, and the Road to MIT

She began her academic journey far from the lab bench, earning a political science degree at Williams College. But somewhere between exploring political theory and wrestling with real-world problems, something shifted. A desire to uncover life’s inner workings led her to Cambridge University for a second degree in genetics, and ultimately to a PhD in molecular oncology from Rockefeller University.

The Provost Who Changed the Game

The shift from politics to biology is a defining moment in Sally’s journey. She’s not afraid of the steep climb or the unexpected detour. That mindset served her well throughout a trailblazing academic career at Duke University, where she rose from assistant professor to provost, all while publishing extensively on the molecular mechanisms of cell death, a field foundational to cancer research.

As Duke’s provost, Sally was known for her brilliant administrative mind and an uncanny ability to pair empathy with execution. She championed student wellness, faculty diversity, and interdisciplinary innovation. Under her leadership, Duke saw a 30% increase in Black faculty from 2018 to 2022, thanks partly to the Office for Faculty Advancement, which she helped launch. In her eyes, excellence was never abstract, it was deeply personal, human-centered, and mission-driven.

MIT’s Humanist-in-Chief

This same spirit defines her tenure at MIT, which began on January 1, 2023. From day one, Sally immersed herself in the community, not from behind a podium, but through walking tours, dorm visits, and even singing with MIT’s student a cappella group, the Chorallaries. She may wear teal glasses and lead one of the most prestigious institutions in the world, but Kornbluth is refreshingly down-to-earth. She’s a needlepoint enthusiast, a foodie always on the lookout for a great Cambridge restaurant, and a folk music and political drama fan. Her humanity doesn’t dilute her leadership, it enriches it.

Sally has already left a deep imprint on MIT in just over a year. Her leadership is defined by intellectual empathy, an ability to listen, connect, and then act. She launched Curiosity Unbounded, a podcast that embodies MIT’s inquisitive DNA. Through the MIT Climate Project, she galvanized the campus to tackle climate change in a coordinated, mission-oriented way. And she remains fiercely committed to ensuring AI advances for the good of society, not just its profit margins.

Rallying MIT to Save the Planet

Sally’s approach to climate is administrative and visionary. She doesn’t claim to be a climate scientist, but she is a coalition builder. Through the Climate Project, she’s bringing together researchers across disciplines to collectively focus on tangible missions like restoring ecosystems or building climate-resilient cities. She knows that humanity’s



problems, climate, health, and AI ethics are bigger than any one lab or dataset. Her job is to align MIT’s immense brainpower with the moment’s urgency. And she’s doing just that.

Stitching Science and Soul

Beyond climate, Sally’s leadership also weaves the sciences and humanities together. Enter MITHIC (MIT Humanities and Innovation Collaborative), a new platform encouraging collaboration between the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences and the rest of MIT. For her, solving the world’s biggest challenges requires technical solutions, ethical frameworks, and cultural understanding. It’s about merging the precision of engineering with the perspective of philosophy. Sally believes in interdisciplinary thinking and builds infrastructure for it.

A Lab for Humanity, Life Sciences and the Future

Students see her as approachable, warm, and invested. Faculty view her as sharp and supportive. The tech world sees her as a bridge between legacy and reinvention. And the world? The world is beginning to see Sally Kornbluth as the kind of leader the 21st century desperately needs, one who knows that innovation is never just about progress, but about purpose.

At the heart of all this lies a fierce and joyful curiosity, what she calls the “elegance of science.” Whether she’s dissecting cell death mechanisms or brainstorming with undergrads over dinner at a fraternity house, Sally shows up with that same hunger to learn. “It’s cool to be curious here,” she often says. It’s more than a catchphrase. It’s a culture.

Making Curiosity the New Cool

In a time when leadership often feels performative or reactive, Sally Kornbluth is refreshingly proactive, intentional, and authentic. She leads with laughter, listens without ego, and governs with grace. Her vision is as expansive as it is urgent: to unlock human potential in solving real problems, not in theory, but in practice.

Because at MIT, and in Kornbluth’s world, knowledge isn’t just power. It’s a responsibility. It’s a connection. It’s an action. And thanks to Sally Kornbluth, that action has never felt more human or hopeful. ♦

Redefining the Boundaries of
Data and Innovation

DR SHANTANU AWASTHI

 *Track Assistant Professor,*
 **MSSU (Missouri Southern
State University)**

What if the assumptions behind the iconic Black-Scholes model could be refined with today's advancements in stochastic calculus? Or if AI could transform not just industries but the lives of individuals on a deeply personal level? For Dr. Shantanu Awasthi, these "what ifs" aren't just theoretical musings—they're the foundation of a career dedicated to solving real-world problems with cutting-edge data science and artificial intelligence.

