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GenAI Trailblazers

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Roundtable two I Debriefing paper
October 2025

From gold rush to growth: How Trailblazer leaders are building structure, collaboration and capability to transform GenAI ambition into lasting business value.

A Meet the Boss community
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Introduction.

AI's gold rush phase is ending. The next challenge is disciplined growth.

The first wave of excitement around generative and agentic AI has given way to something more deliberate. Companies that rushed to experiment are now working out how to embed these technologies sustainably, aligning them to strategy, customer value and internal capability.

That was the focus of our second Trailblazer community roundtable, which brought together senior product, engineering, and design leaders from across EMEA to discuss the organisational challenges of scaling AI responsibly, the realities of cross-functional collaboration, and the vital new skills that will define the next phase of transformation.

Roundtable two

Tom Acland,
CEO 3DEXCITE, Dassault Systèmes

Graham Beale,
Product Design and Research Director, Mimecast

Marios Fakiolas,
Chief Technology Officer, Omilia

Marcos Nähr,
Director of Product Design, Dynatrace

Avihay Nathan,
SVP Head of Data & AI, Cyberark

Deniz Parmaksiz,
Senior Machine Learning Engineer, Insider

"The gold rush is over. Now it's about building something that lasts."

Tom Acland, 3DEXCITE

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Chapter 1

Organisational challenges

Our roundtable agreed that moving from GenAI enthusiasm to sustainable execution is primarily an organisational problem: one of alignment, governance, and pace…

Tom Acland set the tone: when experimentation surpasses structure, teams develop promising proofs in isolation, and the operating model falls behind. His focus is on connecting every AI initiative to a measurable business outcome and giving people "freedom with purpose" – clear goals, standard guardrails, and an agreed way to prioritise.

Marcos Nähr observes the same cultural gap from a design perspective: Highly motivated teams, abundant initiative, and a surge of point solutions – but inconsistent alignment on purpose. Designers need to understand model constraints, while engineers must grasp the intended experience and its downstream outcomes. Until both sides share the same intent, AI risks becoming a collection of features rather than a coherent product strategy.

Graham Beale described a familiar tension: the organisation promotes extensive AI experimentation, but legal and regulatory readiness differ across regions, causing friction during implementation. That gap compels product, design, and engineering teams to coordinate more closely than before – with

> # "Without an operating model, AI becomes an energy drain, not a growth driver."
>
> **Tom Acland,** 3DEXCITE

shared definitions, shared evidence, and shared acceptance criteria – so that teams do not outpace the company's capacity to deploy responsibly.

Avihay Nathan described governance as a growth enabler rather than a hindrance. His view: Compliance, privacy, and security can't be added afterwards; they must be embedded into workflows and tools from the outset. This includes ownership of data access paths, model evaluation, and audit trails. Addressing these early reduces overhead and accelerates productisation; delaying it creates an obstacle course.

Marios Fakiolas expanded the productisation perspective: Proofs are easy to celebrate, but real value is only achieved when cross-functional teams maintain a consistent rhythm, delivering small, measured increments, learning from live feedback, and deciding what to scale or stop. For him, the challenge is less

"can we build it?" and more "can we integrate it into the system safely, repeatedly, and profitably?"

Deniz Parmaksiz provided an engineering perspective. His teams set clear company-level objectives and key results around "AI enablement" but view them as a means rather than an end. Fundamental questions about "where does AI actually change the customer outcome?" come before selecting any model.

Focusing on a narrow context, having clear KPIs, and maintaining disciplined evaluation help keep costs, latency, and scope creep under control.

In summary

The toughest challenges aren't technical "ifs" but organisational "hows": how to focus ambition, embed governance early, and keep design, product and engineering aligned.

AI should pull us together

For **Graham Beale**, AI only creates lasting value when it enables functions to work together seamlessly. In practice, this means replacing tool-focused conversations ("Which model? Which feature?") with outcome-focused discussions ("What changes for the user, and how will we demonstrate it?").

At Mimecast, this shift has strengthened collaboration: Design defines success in user terms; product sets the commercial goal; engineering determines feasibility and measurement plans; legal confirms what can be shipped, where, and under what conditions.

The discipline isn't glamorous – shared definitions, templated acceptance criteria, and review rituals – but it prevents duplication, reduces rework, and keeps releases shippable across jurisdictions.

For Graham, the real organisational challenge isn't that AI blurs boundaries, but that old silos persist. The answer is a unified operating rhythm where each function contributes to the same goal and proves it with evidence.

"Governance isn't bureaucracy— it's what lets innovation survive contact with reality."

