Gener(AI)ting the future

Conversations
FOR TOMORROW

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CLARA SHIH
Chief Executive Officer
Salesforce AI

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A PLATFORM FOR
GENERATIVE AI

Clara Shih is the CEO of Salesforce AI. In her role, Clara oversees artificial intelligence (AI) efforts across the organization, including product, go-to-market, growth, adoption, and ecosystem for Salesforce's AI customer relationship management (CRM) platform. Clara also served on the Starbucks board of directors for 12 years and serves as Executive Chair of Hearsay Systems, a digital software firm she founded in 2009 that is merging with Yext (NYSE:YEXT).

SALESFORCE AND AI

What led to the development of Salesforce AI?

We have been working on AI for a long time. In 2014, we established our Salesforce AI Research Group, and in 2016, we introduced the first predictive AI for CRM, Einstein. Salesforce Research has been developing large language models (LLMs) for many years. The popularity of ChatGPT and increased demand for enterprise AI led us to productize our generative AI applications and platform.

Agentforce, our suite of customizable autonomous agents and low-code tools – powered by our Customer 360 applications, Data Cloud, and Salesforce Platform – makes deploying and getting value from trusted agents easier than ever. It's the next generation of our Einstein AI solutions. Every agent request runs through our Einstein Trust layer to ensure data privacy, data security, ethical guardrails, observability, and monitoring. We know customers don't want to be locked-in to a specific model, especially given the rapid advancement and growth in model options, so we've architected Agentforce to work with any model.

To help customers see value fast, we offer over 100 out-of-the-box (OOTB) AI use cases and Agentforce agents, including service agent, sales development representative agent, commerce agent, merchandiser, buyer agent, personal shopper, and campaign optimizer. These OOTB agents make it easy to get started and are easy to customize. Agentforce agents can be set up in minutes, scale easily, and work 24/7 on any channel (Salesforce offers digital messaging, messaging over in-app and web (MIAW), email, and now voice natively).

Our customers and partners can easily customize and build trusted agents on Agentforce using our low-code tools such as agent builder, prompt builder, and model builder.

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Can you expand on why you chose the platform approach?

Agents have to be customized and grounded in trusted data and role- and industry-based context in order to be production-ready for the enterprise. Salesforce has always offered a user-friendly platform for customers and partners to easily build and customize, and from the beginning, we designed Salesforce Platform to be used even by non-programmers.

Our customers want to customize their own AI apps, and we give them options to do this either with no code, low code, or pro code. Rather than every organization having to build their own data cloud, trust layer, and API management, we make it easy by offering Salesforce Data Cloud, the Einstein Trust Layer, and Mulesoft as part of the Salesforce Platform. Customers and partners tell us all the time how much they appreciate how the Einstein Trust Layer takes care of data masking, citations, audit trail, toxicity filters, zero retention prompts, and prompt defense to mitigate cybersecurity risks.

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Prompt builder and agent builder allow customers to take our out of the box (OOTB) use cases and customize them with their own brand voice, company policies and procedures, and reference organization-specific custom data. For example, an automotive company can directly reference specific custom fields to guide their agents, such as the make, model, and warranty SLA. A retail customer would have a different set of custom fields and business processes. Customers can reference any structured or unstructured data from across their organization, whether it is in Salesforce or an external data lake or data warehouse such as Snowflake, Databricks, or Big Query, by using our Data Cloud.

Agentforce is about deploying autonomous agents to help drive human productivity. It follows all of the data-sharing rules in each Salesforce organization and is personalized to every user. For example, if two different sales reps within the same company ask the same question of Agentforce – such as "What are my top sales deals this quarter?" – they will each get a customized answer based on each individual rep's territory, customers, and open opportunities.

GENERATIVE AI – A POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS

What kind of impact do you envisage generative AI having on large organizations globally?

