

Transcript | Event Title

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00:00:10.570 --> 00:00:15.260

Lowell Weisbord: Hello, and welcome to this apolitical webinar.

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00:00:15.860 --> 00:00:20.599

Lowell Weisbord: Gonna let people join for a moment, but welcome to this edition.

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00:00:20.740 --> 00:00:25.699

Lowell Weisbord: of the AI Skills Lab. We'll be covering AI for research.

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00:00:26.170 --> 00:00:34.060

Lowell Weisbord: We're gonna give everyone a couple minutes to join, but we're gonna keep the session relatively prompt for this quick 30 minutes.

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00:00:34.150 --> 00:00:48.189

Lowell Weisbord: My name is Lowell Weisbord, I am head of AI products here at Apolitical. As folks join the waiting room, it would be really great to hear from everyone, so feel free to post in the chat where you're joining us from today, what organization you work for.

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00:00:48.290 --> 00:01:05.580

Lowell Weisbord: We have our brilliant speaker, Brendan Arnold, here today. We realize that we're calling in both from London and about 50 meters away from each other, just across the street, so calling in from London, it would be great to hear where people are calling in from in the chat. Welcome from Liverpool, Toronto.

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00:01:05.580 --> 00:01:15.339

Lowell Weisbord: Edinburgh, Victoria, BC, welcome, Sunny Scotland, Isle of Man. Pleasure to have you all. The center for Technology at the University of Albany.

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00:01:15.710 --> 00:01:20.489

Lowell Weisbord: Big snowstorm in New York right now. Welcome, regardless.

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00:01:20.650 --> 00:01:22.280

Lowell Weisbord: Welcome from Lagos.

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00:01:22.680 --> 00:01:35.400

Lowell Weisbord: A technical note that your messages might come through to only our backstage team, depending on your Zoom default settings. Be sure to select everyone as you send your messages in the chat today.

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00:01:35.510 --> 00:01:54.399

Lowell Weisbord: We're going to be looking at how AI can help you make sense of qualitative and quantitative sets of data. We're going to explore how generative AI helps you find nuanced insights faster while keeping humans in the loop. We're going to be looking at a few different elements of research and using these kind of new generative AI tools that are available.

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00:01:54.730 --> 00:02:03.179

Lowell Weisbord: For those of you who may be joining us for the first time, big warm welcome. It looks like we're getting folks from all over the world, which is really great to have you.

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00:02:03.180 --> 00:02:20.359

Lowell Weisbord: APolitical is the world's largest community for government. We're used by about half a million public servants and policymakers across 170 countries. We provide governments with the tools, skills, and networks they need to become more effective in tech-enabled organizations. Today's session is going to be compact.

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00:02:20.780 --> 00:02:28.090

Lowell Weisbord: 30 minutes, tightly focused on building your AI skills for research. We know that as public servants, you're likely short on time, and we want to keep these things.

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00:02:28.090 --> 00:02:28.560

Brendan Arnold: Oh my god.

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00:02:28.560 --> 00:02:42.530

Lowell Weisbord: quick, suit your learning needs and work with your busy schedules. We're going to get into the presentation very shortly, but just before we do, we also want to just shoot over the link to our AI and government community, where if you'd like to, you can join over.

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00:02:42.530 --> 00:02:53.170

Lowell Weisbord: 10,000 civil servants speaking about interesting issues having to do with AI and government, how you use these tools, how you make sense of them, policy as it relates, and all of the above.

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00:02:54.710 --> 00:03:09.110

Lowell Weisbord: This event is recorded for on-demand viewing on the Apolitical site, so please don't record it yourself. Contact details for privacy concerns are in the apolitical footer, and closed captions are available that can be toggled on or off in your settings.

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00:03:09.600 --> 00:03:16.930

Lowell Weisbord: Now that everybody's in the room, we've gotten some of the technical bits out of the way, I'm keen to get into the main event.

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00:03:17.330 --> 00:03:28.890

Lowell Weisbord: It's my pleasure to welcome Brendan Arnold, who's our speaker, and who also happens to be his birthday today, so we can give a second emoji reactions, maybe. Wish Brendan a very happy birthday.

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00:03:28.890 --> 00:03:41.910

Lowell Weisbord: It's nice of you to take the time to share with all of us today, we really appreciate that. Brendan works at Policy Lab, a policy innovation unit at the Department for Education in the UK, and is one of the UK government's first creative technologists.

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00:03:42.450 --> 00:04:00.420

Lowell Weisbord: He operates the Paul IS system inside of Policy Lab, uses AI for sense-making of the qualitative data it generates, as well as in his research around various policy topics. You can read his full bio by visiting the resources tab at the bottom of your Zoom screen, and heading to the speakers section.