Avihay Nathan, Cyberark

The AWS perspective: On organisational challenges

We've noticed that companies which successfully scale AI often **start by establishing clear Cloud or AI centres of excellence** that bring together diverse expertise, from engineering to ethics. This aligns with Tom's emphasis on "freedom with purpose" and structured governance.

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Chapter 2

Staying in your lane while delivering value together

Our second talking point centred on collaboration. AI blurs traditional boundaries, but clear ownership still matters…

"You can't have everyone reinventing the wheel. Collaboration starts with shared purpose, not shared tools."

Graham Beale, Mimecast

Graham Beale warned against what he called "AI tourism" – people experimenting without making real progress. The solution, he said, is shared purpose: product, design and engineering must align on the same definition of value. "If every team sets its own direction, you end up with a collection of clever things that don't add up to a better experience."

Deniz Parmaksiz expanded from an engineering viewpoint: Real collaboration happens where code meets context. His teams co-define APIs and data contracts with product managers and designers before building anything. That prevents rework later and ensures features behave predictably in production. "We measure success by quality and latency together," he explained, "because you can't optimise one without hurting the other."

Marios Fakiolas emphasised the importance of curiosity and respect across disciplines. In his experience, the most successful AI projects arise from diverse teams – engineers who understand customer pain points and designers who respect technical constraints. "Cross-pollination keeps creativity practical," he said, "and stops AI from becoming a lab exercise."

From a leadership perspective, Tom Acland described his role as balancing focus with safeguarding freedom. Teams should feel empowered to explore, but within clear boundaries of purpose and governance. "Freedom with purpose," he reiterated, "is what allows autonomy to scale."

In summary

Collaboration isn't about merging roles; it's about synchronising intent. When everyone measures success in the same way, lanes become less about restriction and more about expertise.

"AI changes the lanes, but we still have to drive in the same direction."

Deniz Parmaksiz, Insider

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Chapter 3

The critical new skills

The final part of our discussion explored the capabilities required to sustain AI adoption beyond the initial surge of enthusiasm…

Avihay Nathan began by emphasising the importance of AI literacy across all functions. "It's no longer enough to have a few experts," he said. "Everyone, from product managers to designers, needs to understand what models can and can't do, and how data quality influences outcomes." He described developing internal educational programmes that blend business cases with practical experimentation, so teams learn through experience.

Deniz Parmaksiz observed that engineers now require communication skills as much as technical expertise. "We spend as much time explaining models as we do improving them," he said. That storytelling ability fosters trust with non-technical colleagues and assists leaders in making informed decisions about deployment and risk.

Marcos Nähr called for "data empathy" in design: understanding the limits of AI systems and turning them into creative constraints rather than sources of frustration. "Designing with AI means designing with uncertainty," he said. "You have to embrace that, not fight it."

> **"Curiosity is the new productivity."**
>
> **Marcos Nähr,** Dynatrace

Marios Fakiolas discussed the leadership mindset needed to support this evolution. Teams require psychological safety to experiment, fail, and learn. "If every misstep feels like a risk, people will stop trying," he said. "Curiosity has to feel safe."