Shantanu's journey began in India, where his fascination with uncovering the logic behind formulas led him to a bachelor's in electronics engineering and then to the U.S., where he pursued a master's in mathematics. It was here that his curiosity turned into conviction. During his PhD, he tackled the nuances

of financial modeling while immersing himself in the transformative potential of machine learning. From creating predictive algorithms for global trade to developing AI-powered VisionPro glasses for the visually impaired, Dr. Shantanu has consistently bridged the gap between research and application.



"The greatest asset of a scientist is not just knowledge, but curiosity—a relentless drive to question, learn, and evolve."

Now, as an Assistant Professor of Data Analytics at Missouri Southern State University, he is preparing the next generation of data scientists with a rare blend of academic rigour and corporate insight. Tradeflock interviewed him to delve deeper into his groundbreaking journey, his philosophy on innovation, and how he envisions AI transforming the future.

Q Can you share your background and key moments that shaped your career?

My journey has always been fueled by curiosity and a love for solving complex problems. I started with a bachelor's in Electronic Engineering in India, cleared the GATE exam, and secured admission to IIT Roorkee. However, my fascination with the fundamentals of mathematics led me to pursue a master's in Mathematics in the U.S. During my Ph.D., I explored models like Black-Scholes, uncovering ways to refine their assumptions with modern stochastic calculus.

After completing my Ph.D., I joined Sense360, applying data science to help businesses gain insights into customer behavior and market trends. Later, I returned to academia, first as a Visiting Assistant Professor at Wake Forest University and now as an Assistant Professor of Data Analytics at Missouri Southern State University. My focus remains on teaching, research, and using AI to create meaningful impact. Every step of my career has been about turning curiosity into action.

Q How do you merge lessons from both worlds in your work?

The biggest lesson I've learned is simple: 'Keep studying and keep reading.' In a world where technology evolves daily—shifting from basic machine learning to generative AI in just a few years—staying curious and updated is essential. By following industry leaders and embracing change, I stay motivated and prepared.

Bringing the best of both corporate and academic worlds, I focus on equipping my students with practical, job-ready skills. From designing assignments that mimic real-world projects to teaching tools like GitHub, my goal is to ensure they graduate ready to tackle industry challenges with confidence and expertise.

Q What's one exciting project you've worked on recently?

I had the privilege of presenting my work, titled "Image Modelling for Sugar Beet Root Maggots," where I developed an advanced AI-based model with an impressive 97% accuracy in identifying and counting sugar beet root maggots from images. This model leverages state-of-the-art techniques in computer vision and machine learning to address challenges in

agricultural pest monitoring, providing a scalable and precise solution for automating pest detection in sugar beet fields.

The presentation allowed me to delve deeper into the technical and practical aspects of applying artificial intelligence to real-world problems in agriculture. I was honored to engage in meaningful discussions with distinguished researchers, fellow academics, and talented PhD students. These conversations not only enriched my understanding of the broader scope of AI applications in pest control and crop management but also opened avenues for potential interdisciplinary collaborations.

Q What challenges and breakthroughs did you face developing the VisionPro Smart Glasses, and how will AI further transform accessibility?

Building the VisionPro Smart Glasses was like teaching AI to see the world as we do. Cadre Technology developed these AI smart pro vision glasses, and I volunteered as an adviser to the cadre for developing these glasses. I focused on object detection and optical recognition, using convolutional neural networks to identify colors and read text accurately. While tools like Python-based libraries were our backbone, navigating data privacy was a challenge we tackled head-on.

I believe this is just the beginning—AI is set to redefine accessibility, making technology more intuitive and empowering for everyone, from real-time translations to life-changing visual aids.

"Success for me isn't just about personal milestones—it's about crafting solutions that serve humanity and inspire others,"

Q What opportunities do you see in tech, and how are you preparing for them?

