



TRANSCRIPT • 21 JUNE 2021

Asaf Cohen:

So, good afternoon everyone and welcome to our very first Tune into Data session. My name is Asaf Cohen and I'm VP of sales and customer success at Future Anthem. Future Anthem created Tune into Data to be a series of innovative online events designed to educate entertain and inspire the online gaming community.

With this initiative we'd like to spark a discussion around AI and specifically how our industry can harness its power. So, for example how operators and studios can inject behavioural data into every decision they make from designing new products to improving operational efficiency and most importantly creating the best experience for each and every player.

Tune into Data is a community, and we'd like you to become part of our tribe. In order to do that you need to do two simple things follow Future Anthem on LinkedIn and join our Tune into Data LinkedIn group where the discussion will continue after each and every session. The series will include high profile guests from both inside and outside of the gambling sector and when deciding who we should who should be our first guest speaker we thought long and hard about who we think can share insightful and inspiring knowledge on the topic of personalisation. Microsoft is a tech giant that gets personalisation right from Xbox across to Microsoft 365 and your LinkedIn feed, they are the pioneers in this space, and this led us to the influential industry leader Paul Bolt who is the CMO of Microsoft UK and we are honoured to have him come and share his pearls of wisdom with us on all things data and personalisation. Also, with us today straight from Glasgow is our very own Chief Data Officer Chris Conroy. Chris has spent the majority of the last decade building and leading data science teams in the gaming industry and Chris will bring that industry angle into the discussion. So, without further ado Paul, I'd like to start by asking you to share your thoughts around the importance of data in modern consumer-facing companies.

Paul Bolt:

Thanks, Asaf and afternoon everyone and thank you for that lofty introduction I'll do my best to live up to what you've just said out but yeah, I mean from my perspective you know data-driven businesses win. And I know about personalisation and infusing personalisation into customers and customers journey but fundamentally

that sits in an organisation who understands its data and so, data-driven businesses win, and you know for me, data-driven businesses need the right underlying tech stack, of course you think I'm going to come here today and say that but they need the right online tech stack, the right operational rigour and then fundamentally the right skills in their organisation because the technology and the number of the technologies enable personalisation and great data insights have been in the market for many many years and so it's the rigor and the skills you need to wrap around the tech to really bring that to life and I think probably six months ago now Microsoft worked with Goldsmiths

University to commission a blueprint for UK competitiveness and i think we're going to be sharing the link either during or after this webinar with the attendees, but we did that with Goldsmiths University and what the research showed was that 46 of the UK's businesses fell into the worst-performing category of a quadrant that we built to look at the competitiveness of the UK and I'd encourage you to go and have a quick read of that report because let's talk about the underlying technology the underlying skills capability in your team, as well as, I guess, what you stand for, your purpose and your culture. But the point here is you know this is no longer a nice to have or a can that organisations can kick down the road. I think what that report underlines to me, whether you want to look at it through the lens of data personalisation or digital transformation in its broader sense what their report really highlights is, as I said there's another nice to have but it's vital for organisations if they want to be competitive. So, I think this sits at the very heart of the competitiveness of businesses in the UK.

Chris Conroy:

Interesting, I think there's a few threads there Paul that you mentioned that I think potentially tied together so I think that competitiveness angle I think separately there's been a bit of a debate in the tech community around productivity and you know Control UK is a good example where on the one hand the availability of you know, cutting edge, leading edge, even bleeding edge technology is increasing exponentially. UK productivity is relatively stable over the last 10, 15, 20 years.

So, I guess the conclusion would be that, you know, companies are not yet, and I think you know the statistic on competitiveness would back that up, are not yet necessarily leveraging the technology and I think one of the things we think about a lot, and a personal passion of mine is, you know, given so much amazing technology does exist and given the enablement that we have available to us in cloud, for someone who's, you know, sees across a lot of different businesses, you know, is that, you know, why do you think or is it the case that companies are not yet leveraging technology and what needs to change to increase that competitiveness?

Paul Bolt:

Yeah, it's great question Chris. I think it's hard is the honest truth. When you think about deploying a new piece of technology into your into your business and that new piece of technology is going to enable you to work in different ways, more effective ways, more productive ways, but ultimately that means you need your team to kind of unlearn and relearn a new way of working to really shorten the kind of time to impact on those investments and then that means not only do you have to potentially train and retrain staff but you may not have the right skills in the business in the first place and when you think about that chain of events after doing quite a simple task, like signing a purchase order off for a piece of technology, really you know I look at that collectively and say that's cultural transformation. And I think that's one of the biggest hurdles and challenges businesses face is it's not just about buying the tech it's then around ingraining it in your business to make you more effective, to make your customer experience improved, to solicit better feedback on your offerings and approach, whatever you use that tech for and then the skills. And when all three of those are

impacted, I think you have to look at that as cultural transformation and that's a tough challenge for organisations.

