

Candice Faktor – Unlocking Human Potential with AI-Powered Learning

Host: Maggie John

Overview:

Candice Faktor joins us to discuss how AI can help unlock human potential. Candice Faktor is the co-founder of Disco, an AI-powered social learning platform. Faktor is also a keynote speaker on the future of work and believes we must invest in upskilling our workforces and use AI to augment human potential. Faktor shares why AI is more empathetic than we might think and how it can help us break free from the mundane.

Highlights from our conversation include:

1. Canadian organizations don't have the capacity to offer upskilling opportunities, which has hurt productivity. If we can use technology to provide more opportunities to upskill and collaborate, we can close that productivity gap.
2. AI can be used to build personalized learning experiences, which are crucial but difficult for businesses to facilitate.
3. AI is hyper aware and can glean insights about your workforce, its learning patterns, and potential that you might miss.
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MAGGIE:

We are back and live here at the Toronto Distillery District.

I am your host, Maggie John. I'm now joined by Candice Faktor. She is the CEO and co-founder of Disco, an AI-powered collaborative learning platform designed for modern academies. Welcome, Candice.

CANDICE:

Thank you so much for having me here.

MAGGIE:

Tell me about your experience so far today. What was your big takeaway?

CANDICE:

I think this is fabulous. Yeah. I think the collaboration and the networking and the informal slash formal communities of interest that you've curated and cultivated are incredibly powerful ingredients for learning and ultimately for creating partnerships in this ecosystem.

So my favorite part is really the brilliant and beautiful design and curation of this event.

Hats off to Magnet for doing an exceptional job.

MAGGIE:

Talk to me about the work that Disco does and how you see it fit into what you've just described.

CANDICE:

I was just going to do the exact thing because I believe so much in the power of collaboration and connection and peer-to-peer interaction.

And so that's very much why we built DISCO and started DISCO.

Our belief was, you know, first off, learning doesn't stop at the end of institutional learning.

And so DISCO is really designed very much for workforce learning and continued education and lifelong learning, just like this event is.

One of the big observations we had was that the technology and platforms, they were not enabling of the very nature of how we want learning to happen.

A lot of them are antiquated. They don't have a great user experience.

A lot of them are very content focused and very asynchronous and solo focused.

So we're, you know, on our own watching tons of content and videos.

And quite frankly, it's boring and isolating and lonely, and it doesn't lead to great results or completion rates.

And so just like this festival, I feel like calling it, or event is very much about peer-based learning.

We designed Disco to put people first, to actually do cohort-based learning and a combination of live and asynchronous social opportunities, whether it's live video to asynchronous chat and channels to, you know, having content or posts from your community.

You're able to do a lot of social things in the platform.

And the last thing I'll say is, you know, we fundamentally believe that AI, which is a big topic of this event, is going to radically change the landscape for learning professionals and for learners.

And so at the heart of what Disco is doing is we're using AI to make our learning businesses and our programs much more efficient and effective.

Instead of doing all the mundane work, giving the operators who are here today the chance to actually do the profound work, which is connecting and curating and ideating and making decisions on important topics versus being in the thick of managing and operating and creating cohorts and, you know, doing all the very tactical work.

I think that's like a big shift, you know, that DISCO's enabling.

From a learner experience, just really helping learners connect with other people using our AI, as well as, you know, be able to ask any question and sort of learn in a personalized way.

MAGGIE:

So, Candice, what does that look like then for businesses and how they consider integrating digital learning tools to support employee growth?

CANDICE:

I love that you're asking this question.

We have an equal amount of learning organizations and learning businesses who use Disco as well as companies who are now using Disco.

I think what we're seeing is that companies recognize that people want to learn post-secondary, but they don't have the time, right?

They don't have the resources, both like time resources and physical and financial resources.

And it feels very inaccessible to have to go and do something, you know, only in person and after hours work.

Employers like Disco because it's a very, very easy and modern user experience.

You can use it while you're actually at work. You can do work in that you can do learning in the flow of work.

You can take cohort-based courses. You can connect with your peers in Disco environments that allow you to learn alongside work.

And with our AI now, you can actually have real-time learning.

If there is an academy that you're a part of or a community that you're a part of that's using the Disco platform, you can ask our AI questions of it that can actually pull the IP from the curriculum or from members who know that information.

It's kind of a companion.

I think that's really important.

Equally, you can do certification and credentialing and upskilling.

