

It Matters - Episode 12. (2)

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SPEAKERS

Anthony Darden, Keith Hawkey, Aaron Bock



00:07

Welcome to the IT Matters podcast, where we explore why IT matters and matters pertaining to IT. Here's your host, Aaron Bock.



Aaron Bock 00:16

Welcome back to the show. This is our 12th episode. We're excited to have you. Keith, how have you been doing?



Keith Hawkey 00:24

I've been doing wonderful. And I've got some people on my roof. So hopefully they're not too loud. I'll try to mute when they're not. When I'm not talking.



Aaron Bock 00:33

Well, if it was December, then we would think it'd be Santa Claus. So at least we know it's Christmas in July. Hey, Keith. You know, since our last time we kind of talked a lot about IT trends and what's going on in technology. And I wanted to bring something up before our episode today that we have, that's going to be a really great episode. Have you seen the latest news out of Europe with Microsoft and then looking at the monopoly on teams, it's an interesting lawsuit that's coming together. Basically, Slack, which is part of Salesforce now has brought a case against Microsoft, that there's a monopoly in their Teams product, because they're basically forcing users to download it, and not explaining the proper costs. And I think it's going to be an interesting one for us to follow with all the Microsoft adoptions, phone conversations that we see people talking about going to Teams, I just think it's gonna be a really interesting case, because I've been saying for years, I don't know how Microsoft is not a monopoly. And now it's finally being tried in Europe.

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Keith Hawkey 01:34

Yeah, those Europeans always like to pick on our tech companies. I know that for sure. We have a, you know, typically, the legislation like starts over there. And then it eventually migrates over to the US, but maybe that's because who holds the stakes? But yeah, that's interesting. I mean, it's it's not it's been going on for a long time with Microsoft as far as the ambiguity and all the different licensing and now how complicated it can be. And you know, Microsoft being a monopoly, I don't think it's necessarily a new concept to anybody. Maybe they're just good at what they do. So I'm excited to see how that lawsuit turns out to see if it impacts the market.

A

Aaron Bock 02:18

Yeah. Well, Keith, launch get us started. By the way, I think I forgot to introduce Keith today, Keith Hawkey, co host of the IT Matters podcast has been Joe he joins us in the last five or six episodes, and we're happy to have him he's brought a new life to this podcast. So why don't you introduce we have an exciting guest today, and Keith's gonna kick us off.

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Keith Hawkey 02:38

Yeah. Thanks, Aaron. Really appreciate it. Today, we had an exciting guest with a background in supporting IT with globally distributed manufacturing enterprises. He says that some cloud investments aren't reaching their promised ROI potential. Is he right? Also, with large language model AI? Is it going to be a boon or a bust? When it comes to application development work? Is it going to take our jobs? Who knows? We'll find out. And how should a team leader this leading an application development team approach introducing AI into their workflows? I would like to introduce to you my friend Anthony Darden, who is currently the CIO of protective Industries, a global manufacturer of plastic protective components with over 21,000 active customers and the automotive medical energy and industry segments around the globe. Welcome to the podcast, Anthony.

A

Anthony Darden 03:38

Thanks. Thanks. Thanks for having me. Appreciate the time.

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Keith Hawkey 03:41

Excellent. Well, why don't you? Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? I know, I know, again, gave an intro but I never seem to hit the mark.

A

Anthony Darden 03:50

Sure. So I've been in IT, man, uh, you know, you blink and you feels like, it's amazing how fast time goes by I've been in IT roughly 30 years, started out in application developments, slowly work my way up into leadership. And then my current role. I've been with protective industries

now 10 and a half years. Seen lots of changes, focused a lot on acquisition activity, just virtualization and helping my company transform what was traditionally your tech support, keep the lights on function to a business partner. And that's been an incredible journey. And there's still plenty of work to do.

