Steve 0:17

Welcome to the HR happy hour show. My name is Steve Boese. I am so excited for today's show. We're getting to talk to one of the leaders in enterprise AI, from one of the leading companies in enterprise AI. We have with us today, Miranda Nash. She's Group Vice President Applications Development Strategy at Oracle. But really, to me, Miranda is like everything AI, because that's all I see these days, and you're leading the charge in so many ways. Miranda, welcome to the show. How are you?

Miranda Nash 0:46

It's great to be here. I'm having a great day. Thank you.

Steve 0:50

Thank you. And gosh, do you get a break? Do you get a rest? Do you sleep more than six hours a day, five hours a day?

Miranda Nash 0:58

It's a three day weekend here with Memorial Day. And, you know, just read about AI for fun. That was great.

Steve 1:04

Yeah, it's, Hey, look, it's an exciting time to be sort of at the forefront of, I mean, arguably the most transformative enterprise technology since what internet, cloud, mobile, I mean, you name it, right? It's, I think it's got that potential. And I don't think we're overstating it at all. So I guess, Miranda, let's start with just maybe tell our listeners a little bit about, I've sort of hyped you up as, like, the leader of AI and all, but there's a huge team working at AI at Oracle, I know, but maybe tell us a little bit about what you're doing with AI and what you're doing at Oracle.

Miranda Nash 1:41

Well yeah, look, I lead a team that that is the kind of the central point for AI strategy within all of our Fusion Applications. So we're infusing fusion, whether that's our finance, HR, of course, also sales, marketing and and service products with AI, you know, throughout everything. And as you I'm sure, know, it's built on a foundation from the rest of Oracle, which is our Oracle Cloud infrastructure. You know, that was really built from the ground up. And now it's appealing for AI, and it's appealing large language model vendors who really want to build with Oracle, so it's really infusing the whole company.

Steve 2:24

Yeah, thank you, Miranda, and it's not, I don't want to get too technical on the show, because I'll lose myself as well as maybe half the listeners. But it's important for listeners to know right where, much like other technologies we started to adopt in our personal lives, and now we think, Oh, this will be cool to use at work. A lot of us have used AI for a while now, right in our personal lives, whether it's vacation planning, recipe planning, you know, helping us, helping us in our work, maybe drafting up that, maybe a tricky email that may be hard to write, etc, but I do think at somewhat levels, we don't understand enough what it means, or what the differences are between sort of these consumer AI, things we have come to know and maybe love, versus kind of some of the important considerations for enterprise AI. So before we get into sort of the evolution of AI, which I want to talk about. I'd love for you to comment a little bit about how you guys think about enterprise AI, just conceptually from, you know, security, privacy, reliability, some of the things that matter to companies maybe don't matter to me when I'm trying to figure out how to use my pantry ingredients. Yeah, exactly.

Miranda Nash 3:39

Well, you listed many of them, but let's start with with scale, right the I mean, when, when you are one on one interacting with chatgpt, if it gives you, you know answer you're not thrilled about right now, but then you know, you slightly rephrase and it you know, a different answer, that's fine. It's just you and a one on one interaction. But think about multiplying that you know by 1000s across the enterprise. You really need a different level of reliability in order to scale. So that's number one. More reliability requires measurement and systems around the large language model itself that can whether you know, including guardrails, including, again, sort of refinement strategy where you're using kind of an internal agent, but not a different type of agent we'll talk about later, but agentic strategies to get better answers more reliably. And then, again, to the key point about security, the other big difference is the data, right? You're just not thinking about what your recipe interests are, the contents of your fridge. You're not really concerned about sharing that with the any kind of model provider. Obviously, our customers care a lot about. Their, you know, employee data, right? Anything protected and so that's the other piece. Is very strict rules about how data is used. We don't train on customer data, for example, we don't train shared models on customer data. That type of things really important in enterprise.

Steve 5:20

Yeah and thank you, Miranda. And it's important to to partner with an organization who understands those things, but not just understands them, but is prepared to deliver those kinds of on those enterprise requirements, right? It's and I do see a lot of demos of AI tech these days, the last couple of years, really. And I often ask the providers, as they're demoing, okay, well, what I see, what just happened? I saw data go into some AI tool, but where did it go, and what was it exposed to, and how did it how did it come back, the way it came back? What actually happened? And sometimes I get a good answer. Sometimes I get a really squishy answer, and I think that's really important for organizations who are considering or really in the throes of adopting enterprise AI tools, I think.

