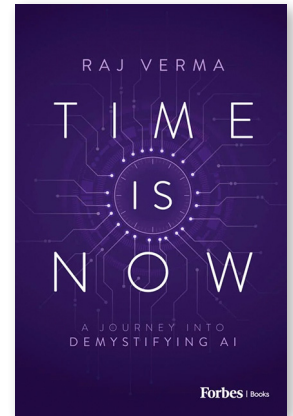


Time is Now

A Journey Into Demystifying AI

by **Raj Verma**



Contents

Introduction

Page 2

Part 1: How We Got There

Page 2

Part 2: Where We Are

Page 3

Part 3: Where We Are Going

Page 4

Conclusion

Page 6

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

In a world where technology impacts the very fabric of our existence, it has become vital for leaders to navigate its impact on business and society.

The book *Time is Now: A Journey Into Demystifying AI* is an educational journey toward keeping up with rapidly evolving technology, harnessing the power of artificial intelligence for intelligent decision-making, and ensuring that our choices positively impact business and the world.

Author Raj Verma introduces us to the essence of “Now” and The Trinity of Intelligence - Information, Context, and Choice to make smarter choices in the age of AI. Through his personal and professional reflections, he guides us to amplify our own intelligence by leveraging AI, and demystify our own selves by demystifying AI.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY:

- The powerful impact a single decision can make on one’s destiny
- The reality of today and where many companies find themselves
- The implications and decisions we all must make about how we shape our future as generative AI evolves

Introduction

History has shown us that the present is better than the past. The future can be better than the present if we are good stewards of Now. With AI, we have an opportunity to create new insights into which way the wind is blowing. But before we can decide how to use AI, we have to consider the power of Now: How it is shaped through Information, how it is given Context by technology and human behavior, and how it drives Choice.

This book is divided into three sections. The first section is semi-autobiographical, showing my own journey and the powerful impact mere seconds – a single decision – can make on one’s destiny. The second section looks at the reality of today and where many companies find themselves. The third section discusses the implications and decisions we all must make about how we shape our future as generative AI evolves.

The moment we are in is not isolated – it has been shaped by the past, is powered by the present, and molds the future. This is not the time to exploit or run away from the potential of generative AI. Rather, with the right information available to us placed in the right context, Now is the time to leave an impact on this world by choosing to do what’s right.

Part 1: How We Got There

Chapter 1: The Power of Now

Life is a series of Now, and each passing has reverberations into the future. Our memories are made of the information we take in throughout our lives and give us our identity. The current context gives us impetus. How we choose to act in the Now is what makes us, us. To understand the power of Now, we must become students of how it forms through Information, Context, and Choice.

- **Information.** In technical terms, our memory is the collection of the data that shapes our identities. Yet it also includes the events that happened outside of our control, before our lives began. Similarly, the future is being decided with each Now. What you choose matters. And much more when you have a never-before-available tool like AI.
- **Context.** When it comes to AI, we have a responsibility to ask ourselves how we will use it. The heart of AI is data - that is, the information it learns. We must see AI not as artificial intelligence but as amplified intelligence and we must recognize that these tools have

the potential to both help and harm. As leaders, we control this ship. Ask yourself: How are we utilizing the tools before us? Are we being responsible?

- **Choice.** Whether it was a whim or destiny, my choice to walk into Wipro (my workplace) changed the direction of my life forever. I’ve taken many chances in my life, but there have been five big ones that have shaped me, this being the first. In doing so, I learned one of the most valuable lessons in my life: you’re not going to score on the chances you don’t take.

Whether you’re a spiritual individual or not, approaching Now ethically requires the cultivation of your soul and mind. With generative AI - or any other emergent technology - we must be cautious in our approach to how we use it to further our agendas. We need to be asking, “What’s the ultimate goal of this project? Is it going to bring good into the world?” These are questions that should be asked in a public forum to gain insight, not hidden away in a locked boardroom.

When we can combine Information and Context through this lens, we can make better Choices, not only for ourselves but for the world and the future. In the combination of Information, Context, and Choice, through the lens of soul and mind, we can find the right direction, the right moment, and the right time. The question remains: Are we brave enough to do so?

