

AI Use Cases and Benefits

Episode 11 · Technology Track · June 28, 2023

AI has gone mainstream — but most organizations are still figuring out what to actually do with it. In this episode, Gina Rosenthal and Angelia McFarland are joined by Dr. Jean-Leah Njoroge, a data scientist and AI researcher with over a decade of experience building AI and machine learning systems at companies including Dell Technologies and Lowe's.

SPEAKERS

Angelia McFarland

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

Gina Rosenthal

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

Dr. Jean-Leah Njoroge

Guest; data scientist and AI researcher; award recipient for Women in AI and Black Women in AI. Find her on LinkedIn.

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.

ANGELIA MCFARLAND

Today we are talking about AI use cases and benefits with our esteemed guest, Dr. Jean-Leah Njoroge. I have known Dr. Njoroge for about two years and met her through one of her many awards for Women in AI, Black Women in AI, and general AI research and excellence. She has had several leadership positions in education and technology organizations, helping to shape and drive AI and data science processes and policy. Welcome, Dr. Njoroge.

DR. JEAN-LEAH NJOROGÉ

Thank you so much. I really appreciate your time and just reaching out to discuss this very exciting and important topic. Things have really picked up with the introduction of ChatGPT. AI is going mainstream now — even though it's been around. I've been in this industry since grad school using machine learning algorithms, so a little over ten years. I'm excited to see it coming into the mainstream. Even my mom was like, 'What is this AI?' And you know when your mom picks it up, it's a sign.

GINA ROSENTHAL

What is it exactly that you've been doing for the past ten years?

DR. JEAN-LEAH NJOROGÉ

For the past ten years I've really been in industry — working at Dell and Lowe's, trying to bring AI within the technology and retail space. There are tiers in this space. Tier one companies build their whole company with data — the Amazons and Facebooks of the world. Then tier two and tier three companies came in late, already had technologies and systems in place, and now have to leapfrog into this new era. I've been helping those tier two and three companies build their data systems and technologies to really impact the business. I like to look at myself as a problem solver. In the last two or three years, I've worked a lot with natural language processing — extracting the 'chatter' from Facebook reviews, Amazon reviews, customer feedback — and finding patterns in it that can tell you about your brand, your pricing, what people are saying.

ANGELIA MCFARLAND

What do you think about the cautionary aspect of AI? Is the fear that AI will take over the world warranted, or is it FUD?

DR. JEAN-LEAH NJOROGÉ

There's a fear of how far we can go with machines, and I think that fear, like any new technology, is warranted. We also need to think about regulation and policy. There's a huge gap between the people making policies and the people actually building these systems — a gap in understanding and education. Geoffrey Hinton — one of the godfathers of AI who helped create neural networks — recently stepped back and said we need to think about the impact of all of this. When he speaks, we should listen.

GINA ROSENTHAL

What would you recommend to business leaders to make their AI plans and goals more successful?

DR. JEAN-LEAH NJOROGÉ

Three things. First, every business leader needs an AI strategy that complements their business strategy — including a data strategy and data governance framework. Without data, there are no algorithms. Without quality data, things can go bad. Second, change management. There's a big gap between education and upskilling, and you have to be intentional about closing it. Third — people. Invest in upskilling your people. And not every shiny object is good for your business. You can often solve a problem with a very simple algorithm rather than a complex one. If you go for simplicity, do simplicity well. Don't push your data scientists toward complexity just because it sounds more impressive — it's more expensive and can backfire.

ANGELIA MCFARLAND

Thank you, Dr. Jean-Leah Njoroge. You can find her on LinkedIn. Thank you for joining us today on the Tech Aunties podcast. Until next time.

The Original Tech Aunties | eopmedia.com/podcast-appearances
Seasons 3 and forward: open.spotify.com/show/3EFJc29Q118NwhRxerS7NS