

Andy Sack (00:02.992)

This is AI First with Adam and Andy, the show that takes you straight to the front lines of AI innovation and business. I'm Andy Sack and alongside my co-host, Adam Brotman. Each episode, we bring you candid conversations with business leaders, transforming their businesses with AI. No fluff, just real talk, actionable use cases and insights for you. Today we have a mini episode for you all in which Adam is gonna...

share an unsanitized story of an agent doing work for him this morning. What was magic and what was a mess? And we want to give you a frontline view of that story and our insights as a result. Adam ran in, hold on, Adam ran an agent this morning to do some real work and

Adam Brotman (00:50.092)

Yeah, you know.

Andy Sack (00:58.04)

Some of it was magic and some of it was a mess. Both things are true in the same 15 to 30 minutes. Adam, do you want to tell us the story?

Adam Brotman (01:08.8)

Yeah, so I think one of the big themes of the day for people that are trying to figure out what's what with getting started with their AI transformation, because I think a lot of people are still just getting started with it, is that they're hearing a lot about agents. we've been talking a lot about what is an agent and is coworking agent? We know OpenClaw is definitely an agent. What makes an agent what's not? But one thing for sure is

When people hear more and more about agents, they hear about kind of the magic of, like it could actually do work for you. It's not just a chat bot. It gets things done. know, we will use words like, you know, it's autonomous. can do it can just do things, whatever. But because it can just do things, it can it can make mistakes and can cause problems. And so there's like this I like how you phrase it, Andy, there's

There's magic and there's mess. And I think people that want to lean into agents, I think they got to be prepared to understand that, you know, a little bit of both magic and mess. So let me tell you that story. the the this morning I want I woke up with a bee in my bonnet, so to speak, about like, I really wanted to get some information and actually get a hold of some people on an item that you and I had an hour.

And we can talk more about it on another episode, but we're actually considering this idea around running or buying a restaurant concept and to kind of test out some of our agents that we're building faster than we normally could. And so as we're exploring that idea, I wanted to get a sense of some different businesses that were for sale and start gathering some information and some data. So I asked my open-claw agent, Jeff,

to do some work for me. And I was getting Addy ready for school, and I didn't have a lot of time, but it was on my mind. And so I thought, this is a great opportunity. I'm going to ask my agent to look up different businesses that are for sale, that fit the criteria we have in mind. I'm talking about small, single location, restaurant, and cafe concepts. And I asked Jeff to find these locations, and then I report back to me. So I'm making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and getting

Adam Brotman (03:33.836)

Adi ready for school and Jeff responds back. I've already done a bunch of research and I found a great location for you on this one prominent street that fits your criteria in Los Angeles. Would you like me to reach out to the business broker? And I just, you I'm on my phone like you were explaining the other day. I'm on my phone going, yes, you know, telegramming Jeff saying, yeah, please reach out to the business broker. Let them know you're my assistant. Be honest about who you are.

and then let's go. And halfway to dropping Addy off at school, I get this message from my agent that says, I went ahead and emailed this other concept for you and told them all this information. And I'm reading it going like, why did? No, no, I didn't want you to email that person. I wanted you email this other person. And I didn't want you to say all the things you said. it wasn't that bad of a deal.

You know, I went back and I was like, I dropped out of the off. I pulled over to the side and I'm like telling my agent, like, I wish you hadn't have done that. But in the meantime, like now that you've proven that you can like go look at this, do this research for me and reach out, like I want you to, I gave it instructions on how to do it better. then on my way back from school, like it had done the better research. It actually had found some other options and it was like, would you like me to reach out to these other people for you?

And I won't screw up like I did the first time. And I'm like, yes, I want you to reach out to number one and number five on the list. And it does. And by the time I got back home, Jeff had already found like a couple of really viable opportunities for us to learn about and got a hold of the brokers for those locations and had copied me. And within five minutes of getting home, I was already on the phone with the broker.

for an interesting location and had made progress. And so, like, I just thought that was a, and I told you the story, Andy, and you were like, let's talk to our audience about it, because it was a great example of just the mess and the magic. despite the fact that, like, it could have gone very badly. Jeff, my agent, emailed the wrong person, didn't say the right thing. Right there, that could have just been disastrous, right? And then secondly, like,

Adam Brotman (06:00.206)

I had to sort of correct the agent and I know you're working with an agent on another project Andy and you know exactly what I mean. Like it's like I had to sort of correct the agent and I was like funny that I could be frustrated. In the meantime, I sat back and I was like, this is interesting.

From the time I left the house with an idea to the time I got back from drop off, I had accomplished.

Andy Sack (06:24.57)

What period of time is that?

Adam Brotman (06:26.798)

45 minutes, 40 minutes round trip total, like while I was talking to my daughter about her math quiz and a bunch of other stuff and dropping her off in, you know, I'm like, I'm not doing the work. Like I got my hands on the wheel looking forward. I got my daughter and we're talking about school and life and like, drop her off, get back. And my agent had messed up, gotten reprimanded, gotten corrected, gotten back on the right track and actually accomplished the task.

