

Pioneers and Pathfinders: Leslie Grandy

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Steve Poor

Hi, this is Steve Poor, and you're listening to Pioneers and Pathfinders.

Today's guest is Leslie Grandy, an author, speaker, and trusted advisor to CEOs, product leaders, and teams. Leslie's career has taken some fascinating turns—from working in the film industry to guiding major brands on strategy and innovation. She's also deeply committed to education, having taught product leaders through The Product Guild, the University of Michigan Center for Entrepreneurship and as guest lecturer at the University of Washington's Foster School of Business. Leslie recently added author to her list of accomplishments with the release of her book, *Creative Velocity*, which explores how to drive better results and better collaboration through creativity and the thoughtful use of generative AI.

In our conversation, Leslie talks about the importance of embracing a creative career path and discovering her personal superpower. We talk about her thesis that creativity is a learnable, repeatable system. We also discuss why reframing problems is often the key to solving them, the role of culture and creative problem solving, and her thoughts on how organizations should be approaching AI tools. Let's listen in.

Leslie, how are you? Thank you so much for joining me today.

Leslie Grandy

It's great to be here. Thanks so much for inviting me.

Steve Poor

Okay, so let's, let's talk a little bit about your background, because you've got for pioneers and pathfinders. You've got sort of an unusual, unusual background as a guest for a show. So you started in film and television, and you made your way into the world of products, and you've now written a book called *Creative Velocity: Propelling Breakthrough Ideas in the Age of Generative AI*. Let's start a little bit by getting your professional journey. Tell us a little bit about how a Northwestern grad in TV and journalism becomes an expert in creativity.

Leslie Grandy

Well, I think my personal journey started with wanting to be perceived and wanting to see myself as a creative person. I had this view of my identity that was important to me, to be perceived as someone who was creative. And so my parents, I was very lucky. I was raised in a highly educated household where people valued the arts as well, and so they were willing to throw money at lessons for anything for me to find my platform. And my mom was a painter, and my father was a piano player who didn't even need to read music. He would pick up any piano in any hotel lobby or bar that the guy got up and walked away from. My dad would start tinkling the ivories. And so they were just naturally talented in the arts.

Steve Poor

I had a roommate like that in college, and it's the most awesome thing to see when someone can just sit down and hear a song and play it on the piano.

Leslie Grandy

It's totally aspirationally. Was like, I want that for myself. I want that sense of fulfillment around a creative pursuit like that. But every lesson I took was not advancing any skills because I had no talent in in these art forms, whether it was acting or music or sculpting, whatever my parents were willing to put in front of me. Ultimately, I remember my piano teacher telling my mom that she was throwing good money after bad, that this was that I reached my peak and that this wasn't really my thing, and so it was very disheartening to believe that I wasn't going to be able to live even a portion of my life as some sort of creative person. And then I made a film in my senior year in high school because I had to have an independent study project at the school I was going to. And so I made a film, a Super Eight film, and oddly enough, it won a Public Television Award. And I say oddly enough, because at the time, I didn't think I was any better at that than I was in anything else I had tried, but I had submitted it, or the school had submitted it and it won, and I thought, Oh, this is the universe telling me you do have talent and this is your art form. So I wanted to immediately go to USC or UCLA and start in film school, but my parents just thought this was a hobby, not a career, and wanted to make sure I got a good education. So that's why I went to Northwestern, which was halfway across the country from where I lived, and had a film program. So it was a compromise where my parents thought I would get a good education and I would actually be able to have the film degree. And so I rushed through college, and the minute I graduated, I moved to California, and my father gave me a check for \$500 and said, Good luck. This is your choice, and so it's your choice, and so it's your decision to make, and you need to make yourself successful, because this is my job is done like that was kind of his view. And so I moved to California and started working in the industry, in Hollywood. And surprisingly, I had no connections. I had no playbook for how you get a job in the film industry, or how you build a career, more importantly, in the film industry, but I just didn't want my parents to be right that it was a dumb idea. I just didn't.

Steve Poor

That's a great motivator, isn't it?

