

The NEXXT Perspective

The real power of the story that follows isn't that it was a planned innovation—it wasn't. It started with a canceled interview. A problem to solve. And a willingness to see what might happen by collaborating with an AI tool rather than scrambling for a workaround. What emerged wasn't just a one-off solution—it became an inspiration to how AI can support human insight, rehearsal, empathy, and engagement. From this simple, small use case emerged a broader model and concept of what sales, preparation, market research, and messaging could look like in the modern era.

This article uses that case study as a springboard to explore something bigger: how the speed of modern business – often mistaken as an obstacle to deep thinking; and AI – often a lazy path to outsourcing due diligence to technology, can in fact be complimentary. It looks at how AI, when used with intentionality, gives us new tools for prototyping, testing, and validating ideas—quickly, inexpensively, and with human nuance still fully present. It's a story of how we can shift from reactive outputs to proactive rehearsal, from guessing to guided insight.

This story reminds us:

- Don't try to "learn AI." Use it on something real. The context will teach you more than theory ever could.
- Good is easy. Great takes iteration. AI delivers "good enough" fast—but true value comes through refinement.
- Innovation thrives under pressure. Constraints – like a canceled meeting – can unlock entirely new thinking.
- The best way to influence a team or culture is to lead with your own curiosity. Share your experiments—even the imperfect ones.

Most importantly, this article isn't about a singular success. It's a prompt – for anyone working with clients, crafting solutions, managing complexity, or telling a story – to ask themselves: what if I didn't wait for the perfect moment or the perfect tool? What if I just started?

Because sometimes transformation begins – not with permission, but with a prompt.



Case Study: When the Interviewee Canceled A Story of AI, Ingenuity, and Intentionality

I wasn't trying to prove a point about AI. I was solving a problem. A scheduled interview subject for an executive education project canceled unexpectedly, and rather than scramble for a last-minute replacement, I turned to a tool already in my hands: generative AI.

This wasn't a gimmick – it was a deep research exercise.

Using ChatGPT, I began constructing a digital persona of the intended interviewee. Not just a surface-level mimic, but a nuanced, data-informed proxy shaped through iteration, feedback, and careful refinement. The individual was a relatively public figure, providing a rich array of available content: interviews, articles, speaking engagements, and thought pieces that could be parsed and synthesized into an AI-powered model of their thinking, speaking style, and probable responses.

What unfolded next was a full interview – not with the actual person, but with the AI-crafted persona. When I later shared the AI-generated responses with the real individual, their reaction was striking: "That's amazingly close to what I would've said."

This wasn't merely about simulating a person. It was about maintaining the value of the conversation even without the original participant. It marked a shift from cancellation to continuity – and from reactivity to resourcefulness.

Perhaps most importantly, it sparked something deeper. What began as a workaround became a lens into a broader opportunity: using AI not just to replicate reality, but to rehearse it. To prepare, reflect, and refine – before ever stepping into the room.

From Simulation to Strategy: Reframing the Role of AI in Human Preparation

While this might initially sound like a clever, isolated hack, it's representative of a broader shift in how AI can enhance real-world workflows and decision-making. Typically, AI's value is framed around efficiency – time savings, automation, rapid production. What my experiment revealed was a more profound capability: AI's potential to model scenarios, enabling strategic rehearsal and foresight.

When AI becomes a stand-in – whether for a customer, buyer, stakeholder, or interviewee – it allows exploration of scenarios, testing of reactions, and refinement of strategies before they ever become "live." This shifts the value proposition from productivity and efficiency, to preparedness. From generating outputs to developing deeper insights.



This mode of strategic rehearsal isn't easily quantifiable. There's no direct or easily measurable ROI calculator for increased confidence, better alignment, or clearer messaging. Yet, these less-measurable outcomes might represent AI's greatest and most nuanced contribution.

The AI persona I built succeeded partly due to abundant source data. The modeled individual had a robust, documented public presence. This highlights an important limitation: AI persona fidelity is closely tied to the richness and availability of source material. Sparse data yields generic outputs; rich context creates meaningful simulations.

That said, most organizations – whether they realize it or not – are already rich with this type of internal data. From service ticket histories and CRM notes to proposal archives, email threads, and customer feedback logs, mature organizations possess a vast reservoir of behavioral and contextual data that can be mined to construct meaningful, tailored personas. Even at the individual level, many client-facing professionals can intuitively describe the preferences, quirks, and tendencies of their typical customers. Those mental models can form the foundation of a digital persona.