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Keith Hawkey 04:37

Yeah, there certainly is plenty of work. And, you know, in our previous conversations you've mentioned especially with the advent of COVID, and moving infrastructure over two or more cloud service delivery model, how the promise of cloud was certainly exciting a few years ago, but some organizations and some leadership aren't realizing the ROI. And then now that contracts are coming up, if you signed a three year contract in the beginning of COVID, you have these renewals coming up and you're having to explain to your leadership, was the investment worth it? Is this the direction we want to go? Shall we peel back in some way? Shall we move forward in others? In your experience, you've been in IT for a long time, how should it leaders conceptualize and get the vision across the leadership when it comes to these types of investments? What are some of the caveats that you've seen?

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Anthony Darden 05:38

Yeah, there's two parts to it. Right. So IT, leaders tend to wear many different hats and I would say that a marketing hat certainly is in play here. Because there's the there's the act of selling, why cloud will have its benefits and the cautions that are very real. Otherwise, you know, I look at I refer to cloud as a money pit. Leaky bucket. I mean, there's, you have to have your arms around it. But then when you execute the strategy, you know that that requires a team partnerships. I always recommend you never go it alone, meaning if you've fully internalize it, there's some risk there, too. But it starts with getting the leadership on board, and I look at cloud as a freight train, nothing's going to stop it. Same with AI. And I will touch upon that later. And by freight train, I mean, this is where every vendor, every software provider wants 100% cloud business. They don't want that on prem model anymore. They don't want a concurrent user model. Everything's named user. So in our organization, we previously had 204 concurrent user license that served up to 600 different employees. Well, now, now we need 600 named user licenses. And that annuity is very attractive to vendors. So every month, they're getting that same fee for every named user. And we're seeing traditional on prem now, I call it old school models of licensing, like some of the design engineering software providers, they're even coming on board with "Whoa, no you just can't buy the software or just do a regular maintenance agreement, now it's a named user license and subscription." Alright, so let me know, I want to make sure I'm hitting home your question here.

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Keith Hawkey 07:30

No, that's, that's excellent insight to, particularly the vendor incentive to move toward a cloud model.

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Aaron Bock 07:40

Really quick Anthony, you know, like you said in the beginning, you know, it's, it's crazy how

really quick. Anthony, you know, like you said in the beginning, you know, it's, it's crazy now you look up, and you've been in IT for a long time. We were in mainframes, we were back distributed, and now we're coming back to the cloud, like, what do you, do you think the pendulum swings again? Do you think we eventually ever go back to the maybe maybe not the perpetual model of the way it was built, but the non consolidated model that we're in right now?

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Anthony Darden 08:11

Fantastic question. And I think this is other large companies that, they have their hands in this pie, if you will. And that's the infrastructure and your telecom providers to reach this vision of cloud everywhere, no matter what you're doing, you got to have a solid backbone, solid infrastructure. You still have these rural locations where companies are, and if your only option is satellite internet, or some, I don't want to say analog lines, I feel like that's gone now. But if it's a weak connection, you're simply going to be crippled as a business. I mean that just can't happen. And you'll see large user base populations like Microsoft Great Plains that have because of the sheer volume, and number of customers that are on Great Plains, really starting to push back on Microsoft. So I look at all these things as deferments. I don't see any stopping. You mentioned the pendulum swinging back, I think if I tried to go back, or if I tried to think ahead longer than three to five years, I'm, I'm crazy. Because as you know, IT can shift in a moment's notice. But I just don't see how that pendulum swings back because infrastructure is improving. I mean, there's fiber initiatives all around my county that I live in. So that's going to keep strengthening, and that just feeds the case of cloud and these companies are good at marketing their products. I get the concept of "Well, you don't need database administrators, you don't need infrastructure people to manage." But if I look at our organization, before cloud was a thing, I walked into a situation where there were three tall racks, just all these physical servers and now it's down to half a rack with virtual hosts. Because there's still some on prem stuff we run, you know, so the manage and the tools keep getting better, you know, the virtualization tools and the data management tools. So it's kind of a false pretense to say, "Well, if you go to cloud, you don't have to worry about database administration, you don't have to worry about the infrastructure costs that come with it." Because if you do a side by side comparison, cloud subscriptions versus managing your own infrastructure, I'm telling you, Cloud is expensive. Now there is, if I'm a local dentists office with a handful of users, okay, I can probably get there, that cloud is worth it. And I'm not I'm not degrading cloud. I mean, I'm, I'm all in, I'm just telling you, you're going to, as a company, you're going to spend more, and you have to really have your arms around it. But back to your point of "Will the pendulum swing back?", I don't see it man because when they got you, they got you. And it's a lucrative annuity that these vendors now have.