Chris Conroy:

Yeah, yeah, I think absolutely, I think one of the examples we always think about, and I think it does tend to be the bit that businesses might miss is that, you know, as you say you can employ the best technology in the world but I think a lot of businesses potentially don't see the fact that that technology should engender a big cultural transformation and I guess the example we often use is, you know, if you're going to, you know, where you talked earlier on and Asaf talked about personalisation, you know, if you're going to move into a personalised way of dealing with customers it's actually quite a fundamental change for a marketing team.

You know, you're talking about a level of change that might go from somebody who's making decisions every week about which segment they want to market to, to a world where you know customers are seeing content and promotions via algorithm and you know for that we always use that example of that person in marketing that used to make that decision about segments, you know, you fundamentally change their job and I guess that's partly what we're talking about in terms of cultural transformation.

Paul Bolt:

Yeah, absolutely and I think you know most importantly when you look at this through you know the goals and objectives you're trying to achieve.

So, maybe you're looking at it through a you know customer lens in terms of acquiring customers, you know, increasing the lifetime value and ultimately the loyalty of that customer to your business. Most organisations have multiple touchpoints with a customer and the fact of the matter is if they're not joined up and you credit data, you know, in terms of the way your data or user experience isn't joined up you create silos and I'd say there's a lot to my team, you know, customers feel data silos in a business when they're engaging with them and they're pretty horrible as well and, you know, some are simple examples like, you know, I kind of probably 14, 15 months ago when we were still checking into hotels, I remember checking into a hotel for probably the 10th or 11th time and being asked you know have you stayed with us before and, you know, would you like a newspaper in the morning and me thinking like what a simple example of the very edge of your customer experience just empowering the person behind that desk with a piece of data to say welcome back, would you like a copy of the same newspaper and will we be seeing you for breakfast again, and so, you know, this does go from the very edge of your business to the very core of how you think about modernising your data estate. Everyone's phoned up their mortgage company and been passed through another department and repeated the same information again. So, these types of data silos customers feel and the expectations of consumers and business customers in terms of what those experience should be and look like has hugely been inflated over the last over the last few years and people just aren't willing to tolerate those bad experiences anymore and so many of them are rooted back into what I view as a data silo in terms of what an amazing opportunity that was to create a small but compelling moment for me and the opportunities missed. It's, you know, it's interesting how organisations need to think about say infusing data from the very edge to the core of their business and then ensuring their teams are empowered and trained to leverage and utilise it at the right moment and those are two examples we've probably all had, same hotel, same questions, same mortgage application, different department, same questions yeah and people will just leave, it's a pretty Darwinian world in terms of experience now.

Chris Conroy:

Well let's not talk about mortgage applications, I had a recent experience. I won't name and shame the bank, but I had a recent experience with a bank who refused to deal with any form of communication outside the fax, so you know, yeah but we won't name and shame. I think just...

Asaf Cohen:

You receive a personalised fax?

Chris Conroy:

I was tempted to send them a very personalised fax back, but we didn't. So, I think, you know, we've talked I guess about some of the problems, and I guess some of the typical problems that we all experience as consumers and again you know this area of personalisation, I think one of the things we're really keen to do in Tune into Data is understand what happens outside of our own industry, so I think just probably to give you a bit of a view Paul, inside the gambling industry, you know, personalisation has been a hot, it's almost difficult to call it a hot topic anymore because it's been a really important area of discussion for, you know, getting on for say six or seven years. A classic kind of like personalisation problem in the industry and in terms of we've got thousands of titles of content, we've got millions of customers, we've got multi-faceted promotions, so yeah, the current kind of state of the nation and in the industry and certainly their products that we build at Future Anthem, you know, around problems like game recommendation, like promotional optimisation as you mentioned, around tying together, the customer experience such that the recommendation that they receive in the lobby on the site is the same as they receive in their push notification kind of, you know, etc. And it's a big focus you know obviously for us at Anthem within the industry, but I think within this forum we'd be really interested from your experience to understand do you have some really good examples of what practice you see in other industries from potentially from customers or from non-customers and what are the next big things that the other industries are doing with personalisation that we should potentially be thinking about everything gambling.