And you can do it at the cohort-based level or at the personalized learning level, which just allows employers to make learning so much more relevant for the users who you're trying to teach and as opposed to having a one-size-fits-all curriculum.

It just takes all the cost and the resource out of having to personalize, which I think is by far one of the biggest challenges for employers.

They just don't have the resources to build really personalized or cohort-based learning programs.

MAGGIE:

I love that because I feel like so much of the narrative around AI, around just the future of technology is we are going to leave all the old people behind that don't understand all this stuff.

Hey, my hand is up because I would consider myself one of those people. And we're just going to, you know, bring on the new young people.

But what I'm hearing is, how do we train? How do we bring along people with these skill sets? And the thread that I'm hearing a lot from people I've been sitting with today, Candice, is let's put aside the mundane.

Let's give that to AI and technology so that we can fully be ourselves and fully be able to invest our skill set into the areas that we're really good at.

CANDICE:

You hit the nail on the head. It's really what I call unlock human potential. How do we unlock the human potential in all of us so that would get out of the mundane?

And, you know, one interesting thing is that AI isn't just for the mundane. AI can even unlock your creativity. It can actually give you ideas to continue to expand your thoughts or thinking on.

And it can actually build really robust learning programs that really challenge people to learn and grow.

And I think what a lot of people don't realize is learning is quite scary for a lot of people. And the reason for that is you're vulnerable.

In order to learn, it means that you don't know something. And in order to get there, you got to figure it out and you got to practice and you got to be okay to fail.

And what's interesting about AI, AI doesn't judge you. AI is actually pretty empathetic. On your 15th go at trying to figure out a question or trying to understand something, it's not getting mad at you.

It's not even, you know, doing anything that would make you feel less than.

So there's actually a real argument to be made to give people AI as a learning tool because it's actually more empathetic than sometimes a human, right?

But what we shouldn't be doing is erasing the human connection, right?

Our AI actually connects you with people you should know who are learning or of like mind or where you could benefit from mentorship or peer support or peer collaboration.

So I think it's an and as opposed to an or.

And it also is hyper aware. So I think something that's really interesting is like if you're running a learning program or you're a business and you're trying to upskill people, you kind of it's impossible to know your blind spots.

It's impossible to know, like, which of the people aren't checking in or logging on or engaging.

Well, our AI can just kind of point you to those people and say, would you like us to nudge them for you?

So it really does help on so many levels, both the efficiency and the ideation and the connection.

But like all technology, technology is not bad or good. It's the way in which we use technology that is bad and good, right?

We can erase a lot of value if we don't invest in unlocking the human potential in our people, if we just invest on tools that replace people.

But that is not our belief. Our belief is absolutely use AI to unlock the human potential in your organization so we can be globally competitive in this country.

MAGGIE:

So how do you see the future of collaborative learning shaping workforce dynamics and business success? It's a very important question.

CANDICE: I think there's two elements of it.

We know that as a country right now, our GDP and our productivity is the worst it's ever beaten.

And I think we actually have to start thinking about why is that?

And a big reason why our productivity is as low as it is, is we have not had organizations often have the resources or the same level of scale as our U.S. counterparts to give people growth opportunities and to invest in people in a way that allows them to upskill.

And so if we can use technology to lower the cost that it would take to give people opportunities to connect and collaborate...like you don't need to be in person you can do this virtually, I can get mentorship from you know somebody in Alberta to somebody in Vancouver.

I can train a nurse from you know like bc and somebody sitting in... I'm just giving an example in our health care which is a massive issue for us right now as well.

If we can create dialogue and discussion, if we can create skilled development at scale virtually, I think we're going to see our productivity rise dramatically.

And upskilling is really, really, really important. We have massive skill gaps, everything from our digital skill gaps to our trade skill gaps to our healthcare skill gaps.

And I think it's about embracing these new technologies, not to replace, but to actually empower our businesses to be able to compete.

And so that's what I'm really passionate about. I'm an immigrant to this country, and I really am excited to see that sometimes crisis causes us to reimagine.

And I think that's the exact precipice that we're sitting in right now is we need different models, more affordable models, more accessible models, more scalable models to upskill humans to actually drive the economic prosperity and to upskill businesses and to use this technology for the areas that are not differentiated, right?

So we should not be using humans in areas that don't require human expertise and capability.

We should be using technology to augment humans so they can do the more powerful work, which is often the creative work, the discerning work, the empathetic work, and using our judgment.

MAGGIE: Thank you so much, Candice. That was Candice Factor. She is the CEO and co-founder of Disco.