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Aaron Bock 11:06

Yeah, I'm with you, I don't think it's gonna swing back. I think I've heard so many times, you know, it's just a matter of time, the pendulum will swing back, we always do. I don't see how we swing back from this one just because of the whole the financial model around it and because of like you said, the annuity is so valuable to so many people outside of IT in the in the financial world, which seems to drive our world. I just, I don't see how you how it swings back but I think it will be an interesting trend to follow. So.

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Anthony Darden 11:37

And the other thing, too, is, and this is where I do tip my hat to the cloud. And that and I know, again, we'll talk about but but the introduction of AI, and other resource intensive technologies, where the cloud gives you that theoretically, limitless power and bandwidth, so they can introduce those things with ease, and they do keep increasing the value of your subscription. But it's also one of those false flags as to why they tell you, you should invest in cloud because they'll rattle off 50 features, I'm like, look, I just need two features to run my business, I know, I understand you have all this cool shit out there. But for me to run my business, I need these five things. Maybe 10 more will come into play for me in time, but that's not why I am subscribing to you or what drives my business. So you got to kind of weed through the all the marketing and buzz that comes with it and really focus on what do I need out of this subscription?

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Keith Hawkey 12:40

I tell you one thing I have noticed more and more recently is the edge computing model, which is a little bit of a different delivery. It has to do with the technology innovation of small form factor infrastructure, that doesn't require a lot of maintenance. And, you know, with with your experience managing IT for from a global perspective, is that something that you've been seeing in your industry, with your organization or your customers?

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Anthony Darden 13:12

Yeah, we have. And I yeah, I think your points are fair, it is small form light touch. But I see that, you know, I see that happening regardless, like I just, very simple analogy, you know, back to my my rack example, you know, when I first joined the company. I mean, just IT footprints in general continue to get smaller and easier to manage. So, I do like the optimization technologies that are in place, because again, as a global organization, you need to be connected in some way. China's another topic altogether, but but there are connectivities, and you got to secure and lock it down and and keep things efficiently moving as possible while protecting the organization. That's a that's a delicate tightrope to walk. So yeah.

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Keith Hawkey 14:06

It seems that the leadership of companies, the boards, the CEOs that are charged with overseeing the digital transformation of the organizations are on board from just from a mental level to move toward the cloud and move toward more of a digital transformation for the organization. But the practical blocking and tackling, the financial overview, and how this impacts the different business departments and how it helps the bottom line and generate revenue. It can be a difficult conversation with from a CIO who's typically more more of a technical person. So what are some of the tips and tricks that you might offer an IT leader that's trying to deliver this vision of digital transformation, moving toward the cloud to a board.

