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Lexmark's Global CTO Vishal Gupta Reveals How AI Transformed a Declining Industry into a Growth Engine

Vishal Gupta shares enterprise AI playbook: From 2,000 ideas to measurable ROI through strategic talent development and cross-functional alignment

CAIO Connect Podcast

Sanjay Puri with Vishal Gupta

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In an industry facing steady decline, Lexmark International achieved something remarkable in 2024: growing nearly five times faster than the market while posting high double-digit profit growth. The secret weapon? A carefully orchestrated AI transformation strategy that prioritized people over technology hype.

Vishal Gupta, Global CTO, CIO, and SVP of Connected Technology at Lexmark, recently shared his enterprise AI playbook on The CAIO Connect Podcast with the host Sanjay Puri, offering rare insights into how traditional manufacturers can leverage AI for competitive advantage. His approach challenges conventional wisdom about AI adoption, emphasizing strategic focus, internal talent development, and cross-functional buy-in over expensive external hires and vendor solutions.

When Lexmark first brainstormed AI opportunities, the team generated 2,000 ideas—a common scenario for enterprises embracing AI. But Gupta recognized that without ruthless prioritization, this abundance would lead nowhere.

"We created a steering team and had each C-level executive nominate one VP to represent what are the top two use cases that are going to make an eight or nine-figure difference to them," Gupta explained. "It's much easier to figure out 100 use cases than it is to figure out two use cases that are going to make a $10 million or $50 million or $100 million difference to you."

> Security, ethics, governance, and data quality are absolutely key. Because garbage in, garbage out.”
>
> *Vishal Gupta*

This collaborative approach delivered two critical outcomes: genuine buy-in from business leaders and use cases with material financial impact. The results speak for themselves—Lexmark extended printer lifespan from four to seven years through predictive AI, achieved 96% automated supply fulfillment with zero human touch, and reduced customer support handling time by 50%.

Gupta identified AI as the first technology in three decades where adoption follows a "pull" rather than "push" model—boards and CEOs are now asking technology leaders what they're doing with AI, rather than the reverse. But this shift creates new challenges.

"It becomes very important for somebody in that role to make sure you don't let the fear take over," Gupta emphasized. "So how do you drive that change in a positive way where people are looking forward to it, where it's a force multiplier and not something that's giving people pause?"

His vision centers on using AI to drive consistent 3-5% annual productivity improvements across all functions, enabling real wage growth beyond inflation—something U.S. productivity statistics haven't delivered in decades.

Rather than treating ethics and security as barriers to innovation, Gupta established an AI Ethics Board a year ago, pattern after UK frameworks. The board evaluates two critical questions: Should this problem be solved by AI at all? And how can we evaluate data quality for bias?

"To go fast, sometimes you have to go slow," Gupta explained. "Security, ethics, governance, and data quality are absolutely key. Because garbage in, garbage out—wrong data, incomplete data will lead you to the wrong conclusions."

Strategic Focus Matters More Than Speed: Narrowing 2,000 AI ideas to high-impact use cases through C-suite collaboration ensures ROI and organizational buy-in.

Build Talent, Don't Just Buy It: Internal AI training programs create strategic ambassadors across functions while avoiding unsustainable talent wars.

Governance Enables Innovation: Establishing ethics boards and data quality frameworks early accelerates deployment by building trust.

Measure What Matters: Focus on enterprise-wide productivity gains and material financial outcomes, not proof-of-concepts and demos.

As enterprises navigate the AI transformation journey, Gupta's experience at Lexmark offers a pragmatic playbook: prioritize ruthlessly, invest in your people, secure executive buy-in, and remember that sustainable AI adoption is fundamentally about change management, not just technology deployment.

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