'Healthcare is not one-size-fits-all,' and that's where I see the future of tech heading. AI has the potential to revolutionize healthcare by making it truly personalized—leveraging smartwatch data, genetics, and health history to tailor treatments. While we've personalized insurance based on driving habits, we're still far from achieving this in healthcare. My vision is to combine real-time health monitoring with AI to create systems that predict, prevent, and personalize care—turning data into life-changing insights.💡

ZAPORIZHZHIA'S LEGAL LIMBO

The Fight for Europe's Largest Nuclear Plant

At the southern edge of Ukraine, nestled along the Dnipro River in the city of Enerhodar, there is a facility that once symbolised national progress and energy security, 'the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant' (ZNPP). Today, it has become one of the most volatile geopolitical flashpoints in Europe.

Seized by Russian forces in March 2022, just weeks after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the ZNPP, Europe's largest nuclear facility, now operates in a dangerous legal and operational limbo. With its reactors largely offline and international regulators voicing alarm, the world is left to ask - Who will ultimately control Zaporizhzhia?

A Powerhouse Turned Political Pawn

Before the war, the ZNPP accounted for nearly 30% of Ukraine's electricity supply,

housing six VVER-1000 reactors with a combined capacity of 6000 megawatts. It was a symbol of Ukraine's energy independence and thus, a prime target during the invasion. Following occupation, the Russian government announced the federalisation of the plant, assigning its operation to Rosatom, Russia's state nuclear agency. Ukraine's nuclear operator, Energoatom, condemned the move as illegal, arguing that it violates international conventions regarding the conduct of occupying powers.

According to the Hague Regulations of 1907, an occupying force does not gain sovereign rights over occupied infrastructure, particularly critical civilian infrastructure like a nuclear power plant. As per a 2023 UN Security Council report, Russia's claim to the ZNPP as its own "federal property" is "not recognised under international law."

Inside the Plant: Decay, Duress and Danger

What is happening inside the plant is equally troubling. Once over 11,000 employees strong, the workforce has dwindled to fewer than 4,500, many of whom were pressured to sign contracts with Rosatom under threat of dismissal or worse. Human Rights Watch has reported multiple cases of harassment and detention of Ukrainian staff.

The reactors themselves are currently in cold shutdown, but risks remain high. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that the plant has been disconnected from Ukraine's grid seven times since 2022, each time risking failure of critical cooling systems. On several occasions, only emergency diesel generators have stood between the reactors and potential meltdown. "The repeated shelling near the plant is a recipe for disaster," said IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi during a 2024 site visit.

A Diplomatic and Legal Minefield

The question of ownership is not merely symbolic, it is legally and diplomatically explosive. In the eyes of the Ukrainian government and its Western allies, the ZNPP remains sovereign Ukrainian property. This view is supported by the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) and the G7, which issued a joint statement in 2023 asserting that "Russia's attempted seizure of the ZNPP is illegal and void."

On the other hand, Russia claims it is acting as a "protector" of the plant, justifying its occupation under the guise of nuclear safety — a claim that international observers widely reject. As per Al Jazeera, Russia has denied IAEA access to critical monitoring equipment several times, deepening mistrust.

Furthermore, despite being a state-run civilian agency, Rosatom's involvement in the ZNPP raises serious concerns about dual-use technologies, as nuclear expertise could be redirected for non-peaceful purposes. This has led some European nations to sanction Rosatom executives, even though the company has not faced full sector-wide sanctions.

The question of ownership is not merely symbolic, it is legally and diplomatically explosive. In the eyes of the Ukrainian government and its Western allies, the ZNPP remains sovereign Ukrainian property

Why Does the ZNPP Matter Globally?

Beyond sovereignty, control of the ZNPP is about setting precedents. The Geneva Conventions and subsequent protocols are clear: civilian infrastructure should not be militarised, and nuclear facilities must remain under transparent, independent control. Allowing any state to commandeer such a facility during wartime, and claim it as their own, shatters decades of international nuclear norms.

A hypothetical incident at Zaporizhzhia would dwarf the consequences of Fukushima. A 2023 risk assessment by Greenpeace International projected that a meltdown could affect up to 20 million people across Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and even southern Russia.

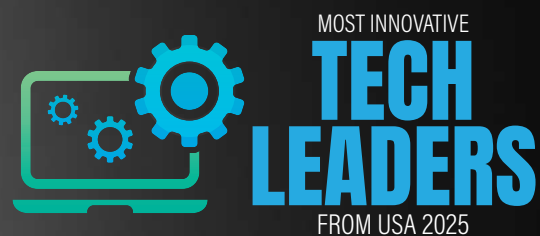
Diplomacy and De-escalation

Despite ongoing conflict, diplomatic efforts continue. The IAEA has proposed establishing a "nuclear safety and protection zone" around the ZNPP, a demilitarised buffer zone that Ukraine and Russia would commit to honour. So far, negotiations have stalled, largely due to Russia's insistence that it holds legitimate control.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has remained firm: "The Zaporizhzhia plant must be returned to full Ukrainian control, overseen by international inspectors, and operated according to Ukrainian law."