Leslie Grandy

It was, it was. The idea of failing was actually the reason I was successful. I can look retrospectively and say I made choices that were really about building a network and keeping working all good things. But at 20 years old, I didn't know that. I just kept saying yes to things and trying things and meeting people. And it wasn't like it was a strategic plan. It just turns out that was a good plan, and I was able, in a couple of years, to actually make it into the Directors Guild of America and work for people I studied in film school, like Brian De Palma and James Cameron and I built the career I had wanted to build, just by sort of brute force, right? Not wanting to fail at the time, though, the part that was kind of ironic about it, I was in a creative field, but I didn't actually have a creative job. I wasn't a director, I wasn't a stylist, I wasn't a cinematographer, the screenwriter. I actually was the person people hired to go figure out how to do things those people wanted to do, and in that sense, I was more creative adjacent than I wanted to be, but I was happy to be in a field that felt like I was around creative people. So I just worked really hard at that role where figuring stuff out that I'd never seen before was important, because if I didn't, somebody else would. Somebody else would that somebody else would get that job. And so I was highly motivated to solve problems and to see the world as something I could conquer. And I had enough confidence that I got that far, that I might be able to do that. And my self confidence, I think, was a big motivator. And in that process, I started to appreciate. My superpower was actually figuring stuff out that other people didn't know how to get done. That that was actually a skill. And that superpower of kind of saying, Well, what if we did it this way, or what if we asked this person, or what if we approached it this way? Really unlocked possibilities for directors, which kept me getting hired. And that became kind of the superpower I had, which is, who doesn't want somebody on the team that is willing to dive in and figure stuff out, or who doesn't run from ambiguity, or doesn't see

problems as hills they can't climb. And so my attitude, I think, really helped open the doors to possibilities for other people to even be more creative than they had imagined. And so when I think back on that part of my journey, I don't think I appreciated it fully in that way. But I did recognize that was my skill. I did recognize that I was really good at anything you plopped in front of me. You need to get an aerial shot of a nuclear sub traversing the Hood Canal. Well, good luck figuring out, because that's not a schedule that's published so a film crew wouldn't know how to do that. I just thought, Well, I'm just going to keep asking people till I figure out who has the power to say yes and how I can get a yes. So the idea that I just didn't take a no, or that I thought something was impossible was kind of inherent to the job. And when I kind of made it through my 20s, and I felt pretty successful, that I had achieved what I wanted, it didn't feel so bad to leave it behind. But then I realized I was so laser focused in the film industry that I couldn't really get another career started. So I went back and got an MBA at the University of Washington, and in that process of actually transitioning from film career to a technology career, I actually got really lucky in where I got my first job, because it helped me make that transition. I did the IPO rose show for a company called Vizio Corp, which ultimately got bought by Microsoft for a billion dollars, but doing that showed the people at the company that I was that person that could just figure stuff out. And back in the '90s, when it was box software, and people had all the time in the world to deliver a product, the function that they put me in after my internship was in product management, because that's the job they thought, where people had to figure it out. How do you find customers? How do you make sure this is the right product to deliver? You know what? If this is something that is bigger than we think it is, if we only make this small change to how we think about it, right? And so I got into product because somebody saw that in me, and through my relationship with that person, I actually recognized that they valued that skill as if it was a creative skill, a creative problem solving skill. They felt that they could count on me when I would hit a barrier to figure out how to get over it, and how to motivate people to keep going forward, even if it looked like there was some unexpected challenge or impossible, competitive move that we had to deal with. And so in that process, I really started to appreciate deploying it in the business world was something that not only I did, but other people did, like I actually had an amazing team in legal and finance, so that if we wanted to think about things differently, they were in there having that conversation with me when I eventually went to work at real networks, we were getting squashed by Microsoft because they had bundled Windows Media Player into the operating system, and it looked like the game was over, but we reinvented the business for real networks into a subscription service long before there was Hulu and Netflix, and that became a patent, and I couldn't have done that without people in the finance team and the legal Team creating new ways of doing business with our partners, and so bringing people into the fold, and actually seeing those people perform their duties in this kind of creative thinking, creative problem solving way, really started to highlight for me that that was not only my superpower, but it was a superpower of people that I worked with that enabled me to be even more innovative or inventive in my solutions, and so as I moved up in leadership, that became sort of my message was that really, you can't outsource your creative thinking to other jobs that look like they're the ones that have creative functions like marketing or design, any more than on a film set. I could outsource the problem of finding a nuclear sub to film, to the stylist, just because they were creative. And so that creative is a more of a state of mind than really a talent, and that really led me, ultimately, to evangelize that message in the book. So that was my journey to get to the path to really express to people. It's in you. You have the unlock. It's your choice. Whether you do that.

