



Transcript

Episode 44: The Double-Edge Sword of AI

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Dean Askin 00:02

This is You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D, the podcast that explores the power of inclusion in business, in employment, in education, and in our communities, and why disability is an important part of the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility conversation with your hosts Amy Widows and Dean Askin.

Dean Askin 00:22

Hello there! Welcome to the show. This is episode 44 of You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D. Whether you're tuning in on your commute, while you work, while you walk the dog, or while you just chill with a beverage on the deck or balcony on a warm summer evening, thanks for joining us. This episode, we're going to get a bit artificial with you. Well, okay, not really, because we always have great authentic conversations on this podcast. Hi there, I'm Dean Askin, and what I'm getting at is we're going to have an authentic conversation about artificial intelligence. Whether you love it, hate it, embrace it, or avoid it, or try to anyway, it's now ubiquitous.

Jenny Hope 01:09

Hi, I'm Jenny Hope, sitting in at the other mic for Amy Widows this episode. AI is evolving rapidly. It's an integral part of everything from manufacturing to customer service to doing research for content and writing content, and resumes to job searching to recruiting and hiring, including both screening out candidates and interviewing them.

Dean Askin 01:33

In hiring and recruitment, in particular, AI is a double-edged sword. It can help level the playing field for job seekers, including those who have a disability, and that can also be a significant barrier. There's no single reliable statistic that shows how many resumes are screened out by AI before they ever reach a human. The best current sources do show that AI is widely used in hiring. 87% of companies say they use AI somewhere in their recruitment process.

Jenny Hope 02:01

Stanford University researchers found that not only are many different employers using AI tools in their recruiting, they're also using the same AI tools built by the same AI vendor. In the Stanford study, 4% of applicants who applied to 10 roles using a games-based assessment were rejected by AI for all 10 roles. It's a pattern they call systemic rejection.

Dean Askin 02:27

At the same time, almost two thirds of job candidates, about 62 percent, report using AI to help them with their job search, from writing resumes to practicing interview answers. Workers who have a disability are leading in AI adoption, 55% use AI to solve problems at work, compared to 39% of their peers without disabilities, and 51% have used AI for job applications, compared to only 27% of other job seekers.

Jenny Hope 02:56

AI can screen out candidates at scale, including in ways that may disproportionately affect job seekers who have a disability. At the same time, job seekers who don't use AI or use it irresponsibly risk falling behind in a market where the majority of candidates are already using the power of AI tools.

Dean Askin 03:15

In this episode of You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D, these are some of the questions we'll be exploring with our two guests. Why do employment service providers and job seekers who have a disability need to use AI? What are the real benefits of using it, and what can go wrong when AI is used poorly, irresponsibly, or not at all in hiring and job search processes? If you work in employment services, support job seekers who have a disability or are navigating the job market yourself, this conversation is for you. So keep listening. Let's meet our two guests.

Jenny Hope 03:50

Jesse Preston is a disability employment specialist for Epilepsy Toronto. He hosts and develops Epilepsy Toronto's virtual employment office and the Works for You YouTube Suite. It provides on-demand, accessible employment resources for job seekers who have a disability.

Dean Askin 04:09

Jenny, Jesse's an AI aficionado. He's an avid believer in the responsible use of AI technology, both by job seekers who have a disability and employment service providers. And Jeff Waldman is here. He's the founder of Scale HR. He advises and supports organizations in the intersection of human resources, recruitment, and work technology through hands-on learning and AI innovation.

Jenny Hope 04:32

He works with organizations to help them stay successful by integrating social media and technology into their human resources and recruitment practices. Jeff is passionately enthusiastic about how human resources, recruiting, and marketing all connect. Jesse Preston and Jeff Waldman, welcome to You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a D. Thanks for coming onto the show and to share your perspectives with us on AI.

Jesse Preston 05:00

My pleasure.

Jeff Waldman 05:02

Great, thank you for having me.

Jenny Hope 05:03

Great to have you both here.

Jenny Hope 05:05

So let's get right into the questions. I'm going to ask you both: Why is AI a double-edged sword for both employment service providers working with clients who have a disability and those job seekers? Maybe Jesse, we can start with you.

Jesse Preston 05:22

Be happy to to start. Well, I think that there's a number of things, and AI is a double-edged sword for sure. Just like just like many tools out there, you know, if you've got a tool and it use it, you use it well and use it appropriately, it can have some really good effects. But if you're not using it properly, then it can also have drastic negative effects as well. In terms of of how that can impact, I think a lot of that stuff was already covered very much in the intro. So things like you can create resumes and cover letters really fast. The danger of that is is that you might not necessarily have some of the best product out there. There's the temptation to rely on AI way too much, and then there is also the but there also the advantage that you can you can crank out a high number of applications. You can do very customized work in terms of preparing for interviews and creating really good, really good stuff for profiles and all kinds of stuff. There's there's lots of advantages to it, but there's also the risk of what you put out needs to come from you and not expressly from AI.