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00:04:00.570 --> 00:04:10.520

Lowell Weisbord: Brendan, it's a pleasure to have you again. I'm gonna hand it over to you for the next 15 minutes, and then at the end, we'll capture everyone's Q&A and go over questions. Over to you.

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00:04:12.770 --> 00:04:16.200

Brendan Arnold: Hey, thank you very much. So, I'll just share my screen.

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00:04:16.750 --> 00:04:23.480

Brendan Arnold: Slides... Hopefully, everyone can see that. Gotta get some thumbs up, if that's the case.

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00:04:26.160 --> 00:04:28.290

Lowell Weisbord: Yep, we're just not quite full screen yet.

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00:04:28.290 --> 00:04:29.360

Brendan Arnold: Oh, yeah, yeah, there we go.

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00:04:29.360 --> 00:04:30.250

Lowell Weisbord: There we are.

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00:04:30.600 --> 00:04:40.740

Brendan Arnold: Great, alright. Well, thanks very much. So, as Lois said, my name's Brendan Arnold. I work for Policy Lab. We're a policy innovation team in the UK government.

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00:04:41.010 --> 00:04:49.570

Brendan Arnold: And we can't... and our mission is to radically improve policy through user-centered design and people-centered approaches.

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00:04:49.790 --> 00:05:00.970

Brendan Arnold: I'm the creative technologist, which is a role, it's kind of a new role, which, bridges design thinking, tech know-how, and applies it in a policy context.

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00:05:01.090 --> 00:05:03.800

Brendan Arnold: So it's, yeah, it's quite a new role, quite an exciting one.

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00:05:03.990 --> 00:05:08.040

Brendan Arnold: And, yeah, I've been spending the last 4 years figuring out exactly what that means.

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00:05:09.530 --> 00:05:17.269

Brendan Arnold: So, I thought I'd just take you through, very quickly, starting out with some, general tips for civil servants on using AI.

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00:05:17.380 --> 00:05:24.680

Brendan Arnold: AI to solve a qualitative problem, in particular one that we've come across through the use of Polis.

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00:05:24.880 --> 00:05:28.760

Brendan Arnold: And, also AI to solve a quantitative problem.

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00:05:28.880 --> 00:05:30.889

Brendan Arnold: In a similar kind of space.

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00:05:31.660 --> 00:05:49.839

Brendan Arnold: So yeah, the first bit of, the first sort of tip I would say is, is that, the guidance, for your organization is almost certainly, if it's anything like the UK government, is almost certainly changing quite rapidly. We're on a third set of guidance now, and I would encourage you just to take a look at, what the kind of current thinking is.

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00:05:49.900 --> 00:06:01.420

Brendan Arnold: If you haven't for a while. There's 10 really good, principles to follow in this, in the UK case. And if your government doesn't have guidance, then you can always look at this, just for some ideas on

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00:06:01.890 --> 00:06:04.379

Brendan Arnold: How to direct your work in this space.

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00:06:04.840 --> 00:06:06.740

Brendan Arnold: use that AI responsibly.

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00:06:07.650 --> 00:06:11.569

Brendan Arnold: So, the second bit, I wanted to talk about was,

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00:06:11.760 --> 00:06:21.319

Brendan Arnold: In the Policy Lab, we have this, really amazing culture that I'm so proud of, where we, we meet up, every two weeks, and we talk about,

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00:06:21.760 --> 00:06:24.900

Brendan Arnold: New and interesting things that interest people in the team.

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00:06:25.010 --> 00:06:31.460

Brendan Arnold: And we actually, sort of, apply a real problem to that, or do a real activity, and then we discuss how that might apply to work.

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00:06:31.780 --> 00:06:39.450

Brendan Arnold: And we've been doing this for a while now, and yeah, it's a really great way to sort of share that knowledge in and around the team, and it's a great practice to set up.

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00:06:39.550 --> 00:06:49.280

Brendan Arnold: And, just... I had a quick count, and we've had at least 8, sort of been around AI, which I think shows just how important and pertinent it is to this kind of research.

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00:06:49.850 --> 00:06:53.649

Brendan Arnold: So yeah, if you can sort of set up that kind of practice, that's a really good thing to do.

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00:06:55.270 --> 00:07:15.110

Brendan Arnold: there are many, things to consider when you start using AI in government. The first thing that you might want to sort of figure out is what tools you can and can't use. For the longest time, I used ChatGPT, with the proviso that I only put in things that were kind of publicly known, so none of my, sort of, like, work materials would go in there.

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00:07:15.240 --> 00:07:26.239

Brendan Arnold: But recently we've been given access to Copilot, which is linked to our, Microsoft Cloud kind of thing. I mean, obviously, your organization might have something similar set up through Google, Gemini, or something.