Chapter 2: Practice Makes Relevant

The sense of ambition I felt on my first day at Wipro was quite audacious. There, I made a promise to myself - to make a name for myself, yes, but to also be the best version of myself. On my first day, I was asked to go up to a building at nine-thirty every morning, take the elevator to the top floor, then take the staircase back down, knocking on every office along the way to see if they wanted to buy a computer or printer from us. That experience became one of the great lessons throughout my professional career. It helped me figure out that the greatest selling point was the idea of relevancy.

This was the context I had to create for people. I had to show prospects the problem they didn’t yet see: becoming irrelevant. The business landscape was shifting, and I had to show how computers would keep them relevant. Automation - one of the biggest buzzwords in the AI landscape - is no more than how you create relevancy. For example, at Wipro, I learned how to pitch prospects not on every feature of the computer but rather to zero-in on one aspect that would make their office more efficient, and more relevant. Often, this meant explaining the power of word processing to them.

It's not about replacing people with technology. It's about empowering people with technology for impact.

But for those of us in the present, we have to consider this carefully. What tools are available today that can make us more competitive, more productive, and more efficient than we were yesterday? What process can be automated? What system can be made more efficient? It's not about replacing people with technology. It's about empowering people with technology for impact. This is the context of relevancy at work. If you seek only to exploit AI for momentary selfish gain, you do not have a relevancy mindset. Remaining relevant always looks forward and around. It asks, "How will this impact the next generation? Will this do good or harm for my fellow human?"

You only remain relevant through sustained effort. You can "go viral" and be forgotten in the same week. Practicing discipline through discomfort makes the difference in staying relevant.

Chapter 3: Low Chance of Success

A common theme throughout my life has been taking opportunities that appeared to have a low chance of success. This began with walking up to the Wipro office and asking for an interview when I had already failed their assessment exam at my college. This was also true in my decision to shift to software sales just as hardware sales were booming.

In the face of increasing globalization, we leaders have an opportunity to increase our chances of success - especially in light of how AI can assist us in creating new insights. As leaders, we must understand that innovation is not technology. Innovation is about culture. It's about facilitating a culture in which it's okay to challenge the status quo, to try the new.

Increasing your low chances of success requires great curiosity. It drives you to ask the deep questions that produce deep answers. A curious culture asks, "What can we do better? What can we learn from our mistakes? What are we not doing that we should start doing? What should we stop doing because it's now ineffective?"

Curiosity is the question. Innovation is the answer. Artificial intelligence is simply another tool to guide your curiosity to the answer with the greatest chance of success right now.

Part 2: Where We Are

Chapter 4: Student and Teacher

Vivek Ranadive, the founder of TIBCO, which became my home for the greater part of my career, was the one who came up with the term Real Time, earning himself the nickname "Mr. Real Time."

In essence, he proposed that if you could get the right information to the right person or place at the right time, then you could solve any problem in the world. Since he was at the forefront of the Real Time conversation, I inhaled his teachings from his first book published in 1999. While technology has changed a lot since then, the philosophies he espoused have not. Without his knowing it, he had become a major influence and teacher for me. As a student of Real Time, every day at work filled me with a sense of joy and wonder. I had a voracious appetite to learn everything I could. If I found myself in a group of people complaining about a problem, I'd make an excuse to leave. Then I would surround myself with more ambitious people who wanted to make the world a better place. These were the teachers I chose.

Chapter 5: Creating Insight

In the discussion about generative AI, much of the focus has been on automation, on outsourcing aspects of human work to become more efficient. This is a limited view, however. The greatest opportunity AI provides for leaders isn't in automation - it's in creating insight.

No one gets to avoid trials in life. When you are not in control of the circumstances around you, you can either complain about it or you can create insight from it. In the age of AI, there is a great lesson to be learned here. Things will not always go your way. Projects will go awry. Mistakes will be made by others that impact you. You must keep in mind that such trials are not the end of the story but a chapter within it. You can always use trials to create insight for yourself on what to do next.

Chapter 6: Identity Shift

More than anything else, our identity is rooted in the ac-

tions we take. With an identity shift, it is never just a matter of words. It is a matter of action.

How relevant and how recent the data is empowers a company to be more relevant itself. Speed is of the essence here but it's not everything. If you are the fastest on the track but run in the wrong direction, you don't win the race. You become a laughingstock. This is the importance of insight. It allows you to take the right action in the right direction.