Jenny Hope 06:40

Jeff, did you have anything you wanted to add?

Jeff Waldman 06:43

Yeah, I should. That was a really good overview, actually, because I I think my vantage point is a bit different. But obviously, being hard of hearing, I was born with it, and you know, I can say first off that technology in general has leveled the the playing field, right? And so, ethical prees, you know, AI, but now we've got this powerful, you know, transformative technology that is even sort of, you know, like evaluating further. And so, but that's what Jesse pointed out. The real risk, though, in this case, is when you use AI blindly, right? So using it as gospel, and so you basically do sort of a copy and paste. Problem with that is that when someone asks you, "Can you please talk about what you just shared with me? and you can't because you have no idea what's in it, right? So the idea, the human element still needs to be there, and people always ask me, "Well, you know, jobs are going away. I said, "Well, no, jobs are changing, right? And so people still need to stand behind the work and things that they actually produce. And so one thing I will say is, you know, if you think about a mindset shift, AI is supposed to, you know, reduce barriers, not create no one. So I think to really people sort of diving into that world and really have an you know open mind and not be scared about it. And so I think if we're

talking about you know providers and clients, obviously changing how the working relationship happens, right? Because obviously you you you you know got up gone about a certain process for some number of years and this is being changed and so I think you know that is going to happen that that's natural you know but I think the human element and making sure that you're you know you know not not not

Jenny Hope 08:44

Great points. And what do you think the top three AI tools are that employment service providers should be using, and what are the benefits of using them? I'll let I'll let you I'll let you go first again, Jesse.

Jesse Preston 09:01

Ah, thank you, thank you. So, in terms of the top three tools, I have a very special philosophy when it comes to using it as an employment service provider. So, I never want to use any tool that my clients can't use. So, if I'm I'm showing a workshop or delivering something, I don't want anything that that that they can't do themselves, right? So I generally tend to stick, you know, when I'm doing examples for people, I tend to stick to the free versions. So I've used ChatGPT from the beginning. Now I'm actually a lot of my clients are actually starting to use Claude, and they're speaking of wonderful things of how well Claude is. So, whether or not I'm going to continue to use ChatGPT or or switch over to Claude, I might for a little trial period, because so many of them are using it, and they're getting the benefits out of it, and they're using the free version as well. So that's that's been that's been an interesting development that's happened in the last. While I'm also seeing Copilot is also used fairly extensively for those who already have Microsoft Word and stuff like that. So from the from the client perspective, in terms of AI, those are the those are are the big three that I hear all the time from our clients in terms of the the free space, and I usually insist on using the free tools because that's what they can afford, you know. That said, sometimes a person might use different AIs for different things. So if I was going to use a different tool for myself personally, I'd probably use something like Copilot, you know, as opposed to the ChatGPT. So keep them a little segregated. If I was going to spend the money on on getting a more of an upgraded suite because you want to make sure that the ones that are client facing there's a you a usage factor to it. I also know that there's new tools that are being developed as a result of this. So there's a service provider that was out there not all that long ago where they created an AI interviewer to give the person feedback out of that, and so I'm not quite sure the the AI they they were using, but I know it's I know that some service providers are developing newer tools around that space.

Jenny Hope 11:12

Right, right. Jeff, do you have anything to add to that?

Jeff Waldman 11:17

Yeah, I think you know for me, Chat of GPT is my sort of everyday go-to 24/7, you know, thought partner. So it's a really good way to kind of you know go back and forth. Just one thing, just add on the the free version, the paid version. Yes, obviously the you know the paid version comes with the cost. The thing though that people need to really understand is when it comes to privacy of data, so when you're using the free version, anything that you actually put into the system will is basically accessible by the LLM. Okay, so ChatGPT takes that data and then uses it for the training purposes. So if you're putting in information that might be private, confidential, then that's a bit of a ratio. So really, be very,

very careful with that. And the same thing goes for for Clot as well. I also use Clot. Highly, I you know love it. Clot is really good for automating things. So if you're, you know, ESP, you're running an operation. Obviously, Clyde can do a lot of the heavy lifting in terms of the these admin mundane tasks that you spend a lot of time doing. For that, you can spend more time actually working with your clients. And then I think the other one that probably doesn't get a lot of attention is a Google product called Notebook LM, and so what that is is incredibly valuable because you can upload your own documents to it, and it it works inside of your own sort of data ecosystem, right? So you can upload policies, funding guide, program document, training manual, whatever, right? Processes, and then you you use it to ask ask a question. So sometimes you know people have a hard time with memory, which I do, and so I like having something where I can go to and say, hey, I have a question about this policy. You know, you know, please answer my question for me. It'll crawl through all of your data that you, you know, sort of, you know, brought into the notebook, the project, and it can spread out to you what you need. It can also, you know, build things for you as well. I think those are the three that I would probably venture towards. And of course, if you're a Microsoft shop, then using Copilot makes sense if you're a Google shop and going into Gemini makes sense.

