



The Iron Man Suit
for Startups:



How AI Drives
Efficiency at Decent

April 16, 2025 | PODCAST TRANSCRIPT



Andy Sack: Welcome to AI First with Adam and Andy, the show that brings you straight to the front lines of AI innovation and business. I'm Andy Sack, alongside with my cohost, Adam Brotman. Each episode, we have conversations with business leaders who are transforming their business with AI. No fluff, straight talk, real use cases and insights for you. Welcome, Nick Soman.

Nick Soman: Thank you. Nice to be here with you guys.

Adam Brotman: Hey Nick.

Nick Soman: Hey Adam.

Andy Sack: Super happy to have you here. I've known Nick for a long time. He's also been a customer of Forum3. Nick, why don't we start out with you just explaining to people, give people a brief introduction to your business Decent.

Nick Soman: Sure. So my business Decent builds health plans for small employers around this new growing care model called direct primary care. The cost of employer sponsored health coverage has quadrupled since the year 2000. And everybody who's in the business knows that people aren't happy with what they're getting from health insurance companies. Now the big companies in America have all figured this out years ago and they'll do something called self-funding where they are able to take more risk themselves and provide better coverage at a lower cost. What Decent does is we bring those tools down to the little guy. So we can help companies as small as five employees, self-fund, and we do it around this model called direct primary care, which to you as a patient or a member means unlimited primary care with your personal doctor. We're giving you what feels like concierge care at a lower price point. And we're growing really fast and right now everybody's happy.

Andy Sack: Yeah, it's been a journey. What's the size of the company and your role there?

Nick Soman: I'm the CEO of Decent and I'm the co-founder with my other co-founder Richard. There are about 30 of us now full-time and we're evenly distributed between India, the United States and the Philippines.

Andy Sack: Great. we're here today to talk about, I mean, so you're, we're here today to talk about your, your journey as both a executive CEO and your journey as a company and really just using AI and when you use it, what's worked about it, et cetera. So give us a little bit of a high level of just your own personal uses of AI and sort of when you decide, when you had an aha moment and how you decided to start to use it in business. And Adam, want to invite you to try and, you know, we're working to try and make this a conversation. So feel free to dive in with both comments and questions.

Nick Soman: I use AI constantly. I actually spent yesterday morning running my own sort of wet test with AI where I use ChatGPT, I use Claude, I use perplexity and I used Gemini. And I ran them through five different tests that are all relevant for Decent and then just took notes for myself and my team of what I observed. So I'm at a point now where there's enough variation in the tools that I'm starting to use more than one tool for most of the AI tasks that I do. And how I use AI is a really good microcosm for how my whole team is starting to use AI. I use AI to do more of the work so I can focus my effort on where I am highest leverage. And at Decent, we work in this really archaic, janky space with these gigantic incumbents that are, as an industry, the single largest employer in America, which increases the cost of what they sell drastically every year.

And what we realized is, Hey, we might be able to build the first billion dollar company with, you know, a hundred, a hundred or 20 employees or less in the United States. If we use AI really thoughtfully, and then we bring in some people from other countries to do full-time work as well. And so what I'm doing and what my team's doing is figuring out if you think about it as a workflow, can technology do it now includes AI? If so, we're absolutely going to push it there. If not. Can somebody who lives outside the United States do it? Could that person be part-time? If not, could they be full-time? If not, could they be part-time in the United States? If not, I guess they could be full-time in the United States. But we really run everything through that thought pattern. And it is incredible how fast AI has been evolving to take more and more of the world.

Adam Brotman: What's an example, I mean, you don't have to be saying confidential, like, what's a high level example of the kind of workflow that you and your team used to have to do yourself manually that now you can automate or speed up or improve through AI?

Nick Soman: I don't want to plug Forum3 too much, but I will a little bit. So you all got us really thinking about how we could, create our own AI tools that have context about all the things we do at Decent. The thing that's pretty mind blowing is, you know, Decent's had a journey, like Andy said, and he's been part of that journey. We've had times when we were more than or roughly a hundred employees in the United States. And we had, you know, a big old talented marketing department as an example.

And a good example of a workflow is now with these multiple AI tools, I have a fractional CMO, Rachel Kim. She's absolutely fantastic. I used to work with her at Gusto. She and I work closely with our product leader who has an eight interest in marketing. And we work with our broker sales leader, Chantal. But I would say at this point, AI is doing the majority of the work to sort of understand the context of what we do. And we'll come to it with really increasingly nascent concepts. We'll say, Hey, you know,

We're thinking it might make sense for us to consider offering a health share alongside our health plans so that we can serve individuals and certain small businesses. How would that work from a marketing perspective? And the difference is really it produces a document that's in the format that we like, that is contextual and aware of the different decisions that have come before. And we're able to take it as a first review. And as anybody who's ever written anything knows that first review and that edit, it takes a significantly less activation energy than sort of working from a blank page.

And I think that's probably at the high end. A lot of what we do is just, you want new copy on a website, you're go to AI. You wanna figure out how to put together a pool of answers that can have enough contextual awareness that when members ask how our plan works, they're giving accurate answers while also recognizing that every member's a little different. This is something we do with AI.

I think what is mind blowing to me is this, you know, you had told me seven years ago that we would be, think at the forefront of how people are using AI in the health plan space, I would said, no, no, no, no, that's not the kind of company I want to build. I want to build a company that's really about putting people back into the feeling of having a health plan and people back into the feeling of having healthcare, not computers. And what was wrong in my thinking was it turns out that AI at its best, I think is an Ironman suit. And we use that analogy constantly internally at Decent. We're able to do more with the talented people we have because we're using these technologies to extend our reach.