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00:07:26.330 --> 00:07:41.239

Brendan Arnold: But they're all starting to sort of conversion their sort of interface and look and feel, which is this kind of, you know, box that you type into, essentially, and are able to sort of upload files and things like that. So I'm starting to find now that it's actually really great that,

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00:07:41.310 --> 00:07:52.739

Brendan Arnold: now I'm able to sort of show it, and it can, files that I might be, might be working on, and I've sort of stored within our cloud, and not have to worry too much about, whether or not

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00:07:52.740 --> 00:08:03.379

Brendan Arnold: what people behind the scenes are doing with that data. Again, check your, kind of, like, organisational policies and things like that, but, yeah, I found that, it's really great to have that freedom.

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00:08:05.930 --> 00:08:06.830

Brendan Arnold: So...

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00:08:07.000 --> 00:08:14.770

Brendan Arnold: I'm going to take one of those tools and apply this to a qualitative problem, that we commonly face in

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00:08:15.710 --> 00:08:34.440

Brendan Arnold: Policy Lab, and that is, when using our collective intelligence tool, Polis, poll.is. This is a tool that we invite people to take part in. We set a topic, and people submit in, statements, so short-length statements, and they go on their phones, or they go on their laptops, and they click agree and disagree.

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00:08:34.740 --> 00:08:39.769

Brendan Arnold: And this generates hundreds and hundreds of statements that everyone has sort of voted on.

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00:08:39.940 --> 00:08:48.459

Brendan Arnold: And, and then we end up with this sort of, like, massive sort of data set of hundreds and hundreds of, individual, kind of, statements.

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00:08:48.820 --> 00:08:57.969

Brendan Arnold: That are quite tricky to sort of get your head around and understand in any sort of meaningful way. So the problem we face is, how do we categorize them? How can we sift through them easily and quickly?

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00:08:59.150 --> 00:09:08.900

Brendan Arnold: So what we do is, we've come up with this method, and this is with, one of my colleagues, Alicebury Archer. We've come up with this method where we, build a prompt

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00:09:09.050 --> 00:09:25.890

Brendan Arnold: Starting out by sort of specifying where the data is. So, in this case, it's really great to upload them as CSV files. You can fit a lot more than if you just paste this sort of data into the window. So if you upload a CSV file, yeah, you can really sort of, like.

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00:09:25.960 --> 00:09:30.299

Brendan Arnold: Expand the kind of... kind of scale of the, analysis.

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00:09:30.530 --> 00:09:44.709

Brendan Arnold: You specify which files you look at, you don't have to use exact words, the kind of system's smart enough to know that if the file's called, you know, data categories, then you can just call them. You can just say, look at the categories, and use that to refer to something else.

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00:09:44.970 --> 00:09:57.019

Brendan Arnold: And, when it comes to, sort of, grouping by topics, it's often really, really good to, actually start off with a set group already. It's not always the case, but if you, sort of, let the system do it, sometimes it can pick some

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00:09:57.020 --> 00:10:07.280

Brendan Arnold: kind of funny-looking topics that perhaps, it might combine slightly dis... disjointed ideas. So if you can give it some hints, the more hints you can give it, the better results you tend to get at the end of the day.

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00:10:08.980 --> 00:10:23.629

Brendan Arnold: You then say what you want at the end of it. So in this particular case, we say, you know, we'd like a new CSV file, and you can specify what that looks like by sort of either giving it a screenshot, so if you sort of, like, make a mock version of it in

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00:10:23.760 --> 00:10:38.539

Brendan Arnold: Excel, you can take a screenshot, post it in, or you can use Markdown, so that's a really quick and easy way of doing that. If you're not sure, just do a search online for Markdown, but essentially use the pipe characters to separate the headers, and the system, you know, understands that really well.

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00:10:38.680 --> 00:10:51.179

Brendan Arnold: if you're kind of a bit more advanced, you can ask for sort of Python or Jupyter code, so if you're kind of willing to dig into details a bit more, it can actually sort of, like, generate the code for you, which you can then do offline and sort of give you that head start.

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00:10:51.760 --> 00:11:04.479

Brendan Arnold: And finally, you know, where the sort of fidelity really matters, you might want to put in some extra qualifiers. And in this case, it's things like, include the statements about him and don't paraphrase. You know, that's a key one that we found.

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00:11:04.480 --> 00:11:15.139

Brendan Arnold: Because what we found is the system tends to overcorrect. It starts to sort of correct spelling, change the phrasings, correct grammar, and things like that, which you don't really want when you're using with... when you're using, kind of,

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00:11:15.350 --> 00:11:19.770

Brendan Arnold: primary insights from users, and wanted to hear them in their own voice.

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00:11:20.250 --> 00:11:21.740

Brendan Arnold: So once you've built that.

