Tech show branding sequence begins with montage of colorful graphics interspersed with closeups of circuit boards and hardware tools. Cut to a digital clock on a desk as it strikes midnight.

Transition to a residential garage door with the words Lenovo Late Night I.T. prominently displayed.

The garage door opens to reveal an open workspace with a relaxed environment. Show host Baratunde Thurston and his guests Olaf Groth and Sanjay Srivastava sit at a large wooden bench in the middle of the garage. Cut to a closeup of host Baratunde Thurston speaking. The shot pans out as he turns towards his guests.

Baratunde Thurston (00:10):

Hello and welcome to Lenovo Late Night IT. I'm your host, Baratunde Thurston, and today we're talking about AI, also known as artificial intelligence, as in DeepBlue, AlphaGo, Skynet. And as for things I swear I just thought about, I'm joined by Olaf Groth. Olaf has 25 years of experience as an executive and advisor to multinationals, startups, venture capitalists, foundations, governments, and academic institutions all over the world. He's the founding CEO of Cambrian Futures, an advisory think tank, and the concept development firm Cambrian Designs. He really loves the word Cambrian. Now, Olaf is the author of The AI Generation: Shaping our Global Future with Thinking Machines.

Also with us is Sanjay Srivastava from Genpact, a global professional services firm that supports hundreds of Fortune 500 clients in their digital transformation initiatives. Sanjay runs Genpact's AI analytics, data, and technology services business. He's built and sold multiple startups and has held operating leadership roles at Hewlett Packard, Akamai and SunGard. When I emailed Sanjay for a fun fact about himself, he had to delegate the task to a chief of staff. So that tells you everything you need to know about Sanjay. Olaf, Sanjay, welcome to the garage. Thanks for being with me.

Olaf Groth (01:25):

It's a pleasure to be with you.

Baratunde Thurston (01:25):

Thank you.

Sanjay Srivastava (01:25):

Great to be here.

Baratunde Thurston (01:27):

So I want to start off with this idea that a lot of the way the public has been taught about AI with these big boil-the-ocean applications, we're going to do advanced, deep learning, we're going to make a machine think and even feel like a human, do you think that approach is has failed, Olaf?

Olaf Groth (01:43):

Yeah, I think it's definitely failed. Look, I mean, there is the confluence of Hollywood with these Terminator visions, or-

Baratunde Thurston (01:43):

Nice.

Olaf Groth (01:49):

Yeah. So AI is impersonating beautiful women falling in love with you. And then of course, on the technology side, we call it a general-purpose technology foundational, so there's this illusion that it can fix all kinds of things, that it's a general intelligence that has a lot of utility, and it's just not true. It's still a very narrowly applicable technology.

Baratunde Thurston (02:08):

What do you think, Sanjay?

Sanjay Srivastava (02:09):

Well, look, I mean, I think he's right, but there is a flip side to it as well, which is, you know, as you look at applying AI in real life, there's a real challenge, and that is the machine learning paradox. And I see it at Fortune 500 companies across the world. And the machine learning paradox is as simple as this: you need to be able to apply AI to be able to make it get better. You need the AI to be better enough for you to be able to apply it in the first place. So you're just sitting in this round circle and you can't get started because it has to be at an accuracy level so you can put it into play, and then it has to be put into play so you can get it to the right accuracy level. And so that's the paradox we sit in.

Baratunde Thurston (02:45):

You just broke my brain. Let me just pause for a second. So AI needs to get better, so you need to deploy AI, but AI needs to be good enough to deploy ... I'm malfunctioning.

Sanjay Srivastava (02:59):

But think about it. Right?

Baratunde Thurston (03:00):

It's like a game of double Dutch. How do you jump in?

Sanjay Srivastava (03:03):

Well, so you pick the areas where it's permissible to be lower in accuracy. Think about your Siri. Think about the early days of driving around and asking Google for directions. Did it get it right every single time?

Baratunde Thurston (03:14):

Absolutely not.

Sanjay Srivastava (03:15):

Okay. Did it get better over time?

Baratunde Thurston (03:17):

I reluctantly admit that it has.