Andy Sack: Nick, I'm curious, is everyone in the company using AI and what do you have a corporate tool that you've subscribed to?



Nick Soman: We have an enterprise instantiation of ChatGPT. And then we also will fund people who my marketing leader likes to use Claude. She thinks it's better for certain aspects of writing. so, you it's funny, you become cash constrained as a startup and you worry about these things. And I appreciate, and I love that my team knows that I'm likely to say, could we do this for less? Could we do this for cheaper?

Andy Sack: You do, okay.

Nick Soman: AI is one of these tools that I honestly think is drastically underpriced right now for the value that it's creating. And so I've gone to my team and said, look, if it's going to cost you 80 bucks a month to use all four of these key tools, get them all. We're not going to go buy them for everybody because you need to earn the right to use them by showing that you actually will. But it's a no brainer for us, because if you think about the cost, financial and emotional of hiring someone junior who doesn't really know how to do the job and needs to be managed, I mean, if you could take an \$80,000 slug and that's on the low end and cover infinite AI tools for everybody at the team who wants them, that's a no-brainer. We've recently started to introduce AI for our international teams as well. And it's amazing how quickly they're getting up to speed.

Adam Brotman: Do you, do you run, do you find yourself running like an AI council with like AI office hour? How do you, you're, know, you're not a huge team, but you have enough of you that are, are you sharing best practices in some ways and kind of tips and tricks? Tell us how you're.

Nick Soman: We are, we are, we have a dedicated Slack channel that's around how we use AI thoughtfully. The other thing, and this is going to sound a little callous, but I don't care. can be a little callous. I've gone to people and I've said, look, AI is not going to take your job unless you don't use it. Somebody who is using AI, and I didn't quote this, but somebody else said it they said it well is going to take your job. If you're not serious, this is a job, right? We're having fun here together. We're growing. It's really exciting. I expect you to do your best work.

And when new tools become available, and we're happy to pay for them, get in there, give it a try. And thankfully my team has been really willing to do that. But I have set the expectation that if you're doing things manually and someone else points out to you, hey, look, there's a way you could significantly reduce your workflow so you can focus more of your energy on the tasks where Decent really needs you to be yourself. Most of the time people better have a darn good reason if they're not willing to do it. We don't comport with people that are just a little uncomfortable.

Adam Brotman: Yeah, that's cool that you're talking. I liked your Iron Man suit. But did you say you think of it as like wearing an Iron Man suit? Is that what you said? Yeah.

Nick Soman: It's there in Mansu for everybody. mean, it's Jarvis too, but this is the thing I needed to sell to my team. Cause ultimately every exercise and change management is a sales job, right? And I had to go to them and say, look, I'll think about Julia on my team. It was absolutely incredible. So, Hey, Julie, if you're listening to this, this is the woman that runs our nurse care management team. I am under strict orders from my wife, Anna, to give her whatever she wants because she takes care of our family and she's absolutely fantastic. And she gets to be fantastic by being a human.

And understandably, anybody that's worked in a large organization, which she has, where the humanity was sort of lost, is going to be reticent to embrace new technology. But I was able to kind of go to her and say, let's try out these tools. And she can now see how much more she can do without working late nights by virtue of being able to set up a system that can at least take a first shot at answering members' questions so that...



You only need the human to kind of approve the answer before it goes out as an example, which I think, by the way, is going to be one of the major heuristics in health care in the near term. There's a lot that she can do now that she was feeling very overwhelmed by before we started to step into this world.

Adam Brotman: Yeah, by the way, that, reason I brought the Iron Man suit is that I love that analogy of yours. I, and then to your point, cause you, I, the reason I brought it back up is you said, it's sort of like, I like how you put it, you know, people should be using AI, but they should be kind of using it all the time. Like, and it's something that we, we practice, we, we preach that I should say, we have practiced it too. We probably don't practice it enough to be honest, but we, we, know, Andy and I and our little team, we use AI dozens of times a day. So we're using it a lot. But to be honest, it'd be like the Iron Man suit. It'd be like Tony Stark going out and fighting crime without his Iron Man suit. would kind of be foolish. Like he might be able to do it, but like why? Yeah, it is amazing.

Because I don't know about you, but I have found myself, and Andy's a big fan of this. I'd love to get Andy to chime in. Like now I go into meetings, conversations hoping that they're being recorded, which is weird, right? Because hopefully that, yeah, because it's like, if I wanna wear my Iron Man suit, I just want everything to be kind of running through the AI and being just step changed, improved. And if you're not recording it or you sort of forget sometimes, you don't have to record it. You could just relay a conversation, take your notes and relay them to the AI. But it's going to make it better.

Nick Soman: We use Fathom for everything for that reason too. Yep.

Andy Sack: Adam, explain why you want to record everything. Because I'm a huge, obviously you know I am, but just to connect that for people who don't know, why is that important?

Adam Brotman: Well, mean, it's fascinating that if you take the transcript, so if you're recording everything, there's going to be a transcript, which means you essentially created a data set of a conversation. And then you can take that data set, you feed it to the AI, and you can do anything you want with it. You can say, make it better. Give me a summary. That summary is like the least impactful thing you're going to do. You're actually going to say, analyze this conversation from this conversation, like what insights were, what questions did we not ask? What are the next steps that we should be focused on in prioritizing? Like it's incredible. If you did that for every meeting all day, every day, you're going to see a 50 % increase in quality and productivity across everything you do. that's incredible, right? It's an incredible gift. It seems like it's not possible, but it is. So that's why it's turning conversations into data sets and then letting the AI be that Iron Man suit for you.