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00:11:21.890 --> 00:11:37.919

Brendan Arnold: You can download the output, and you get a nice formatted CSV file, which is a really good starting point for then sort of doing, onward analysis for perhaps looking for duplicate statements, similar statements, and, and then actually going into subtopics.

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00:11:39.590 --> 00:11:46.069

Brendan Arnold: So, yeah, just to summarize those, they're all the points there. I'll let you sort of reference those, in the slide at the end.

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00:11:46.110 --> 00:11:57.640

Brendan Arnold: One last thing to say is, is if you, if you can actually sort of, like, narrow down the data sets at all, so once you've come up with a set of categories, if you can sort of feed those back into the system again, you can ask for some...

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00:11:57.640 --> 00:12:11.649

Brendan Arnold: topics, and you'll get a much more refined set of topics, output. So really, it's a way of, sort of, like, you can take this iterative process, and you'll get results and outputs which are just as broad as the kind of data set that you put in in the first place.

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00:12:11.740 --> 00:12:16.489

Brendan Arnold: So, yeah, it's a case of sort of narrowing down the system as much as possible.

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00:12:16.590 --> 00:12:19.059

Brendan Arnold: And it will then help you out and give you better results.

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00:12:20.020 --> 00:12:28.829

Brendan Arnold: So I wanted to talk a little bit now about a quantitative problem, and in this case, it's sort of finding out who needs to log in. So what we do is we send out invites.

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00:12:29.030 --> 00:12:35.599

Brendan Arnold: And, not everyone logs in, so we want to find out who is left over, who hasn't yet logged into our system.

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00:12:35.960 --> 00:12:40.069

Brendan Arnold: And, so this is a good demonstration of a quantitative approach.

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00:12:40.470 --> 00:12:56.349

Brendan Arnold: And in this case, you can describe the problem in the abstract. So, so I have two sheets in an Excel doc. One has a list of IDs for people who have logged into our survey system. The other has a list of all of our user records, including their IDs.

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00:12:56.380 --> 00:13:04.240

Brendan Arnold: So we've got... yeah. So, we then ask it... we then ask Excel, how can we actually, generate a new list

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00:13:04.340 --> 00:13:07.910

Brendan Arnold: Which, records, the people who've not logged into our survey.

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00:13:08.470 --> 00:13:19.020

Brendan Arnold: So this is really good to actually sort of learn tools. So this isn't actually asking the AI to do the analysis for you. Instead, this is asking the AI to help you do an analysis in another tool, in this case, Excel.

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00:13:20.360 --> 00:13:28.690

Brendan Arnold: And, you get an output that might look like this. So this is really handy if you, you know, just to sort of, like,

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00:13:29.280 --> 00:13:38.619

Brendan Arnold: get over that initial barrier of sort of understanding how Excel works and getting those, prompts that are sort of, like, a little bit trickier, or might be difficult to sort of look up.

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00:13:39.400 --> 00:13:40.210

Brendan Arnold: Normally.

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00:13:41.220 --> 00:13:44.020

Brendan Arnold: Now, the second sort of, like.

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00:13:44.340 --> 00:13:47.180

Brendan Arnold: Tip here is that if you do have a,

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00:13:47.930 --> 00:14:01.009

Brendan Arnold: kind of an enterprise kind of version of Excel, then you'll get a button that actually sits in Excel, and it means you don't have to then sort of, like, have all this sort of context, and you don't have to describe the file, so you can sort of take a bit of a shortcut here.

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00:14:01.310 --> 00:14:05.649

Brendan Arnold: And this is a really good way to, work a little bit faster.

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00:14:06.330 --> 00:14:11.600

Brendan Arnold: So, I'm just going to show you very briefly, because I think I do have a little bit of time.

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00:14:11.850 --> 00:14:15.789

Brendan Arnold: what that might look like. So I've set up an Excel document here.

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00:14:16.290 --> 00:14:20.640

Brendan Arnold: Which has this, setup in it, so hopefully everyone can see that.

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00:14:21.020 --> 00:14:23.730

Brendan Arnold: We've got a list of participants on the left here.

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00:14:24.240 --> 00:14:37.390

Brendan Arnold: And we've got the people who've, logged in. So this is, like, a shortened list of people who've actually logged in already. We're trying to find out, who, needs to log in and create a sep- a new list from that.

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00:14:37.600 --> 00:14:53.270

Brendan Arnold: And we've got here a prompt which is set up, and you can just simply say, use the data in the workbook. You don't have to describe what columns are or anything like that, and you can use that context. Now, I've run this before a couple of times, and we get mixed results, but most of the time it comes up with a good thing, so let's just see what happens.

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00:14:53.480 --> 00:14:54.820

Brendan Arnold: This time around.

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00:14:56.740 --> 00:14:58.490

Brendan Arnold: So it's having a little bit of a think.