Sanjay Srivastava (03:19):

So there you go. So you've got to put it into play and then you have to kind of learn from it and get it better. And that's the journey of AI in an enterprise. And that is really important. And so coming back to Olaf's point, I think some of these large-scale projects help because they actually get the ball moving forward. They get enough in the game so you can pick something and build on the shoulder of others as opposed to starting from scratch.

Baratunde Thurston (03:40):

Why are we obsessed with the AI world with board games? Like, it's always chess and Go and other things. Most smart people I know don't even play board games. So what's going on here?

Olaf Groth (03:48):

Well, I think it's a paradigm shift, right? So we always thought that we were on top of chess and of Go, and Go is a very complicated game, more complicated than chess, and all of a sudden there is an artificial intelligence that can beat us at these what we thought to be highly sophisticated skills. And yet the machine with its compute power can actually out-compete us. And as a good friend of mine who is a chess grandmaster said, the era of humans being on top of chess and beating every machine is over. We will no longer be able to beat the most sophisticated chess or Go computers.

Baratunde Thurston (04:24):

How did that make your friend feel?

Olaf Groth (04:25):

Well, he's been seeing this come for a while. But see, he says what you have to do is you have to pair a sophisticated chest computer with a human grand master, right? The chess computer brings the computer power and opens up all kinds of possibilities, and the chess grandmaster has the visioning capability, the theory development, and the inspiration and the strategy. The machine doesn't have strategy. And so the two together, he says, play at a much higher plane. And that's really where we want to go with productivity, but all kinds of other areas in life as well.

Sanjay Srivastava (04:57):

So I think ... going back to the question about why board games, right? Look, there's a role we need to play around bringing AI into general life and getting people to understand and accept that as a valuable piece of technology. And the way you do that is you capture use cases that capture people's imagination, that all of us can relate to. Now, think about it. If we run a project and say, "We're just going to simultaneously translate the fourth session every sixth day of the United Nations committee," how many people would be-

Baratunde Thurston (05:25):

Boring.

Sanjay Srivastava (05:26):

... interested in that, right?

Baratunde Thurston (05:27):

Not even the UN staff would listen to that.

Sanjay Srivastava (05:29):

There you go. You want to be able to pick something that's real life for most people. So you go to a board game. All of us play it. I have two teenage sons. They can relate to that. They're not going to relate to translating something simultaneously at the United Nations committee. But they will relate to that. And that's really important role to play. I think the other thing that Olaf said is really right, which is, you know, we all get caught up with AI as the one-trick pony, that it's going to solve for everything. It's not so. Back to the chess master example, what AI fundamentally is, it's the best prediction machine we have ever had and likely will ever have, but that's all it is. All it does is it predicts. What's the probability this is going to happen? What's the probability this is going to happen? That's all it does. Now, once you have a great prediction, guess what? You have to do something about it.

Baratunde Thurston (06:19):

Because you can't just let the prediction [crosstalk 00:06:21]-

Sanjay Srivastava (06:20):

You can't just let it sit there.

Baratunde Thurston (06:20):

Okay.

Sanjay Srivastava (06:22):

This is where judgment comes in. This is where the human comes in.

Baratunde Thurston (06:24):

We've seen how COVID has affected everything. For example, I'm really good at washing dishes now. I wasn't so great before, but I've done it all day every day for a year and a half, so I'm the best dishwasher in the game. What has COVID done to AI initiatives in the workplace especially?

Sanjay Srivastava (06:38):

Massively accelerated it. We're using AI in new and meaningful ways. I'll give you one example. We're about a 100,000-employee corporation, and Olaf knows-

Baratunde Thurston (06:38):

Human employees.

Sanjay Srivastava (06:48):

Human employees. And I'll come to the non-human in a bit. But spread across the globe. All right? Many different countries. You can imagine many different cultures, many different office locations, hours, time zones, et cetera. Before COVID, we used to have the workforce that would show up in the office. We had leaders, we had managers, we had a hierarchy, like just any other company. They were trained in HR principles. The managers would know how to sort of manage the team, look after needs, understand where people are. Guess what? Everyone went to work from remote places. So they're not coming to the office. All of that established mechanism just went away overnight. How do you know how an employee is doing?

Baratunde Thurston (07:25):

You hack into their webcam.

Sanjay Srivastava (07:27):

Well, you don't hack into the webcam. I can tell you that.

