



## AI LEADERS PODCAST EP 70 CELEBRATING WOMEN IN AI TRANSCRIPT

**Alice Chen** [00:00:00] I think we need to have a mentality of just signing out for the right opportunity. And don't overthink. Just So, it. And we need to get our hands dirty.

**Keri Smith** [00:00:19] Hello everybody, and welcome to another episode of Accenture's AI Leaders podcast. I'm Keri Smith and I'm going to be your host for this session. And I'm particularly excited about this episode where we're going to be focused on celebrating women in AI. And I have some amazing guests with me today, and I'm going to ask them to introduce themselves. So let me start with you, Teresa. Could you introduce yourself to our listeners?

**Teresa Tung** [00:00:48] Hi, Keri, my name is Teresa Tung, and I'm our global data capability lead at Accenture. I get to think about what's going to happen with data in the future and then build our capabilities, our thought leadership, our assets, how we partner to be able to achieve those that future.

**Keri Smith** [00:01:08] And you're brilliant. I've had the honor and pleasure of partnering with you over the years and always inspired by what I see with you. Teresa and I want to introduce our second guest as well, Alice. We are going to be fast friends, but I know this is our first time connecting. But Alice, please do introduce yourself to our listeners.

**Alice Chen** [00:01:28] Thank you. Keri. And thank you for having me. Alice here and I am senior manager from AI center for AI. Teresa, I'm working with Teresa, and I'm focused on the Atlantic AI solution development. So, building crew applications and solving the toughest problems for our clients.

**Keri Smith** [00:01:50] Wonderful. Thank you Alice and I will introduce myself as well. So, hi everyone. Keri Smith and I have the pleasure of running our data and AI a global portfolio for our financial services. Clients are spending a lot of time with our banking and capital markets clients. So, as we're looking at today's topic around celebrating women and I, I'm just really energized about the time that we're in the age of AI and just a lot of the possibilities. But as we kind of think through our own personal journeys, I thought it would be helpful for us to maybe talk through the listeners some highlights across our own journey. So, one thing is, as we think about our own interest in AI and data and maybe some key moments that shaped our career path, why don't we talk a little bit about that now? And Alice, I'm going to actually ask you to go on this one, please.

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**Alice Chen** [00:02:41] Yeah, I love it. Thank you. Okay. I just thought of all I grew up as a kid. I just feel I have a natural tendency to keep things organized and funny inside. So, when I was younger, I enjoyed like, detective stories and finding his killers in the end. Right. And I think that just, like, carry over to like, we're, like, dealing with data and like, or kind of like digging through all those messiness of data. And they're using AI as our best tool to find inside. Let's just give me almost the victory moment at the end. So, when I was in the college, I remember my professor brought out like data mining and knowledge discovery. And to me, that's like almost a moment that people start to shift all the focus to data and open out of the new era, like we start our current work. So, I just know, like, this is so cool. I want to be part of it.

**Keri Smith** [00:03:40] I love that when you're saying that I'm just there thinking about like, Nancy Drew, Agatha Christie and okay, tying that to AI. I love that. Thank you for sharing that with us. Teresa, what about you?

**Teresa Tung** [00:03:54] Yeah, I guess for me it was much more inspired a bit by the internet. So, I am a child that was growing up when the internet was coming out. I still remember getting CDs with AOL, I think American Online, and that's kind of my first experience with dialing in via a modem. And I thought, wow, this is so amazing that, you know, at my fingertips, I can ask any question. And it could come up with an answer. And we certainly seen how that's just changed over that time. And so, when I went to school and I was looking at, you know, what I wanted to study more of, I think network design and the internet and how well that's scale today is still the biggest, most scalable data system. And then the fact that you can Google or being something and find an answer, that's amazing because I can't even find anything on my laptop. So, the fact that how did that work? And so, when that happened, that's exactly what I wanted to study more of. Like, how does the internet work at scale.

