

AI Basics with Professor Wondernerd

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With AI dominating every headline, it can be nearly impossible to separate signal from noise. In this technology-track episode, Gina Rosenthal sits down with Tony Foster — a.k.a. 'The Wonder Nerd' — to break down what AI actually is, how neural networks and large language models like ChatGPT work, and what the real limits of today's AI are.

SPEAKERS

Angelia McFarland

Co-host; tech marketing veteran and founder, EOP Media

Gina Rosenthal

Co-host; technologist, product marketer, and founder, Digital Sunshine Solutions

Tony Foster

Guest; Senior Principal Technical Marketing Engineer, Dell Technologies; Adjunct Professor of Technology, Kansas State University. Known as 'The Wonder Nerd.' Find him at wondernerd.net or on LinkedIn and Twitter at [@wonder_nerd](https://twitter.com/wonder_nerd).

TRANSCRIPT

ANGELIA MCFARLAND

Welcome to the Tech Aunties podcast, where we're bringing you industry context and vision from myself, Angelia McFarland, and Gina Rosenthal. On each podcast, we will share our marketing and technology industry experiences along with the team. Listen to us as we explain the past so you can have context to understand and create your own version of the future. So let's get into it.

GINA ROSENTHAL

We have with us today Tony Foster — our first guest. Tony is a Senior Principal Technical Marketing Engineer at Dell Technologies and Adjunct Professor of Technology at Kansas State University — or as most people know him, the Wonder Nerd. He's a VDI, UC, and GPU fanatic, bringing deep learning, machine learning, AI, and HPC to the virtual world. He also literally wears a cape at conference sets — it's his trademark. Tony, what is AI?

TONY FOSTER

Well, I'll give it a shot, because everybody has their own slightly different definition. Really, it's the involvement of computer technologies to make logical decisions based on tons of inputs that are all mashed together. The simple way to explain it: we look at a bunch of stuff, and depending on all the little switches that are flipped, it must be this. If you're looking at cats, I put a picture of a cat in — all these things we know are parts of cats are there — and if all the switches turn on correctly, it's a cat.

ANGELIA MCFARLAND

Tony, based on the way you've described this — AI today can only tell you what it already knows, right? It has not gotten to the point where it can infer an unknown. Is that correct?

TONY FOSTER

That is absolutely correct. And that is something a lot of people are freaking out about — AI is going to take over the world. It really can't, because it can only do what it knows and what it's been taught. If you tell it to take over the world and explain how to do that, it can do that. But if you don't explain it — no.

GINA ROSENTHAL

What are the actual paths into AI for organizations?

TONY FOSTER

There are really three ways. First, the cloud — AWS, Azure, Google Cloud. That's the easiest path to entry. Second, you can buy a solution package from a server vendor — you can go as small as four servers depending on the model. Third — companies like NVIDIA have their AI Enterprise Suite that you can get, either bundled with servers or sold separately, to run your platform and build your models. I've done it in my home lab, which is sitting right over yonder. They're making it easier and easier every day for organizations to consume AI. That's why it's so important for marketers to understand the basics.

ANGELIA MCFARLAND

My one takeaway is that AI can only do what it already knows. It is not at the level where it can infer an unknown.

TONY FOSTER

That is correct.

GINA ROSENTHAL

Where can people find you, Tony?

TONY FOSTER

You can find me at @wonder_nerd on Twitter, on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/in/wondernerd](https://www.linkedin.com/in/wondernerd), and at wondernerd.net. And you can find me in classes at Kansas State.

ANGELIA MCFARLAND

Thanks, Tony. Thank you for joining us today on the Tech Aunties podcast. Until next time.

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