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Anthony Darden 15:08

So it starts with having a CEO that recognizes, you know, the benefits of this, or the inevitable future since I kind of alluded to that before, I was saying a freight train. That helps. Not everybody will be fortunate enough to have a CEO that's, that's tech minded or tech aware, and but if there's trust in IT leaders, you know, you hope that that she or he will be supportive of that as a starting point. The good news for companies and leaders like us is that boardrooms are fully aware of this. They are talking about it. The number of EY and PWC events that I've attended, or been privy to, or invited to, it's all cloud and AI, and I mean, everybody's talking about it. So I feel like at a board level, there's not much of a battle to be had, but executing a strategy, once you get down to the CEO, that's where you have some of your challenges may exist. A couple things to throw out there. I mean, one, if you think about, you know, how you sell this vision, there are, I mean cloud does shift the strategy from being capex and cash intense outlay to get infrastructure and systems in place to more of that subscription model. So if you're a company that really has a tight stranglehold on cash, I mean, there, that's certainly appealing if you're just selling go pure subscription. But there's also a staff element to it before. I mean, I mentioned how earlier, where you don't necessarily need your database administrators, whether you're cloud or not, but there is still some cloud benefits in terms of supporting it. Because now it's the vendor. Now you'll have more throats to choke as an IT leader so you may be playing admin and chief, if you have, and the average the average cloud systems to an organization, based on my research is anywhere between 10 and 12. So you got 10 to 12 different systems in play, well, it's 10 to 12 different support areas, potentially, that you have to manage. But at the end of the day, you may have an internal team of folks there is some attrition to be recognized. Now, this is not all cost play here because when you think about ROI, when it comes to the cloud, a trap that you can fall into is the ROI of doing an ERP upgrade, or ERP implementation or securing the business. To me, these are two things that are, thou shalt. I mean, it's just a cost of doing business. If you're going down the ROI path of why we're going to implement, you know, business central SAAS as an ERP system. I mean, you're you're in for a tough road. I mean, you just don't, it's impossible, I think. But there are some benefits to focus on, for example, the AI elements that that help with running an organization, I mean, to me, that's where you have an ROI discussion, and you get the benefits that are very clear. And what you need to do is partner with your internal stakeholders, this can't just be a conversation with your CFO and CEO, you got to go to your commercial leaders, you got to go to your operational leaders, your marketing leaders, because this technology, these cloud solutions touch every part of the organization. There's one phrase that I think resonates for this conversation is that every company is a technology company now. That being said, that means you're touching every corner of your organization. So partner with your stakeholders, you get them excited, you participate in demos, and now you're a team and you have a much more compelling story that helps bubble up and sell what these benefits are. Because if I look at different companies that I deal with, everyone has some element of CRM, or some kind of mobile app or go online to sign up. I mean, it's it's it's in our face. And you look at the manufacturing efficiencies that come with, you know, solutions, and you mentioned the digitalization initiatives. I mean, it's evidence. So I do feel like it's an easier sell than it would have been, you know, three, four years ago.

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Aaron Bock 19:41

Hey, Anthony, it's interesting. And I kind of want your take on this, because you're talking about, we're talking about the cloud adoption, which by the way, just hit a half trillion dollars in the last few few months, which is incredible. But what's interesting to me is when we have this conversation about the cloud, and you compare it to what the conversations were about infrastructure, people viewed infrastructure as servers storage network. It sat there, it ran my

company, it's back office, blah, blah, blah, the CIO role was more internal facing as like kind of a part of the the organization not driving revenue. But when you're talking about the cloud, and this is where I think people don't understand, when you're talking about the cloud, you're talking about AI, you're talking about tooling that's helping the organization do things in HR, you're talking about doing things in the products, in the business, the cloud has that and I think that's the piece of selling it. Like if you have a board member who's Pro Cloud, great, that helps it. But when you're not sure, the organization doesn't have a clear champion, selling that value is the piece that I think is different between the traditional infrastructure model of just cap expert topics, and the tooling and the native abilities in the cloud. And so I'm curious, like, how do you how do you talk about the cloud differently than you talk about infrastructure that you used to? And you just kind of did with AI? But I'm curious how else you're doing it?