Baratunde Thurston (07:29):

No? Wrong answer?

Sanjay Srivastava (07:31):

But we came up with Amber. And so this is what you were, I think, teasing out. Amber is an AI bot that actually sends out emails and chats with our employees. And what it does is it asks them questions, it communicates back and forth, it engages with them over email in a conversation. And so what's happening now is we're trying to figure out, you know, are people happy. Are they frustrated? Is there a reason for the concern? Is there something that's playing in? Is something happening in Bucharest versus Noida versus San Francisco? So now I have granular data. You can spot challenges. You can spot issues faster. You can ask questions in a very ...

You know, look, the reality is the only other way to do it is to say everyone get on video conference and ask your peer, "Hey Olaf, how are you doing today?" Right? The reality is you can't do that because the way I ask the question has to be non-judgmental. What Olaf says next has to be processed in the right light and then has to be harmonized with what everyone else says so I can make sense of it. There is no way we could have done that. Amber is allowing us to do that. We know exactly where we stand on employee satisfaction across the world.

Baratunde Thurston (08:37):

Do the employees know they're interacting with technology as opposed to a real person?

Sanjay Srivastava (08:41):

That's a great question. We spent some time thinking about it. I was with the CIO last week in Atlanta and he was telling me they have Steve, and no one knows ... And Steve apparently has gone out to win some company awards, like three or four company awards. He's been cheered at places. He's been nominated for different things. Steve is actually a robot, right? Like, no one knows that in the company.

Baratunde Thurston (08:59):

Wait. So a robot is like employee of the month?

Sanjay Srivastava (09:00):

In their case, yes. But we made the decision that we want to be very transparent, and so everyone knows in the company that it's actually a ... It's an AI engine.

Baratunde Thurston (09:09):

Have you noticed a culture change in your own organization after deploying not just Amber, but any other types of AI tools? What happens after that? Other than profits?

Sanjay Srivastava (09:18):

No, I think ... Look, I think this AI journey is an important one to be very thoughtful about. And I think in my mind, the building blocks 1-2-3, 1 is you've got to get data and the privacy, right? So anytime you pull this data together, you actually have to have a purposeful, thoughtful approach to designing privacy into the stack, into the way you pull it together. It used to be they pull things together and you sort of apply security on top of it, and then you apply a layer of privacy and we're done. Well, it doesn't work that way. You cannot do that at the end of the project. You got to start the project with privacy, with security, and build a foundation and then start pulling the data together. Number one.

The second thing you need to do is, look, all of this is about empathy and it's about ethics and it's about bias or unintentional bias. And the only way you can do that is to actually have diverse teams. You have to have diverse data sets. You have to be thoughtful about bringing different perspectives into the algorithm design mechanism and the process and the factory that produces it so, you know, that things you can't spot, someone else can. Some things that he can't spot, someone else can. That diversity is super important. So, that's the second thing, I think. Second building block. And the third building block is governance around application. So we'll come up with an algorithm. It's fantastic for this purpose. Well, guess what? There's a temptation to take that and apply to this purpose. And this purpose is very different.

Baratunde Thurston (10:41):

And that's clearly my algorithm, not the Olaf algorithm.

Sanjay Srivastava (10:43):

And it's not about the IP issues. It's about this was designed to do something very different. And you take and apply it somewhere else just because it's convenient, it's fast, you can turn the corner quicker, it's cheaper, you can end up with a very bad outcome. And so governance becomes really important. So they're the 1-2-3 building blocks of, you know, at least the approach that we've taken.

Olaf Groth (11:01):

Yeah. Look, I mean, there's nothing I could disagree with here in what Sanjay is saying. I would, however, go a step further and I would say it's not just 1-2-3, it's actually there are six or seven different things that companies need to do. And I think your audience will be interested in this because it actually does mean AI is permeating the organizations much more broadly, right? So yes, there is leadership and strategy. We have to make sure that AI trials and pilots are feeding back into company business unit product strategy. Right? Then there is ethics and governance, and we both agree on that as well. Then there is data and data infrastructure. There's also human resources and talent. We have to make sure that we hire people that are data savvy, AI savvy, and then pair them up with the people inside the company that aren't because this is the culture change we need.