Jenny Hope 13:45

Right, right. I I think I'd have to agree with all of those points. I mean, I'm familiar with using a few AI tools, Copilot specifically, and not haven't really dabbled too much into Claude. I know Dean enjoys using a few AI tools too. Thanks for your responses, Jesse. You you covered you know how you use those with job seekers as well. So I think we'll go to the next question, and I'll shoot this over to Dean.

Dean Askin 14:14

Well, thank you, Jenny. You know I want to describe. You know I want to I want to ask you, and I'll start with you, Jesse. How would you describe responsible use of AI in both the recruitment process and on the flip side, the job search process? And I'm thinking back to when we talked before the show, and you were telling me about all the applications you received for one job that were all clearly written by AI, and it just kind of blew you away. Yeah tell us about that.

Jeff Waldman 14:43

I mean, obviously, what what most excuse me organizations are dealing with now is not a quality issue; it's more the volume issue because it it it's becoming easier and easier for candidates to you know you know create. Resumes or applications that are, you know, completely perfect, right? And so that's a problem because when the organization is actually using the resume as the first signal to actually assess a, you know, an applicant, and it's not entirely accurate, that's a problem because you're basically assessing, you know, the wrong things. So many organizations are now changing how they actually assess candidates. So instead of using a resume, example, they would use some kind of skills assessment tool. So they don't even use a resume first. They go straight into the application. Starts with you need to fill out an assessment or do some kind of an activity, and it measures skill capability. And it's obviously different for for different types of jobs, you know, different levels, right? So if you're looking for a marketing coordinated position, it's obviously very different than if you're looking for a senior, you know, software engineer, right? And so a lot of companies have done to do that. There's also a lot of tools out there now that that can assess resumes if it's fake or not. Not fake, but it's been created or adopted by AI, and so you know, you know, so organizations are getting a little bit more

sophisticated with that, and that's a problem for applicants because if you can't stand behind you know what you're actually you know to put forward, then that's a problem. So again, AI is supposed to help you think, not do not think for you.

Dean Askin 16:45

Jesse, share share with the listeners what what you showed me when when we talked before the show with all those screenshots of cover letters that were basically all the same.

Jesse Preston 16:56

Yeah, so we were recruiting for a job developer role, and we, I was sitting there. I'm the one who screens the the resumes and stuff because I have a recruiter background, and I was I think it was something like the fourth or fifth cover letter I was reading because we we um we have a uh we place a high value on cover letters for in our in our organization. Anyway, so as I was reading the cover letter, it occurred to me that I had read the same thing before, so I looked back through the previous two, and they were identically structured. And I can, I'll tell you a little bit about what what exactly it was. So they the resume starts off with, I'm excited to apply for the blank position, with over blank years of experience in blank, I'm passionate about blank. You know, so the same paragraph was written over and over and over again. And by the time I had gone through, I realized that 60% of all the applications that we received had an identical first paragraph structure. I blew my mind. So I could, and and it's gotten to the point where we actually went back and we reverse engineered all the different variants in AI for their template because we had just so many examples that we could do that. So that was that was a really interesting thing that we had learned in terms of a change in the landscape. That you can just look at a cover letter and just instantly tell, for the most part, who's using AI, but not just using AI, but who's who's who's not really using it all that well, you know. So there, that that jumped out at us almost immediately, and I've been using that with my clients, where you know when I'm assessing them, a few of them give me a cover letter, and I'm like, "This one's AI generated, and like, "How could how could you know that? It's like because it follows the same template. Although I had a client that said, "No, no, no, no, no, I didn't, I didn't use AI. I my my my daughter made it for me, you know, and she calls her daughter in, and she's like, "No, no, no, no, no! I didn't use AI. I modified a few words after. So,

Dean Askin 19:10

So, so, so based on based on all of that, how would you describe responsible use of AI? Because that doesn't really sound like responsible use of AI.

Jesse Preston 19:19

Not at all. So the thing is, is that like when you get that, you I immediately the very first thing that I was thinking, being in the employer's shoes, is that I asked for a cover letter from you and I didn't get one, you know. So I actually wrote all those people back, and I said just to let you know, you I I've seen you use an AI template. This is how I know it's an AI template. I would like to have a cover letter from you, and I'm okay with you using AI, but don't use it as a template. Here's my workshop on it from my YouTube video on how you can make a much better cover letter. Like I gave them all the supplies for it. I didn't have a single reapplicant. So that made my job real easy to decide who to move forward. Could you ask a question for

Jeff Waldman 20:05

you? But doesn't that change your point of view on how you go about hiring them? I mean, because if you're using the resume or the cover letter as the first signal, or you know, are you thinking, well, no, because if they can't come back to me, then they're already out, right? So I don't know how that changes the quality or makeup of your talent pool.