Paul Bolt:

Yeah, I think the industry I'm consistently most impressed with is what I've described as the kind of the new breed of kind of cloud-native and digital retailers. So, brands like, you know, Gymshark, Boohoo, Misguided, ASOS, etc who have been born and grown in the cloud in many many respects and so you know they don't have some of the technical legacy and the technical debt that other organizations do and so I know you know sometimes I say conferences you know, that the Netflix's of the worlds and the Ubers of the world are held up and I think most people sit in the conference and think I'm never going to have a DevOps team like Uber but thanks for the example today. But I think those organisations do an incredibly good job in terms of a really exquisite understanding individual by individual of that customer in terms of what they buy, what they are likely to buy, when they have a propensity to buy, what type of content they have a propensity to engage with, and which topics they don't and just a really really good, exquisite view on there and of course interestingly, you know, I would say most people, like there's nothing worse than bad marketing, like most people you know hate being marketed to because there's a lot of bad marketing out there but when marketing is good and it's driving and it's relevant and it feels personalised to you and it's driving up your engagement with the brand that's a really magic combination for increasing the lifetime value of that customer and the kind of the repeat purchasing in the velocity of the purchasing. So, I would say some of those digital retailers have done a you know an incredibly good job in that space and then, of course, you know, we talk about uncompetitiveness, I still have a letter addressed to the former resident of my current house which I've tried to get off the mailing list of a company that sells seeds for almost three years, that still arrives every quarter

addressed to Dear Unspecified Christopher, so clearly Christopher hadn't told them what his pronoun was when he filled in the contact form and I can't get off it and so, you know, there's great examples of where marketing can make you feel very close to a brand and it feels very personal and tailored and relevant to you and you feel engaged by it and I think personalisation and data and AI can enable you to drive that level of personalisation and maybe there's an example of the Dear Unspecified Christopher circular I still get every quarter to my house. I think those guys have done a really good job in terms of raising the bar for traditional retailers in terms of what personalisation of personal service looks like in today's world.

Asaf Cohen:

Sorry Chris, we've got two more minutes. I know that it's short today, so yeah last question to Paul.

Chris Conroy:

Yeah, I was going to say yes, I think the, you know, what you mean again you know a few things tying together because yeah, I think I certainly was that person in the audience a few years ago, looking at some of the conferences and like oh my god, you know, that's yeah, how do you actually get there, and I think yeah definitely what we've found and what I found that you know, working for cloud native businesses, yeah, it is an amazing opportunity because to build something in the cloud without that legacy and I know what that legacy and that kind of those silos are like. It's been a massive advantage and actually an eye-opener in terms of the ability, I think I would definitely say that you know for the companies out there that are dealing with legacy rather than thinking about we have to migrate everything you know if you actually just choose a use case and choose a deliverable and say we're going to personalise that one page, we're going to get it done by you know the end of the summer, and we're going to put a few people around, it's a really good place to start. I think the final thing I would ask is and of course you've got really low amount of time you know, we've obviously built our technology within Azure and we utilise a lot of Microsoft technology but I think one of the main reasons that we've done it in the cloud obviously is that you know, no disrespect to you guys, we also utilise a lot of non-Microsoft technology which is the kind of beauty of that ecosystem, really curious I think the audience will be how big a culture shift, because we talked about culture, how big a culture shift was that for Microsoft kind of ten years ago when you know historically you developed a reputation for being, you know, potentially close to non-Microsoft technologies?

Paul Bolt:

Yeah, I think anyone who follows Microsoft will be aware of the journey the organisation has been on in the last 10 years in terms of kind of reinventing and rediscovering what made Microsoft special initially because I think from a, and I hope by the way people in this organisation should choose to partner with us and choose and choose our tech I think in that probably 20 seconds I have left I would say you know if I look at Azure today you know intelligent edge to an intelligent core, beautifully sophisticated suite of services available, AI-infused throughout, you know we think of it as the world's computer so you know, bring your apps, bring your preferred programming code, and come and work on our platform, you know, everyone is welcome and yeah, it's Azure alone is probably a great example of the cultural transformation and as a result some of the business decisions we've made. So yeah, from open-source code to containers we are, you know, we're the world's computer, so if you've not looked at us for a while, I would encourage you to come back and take a look at what's in Azure today it's a very intoxicating blend of IaaS and PaaS so we would love to see you building your apps with us.

Asaf Cohen:

Thanks Paul that's your CMO coming up floating at the end of the conversation, thanks for that. So, we spoke about the importance of using data to create personalisation, our players are basically digital consumers, so they expect us to serve them a personal experience the same way as when they shop online or consumer entertainment. We've discussed the challenges of doing that and how AI can help us, and I'd like to thank Paul and Chris for their time today and thank you all, our audience, who have joined us for this first session of Tune into Data.

If anything you heard today sparks thoughts, if you've got any questions to Paul or Chris or if you'd like to give us feedback or ideas for the next session, please don't be shy and share your thoughts with us on the LinkedIn group page which appears in the chat you can also approach us directly on our email addresses we should also be in the chat. It was a pleasure having you today with us and I'm looking forward to the next Tune into Data which will be in August, see you all there.