Sanjay Srivastava (11:42):

The world needs more machine learning engineers, but actually what the world really needs is people that are finance or accountants and not machine learning, people that are manufacturing engineers and understand computer vision, folks that understand financial lending and natural language processing. It's the intersection of disciplines where the value is that needs to be unlocked. And I think Olaf said this, you have to be very thoughtful about setting the people and the talent base to be able to provide that intersection, to be able to unlock the value at those disciplines as they converge, and that's what's really happening in our work.

Baratunde Thurston (12:21):

So a TV host and a natural language processor can make a great combination.

Sanjay Srivastava (12:24):

There you go.

Olaf Groth (12:24):

Yeah.

Sanjay Srivastava (12:25):

Better update your resume.

Olaf Groth (12:26):

It's tricky, but it can be done. But you know, people who are not techified at all, who are maybe even phobic when it comes to math and engineering, we need to develop programs that bring AI and data science to them. There isn't really a profession anymore that can afford not to have exposure to these crafts, and liberal arts majors need to learn it as much as geography majors, philosophy majors, and business majors.

Baratunde Thurston (12:48):

They're going to be terrified to hear that.

Olaf Groth (12:50):

They are. But see, we need them too. We need the liberal arts coming to data science and AI in turn.

Baratunde Thurston (12:56):

To folks in tech, artificial intelligence is a household topic, but how much does the average person know about it? To find out, our East Coast correspondent took to the streets of New York City and asked random terrified strangers about AI. Here's what they said.

The screen cuts to a wide aerial view of New York City. A montage showing the streets of New York and people laughing flashes across the screen. A pedestrian stop light changes from stop to go as the words Tech Walks appear next to it. A man holding a microphone interviews various people outdoors in New York City.

Tech Walks host (13:18):

We're doing a show. It's about AI. Do you know what AI is?

Interviewee 1 (13:22):

Alan Iverson.

Tech Walks host (13:24):

If you had to guess, what do you think it stands for?

Interviewee 2 (13:26):
Is it artificial intelligence?

Tech Walks host (13:28):
You're right. Congratulations.

Interviewee 2 (13:30):
Oh, good.

Tech Walks host (13:31):
What is artificial intelligence?

Interviewee 3 (13:33):
It's mostly going to be data that's utilized to perform actions, things that'll hopefully one day make our life better. That's what they say.

Tech Walks host (13:41):
Have you heard of machine learning?

Interviewee 2 (13:43):
No.

Tech Walks host (13:44):
Neural networks?

Interviewee 2 (13:45):
No.

Tech Walks host (13:45):
Computational hydrostatic receptors?

Interviewee 2 (13:51):
No.

Tech Walks host (13:51):
I made that up.

Interviewee 2 (13:51):
Oh.

Tech Walks host (13:53):
What skills will be prized in a world where artificial intelligence is doing a lot of our tasks?

Interviewee 3 (13:58):

Obviously marketing. I mean, you can look around here and it's a sensory overload. The data points, the amount of information that they can utilize for AI is way more than any human being will ever be able to do.

Tech Walks host (14:10):

Have you ever just been talking about something and then you see an ad for it?

Interviewee 1 (14:13):

Yes. Like Taco Bell.

Tech Walks host (14:14):

Do you worry about computers taking over the world, becoming hyper intelligent?

Interviewee 4 (14:18):

Not too much.

Interviewee 5 (14:18):

Not right now, but you know, a couple years, yeah, if we're not ...

Tech Walks host (14:23):

Couple of years?

Interviewee 5 (14:24):

We have a couple good years and then we're toast.

Tech Walks host (14:26):

I'm going to read you some jokes that were written by a computer and some jokes that I wrote. And I want to see, can you tell the difference? What do you get when you cross a fragrance with an actor? A smell Gibson. Computer or me?

Interviewee 6 (14:39):

You?

Tech Walks host (14:40):

Really, you think I wrote that joke?

> A jar of Elvis Presley's hair auctioned for $72,000, although it's street value is much higher.

Interviewee 7 (14:49):

I feel like this one's not too funny. I would ... I don't know.

Tech Walks host (14:52):

I wrote that joke.

Interviewee 7 (14:53):

I'm sorry. I don't love your joke.

Tech Walks host (14:56):

All right. I think we've done enough here.