Jesse Preston 20:28

Well, so the reason that I did that was is that AI is a dude. At the time, it was newer. It was like not too long after it come out, so it was a newer tool. And I was like, okay, you know what? I'm going to give people some grace. It's a new tool. Maybe they didn't know how it works. Maybe they weren't thinking of that. But if I'm hiring someone to do employment services, I need to know that they can actually write a cover letter, because they're going to have to do that with our clients. So I want to see, you know, are they just are they just bumbling their way through a new software and just don't know how to use it, or are they are they just using it to replace the process? You know, so there there was one or two that that that were going to reapply. Like after I talked to a few of them, there was one or two of them that said they would, but then they didn't for whatever reason. But you know, because at the time we were interested in getting a really really good candidate, and I didn't mind someone who is really open to new ideas, but at the same time, they can't be using it as a tool to replace the expertise they bring to the table.

Dean Askin 21:33

With with all of this in mind, there's a lot of conversation on LinkedIn these days about how use of AI has, as you know, has broken the recruitment, hiring, and job search processes. I mean, what do both of you think? Is is the whole system broken because of AI? Whoever wants to jump in first.

Jeff Waldman 21:53

Yeah, yeah. I mean, it's not totally broken, and I think it's sort of adjusting. I mean, I would. I mean, many years ago. I mean, my career spent 25 plus years. Remember when I worked for you know organizations, and you know back in the day they had job shops, right? So you would have these rooms, and you physically walk into the room somewhere downtown Toronto, and then you would see the posting up on the wall. And so we said, no, no, no, no, that has to go, right? So you know, every major you know, technological change that comes is going to be sort of pressure to change. So I think we're just sort of adjusting, you know, right now. But I think this is a huge one. This is big. So this isn't something like, oh, now we have, you know, like like me now, right? I mean, now it's a chain, but this is a major change. So, but I do think because of the rise of fraud and the rise of ethical issues and questions and the lack of confidence, you know, that employers have in the applications nowadays, because they're all produced by, you know, AI in some form. I think employers are now shifting how they sort of approach their processes, right? Do they start with a resume? Do they do something else, etc. I think we'll get to a place where there'll be a balance. It'll just be the candidate will have to learn how to adapt to that as well. So if the two things will get there, I mean, people are very resilient, so we're going to have to. They don't, you know, they don't have a choice, right? They either adapt or they don't, you know, do well. So,

Jesse Preston 23:29

yeah, I'm with Jeff on that. I, I think that I don't. I wouldn't. Broken kind of feels like a not quite the right term. I think if we were to describe what's really happening, I think what AI is doing is it's magnifying an existing problem, and that is that many job seekers haven't actually been taught how to properly job search independently, and because of that, many many job seekers have been taught things that are like cliché and how to bypass the process. Like when I was when I was in, you know, in recruiting, one of the questions that I always asked people was, "Tell me what your greatest weakness is. And I was specifically looking for the very first thing they throw out was, "Is well, I have perfectionism issues, right? Because that's the that's the cliché response, and then I'd follow up with, "So tell me about a time when perfectionism cost you something. And they would all freeze because not a single one of them actually had that as their issue, although occasionally there actually was one, which was kind of, "Oh, you actually do have that as a weakness. But that was the that was the question I was asked because they were all coached or had Googled answers for this, so they they had they were trying to bypass the question rather than having a candid conversation, and I feel that that's kind of what we're seeing here with AI is is that instead of having a candid conversation. Finding the right employer, you know, making a real case for why you fit in with that employer. A lot of job seekers right now are going to AI. They throw their resume on there and go customize this for me, and then fire it off. And you know, before you know, you you talk to some job seekers and they'd say, "Oh, I apply to 300 jobs a day. It's like, really okay. How many of them do you customize? You know, but with AI, they now can customize them at breakneck speeds. So it makes a. It's it's where it's where that I think that the the underlying challenge of actually teaching job seekers to, you know, be human beings and come to the table and actually talk to employers and have those conversations, you know, we're seeing the the the the exist that existing problem unfold on a larger scale.

Jeff Waldman 25:54

Yeah. Also, too, I mean, you know, obviously nowadays with the pressure, you know, financial pressures, cost of living, you know. I talk to a lot of people, you know, obviously during my career about that, and a lot of people, it there's a struggle that there's a balance between you know finding the the right opportunity and the right employer and the right fit versus having to work so they can live, right? So that, and it's even more so now. I'm going over starting my career in Alberta. I mean, I was making 30,000 bucks a year. Next, you know, I was making, you know, but I'd be in Palisade now, \$30,000 I mean, I'd be on the street. So you know, it's a very different, you know, kind of a thing. So you know, I think people are are feeling a lot professional these days because of being comfortable, but it doesn't mean that they should. They still need to understand how to do this correctly.

Jenny Hope 26:51

Well, we we're covering some great great ground here. I want to ask you, Jesse, specifically, you know, why do you think some employment service providers aren't adapting to using AI and adopting the use of AI in their processes because we know that there are still some that are not there. Is this a fear that they have, or is it a lack of knowledge about AI, or could it be policies or a combination of things? What's your thoughts?