Miranda Nash 6:11

Absolutely, I mean, look, we talk about our strategy is to be the trusted AI partner for our customers, and the foundation of that is data. Of course, Oracle's known for our data management from decades, right? And the other piece of that is how, again, Oracle is in a kind of unique position, because we have the Oracle Cloud infrastructure, OCI, so we can actually bring the AI to the data, which is pretty unusual. And again, really works well for those customers who do have security and trust as top of mind.

Steve 6:48

Yeah, that's really important and needs to be restated, I think, as we go through the rest of this year and into next year, as organizations are going to be increasingly adopting these tools to really understand at a deeper level, what what they're getting into, right? Miranda, I'd love for you to take a moment though this year seems to be at least on the HR side, where I spend most of my time the year, where everybody is talking about agentic AI. That is a newish term, a newer term. I don't know that I heard much about it before this year, maybe a little and, of course, generative AI, we've all talked about a ton, and this is typically what most of us in our personal lives have experienced with over the last couple of years, with chat GPT and many other tools. But there was AI before all that, too, right? AI didn't get invented with chat GPT emerging a couple of years ago. It existed, quite honestly, both in the enterprise and in other applications before. But I'm wondering if folks are getting a little confused, though, especially with agentic. So if you could from your perspective, and then we'll talk a little bit about what Oracle is doing, maybe kind of walk our listeners through these iterations, or the evolution of AI, and why the distinctions do do matter to an enterprise user or an enterprise leader?

Miranda Nash 8:10

Okay, well, let's start with, I think folks are largely calling it predictive AI. Now I have a guest on one of in one of my videos, who called it good old AI, but I'm gonna call it predictive. AI, okay, so we were the big distinction there is, it's fit for purpose use cases, right? So instead of training one Uber model that can handle, you know, literally any type of question that it's through that is thrown at it. Here you're making a much more specific model trained on specific data just to predict a certain you know, for example, recommending jobs to people, right?

Steve 8:58

That's a good one.

Miranda Nash 8:59

It's a very specific use case. And there we've been training models to do that for quite some time.

Steve 9:07

Flight risk on the HR side was another one I remember, right? It emerged kind of early, right? What's the likelihood this person might voluntarily separate?

Miranda Nash 9:16

That's right, churn concepts, in this case, for people leaving the company. But there are other types of churn, yes, exactly, yeah, anomaly detection as well, right? So these are all models that are trained specifically for the problems they're solving. Okay, and, but it's, it's proven. It's well established and, and that led honest to the success of generative AI from an enterprise standpoint. I mean, you know, I wasn't part of the folks developing the foundational models, but in terms of making those successful in an enterprise setting, it was what we put in place for predictive that laid the groundwork to take advantage of the. Uh, these foundational models that are trained on, you know, they call it the full distribution, right? So, like everything on the internet, yeah, and that's but it was, again, it was the disciplines of measurement, it was the systems around these models. It was the, the way to deal with probabilistic instead of deterministic, you know, scenarios that we kind of had had in place for some time before the foundational models that we've now come, you know, to be very familiar with.

Steve 10:36

 And those, those systems, those earlier systems, they did, they could learn, quote, unquote, they could be refined, right? They there was a feedback mechanism to improve the predictions, right?

Miranda Nash 10:48

Absolutely, in fact, in many ways, that was a tighter feedback loop, if you will, because the models are smaller, they're faster to train. And you know, basically you can have, for example, we have a lot of on going AI that that trains daily, right? So it learns and improves daily. You can't train a GPT four daily.

Steve 11:15

Yeah, gotcha, gotcha. So they the next sort of general evolution, right, in these commonly understood, right, AI technology, you know, by the by the non sort of AI developer person say, would be what the emergence of generative AI, right, which you talked about a little bit, but then we all sort of associate with the tools like chat, GPT and others that we use a lot. But that seemed to be a big, big leap forward, if not in technology, at least certainly in popularization, in the general consciousness of AI, because then it became a thing just people talk about at home and that at barbecues and over, over the dinner table.

Miranda Nash 11:57

Absolutely, especially for natural language processing, right where, basically it was obvious at this point that a generalized model to handle language would be far more effective than any individualized NLP, and what we've seen in some of our finance use cases is evidence that the same holds true for, you know, non language based models, training on training a foundation, a generalized model, it can answer all of those individual questions as well or more effectively and at lower cost overall than the old approach of predictive AI.

Steve 12:37

So instead of having to build a model and an application to solve very specific problems, one at a time, almost now we can take a more generalized approach and provide answers and guidance and feedback right to a wider range of problems with it with a and kind of mask some of the complexity from the user too, I think, as well, right because now we're just talking to these models, either typing to them or talking to them or interacting with them, just like we would have a conversation.