Baratunde Thurston (15:00):

All right. So what did you think of our East Coast correspondent's experiences on the streets of New York?

Olaf Groth (15:05):

That's pretty representative, I think. Right? Look, AI is just this catch-all phrase. It's as amorphous as science fiction, right? But what does it actually break down to? And most people aren't really interested. I mean, are you really interested what's inside your Black and Decker? Not really. Right? So it's the same with artificial intelligence, only that it'll have a lot bigger impact than your drill.

Baratunde Thurston (15:27):

Well, unless that drill gets smart and sentient, then I do care a lot.

Olaf Groth (15:29):

Then, of course, yes. It comes after you.

Baratunde Thurston (15:31):

Yes. I like the guy who said we have a few good years left.

Olaf Groth (15:36):

Right? Just a few.

Baratunde Thurston (15:36):

And then we're toast. With a smile. Like, that's creepy on multiple levels. Inside of a company, I can imagine an executive who's like, "I need an AI strategy." Their reasons aren't driven by business outcomes or desire to deeply innovate. Their reasons are driven by trends, by a sense of fear or concern that my boss expects me to have an AI strategy. How do you suss out the difference between a sort of a superficial application of this to look like you're keeping up versus something that runs a little deeper?

Sanjay Srivastava (16:07):

Here's what I would say. Wrong question. So, you cannot start with the answer and then start searching for the question. Look at what you said. Don't start with, "I've got to do AI. How do I do it?" Right? Like, that's the wrong question. You can't start that way. You have to start with, as Olaf is saying, use cases, challenges, business problems, and then you have to walk back and think about, what do I put into play to change that, to affect that, to improve that? And that's how you discover the right opportunities for AI. Too many peers of mine have sort of gone down and just said, "Let me just deploy some AI because we're falling behind." And there's some value to experimenting, incubating, falling down a few times, learning, et cetera. So don't get me wrong. That's very meaningful.

But you don't get to a pervasive AI strategy starting with AI. You get to a pervasive AI strategy, starting with a business problem and then disaggregating that into its components and then figuring out, how do I solve for that collectively? And sure, a good chunk of that is AI, but a good chunk of that is something else. So I like to say there's four components. There's people, process, data, and technology, which AI is inclusive of. People are super important because-

Baratunde Thurston (17:13):

And I'm glad to hear that we still [crosstalk 00:17:15]-

Sanjay Srivastava (17:15):

Well, the reality is you have to adopt it, you have to be okay with the answer that gives you, and then you have to embrace it. I know that it sounds like a lot and it's coming really fast. That's the point you made.

Baratunde Thurston (17:25):

Maybe it's just because you talk fast.

Sanjay Srivastava (17:28):

Well, that is true, by the way.

Olaf Groth (17:28):

You're forcing us to talk fast.

Baratunde Thurston (17:30):

Yeah, I know.

Sanjay Srivastava (17:30):

You just keep hitting us at these questions.

Olaf Groth (17:32):

I don't know what you put into this, but ...

Baratunde Thurston (17:36):

Drugs. Two parts hydrogen, one part oxygen.

Sanjay Srivastava (17:38):

But I'll tell you, forget AI and tech for a minute. The world is changing at warp speed. Right? And yes, the AI sounds like there's a lot of it and it's coming really fast. It's really just in response to the problem at hand, the changes that we're trying to deal with. And I'd kind of take that framing on it as opposed to the other way around, which is, my golly, it's like coming at us so fast.

Olaf Groth (17:58):

Look, it's true that we have always had revolutions. We've always had 10X type changes. But this one I do think is a particular type of animal. And-

Sanjay Srivastava (18:07):

I agree.

Olaf Groth (18:07):

And that's because it is coming very fast. I mean, you could now release code and get insights within split seconds, release code to 200, 300, 400 million people all at the same time. In the Industrial Revolution, you couldn't move weaving chairs and machines that quickly and it was much more expensive. And that means the CIO needs to take a strategic view of, how is all of this now coming together and impacting how we do business?