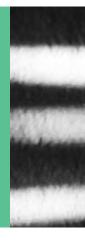Generative AI offers a tremendous opportunity with a potential economic impact of trillions of dollars from both productivity gains and cost savings. Agentforce customers like Wiley and OpenTable are finding tremendous success, increasing the number of routine support issues they can use AI to resolve autonomously 24/7 while increasing employee engagement and customer satisfaction.

But change cannot happen overnight. Companies need support in the form of trusted software systems and partners who can guide them through the transformation. In the current scenario, even the most forward-looking customers want AI automation to allow employees to work in more productive and efficient ways. Then, the priority shifts to reshaping departments. For example, Gucci used Salesforce AI to transform their service representatives into sellers. In addition to resolving customer support problems faster, our AI tools also helped teach them how to help customers find additional products to buy and to complete e-commerce transactions. The third phase is enterprise transformation. Just as with the internet, generative AI and agents will enable new pricing models, business models, and organization models.

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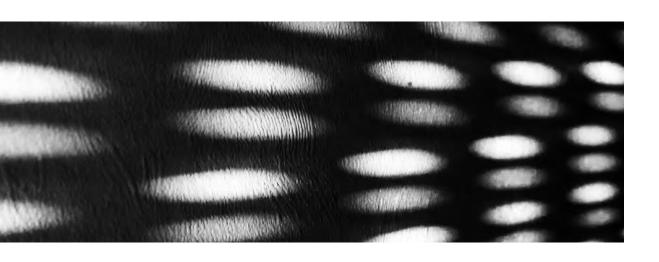
Is there any specific industry in which you see the most enthusiasm?

We offer 15 different industry clouds at Salesforce and there has been AI demand and customer success in every industry. For example, Santander Bank, in the financial services industry, uses Agentforce to visualize its international trade trends and customer insights in real time to guide customers towards the right products. L'Oréal, in the consumer products industry, uses Agentforce to boost direct-to-consumer revenue with AI-powered product recommendations. Iron Mountain, an information management and storage company, turned to Salesforce for customer service, and their service representatives use Agentforce to create a connected experience across email, chat, and voice. Simplyhealth, a leading health insurance provider in the UK deployed our Agentforce for their customer service team. They saw 90% time savings by using generative AI to respond to customer emails, and they were able to resolve over one-third of their cases using conversational AI.

"90% TIME SAVINGS BY USING GENERATIVE AI TO RESPOND TO CUSTOMER EMAILS."

Executive Conversations

Which generative AI use cases do you think are the most popular?

Each industry has specific use cases. For example, in communications, customers want organizations to address billing inquiries promptly. In consumer goods, the focus is on crafting AI-driven personalized product descriptions and marketing campaigns. In healthcare, it is on optimizing patient appointment scheduling and reminders in a compliant way.

This is why we were so thrilled recently to launch over 100 new out-of-the-box Agentforce for Industries features, now available in our Salesforce AI Use Case Library. Customers can easily customize and deploy this new ready-to-use AI to automate time-consuming tasks such as matching patients to clinical trials, generating proactive maintenance alerts for industrial machinery, and delivering government program benefits. These use cases are tailored by role and to each of our 15 Industries clouds for accelerated time to value. They are easily customizable with prompt builder, agent builder, and model builder.

Many companies trying to "DIY" their AI tech stack are finding they've wasted a lot of time and money finetuning models and building data pipelines without much to show for their efforts. In contrast, customers from AAA Insurance and Air India to Wyndham Hotels & Resorts are finding rapid value in a matter of weeks using these out-of-the-box Salesforce AI features.

> **In customer service, emphasis is on delivering solutions rapidly, addressing questions quickly and accurately, and closing the case promptly."**

Horizontally, across functions and sales, we place importance on streamlining account research and meeting preparation, and gaining a thorough understanding of all the open support cases and marketing engagement. In customer service, emphasis is on delivering solutions rapidly, addressing questions quickly and accurately, and closing the case promptly. It also enables better formulation of draft cases and incident summaries to help service representatives to allocate their time to more strategically significant tasks. In marketing, use cases include generating personalized emails and campaigns, segments, landing pages, auto-populating contact forms, and rapidly understanding insights from large-scale customer surveys.