Miranda Nash 13:07

Well exactly, and that's how they're embedding their their manifesting language in a completely new way that has opened lot, tons of opportunities for enterprises, right? I mean, you hinted at some of them, but we've been embedding now generative AI models within Fusion HCM well and our other fusion products for a couple of years, just in just hundreds of examples, wherever you're confronted with the need to to write text.

Steve 13:36

Yeah, generate text, summarize text, understand. Look for in, you know, look for patterns and things like that. It was really helpful, and it still is helpful. Like and just because we've, you know, I even say this about the predictive models, just because we've have advanced in the technology, that doesn't mean some of those models around predicting, you know, a job match or a flight risk or things like that. They're not valuable still. I think they still can be and they still are generative tools. We've seen a lot of them again in the HR domain, on things like generating job descriptions, on helping managers craft goal definition and performance feedback, and just things like, you know, understanding how career development is another great example where we've seen, you know, employees can kind of interact with the tool and get some guidance around development opportunities for career planning purposes, right? Super powerful and interesting, but, yeah, but we do, but it didn't stop there. It hasn't stopped there, right? Because, as I said, I feel like now we're talking a lot about agentic AI, and we've done some things on it here on our show, and written about it a little bit. But for I'd love for you, Miranda, to talk about agentic AI, both from your point of view and as well as kind of you know, we'll get into what Oracle is doing around agent. A I know there's been a couple of recent announcements in the fusion apps for agentic AI, but like, what's this now? What are we talking about with agentic AI.

Miranda Nash 15:07

Well look, stepping back and looking at Enterprise automation and the phases of that we've had workflow rules based automation engines for a long time, right? Yeah, for sure. And so there, there are elements of agents that bring forward, you know, workflow automation tools of the past, we've had, obviously, chat bots for a long time, right? Interact sort of keyword based or chat bots in place and with large language models, with the foundational models that communicate like a human and reason, the reasoning is key. That was really the unlock for this new type of enterprise automation, which is what agents enable. That's agentic, AI, right? So instead of being focused on generating text or summarizing text, or sort of the communication aspects, which was really the first wave of generative AI. Now with agentic AI, it's about a much more powerful type of automation.

Steve 16:13

And reasoning, able to take actions where under certain set parameters, things like that, right? So, like we're taught, we gave some examples, right? We gave some examples, at least in the HR domain of predictive kind of AI applications or use cases generative as well, whether it's job descriptions or performance feedback, what would be a good example of an agentic AI kind of use case or application that kind of can make it clear to to listeners what we're talking about and how it's different.

Miranda Nash 16:45

So again, in a HR context with with agentic AI, we think about automating processes end to end that we didn't even really attempt to automate before. You know, an example might be filling a filling a role that has become open when someone leaves, right? That's a pretty big concept, and there are many steps along the way, you know, of obviously generating the job description. We talked a lot about that, and that's easy one, but posting, attracting candidates, scheduling interviews, you know, setting everything up for the people who are making the ultimate decisions. To make those decisions, to summarizing review, you know, summarizing interview feedback, etc. So there are many, many steps in that one concept of filling an available position and with agents, that's where we're going. So what we do is break it down into tangible, you know, small goals that are task oriented, and you can then basically create an AI agent that can accomplish that task. And when you put these agents together in agent teams. You know, that's when you start to get these powerful unlocks. And you mentioned the reasoning, and this is why it's important, right? I mean, in theory, we could have written deterministic software to do some of this in the past, but it was totally impractical for most types of problems, too many edge cases, too many variables, too many scenarios that you don't predict. Yeah, and that's the power of reasoning with within the large language models that you know they bring to to AI agents.

Steve 18:38

Thank you, Miranda for breaking that down a little bit, right? It makes sense, right? When you talk, we talk about the evolution in the context of some of these use cases, and then the power, right, of stringing these things together and then supporting organizations in executing these complex price processes and maybe even time consuming processes that they they simply just couldn't manage, you know, effectively, right? If they didn't have some support to do them, recruiting is certainly one, but there's lots of other ones, right, where it's, you know, if you have 100,000 employee company going looking for payroll anomalies and taking action on them, for example, would be that's kind of quite a daunting task, right?