Nick Soman: It's also context that makes you smarter every single time. My favorite test that I did with these four different AI tools and their responses were funny. know, we're doing founder led sales, which by the way, Andy, I fucking love it. my God. Am I having fun over here doing this stuff? And there's still room for Chantal who's incredible and she's doing all the relationship management, but nobody can get up there and talk about this thing like I can because I've been doing it for seven years. And so I have been leaning into what that looks like going into the new year. know, Q4 is a heavy sales season.

We've gotten some ideas, including from AI on how to crack seasonality in our business. But I wanted to look at how do we scale kind of our product led, our founder led sales. And I have a couple of friends who do this for a living. One of them is Pete Kazanji, who's a good friend of mine from Stanford who wrote the book called Founding Sales. Another one is a woman called Jan Abel. She's probably the other person on Twitter that's best at early stage sales. And I emailed both of them to say, can you take a little time with me.



I got bored of waiting for them to say yes, which they ultimately did. And so I went to AI and I said, Hey, I just asked this question to Pete Kazanji and Jen Abel and tell it anything. I actually said, imagine if Pete Kazanji and Jen Abel had a baby. And it was funny because ChatGPT immediately picked up what was desired there. Claude said, I cannot speculate on the personal interests of people because Claude is too high up the ethics ass and perplexity couldn't do it and connected it with the wrong Jen Abel, who I guess is a Canadian diver. But as soon as I corrected it and said, you tell me what they're going to say, it wrote this incredible summary. Then I did that with three other AI tools. Then I asked the AI where it disagreed with itself. Then I synthesized it.

And then I sent the answers to Jen and Pete and basically said, this is what it thinks you're going to say. And they both said, yeah, that's pretty much right. So now we can use this time that we've scheduled to dig into the next layer of questions, which that's mind blowing to me. I would not have been able to do that in my imagination three years ago. So I'm right there with you that picking up that context on us and the world around us is everything. And what I think you're gonna see, yeah.

Andy Sack: That little vignette is a great example of the Iron Man suit, right? Like that,

Nick Soman: Yeah. Why should I wait for somebody to tell me what they think when I can get 95 % fidelity by asking a computer and then they can correct it?

Adam Brotman: Yeah, Andy, doesn't it remind you of what Joe said on, we had another CEO. Yeah. And we had another CEO of a startup company that was, like you, Nick was really, you know, using AI time. And he gave an example of talking, doing a fundraising round, I think. And he was saying, well, I'm going to go off and I'm going to basically do kind of what you just said with all the different venture capitalists that I want to go talk to and gave them the context of prior conversations combined with the research AI could do. And effectively it was like, tell me what they're going to say when I go pitch, right? Which is an amazing way to prep for a meeting, right? Or like prep for an interview or whatever. it's, it's great stuff.

Nick Soman: Yeah. It's incredible I actually want to give one more quick example, and this is a short one, because this is something I did yesterday. So yeah, I had a meeting with a friend of mine, and we're looking at doing something pretty interesting together that probably connects pretty deeply to Decent's next big play. Not that we have so much we can do on the current big play, but I'm always looking at the future as well, because the ambition of this company is affordable healthcare for all, and I mean that. And so I was talking to a friend of mine who can help us get there.

Andy Sack: Yeah, yeah, no examples are examples are great.

Nick Soman: And I sensed that the conversation was going well, but there was a little bit of an undertone that I couldn't identify. So I fed the transcript into ChatGPT and I said, what's going on here? What's, what's the relationship between these two people? I had literally just been in the meeting and it was able to summarize with specific examples, areas where my friend was coming off as, you know, a little conservative and wanting to make sure that I was going into this eyes wide open. And I even argued with the AI and it said, well, if you look over here, you know, this is how he reacted when you said this thing, you know, and then he said this thing. And I had no notes.

I had to go back and go, okay, you're absolutely right. There's a conservatism here and there's sort of a wariness, not in a negative way. But that became part of my followup to the guy is to kind of go, hey, can read people pretty well in general, but having that as a tool at my disposal, it put a name to something that also probably would have been a little awkward for me personally to name you know, without help. And I



was able to use that to kind of lubricate the relationship going forward. So the closer this thing gets to understanding how people think, how they work, bluntly, the less people we're going to need to build big companies.

Andy Sack: Nick, you mentioned earlier in this conversation that you think you said something along the lines of that AI tools are underpriced. I think that was what you said. Talk about the value versus the cost in your mind. And then also talk about where you would like to see Decent go in your AI journey.

Nick Soman: So the reason that it's hard to put a value on AI in the early stage startup world, I think, is related to the fact that we've all gotten it drummed into our heads that the way to build a team early on is to specialize, specialize, specialize. You don't want people hanging out that are just pretty good at a lot of things for the most part. You might want a couple of them early on, but that's really as fast as possible. You want to hire the world's best designer that'll work with you as a founder. You want to hire the world's best technologist. You want a world-class CEO.

AI sort of turns that paradigm on its head because it's almost like if you could get a fractional genius for every part of your company at the same time, how much would you pay for that? And the answer to that isn't clear because I can't just say, well, cost me this to hire a junior person or it cost me this to hire a senior person for one function, right? The idea that you could have somebody that consistently adds 25 to 50 % productivity and thoughtfulness to your decisions.

