



AI360 Podcast

# Deloitte AI360 Podcast

**Jim Rowan, Head of Applied AI**  
**Ashish Verma, Chief Data and Analytics Officer**

**Title:** Deloitte's AI transformation: Thoughts from our Chief Data and Analytics Officer

**Description:** Chief Data and Analytics Officer Ashish Verma reflects on Deloitte's own AI transformation and why the journey begins outside your four walls.

**Duration:** 8:27

**Jim Rowan:**

Ashish, welcome to our AI360 podcast. Great to have you here.

**Ashish Verma:**

Jim, thank you for having me. I'm sure it's going to be a fun conversation like it always is.

**Jim Rowan:**

Like it always is. So you and I only spend a little bit of time talking to each other (being sarcastic). So Ashish, why don't you tell us a little bit about your role and help people understand why we spend so much time together?

**Ashish Verma:**

It's a good thing we do. I think it's a lesson as to why we spend so much time together. So I'm a principal at Deloitte. I'm also the US chief data analytics officer. So all things that feed our ambition for AI and GenAI start sort of with data, and [there are] lots of reasons why we collaborate for that very reason and [I'm] looking forward to the dialogue.

**Jim Rowan:**

Yeah, it's great. I don't know how we're going to fit this into 360 seconds. So we'll see if this becomes a long-form podcast when we're done, but Ashish, data plays a critical role in everything we're doing from AI. Maybe you could just start telling us a little bit about where you've been with Deloitte on this journey because we've had to do a lot, I think, to kind of get ourselves ready for an AI journey internally and externally with our clients.

**Ashish Verma:**

Yeah, what I'll tell you, one of the things that became evident to me as we started this was that our legacy or our data strategy historically was tied to our own data. And if you looked at sort of how we instantiated the data upstream, it came from process-centric software. In ERP instantiated data, we curated the data and we sort of said, "OK, we're going to meet our ambitions." The minute we started to look at sort of agentic AI and GenAI workloads, it became evident that first-party data sets alone would not meet the mandate for the use cases that we're curating. So pretty soon, we started to look at not just first party, second party, third party, and we do buy a decent amount of third party and obviously synthetic, right. So, longitudinal data sets and things that we could not sort of find, irrespective of what we bought and how much of what we bought. So the challenge really became is it's coming as a firehose now, and it's coming from outside the walls of Deloitte. And so how do we put a process in place from the standpoint of the fact that the use case is commensurate with the ambitions. So, if you need first-party, second-party, third-party data curated or commingled or vectorized, or any of the above, how do we make sure that the process doesn't become an impediment to the SLA or the use case? So we had to put a process in place. And we've held to the strategy of being able to procure within the timelines of set up the needs of the use case, and it's down to almost less than a week in certain cases. And we've standardized the terms and conditions with the data broker. So I would say, like for me, the biggest revelation when I started this a year-and-a-half ago was how do we do this at scale and a pace that's sort of commensurate with how fast things are happening?

**Jim Rowan:**

Well, maybe to pick up on the speed for a second—because this foundation with the strategy you’ve set up really helps us enable our internal transformation. So you and I are both also working on figuring out how does the firm improve with the use of the AI. It’s a great story for what we’re doing. It helps with our clients. What do you think the role is of the chief data analytics officer in that type of transformation?

**Ashish Verma:**

You know, AI has become so core to what we do. I mean, we talk about this all the time. So, if you look at our business value chain, it starts with what we sense in the market and how do we feed that what’s happening in the market to sort of our marketing function that then works with our operating portfolios and things that sort of stitch together what services we prepare on the back of what’s transpiring. And then ecosystem partners are core to this evolution, and all of the supply and demand management that we do in this business value chain is tied to a portfolio of services. In reality, if you look at something as nuanced as how do we staff 177,000 people in the US—so 455,000 people globally—to a role description, there’s no contextuality inside of résumés. You have a human being read a résumé and feed a role. So we figured that discovery, contextual search embedded into what we do with our own enterprise data is very, very key to how we go from here to serve the ambition. So we basically took our entire résumé database, we contextualized it, so you can sort of do “search” on it, much like you would do on the World Wide Web but with the UI/UX prompt. You can get to the nuances of what you’re looking for. And those are the kinds of pillars and things that we’re standing up that’s on our enterprise data set that sort of make this discoverable, make the things that we intend to do super cool—or depending upon your perspective of how much you like technology [laughs]—yesterday’s problem as well as today’s problem.