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Anthony Darden 21:08

Well, two of our strongest competitors have enterprise class, best in class, e commerce, web facing platforms. When I asked our commercial team, what are they seeing, as far as the competition goes, e commerce comes up a lot. Now, we've been underway with E-comm projects and initiatives and upgrades for the last five years, but it's one of those to your point, you know, it's not all about infrastructure and staff attrition, I mean, there are real benefits to be had. So, I mean, everybody knows Amazon, right? Every, you know, and the and the behemoth that they are, but competition in your own business, you look at that and in the case of us, we have some very strong web facing, you know, competitors that have amazing sites, and our customers are not always wanting to pick up the phone. I mean, they they want to have some self service capabilities. And if you think about a robust feature rich website, and E commerce experience for that customer, it's not just placing an order, it's managing their payments, looking at their order history, doing some reporting, things that a phone call conversation will not satisfy or end in "I'll get back to you, let me take some notes, and I'll send you an email with some attachments," right. Customers are becoming used to that 24/7 customer service experience. So that alone is a driver. And that and that's when you talk about bringing in additional revenues and helping to and a feature rich ecommerce site running 24/7. You do have the benefits of cost savings there. But to me, that's just a small piece of it, because you're giving your customers so much more at their disposal. And, you know, with with their timelines in mind.

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Keith Hawkey 23:03

It sounds like to me, historically, the IT department has approached leadership and says, to say this is what the IT department needs. But the conversation is shifting to where they can say, this is what the marketing department needs. This is what the HR department needs. And ultimately, this is what our customers expect of us. We want to remain competitive.

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Anthony Darden 23:32

And I'll put a little twist on that because you don't want to in all cases, not in all cases, but you don't want it to be an IT initiative. You know, I look at it and you were touching on this. But this is a this is a marketing initiative that IT plays a key role in it. That's where, that's where I look at that having that kind of collaboration, marketing hat as an IT leader. Because the last thing,

especially in operations, that can be a different breed. The last thing you want is operations feeling "Well IT is forcing this solution down our throats." So being able to collaborate and come to an epiphany together, man, that's powerful. Because now you have to implement these solutions. And now, now change management is front and center. And you know, the difference between a successful project and a painful one that happened to launch 12 months later, is successful change management.

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Keith Hawkey 24:30

Exactly. Speaking of change management, AI, you can't escape it, it's all over the news, it's in your face. You've you've led application development teams, how is AI you might be able to speak to impacting the workflows of IT teams that you see today? Maybe particularly when it comes to global manufacturing organizations? I'm sort of throwing this up and allowing you to approach it any way possible because there's a plethora of angles to address AI and give it some life. So I guess we could start when it comes to application development teams. How do you see AI impacting their workflows over the next six months to a year considering your, your background?

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Anthony Darden 25:24

You're all fired. No.

A

Aaron Bock 25:26

But seriously.

A

Anthony Darden 25:28

Yeah, yeah, no, it's, that's the knee jerk reaction to this, right, because I sat in the sessions with Microsoft watching, you know, 40% of an application environment be spun up with AI. And then the human comes in to kind of refine, polish, finish. So the knee jerk reaction is this is going to, I'll be out of a job. Now, if you are a lean team, and I feel like lean is baked in the cake, in the American cake for sure, where we want to do more with less and then thank you for a great year, what are you going to do for me next year, without any chance of exhaling? You know, I don't necessarily see that as this apocalyptic job killer. But if you're a large insurance company, or a bank, and you have teams of developers and teams of content creators, I do think that there there is some real attrition coming because you can, and we do leverage AI to help tee up work. And then, you know, someone comes in to help, to help finish it up. But you know, we have a small team, a small development team, and I don't see, all I see is enhancing them a lot and allowing some of that mundane setup and work to be handled, and allowing them to focus on the on the real fruit that they're creating here. But I do think, I do think there is going to be attrition on some level, and you always hear, you know, well in it during the Industrial Revolution, and there's always historical call outs where we thought the, the, you know, the sky was falling, and mass unemployment is coming. But I just can't see how whatsoever, what will

these people be repurposed to do? I don't know. I mean, this is where we got to play it out. Right. But for sure, AI properly harnessed, it's a key term there, properly harnessed, is going to, you know, either defer hiring or, or reduce headcount in some with these larger teams.