Steve Poor

How do you communicate that message? And I'll give you the context with which I'm asking it. A lot of our listeners, most of our listeners, are in the legal profession or adjacent to the legal profession. And I think that when you talk about innovation in the profession, a lot of lawyers don't think of themselves as creative. They think of themselves maybe as solving problems for their clients and being good at it, but they don't see themselves as being creative, and so a lot of effort goes into trying to get them to think

outside the box, to think about a problem solving way. How do you communicate what you've just said to an audience that's somewhat resistant to being thought of as creative?

Leslie Grandy

Yeah, that's such a powerful question, because I really think it boils down to being willing to ask, what if? To being willing to adventure into an area where there may be ambiguity or there may be less of a template for how it gets done, and in that process, being able then to navigate through that ambiguity, to find that special perspective or angle, to really elevate the solution. So solving a problem is great, but sometimes solving a problem in a way that squashes competition effectively, like because you've now changed the definition of the game. When we were real networks, it was a software game. We made it a services game. So what if we no longer thought of our business as being this, and we thought of our business as being that? And some industries are really good at this, and I'll say that the pharmaceutical industry has actually done this really well, where they're really comfortable if they come out with a medicine for blood pressure and they find out that it actually is good for erectile dysfunction, or they find something for diabetes that's good for everybody to use weight loss. They're willing to make that pivot and see, what if that's a bigger market? What if the thing we're doing is good, but the thing we could be doing is great? And I think one of the best versions of that question is, what if we're making safe choice, not the smart choice?

Steve Poor

Lawyers are bigger making the safe choice right.

Leslie Grandy

And so if you change that question to ask yourself, What if that's just the safe choice, but the smart choice looks different, and then you're willing to go look at something that really could not just break you out of the box, but change how the box is defined. And that's really the lesson of my career. Is so many times I've really thought about the way that business is done and wondered, What if we do it differently, and what does that open up as both in risk and possibility? But unless you're willing to ask, What if you're not going to be able to see whether the possibility outweighs the risk or the possibility is worth taking the risk?

Steve Poor

One of the premises of your book, which we'll put a link to in the show notes, is that creativity is a system. It's not just inspiration, but it can be brought into a system. Tell me a little bit about that concept, sort of flesh it out for me.

Leslie Grandy

Sure. I'm actually teaching a Maven course right now, and I have a bunch of folks who are taking this first cohort who, in the context of keeping it small, have been giving me a lot of feedback about whether or not this really changes how they think about creativity. And I think the answer to that question about it being a system is it's that you know that you have tools, you know that you have scaffolding, you know that you have a way to approach a problem methodically, which a lot of people who don't see themselves as creative appreciate because they're not just rambling aimlessly over the landscape trying to find something cool, but they're asking the kind of open ended questions in a very structured manner that allows them to explore the problem and stay on point at the same time, right? It allows them to ask questions that wouldn't have occurred to them. And so we did this exercise in the class yesterday about fixing the problem for logging into streaming services when you go to a rental house or a hotel, and what a pain in the butt it is to use a remote to do that, and most of them just looked at the system and broke the system down and saw the parts and thought they could use different parts. And I said, Why aren't you thinking about where the system lives? It lives in a place where people are already