Experts argue that a solution may require tripartite oversight, potentially involving Ukraine, the IAEA, and neutral third-party observers. Although complicated, this model has precedent in Cold War-era joint control arrangements over disputed military installations. ♦





The Human-Centric CTO Behind Saga's Tech Evolution

TRACY CLEETON

CTO,
Saga Communications

In today's lightning-paced digital age, technology leaders are often viewed through the lens of innovation metrics, cybersecurity dashboards, and AI implementation roadmaps. Yet, behind every high-performing system and seamless digital transformation is a human being who not only codes and configures but also mentors, teaches, inspires, and adapts. This edition of our magazine brings forward one such individual who has quietly but powerfully shaped enterprise technology over the decades. Meet Tracy Cleeton, the Chief Technology Officer of Saga Communications, whose journey is about keeping up with technology and making it work for people.

From Humble Roots to High-Stakes Networks

Tracy's journey did not begin with a degree from an Ivy League school or an overnight start-up success. It began with curiosity, resilience, and a strong sense of purpose. Starting at Sandusky High School, Tracy pursued Electrical Engineering at the Indiana Institute of Technology, but life, like technology, is all about pivoting. After shifting academic paths, Tracy earned a Master's in Information Technology focusing on Cybersecurity from Walsh College, an MBA in Computer Information Systems from Baker College, and a Management Information Systems/Finance degree from Liberty University.

What makes Tracy's background so compelling is its balance between technical depth and business acumen, academia and enterprise, and teaching and executing. That rare combination defines the core of Tracy's leadership style today.

The Groundwork at Oetiker Inc.

Tracy's professional journey in IT began in 1998 at Oetiker Inc., where he led day-to-day IT operations across North and South America. Tracy's responsibility was to maintain the infrastructure and scale and to integrate it. From opening new facilities in Mississippi and Mexico to connecting operations in Canada and Brazil, Tracy worked at the frontlines of globalization and technological scaling, laying the groundwork for what would later become a hallmark of their leadership style: strategic foresight blended with technical rigor.

From Systems Architect to Strategic Leader at Saga Communications

Tracy joined Saga Communications nearly two decades ago, climbing the leadership ladder through sheer grit, skill and vision. Their first role as Director of IT involved managing an expansive network of 28 business units and 1,600 users. They consolidated 31 Active Directory domains into just three, slashing labor costs by over 13%, streamlining workflows, and significantly increasing security postures.

As Tracy moved into roles like Director of Infrastructure and eventually CTO, the mission expanded: integrate ITIL service components, automate compliance effort, redesign network topologies, implement endpoint management solutions, and most importantly, protect Saga's core broadcast product from modern cybersecurity threats.

Today, Tracy oversees operational efficiency, enterprise-wide cybersecurity, and strategic innovation. Under their watch, Saga successfully migrated to the Microsoft Cloud for over 1,200 users, embedded security awareness training into company culture, and adopted

“Under Tracy, Saga successfully migrated to the Microsoft Cloud for over 1,200 users, embedded security awareness training into company culture, and adopted next-generation tools.”

next-generation tools like Zscaler and Trend Micro to mitigate malware, hacking, and data breaches.

A Teacher at Heart

Behind the firewall rules and VLAN configurations lies an educator who has never stopped teaching. Tracy served as a Professor at St. Clair County Community College, teaching Microsoft Office to adult learners reentering the academic world. That commitment to education continued at the Sanilac Career Center, where Tracy helped shape curricula aligned with real-world job markets by integrating Oracle and Cisco training into career tracks.

As Vice President of Education and Certification at the Project Management Institute (Thumb Chapter), Tracy advocated elevating the project management profession through structured learning. Today, they continue to champion education as an Advisor to Cornerstone University, helping shape the Strategic AI Certificate Program, a bold initiative to integrate AI and cybersecurity education for the next generation of tech leaders.