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00:15:01.780 --> 00:15:07.010

Brendan Arnold: So, it suggested a VLOOKUP formula, In this case.

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00:15:07.810 --> 00:15:09.150

Brendan Arnold: You can copy and paste that.

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00:15:10.380 --> 00:15:14.940

Brendan Arnold: It does say add to the cell, but I tried that before, and it actually doesn't work very well.

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00:15:15.120 --> 00:15:19.849

Brendan Arnold: So yeah, there we go. We can double-click on that. Now we get a list of people.

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00:15:20.670 --> 00:15:23.340

Brendan Arnold: is... Logged in.

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00:15:24.590 --> 00:15:27.829

Brendan Arnold: And now we can apply filters on that.

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00:15:34.170 --> 00:15:42.090

Brendan Arnold: So, yeah, we've got a list of people now who haven't logged into the system. So that's a really quick way that you can sort of use AI to help

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00:15:42.180 --> 00:15:55.040

Brendan Arnold: do slightly more technical things to use, to generate sort of formulas and things like that, which I find really useful, for someone who kind of, like, is not necessarily an Excel, a pro at Excel.

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00:15:55.140 --> 00:16:03.300

Brendan Arnold: So this is a, so yeah, I think that's the, that comes to the end of the, demo. Hopefully,

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00:16:03.690 --> 00:16:08.369

Brendan Arnold: There are some questions and, some thoughts there.

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00:16:08.590 --> 00:16:15.309

Brendan Arnold: But yeah, if there are any sort of, like, if there is any other things you'd like me to sort of look into in a bit more depth, or to talk about, then happy to answer those.

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00:16:16.270 --> 00:16:30.829

Lowell Weisbord: Thank you so much, Brendan, that was brilliant. It was good to cover a few different examples and get the live... the live showing, which is often what people want, and we have questions coming in, as well as some pre-submitted ones, so we'll get... we'll get right into it.

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00:16:31.540 --> 00:16:43.189

Lowell Weisbord: So I think there was... there was... there was one upvote on this question, too, but around your qualitative analysis, which was around, yeah, okay, can I find themes in qualitative data, right? It's a big... a big part of

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00:16:43.350 --> 00:16:57.780

Lowell Weisbord: call analysis is maybe scanning, coding, doing that kind of thing. I think your topic grouping was, in some sense, a form of that. I don't know if you tried to go any deeper there, or experimented with different modes there?

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00:16:59.480 --> 00:17:13.090

Brendan Arnold: Yep, so we, we've done experimentations with trying to, sort of, to generate the topics on the fly, and so it often is good to, sort of, do a two-stage process with that, if you are going to do that, because when you ask the AI to do too many things at once.

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00:17:13.369 --> 00:17:22.030

Brendan Arnold: Yeah, I think the context window starts to overflow a little bit. It doesn't quite work as well as you... as you might hope.

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00:17:22.260 --> 00:17:33.129

Brendan Arnold: interestingly, I'm seeing more and more with the AIs that when you ask it these questions, that actually, in the background, it starts to try and do it through a numerical approach using, code.

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00:17:33.300 --> 00:17:35.569

Lowell Weisbord: So we're starting to see that more and more.

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00:17:35.570 --> 00:17:42.660

Brendan Arnold: Which is why I think when I look at these problems, I tend to actually just ask for the code in the first instance, and then use that to then tweak.

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00:17:44.100 --> 00:17:53.479

Brendan Arnold: you tend to find as well that if the actual AI does take an approach where it ingests it and then brings it back, that's when you get that over-correcting kind of problem.

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00:17:53.850 --> 00:17:56.480

Brendan Arnold: So, yeah, there is...

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00:17:56.900 --> 00:18:06.810

Brendan Arnold: Yeah, and in which case, you know, what you might want to do is you might want to sort of link it with IDs, and then sort of... and then just do a little bit of check-in, just to make sure that it hasn't scrambled those IDs, basically.

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00:18:07.290 --> 00:18:13.629

Brendan Arnold: I mean... The thing is, they are... they are changing quite a lot at the moment, so basically, it's...

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00:18:13.700 --> 00:18:33.419

Brendan Arnold: a lot of the analysis that we came up with before have kind of moved on and iterated on, and so now we take an approach where we try to do as much, you know, numerically, and actually using AI as a supporting tool to do numeric and repeatable analysis is probably good for sort of long-standing processes that you might want to set up.

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00:18:33.460 --> 00:18:44.939

Brendan Arnold: So really, yeah, we... I thought it was quite interesting to see in the first instance, you know, these kind of, like, topic, you know, topics where it might ingest and then sort of come up with some answers.