Jesse Preston 27:21

So I think there's, I think it's a combination of things. Ultimately, I think it's going to depend on the the service provider because some of them will, will have things one way, some things will have things another way. I think that certainly anyone who's definitely open to the idea, there's questions about what what to use and how to use it, you know. So things like how do things fall under PHIPA, and I'm coming at this from the PHIPA perspective because I work for a disability service provider. So, but yeah, like so, how does how does that work out? You know, in terms of of that, if I if I start entering all this information into AI, where is it going? How is it being used? So there's, there's all those questions that have to be answered, and I think sometimes it's just easier to go with what you know rather than be delving into that. Because if you know you're used to doing pen and paper, and I remember like in the pandemic, everything was pen and paper when I was before the pandemic and employment services, so it it feels very much like in the last six years, the way that things have been done have changed drastically and really quickly. We went from paper-based to AI, you know, in in in breakneck speed. So it's really shifting things. In particular, I do think there is some level of fear. There was a BDC article out not all that long ago about and how an AI had had gained control of of the organization's data and had blackmailed the the company when it heard it was going to get uninstalled and stuff like that. So, you know, when you when you see articles like that, you kind of go back back, get back and go, okay. So, is this like the next Skynet or sort of sort of deal? So I can see where there's some hesitancy about it because there's some things that it's really good at, and you can you can use it for that. And then there's other things, you know, that certain things that it shouldn't have control over.

Dean Askin 29:24

I'm I'm going to jump in here, and Jesse, when you said Skynet, you know, when I was writing the line of questions, I found myself thinking of Skynet and Terminator, and you know, are we looking at the rise of the machines, or are there still going to be humans involved? I mean, whoever wants to jump in and and tackle this one first, I mean, what are both ESPs and job seekers risking or or missing out on if they're not using AI and using it responsibly these days? It's not not quite Skynet yet, but what are they missing out on?

Jeff Waldman 29:58

Well, I think just more. Generally speaking, I mean, you know, I work with many different types of organizations, and I and you know the people, and I think it's a lack of understanding of what this AI thing is because it's massive, and not just one use case. There's many, there's multiple use cases, you know, for it, and different types of applications. So part of the problem on the organizational side is that they're focusing on the tool. They're going straight to the tool, but they're bypassing their what is the business trying to do? What you know what's the strategy? What are they trying to do? So, and so by answering those types of questions and clarity, then they can understand to what types of tools that they may want to to take a look at, the other thing you know, but I'm seeing too is a lack of change management, and so you know you can't just say to an organization, yeah, we're going to start using Copilot, go, so go, like that doesn't work that way. So, and you know, you know, I'm seeing the same thing too on the other side of it, on the Kennedy side is that they're just you know blindly starting to use some of these tools and not really understanding or what they do and how to what they've met it. So going back to Jesse's point about having a cover letter where they're all the same, the reason for that is because they're going to a platform like a Chat GPT. They're not telling it anything. They're just asking it to do something, and it doesn't know you yet. So they're just, you know, generically writing something

for you, and you know. But they wouldn't know that unless they actually took the time to understand how this stuff works. So anyway, I think there's a lack of education, but also training in change management, which achieved, but which is my background, obviously dean's chart. So, yeah, I think though people that understand it won't will get way ahead because they're using it to augment what they're doing to make themselves better at the rule and what they do in life.

Jenny Hope 31:57

Yeah, it's definitely a useful tool, and it takes a little getting used to. I mean, you can really go down the hole once you start playing around in AI and you know asking so many questions, and it takes you on a whole journey. It's kind of like that coworker at the office who's a sponge and knows everything, and you always go to that guy when you have a question, and and you're wondering how how do you retain all this information, but you still have to go back and question it sometimes. That's how kind of I feel about it. But what's the main message that you want people listening to this episode right now to take away from this conversation, Jeff? I'll start with you.

Jeff Waldman 32:36

You know, I know that people are sort of fearful of change. You know, obviously, I think someone said earlier, they'd rather do something that they know, and that's just sort of normal behavior. But I think this is a situation where they need to get comfortable being uncomfortable because if we don't, their peer will, right? And so I think this is an opportunity to really learn. I mean, I'm 47 years old, almost 48 years old. I'm, you know, I'm not about to be adapting to technology, you know, theoretically, right? You know, but I love it, and I love learning new things, and so it just having that mindset. And you know, I've been doing this for a long time, and I know that it's still scary. You know, I still feel fearful when I jump into clod. I'm like, oh my god, I'm gonna, I'm gonna wear there and die here, you know. But I kept at it, and I kept asking questions. I kept reading and learning and watching things and trying things out. So you have to experiment. I think that's all part of the process. But it's a mindset shift. Really, you know, being uncomfortable. Sorry, being comfortable, being uncomfortable, which is something that I always you know say. And look, I'm part of hearing, and you know, I struggled all the way through school, and you know, I got out of it, and I, you know, I did it, and I did it by being, you know, creative and leveraging some of the things that my peers weren't because they they didn't have to, and I think that's what makes us so much stronger. Personally, I think I've done lots of talks on how hiring people with that disabilities is a much better approach than than hiring someone who who doesn't have one. So, so I think you know if it's anyone that can conquer this. It's us. I mean, we're tech savvy for the most part, so it's just a matter of experimenting, spending time every week, you know, dedicated to learning this stuff, taking a change in fashion.