What the case study revealed was not just the power of data, but the accessibility of the approach. Persona building isn't only for tech giants or marketing departments with deep budgets. It's an approach anyone can explore—with nothing more than a license to an LLM and a willingness to experiment.

Yet, the broader principle remains compelling: AI as a preparatory partner is just starting to be fully appreciated. Whether rehearsing sales pitches against AI-modeled skeptical buyers, or anticipating stakeholder objections to refine strategic presentations, the aim isn't AI replacing us – but enhancing how prepared, informed, and intentional we are when we arrive.

So in a practical and applied sense, let's bring this back to the AV and integration world. In sales or solution design, for instance, we often struggle to balance features, cost, and value in front of clients with different priorities. What if we could simulate how a specific customer type might respond to the way we present options? In project management, how might a stakeholder react to unexpected delays or change orders? In product marketing, how will our market respond to different ways we tell our story, or how we frame our value?

Any individual with internal or external customer interaction can benefit from testing and refining those conversations in advance. And that's the point: AI lets us rehearse the hard stuff before it counts. No risk. No judgment. Just smarter, sharper engagement.

The Rise of the AI-Enabled Persona: A Digital Twin Mindset



To bridge concept into application, we can borrow a familiar construct from our own industry: the digital twin. Just as building information modeling and digital twins allow engineers and facility managers to simulate and refine physical systems before construction, we now have the ability to create digital representations of customers, stakeholders, or collaborators to rehearse engagements before they happen.

AI should no longer be looked at just as a task executor; there is real proactive opportunity for it to become a modeler. With advancements in large language models like GPT-4, we have the potential to simulate digital “twins” of customers, colleagues, or experts with uncanny realism. These AI agents can be used to test ideas, rehearse scenarios, or explore behavioral nuances with a depth and speed that traditional methods can’t match.

While the proposition of digital personas replacing real human focus groups might seem far fetched, in fact AI predictive modeling in this application has reached a degree of reliability proven in research to be comparable to traditional human groups. Focus group research is never 100% accurate simply due to the inherently analog nature of humans, and in some ways vast datasets around personas can yield insights as or more accurate as those from traditional smaller scale focus groups. But the key difference? These AI-driven analyses can be performed in seconds rather than weeks, and for pennies rather than thousands of dollars, representing a paradigm shift in how businesses approach market understanding and persona modeling.

It positions AI not merely as a replacement for human input, but as a strategic enabler for more confident decision-making and richer preparation. And in the same way that digital twins in construction identify conflicts before a single beam is placed, AI personas help uncover misalignments in narrative, assumptions, or strategy before we ever walk into a meeting or launch a campaign.

Sales Rehearsal in the AI Age: The Power of the “Do-Over”

Consider the application in sales enablement. Using AI agents to simulate buyer personas for pitch practice, a digital persona of your ideal (or specific) customer, fine-tuned to exhibit specific preferences, objections, or even moods, can be a 24/7 role-play partner for sales teams. The benefits are immediate: shortened onboarding, increased confidence, and improved win rates.

For decades, many salespeople have learned the craft not in classrooms or simulations – but on the job, often through costly trial and error in front of real customers. As my late friend Brad Sousa once said, it’s like “learning to shave on the customer’s face.” While traditional



training environments attempted to mitigate this by rehearsing in front of peers or coaches, those scenarios often felt artificial, judgment-laden, and inefficient.

AI changes this equation. By enabling highly realistic, low-risk simulations, sales reps can now engage in repeated, tailored practice without the fear of embarrassment or social friction. There's no judgment from an AI persona – only feedback. And when AI is used not just as a simulator but as a coach, the learning curve compresses dramatically. Companies using these AI "buyers" have reported 30–40% faster ramp times and up to 45% improvement in deal conversion rates.

But beyond rehearsal, AI offers something even more compelling – the opportunity for a "do-over." Imagine revisiting presentations that didn't quite hit the mark. In an age where speed and agility dominate, preparation can often become rushed or superficial, limiting depth of insight. AI provides an exceptional pathway to balance speed with due diligence, enabling businesses to rapidly test, validate, and refine responses. It respects the imperative of speed while empowering teams to differentiate, resonate deeply, and build emotional connections. Think of the power of a team using an AI persona to rehearse a major account pitch the night before their client meeting. To role-play objections, stress-test assumptions, and adjust the tone and narrative of their story. When the real meeting happens, it should feel more like a continuation than a pitch. This partnership of AI plus human insight ensures we not only demonstrate a profound understanding of the customer to foster trust, but ultimately triggers that "exceed expectations" emotion within the customer that is so powerful in tipping the buying scales.