And I was telling you, as messy as that was, and frankly, as stupid as that was on some level, because I didn't really handle it perfectly, which we can talk about lessons learned, the actual task got accomplished that I wanted to get accomplished. frankly, better and faster and more effectively than I even thought when I was asking Jeffrey to do it, because I was kind of a flyer to ask him to do it. And I just think that's a great lesson for people to hear about.

wow, these agents, these AI systems, they are able to actually do real things, do real tasks, be helpful. And if you don't set them up right and you don't know what you're doing, including like limiting the damage they can do, properly prompting them, setting up the right guard rails, you know, they can cause a real problem and they can also be magic for you. And I think that's the stage we're at with agents right now, which is like,

Be careful, but also you kind of want to experiment with them on some level if you can be smart about it because you you're going to be leaps and bounds ahead of other people that aren't, but it's not for the faint of heart. And I thought there was some good lessons.

Andy Sack (08:07.567)

Well, what would you let's let's fast forward to next week. What would you do differently if you had a task that you're taking your you're taking your daughter to school on another day next week, same day? Podcast recording day, what would you do differently?

Adam Brotman (08:27.596)

I think I would have been more cautious on the one hand about.

about making sure that I slowed down a little bit and took the time to read the agent's response before I told the agent to do a next step. And that's, by the way, just like classic best practices that, but I'm telling you, when you start working with these agents, whether it be a cowork kind of moment or all the way to an open-claw moment, you're, you just sort of, they're so good at what they do and they work so

fast, that there's a temptation just to go, yes, I accept that. Yes, let's go. When in reality, like with everything with AI, need to, times, as the human in the loop, sometimes you need to slow down and be like, hold on, you're an agent with real capabilities. I've got to be careful that you don't do the wrong thing. So I think the difference is I would have, even my second round this morning, I slowed down and said, hold on. I gave it better instructions.

and I gave it better guardrails. And I didn't just trust that it, because it was supposed to have those things in its memory, the memory on these systems are not perfect. And so I would have slowed down a little bit. And I think that's a lesson learned.

Andy Sack (09:50.871)

It's worth, think you mentioned this, but I'll just highlight this for our listeners, which is Jeffrey is an open-claw agent that you set up, I think, in February, and you've been working with and keep running. So it's an open-claw agent, not.

something else and it's on and it's set up. So I think you mentioned that, but I just wanted to, it's worth hovering over that. Secondly, you did tell it what to do and it completely ignored you and went to an email to somebody else. And so that's worth hovering over and highlighting. and the fact, and, you, and it did that and the person had emailed was in line with, it was a good substitute, but it did not ask for

Adam Brotman (10:15.278)

That's right.

Adam Brotman (10:29.037)

Yeah.

Andy Sack (10:39.067)

mission, it just went for it. And it did not email the person that you told it to. So it wasn't like a lack of instruction. And you have to when you work with agents at this stage, you have to be that's both the mess and the joy of working with agents is that and then and then you reprimanded it and was like, yeah, I'm so sorry. But there's no there's no take back on on the email that it did send to the person that you did not know sending to

And inherent in that, that all happened in 45 minutes while you were driving. And that's the magic and the mess. so it appeared.

Adam Brotman (11:14.272)

Yeah, that's right. yeah, just to kind of hover for one more second over what you just said, because it's worth saying to the audience, that when you get this, we give advice all the time in our boot camps, and to our clients, and just in general when we talk about AI to say,

There's no better way to learn than to use these systems, whether it just be chatting with a chat bot or using something that's a little bit more agentic, like a codex or a coworker or an open

cloth. because part of what you learn is what you just said. How do you explain what we just said without giving the story, without doing it? There's no user manual that says, when you're working with an agent,

You can't just give instructions. gotta understand the nuance of how to give instructions. What does that even mean? What are you talking about? But if you think about it, if you're giving instructions on how to work with a coworker or how to be a good manager, there's no user manual on how to do that either. Part of it is just using your judgment, and part of it is just like, I know that when I work with this person, when it's a human, or when I work with this agent, this is what I gotta be careful of. And the example you just gave,

I did give instructions, but I could have definitely been clear. said, email this person. And my agent took the liberty to be like, well, I'm not going to email that person, but I'm going to email a person I think is good enough and different. I get why the agent did that, but I could have said, email this person, but don't.

email anybody else, just email that person this information, that's all I want you to do. Like if I would have been that clear, I would have avoided this, but I wasn't in the mindset to be that clear because I had just gotten into a back and forth and everything was just rolling and you gotta be careful with agents.

Andy Sack (13:14.021)

Yeah, I mean, your point, though, which I'll just reiterate, we can close is that as a business leader, there's no substitute for actually getting your proverbial hands dirty and working with AI, working with agents, even working with open cloud just to be able to understand what it's capable of because it improves your understanding. that's and you have an emotional understanding of the magic and the mess.

So any closing comment, Adam? All right. The magic and the mess, yeah.

Adam Brotman (13:47.072)

No, the Magic and the Mess, that's a good title for something.

Andy Sack (13:51.441)

With that, thank you all to the audience for listening to AI First with Adam and Andy. For more resources on how become AI First, you can visit our website, form3.com, download case studies, research briefings, executive summaries, and join our email list. We also invite you to connect with our AI First community, a curated hub and network for leaders turning AI hype into action. We truly believe you can't over-invest in your AI learning. Onward.