Miranda Nash 19:22

I mean, at scale, almost every HR problem becomes a candidate. And you know the I mean, with some of the more basic automation and Agent capabilities, you're just dealing with all the policy questions. So I think Chris was on your show before talking about some of those examples. Yeah, you know that those are very real world use cases, getting answers about travel and expense policies, procurement policies, benefits, policies, etc,

Steve 19:54

And it's, it's the possibilities are. Are, I don't want to say they're limitless, but they feel very much less limited than they used to be right then in traditional enterprise software, right, which always was thought of as being kind of inflexible, kind of difficult to adapt, difficult to customize. If you had to, you're we were told for years and years, don't customize anything, right? Or and there was good advice for lots of reasons, for a period of time, and now these tools offer much more flexibility, much more personalization and much more adaptability, right to make them more fit your organization, versus you always having to fit the way the tool wants you to work. I think, is this fair?

Miranda Nash 20:39

Absolutely. I mean, not only like rigid kind of workflows in terms of screens or something, we sort of all adapted ourselves around to right, also menu structures that can be you know, how to filter and search. These are all things that we've sort of become accustomed to adapting ourselves to fit the software and with agents, there really is that opportunity to have the software fit us.

Steve 21:11

Yeah, absolutely. I think Miranda, just to wrap up a couple things real quick. One thing I wanted to just if we could quickly. I we talked about security and privacy and kind of trusting your data, working with the right partner, etc, etc. There anything that you guys think about where you know advice you might say to an organization thinking about engaging with a provider of these kinds of tools for the enterprise, right in enterprise applications, what should customers or potential customers, be thinking about and be looking for, I know we can't get through everything, right, but just a couple of things hanging you should think about this before you, you know, start deploying AI across the enterprise.

Miranda Nash 21:53

Well let me say this, the promise of agents is alluring, and there are lots of stories being told right now. And and it does, sort of it can make business leaders think, oh, I can plaster over whatever kind of data infrastructure challenges I've got, or, you know, just don't have to kind of go back to some of the basics. And the way we look at this is that agents have got to be close to the transactional data. This is how they have the context. This is how they have all the con like, if you're taking data out of these systems in order to do AI over here, for example, or if you've tried to layer in this extra middleware, that's where our customers are going to have problems. Yeah, put those agents close to the data. That's what gives them the context, that's what ensures security, and that's what allows them to start to take action in a reliable way.

Steve 22:58

I love that advice. Miranda, okay, I promise you, this is the last question, 12-18, months from now, is there anything out there not giving away the secrets, giving away the store? I know, right? You guys are always cooking up something in the development labs and in the user experience labs and more. What if you say, oh, boy, this is going to be really cool and it's coming. Is there anything that you're thinking about?

Miranda Nash 23:22

I mean, honestly, 18 months out feels like such an eternity to us. I know so that is hard to hard to project, but I think it's basically just a continual, you know, drum beat toward this level of automation. I mean, the vision, frankly, is so big right now, it's really delivering on that vision that that will be our focus over the next 18 months, using the power of agents to automate problems for our customers that we haven't solved before. Yeah, allowing putting those tools in the hands of our customers directly, where we already announced the AI agent studio, and that'll be available very soon. So so that with, without being a coder, without having, you know, in these low code, no code environment, basically being able to enhance our embedded AI agents and build your own to solve problems we haven't conceived of.

Steve 24:26

Yeah, it's, it's really like the beginning Steed steps of an amazing kind of frontier we're all heading towards. But it's, and it's not an exaggeration, I said at the beginning of the show, I don't think an exaggeration to say this is as transformative as really anything we've encountered in the last 30 or 40 years of enterprise Tech, I believe, yeah.

Miranda Nash 24:46

I mean, I totally agree. And in the again, like those past waves, making it come to fruition and real value to cut to customers does take time, and that is completely where we are from. Focused, yeah, bringing the promise of this AI to bring real value to our customers.

Steve 25:05

Great. I think Miranda, I think that's a great kind of bow we could put on this conversation, right? And I, I strongly urge folks to check out what Oracle is doing with AI, what's Oracle's doing with applications. We've done, we had some shows in the we did with Chris Leone on this now, this conversation with Miranda and more to come. I can't wait. It will be a cloud world in the fall, which is always exciting for me. I'm sure we'll see you there, Miranda. Thank you so much for spending some time with us today.

Miranda Nash 25:31

Oh, it's my pleasure. Look forward to seeing you at Cloud world.

Steve 25:34

Absolutely! That's Miranda Nash. She's the Group VP of Applications Development Strategy at Oracle, talking about all things AI. Thank you so much, Miranda. Thanks to our friends at Oracle. Thanks for listening to the show. We'll see you next time, and bye for now.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai