

Critical learnings from Collision 2023

What is the purpose of this article?

- 1) Share my critical learnings from my three-day attendance at Collision 2023 in June 2023. Collision was a North American startup conference with 36,000+attendees, ranging from pre-revenue founders to large established companies, and investors ranging from angel investors to multi-billion-dollar funds.
- 2) The critical learnings section below are my key learnings from Collision. I believe that these learnings apply to any size company.
- 3) The observations section below are some of the facts and opinions shared by presenters. I believe these have massive short and long-term implications. Reach out to me if you wish to discuss the implications.
- 4) The learnings and observations in this article are only a tiny subset of my 48 pages of notes.

What are the critical learnings in this article?

- 1) There is close to a universal belief that the critical aspects of talent are: collaboration, learning, and problem solving – and that these are hard to find. Hard skills are easier to find but of less value.
- 2) Generative AI was a universal theme. Jobs with limited skills and experience will be eliminated or dramatically reduced in the next three years e.g. call centre staff, law firm associates.
- 3) There continued to be unlimited money available to start and grow companies BUT due diligence has dramatically improved with a stronger focus on competitively differentiated talent.
- 4) If a company can train, develop, and grow an employee who had spent decades in prison, I wonder why many companies are unable to train, develop, and grow their employees. Too often the easy approach seems to be fire and replace.

What were my key observations?

- 1) The world is no longer predicable.
- 2) Hire people for purpose and values.
- 3) Ask people why they stay at the company. Do a NPS (Net Promoter Score) with current employees.
- 4) There's a company that helps other companies hire former prisoners. This company hired someone who had been in prison for decades. The person first started in customer support and ended up as a customer support manager.
- 5) A survey of over 200 Chief Technology officers revealed the top three things they were looking for in employees: ability to collaborate, ability to learn, ability to problem solve. Coding skills and knowledge of coding languages was not in the top 3.
- 6) 15 years ago, the competitive differentiator for software engineers was their coding skills. Today, the competitive differentiator is problem solving.
- 7) The most important factors in selecting founders are: what will enable them to survive the hard times; why are they doing the startup; what is motivating them.
- 8) Facebook paid \$1 billion for Instagram with 13 employees. The capabilities of current and emerging tools will enable a single person to create and sell a company for \$1 billion.
- 9) Apple Vision Pro will make remote work similar to being in person. Collaboration, team meetings, etc. will be far more effective than today.
- 10) Look at the customer ROI and customer risk, not just the company ROI and company risk.
- 11) Deliver to customers far more value than price. Willingness to pay is based on value.
- 12) Casetext, a legal AI firm, has launched CoCounsel, a legal AI assistant with the potential to replace law firm associates. Thomson Reuters announced they're buying Casetext for \$650 million US.
- 13) AI will change the talent pyramid in Financial Services.
- 14) Generative AI will increase polarization in society.
- 15) 50% of the people in a session I attended, use AI to create the emails they send.
- 16) ChatGpt-4 already scores in the top 10% in LSAT and SAT tests.
- 17) The capabilities of Generative AI are doubling every 3 months.
- 18) In the near future, everyone will be able to create movies themselves with personalized content. E.g. each person could be a character in the totally realistic movie.
- 19) Expedia has 70,000 terabytes of data.
- 20) The number of pre-seed and seed fintech raises are at a record level this year. The total dollar amount is lower.
- 21) A good portfolio company will run with bad news to their Venture Capital investors.

What are your next steps?

- 1) Identify the roles that have the great impact on the value proposition for your customers and users.
- 2) Determine the additional value the roles must provide, in this hyper-competitive world we live in.
- 3) Identify the additional talent requirements.
- 4) Determine how best, from a customer perspective, to meet those requirements i.e. what combination of human and Generative AI.
- 5) Benchmark your talent assessment, hiring, developing, promotion, succession and exits process, technology, and staffing relative to the best companies in the world. What are the implications in terms of your company's long-term success? What changes do you need to make? Start with the board of directors.

What further reading should you do?

Generative AI – by McKinsey

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/generative-ai>

Is your company planning to fail?

<http://koorandassociates.org/avoiding-business-failure/is-your-company-planning-to-fail/>

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