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00:18:45.420 --> 00:18:56.540

Brendan Arnold: We kind of found, because it's so variable, and it gives... gives much... very different results each time, that actually it was... it was a better way... it was for it to support us to do something that was a bit more,

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00:18:56.850 --> 00:18:58.620

Brendan Arnold: Kind of repeatable.

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00:18:59.430 --> 00:19:07.520

Lowell Weisbord: Yeah, 100%. Brenda, do you mind actually unsharing your screen at this point, for the moment? Thanks. Just so we can see you a little bit better.

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00:19:07.520 --> 00:19:15.209

Lowell Weisbord: I think, yeah, on that kind of qual analysis, we definitely encourage people to experiment with different things. As Brendan was saying, you can generate code.

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00:19:15.210 --> 00:19:38.529

Lowell Weisbord: and do different kinds of, you can more easily do different kinds of semantic matching, semantic analysis. Some of that, the AI often will gear towards using, like, traditional kind of natural language processing modes, but you can also then use the actual, use the LLMs themselves within that code as well for, like, incredible qual results, e.g. call a... call the API of that.

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00:19:39.100 --> 00:19:57.250

Lowell Weisbord: that LLM, if that's your... if that's your mode, if you're kind of on that technical side, you might get really, really great qual results that way as well. One question with quite a few updates here. The statements from Wendy, the statements you coded were really short. Does the quality of the coding reduce

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00:19:57.460 --> 00:20:02.190

Lowell Weisbord: The more lengthy slash complicated data you ask for it to analyze.

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00:20:04.170 --> 00:20:12.840

Brendan Arnold: Well, in all cases, the more data there is, the, yeah, the kind of results do vary more, basically. So,

134

00:20:13.010 --> 00:20:24.909

Brendan Arnold: In our particular case, our tool generates statements of that length. It's like Twitter-length statements that get put into the system, so most of our work has been on that. But we also deal with variable amounts of that data, so more records.

135

00:20:25.020 --> 00:20:26.690

Brendan Arnold: Fewer or more statements.

136

00:20:26.900 --> 00:20:42.380

Brendan Arnold: And yeah, as I mentioned before, that if you can narrow it down, it does get... you do get much, much better results. So, if you do sort of throw in a thousand statements, and you say... let's say... and let's say you don't prescribe the topics beforehand, and you just say, come up with six topics.

137

00:20:42.560 --> 00:20:58.009

Brendan Arnold: You'll often find that, those topics are sort of not necessarily evenly attributed, so you might have some topics that have only got 10 in them, and then another one's got 200, or something like that, right? Yeah. So, and then you might find as well that those topics are actually quite,

138

00:20:58.520 --> 00:21:03.630

Brendan Arnold: quite unusually grouped, so it might say things like, I don't know.

139

00:21:05.110 --> 00:21:18.070

Brendan Arnold: I'm just trying to think of some example now, but... but you can imagine, like, two things that don't really go together. Yeah. So, rather than it being insights and analysis, it might be, sort of, insights and, I don't know,

140

00:21:19.840 --> 00:21:26.279

Brendan Arnold: procurement, or whatever, you know, or something like that, right? So, so you tend to find that these,

141

00:21:27.210 --> 00:21:37.060

Brendan Arnold: But if you can sort of, like, give it a much, sort of, like, more concentrated data set that you already know is on a topic, so it's already gone through one round of this analysis.

142

00:21:37.370 --> 00:21:48.169

Brendan Arnold: And then you're kind of looking for subtopics within that theme, it's a good... yeah, that can be good and can give you much more, sort of, precise topics. Or more topics that are, sort of, a little bit more...

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00:21:49.030 --> 00:21:52.569

Lowell Weisbord: incisive, a bit... a bit better suited to the data set.

144

00:21:52.570 --> 00:21:57.449

Brendan Arnold: So, yeah, it can be... this iterative approach can be, sort of, can be beneficial in that case.

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00:21:57.890 --> 00:21:58.480

Lowell Weisbord: Yeah, I think...

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00:21:58.480 --> 00:21:59.000

Brendan Arnold: Lisa.

147

00:21:59.430 --> 00:22:04.139

Lowell Weisbord: That... that... that makes a lot of sense, and I think, in general, with all these kinds of analyses.

148

00:22:04.240 --> 00:22:10.569

Lowell Weisbord: taking it iteratively, working back and forth with the AI tool that you have access to is probably always a good

149

00:22:10.660 --> 00:22:13.159

Lowell Weisbord: Good recommendation,

150

00:22:13.160 --> 00:22:33.500

Lowell Weisbord: A question on the learning sessions and the challenges for Mike. How much time and effort are you finding that you're having to put into preparing the challenges for the Fortnite sessions? It sounds like a great idea, but I could see it becoming something of an industry. I was also... I had a question of what that kind of flying bug up in that picture was as well. That looked like quite a fun,

151

00:22:33.500 --> 00:22:35.590

Lowell Weisbord: Quite a fun session, whatever it was.

