The Napkin Guys: Preparing Yourself for Today's Emerging Business Technologies

Tim Hanson: So Bryan, you know while we're up here, I always like to pick your brain on kind of what do you see emerging in the IT space?

Bryan Bechtoldt: Yeah, the technology trends in general.

Tim: Yeah, in general.

Bryan: You know, what we see right now, I think that most people are starting to talk about, even if they don't know how they're going to impact or resonate in their organization, is a lot of conversation around things like predictive analytics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. And all of these things are technologies that are supposed to help us understand information and model and try to do things with our future organization that's going to take advantage of whatever gaps exist in the market.

Tim: Well, you just threw out three terms that some other time you and I just need to talk through the differences between. Because I think a lot of people confuse machine learning, artificial intelligence, and predictive analytics, or even think they're the same things. Some other time I'd like to pick your brain on the differences between those. But, how do organizations prepare themselves?

Bryan: Well, that's actually the interesting thing is that there's a very common base to all three of those and for organizations, you think they may want to take advantage of those technologies at some future point. They really need to start investing now if they haven't started understanding their data footprint and haven't started preserving it, then they're really already behind. So what you really have to do is, you have to understand where your data lives and then you have to collect it properly. And then, I guess the term is curate, but you gotta store it some place where you can access it in the future. Say for when you need it for one of these tools, or these engines, to actually start to deal with it. You gotta source it, collect it, understand it, make sense of it, and then save it so you can ship it off to one of these AI engines, or machine learning engines, that will process it for you and help give you insight. The more data you have, the cleaner it is, the better prepared it is, the better the outcomes will be from all three of those technologies.

Tim: Well those are great steps and I'm guessing somewhere in that is making sure that you understand how you own your data and what access you have to it. So summarize those for me now. So, first one was.. what would you categorize that as?

Bryan: Well you gotta source it, collect it.

Tim: Source it.

Bryan: You gotta get it, you gotta make sure you have it, and to your last point there, you gotta make sure you have access to it. You gotta make sure you own it. So there's even potentially contracting steps that have to be considered as you're thinking about this.

Tim: Ok, so first, resource it.

Bryan: Yes, first, resource.

Tim: Second?

Bryan: You gotta organize and understand it. We've gotta make sure that we know that the data that we have, we have a belief that what we're storing is purposeful and that we think we can use it downstream. It's as complete as we might need.

Tim: Good. And what was the third point?

Bryan: The third point, I think is really interesting, is what kind of insight, what kind of questions might we want to ask of it. What kind of insight are we potentially trying to glean?

Tim: So what would we do with it.

Bryan: What would we do with it. I mean, it's one thing to be a pack rat of data or anything else. The other thing is what's its purpose?

Tim: But I think really stepping back and thinking about what questions are we trying to answer in the business and then how would we use that information to guide us in those questions.

Bryan: And I would say, just in general, one of the biggest things for people to do is understand that data's information, and information is what powers businesses. It's really not about technology. It really is about the business and it's about your critical information that gives you insight to what your organization does.

Tim: So those are really three good points. One, source it. Think about how we source it. Two, think about how we organize it, where we store it, how we access it. And three, understand what we're attempting to do with that information. What questions we're trying to answer within the business.

Bryan: Yeah, and don't, just the last thing is just something we all need to remember, don't get caught flat-footed. If the industry disrupts and some of your competitors leverages one of these tools, you gotta be ready.

Tim: Oh, so we're going to stray from our three points, but four points is don't get caught flat-footed.

Bryan: I could keep going!

Tim: That's great! Yeah, I know, I'm sure you could.

Bryan: Don't get caught flat-footed.

Tim: These are good. This is good information, that's good advice.

Bryan: I think that the biggest thing is be ready.

Tim: Yeah, be ready. Perfect.

Bryan: Be ready, yeah.

Tim: Great, that's helpful. Thank you.

Bryan: Coffee. It's 9 o'clock in the morning.

Tim: It's morning. It's a little fall in northern Wisconsin.

Bryan: Tastes pretty damn good.

Tim: It does.

Bryan: Cheers.