Nobody knows how to price that, right? And I think that's only going to get better over time. What I've told my team, because that's probably the best arbiter of truth. I've told them, Hey, we're not there yet. I want to be Netflix. I want to build a white knight version of United healthcare, but culturally I want to be Netflix. I want to know we've got the absolute best people on this team in the United States. I want getting a full-time job at Decent to feel like getting a tenure track job at Stanford. Like you could leave, but you probably won't.

And I think that if you can get the right people, and they have that growth mindset that is really predictive of whether they'll use AI the right way. I think this is the direction things go. actually, I'm practicing what I preached. I just reached out to a friend and he had said, the best people leader I know just became available for fractional work. Now what's interesting is I thought, okay, I don't really need that right now, but I'm anticipating we're going to be growing in the not too distant future just because the business is growing.

I wouldn't have said this two years ago, but I feel like a great fractional thinker supported by AI and some of the people we're working with in the Philippines as an example, could probably do a better job than somebody I could get and pay a good rate for full-time. And it really changes the game. It's how can you have access to the best original thoughts and then use the AI as a scaffolding and use maybe some more junior talent to sort of do the day-to-day work. And that's an incredible inversion, especially for someone that loves working with leaders.

Andy Sack: That's awesome. Talk about the second part of my question, was where you see using AI going forward. Where is Decent in its AI journey, and where do you see it going? Just prior to recording, you were talking about your mouth being bigger than your stomach, or your stomach being bigger than your head.



Nick Soman: Yeah, my eyes are being bigger than my stomach. So this is the nature of being a founder, right? I look at this and I'm like, look, let me break it down for you. So a health plan is a math problem. It's really, first it's an adoption problem and then it's a math problem. The adoption problem is, can you get people to buy your thing? And then the math problem is, can you serve them for less than it takes you to, can you make enough money that you can serve them without going broke?

And it is dead obvious when you break down health plans, which by the way, are Warren Buffett's favorite investment. They are some of the biggest companies in the world. They are gigantic. It's not complicated when you look at it at a root cause level. Now, can AI help with adoption, which is my side of the house? You're goddamn right. It can. Can AI look at things like find all of the information that's available for every employee of this company on the internet and use our existing actuarial tools to predict what we're going to be able to give them a plan for since we use all of this standard human information, did they do that assessment anyway?

How close can we get if we've got the world's best AI tools? So I can go to somebody and say, maybe I don't know that I can save you 40 % on your existing plan, but I'm confident enough based on running a bunch of people through this and looking at the results, that I'll give you a hundred bucks straight up if I can't. Things become possible that weren't possible before, because you just think about it like Adam said, is it's a new creative way to be able to parse the entirety of the internet all at the same time and add that to the context of what it knows about you. So that's on the adoption side on the math side.

You know, I could hire a huge data team and it probably wouldn't be able to do what ChatGPT can do today. Looking at our systems and figuring out for this group, you know, let's, let's look in the moment. Then let's look in the future in the moment, which of our groups are costing us money. why are they costing us money? Are we missing any near-term opportunities to be able to better serve those groups for less money so we can give them a great renewal next year. And then you can easily start to see, it turns out groups like this tend to cost us money. Whereas groups like this are an absolute, know, godsend to our finances that can allow us by the way to subsidize other groups. And you could start to look at what would have to be true to be able to take the highest leverage changes possible.

Because again, you've got this awareness system that is looking at all of the data. I mean, the direction, all I wanna do is run this company till I die and then have it outlive me. I'm really, really proud of what we're building. And I think there's a good chance that I'll be able to do that. And if I can use technology and if I can pair it, cause it does come back to the people with absolute world-class leaders across functions, which I think I have right now and will retain in the future, I'll be able to make my mom proud at the end of all this. I'll be able to say, I didn't become a doctor, but I was able to help fix some of what's broken. And that would be a life worth living to me.

Andy Sack: And so what I guess I didn't in that beautiful sentiment, what I guess we're talk about the, you know, your eyes being bigger than your stomach as it relates to the AI journey in that, in that.

Nick Soman: Ha ha! Yep. First, need AI to get its hooks in every function of the organization in a meaningful and transparent way. I need to be able to not say, hey, I've had some really good conversations with Julia about how we're going to be able to answer questions for members, but I need her and her function to have the aha moment that has happened with me and with others on my team when AI takes this big chunk of work you thought you going to have to spend your Saturday doing, and it says, no, it's done.



And not only is it done, but I know how to do it better next time. So just feel free to ask again. I need that because what I've seen is that as soon as people have that, she's going to be coming to me with ideas. And one thing we do that's a little different at Decent, we don't think of things as a global hierarchy. Now, obviously the CEO lives in the United States, but I go to the people in the Philippines and I send them the same message. Look, I don't want to hear that you are the hands for the U S strategy operation. I don't look at things that way at all. You're the closest to the problems you're trying to solve.

I need you coming to me with ideas and if you aren't well equipped to do that, then you're not going to last on this team for very long. Cause I'm going to hire the best people I can find in the Philippines. I'm going to hire the best people I can find in India. And I want to get everybody to have that aha moment where they go, forget what Nick wants. This is making my job and my life a lot easier because ultimately people are going to be more motivated by that than some stump speech that I can give. Then the second thing, and I'm just predicting in the future, as I was running through these five tasks for four different AI tools, knowing that there are another four I easily could have thrown into the mix.