**Jim Rowan:**

Well, and it’s usually one of the things I hear a lot from our clients is “I don’t have a data strategy.” My data is federated across all these different platforms on multi-cloud, multi-different sources of data everywhere. Can I even get started with AI with my data state being in that kind of—maybe “disarray” is a strong word, but that level of organization. What’s your perspective? What’s your advice to folks on that?

**Ashish Verma:**

Look, what I would say in essence is it’s never too late to start. And your ambition for your business partner is fairly commensurate with where we’ve ended up. There is not going to be a single nuance of a workload that is not going to be agentic or enabled by an LLM [large language model] or pick your choice of disruptive technology. So, the question really becomes “What’s the starting point?” What’s the starting point of this journey? And the starting point of the journey really is think beyond the four walls of where data is going to come from. Think about annotation and labeling consistent with usage criteria—and walk backwards. If you walk backwards from the end, you pretty much know what you need to land with. That means you need to be able to procure all flavors of data, like I said, and make sure that the compute environments that are attached—you know, we run a data marketplace as you’re aware, which is a single landing point for anything that you want. It’s called data.deloitte.com. And you land there and you can pretty much search for what you need. And that is the first pillar of discoverability with the nuances of the workloads and the business partners and the use case aspirations. And that’s the journey you’re going to have to undertake, and it’s never too late.

**Jim Rowan:**

I’m glad to hear it’s not too late. I mean, it sounds like you can start small with sort of a focused area of a couple of data products that feed your AI solution and then build and scale around that. Is that a fair summary?

**Ashish Verma:**

That is absolutely a fair summary. Because if you look at the domains that you start to curate, some function—whether it’s finance or marketing or supply chain, or whatever it might be—may be a little ahead of the journey, but nonetheless. You can start with the domain and scale out the patterns, depending on physicalizing the patterns, depending upon what comes next.

**Jim Rowan:**

I love it. Maybe I could sneak in one last question for you. The technology landscape is vast in this space. There’s tons of new capabilities that are coming out from established players. There are startups that are releasing new capabilities. As you sit on top of this view, how are you thinking about navigating that landscape, some of the build-versus-buy decisions? How do you think through that? What advice would you give folks?

**Ashish Verma:**

Yeah, I mean, the way I look at it is very, very nuanced and overwhelming to be able to capture all of it. And the pace of change and the shelf life of anything that you have, whether it’s feature function set on a model or whatever, it maybe is overwhelming to be able to keep up. So give yourself some grace. And I don’t think that anything that you buy today is going to have the shelf life that you can imagine. So the question really becomes what are the patterns that you persist? And if you understand the patterns that you need to persist, it doesn’t make a difference because interoperability or swapping things out is going to inherently be part of the architecture. So whether you pick a particular model or you don’t pick a particular model, I think there’s certain curation patterns for this data set that should be obvious to you.

**Jim Rowan:**

I love it. Ashish, great advice. Really appreciate the time today. Clearly there’s plenty of things we could cover longer form later. So hopefully people tune in to the things you’re releasing online—your LinkedIn as well. You’ve got some great insights about what we’re doing around AI and data. I really appreciate the time today.

**Ashish Verma:**

Thank you, Jim. Take care.

**Jim Rowan:**

Take care.

Visit the AI360 library  
[www.deloitte.com/us/AI360](http://www.deloitte.com/us/AI360)

#### About Deloitte

---

As used in this podcast, “Deloitte” means Deloitte Consulting LLP, a subsidiary of Deloitte LLP. Please see [deloitte.com/us/en/about](https://deloitte.com/us/en/about) for a detailed description of our legal structure. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting. Please see [www.deloitte.com/about](https://www.deloitte.com/about) to learn more about our global network of member firms.