How are we able to take all these websites that people are publishing and to be able to index it? And then when I ask any question, it's able to guide me to the right answer. We didn't have to call Google to say, Hey Google, I'm creating a new website. I'm creating a new TikTok video. Please, please, please showcase it, right? It just can find it. And I thought that almost seemed like magic.

**Keri Smith** [00:05:20] I love that and is like, okay, that's the wonderful power of what people sometimes call AI Gore's Internet or Beyonce's Internet. So, I'm glad that it has a really good impact on you and your interests, and all the contributions that you've been able to make to the field. If I if I think about, you know, that question for myself, what I would say is, you know, I've, I am a I've been a founding member of several fintech. So, I have been in the entrepreneurial space for a good portion of my career. And I also come from a family of, of, of entrepreneurs. So, it's been in the DNA for generations. And so, growing up, being around that and also being an entrepreneur myself, what I would say is a big part of that is just a lot of pioneering energy. And how do you continue to be relevant and stay apace or ahead of where innovation is actually going? And so that lies very closely with AI and what was then big data and, you know, robotics and things like that. And just more as you AI reversing the world. How do you continue to stay current relevant ahead and being able to do kind of advisory work, pioneering work. So, I would say that was a key part in terms of just my upbringing, what I saw around me and, and how do you kind of do new things, pioneering things in this space. And obviously AI falls very, very nicely within that category. So, I know I was you were kind of keen to also maybe touch on a couple of different topics. So how about it?

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**Alice Chen** [00:06:54] Yeah, sure. So, take Keri and Teresa. I know both of you have been working in the field for a long time. You're in my mind. Consider as you, senior leader. So, let's say a relatively early and meet level career professional. I really want to validate, like what I have do with my career and kind of get some career advice from both of you. So, my first question is about like your leadership journey. Really curious. Like this cliched question like what is your early trade journey look like? Because I can think about like the moment and the first time, like leading up here. I was so scared, and I keep scared for a couple years. And like, we're in a working in consulting, like, running a business is also like the later part of our career. And I have no idea how that happened. So maybe. Keri, I'll start with you. And if you can share a little bit of like, your experience with me.

**Keri Smith** [00:07:59] Yeah, absolutely. And I think it's kind of maybe I'll just give a probably multi-dimensional answer to that, because a couple of different things have come together to help me with that. And so one thing was definitely, I want to give a lot of respect to my parents, Trevor and Althea Smith, and I would say grew up in an environment where we had the power of high expectations, and I didn't appreciate it as much until I left home and started to interact with other groups and other communities where I realized that some people don't have anyone in their life that is actually expecting positive things from them. So, I grew up in an environment where, yes, we all had our responsibilities in the household like we had to do well in school. Like, you know, we didn't have all the financials to be able to pay for our college. So, you have to do well to get a scholarship and things like that. Right. And you had parents that were expecting great things of you thought you were smart and all that stuff.

And I realized how having people believe something positive about you, particularly in your formative years, how important that is in terms of your own confidence and courage to be able to take on new things so that that's kind of one. And then the other part of it, I would say definitely strong mentors and safe spaces to be able to kind of talk through, hey, this is what people are saying, but this is what I am actually seeing in practice. Can we have a real discussion about what it's going to take to navigate this doing it? So, I think there are kind of multiple components to it, Alice. But I would say overall, one definitely having a support structure and also people who are believing in you, but part of it is your own boldness and courage to know that, hey, I have a right to be here. And I do fundamentally believe that anybody can learn anything. It's really about your mindset and what you have access to. So that's kind of my shorter answer to it but definitely want to give really a strong shout out to my parents and also mentors, past and present, who have really helped me a lot in my career.

**Alice Chen** [00:10:06] Yeah, I love it. I love when you mention like the right-hand side to have and then when people can release almost in that loving environment, I feel the same way, like I when I find the right manager and then they, they also see the all the things that I can bring to the table. So, 100% on that.

