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Generative AI Can Be Useful (But You Need to Provide Context)



I had the privilege of attending an engaging and thoughtful in-person program recently on Generative AI for the Corporate and Securities Lawyer. Kara Tatman, VP and Assistant General Counsel at Ampere Computing, moderated an interactive panel featuring Microsoft's Jason Barnwell (General Manager for Digital Transformation of Corporate, External, and Legal Affairs) and Perkins Coie's own Gwyn McAlpine (Knowledge Management Director).

One of the points Jason made about using generative AI is that you need to provide it with enough context to get useful content out of it. Because it is a technology that is making predictions based on massive amounts of data - just like we all make predictions in our daily interactions in order to answer questions and interact with the people on our lives. To do those things, we need context.

As he was talking, the example that kept replaying in my mind was Pictionary. Probably because I play a lot of board games and recently spent a long weekend playing games with my favorite game-playing friends and my kids. While watching my kids learn to play, and seeing how it clicked for my daughter almost immediately, I realized that one of the most important skills to playing it well is *empathy*. You have to see your drawing from the eyes of the person who does not have the answer in their head.

My all-time favorite Pictionary win was when my friend drew a global map, identified India, and started drawing lots and lots of stick figures. I said "overpopulation" and we had won the "difficult" clue with more than half of the sand left in the timer (and the rest of the players staring at us like they thought we were cheating). The few seconds my friend spent providing sufficient context to get my thinking aligned with hers paid significant dividends.

Generative AI has extraordinary potential to be the basis for tools that can synthesize large amounts of information and provide first drafts that give us the flexibility to spend our precious time being creative. I'm excited about these tools. But, we all need to learn how best to use them, and build the skills necessary to take

advantage of that potential. And I think those who have a natural inclination towards empathy will have a leg up.

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