doing some things that you could actually leverage to make this easier. Why are we always looking at just the problem as the set of circumstances that define the problem. Why don't you frame the problem contextually to be a bigger landscape? Because you might find solutions in that that you could apply, either because they're leverageable, someone's already doing it, they're familiar with it, they know what they're doing, or because you don't have to introduce something new that may actually create subsequent new problems. And so this idea that you can use this, this methodology, to go beyond the way that you think about it, and most of the people in class that the thing this was helpful for was reframing how they thought about the problem. It wasn't like the answer was there. It's not like this is a book that you're going to get answers for every problem you have by picking up the book, but in thinking differently about the problem and asking some of these open ended questions, you can reframe where the solution might live.

Steve Poor

Yeah, I think, I think that's right. I think one of the challenges for legal professionals is that lawyers are very risk averse. They're very precedent oriented. You know, we look forward by looking backwards, and so communicating this desire to reframe the problem is often a challenge.

Leslie Grandy

Yeah, and I think this is one of the other things about the methodologies. You can manage risk with some of these methodologies. One of the main things that I've been speaking about since launching the book is premeditation of evils as a risk planning strategy and that you actually can use.

Steve Poor

Okay, wait, what?

Leslie Grandy

Yeah, so if you look at the old philosophical approach of premeditation of evils, it's really inversion and opposite thinking. And inversion thinking is assume everything I did is wrong and the actual opposite happens. What did I not consider i. That made that be so. And so a really great advocate of this was Charlie Munger, the Chief Operating Officer of Berkshire Hathaway. And he tells the story about being a weather forecaster in World War Two, and he didn't know anything about meteorologists and how to be a good meteorologist, and so all he knew is his job was to keep planes from crashing. So he asked the pilots, what are the things you don't want to ever encounter? And I'll focus on those to make sure we don't put you in those situations, because everything else you can manage. And I shouldn't waste my time on it. I should only waste my time on keeping you out of the circumstances that would actually result in tragedy. And so when you own that opposite model, when you think about working backwards from the worst thing that could happen, which is the premeditation of evils, you actually create more resilient plans, but you actually believe that you're prepared for things that might occur and how you would respond for them. You would give contingency plans some extra time. Well, this is risky, but here are my contingency plans, because these are how I identify the risk, right? Identify storms with lightning and thunder so I can go into rain. I just have to be a place where the percentage of lightning and thunder would be low, so a pilot wouldn't have a risk of that, right? So you work backwards from the bad use cases, and you challenge whether or not your current plan covers your capacity to deal with them, should they arise. And so that's actually a creative thinking exercise is to challenge your assumptions and challenge success by assuming you were wrong and then preparing for that and feeling like you know which are the biggest risks that you're putting out there, because you don't have a contingency platform, and then just focusing on those. And so you it becomes a risk management strategy. I gave a talk at a cybersecurity conference, and I've never worked in cybersecurity on this topic, and it was so popular, I was asked to write a article in a journal of AI robotics and workplace

automation, because it's something we worry about, but we don't have a structured way to think about it, and we don't have a productive way to address it.

Steve Poor

Oh, that's fascinating. I really hadn't thought about solving the problem that way, but I think that would be very I think lawyers would be very receptive to that way of approaching it as a risk management solution. Yeah, one of the other theses of your book, you talk about the impact of generative AI and the collaboration with this technology that none of us actually understand how it works. It's fascinating. They'll go to conferences and they'll be we're doing studies on how this technology works, and you're sitting here thinking, Wait, didn't you build it? We don't understand how it works anyway. I digress. There's a lot of talk in the legal profession about collaborating with AI, treating it as your partner or your assistant, but I think very few people know how to do that. Sort of, what are your thoughts on how you get people over that bridge thinking of it not as a tool, but as a collaborative partner?