I thought, boy, this feels really inefficient. It seems sort of obvious to me that AI aggregators are going to be a thing as well, just as it doesn't make sense to go to United and buy a plane ticket. know, Kayak has evolved from that. AI did such a good job policing itself and being able to identify the differences in its own thinking and figure out clarifying questions to get to a good answer. You know, obviously you got to figure out token spend because that this stuff gets expensive, but I do think ultimately, we probably end up with a super intelligence that looks more like one AI to rule them and bind them because there's just not a great reason for me to be copying, pasting things into five different interfaces.

Adam Brotman: In Nick, on the topic of, of, I'll call it data analysis with AI. So it sounds like in your companies, a lot of what you do in your corporate collective corporate function is you, you have to do a bunch of data analysis or at least predict what something's going to cost and whatnot. Yeah. And so did you before.

Nick Soman: Actuarial underwriting, yep, that's right.

Adam Brotman: Before, you know, ChatGPT, did you, how did you do your analysis? And then have you been able to use ChatGPT for some of that analysis? you like, and, and you like, is there like a concern around like PII? you like, you outfuscate or anonymize the, the information before you run it through ChatGPT, even though you've got enterprise, which is the most secure version, like walk us through a little bit of like the data analysis flow and how it's helped you or where or where you have challenges with data analysis.

Nick Soman: The way we did it used to be very dumb. And I have to tell the truth because Andy was there when we were doing it. Like, it took me way longer than it should have because we originally launched to serve self-employed people. And when we launched to serve self-employed people, after like a year of doing it, we looked at our numbers and we're like, here's the crazy thing. When we enrolled these people at the beginning of the year, which is during what's called the traditional open enrollment period where your health plan might start in January, we did pretty good.

They were relatively healthy. were able to serve them at a low cost and give them a really good renewal. But for the people that enrolled in the middle of the year, we got our asses kicked. And then, you you start thinking about, well, why would that be? it's because they waited to get sick. And then they said, well, now that I'm sick, I should probably get some health plan. And these idiots are, you know, right here willing to offer it to me. That's the sort of thing that easily could have been identified as, you know, an early flag by sort of a well-tuned AI system.



Now, could it have been flagged by an expensive data team that's going to cost me a million dollars to hire in San Francisco? Sure, but what a waste of money. The opportunity is to get this thing looking at the data. You always have to think about PHI. PII is actually less of a concern because it's not connected to health, but we as an organization have sort of made that a priority from day one. And we are very careful to make sure that nobody's looking at data that doesn't need to be seeing it.

As far as I know, there are not yet laws about giving an LLM access to a whole lot of data and letting it turn itself loose. It's about what happens when you make it available to another human. So thankfully, at least for now, we have a fair amount of leeway there. But here's what's crazy. I used to be a growth leader at Gusto. And nobody wants to say this, but growth is really about how to connect all the crazy dots on the internet to know as much about people as you can possibly know.

And it turns out that's an incredibly relevant exercise to healthcare. That's an incredibly relevant exercise to making the best use of an LLM. Not to say it in a creepy way, but just as an example, if somebody gets on our plan and they have diabetes and we can know that upfront, we can call them ahead of the plan starting. We can have a meeting with them the first day and say, this is your doctor. We pay for some extra stuff for you because we know that it's going to pay for itself in the long run, as long as you're willing to, to work with us.

The more we can know, the better we can take care of people. And I guess it could be a little big brother if you wanted to look at it that way. But when I've explained it that way to our members, just tell us what you're willing to tell us and we're going to find out what we can. We're really going to translate this to getting you the best care you can. People don't seem to.

Adam Brotman: Do you find that you give the AI systems, whether they be ChachiBT or any of the other ones, do you find that you give them just raw data and be like, hey, this is the insights and the correlations that we're looking for, or do you tend to give them summaries and have them kind of work from the summary? What fidelity of data?

Nick Soman: I like the raw data. I would just write because I want the raw data. And so I would treat it the way that I'd want to be treated. I like to throw at data because often it'll go, here's something you didn't notice, or something that you wouldn't have guided me in the right direction. It feels like I wouldn't buy a TI-83 and then explain to it how to do simple math. I'm happy to give it everything. Yeah.

Adam Brotman: And you have to Nick, do you find that you like it when you have these it ever like chug on that data and you go why is it having problems and then you realize you need to clean up the data or you need to specify what columns are and things like that.

Nick Soman: That definitely happens. I've also learned that you need to break it down into constituent parts because especially the ones with a shorter context window, they just don't know what to do. What I don't like, if I could complain, like, and I didn't know that I didn't like this until I saw an alternative, but I think Gemini is the one that'll tell you like, hey, the context window is not long enough for us to credibly answer your question the way that I know you're looking for it to answer. I thought of all the times that I wish ChatGPT would have told me that because it'll sometimes just start going, well, I don't fucking know. So here's some shit I made up. And it'd be nice to at least have a, you know, a flag on like level of competence or something like that. But I understand they made a different choice.

Adam Brotman: Right.



Adam Brotman: Yeah.

Andy Sack: Nick, I'm curious if there were, if you had a magic wand and you could build a line of business AI app that increased your EBITDA or was strategically important, critical to Decent, what are the top two line of business apps that come to your mind?

Nick Soman: The first one really absolutely is I want AI to do as much of the day-to-day work to answer member questions as it can possibly do. And it needs to be extremely contextually aware. It needs to be privacy focused. And it needs to not creep people out. And there probably needs to be a human in the loop, but like, let's minimize the impact and the effort of that human in the loop because this is not consumer.