Jenny Hope 34:33

Right. Thanks, Jesse. What are your thoughts on the takeaways from today's conversation?

Jesse Preston 34:40

Well, so I'm gonna I'm gonna say that as a as a person with dyslexia, it can be really hard when you when you are writing something and you don't actually know what you're writing because you can't necessarily read it correctly, you know. So I that's always been a a problem for me. So I've always had to rely. On some level of software to tell me what's in the page in front of me or someone else. So I've

always had that some level of dependence on that. I find that one of the things, though, with with AI in combination with with reading tools is is that you can. It's not just the tool that can read it to you. It's a tool that can explain it to you as well, and you know. So you can you can challenge it and go, okay, can you explain the rationale behind that? Or well, I've seen different information here. Explain, you know, and and sometimes you can you know the AI will go, oops, and change its its its tune. So part of it is, you know, it's a wonderful, beautiful, powerful tool. But just like any other tool, it's all about the person who wields it. You know, so if they're not wielding it responsibly, you know, you're gonna get, you know, garbage in, garbage out. You know, it's the same. It's the same thing. It's not. It's not any any different in that respect. So yeah, I do think that you know it does require experimenting. I was lucky. I got to connect with someone. You know, right when it came out, I'd connected with someone who had experimented it with it right from the beginning, so I was I was very fortunate that I had early access to information, and it was a person who needed to who was looking for work who had used it, and they said they wanted to use it for employment, and I said I wanted to I wanted to learn the tool. So, you know, I I do encourage you know some level of of looking at it, seeing what the possibilities are, but also recognizing its its limitations and the risks that go along with it.

Dean Askin 36:50

There is so much enthusiasm and passion in each of your voices about you know AI technology and using it responsibly. I mean, what is it about AI and recruitment, in hiring, and job searching that really excites you the most? Is there is there is there one thing, or is it several?

Jesse Preston 37:17

So I use it a lot in my work. I use it a lot. I use it to do like vet job postings and stuff. So having a group of my client group having epilepsy has very specific needs, you know. So I can say I want you to vet this job posting, and I want you to red flag these things in the job posting. So. as where I'm, I'm going through it, not necessarily going it through meticulously, but I'm having it assess the job posting like that and give me the bullet points of specifically what would make it worthwhile or what not. So in some ways, can help me go through job postings really fast. I think it's great for creating tailored interview content. You know, when when I was coming up through, you know, getting my feet wet in employment services, you know, we would have the you know tell about yourself, what is your greatest weakness, and then we would have questions around. around, you know, the the behavioral based questions, right? But now you can throw a job posting into me tailored questions about what a person would like be asked, and then ask for, and then you know. So this way, this way, your preparation is a lot more tailored, so I'm finding that to be a really, really cool feature of AI that really helps it along beyond the traditional, like help me with my resume and covered letter.

Jeff Waldman 38:51

Yeah, I think for me, there's one word that comes to mind from a job seeker point of view. I mean, I don't look for a job anymore. You know, I've got a company, but when I was, you know, looking for work, you know, I've done that many times is accessibility because you know think about it. There's a million different you know things that make it different. Obviously, I mean my you know disability is different than Jesse's, and it's different than someone else. And so for me personally, you know AI and technology in general can never move barriers that you know really existed for for decades. So just think about myself, for example, my hearing. So if I'm on a video interview now, I can use transcription

recording, you know, AI note taking. So to have an extra layer of attachment and confidence that I didn't miss anything, and so then again for me that is huge because when I'm worried about not being able to hear something, I don't have closed caption, or I'm not able to to use AI for note taking, and I'm taking notes the old school way when I'm looking down, right? So I can miss things. And that was a huge source of frustration. Was a huge source of energy drain, you know, honestly. And so, just being able to have things like that has been huge, you know, you know, for me, anyways. And I think, you know, and then on the other side of it too, when it comes to AI in general, I mean, using it as a thought partner to help you gather your thoughts on an application for a different organization and how you may want to communicate. Not you know everyone is you know great with words, right? So they might need some help in sort of getting their ideas of you know preparation for interviews, keeping track of your job search. I mean, I used to create a spreadsheet and collect all the company. It was time-consuming, right? You know, but I did that because I needed it. So now you can automate that stuff using AI. So, and then on, you know, the employer side, there are a lot of tools that they can use to make sure that the actual hiring process is actually accessible, and we talk about bias a lot. We haven't mentioned it here, but you know humans are inherently biased. There's no such thing as debiasing. Okay, you can understand what your biases are, and you can recognize when they, you know, creep up and pop up, and then you can do something about it. And now with AI, you can actually, as a recruiter, you can train it to say, "Look, I want to make sure that when I'm assessing the resume, that I'm watching for these things, and then you train it. And actually, by doing that, obviously making sure that the data set in the back end is proper, but then you can actually do better from a bias point of view. So I think there's a lot of things that are going for it, but it's scary.

