

L&T Finance Chief AI Officer Dr. Debarag Banerjee Reveals How AI is Democratizing Credit Access for Millions of Indians

Stanford PhD and AI Pioneer Dr. Debarag Banerjee shares insights on building ethical, high-impact AI systems in financial services

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EINPresswire.com/ -- [CAIO Connect](#), the leading platform for Chief AI Officers and enterprise AI leaders, released a groundbreaking episode on The CAIO

Connect Podcast featuring [Dr. Debarag Banerjee](#), Chief AI and Data Officer at L&T Finance with the host [Sanjay Puri](#). The episode offers insights in building enterprise AI systems that deliver measurable business impact while maintaining ethical governance standards.



Where AI Meets Leadership

CAIO Connect Podcast

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Dr. Debarag Banerjee, is transforming how a \$12 billion lending institution serves over 10 million borrowers across India. Dr. Banerjee shared his journey from Silicon Valley startups to building India's fastest growing 4G network at Jio and now revolutionizing financial inclusion through artificial intelligence.

"The most important thing when you bring your board and C-suite executives together in being a co-traveler in the AI

strategy is to listen more than you proselytize," Dr. Banerjee explained. "I actually ran a hands-on boot camp for our entire C-suite and business heads where they didn't just learn about AI – they built something themselves. That's when the lights really went on."

Dr. Banerjee introduced the concept of RODI - Return on Data Investment – a framework for measuring whether data sources truly drive business value. "We looked at traditional sources like credit bureaus, but also non-traditional signals like bank statement patterns and expenditure behavior," he said. "The surprising insight was that some less traditional sources actually

produced higher RODI numbers than established ones."

This approach powers Cyclops, L&T Finance's real-time underwriting engine that processes loan decisions in under four seconds. The system now handles 100% of the company's two-wheeler loans and a significant portion of farm and SME lending.

The episode delivered actionable frameworks that CAIO Connect's global audience can immediately apply:

1. Dr. Banerjee advocates for experiential learning over traditional presentations. His approach of running hands-on AI bootcamps for board members and C-suite executives created co-creators rather than skeptics.
2. For leaders facing 90-day pressure to show results, Dr. Banerjee recommends starting with quick wins like chatbots, collections automation, or productivity tools while building longer-term systems like underwriting that require more time to prove value.
3. Operating under Reserve Bank of India guidelines, L&T Finance maintains independent model review committees and InfoSec audits before any large-scale deployment, demonstrating how to balance innovation with compliance.
4. Rather than competing with tech giants for expensive talent, L&T Finance recruits young engineers with strong mathematical foundations through open machine learning challenges. "Success depends on attitude more than credentials," Dr. Banerjee noted, emphasizing that critical thinking and problem-solving remain essential even as AI tools automate coding.

Beyond business metrics, the conversation highlighted AI's social impact. By analyzing alternative data sources with customer consent, L&T Finance identifies creditworthy borrowers- gig workers, young professionals, and rural customers- who might be overlooked by traditional systems. This approach is expanding financial inclusion across India's diverse population.

The discussion explored emerging applications of Agentic AI, from customer-facing chatbots with tool-calling capabilities to internal workflows that augment human underwriters. Dr. Banerjee emphasized an "experiment, evaluate, then scale" approach for deploying agentic systems in production.

"This episode exemplifies what CAIO Connect stands for," said host Sanjay Puri. "We're building a



community where enterprise AI leaders don't just talk about transformation—they share the actual playbooks, mistakes, and measurable results that help peers accelerate their own journeys."

Dr. Banerjee's parting wisdom reflects his practical philosophy: "The way we're winning the talent war is not by fighting it head-to-head, but by building the right culture and growing talent in-house. And ultimately, AI should serve people – opening up access to credit for millions who would otherwise go unnoticed by traditional systems."

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