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Aaron Bock 27:47

So I agree with you, quick question. If you have a student, if you're, if you're a parent, you're raising a 15 year old going through and they're interested in something in the tech field. What do you tell that student to go to in this space now? Because it's interesting, like we were telling people to go to development, like less than 10 years ago. And now like, we're saying, hey, development is sort of potentially going to get cut because of AI? I think it's a really interesting question, but I'm curious what you would answer and what you would advise a 15 or 16 year old going into the space.

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Anthony Darden 28:28

Cybersecurity still remains the top of the list for me, and I think the proliferation of AI only ups the importance of roles like that, because now your cyber threats, you know, can become even smarter, as far as far as trying to get into an infiltrate and, you know, so I see that as COVID proof, technology proof, career path. Development, I mean, if I look at, you know, I'm a Microsoft shop, so I tend to always go there, but you know, their power platform, their suite of AI tools, Microsoft fabric, Viva sales, copilots. I mean, there's a lot of technology out there. That still, there's still the purposeful intent to have human beings as a part of the process. I mean this technology is helping to cut out some of the admin and some of the governance areas that may come with it, so I do still think the development space is at least again, I hate to project out far, but I do still see it as a reputable space to the former career path. And if anything else you think about, again, I just mentioned four new tools from Microsoft, that's not going to stop. I mean, these tools are going to keep coming and you need people to, to manage and develop it and build it and support it and so I don't really see that as much as a threat. And I certainly see cyber remaining strong.

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Aaron Bock 30:05

I'm going to speculate something I think is going to be more needed. And I'm not sure if it's a new role or new position inside of a company. But like, I grew up as a, I was a finance major, and I went through and it was very finance focused. We never, I think we had one class that was around information technology and then like, all of a sudden, I get, I was at PWC and I get into like, basically a full IT role with being like part of accounting. The people inside the business that can speak both languages are so much more valuable than ever before because if you have someone in your finance department and like accounting is an industry under a lot of scrutiny right now with like, the way it's been done for years, but like, "Can we do it more efficiently?". The people that can look at that, that business process and say, "Have we looked at this and how technology can actually help us and we can use technology and harness it well, without it being without it coming from the IT department always?", those people are so much more valuable. And so I don't know what that major is necessarily, is it a business major with an IT focus? Or is it an IT focus with a minor in business or whatever part of the business, you're working in chemistry or science or something like that, I just think that there's going to be a lot

of value for those people continuously, because they know how to kind of look at it holistically. And that's where we see people aging out or or aging is not the right word, but like, they're not willing to change, but like, look around, everything's changing. So you either adapt and adopt or you kind of age out. And that's kind of what we're seeing.

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Anthony Darden 31:48

Yeah, man, those are all great points, because and remember what I said earlier, right, every company is a technology company. And, and just go to your local auto dealership and test drive the latest electric model. When you're sitting inside of a computer, you see your corner garage, that's another another attrition point. They either adapt or die and and you can argue that you know these automotives want you going to a sanction, GMs repair shop or I mean, it's everything is computerized. So I don't look at now, one end of the spectrum is okay, if every company is a technology company, then every problem is an IT problem. You know, and that's not, that's not true at all. And you touched upon this, the skill sets, whether you're in ops or marketing or finance, is you have to have some IT competency about you. I think the baseline is moving across organizations as a whole as an employee and the skill set you bring. And that's why I think you know, anything, in IT is going to have its legs, but you are becoming more of a business minded employee and not just keeping the lights on employee and you think of traditional IT. So becoming a more rounded, more robust, more, more of a business partner is is critical, especially in IT leadership. If if you're going into it thinking you're just purely IT, and you're kind of behind the curtain, I'm not so sure you're in the right, in the right career.