Sanjay Srivastava (18:33):

Let's assume the recommendation engines are 60% accurate. I'm making that number up. I actually don't know the numbers, right? 60% accurate. So you log on, you kind of ... If you were going to go buy something else and you see these 10 things that came up and six of them were probably things that are really interesting, you actually want to buy them. Well, that's great. That's how we think about it today. And what the company, the backend does is it has run those recommendation engines, and the entire e-commerce front end store, think about the investment associated with running all of that. Right? Well, fast forward as AI gets better, what if not six but nine, maybe nine and a half out of 10 items are things you're going to buy this week?

When that happens, the business model changes. Monday morning, you wake up, you open your door, you step outside, there's a box on your doorstep. What is that? You pick the box, you come inside, you open the box inside. There are the 10 things that were being recommended, except we know nine and a half of those you're going to buy anyway that week. Now the other item, the one that you didn't want, you throw it back in the box, you put it in the doorstep, someone's going to come by and pick it up in four hours from now or on Friday or something like that. Completely changed the business model. You're not even going online. You're not even looking through all of this stuff. And all the investments, now think about the backend of that. The industry's changed, because it's not about throwing all the things at you and recommending it. It's actually being one step proactive, getting it to your door and working at a reverse logistics chain to efficiently pick this up from your door.

Baratunde Thurston (19:48):

You just explained how Santa Claus works. Thank you. That's the Santa Claus algorithm. And as long as they don't charge me for it, I'm going to be very excited. But if they took my money, I'm going to feel a certain type of way until I started using all those products and reluctantly admit that this was a great experience. Olaf?

Olaf Groth (20:02):

Well, and to use the Santa Claus analogy right now, how Santa Claus and all these little elves work is different, right? So the workflow has changed. So for the CIO, they need to know that a business model change like this entails workflow changes. So giving people the predictive tools and that power means somebody has to think about, where do I have to put these nine and a half or 10 different products? At what point in the week? And by the way, now that I have all this intelligence, how do I then flow that data back into the product designers, to design new products? But all of these are new work processes and workflows. So the design of work actually changes inside the company.

Baratunde Thurston (20:41):

Everything changes.

Olaf Groth (20:42):

So I think that all these dystopian messages of all we're going to need ... the future of the factory is all machines, one human and one dog, and the dog's only there to keep the human company, I think that's rubbish. I don't think that's necessarily going to happen. There may be some factories who look like that. But by and large, we will have jobs for humans, and maybe more jobs for humans. But here's the thing. We will never get there if we just measure the human as going head-to-head with the machine on certain metrics that the machine can already fulfill very, very well, everything that's analytical, that's structural, that has to do with routine jobs. We need to actually have the humans play to their innately human skills, right? Things that are hard to measure, like empathy, and love and coaching and management and counseling.

Baratunde Thurston (21:29):

All this funny stuff.

Olaf Groth (21:30):

All this funny stuff. Imagination, right? Inspiration.

Baratunde Thurston (21:33):

Judgment.

Olaf Groth (21:34):

Right? Judgment. How do you even define judgment? We don't even know how to define judgment and much less measure it. There's no taxonomies out there for that stuff. But that's the really, really important stuff that is so important for productivity. But it's hard to measure. It takes a discrete effort for us to say, what actually makes a human productive? Is it the fastest way of calculating or navigating down a structured process? That sounds to me like we're an analog machine, right? That's not where the highest productivity is. But creativity, visioning capability, theory capability, the kind of thing that a chess grandmaster does really well, if put to the right use in a company, can be exponentially more productive in combination with a machine. Right? But for that, we need to actually train people and we don't have the institutions to do that.

Baratunde Thurston (22:18):

This has been fascinating. We are not done, but we are going to take a pause to do something very awkward together.

Sanjay Srivastava (22:24):

Okay.

Baratunde Thurston (22:25):

When the tech industry talks, people listen, but that doesn't mean they understand. Fact is, a lot of what tech experts say is gibberish to the general public. And that's not good if you want the world to trust you. So we created a segment that challenges our guests to describe what they do in the language of laypeople. You're going to explain your job to each other as if you were on a first date. The goal is to be

conversational and engaging, not to plunge your partner into a REM cycle, because that's the surest way to blow your shot at date number two. Get ready to get awakened and awkward. It's time for Date Night IT.

Are you ready for the weirdness?

Olaf Groth (23:07):

Can you ever be ready?