Leslie Grandy

Yeah, it's a great question, because it also plays into the same reason these techniques provide scaffolding in that environment as well, by using a technique, especially a structured technique, like a scamper or inversion thinking, they know what it is. These tools know what that methodology is. So if you say, I have this problem, and I state the problem without solutioning in it, without any approach to how I see the problem, but just describe the effects of the problem the way the problem appears. And then you say to generative AI, I want to use this technique, one of the techniques in the book, to understand what could go wrong, right? So in inversion thinking, I might say, let's use inversion thinking to see if I solve the problem. What are the things that I have to think about that could go wrong? I have a solution, but how might it go wrong? Likewise, if I don't know where to start. I could say I have some moves I want to make. Let's look at some analogies. Where are the analogies in other domains that I can apply? And a classic example of this is a story I think I tell in the book. A woman I interviewed for the book was a designer at Reebok during the pump basketball shoe era, and as a designer, obviously their goal was to get more bounce out of the shoe, right? That was their selling point. Instead of looking at materials that are bouncy, they decided to look at biomimicry and look at fleas that can jump 100 times their height, in order to see what the mechanics of that were. And in looking at another domain, they recognized not just the materials, but the whole manufacturing of those materials can create something that enables that type of flexibility, that type of bounce. And so when you ask the question of, what materials could I use to get more bounce, you're going to get an answer that's materials based when you ask Gen AI, when you say, is there another domain where this kind of solution exists that I could apply to this problem. And we do this all the time. Drone warfare is about how insects swarm. We learn how things work in other domains, and then we try to figure out how to apply them. And so even in the class where I was talking about the streaming problem at rental properties, I said, Where else do you have a place where you interact for a short term? Basis with some public facility that has access to your secure information. And if you ask that question, you might think of an ATM. You might actually think of the airport. It's someplace where you check so you can then look at other things, other circumstances, to see if there's some knowledge there, if there's something that you could apply. Because if you do that again, you're expanding what might be in the solution set by reframing the problem more broadly.

Steve Poor

Do you find people are receptive to that mindset of looking outside their particular domain? I think that's that's a challenge for lawyers, in that we tend to think we're special, special snowflakes, and often other professions, other companies, other businesses, other industries, have found solutions to the challenges that lawyers are looking for a long time ago. How do you create that mentality where you're willing to say, I give you an example, Cat Moon at Vanderbilt--who's one of the more creative in the law

school, runs a great creative program down there--learned a lot from talking to the radiologists who were encountering I'm not going to get this right, so cat, I apologize, but we're encountering the impact of technology on their profession, you know, years ago, and how they adapted, and how they learned. And she learned from that profession. That example is relatively rare in the profession. How do you get people out of their comfort zone and being willing to say, well, the accounting firms do it this way. Why won't that work for us?

Leslie Grandy

Yeah, it's I think there's a couple of elements to that question. One is the mindset, right? I think that recognizing what a creative mindset looks like, and being able to balance not just open mindedness, but curiosity and discernment and really looking at the full range of things that allow someone to step outside of the status quo or what they know, to find something inventive or novel, right? And so there's a mindset start. And I think a lot of people are told to believe that certain jobs have a mindset that doesn't make that plausible possible. That's what other people's jobs are for. My job is to reduce risk, or my job is to limit risk, or my job is to create a predictable outcome. And in that sense, your mindset is, by definition, a little bit narrower, right? And so you're less likely to go venture in those so I think one thing is that you have to have the mindset. The second thing is you have to train yourself to get in that mindset. If you're not naturally like that, you have to put in intention and effort to understand where you are. And so, I have people take an assessment to really be honest, not for me, but where they are. And what I found when people take this assessment is they have low confidence in their ability to do it, and part of it is because they don't know that they should or could go beyond what they've done before, or what standard practice, or that the company would appreciate them as somebody who might be an inventor in that job. And so culture and mindset are really key. People in a certain culture have to believe they can contribute that way. And in the places that I work, like real networks and Vizio and Amazon, those people all in those jobs, know they're expected to show up that way culturally and are interviewed for their capacity to be both self reflective and open minded. And so I think it starts a lot with being perceived as something important to the culture, and then being honest about where you are in that journey yourself with being able to spawn and generate ideas. The last thing is, we all have natural biases, and I'm sure lawyers have a more common, shared set of biases around how they process information, and I'm not talking about gender and ethnicity and those kinds of biases. I'm literally talking about how you process information, how you weight facts, how you decide what you leave behind and what's important, and in that process, you skip things, because those biases are mental shortcuts for you to get the job done. And you have to actually recognize when they're present, and you have to then work intentionally against them. And so status quo is a classic bias, right, where it's hard to shake up the status quo, and culturally, it may not be welcome to do that, and people have a tolerance for change that sometimes can be limited, but then you have to figure out what the right answer is, and then massage that into that culture so that becomes acceptable. So as an example, you might have an answer. You don't come into a culture like that and say, I think we should do this. You could say, I've explored what might happen if we do this. And while there's risk, I think the reward is so much greater. Can we talk about that? And here's how we would manage the risk, because I acknowledge it exists, and here's my contingency plan to deal with that risk. And now you bring people down from the ledge that we're going to do something different, because you've thought of it in that kind of comprehensive way, and you're not pressing your creative self so much on illuminating your thought process. You're saying this is how I got to this conclusion, because. I asked this "what if" question, and in exploring it, I saw risk and reward, and here's how I think about both of those things.