K

Keith Hawkey 33:26

What do you do when you have a bright employee that is of the other technical ilk, and they're used to solving computational problems. And you want to bring this new employee up into being a more well rounded, charismatic leader that can speak to the business, can speak to the business problems? How do you introduce them into you know, it's almost because you're solving people problems. And you're solving with technical solutions is the way I think about it.

A

Anthony Darden 34:05

Yep. That Yeah. I don't know why think just I go right to, is there even a value for college degree in Management Information Systems anymore? I mean,

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Aaron Bock 34:19

Warning- This, this podcast has now gotten very, into the biggest debate of all time, but keep going.

A

Anthony Darden 34:29

Yeah. Yeah. Don't go to school and you're all fired. So I go by the happy hour method for interviews. I want you to have a small technical foundation. But you need to be able to survive

interviews. I want you to have a small technical foundation. But you need to be able to survive a happy hour, meaning if you can demonstrate social skills and you know, sense of humor, and can you read the room so, that's the other thing, group interviews around the table. I know we're in this digital age and we're on Teams and Zoom and remote work is here and hybrid for sure. I don't see that going anywhere, but if there is, but there needs to be a group interview on some level, because you have different person and purposeful, different personalities and and age around that interview and how does this candidate adapt and react? And as you can say, you can have the same conversation with five different people, and it's going to be five different paths you go down, because so so can they be that chameleon? That's very important to me, because anybody on my team, you're going to be working with folks in the business and, you know, we talked earlier about you kind of have that marketing hat on and that partnership, so people skills, I would say, minimum 50% importance than the actual technical talent you're bringing in. Because I don't care what you learned in school, or what you did. I mean, it's gonna demonstrate your work ethic and your ability to manage time, that's all well and good. But usually the technology that's in a place, it's, it's ground zero learning, you know, so I want to make sure you have the drive and the people skills before you're offered anything with our organization.

K

Keith Hawkey 36:14

When AI becomes compelling in the people skill area, that's when we're really in trouble. It seems that they have a compelling converse, when we're having a conversation with an artificial intelligence, and we feel delighted or charmed by them, we're in trouble you know. Right now, it's, we can kind of keep them in their technical box.

A

Anthony Darden 36:36

Yes. And we're getting resumes that are ChatGPT generated, I'm positive of it, because you read them, and they're just chock full of buzzwords and things that really have no bearing whatsoever, you know, Windows Server 2003, you know, I mean, it's like, whoa, wait a minute, you know. And you mentioned kids, 15 year olds, I worry about, like, I can't navigate a city, without Siri telling me where to turn, you know, so I've kind of dumbed myself down in terms of retaining, how do I get from point A to point B, you think about these essays and these long projects, I can just go to chat GPT get me 80% there, and then put my 20%, you know, flair on it and submit it? I don't know, I worry about it.

A

Aaron Bock 37:32

This is the debate. I think that's interesting, in some ways, right, you hate to see that resumes coming into your, your IT department or whatever that is chat GPT generated. But the other hand, you're saying, well, this person is actually trying to use AI for their good, for their own good or for whatever. So I assume they would apply that logic elsewhere. And, you know, we hire all the time, and I debate on like, well, is that a bad thing? Right? Like, that's like the classic? Like, do you take the test with no information? But when else in your life do you take a test without the information? So like, let's make it more realistic, like, and I'm kind of on the fence with this one, because I kind of think like, well, that person might be more willing to kind of use technology for the good.

A

Anthony Darden 38:18

You know, you kind of 180-ed me there. That's, you know, so I would almost, I can see a path of, alright, we're going to interview this person, and we're going to ask them, so did you just ChatGPT it? And they said, yeah, yeah what did you think? Hmm, I might continue that conversation. You know, first of all, you're owning it. Second of all, you have a sense of humor, because you're engaging in this, and you're not all panicked, and you know, deer in headlights. And then you get a sense of this person's true capabilities and personality that you know what they are, and that's a great, I love that point.