Baratunde Thurston (23:08):

No, but you, you have to go sometimes. So I'm going to tell you all-

Olaf Groth (23:12):

Let's dive.

Baratunde Thurston (23:12):

You go first. Explain your job to Sanjay as if you are on a first date and you want a second.

Olaf Groth (23:17):

Well, Sanjay, it's so good to be with you tonight. And it's a fantastic wine, such a great meal. Look, I think we have a lot more to talk about here. We should spend more time together because what I do is, I help people see the future, but you can't do it in one dinner. So we have to do it again. What I do is I help people vision where the future could plausibly go and then I help them figure out what it means for their lives, for their businesses, for their strategies. And then I write books about it and I teach young leaders how to shape the future they want to see. Right? And so we definitely have to talk more about this.

Baratunde Thurston (23:48):

All right. Sanjay, what did you think of how Olaf explained his work?

Sanjay Srivastava (23:52):

I thought Olaf is a fantastic and articulate speaker. So I don't think he could have done more. He left me wondering on, is it all future? Like, is it healthcare, longevity of life, spiritual wellbeing? Or is it data, AI, tech?

Olaf Groth (24:07):

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sanjay Srivastava (24:08):

Maybe it's-

Olaf Groth (24:08):

Deep tech. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Sanjay Srivastava (24:09):

But I'm not being critical, because I thought that was fantastic. I love his-

Baratunde Thurston (24:12):

You love what he did.

Sanjay Srivastava (24:13):

Yeah.

Baratunde Thurston (24:13):

Okay. So you would do a second date based on what you just heard. [crosstalk 00:24:18]. That was a long pause.

Olaf Groth (24:19):

Yeah, I know. That's really a no.

Baratunde Thurston (24:22):

Compliment, compliment, compliment, I don't know, hesitation. The body speaks when the mouth doesn't. I also, I did like Olaf the way you three or 10 times said, "We need a second date." Little heavy handed on your intentions here. Got to ease up off the gas.

Olaf Groth (24:39):

Let's do it.

Baratunde Thurston (24:39):

Let it glide. Let it glide.

Olaf Groth (24:41):

Let it glide.

Baratunde Thurston (24:42):

Right. Sanjay, with the benefit of his experience, why don't you shoot your shot and explain your job to Olaf?

Sanjay Srivastava (24:48):

Olaf. It's great to be here with you. I have to tell you a little bit about what I spend time on, because I think you might be interested in my work. I work across Fortune 500 companies and I help them transform their businesses using digital capabilities, data, technology, AI, analytics, and automation software. And it's a really interesting role because at the heart of it, it's about technology, but it's not really just about technology. We spend a lot of time thinking about people. We think a lot about processes. We think a lot about setting up a data infrastructure and governance and ethics, and then we roll the technology in. I get to see a lot, good and bad. I get to get in really tough spots and some great outcomes. And so I love what I do, and I hope we'll get a chance to talk more about it.

Baratunde Thurston (25:36):

Right. All right. Sanjay, well done. Olaf, what is your response to Sanjay's pitch?

Olaf Groth (25:42):

So, I'm intrigued, and I wish he had brought it back to, what does it mean to me? Where's the tension? Like, you had some tensions in there, like some people ... There was in your last couple of sentences, you said it's not a slam dunk, right? There is a lot of stuff to figure out. Bringing out that tension a bit more, a little bit more drama maybe to intrigue me as to what it could mean for me, that would've really done the trick.

Baratunde Thurston (26:03):

As for something that meant something to me, you had me at data analytics. I'm not sure that's going to work with everybody on the first date, but it was very honest. So I'll give you points for honesty. I want to thank you for your commitment to the garage, to this conversation, to our silly games, and our really thoughtful, sometimes conflicting conversation. I've learned a ton and I've enjoyed every moment of it. Thank you both.

Olaf Groth (26:26):

Thank you.

Sanjay Srivastava (26:27):

Thank you.

Olaf Groth (26:27):

It's a pleasure to be here.

Baratunde Thurston (26:28):

IT never sleeps, but I do. So, that's it for tonight. Thanks to our guests, Olaf Groth and Sanjay Srivastava for hanging out with us. And thanks to all of you for watching. I'm Baratunde Thurston and I'll see you on the next Lenovo Late Night IT.