**Keri Smith** [00:10:25] Absolutely.



**Alice Chen** [00:10:27] Yeah. So, Teresa, like my second question is for you. So, when I get a little bit of tactic because I know people always say like it's so important to find a mentor. So, I'm curious like what you were thinking, mentorship is important to find a mentor or maybe a sponsor. And how do you find the mentors and what are the trade you think? Like, how do you like mentoring Linton. Oh. What do you think? A healthy mentor mentee model would work. Maybe you can share a little bit of your experience. And then a little bit of advice for us. On the mentorship.

**Teresa Tung** [00:11:05] Yeah, I thought Keri had great examples with her parents, but her parents set high expectations for Keri and that that helped her grow and give her confidence to, to do what she needed to do. In the same way, that's what a mentor is not. Some of our mentors can be our parents. It could also be other people that you meet throughout your journey teachers, supervisors, colleagues. In our cases, a client. And so, the mentor's job is really to help you dream bigger than what you could. So, I'm using the analogy. I'm Chinese and we have a term called Tiger Mom. Right. Tiger mom. Her job is to actually help her child. She has ambitions for her child, and she's helping find all the enrichment courses and find opportunities and really supporting. Right that that that's the positive spin on Tiger Ball. I guess Tiger Loan could be a lot of pressure. But if we take that positive view, I think that is what we need a little bit. So, in my own career, you know Karthik Narain our group technology officer, he's my tiger mom at work. So, he was the one who you know, I was in Accenture Labs at the time. I did a lot of our first projects with cloud and big data, but definitely more from an R&D perspective. And he's the one who said, I'm starting a team at the time called Cloud First. Would you like to come and join me as our Chief Technologist? And at the time, I was really apprehensive. I was a little bit scared. I was like, oh, I've never done anything like that. I've always done more R&D.

Should I be, you know, doing something within the practice. And the Tiger mom job is to say, yes, you should. I think you can do it. I'm going to support you and be your cheerleader. And really give you that opportunity. And I think that is really what we need. So, I think is some things about this. It's definitely not your mentor's not necessarily a woman. Right. Definitely. If we're in tech, it can't be women only for women. I think it is also looking across the business. So, in some ways you do need a network. I know that's what people say. To get mentors you're going to need a network, but that really is the case. But as you're open with what you are looking for in your career. So, I was pretty open. So, I talked a lot about, you know, I'm doing this work in labs. I wish I could have a bigger impact. I didn't necessarily know how that would come about by moving into the practice, but I was pretty vocal. The people that I spoke to, I spoke to Paul Doherty, our CTO at the time. I spoke to Elise Cornell, who is leading our marketing within tech like, so it was really about putting it out there and saying, this is what I want to do. I'm not really sure exactly how it's going to pan out, but I need some of your help as to figuring out how to make this happen. And then the mentorship thing kind of happens, I think. You know, through that networking, you'll find people who will lean in and say, yeah, I really think I can help you with your journey. I think you can also help me. Those are where it really clicks. And I think that's one. And then too, it's again, not necessarily people within your direct chain of command. It's not necessarily someone who looks exactly like you, the same gender or the same roles. Right? It is sometimes the best mentors. Like in my case, Karthik. It was somebody who was outside what I was doing that that gave me the idea even that this was a possibility and giving me the opportunity.

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**Alice Chen** [00:14:41] Yeah, I love it. So, I kind of feel that resignation for what you said. And then Keri said, like having that supporting structure and also like surviving the loving environment. They say you got all their support for like what you have the idea to do, and you just need a little push. And it does remind me of like one of the vegan directors I used to work with, and he almost always started like, I've, I will give you a challenge for every conversation. He started with all the consultants. So, I definitely feel that Tiger Mom profile. So maybe that's a lot of fun. Yes. So, Keri, like is there anything else that you want to add in terms of the advice that you want to offer to us like a woman community and especially like for us, technical roles who work in the AI field.

**Alice Chen** [00:15:37] Because I can think about like you're a not only an expert in AI, but also an expert in the financial industry. So how will you be able to keep up so well with that? Right?

