Cascade Summit 2026

AGENDA SUMMARY

Executives from Boeing, Stripe, Intuit, the Gates Foundation, Lumen Technologies, Avalara, Slalom, Microsoft, and other organizations gathered at Microsoft's Lincoln Square offices in Bellevue for a full day of conversation about what it actually takes to deploy AI across the enterprise.

The through-line was unmistakable: the gap between AI experimentation and AI at scale is closing fast, and the organizations moving now are pulling away from those still waiting.

TOP TAKEAWAYS

1. AI Is Now a CEO Mandate, Not an IT Experiment

The era of bottom-up AI pilots is over. Steve Bandrowczak opened the morning with a blunt message: AI transformation must be led from the top, with the CEO personally accountable for outcomes. Tom Davis reinforced the point when he asked the room who deploys AI at true production scale – only two or three hands went up out of fifty. Roger Beggs warned that the biggest mistake he sees across TPG's portfolio is waiting for incumbent SaaS vendors to add AI for you. The consensus was clear: treating AI as an IT initiative instead of a business strategy is the fastest way to fall behind.



"If your CEO is not personally driving AI strategy, you're not taking it seriously."
Steve Bandrowczak, Former CEO, Xerox

2. Speed to Value Separates Winners from Everyone Else

Multiple speakers converged on the same number: six weeks. Steve Bandrowczak described mandating that every AI initiative at Xerox deliver measurable results within six weeks, declaring that any program running ninety days or longer is destined to fail. Others drew a sharp contrast between six-week Cascade deployments and nine-month+ HR Tech rollouts. The message: bias toward action and iterate, don't over-plan.



"Being able to launch [Cascade] in six weeks changes all of my opinions about build versus buy." Britt Provost, SVP HR, Sunbit

3. The ROI Is Real, Measurable, and Accelerating

This was not a day of hypotheticals. Steve Bandrowczak shared that Xerox generated over $1 billion in AI-driven savings: collections exposure dropped from $200 million to $70 million in ninety days, inside sales grew 20 percent after five years of 3-percent-per-year decline, and 60 percent of field service calls shifted to remote resolution. Steve estimated that 50 to 70 percent of all enterprise work today can be handled through AI agents – and framed that not as a distant future but as the current reality for companies willing to move.



"50 to 70 percent of all work today can be done through agents."
Steve Bandrowczak, Former CEO, Xerox

4. 75 Percent Buy, Don't Build – Stop Building, Start Assembling: The New Enterprise AI Playbook

Tom Davis shared that 75 percent of enterprise AI decisions now lean toward buying purpose-built solutions rather than building from scratch, describing the current market as a kind of fantasy draft for best-in-class agents. Microsoft scouts 40,000 startups annually and curates a few hundred for its customers; the number-one question from CIOs is whether a given startup will still exist tomorrow. Justice West offered the pragmatic middle ground: build the governance and orchestration layer in-house, then plug in specialist tools like Cascade underneath. The consensus favored composability over monolithic platforms.



"It's like fantasy football for agents right now."
Tom Davis, GM & Partner, Microsoft for Startups

5. Change Management Is Harder Than the Technology

Every implementation panel circled back to the same insight: the technology works, but adoption requires deliberate effort. Justice West and Britt Provost both noted that prompt literacy is a real barrier even among younger workers who are assumed to be digital natives. Jimmy Ye from Cascade stressed the importance of engaging IT teams early, because without their buy-in, deployments stall indefinitely. Stacy Kruger described how reframing the tool as an employee experience rather than a technology rollout drove engagement. Building trust also means guaranteeing anonymity for sensitive questions – employees will not engage honestly if they feel monitored.



"Don't look at it as a tool - it's an experience."
Stacy Kruger, VP Total Rewards, Smurfit Westrock

6. Employees Need a Single Front Door, Not More Portals

A clear design principle emerged across sessions: employees should never have to figure out which system, portal, or agent to consult. Stacy Kruger described the goal as one entry point with different agents working behind the scenes. Tom Davis explained Microsoft's vision of Copilot as the single interface, with specialized agents invoked automatically. Britt Provost emphasized that employees should not need to know which agent they are talking to. Justice West shared how OneOncology is building a unified platform called OnePlace to connect disparate systems across its network. The era of portal sprawl is ending.



"One entry point, different agents underneath – not more portals." **Stacy Kruger, VP Total Rewards, Smurfit Westrock**

7. Healthcare Is an Urgent Frontier for AI

The healthcare panel surfaced a stark reality: employers are facing double-digit cost increases. Agnes Quiggle noted that employees are already turning to ChatGPT and Claude for healthcare navigation, putting employers at an inflection point – either guide that behavior or lose control of it. She argued that AI can sit on top of existing benefits solutions to surface the right next step without ripping out the vendor stack. Dylan Landers-Nelson added a sobering statistic: only one-third of HR leaders say they are part of the AI journey at their organizations, even as healthcare costs demand new approaches.



"The health care ecosystem is so complicated that when people are in situations where they're scared, they're hurt, they're trying to figure out their livelihood, their family's health – being a trusted place where an employee can go to say, 'I need help, help me,' is an incredible opportunity." **Agnes Quiggle, Partner, Mercer**

8. The Most Undervalued Asset in Your AI Stack: Your Knowledge Base

Several speakers made the case that the knowledge base powering an AI assistant is not just a technical input – it is a strategic asset. Britt Provost called it one of the most important pieces of IP a company owns, because it reflects the organization's culture and how it communicates with employees. Justice West offered a memorable framing: the day you buy an AI tool will be the dumbest it will ever be if you are iterating correctly, because the knowledge base should improve continuously. Investing in content quality and ongoing curation is the single highest-leverage activity for any AI deployment.



"The day you buy it will be the dumbest it will ever be – if you're doing that correctly." **Justice West, Enterprise Platform Solutions, OneOncology**

SPEAKERS



Ana-Maria Constantin
CEO & Co-Founder,
Cascade AI



Tom Davis
GM & Partner, Microsoft
for Startups



Steve Bandrowczak
Former CEO,
Xerox



Eylul Kayin
Former Partner,
Gradient



Roger Beggs
VP & Operating Partner,
TPG



Justice West
Enterprise Platform
Solutions, OneOncology



Prasad Setty
Stanford GSB / Former VP
People Ops, Google



Agnes Quiggle
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