Steve Poor

Yeah, one of the things that strikes me in listening to you and thinking back on your experience in the film industry, I see the analogy into the legal profession, where increasingly, over the last few years, the last decade, law firms in particular have been bringing in creative professionals, technologists or knowledge management people, or whatever. And this collaboration, so, for example, you describe

yourself as being creative adjacent, yeah, which I don't think is true, but at the time you that's why you perceived it.

Leslie Grandy

At the time that was Yeah, exactly at the time. That's how I thought it.

Steve Poor

And so there must have been, what a crazy idea to What do you mean? You want to get a drone shot of a nuclear submarine? It's easy to say, no, that's not possible.

Leslie Grandy

Exactly.

Steve Poor

In the legal profession, that's often the first response, totally, no, you can't do it that way. Because here's all the reasons. What advice do you give people trying to create structures to enhance innovation, enhance creativity in that context, to help break those barriers of working with in a multidisciplinary organization?

Leslie Grandy

That is probably the most common, not legal, specific type of problem in especially older industries like Retail, you know, which has had a hard time really evolving with the times, right? And so I think that question is universal, is my point. I don't think that's a unique problem with the legal profession. I think that it stems again, from two things, culture, right? And comfort with people being a tall poppy for a moment, and being somebody that is not in the job you'd typically expect to come up with this amazing idea and being open to it, right? And I think sometimes people in any company, maybe law firms, too, think they are the smartest person in the room, or their title gives them that privilege. And if they're the authority on it, they can squash that idea faster than anyone else. And so I think that structure has to be intentionally developed to prevent that from happening. There has to be the opportunity. And so a good example like when you work at Amazon and you're invited to a meeting, you're expected to make that idea better. You're not expected to kill the idea. You're expected to establish a path to make that idea better. If the idea that came in the room wasn't good, not to kill it. And that whole meeting is expected to explore how it could be made better, and it only dies if there's nothing that comes out of that meeting, right? Like if you can't make a half baked idea fully baked, that's when it should die. But other people may be required to make it fully baked. And in the case of an online video subscription service that didn't exist before, the lawyers were required to help me make it fully baked, because there were rights holders for that content that would never give us the content if we didn't protect them. And so while we had this technical way we could do it, we had to make it contractually possible for people to be protected, not just technically protected, because we all know technology has bugs and sometimes can be hacked and things could be risky. So in that scenario, going with us on the journey of this is sort of half baked, but we're going to make it fully baked. And if we can't make it fully baked, then we're probably not going to be able to do it, as opposed to killing it, because it's half baked. And so the structure of a meeting, you know, at a place like real networks or at Amazon, is intentionally inviting people in in roles that are not necessarily considered the owner of the idea. So in a technology company that could be the operations team, it could be customer support, because at some point the trickle down effect of that idea could be that it's a great idea, but if we can't support it, it's a sucky idea. It's terrible. So you want all that stuff brought in upfront and so methodically, we would have these meetings where, unless you're going to speak up in that room, you shouldn't be in the room. And if you're invited to the meeting as an ops person or a customer service person, or in some way, HR right in that meeting too, because people's jobs are going to change now that we've changed the business