Yeah, that's a good way to think about it, or customer service. Here's the deal with health plans. And I used to work in consumer so I can say this, like, nobody wants to talk to me. Nobody wants to talk to a health plan. Nobody wants to dig into 17 pages of self-serve paperwork. Like, answer my damn question. Let me move on with my life. If you need to tell me what to do, then tell me and make it really easy. And those are things that I think an AI is better equipped for than a human. And so that's, that's the first thing.

I really do think there's something to this idea of using everything that we know about someone to just divine what is the absolute best course of care. Now this comes back to philosophy and my parents and you know growing up with primary care doctors and understanding that the first thing is you got to give a shit about people but if you give a shit about people your tendency is to ask enough questions to actually make yourself useful. AI can answer and ask a whole lot of questions, can synthesize information without asking.

The white whale for me is you know I got on this Decent plan and it's not like any other plan that I've ever seen. You know, before the coverage even started, I got this email introducing me to Julia and you know, a really thoughtful and personalized course of care recommendations and some incentives to make me want to do them. Like this is the direction we can go and the path to get there runs squarely through AI, not me throwing bodies at the problem and trying to do what UnitedHealthcare has done and build an army of low scale.

Andy Sack: Excellent. I promised you that it'd be a moment for you to give a little pitch on Decent. Here's your opportunity.

Nick Soman: Ha! All right, before any of this, I'm the only one in my family that's not a primary care doctor. And so I share this with you a little bit as bona fides and also for you to know what drives me. I watched my parents grow up and they went from talking about compassionate patient care to the point that my sister and I were like, please shut up. We don't want to hear about this anymore at the dinner table. It's not interesting. You know, she would of course go on to medical school. And I watched them become disheartened.

I watched them get basically chewed up and spit out by these, you know, big HMO insurance company entities and feel like, like thousands of doctors across the country are feeling, I didn't get into this business to dance for the insurance companies. I got into it to take care of people. And so I wish the model that they had found instead of becoming Grouchy HMO executives in Seattle was this direct primary care model. It's very, very meaningful to me. There are 8,000 of these clinicians across the country.



that have really thrown off the shackles of a traditional insurance company. And I should say, this is not an insurance company. We're a third party administrator that enables self-funded plans so that these primary care doctors can focus on what they love to do, which is delivering primary care. And what's really cool is we had a hypothesis seven years ago that now is definitively true, that if you give people enough primary care in the middle of their plan, you make it easy enough for them to access it.

It actually feels like a concierge experience, but it saves the plan so much money because people get the primary care when they need it. They're kept healthy when they need it. They listen to their doctor and they do what the doctor tells them to do and it keeps them healthier. That you can actually offer a drastically cheaper health plan. So 30 to 40 % cheaper than these fully insured insurance company market rates. And it's really starting to work. And the neat thing that I wanted to share with you Andy, and it's less about pitching who might be listening. It's like, as a guy who loves you and really sees you as a mentor, like here's what's happening in my business. Not only are we growing and we're going to hit our number and that's really exciting, but it's who we're growing with.

The people that are in this direct primary care movement, front and center, are for the most part really choosing to get on our plans, not just as partners, but as customers. And that's an incredible thing because you've got, I'll name some names, know, Hint Health. They are a software company that powers the payments for 65 % of the direct primary care space. They'll be a Decent customer. Health Rosetta, the guys that I used to look up to and go, God, maybe someday I'll be as smart as you.

And I honestly still kind of feel that way, but they've helped us figure out how this plan should work and then they liked it enough they got it on themselves. And there's five or six other examples like that that I just want to clear with them before I mention it. But you know, the beautiful thing is like, the experts are picking us and most of the employers are looking to the experts. And so I think we're really well positioned to grow into the new year.

Andy Sack: That's great, any closing comments or suggestions for Nick, anything you want to highlight?

Adam Brotman: I mean, Nick, that was a great inspirational 45 minutes. I was up late last night, Thanksgiving week, craziness, and you're inspiring me. And usually people are looking for Andy and I to do that, but you gave a good shot in the arm. So hope to have you back. I mean, we could talk about example after example with you.

Nick Soman: Ha ha ha ha ha! I'm jazzed.

Adam Brotman: It would be fun to have you back on the pod. It's great.

Nick Soman: A, let's do it, and B, let's do it when I put my money where my mouth is a little bit more and I can point you to some specific things that we've rolled out, because it's coming.

Andy Sack: Excellent. Well, Adam, Nick, thanks. This concludes another episode of AI First with Adam and Andy. To stay updated on the latest in AI and access exclusive content, go to our website, forum3.com. Join the email list, follow us on LinkedIn. We truly believe you can't over invest in AI. Onward.

Nick Soman: Love it. Sweet.

Adam Brotman: Thanks, Nick.



Andy Sack: 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 alongside my cohost, Adam Brotman. Each episode, we bring you candid conversations with business leaders, transforming their businesses with AI. No fluff, just straight talk, great use cases and insights for you. Adam, that was a great conversation with Nick from Decent. Let's debrief. What stood out for you from the conversation?

Adam Brotman: Well, the first thing that stood out was his enthusiasm and energy around the topic, which you and I can relate to. I just want to comment, mean, commend Nick, but also just kind of comment on, you know, we're at a stage of AI adoption in the enterprise where I think that that's the exception versus the rule. And I think we're going to see that change as we go into 2025.