**Keri Smith** [00:15:51] Oh, yeah. Thank you for that. You know what I would say on that is, you know, as we look at this, I my view is we have one life, and we want to make the most of it. Right. We do not know how long we're going to be here. And we want to make the most of it. I would say for me personally; I'm motivated by growth. I want to keep getting better as a human being a king, getting better as a leader and in contribution. I'm not only on this planet for myself. I want to always be giving back and helping other people. But I think there's a lot of agencies, I would say, regarding how we need to run our lives. And what I mean by that is we need to take control of our destiny and design. How is it that we want to be purposeful about making the impact? So, as I'm speaking and answer your question to advise others, I would say, what is that future that you want to be able to drive? How do you want to be able to contribute? What are things and signals that you've seen around things that excite you? Right. Because that's innate and you can see things that you get more excited about a passionate about. So, design like, what is that world that you want to step into?

Now then let's see how to make that happen right and have the confidence around it. So, I feel a big part of it is let's take control of our destiny. Let's not be reactive and order takers around it like, no, we put our self forward, partially contribute to this world. What is it that we want to do and let's make the most of the time. And one of the things, at least I would say that I'm a big student of leadership. And I as I said, I will always want to keep getting better. And what I want to do is I want to make sure that I'm learning not just about everything that I'm going to do, but from what others have done and gotten their wisdom right. That's going to accelerate my learning curve. And so, one of the things that I find very interesting to read is when people are very close to death, a lot of times they are. There's no more pretense. They're very truthful about what they think and some of their regrets. Right. And some of the top regrets that are there is oh my goodness. They wish they didn't listen to others as much and that they went after their true passion. They wish they would have spent more time with loved ones. Right? But they would have wanted to be bolder about taking action on some of the things that they desired. So that's kind of what I would encourage people. We do not need to wait to that point in time, because we don't know when that point is. Time is going to come, right? So, let's take agency and design that future that's going to inspire us and let's start taking action from now. So just be bold, courageous, and you deserve to be there.

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**Teresa Tung** [00:18:19] Let's look into the future now. This is such an exciting time to be working in this space of data, and I don't think it's ever been more exciting. In fact, I kind of feel like the last two years, you know, they say dog years, right? For every one year of human like, it's like seven years of a dog's life. It feels like in the practice, like it's been we working dog years, right? It's feels like seven years have gone past for every one year. The last couple. So clearly, it's all hands-on deck. I think my first question is for Keri. What excites you most about this current environment, and how can women really help to shape this field?

**Keri Smith** [00:19:00] Yeah. So, you know, I think as we look at the environment that we're in and, you know, right now, obviously there's a big push around generative AI and what's possible with that kind of being the first emerging technology in the history of human development, right. That that has had this pace of innovation. And so, when I look at kind of what's possible there as well as and what I would say is what's really exciting for me is being able to tap more into that human creative capacity and that imagination and get much faster from idea and thought to something tangible. I'm very excited about what that means. And, you know, some of the things that I've shared in with, with other discussions with people as well is as I think about being able to leverage, for example, I agents and my digital partners to be able to help me with some of the maybe more mundane activities when I'm freeing up a bit more of that intellectual capacity and using it for good, what is actually possible for humanity, right? So, there are some things that we obviously want to tackle in terms of world hunger, world peace, etc. so if I'm able to free up more of that intellectual capacity there and doing that on a global level and being clear around pointing that for good, what's actually possible.

So, for me, Teresa, like, I'm excited about that as well as then I do see I as a potential equalizer as well because of some of the multi-modality that's available and more accessibility. I feel like, you know, we all have different learning styles, etc. if there's something that's a little bit more challenging to me, can I work with AI then to make that a bit easier? And then what does it allowed me to do as well? So, I feel like it's going to have the potential for us to also help with a bit more equity in the world. But also, I'm a big proponent of AI for good. So, these are things that I would say excite me about the future. And obviously they require a lot of intentionality and partnership, right, to be able to channel the energy in that way.