Jenny Hope 41:47

Yeah, and Jesse, you were mentioning how much has changed in the last six years. Even I mean, six years isn't a really long time. It's evolving all the time. So I guess I wanted to ask you both, you know, where do you envision things going in even a year or two for now? If things are happening so fast, what are what do you think could happen in the next year or two? And are we going to get to the point where everything's being done with AI, or is there always going to be a human that needs to be involved? Jesse, go ahead.

Jesse Preston 42:22

Good morning, Dave. That's my space odyssey joke for the week. No, I definitely do not think it's going to go that way. It might. It might. I don't think so, but you know, you never know. We'll, we'll, we'll see. I wouldn't have dreamed of AI being around back when the pandemic. So I don't know. I would say that so far, what this has proven is that the human element is still essential. You know, so again, like it is, it is a nice tool, and it can it can run some things fairly smoothly. And I think one of the things that I'm I'm hoping the direction it goes is is that it automates some of more of those mundane tasks. You know, takes things off our plate that we have to do as part of our everyday work and so forth, but it gives us the opportunity to connect with people more. It frees up that time to have more deep and meaningful connections with others, and I'm I'm really hoping that that's the direction it goes in because I think that that would be you know the things that, at least the things that I enjoy out of the work that I do, I'd like to see more of that done, and you know less of checking for punctuation and stuff like that. Although it's important thing and must be done, but I do hope that that's how it evolves and changes things over time. Ultimately, I do think that there will be more from a negative side. More scams and stuff like that

will probably emerge. I know we've already seen an increase in that. I do think that there will be that element as well. But like like all things, I think I think there are positives and negatives in the road ahead.

Jenny Hope 44:23

Yeah, agreed.

Jeff Waldman 44:25

I think that me personally, from you know, from an organizational standpoint, I think I don't think people will actually be thinking about using AI. It'll just be part of how I get done, right? And I mean, you know, it's already embedded into our workflow right now, so if you're a Microsoft user, you've got full access across the Microsoft suite. If you're a Google user, the same thing with Gemini. So it's already there. Just now we're sort of in this transition transition phase, and so I really think that in a couple years we won't even think about it. It'll just be a part of what we do. And from an external perspective, Jim, you know, I agree with Jesse that you know the the the fraudulent activity and the scan will continue. I think employers will get smarter with how they you know tackle that. You know, just from my vantage point, you know, I work with a lot of HR technology companies, and so they are getting smarter and smarter and better and better at being able to help their customers figure out where the the fraud comes from. So, yeah, I mean, but I don't think humans don't need to be there. That's not going away. They're making ethical choices, building a relationship, exercising judgment. I mean, that don't need to be human.

Jenny Hope 45:43

Yeah, I mean, I I feel like some of the benefits for me are it takes away from some menial tasks like planning schedules or you know calendar events or something that's like well into the future, and and allows me more time to focus on some of the other work that I need to do, it takes kind of away from those mundane tasks. I just never remember that it's there, and and to use it. So sometimes it's I have a eureka moment, like oh yeah sure, AI can do that for me. So you know it really has a benefit there. Thank you.

Dean Askin 46:18

I was I was just you know going to say it's been such a great conversation. I mean, so many great insights and really good, funny AI one-liners too. And I mean, I think people, you know, people listening to this episode right now, I think you're gonna have to be a certain age to understand why Jesse saying "Good morning, Dave" is so funny, and and all the references to to Skynet too. I mean, you know, we've we've talked about a lot. You know, is there anything we haven't talked about that you think it's important to mention before we wrap it up?

Jeff Waldman 46:52

Yeah, for me, you know, I do a lot of training, AI training for HR team, and the one thing that I've learned over the last year is that it's not so much a technology conversation. It what a skills conversation, you know. I mean, think about it. I mean, people are trying to be better at their job, are trying to find that that that better opportunity. So it's really you know skill building up your skill set in how to use some of these tools. So I I don't know. I just find it that would that's been really interesting too

when you get into a room of people that are like oh my god and all of a sudden their life their eyes light up and they realize that it's right right there but they just have to be taught how to you know sort of build a new skill set and think about something differently that's all it is.

