

09-22 Interview: Natalie Kucior - AI Adoption in Enterprises

Interview Information

- Date & Time: 2026-09-22 14:02:34
- Location: [Insert Location]
- Interviewer: [Insert Name]
- Interviewee: Natalie Kucior (also referred to as "Natalie"; works as Chief Technologist in Applied AI at Google)

Viewpoints

1. AI Adoption Reality in Enterprises and Governments - [Natalie Kucior]

- **Leaders have moved beyond "Should we use AI?"**

Natalie explains that in large enterprises, governments, startups, and model providers, the debate is no longer about whether to use AI. The focus has shifted to practical questions about customer experience, sovereign versus external AI, leader mindset, investment theses, and balancing bold progress with responsibility. Access to advanced AI is now broadly democratized, allowing small teams to move faster than ever.

- **AI assistants are transforming retail customer experience**

Australian retailers (e.g., Bunnings' "Buddy," Kmart's "Joy," Woolworths' "Olive") use AI assistants and have reportedly seen around a 40% increase in basket size. The theme underscores practical, revenue-linked outcomes from AI-driven CX improvements.

2. Level Playing Field and Speed Advantage - [Natalie Kucior]

- **Small teams can win due to equal access to models**

For the first time, small teams have access to the same AI technology as large enterprises and governments. This compresses advantage and emphasizes speed, agility, and experimentation as the differentiators, rather than exclusive tech access.

- **Don't wait; AI is accelerating**

Natalie cautions against “waiting for the next version.” The pace is exponential, so starting now and learning in motion is crucial. Business owners already have the instinct to start without perfect answers; they should apply that instinct to AI.

3. Where Businesses Should Start with AI - [Natalie Kucior]

- **Start with bottlenecks, not tools**

Instead of choosing models first (e.g., Gemini vs. GPT), begin by identifying repeated, scalable decisions and bottlenecks (admin, quoting, first drafts). Use AI with clear business context to explore workflows. Let AI “interview” you about processes, required system access (CRM, databases, creative tools), and turn insights into operational workflows.

- **Use AI to design workflows with human-in-the-loop**

Early projects should incorporate human checkpoints to ensure accuracy and trust while gradually maturing toward greater automation.

4. Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them - [Natalie Kucior]

- **Focusing on models over operating systems**

Models update rapidly (every 4–6 weeks). Rather than chasing model changes, build an “AI harness”: teach AI your operating system—SOPs, processes, voice, skills—so prompts and workflows remain portable across model/platform changes.

- **Shadow AI is real; set paid, safe policies**

~66% of employees admit using AI regardless of policy. If you're not paying for the AI tool, you are the product; unpaid tools may train on your data. Pay for tools, set policies, and assume employees already use AI secretly. Establish governance and guardrails.

- **Close the experimentation gap**

Human learning prefers incremental steps; tech moves exponentially. You cannot “keep up.” Operate with a permanently open gap by creating a home for experimentation—time, budget, tools, and roles dedicated to testing and learning (e.g., “head of experimentation and failure”).

5. Practical AI Application Areas and Examples - [Natalie Kucior]

- **Three opportunity zones: operations, customer experience, new revenue**

Begin with internal operations (admin, quoting), then enhance external CX, and explore new revenue streams enabled by AI. Debuting first AI skills internally reduces risk before facing customers.

- **SMB examples: sales and admin agents**

A wholesale supplier built a sales agent to generate tailored decks in minutes (analyzing past performance, churn risk, roadmap) and an admin agent to parse purchase orders from email/PDF into NetSuite with a human checklist, turning hours into seconds.

6. Human-in-the-Loop and Guardrails - [Natalie Kucior]

- **Define access, actions, and intervention points**

As models evolve, the stable elements are your processes and guardrails: what the AI can access, what it should do, and when a human intervenes. Over time, AI can own more of the process as trust and maturity grow.

7. Highest ROI Section of the Business for AI - [Natalie Kucior]

- **Depends on stage: zero-to-one vs. established**

Early-stage companies can use AI tools (e.g., AI Studio) to code and launch products without developers. Established businesses often gain most from stabilizing internal processes (admin/sales) before scaling to CX or new revenue.

8. The Next 2–5 Years: Winners vs. Laggards - [Natalie Kucior]

- **AI vs. non-AI businesses will be unrecognizable**

Natalie predicts that seemingly similar businesses will diverge dramatically based on AI adoption. Examples include an airline with an AI voice concierge for personalized itineraries and an interior designer scaling expertise via labeled data, plus real estate firms auto-generating listings and 3D floor plans from property videos.

- **War for talent will favor AI-enabled firms**

Future graduates expect AI-native workflows. Professional talent (law, accounting, HR) will choose firms that allow AI use, intensifying competition for digitally fluent employees.

9. Personal AI Use: Live Coaching and Thought Capture - [Natalie Kucior]

- **Gemini Live as a coach via car integration**

Natalie connects Gemini Live to her car and uses it as a business coach while driving or walking (“rant walks”). It captures, summarizes, and emails structured thoughts. Prompting with “Act as a [role]” improves results and shows everyday, non-engineering accessibility of advanced AI.

10. Fear and Mindset - [Natalie Kucior]

- **Don’t fear AI; fear not learning**

Fear narratives are unhelpful. The real risk is refusing to learn. Drawing from big-wave surfing, she emphasizes reading “moving waves” and acting in motion. There is no perfect time; start now and learn continuously.

Conclusion

Natalie Kucior emphasizes that AI adoption is no longer optional and that access to advanced models has leveled the playing field, enabling small teams to move quickly. Businesses should start with bottlenecks, build AI around their operating systems (SOPs and processes), pay for tools with proper policies to avoid shadow AI risks, and institutionalize experimentation with human-in-the-loop guardrails. Early wins typically come from internal operations before customer-facing launches. Within 2–5 years, AI-enabled businesses will look entirely different from non-AI peers, both in customer experience and in attracting talent. Practical applications across sales, admin, and CX demonstrate immediate efficiency and scalability.

Next Arrangements

- [] [Insert more]
- [] Contextualize future questions with company size, industry, and current pain points to elicit tailored guidance.
- [] Add targeted follow-ups (e.g., a 30-day plan with milestones) to move from principles to execution.
- [] For ROI prioritization, use stage-specific scenarios and request concrete metrics or cases (e.g., KPIs in 60–90 days for a 20-person services firm automating admin vs. improving CX).

AI Suggestions

Based on your recording transcript, there are some interview(not job interview) questions that can be optimized. Here are some suggestions from the AI for your reference:

When asking broad questions like “Where should businesses start with AI?”,

provide context and constraints (e.g., company size, industry, current pain points) to elicit more tailored, actionable guidance. After high-level answers, include a targeted follow-up such as “Can you outline a first 30-day plan with specific milestones?” to move from principles to execution. For questions about ROI or “which function to prioritize,” frame them with stage-specific scenarios and request concrete metrics or case examples, for instance, “For a 20-person services firm, what KPIs should we expect in 60–90 days from automating admin versus improving CX?”