22ND ALLIANCE AI ROUNDTABLE

How CEOs are Transforming Their Org Chart with *AI Employees*

FEATURED CEO SPEAKER
Mike Adams
Pop Sells, CEO

MODERATOR
Matthew Swanson
StaffAI, CEO; and Silicon Valley Software Group, Managing Partner

HOST
Paul Witkay
Alliance of Chief Executives, Founder & CEO

RECAP

Summary

This 22nd Alliance AI Roundtable focused on one of the most practical questions facing CEOs today: what it looks like when AI moves from a tool employees use to a member of the workforce. Moderated by Matthew Swanson, with featured guest speaker Mike Adams, CEO of Pop Sells, the discussion explored how a non-technology company trains, deploys, pays, and measures AI employees.

Mike first joined the roundtable two and a half years ago, when Pop Sells was using AI to score sales leads. Today, AI employees initiate every outreach to prospective sellers on Pop Sells' nationwide marketplace for pre-owned boats and RVs. Over the same period, Paul reported, AI use among Alliance CEOs has grown from 70 percent to 97 percent, and the share reporting good or better results has risen from 50 percent to 80 percent.

THE DISCUSSION

Key Themes & Insights

01 Three Things AI Employees Do Today

Matthew, whose company StaffAI has worked with Pop Sells' team, opened the session with a live demonstration of a voice-enabled AI persona. StaffAI creates these personas for its own team members and now for client companies, giving employees personal AI representations of themselves that can be trained and put to work. He described three patterns he sees AI employees performing over and over.

First, AI employees gather lead information across the internet, including channels such as Facebook Marketplace, by clicking through web portals just as a person would. Second, they embody a company's top performers, communicating the way those people do over text, email, and voice, and carrying on the back-and-forth needed to negotiate complicated transactions. Brokering a boat raises many questions that once required a person to answer; AI employees can now handle that dialogue all the way to signing a seller.

Third, AI employees operate systems of record through the same screens people use rather than through an application programming interface (API). Many companies, Pop Sells included, run custom systems with no API available, and this ability is what allows AI to work like a human employee inside them.

02 Start with a Narrow, Measurable Use Case

Pop Sells' AI journey began with lead scoring. The company receives 10,000 to 20,000 buyer leads each month and distributes them to roughly 300 independent salespeople. AI learned from customer behavior on the website and the content of each inquiry to flag high-quality leads, which were then routed to the best-performing salespeople.

Those leads converted at a much higher rate. Mike acknowledged that some of the lift is self-fulfilling, since the best leads were going to the best performers, but the ability to identify them let the team focus its effort where it mattered most.

03 AI Employees Now Run Entire Workflows

Today, every initial outreach to a prospective seller is started by an AI employee. Signing a seller is a multi-step process: engaging the customer, sending a listing agreement, getting it signed, collecting proof of ownership, and publishing the listing. AI employees now handle each of those steps, and the share they carry all the way to a published listing continues to grow. Pop Sells signs roughly 700 to 1,500 sellers a month.

04 Train AI the Way You Train a New Hire

Pop Sells did not hand AI employees a script. Its seller services manager and top-performing representatives worked directly with their own AI employees, teaching them how to find a good lead, communicate with customers, structure agreements, and complete the publishing process.

Mike said this was the only practical path, given the variety of ownership structures and state-by-state requirements involved in selling thousands of boats and RVs across all 50 states. Pop Sells is now applying the same approach on the sales side, where top salespeople are training AI employees to send offers, structure purchase and sale agreements, and follow up until they are signed.

05 Paid on Performance, for People and AI Alike

The POP in Pop Sells stands for Paid on Performance, and the company applies that principle to its AI employees. With tight fixed expenses, Mike said Pop Sells could not have afforded to build these capabilities itself.

Instead, there were no upfront costs: the AI employee earns a set amount at each milestone, from sending a listing agreement to getting it signed and published, with a larger payment when a deal closes.

That compensation comes out of the sales team's commission, not Pop Sells' margins. Salespeople accept the trade because they are closing more volume with more time on their hands. In a business where leads arrive around the clock, consultants who once could never take a vacation now have a better quality of life alongside better financial results.

> *"These AI employees get paid just like we get paid."*
>
> MIKE ADAMS · CEO, POP SELLS

06 Put AI to Work in the Systems You Already Have

Many CEOs assume they need a large technical team to build AI capabilities. Pop Sells had the opposite constraint: a 17-year-old proprietary platform carrying significant technical debt, and a development team of about four people with a long backlog.

A core requirement was that AI had to use the same tools as the team. Pop Sells' AI employees log into the company's platform and navigate its screens to send agreements, build listings, and manage offers, so every customer communication is recorded where the sales team can see it. Matthew described this ability to operate existing software, rather than requiring new software, as one of the things that separates an AI employee from an AI agent.

07 Measure ROI in Both Metrics and Morale

Because Pop Sells tracks return on ad spend and conversion for every lead source, it can measure AI's impact precisely. For leads pursued by AI employees, Mike reported an almost 50 percent increase in the lead-to-close rate, driven by double-digit percentage gains at each stage of the funnel.

The more surprising signal was cultural. Mike described his sales force as seasoned veterans who rarely volunteer compliments, yet several have forwarded him deals the AI converted while they were away, including one closed while a consultant spent the weekend with his grandkids.

> *"We're not just seeing it with the metrics, we're seeing it with the morale and the response from our sales team."*
>
> MIKE ADAMS · CEO, POP SELLS

FOR EXECUTIVE TEAMS

Suggested Action Items for CEOs & Executive Teams

01 Begin with a narrow, measurable use case, such as lead scoring, and build from early results.

02 Treat AI as an employee: onboard it through your top performers, using the same process you use for new hires.

03 Have AI work inside your existing systems before committing to new software or custom development.

04 Explore performance-based compensation for AI to limit upfront cost and tie spending directly to results.

05 Pair AI employees with the people whose work they support, so those teams share in the success.

06 Measure impact at every stage of the funnel, not only at the final outcome.

07 Track morale and adoption alongside performance metrics; team buy-in determines how far AI can scale.

08 Roll out deliberately, one step at a time, and involve teams closely enough that they begin asking for more.

IN CLOSING

Conclusion

Mike's journey shows how far a non-technology company can go in two and a half years. His advice to CEOs charting their own roadmap was to implement AI with a clear end in mind, take it one step at a time, and avoid trying to boil the ocean. By applying the same discipline Pop Sells uses for any process or software change, the company built consensus along the way, to the point where its teams now ask for more AI rather than resisting it.

> *Treat AI like an employee: train it through your best people, pay it for performance, and bring your team along one step at a time.*