152

00:22:36.530 --> 00:22:50.310

Brendan Arnold: Yeah, so... so in... so that is actually a session that we run inside our lab. It's actually, sort of, slightly geared towards more creative, to sort of, like, it's a bit of a benchmark for, sort of, like, making sure that we are... we have a good benchmark of what innovation means for us as a team.

153

00:22:50.690 --> 00:23:01.239

Brendan Arnold: And so, yeah, we, yeah, and in terms of, sort of, coming up with sessions, we crowdsource it, essentially. So we work with lots of people within the team who have, sort of, like, very varied interests.

154

00:23:01.320 --> 00:23:18.680

Brendan Arnold: Lots of people are really keen to sort of set up their market stall, if you like, you know, so, to sort of say, look, here's what I'm about within the team. It's quite multidisciplinary, so we get lots of nice variety there, and it's a good way for people to actually sort of say, look, here's a practice that I'm, you know, that I'm kind of interested in.

155

00:23:18.810 --> 00:23:37.569

Brendan Arnold: And there are people on the team who do, you know, where AI is, like, something they're really good at. So as Marie Archer, I mentioned earlier, you know, she's sort of, like, she does a lot of AI work. Kellen Bricker as well, he combines AI with his art practice, so he sort of does AI art and policymaking, which is this brilliant mix.

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00:23:37.690 --> 00:23:45.809

Brendan Arnold: And so these kind of things, they're able to sort of bring these really interesting sessions, you know, to the team.

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00:23:46.270 --> 00:23:53.029

Brendan Arnold: Yeah, I mean, at the BOG, I think that one, actually, that session was actually one that we did where we sort of, like, it turns out.

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00:23:53.240 --> 00:24:11.200

Brendan Arnold: that, SharePoint, so a Microsoft product, actually had a 3D Spaces tool, and so we were looking, actually, what is this? What is this mystery button that, when we push, launches into this 3D world, basically? And so we would sort of... we use those tools as well to sort of explore the kind of corporate tools that we have in a little bit more depth.

159

00:24:11.290 --> 00:24:30.289

Brendan Arnold: To try out new features in Teams and things like that, as well as the AI features that we might want to look into in more depth in, you know, you know, how to use a prompt more effectively, or what interesting things can we do with prompting, and things like that. So, yeah, it's a really great way to sort of share that around the team.

160

00:24:31.360 --> 00:24:49.469

Lowell Weisbord: 100%, and that totally makes sense, and it's... I mean, it's a testament to everybody here that maybe one of the core skills of the next decade might end up just being that continuous learning, that continuous experimentation that does seem so required to kind of keep up with what's out there and how to make the most of it in creative ways.

161

00:24:49.490 --> 00:25:06.689

Lowell Weisbord: A pretty specific question here on kind of using AI, maybe the traditional deep research type tools, from Kip, says, when using AI as a research tool to gather a source of information on a topic, how do you get around the issue of it not being comprehensive in its responses?

162

00:25:06.690 --> 00:25:16.039

Lowell Weisbord: I've found that LLMs do not give me all relevant sources, but just select a few, meaning that I usually have to do my own Google search to find things it has missed.

163

00:25:16.090 --> 00:25:21.330

Lowell Weisbord: This is the case even when I explicitly say I want it to give me all sources about a topic.

164

00:25:22.770 --> 00:25:33.590

Brendan Arnold: So, yeah, I think this is a really interesting thing about, kind of where policy and research meet, kind of thing, because I always think that policy is more like... it's a bit of an art, not a science.

165

00:25:33.810 --> 00:25:50.679

Brendan Arnold: And policy is a navigation process, so, I understand I'm probably talking to a lot of researchers here, but, and my background is in research, you know, I used to be a physicist years ago, but basically, kind of the big switchover when I came to policy was understanding that, actually.

166

00:25:50.810 --> 00:26:01.760

Brendan Arnold: a lot of these things are designed... a lot of the tools that policymate... that we... that we come up with in PolicyLab are designed to help when the situation is very complicated, very naughty. You're not after the one true way.

167

00:26:01.880 --> 00:26:12.070

Brendan Arnold: you're looking for ways to sort of try to sort of get started. It can also help with things like the blank canvas problem, you know, where you kind of, like, it seems like there's so much to sort of tackle all at once.

168

00:26:12.240 --> 00:26:25.430

Brendan Arnold: you can start to use things like LLMs, just to sort of, like, get the ball rolling, basically. And I know people say this all the time, it's like, oh, it's a good starting point, and it gets a little bit... and you're like, well, I kind of want it to finish my work, right? You know, and then to sort of, you know.