model. We want to just make sure it's all on the table and that we then think, collectively, can this be combined in a way that makes that idea superior, competitively, makes that idea patentable? I mean, and ultimately, the answer to the question of real networks did actually generate a patent that lasted for 20 years and was bought by Intel. It was that important to the streaming services market, and those things wouldn't happen unless all those functions weren't part of the discussion. If all those functions are showing up, we have a much more ironclad innovation. Then let's go throw it out there and see if anybody likes it. Now we went in fully baked, because all those people were at the table.

Steve Poor

I know we're running a bit over our time, but one last sort of question, or set of questions, you talk about creative velocity, you talk about creativity as a system collaboration with AI, what are the risks for organizations to choose not to go down that path in this moment of change

Leslie Grandy

So important ... I think a lot of people are focused on AI for automation and efficiency and what they don't see it as an amplification of the talent that they have, as opposed to a replacement of the talent they have. So the biggest risk right now is the focus on efficiency and automation does create a organizational change around the structure of jobs and roles, but then those roles and those humans have to still ideate and innovate, and are left with less of them in the building now because all these functions are automated. So how did those people perform? And so a lot of what I think has to happen right is the idea that everyone's job can contribute, and AI requires the human collaborator, to keep it on point, to keep it on values, to give it meaning and purpose, to actually not outsource the thinking, but to actually challenge it. Oh, so you went there. Why did you go there? A lot of the time, when I was working on my book and I was putting exercises from the book into AI, it would give these random answers. And I just thought, either I'm missing the point or it's missing the point. But I got to figure out why, where did it come up with that answer? How did you think of that? And so I got smarter about how to work with AI, because then I got smarter about what my partner does. I asked AI once, what do you do when I don't give feedback on an answer and I just walk away, and every tool had a different answer for that.

Steve Poor

Really?

Leslie Grandy

Really, it's shocking. The only tool that actually said you can tell me what to do was ChatGPT, and it said, What do you want me to do when that happens? Because it really lives on the history of the user, and it really evolves from the history of the user. But others were like, Yeah, we're gonna assume it's good enough. You think it's a good enough answer, so we'll clock that one as right? And so for me, I think the ownership and agency of each person who uses AI becomes really essential, and it becomes an important part of the AI deployment, in amplifying what an organization can do when it's AI-powered by making people not just focus on sort of what I call the bottom of the AI engagement pyramid, which is tools and workflows, and it prompt engineering and forcing them to move up to the top, where it's more strategic planning, risk planning and creative ideation. You're actually now not only just seeing them as a partner, but you're taking some agency over the output creatively, such that it has meaning for your audience, for your customers, and then its purpose is on point to what you're trying to accomplish as a business. And unless you do that, you're really just outsourcing it to some other employee that doesn't know as well as you and has complete psychological distance from what is important to your audience.

Steve Poor

We live in an interesting time, don't we?

Leslie Grandy

Totally it's kind of fun, though, because for me, I'm one of those people likes to figure it out. So every time I do get involved with AI, I just like, tell me why you thought of that, or why are you working that way? Or why didn't you look at this thing? And so I'm learning how it's working, and it's becoming a better partner to me as a result of that. And so leaning into it in that way, and getting smart about why it came up with the answer, I think, is the best single advice I can give in terms of really trusting the output, but also shaping the output, making sure the output is giving you what you intended it to give you.

Steve Poor

Oh, absolutely. Well, Leslie, thank you so much for spending time with us today. It's been fascinating. Thank you so much.

Leslie Grandy

It's a pleasure.

Steve Poor

And as I said, we'll have a link to your book in the show notes, and I encourage people to take a look at it. It's got some great stuff in it.

Leslie Grandy

Thank you. Thanks, Stephen, so much for the time.

Steve Poor

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