Finally, **Tom Acland** returned to the long-term perspective. Tools will continue to evolve, so adaptability remains the true skill. "Teach people to adapt, not just to use the current toolset," he said. "That's how you future-proof the organisation."
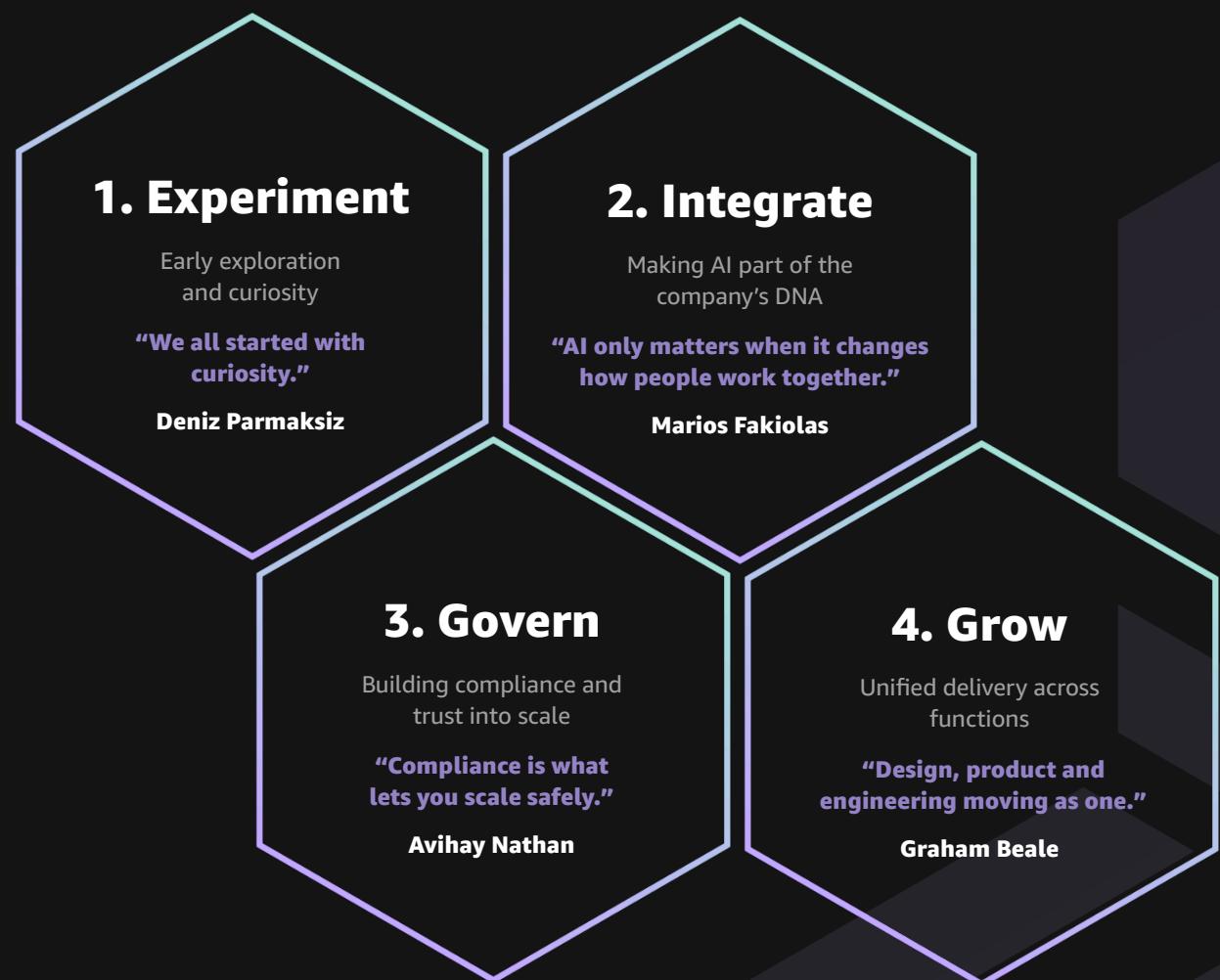
In summary

The next wave of AI success will belong to organisations that view learning as infrastructure: the systems, language, and incentives that keep curiosity alive.

The AWS perspective: On cross-functional collaboration

Many organisations **achieve success by establishing "AI champions" within various business units** who can connect technical and business viewpoints. This reinforces Marcos' point about the importance of "data empathy" across functions.

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From gold rush to growth

How Trailblazers build lasting advantage…

1. Experiment

Early exploration and curiosity

"We all started with curiosity."

Deniz Parmaksiz

2. Integrate

Making AI part of the company's DNA

"AI only matters when it changes how people work together."

Marios Fakiolas

3. Govern

Building compliance and trust into scale

"Compliance is what lets you scale safely."

Avihay Nathan

4. Grow

Unified delivery across functions

"Design, product and engineering moving as one."

Graham Beale

"Teach adaptability, not tools."

Tom Acland, 3DEXCITE

Conclusions

Our roundtable closed with a shared recognition that sustainable GenAI adoption depends on three interlocking foundations, according to Trailblazer community manager **Adam Burns.**

Firstly, structure provides focus and governance. Secondly, collaboration ensures that energy is channelled, not scattered. And thirdly, skill – technical, human and adaptive – turns strategy into action.

For these Trailblazers, AI is no longer a separate initiative; it's the connective tissue of modern product and organisational design. The challenge now is to scale it responsibly while keeping people curious and confident.

The organisations that scale GenAI best won't be those that move fastest, but those that learn together, faster.

The AWS perspective: On building sustainable AI capability

AWS ML training and certification programmes help organisations build the broad AI literacy that Avihay Nathan emphasises as essential, offering role-specific learning paths for various functions. **AWS Professional Services** and the **AWS Partner Network** can also assist companies in establishing AI centres of excellence and governance frameworks, supporting the shift from experimentation to structured growth that the report advocates.

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