169

00:26:25.430 --> 00:26:34.809

Brendan Arnold: But it is... it is really, really good for that kind of exploratory kind of work that you might have at the start of a research piece, when you're trying to sort of establish a new evidence base.

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00:26:34.940 --> 00:26:41.489

Brendan Arnold: To actually, Sort of let you know what the sort of... who the big players are.

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00:26:41.710 --> 00:26:54.409

Brendan Arnold: And then what you can do is then you can sort of use your kind of... maybe you can use your convening work, reaching out to experts and other people in the field, to actually get that kind of depth of information and that kind of slightly more nuanced and detailed stuff.

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00:26:54.410 --> 00:27:03.280

Brendan Arnold: Which is, you know, let's say it's got those stronger references and those stronger, kind of, links back into the research. So.

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00:27:03.580 --> 00:27:21.850

Brendan Arnold: I think as a policymaker, I would definitely look at, sort of, like, starting out policy, you know, AI research as, like, a starting point, just for when you need to quickly turn

something around, get that kind of, like, a baseline of understanding, that you might then want to, sort of, like, take forward, when you actually come to, sort of.

174

00:27:21.990 --> 00:27:28.289

Brendan Arnold: And then you can use the time that you're with experts and the time that you're actually, sort of, like, doing that deep research to really look at the

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00:27:28.430 --> 00:27:31.239

Brendan Arnold: The interesting stuff, and not have to cover the basics.

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00:27:32.330 --> 00:27:42.840

Lowell Weisbord: Yeah, that totally makes sense. Use it as a starting point, experiment with it. I think your point earlier around just try new tools, I think there are increasingly new kinds of research tools.

177

00:27:44.420 --> 00:27:52.700

Lowell Weisbord: that are targeted for policy, for research, that help you do literature reviews, that help you do all sorts of things that you should explore.

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00:27:52.750 --> 00:28:11.899

Lowell Weisbord: that can really help you in this space, and I think to that specific problem, too, you know, be more instructive, too. If you... if, you know, AI works in the same way sometimes that we work, these agentic tools that are built into Copilot, if you tell it a specific search term, it often actually can do that and look at similar results that you might have looked before.

179

00:28:11.900 --> 00:28:23.959

Lowell Weisbord: unfortunately, there's actually loads more questions here, but we do have to keep this tight and keep the show on the road. But I... it's been really, really great to have you, Brenna. We have a few closing notes here.

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00:28:23.960 --> 00:28:24.590

Brendan Arnold: What did we say?

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00:28:24.590 --> 00:28:45.880

Lowell Weisbord: And we have some follow-up resources which actually address some of these questions to today's topic. We have an article from one of our contributors exploring how to shift

your mindset to kind of beyond moving scene... beyond seeing AI as a replacement for rigorous work, or just a time saver, but actually using it as this research partner, as, I think, like you were saying, like, a place to start, and kind of like a continuous

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00:28:45.880 --> 00:28:47.489

Lowell Weisbord: tool,

183

00:28:47.620 --> 00:28:59.310

Lowell Weisbord: to glance this, go to the... you can check that out by going to the AI and government community, and I think there's a post to comment on at the top of the page, and we'll shoot out the link to all of that as well.

184

00:28:59.530 --> 00:29:08.459

Lowell Weisbord: I'd like to give Brendan a big round of applause at this point. It's your birthday, you've given us a great chat, you've given us lots of answers to questions, we really, really, really,

185

00:29:08.490 --> 00:29:17.349

Lowell Weisbord: Appreciate your time today. And we try to keep all our events useful and helpful, so you'll see something pop up on your screen to just,

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00:29:17.350 --> 00:29:28.659

Lowell Weisbord: rank your agreement with this statement. This event was a valuable use of my time. We try to respect people's time and keep the programming good, so would appreciate you just quickly answering this if you have a moment.

187

00:29:28.840 --> 00:29:37.109

Lowell Weisbord: While you respond to that poll, a few more upcoming AI events you'll see in the chat here. You can register to join us at again soon.

188

00:29:37.170 --> 00:29:56.490

Lowell Weisbord: If you're not available to join live, remember that you can always register for the event in order to get the recording afterwards. We have one about AI ethics and safety in March, which would be really interesting, and another AI skills lab looking really specifically at AI for slide decks, and emerging, an interesting place that people are getting a lot of value out of.

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00:29:56.490 --> 00:30:05.800

Lowell Weisbord: We also have general AI courses, effective prompt engineering, and all of the above that you have access to if you're looking for more resources. But encourage experimentation.

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00:30:06.260 --> 00:30:20.309

Lowell Weisbord: That's all we have time for today. We hope you found it really helpful. One last huge thank you to Brendan for taking the time, and yeah, feel free to look for the email for any additional resources, and hope to see you at another event soon. Thank you all.

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