That was cool to see him talk about the Iron Man suit, like, is you and I have talked about like a limitless pill in the past or an Iron Man suit, like this idea where you sort of realize that this can help you across anything you're doing across any function. Yes, you can use it to automate and streamline things. But on top of that, there's the inviting it to the table all day, every day point that is probably the biggest opportunity for CEOs and leaders right now to instill across the organization and he's clearly doing that and gets it. And it was just, fun to see somebody who's in that mode.

And I think that's a big part of the reason we're doing this podcast is to get more of that in front of our listeners and our viewers so that we can, it's not just you and I talking hyperbolically about this technology, but getting into the real you know, everyday use cases and showing like, look, this is what happens if you use it every day. And, know, we'll probably even, you know, I think we pushed Nick on ROI a little bit and we've talked to our other customers about ROI and we're going to see more real numbers come out in 2025 because it's so new, but it was, it was cool and exciting and refreshing to see an AI first CEO like Nick, you know, on the show.

Andy Sack: Yeah, I I've known Nick for a long time and so I've seen him develop. think what stood out for me from the conversation, there were three things that I think. So first, Nick is, I would say like a next generation CEO. He's an AI first CEO. He is turning himself and using not just one tool, but multiple large language models. He says he's working across three to five of them.

So he's a next generation CEO, think an AI first CEO, if you will. I think his business, the fact that his business, he uses the mech suit, the Iron Man suit for himself, but he also talks about how as a small company, you can punch above your weight. And I think that's true of a big company that uses AI, they can punch above their weight, but this notion of both as an individual and as a small company using

Adam Brotman: Yeah, no, those are really good points. The punching above your weight point is interesting because it gets to this, you know, you and I have talked about this second aha moment that can happen, which he's clearly had. Like the first aha moment, which we sometimes call the holy shit moment, is where pretty much everyone's had it by now, or at least not, well, I shouldn't say that.

A lot of people had it by now where it's like you've used AI ChatGPT or Gemini or whatever Claude and you and there's this the further for everyone can remember that first time they're like, holy shit, what is this? Like how is it able to truly be something out of science fiction? Like truly be like a smart human understanding me and being able to intelligently respond in a way that I never would have thought a software program could respond.



That's like the first aha moment. Then there's this, but then what happens is a lot of people see that and they're like, they got that because they asked it to write a job description, or they asked it to help it write an email, or maybe even kind of used it instead of Google and got like a really thorough, interesting answer, which may or may not have been correct if you're using it instead of Google. the point, mean, particularly if you were using it prior to like ChatGPT search, being live.

But then there's a second aha moment that happens that clearly Nick was talking about this, where you start to realize, wait a minute, this is like, this isn't like any other software we've ever dealt with. It's more like having a BCG McKinsey consultant. It's more like having a data scientist. It's more like having an expert. It's more like having a chief strategy officer, another marketer, whatever. like, once you start and it's like kind of limitless and free and that's when that second aha moment kicks in. And at that point, I think you start to, like Nick is saying, and I know we are infected with this, like when you have this second aha moment, you start to go, I need to put everything I'm doing through this, like immediately, because it's gonna just, like you said, it's gonna uplift everything by a certain amount, and that's how you're punching above your weight, because it's like, know, Nick can't afford BCG. I mean, I don't know that much about his.

Adam Brotman: Finances you do I think you're on his board, but the point is like I doubt he's able to hire a BCG or McKinsey at his startup size But he's got AI and if he knows how to use it effectively like it's it's no it's not the same but it's it's kind of like having access to a top-tier consultant and extra staff and extra experts and whatnot and like of course that allows you to punch above your weight, so you're just constantly Trying to figure out how to run as much of your business through it and I you can kind of feel that from Nick when you're asking him questions about it like that. He's he gets that

Adam Brotman: That's totally, yeah, you never could afford it. So you were always just trying to figure out how to get to growth without adding cost, right? Yeah, yeah.

Adam Brotman: Yeah. Yeah. It is unbelievable because if you think about it, there's, yeah, Paul Raitser makes a great point. He'll, he'll create like a great custom GPT. That's really useful for his business amongst the 5,000 other use cases. He and Mike and his team use AI for, but he'll be like, that one GPT I'd pay, I'd pay \$500 a month. Like, in other words, like for that one call it self-rolled feature that he made out of it with a saved prompt and a GPT. The ROI there is like 10x what he's paying for. And that's one of 1,000 things he's doing with it. that's, the ROI point is pretty obvious in that case.

But by the way, I think that brings up a bigger topic that you and I should also talk about, which is that there and I think Nick was mentioning this, which is just in general, these systems are kind of underutilized. You know, it's interesting. I was listening to CNBC this morning and Jim Cramer and David Faber were in Carl Kintanier or whatever were talking about AI and Jim Cramer was saying that he was using the free version of Chachi BT, I guess. And was having trouble getting it to do good research for him on companies because it was like getting stuff wrong. it was referring to like, you know, old data. I thought to myself, like, I wonder if he's not getting it to use search. Cause that, and he's just asking it questions that, that are basically screwing up the fact that he's, he's not taking into account the training data cutoff date.

But here's the thing that's not on him. Right. Like you and I have seen this a lot of times, like with technologies, we saw this with blockchain. We've seen this with metaverse. We've seen this time and time again, like, like if it requires you to like understand how the software works and whatever, like you're dead. Right? So like that's, that's not helpful. And yet here's this technology that is being used by hundreds of millions of people is probably the number one priority, probably of most of the major hyperscalers and tech companies in the world. And yet.

