

Balancing Innovation and Control: Tom Andriola's Blueprint for AI at Scale

Tom Andriola shares how to build responsible AI—balancing innovation & governance while redefining the Chief AI Officer's role in digital transformation.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- In this episode of [CAIO Connect](#), host [Sanjay Puri](#) sits down with [Tom Andriola](#), former Vice Chancellor and Chief Digital Officer at

UC Irvine and now at Dynatrace, to explore how universities and enterprises can scale AI responsibly. Tom—who led UC Irvine's pioneering ZotGPT initiative—shares how he built one of the first university AI platforms in the U.S., branded business transformation, and prepared students for careers in the Age of AI. From agentic AI to the evolving role of the Chief AI Officer, this is a must-listen masterclass for leaders shaping enterprise AI strategy.

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You have to have a strategy for how you deal with a large amount of decentralized activity, because if you have a structure for working with it, you can effectively build an enterprise strategy.”

Tom Andriola

Walking the Razor's Edge

Chief AI Officers today sit on a razor's edge—pulled between innovation and compliance. As Tom notes, their mandate is twofold: drive competitive advantage while managing risk. And the challenge isn't confined to IT. “AI will change every role,” he says, echoing Walmart's CEO, who reminded 2.1 million employees that everyone's job will evolve.

For UC Irvine, that realization led to a threefold mission: equip 30,000 employees for new workflows, empower 40,000 students with responsible AI fluency, and ensure the university itself stays competitively agile in an accelerating digital world.

The ZotGPT Moment

In 2023, Tom and his team launched ZotGPT—a secure, university-branded AI platform. Why build instead of buy? Control, trust, and culture. Commercial tools were powerful but generic. UC Irvine needed a platform that reflected its brand, data ethics, and learning mission.



CAIO Connect

“Transformation needs branding and cache,” Tom explains. By connecting UC Irvine’s mascot, Peter the Anteater, with “Zot,” the school’s iconic rally cry, ZotGPT became more than a tool—it became a movement. Faculty, students, and staff rallied around a shared call to innovate responsibly.

How AI Adoption Scales

UC Irvine’s journey mirrors what every enterprise faces. Adoption follows three stages:

1. Privacy & Trust—Calm fears with clarity. As Tom puts it, “What you do in the backyard stays in the backyard.”
2. Data Quality—Move from fear to confidence.
3. Integration & Accountability—Treat AI as a silicon-based coworker, with performance metrics and ethical oversight.

Once trust and clarity took root, adoption surged from 15% to nearly 40%. “That’s when the magic happens,” says Tom.

Balancing Innovation and Control

Tom calls this tension the CAIO’s razor’s edge: growth leaders push for speed, while compliance teams hit the brakes. His advice? Don’t choose sides—build balance through technology itself. Guardrails, audit tools, and model flexibility let organizations stay innovative and safe. At Dynatrace, he now helps enterprises adopt that mindset—addressing technological challenges with technology, not bureaucracy.

Leading the Transformation

Tom believes the modern Chief AI Officer isn’t a technologist first—they’re a translator, bridge-builder, and transformation leader. The CAIO’s job is to turn AI from an abstract capability into tangible business outcomes.

“Technology and innovation are one and the same now,” he says. “The Chief AI Officer and Head of Business Transformation? That’s the same person.”

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BLUEPRINT FOR
ENTERPRISE AI
LEADERSHIP

TOM ANDRIOLA
Former Chief Information & Data Officer
AI Leader With Dynatrace

SANJAY PURI
Host and President
CAIO Connect

Tom Andriola, former Vice Chancellor and Chief Digital Officer at UC Irvine with Sanjay Puri, President, Knowledge Networks

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