A

Aaron Bock 38:51

Well, and it's interesting, because I've heard, I've heard a million times from IT folks saying, like, I get these people who come in the door, and the resume's chock full of like, Windows Server expert, or, you know, you said you're a Microsoft shop, so like Azure, blah, blah, blah, and maybe they pass a cert somewhere, maybe they didn't, but like, without it, you know, you could check certs, you can check where they came from, it's hard to know, their knowledge base. And so I do agree with you, if you're just putting stuff on a resume, that is just totally a lie, well, that's a problem. But if you're, if you're trying to use technology to say yeah, like, I know, Azure, and this is my, this is how I use it and I'm using AI to help me learn it, blah, blah, blah. I'm kind of like, well, that person's gonna really help me long term so I want that person on my team.

A

Anthony Darden 39:38

Yeah. Yeah I'm on board with that.

K

Keith Hawkey 39:41

And the follow up for the interviewee is, let me tell you about the prompts that I used to put this together. Right. So that's, you want this kind of person this, if you're not using AI, you're you're left behind. So as long as it's not completely fabricated and it does have your personal touch and you are able to wield it to your your goals and initiatives, then it's a strike. We do have one last question for you, Anthony. We're wrapping up here. And let's say, all over the world, every screen, your phone, your laptop, every monitor every television screen, Anthony Darden has a message to convey to the world, could be about IT, could be about something else, what message would you like to impart to the humans of this earth? What would you do?

A

Anthony Darden 40:41

It's good question. Embrace empathy comes to mind. I, one thing my career has taught me is, you can't just solve every problem with a hammer. And I mentioned lean teams earlier and usually what comes with lean teams is high stress. And, folks, you know, and think about your email inbox. I mean, if you don't check your work email for a day, or you go on vacation, and come back, I don't know if you ever truly unbury yourself from that, and still have a day job.

And so keep in mind that you're not alone in that, in that capacity, and you have coworkers around you that are feeling the same thing. So when you're having that project, or you're working through a challenge, and someone snaps out at you and I tend to, I think that ills of social media, I just feel like it's the source of so many anger and triggers and just hatred. It's, that's another 20 episodes. But if I think of just the nature and reactive and polarization that goes on, I mean, it's not just tied to social media or politics. It's also within our own four walls. So I think we just need to be I mean, we've been given two ears and one mouth for a reason, right? So listen to your coworkers, be empathetic. Not everything requires a snarky reaction in return. I just think we need to get back to that. And I would, I think we would be all better off both personally and professionally.

A

Aaron Bock 42:24

That's a great piece of advice. I love that we we talk about IT for 90% of the podcast, yet pretty much every guest we've had has, when we've asked them this question, they've given a very human piece of advice, which is embrace empathy, here from Anthony. And I think we all could use that whether it's specifically around IT, what we've talked about or not. So Anthony, this was this was great having you on the show really enjoyed the conversation today. I know you took the time out of your schedule, and you're you're busy so we appreciate that. I know our listeners will. Anthony, anything else that you'd like to share how people can get in touch with you? Any closing thoughts?

A

Anthony Darden 43:03

No, no closing thoughts. And thank you for having me on your show I really enjoyed it. I just love having conversations with other IT leaders and thought leaders in this space, so always an enjoyable conversation. And again I do appreciate it and I'd love to reciprocate, have you, have you on CIO lifeline at some point in the future and continue the fun.

A

Aaron Bock 43:27

Yeah, we forgot to mention this in the beginning but check out, Anthony is also a podcaster, the CIO Lifeline, they publish it on YouTube. So check it out if you get a chance. Anthony, thanks for joining the IT Matters podcast and I hope you have a great rest of the week.

A

Anthony Darden 43:43

Thanks guys much appreciated.

A

Aaron Bock 43:45

Alright, have a great one guys.

👤

12:12

11 45:40

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