Thought Leadership with Purpose

Tracy's influence has extended beyond classroom walls and corporate meeting rooms. As Director/Chairman of Editorial Content at NaSPA, Tracy helped curate global content for Technical Support Magazine, serving over 50,000 readers. This was about editing articles, elevating the system administration profession when IT shifted from back office to boardroom.

The Human-Centric CTO

What truly sets Tracy apart is the empathy woven into every project and initiative. Whether

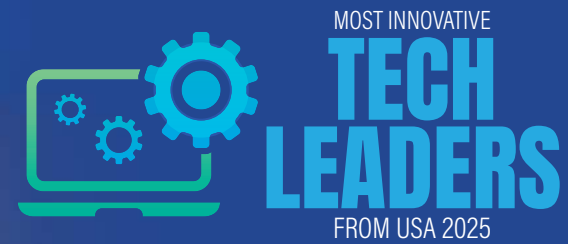
creating cybersecurity awareness videos for 1,200 employees or collaborating cross-functionally to integrate SOC controls into Saga's daily workflows, Tracy approaches technology to empower people, not just monitor them.

In an era where buzzwords like "digital transformation" and "AI-first" dominate headlines, Tracy reminds us that great tech leadership is rooted in clarity, compassion, and community. They are the rare CTOs who still believe in asking, "What problem are we solving for people?" before deploying any solution.

A Legacy in Progress

With over 25 years of experience spanning broadcasting, academia, manufacturing, cybersecurity, and enterprise tech, Tracy Cleeton is shaping the future of Saga Communications and the industry itself. As the landscape continues to shift with advancements in AI, behavioral analytics, and cybersecurity, Tracy remains grounded in a simple yet powerful ethos: technology must always serve people, not the other way around. ♦





Rethinking Computing at Scale

VIVEK SARKAR

Dean, College of Computing,
Georgia Institute of Technology

Before artificial intelligence dominated tech headlines and quantum computing teased a new frontier, computing pioneers were already building the foundations of the future—one elegant algorithm, resilient architecture, and disruptive research project at a time. In a world increasingly obsessed with overnight breakthroughs, the story of Dr. Vivek Sarkar stands as a powerful reminder that the most lasting innovations are forged over decades of visionary leadership, collaborative progress, and fearless reinvention. Today, as Dean, College of Computing at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Sarkar is leading one of the world's premier computing institutions into the next era of global impact.

The Spark That Started It All

Vivek Sarkar's story begins with curiosity about machines, codes and their potential. Graduating with a

B.Tech in Electrical Engineering from IIT Kanpur, one of India's most competitive engineering institutions, Vivek quickly pursued deeper academic challenges in the United States. He earned his MS in Computer Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and later a PhD from Stanford University, where he studied under the legendary John Hennessy, future co-founder of MIPS and president of Stanford.

While many might have seen academia as the final goal, Sarkar saw it as the launchpad. He entered IBM Research when the tech giant was a powerhouse of innovation. Over two decades, he worked his way through the organization, pioneering several game-changing projects and shaping the future of parallel computing and programming languages.

The Architect of the Parallel Revolution

At IBM, Vivek's fingerprints are all over some of the most transformative innovations in programming models and runtime systems. He led the creation of the Jikes Research Virtual Machine, a groundbreaking Java virtual machine that became a gold standard in academic research and teaching worldwide. His work on the PTRAN parallelization system and the ASTI optimizer helped redefine how software compilers manage complex workloads. Perhaps most notably, he co-developed the X10 programming language, designed for high-productivity computing on future parallel systems, which earned a "Most Influential Paper" award years after its initial publication.

Under his leadership, IBM's Programming Technologies Department more than doubled in size, reflecting his technical depth and ability to grow and inspire high-performing teams. He was inducted into the IBM Academy of Technology, a select group of top innovators, and earned multiple Outstanding Technical Achievement Awards for his visionary work.

Scaling Impact at Rice and Georgia Tech

After two decades at IBM, Vivek made a bold move. He transitioned to academia in 2007, joining Rice University as the E.D. Butcher Chair in Engineering. There, he founded the Habanero Extreme Scale Software Research Laboratory, which became a hub for cutting-edge research on high-performance and extreme-scale computing software.

As Chair of the Computer Science Department at Rice, Vivek brought the same culture of innovation and growth. He saw a doubling of undergraduate majors, dramatically increased gender diversity, and scaled the university's professional master's program. But he didn't stop there. He cultivated community, mentored faculty and students alike, and ensured that Rice was positioned as a leader in parallel computing and beyond.