In e-commerce, the focus is on the creation of digital storefronts, promotions, product descriptions, and outlining e-commerce strategies. From a developer standpoint, it's boosting productivity with AI-driven code generation and test generation.

CHALLENGES WITH GENERATIVE AI

"When we meet with the Gucci customer service representatives who are using Agentforce Service Agents from Salesforce, they're so fired up."

How do you envision the future balance between human-led and AI-led customer services?

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> **ATM machines did not replace tellers. There are more tellers today than ATMs, but now they are personal bankers."**

There's going to be a need for both. ATM machines did not replace tellers. There are more tellers today than ATMs, but now they are personal bankers and focus on forging personal relationships and upselling. AI will allow workers to move away from repetitive tasks to focus on doing what humans do best, which is building relationships, unlocking creativity, making connections, and addressing higher-order problems. When we meet with the Gucci customer service representatives who are using Agentforce Service Agents from Salesforce, they're so fired up. They feel like we are empowering them to do the best work of their careers.

"ORGANIZATIONS MUST TAKE AN ETHICS-FIRST, TRUST-BASED APPROACH TO AI PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT."

What worries you the most about generative AI?

Any powerful new technology has a range of different applications. The majority of them are good, but there can also be some nefarious use cases. I think educating law enforcement professionals, government leaders, and voters on the risks of misinformation and disinformation, including fake AI-generated images, is of utmost importance.

Salesforce has joined the Business for America coalition supporting the bipartisan Protect Elections from Deceptive AI Act. This legislation would ban the use of AI to generate materially deceptive content that falsely depicts candidates in political ads with the intention of influencing federal elections.

How do you think organizations can create representative and inclusive datasets?

Organizations must take an ethics-first, trust-based approach to AI product development. Trust is the most crucial element engineered into any Salesforce product. We have also enabled responsible AI practices across the organization.
For example, to protect consumer and employee privacy, we disallow the use of facial recognition AI within Salesforce products. Another aspect of our AI acceptable use policy is that when one of our customer's customers is using an AI agent, we require the agent to self-identify as an AI versus masquerading as a human. This is to ensure trust and transparency remain paramount.

We've open-sourced our trusted AI principles around five pillars:

1. Being responsible, safeguarding human rights, and protecting the data with which we're entrusted

2. Being accountable, seeking feedback, and acting on it for continuous improvement from all stakeholders

3. Developing a transparent user experience to guide users through any AI-driven recommendations

4. AI is here to empower people – not replace them

5. AI should be inclusive

"We disallow the use of facial recognition AI within Salesforce products."

What are your views on the climate impact of LLMs?

Sustainability is among our core values. LLMs expend a tremendous amount of energy on both training and running the models. At Salesforce, we envision that, because of climate impact, as well as for cost and performance reasons, the future of AI will be a combination of LLMs and small models.

> " The future of AI will be a combination of LLMs and small models."

Currently, small language models (SLMs), even ones that run locally on laptops, could accomplish similar results to those that LLMs produce. Salesforce AI Research Group is developing these small and medium-sized fine-tuned models, which are industry- and use-case-specific. Over time, we will help our customers figure out the right model mix for them.

GENERATIVE AI REGULATORY LANDSCAPE

What are your thoughts on generative AI regulation?

The power of generative AI justifies strict regulation. The smartest approach involves broadening the scope of existing laws to encompass elements particular to AI usage. A great example is the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) in the US. That requires organizations to obtain customer consent before robocalling or text messaging the consumer. Recently, the TCPA was extended to include the use of AI-generated voices. It makes a lot of sense to take existing laws and ensure that they are updated to capture the new risks that AI has introduced.

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