**Teresa Tung** [00:21:04] Yeah. No, I love that. Oh, go ahead.

**Keri Smith** [00:21:07] Sorry. I just realized that you asked me about women to shape the field. So sorry. I want to make sure I address that as well. So very quickly on that point, what I would say is, as we look a lot at the benefits of AI, and I would say also some of the cautionary parts of it as well. What I feel that women can bring a lot to the table as well is just we need to be able to also manage the culture around this, the change management. And how do we make sure as we're doing more of this automation and efficiency, there's still empathy.



There's still a way that we are going to interact in humane ways. We're going to also have consideration in terms of like, yes, there's more automation, but are we also helping people with job placement? I'm thinking about that. So, I feel as we look at women continuing to shape the feel there needs to be, there's these ethical considerations, but also managing the culture, inclusivity, etc. and I feel that women actually do a great job of doing that. So, I feel that will be really, really important in order for us to continue to have a healthy society that can benefit right from this technology, technological innovation.

**Teresa Tung** [00:22:13] Yeah, 100%. I think both the AI for good and especially it also helps with diversity, diversity and inclusion. Right. That's one of the places as among others. And then the role of women in helping shape those programs, it's become much easier to apply AI than ever. So, finding out where to apply it and how to apply it seems to be even the harder question and the more meaningful question that you're mentioning, as opposed to the mundane question. I think this space is also so exciting because it's new for everybody. I so, so nobody has decades of experience where in some places you can argue that, you know, there are some others with more experience. So that's part of why they're leading the pack. In this case, you know, nobody can claim that they've been doing it for years. And they know how this unfolds. So. So why not women and why not? You know, thinking about not making a. Yeah. Why not me? Why not us? I have to say.

**Keri Smith** [00:23:15] Yes, I agree.

**Teresa Tung** [00:23:17] So, Alice, why not you? So, question to you. So, first, what is this exciting you most about the future of AI?

**Alice Chen** [00:23:26] Yeah, I think about AI like the potential to make my life easier. Everything becomes more and less. And I've always been wanting to have my personal, like Ada to do all the, like, random and then stuff. And I can also see a robotic stuff coming. Ready? Be at my home maybe in a couple of years. So that's all got me very excited about like, okay, please come faster. I need it tomorrow. But when I also think of like as a woman working in the field of AI and I think about like, oh, there are still like a lot of, like male leaders and the women are still a store representative in this, like, whole hierarchy. So, I think it's super important for us to stay on the table and be competitive. Why not me? If something like Keri mentioned earlier, like, I think we need to have a mentality of just signing up for the right opportunity. And don't overthink. Just go do it. And we need to get our hands dirty. Like it is a new field. So, a everyone is like just having a new starting point. So, there's no better point time point for us to just like, be as a leader in this field.

**Teresa Tung** [00:24:51] I think that's a great point. I think, you know that you need to get your hands dirty. So, some of it is you need to opt in. I think, again, it's new for everybody, but you have to do a bit of self-learning or, you know, open to roles that are different than what you did before. And I think carry some of your advice early on that says you deserve a seat at the table. Why not me? Right. I think that is something that women sometimes we opt out before anybody else says anything. And I think this is a great time to see the difference we can make.



**Keri Smith** [00:25:30] I agree with that. Teresa and I just wanted to just say one, Teresa and Alice. It's been an enjoyable conversation with you both. I'm just here, like, inspired and like, let's get out there. Let's and let's get more and more people to embrace. I can do this. And I want to also acknowledge that I would say women have been making contributions and AI has been around since the 50s. Women have been making contributions since then and with generative AI as well. I would say women have been doing that. So, I do want to acknowledge, right, the impact and the performance of women in this space. And also, just to celebrate women in AI, celebrating you, Teresa, Alice and the many women out there, and also encouraging those who have not put a foot in the water yet, please come join us. We need more. We need more voices. We need you. We need everyone. Thank you so much for listening to our episode today. We're going to continue our journey of celebrating women in AI and again comes back to us for the next episode.