It doesn't come with a user manual. You do have to have some AI literacy and proficiency to get the most out of it. And so, like that's just a really interesting spot we're in, right? Where, like when you talk about things being under priced, I think part of the reason is like a lot of CEOs and a lot of people still think of this as like a novelty and it's interesting and kind of cool, but geez, is it really worth dollars a month or whatever and then there's other people that are like, yeah I'm turning my comp I can double the EBITDA of my company and the growth rate of my company with it so it's worth hundred it can be potentially worth like tens of millions of dollars and And I'm I just lost Andy here. So I'm just gonna keep talking for a second. So maybe we'll edit this part the so anyways, my point is it it It's interesting that you could have a technology

I was listening to that CNBC moment where Jim Cramer was like saying, you know, the free version of ChatGPT, you know, it's giving me not great help on my company research and he's giving me old information. I was listening to him and I thought, yeah, like probably because he wasn't, he wasn't thinking about the training data cutoff as he was prompting, and then he may or may not have been able to take advantage of the search capabilities that are built in to ChatGPT four and, then the next thought I had was like, well, geez, you know, there's no user manual.

Like he hasn't been through a bootcamp or something. So talk about the uneven distribution of understanding and usage. And so really that just goes, so it's fascinating. It goes to show like, if you've had some level of AI literacy, some level of AI proficiency and training even minimal, your ability to utilize this technology, the differences between it being a novelty where you're not sure if it's worth \$20 a month, all the way up to like startup companies that are like using this as like a Iron Man suit to create tens of millions of dollars of incremental enterprise value from the same technology for the same price. Like that's a really interesting like dynamic with it, where we're at with this technology right now. We're like, it's that level of Delta, which is interesting to me.

Andy Sack: Yeah, I mean, I think that's interesting. makes this is unrelated, but related when you're talking about the jagged frontier of people's individual usage. I want to come back to the point that I made at the beginning of what stood out to me, which is like really the healthcare industry and in particular healthcare insurance, which is Decent's business. Like if you just think about if as an audience member, your own unique situation and your own unique, your families, everyone's got, I mean, at least in my family, I've got a diabetic, I'm a survivor of cancer, I have particular interests and needs, highly personalized information and data. And then you have these really complex regulated priced plans. And it's always so hard. And then you've got the web of providers.

It's always so hard to figure out what plan to pick and does that doctor, does this plan match me? Which doctor should I use? Am I like, and you want all that information served up. AI is the, is the single technology to actually make that user experience seamless. And it's kind of amazing because it's, that's very different than some of the other guests we've had. It's really a great example of high personalization and customization, delighting the end user.

And really just how, you know, I'm reminded of when we interviewed Reid Hoffman and he was talking to the Pope and the capability of having, you know, an AI on, what was it, eight billion phones worldwide. So that just stood out to me from the interview with Nick. And it talks about the, to connect it what you were saying, the jagged frontier. It's really an example of the, a positive example of the jagged frontier of, you know, company fit and industry fit for the implementation of AI first experiences.

Adam Brotman: Yeah, yeah, it really, you just reminded me of, I can't remember who we heard this from. Nick maybe even mentioned it or alluded to it just now, but I think we heard this, that AI is absolutely at its best when you have large amounts of data. I think Nick was kind of referring to this. With large amount of data and not a lot of time to make a decision. In fact, I've heard from another one of our influencers, can't remember who it was, it was saying like that, if you want to know like the best use case for AI, it's just generically stated concept of tons of information, not a lot of time, got to make a decision. AI is like, that's where AI is pulling its weight the most. Cause even if it's directional or mostly right, it's better than you not having any help in making a decision, right? And so.

Like, and you start to think about like, you're talking about healthcare, insurance, you know, financial industries. There's all these industries where like, there's all this data, like literal data, like unstructured, huge amounts of data or structured data. And you have to do analysis and make decisions. like, normally you have to have like BI teams and advanced analytics and like having an AI at your fingertips is like, it's incredible to think about. But then when you go back to like, what constitutes data?

And you think about like that case study from our book where Matt Britton from Susie was saying, I have all this data and I was not utilizing it. And I, my first thought was like thinking about typical data, like in a data warehouse or whatever. And like, and he was talking about all the transcripts of all the sales and account calls. And I was like, my God, that's right. Like who's going to, the sales manager is not going to go back and read thousands of hours worth of transcripts, but AI could do that.

Really easily in a matter of seconds, and then basically give you all sorts of guidance and alerts and whatnot. it's, to your point about healthcare and all this like personal information and the need to sort of sift through all these different variations of plan details, like we're heading to a world where your own AI your own ability to leverage AI as a worker in a personal capacity is just going to be game changing.

Andy Sack: Yeah, I I completely agree. It was great to have you on Nick, even though he's not here. Anything else you want to say about this before we wrap up?

Adam Brotman: No, great episode. Let's get some more Knicks on here. This is great stuff. We're learning a lot.

Andy Sack: Yeah, I love the flag behind when he did there did the interview was funny. Okay, well, with that, thanks for listening to AI first with Adam and Andy. Stay updated on the latest in AI and access exclusive content visit formthree.com follow us on LinkedIn. Sign up for our email list. We truly believe you can't over invest in AI learning. Onward.



Ready to become an AI First organization?



Andy Sack

Brings over 25 years of entrepreneurial and investment expertise in high tech and finance.



Adam Brotman

As the inaugural CDO at Starbucks, Adam's background in digital innovation is unparalleled.

[Book a free consultation](#)