Artificial intelligence is the culmination of this journey. The advancements we see through data analysis and creating insight show this to be true. The one who creates insight the fastest wins.

Inaction is not an option. The individuals and companies who take no action will lose their identities, and lose their relevance. The ones who do take action to become faster - to amplify their intelligence with the tools now available to us - will make the necessary identity shift to survive.

Chapter 7: Improvisation

There is always a risk in improvisation. Yet it is often the secret ingredient in what differentiates you from the rest of the crowd. It is what creates an experience people will cling to. But is there a metric to use to know if you're improvising the right way? I believe there is.

To know whether you are improvising the right way or not, the secret is this: you must consider the user experience. Ultimately, the key to creating a superior product is the user experience. Consider Sony's Betamax player from the 1980s. It was arguably the better-designed product from a technological view. But VHS was the more user-friendly product and won the market. History is filled with great products left behind, leapfrogged by a "lesser" product. The user experience always casts the deciding vote and is always about the latest context. That is, are you meeting the user's expectations today? This is also the power of Now.

Your ability to pivot, to create an excellent experience, to improve each day - are what will future-proof you. It will be the same with generative AI. It's an iterative process, a continuous swinging of the hammer. The companies that can implement AI to create a better experience, to help them improvise with more insight, will be the ones who thrive. To get there, they will have to leverage the power of Now - wielding the right Information in the right Context for the right Choice.

Part 3: Where We Are Going

Chapter 8: A Great Escape

If there is any one lesson I've learned from my past, it's that the future is always a bit foggy. It encapsulates the unknown. But the choices you make today - in the Now - can provide great clarity to what the future holds.

Choices, I realized, are not solitary phenomena. They ripple outward, influencing not just our own reality but the realities of others. Choices are not made in a vacuum. They are the product of Information and Context, the raw materials from which we construct our identities. The more I pondered this idea, the more it struck me how, in many ways, companies mirror the complexity of individuals. They are conglomerates of people, each with their own Information, Context, and Choice. This trifecta is what differentiates one company from another, even when they operate in the same market with similar products and services.

In essence, Information, Context, and Choice are not only the pillars that make up Now - they are also the building blocks of intelligence. When we apply this thinking to both human intelligence and artificial intelligence, we can begin the process of demystifying how we can create insight, how we shape our identities through our choices, and how we build the future we want.

Chapter 9: Demystifying AI

We find ourselves in a fast-moving, fast-changing world where every week brings a new announcement about tech, new noise around AI, or a new company or product being launched into the world. With each passing Now, the landscape is being augmented, and it's easy to get lost. If we keep a foggy, narrow lens through which the view of AI is not well-informed or well-rounded, we will lose our way in the landscape.

Stack Overflow had long been the proverbial "watering hole" for developers - a thriving hub where engineers could share their coding conundrums and collectively troubleshoot. And then, in the blink of an eye, the landscape changed. With the advent of ChatGPT in late 2022, the once-bustling Stack Overflow saw a precipitous drop in traffic.

But here's where the story takes an interesting turn. Chat GPT-4, the brainchild of OpenAI, had been trained on publicly available data up until September 2021. This data, allegedly, included the same billions of transactions that Stack Overflow had been diligently collecting and analyzing. Then

To define AI, we need to first recognize that data and memory play a key role in how we currently define human intelligence.

why did the same data in the hands of OpenAI lead to such a seismic shift in the coding landscape? What did OpenAI do differently with the same information that Stack Overflow had been sitting on for years? The answer lies in context. Stack Overflow had the data, but it was OpenAI that took the data and added context to create action.

To define AI, we need to first recognize that data and memory play a key role in how we currently define human intelligence. Only then can we go down the hypothetical path of recreating intelligence through a machine. Much like the human brain's synapses and neurons, the data we collect are connected to each other. When our brains discover a pattern in this data and how it is connected, the raw data elevates to knowledge. The more experiences and learnings we have, the more "knowledgeable" we become.

The data points that what we incessantly and perpetually collect vary from moment to moment. Before these experiences are filed away in the recesses of our minds, though, we add an additional layer to these data points. We add Context. With Context, our brain attaches emotions, thoughts, and lessons together. We are also selective in what we choose to remember. We effectively live in an incessant cycle of Now. What makes us different from each other, even if we live through the same experience, is the context of every single piece of data we process. The last piece of the puzzle that brings Information and Context into action is Choice.