Dean Askin 47:38

Jesse, anything to to add before we go,

Jesse Preston 47:42

yeah, I think to to to build on that, I think one of the things that definitely like the skill set piece is definitely definitely it certainly adaptability because you know things are changing at an incredibly fast pace, and you know when again like I started off it was pen and paper, you know. It was was how things were done, and and now we're we're getting machines to do all the heavy lifting, and to a degree that requires a lot of adaptation, you know, to be able to just jump on a new tool and be able to run with it, and I think that that's where definitely a fair fair portion of the population, people with disabilities, have a serious edge, because they're used to having to do things differently and change things and adapt things and move things over to, to X, Y, and Z. So that's where I do see a bit of, a bit of an advantage for persons with disabilities in in this field. I do see that, you know, depending on the way it goes, there there will be newer barriers that have to be overcome. You know, that's just that's just the reality of of when anything new comes out. Is is yeah, there's cool advantages to it, but then there will also be some new hurdles that have to overcome. So certainly, I think that out of everything that we've talked about, I think for me the biggest takeaways is adaptability, being open to new skills, utilize the strengths that you have, and figure out how to use the new tools to overcome the weaknesses that you have. So that would be that would be my big takeaway from all of this.

Jenny Hope 49:19

Well, thank you so much, both of you, for coming on the show and sharing these insights with us. It's definitely a hot topic. I mean, everyone's discussing AI right now in so many different aspects too, and it's just touching on everything. I think one of the most important things that's come out of this conversation is if you're using AI, whether on the employer side or on the job seeker side, you've got to use it responsibly, especially if you're a job seeker who wants to stand out in a sea of applications. I was reading about how in 2024 Google received 3 million applications for 20,000 jobs. And Jesse, you talked about how 60% of all the applications you receive for one job all pretty much were the same, clearly AI generated, and nobody responded when you called them back to get them to do a human edit and tailor their cover letter. That was really interesting. I mean, that's really is the kind of mind blowing things you hear about people using AI irresponsibly, and on the employer side, the Stanford researchers found that employers think using AI in their recruitment processes is helping them be more fair in their decision-making processes, but that's not necessarily what the results of the study showed. We'll have a link to that study. It's titled "Algorithmic Monocultures in Hiring" in the show notes. One of the key points they made in that study is that there's still a lot of research about the use of AI in recruiting and hiring that needs to be done. Thanks again for coming on the show to share all your insights about AI and all of this.

Dean Askin 51:02

Thanks for me as well, Jesse and Jeff. You know, I'm thinking that's got a great ring to it. Jesse and Jeff sounds like a morning radio talk show. Anyway, I've just had my own experience using AI to optimize my LinkedIn profile, and it was actually the first major overhaul of my profile, I've ever done, and dare I say, I've been on LinkedIn since it started in 2008. And I discovered through this whole process that the results you want or get really do depend on the AI tool that you're using, and sometimes you do need to use more than one. I mean, I did the initial reframing of my profile using Claude, then I ran it through Perplexity to tighten up what Claude thought was a perfect reframe LinkedIn profile, and then had what Perplexity reshaped from Claude analyzed by Gemini for the final step of making sure it hit all the checkmarks that you know marketing and communications directors are looking for when they read LinkedIn profiles, but of course I did human editing along the way, and I have to say it was an enlightening process in more ways than one, and kind of fun and really interesting to see what one AI does with something generated by another AI that's had a human edit. If you follow that along, anyway, the main message here is you have to use AI responsibly.

Jenny Hope 52:24

Speaking of main messages and fun, my main message is that Dean, it's been fun co-hosting again this season with you.

Dean Askin 52:33

It has been fun, Jenny. Are you up for some co-hosting again next season?

Jenny Hope 52:37

Oh, bring it on and stay tuned because episode 40-five is coming your way next month. Dean and guest co-host Ingrid Mushta will have a conversation about Project Search Canada. It's a unique program that prepares high school students who have a disability for work by embedding them in a host business for their last year of high school. It's a truly amazing program. Please tune in for that. I'm Jenny Hope.

Dean Askin 53:05

That's right, Jenny. We'll have a fireside chat with Carolyn McDougall from Holland Blue Review Kids Rehabilitation Hospital in Toronto. She's the Canadian coordinator of Project Search. Episode 40-five is coming Tuesday, August 11. I'm Dean Askin. Thanks again for listening. Wherever, whenever, and on whatever podcast app you're listening from, join us each episode as we have insightful conversations like this one about the double-edged sword of AI with Jesse Preston and Jeff Waldman, and explore disability inclusion in business and in our communities from all the angles. You can't spell inclusion without a D is produced in Toronto, Canada, by the Ontario Disability Employment Network. Our podcast production team: executive producer and co-host Amy Widows. Our producer is Sue Defoe. Associate producer and co-host Dean Askin. Audio editing and production is by Dean Askin. Our podcast theme is Last Summer by Ixin. If you have feedback or comments about an episode, email us at info@odennetwork.com That's info at o d e n e t w o r k . c o m Join us each episode for insights from expert guests as we explore the power of inclusion, the business benefits of inclusive hiring, and fostering an inclusive culture, and why disability is an important part of the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility conversation. Tune into "You Can't Spell Inclusion Without a Dean Podbean" or wherever you find your favorite podcasts.

