AI

Coalesce Inc.

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IT CEO of the Year – Massachusetts

Coalesce is a personalized research assistant that combines machine learning with human expertise to provide relevant information to business users about their prospects, customers and investments. Greg Woolf took the time away from his busy schedule to share with us his insights into what it takes to succeed in this innovative business.

My main role is to function as a strategic leader and product visionary. Combining these two functions allows me to bridge the gap between what our clients need to be successful and what our team needs to deliver.

Meeting the expectations of clients is always our key goal. I believe that the best way to provide a superior customer experience is by researching and utilizing the combined resources of technical and industry experts. Our team is comprised of machine learning specialists, user-experience designers and product developers who have authored more than 25 technical books – each member brings different perspectives and strengths to the team. Finding common ground and guiding them to contribute their highest potential to the product is what I do best.

Our mission is to save people from drowning in the data that overwhelms us every day. Sixty billion gigabytes of data is added to the web every day – that's the content of 100 million smart-phones every hour. As computers become more powerful, more people around the world rely on technology in their daily use and we continuously need better, more intuitive software to make life easier.

The rapid evolution of software and the vast amount of new tech being invented today poses many challenges. People can easily become punch-drunk with new tech. Ten years ago we never though it possible to have high-quality video conferencing with anyone in the world … and for free no less! The growth and improvement curve is so steep that we are now experiencing technology we could only dream about in the recent past. However, this also makes it difficult for companies to stay ahead of the pack. If you are not on the leading edge of the curve you run the risk of getting left behind and becoming out-dated. This can happen, seemingly, in the blink of an eye and it can affect the creators as much as the users of technology.

Generally, people are open to new technology providing it's intuitive and easy to implement and use. We continuously seek better solutions to improve our products and user experience. A key advantage to our growth and success is the ability to leverage our community. Being members of the Watson Ecosystem gives us access to IBM's global marketing and technical reach. I moderate an industry group of machine learning experts, known as the Cognitive Computer Group (CCG) of Boston. There is a real thirst for knowledge about the potential impact of intelligent software in everyday life. We recently launched a series titled "Real Life Examples of Cognitive Computing" which caused our CCG membership to increase more than 400%.

Based in Massachusetts, we are very fortunate to work in a tech-rich environment with access to some of the world's leading business and educational establishments, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard University, Boston University and other leading institutions. As a result, Boston is home to numerous innovative companies, large and small, which germinate and thrive here due to the progressive mind-set.

We have an obsession with ideas which initially seem impossible, but as they reach fruition, are capable of producing significant changes to how people work every day. I am continually inspired by Elon Musk, a 'big thinker' who has proven time and again that impossible ideas, such as solar power, electric luxury vehicles and commercial space travel, can become mainstream with enough vision and determination.

To be a successful CEO starts with surrounding yourself with a team of like-minded individuals. We look for people who are excited to explore and develop at the forefront of current technical boundaries while ensuring that Coalesce provides them that opportunity. Being in Boston works to our advantage, since there is no shortage of people with vision and expertise in the local technical community, allowing us to leverage a deep network of innovators and experts to access terrific talent.

Observation and innovation are the two factors which I feel are instrumental in distinguishing us from our competitors. I've been told that we listen to our customers better than other business partners, which continually drives us to innovation. Merging customer needs and desires into a product at an acceptable price-point is the best way to succeed in a competitive marketplace.

We have a history of innovating advanced software solutions ahead of the pack, having been first to introduce a data-warehousing product for alternative investment managers. We're now the first to create a personalized research assistant that leverages machine learning for business users to filter information about their prospects, customers and investments.

Coalesce is a new company that emerged out of Vantage Software, a company I founded 15 years ago, which provides software to investment firms that manage over $1 trillion in aggregate. Our first goal in the new year is to broaden the reach of Coalesce beyond investment research to business users in all business roles including sales, marketing, customer service and business development.

Coalesce has been a remarkable foray into the future of intelligent software development. We are fortunate to be on this exciting path and look forward to a bright future ahead.