

Cut through the noise, focus on the value: Reflections on the AI Summit London 2023



Our Data Scientist, Gabe Musker, attended the AI Summit London 2023 on behalf of Branding Science! Read his thoughts below.

Focusing on the technical

It was great to be out at the Tobacco Dock for the AI Summit London 2023 last week on behalf of Branding Science. As data science conventions go, it managed to avoid the bombastic hype that many similar conventions tend to buy into; the titles of the talks tended to avoid sensationalism, the exhibition spaces were compact and efficient, and there were very few overly enthusiastic tech salespeople looking to hand you mass-produced merch in exchange for listening to a pitch.

Importantly, it's also not a conference that focused exclusively on the technical. Vital discussions were held throughout the two days about topics such as dealing with EU data protection laws, how enterprise data teams must adapt with the advent of LLMs, or measuring the value of an AI product throughout its lifecycle. Many of the attendees I met were not data scientists or ML engineers, but tech-focused executives, governance leads, or marketers.

This broad cross-section of attendees, from a variety of industries and experience levels, accompanied by the overall tone of practical, value-focused discussion, gave me some hope that we are getting over the "peak of inflated expectations" on the Gartner hype curve for AI, and finally start getting into some proper conversations about how to drive the most value from these impressive new tools.



Delivering seamless results

As a data scientist looking to develop our advanced analytic function here at Branding Science, some of the talks I attended were extremely useful, and I was grateful for the practical advice given by some brilliant speakers about, for example, how to find the right KPIs to track for an internally deployed AI tool.

The best talk I saw, however, was by Jamie Dougherty, a Machine Learning Engineer from Speechmatics, about Conway's Law, and why being a generalist is a good thing for a data scientist. Conway's Law says that states teams reflect their communication structure onto the work they do. In other words, when you separate different, specific functions for different sub-teams, the product you build will inevitably have seams where those between team communication gaps lie. Jamie went on to talk about how, when you instead have teams made up of generalists, who have the skills and the focus to try to just drive value in the end product without fixing specific reimits, you are likely to deliver a more seamless result.

Staying at the cutting edge

Here at Branding Science, we have an award-winning market research team. Since hearing Jamie's talk, I've realised that this team's fantastic track record in delivering work that delights our clients is, in part, due to the fact that ours is a team of generalists – we don't have fixed teams, with resources being allocated on a project-by-project basis based on needs and experience, and nobody has a fixed remit in terms of what tasks they do and don't perform. Instead, each project team will flex as required, and every single team member's primary focus is on delivering the highest possible quality of work for our clients.

As we build our data science function over the next months and years, this is a structure we want to mimic. The world of AI and data science is filled with job titles that have extremely varied role requirements – anyone who's searched for a job in this space will recognise that different data scientist roles at different companies will often have wildly differing skill requirements and tech stacks. Our goal is to build a team of generalists, and hope that by backing our core skills – both technical and soft – and taking the opportunities to learn and grow (such as attending AI conferences), we will be able to stay at the cutting edge and continue to bring value to our clients.



A moment of growth

Here at Branding Science, our data science team is in a moment of growth. We're looking to grow our capacity to build tools and systems that assist our internal teams and our clients, and the lessons I've shared about being a generalist are going to be central to our hiring strategy.

For more information, please reach out to:

Gabe Musker, Data Scientist

gabe.musker@branding-science.com