When Information and Context come together, we can make Choices that align with actions. Repeated action leads to the building of skills, which is often referred to as muscle memory. It is this combination of Information, Context, and Choice that forms the building blocks of a framework we call the Trinity of Intelligence (or, TOI) to Demystify AI.

In embracing the foundational pillars of Information, Context, and Choice, the TOI framework delineates a multidimensional path for translating AI's potential into tangible outcomes. Seizing the opportunities lying at the intersection of these pillars, organizations can unravel the mysterious tapestry of artificial intelligence and devise strategies that harmonize technology and human intelligence.

Building on the TOI framework, our team has developed a blueprint architecture for enterprise AI that you can freely use to make your own choices. In short, it's a blueprint for companies to understand and master AI through data. You can delve deeper into this topic and download the blueprint from timeisnow.ai. You see, the brain has three key layers that are always interacting with one another to drive our decision-making processes. Likewise, AI can be understood through these three layers:

- Layer 1: The first layer is made up of interfaces - that is, the receptors and effectors. Think of these as the nerve receptors that are taking in all the information from throughout the body-especially the input of our five senses. These interfaces directly interact with the outside world, taking in a constant stream of data occurring in real-time.
- Layer 2: Prefrontal cortex models and tools. Within the scope of AI, this "prefrontal cortex" is composed of the models and tools performing the work. While decision-making looks different with artificial intelligence than humankind, it's still making choices based on the parameters of the model or tool. Without these, it would be incapable of giving any kind of meaningful results.
- Layer 3: Memory and context-analysis of transactional data. The core of AI is data. The tool itself is irrelevant without it. The longer it takes AI to get the relevant data, the further away you move from Real.

If you can ensure your database gets the right information to the right person at the right time, you can solve any problem in the world. By demystifying AI, we are forced to also demystify our own motivations as leaders. What kind of impact do we want to make on people? On the world? What does the database of our experiences and the context of the moment tell us? If life is indeed a series of Now, the time is now for us to decide what tomorrow will look like.

Chapter 10: Leadership in the Age of AI

With more insight, more information, and more context-you can gain more confidence about when to climb the peak and when to stay in the tent. You can never predict

everything, but the more knowledge you have within your view, the more likely you are to succeed. Relevancy and recency also play a role here. The better the information available, the more likely you are to string two steps together and rebound from the occasional step backward.

As a leader, creating a healthy culture is one of your most important responsibilities. Creating culture falls into three categories:

- What you promote. This is where you verbalize the mission, the vision, and the values.
- What you practice. This is where you have to live out the values you proclaimed.
- What you permit. Here is where you have to set the boundaries of what you will allow and what you won't.

Always communicate. Communication is not always about the information. It largely depends on the context. Naturally, your team can't read your mind and can't grasp the full context of your thinking. The responsibility falls on you to repeat with clarity and high frequency. Don't be afraid of the unknown. When making decisions about the unknown, it is only in hindsight that it becomes obvious what the right choice was. The majority of your executive team may disagree with you and if you're wrong, well, then it could cost you your company, your financial well-being, and your legacy. But if you can consistently connect the dots, and find the pattern across a universe of dots to make conviction-based decisions, then you can keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Conclusion

In the age of AI, we leaders must remember that we have a moral responsibility to neither run from AI nor exploit it. We must set the boundaries of what we will promote, what we will practice, and what we will permit. While this may be the end of the book, it should be seen as the beginning of a conversation. If you've enjoyed the insights here, I invite you to engage with me through LinkedIn. An eternity lives in Now. The time for this conversation is Now. Do not put it off. For Now sits at the crux of Information, Context, and Choice. Now is the time for courageous leadership. Now is all we have... because the time is Now.



Raj Verma's professional journey has spanned more than two decades in infrastructure software, culminating in his becoming chief executive officer at SingleStore in 2019. While Raj is an avid golfer, reader, and pursuer of holistic health of mind, body and spirit, he identifies first and foremost as husband and father to four amazing children. His philanthropic interests center around helping the vulnerable in our society.

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