Market Research at Compute Speed

The same approach revolutionizes traditional market research. What once required months of focus groups and surveys can now happen in hours. AI persona panels – trained on real customer data – can test reactions to messaging, features, or experiences across thousands of simulated users. The best part? These personas don't fatigue, forget, or flake. They are on call at any hour of the day or night – especially as strategies pivot, schedules compress, and deadlines loom.

Properly leveraged, this agility represents the speed of modern business: the capacity to iterate and evolve in real time, to test and validate ideas without waiting for focus groups, or even slower real-world results. It unlocks the power of experimentation while still mitigating risk, dramatically reducing the need for final product perfection before deployment. This modeling revolution allows exploration of a wider array of questions – what if our Gen Z buyers see this ad? What if we raise the price by 10%? What if we pitch it to IT first, not the



business owner? AI offers the potential to test human perspective at compute speed, offering strategic agility and responsiveness.

Conclusion: Prototyping the Human Conversation – from Models to Momentum

Earlier, we explored the premise of digital twins and building information modeling—concepts that have long helped the built environment anticipate conflicts and refine plans before a single beam is laid. As I was writing this, another parallel struck me, that being the similarities of the opportunity of AI-driven engagement modeling and the rise a number of years ago of 3D printing.

Years ago, a visit I made to the Bose factory in Framingham revealed how they had brought their culture and reputation for innovation to power speed and agility and even greater experimentation to rapid prototyping. Their "maker space" – a warehouse full of almost every imaginable tool and technology for building almost anything – had transformed how their product design and management teams imagined, built, tested, and evolved their ideas – quickly, repeatedly, and without fear of failure. Where in the past their product design process had a natural time constraint in the number of prototypes that could be built – only so many shots at getting it right when it took weeks to outsource and receive prototypes – 3D printers in particular had created an almost unlimited prototyping quantity if needed to reach the "perfection" bar Bose is known for.

Just as 3D printers revolutionized the prototyping of physical products – reducing cycle times from months to hours, and slashing costs while dramatically increasing innovation velocity – AI has the capacity to do the same for prototyping human interaction.

We are entering an age where ideas and insights can be trialed at the speed of thought, where feedback loops are immediate, and where the risks of innovation are vastly reduced. An era where it's not about perfection – it's about momentum. Much like digital twins in the built environment help reveal design conflicts and improve construction planning at a macro physical scale, & 3d printers similarly at a micro scale, AI-powered human prototypes are set to do the same in the realm of messaging, engagement, and communication. Our chance to move from static documents and gut-feel strategies to dynamic, tested, and tuned interactions. It's about showing up to every room, conversation, or pitch with not just information, but insight. Not just speed, but prototyped preparedness.

In that light, this story is not just a case study. It's a glimpse of what's possible when ingenuity meets intentionality – and when AI becomes not a reactive crutch, but a proactive co-pilot in the pursuit of better human connection. If there's one takeaway NEXXT consistently highlights, it's this: you don't need a major transformation program to get started in triggering





innovation & transformation. Powerful breakthroughs often begin with a small experiment, a single conversation, the courage to try something new, and in this instance even a crisis. So whatever your role, if iteration, feedback, customer engagement etc. are foundational to your success, take the lessons here and try something similar yourself. Define and build a persona. Explore a scenario. You might be surprised where it leads.

Byron Tarry is the Founder and Chief Transformation Officer of NEXXT. A visionary leader with over 30 years of experience in the Audio Visual and Collaboration Technologies industry, Prior to NEXXT, Byron served for nearly a decade as CEO of a global AV integration company. He brings a deep understanding of how technology can transform businesses – and a passionate belief in its potential to do so meaningfully, collaboratively, and sustainably.

That passion, combined with a “think different” mindset, laid the foundation for NEXXT’s unique positioning: an education, advisory, and enablement organization driven by a social enterprise mission, and inspired by the collaborative economy. Through NEXXT, Byron leverages his expertise in business model innovation to help organizations navigate the transformative forces reshaping today’s business environment — from global scale, to sustainability, and the disruptive power and potential of AI — to not just to survive, but thrive in this unprecedented era of change & opportunity.