Leading Georgia Tech's College of Computing into a New Era

At Georgia Tech, Sarkar continued his research legacy and further amplified it. He became Chair of the School of Computer Science, spearheaded the creation of new "Foundations of AI" area, and co-directed the Center for Research into Novel Computing Hierarchies (CRNCH), which focuses on rethinking computing as Moore's Law comes to an end.

Under his leadership, Georgia Tech's College of Computing launched major initiatives that blend software and hardware co-design, foster AI innovation, and shape computing education at scale. As of 2024, Sarkar now serves as the John P. Imlay Jr. Dean of the College of Computing, overseeing over 200 faculty and staff in one of the most respected computing programs in the world.

Global Influence, Local Impact

As a fellow of ACM and IEEE, Vivek's accolades include the ACM-IEEE CS Ken Kennedy Award and the Distinguished Alumnus Award from IIT Kanpur. He has served on the U.S. Department of Energy's Advanced Scientific Computing Advisory Committee (ASCAC) since 2009 and helped shape national computing research priorities through his work on the Computing Research Association's Board of Directors.

Yet despite his global stature, Sarkar remains deeply grounded in mentorship. He has supervised more than 30 PhD students and postdoctoral researchers, many of whom have become leaders in academia and industry. His lab has received over \$50 million in research funding, backing innovations spanning AI, cybersecurity, programming languages, and beyond.

A Philosophy Rooted in Possibility

At his core, Vivek Sarkar is a builder, not of machines, but of ecosystems. He builds labs where ideas flourish, classrooms where minds expand, and institutions where future leaders take root. His approach is shaped by collaboration, curiosity, and conviction.

When asked about his motivation, Sarkar often emphasizes that computing is not just a technical field, it's a human one. The choices we make in designing systems, tools, and platforms ripple outward into society. This awareness guides his work as an educator, researcher, and dean.

Vivek Sarkar stands apart in an era when tech leaders are often defined by their startups or patents. He's defined by people, by the students he's mentored, the researchers he's inspired, and the community he continues to elevate. ♦

BILLIONS INVESTED, THEN DEEPSEEK HAPPENED

A WARNING SHOT FOR AI GIANTS

For years, the AI arms race seemed like an exclusive game for the biggest players—OpenAI, Google, Meta, and Anthropic—who collectively raised billions to develop cutting-edge AI models. The assumption? That more money meant better models. But then, DeepSeek happened.

DeepSeek, a Chinese AI startup, shattered expectations by developing a powerful AI model with just \$6 million—a fraction of the billions poured into AI giants. The company's success sent shockwaves through Silicon Valley, raising uncomfortable questions: Have investors overestimated the costs of AI breakthroughs? Have the industry's biggest players miscalculated what's truly needed to lead in AI?

Jordan Jacobs, investor at Radical Ventures, found himself fielding calls from panicked investors. "Let's focus on companies actually building real businesses, not chasing science fiction," he reassured them. But the debate had already begun.

Over the past two years, venture capitalists have pumped over \$155 billion into AI startups, with OpenAI alone securing \$24 billion and reaching a valuation of \$157 billion—higher than Citigroup or Pfizer. Anthropic followed closely, raising \$16 billion. Yet, if DeepSeek could rival these firms with a shoestring budget, was all that capital truly necessary?

Matt Turck of FirstMark Capital summed up the skepticism: "It's not a good look for AI companies claiming they need ever-larger scale to win."

Investors who passed on funding foundation models now feel vindicated. Marc Andreessen had warned that investing in large AI models was like "selling rice"—a commodity race to the bottom. Benchmark's Eric Vishria called foundation models "the fastest depreciating asset in human history."

Meanwhile, AI investors scrambled to justify their bets. Gavin Baker of Atreides Management pointed to data access as the real moat, arguing that X.ai, backed by Elon Musk, had a unique advantage with exclusive data from X (formerly Twitter).

Beyond Wall Street, DeepSeek's rise reignited global AI tensions. Some blamed U.S. regulations for stifling competition, while others saw an urgent need to accelerate domestic AI development. "That's capitalism," quipped General Catalyst's Niko Bonatsos, noting that hundreds of startups had already copied DeepSeek's model within days.

The AI landscape is shifting faster than anyone predicted. And as new players enter the arena, one thing is clear: the billion-dollar AI playbook just got rewritten. ♦



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