


RamtinEpisode Template_mixdown

Fri, Mar 13, 2026 11:57AM 15:45

SPEAKERS

Kara Snyder, Ramtin Davanlou

 00:00

 Kara Snyder 00:00

hello and welcome to the podcast, a podcast produced by the College of Applied Science and Technology at Illinois State University. I'm your host, Kara Snyder, and I serve as the assistant dean of marketing communications and constituent relations for the College. Each episode, we're sitting down with an alum of the college, and today, we have a chance to talk to Ramtin Davanlou. Ramtin is an information technology alum and currently serves as the chief technology officer for the Accenture and Intel partnership. Welcome and thank you for being here. Thanks for having me. Kara, it's great to be with you today. Well, we're going to have some fun. I'm excited to learn about you, and we're going to start at the beginning. Why did you choose ISU,

 Ramtin Davanlou 00:54

that's a good question. It was really a stars aligning situation. I think I found the exact Information Systems major that I was looking for, but also I think their location was critical. Bloomington, normal is such a nice town, and I actually had family in the area. My aunt and her husband were both alumni, and my uncle was a professor at ISU business school. So so, you know, my wife and I visited a year before that I applied, and you know, we just loved the atmosphere on campus, and you know how friendly people were, and we really felt like we want to be part of this community.

 Kara Snyder 01:36

And I didn't realize you had such a big support network of red birds. That's really special. Now that you and your family have that in common, I think that's really neat. so tell us what it was like to be a non traditional student here during your time on campus.

R

Ramtin Davanlou 01:52

Honestly, it felt really good. This was my second master's degree, and I had worked for a few years after my first master's degree. So even though I thought I have an established way of thinking and a career, I think ISU forced me to reinvent myself. You know, when you come back to school with a bit more life experience and you know, you're more purposeful. I was not just looking to get a degree or past tests and things like that. So I was looking for large hands on projects where I could really improve my practical skills. So, you know, I can just start a new career, basically here in the US. And I was really intrigued when I was reading your bio prior to this chat. I know that some of your work while you were on campus focused on getting access to true crime data to analyze long term crime trends. So tell us about your interest in that area that's so specific, but also fascinating. I'd love to hear more. Yeah. You know, at the time, I was looking for ways to apply modern data processing technologies to solve problems that were previously unsolvable, and specifically the challenge of processing massive data sets. This is something that, you know, I started thinking about even before joining, is you, but you know, I think, is you gave me the opportunity to actually focus on it and learn more about it. And this was when, you know, companies like Google and Yahoo had just pioneered a technology called Hadoop which is basically binding hundreds or even 1000s of computers together to work on a single problem. And they do it by shredding massive data sets and distributing little pieces of these data set to each computer and having it solved for a fraction of the problem, and then returning it to a central computer to aggregate all of those results. So this is a very, very interesting way of putting all of those compute power together to solve a larger problem. And this was incredibly intriguing to me. I was lucky enough to get access to us crime data through a very resourceful and brilliant professor, Dr Brian Hosek. And you know that basically data set allowed me to really put that distributed computing power to test, right? So the crime data was large enough that was really difficult to be processed in in any single computer, even if, like, you had the beefiest server out there, this data was large enough that couldn't be handled by a single computer. So you know that, plus getting access to bunch of servers that that we got from the from the IT department, and basically stitch them together to solve this problem was probably the most, you know, intriguing experience that I had during ISU.

K

Kara Snyder 04:46

that's so interesting. And what I love about this is that you're leaving you're leaving campus, you have your degree, and you have this wealth of hands on experience. So I would love to hear from you the Cliff Notes version and really, of how you went from your graduate school graduation with all this great experience to your current position as the Chief Technology Officer.

R

Ramtin Davanlou 05:08

Very good question. I think it has been a little bit more chaotic than this version that I'm giving you, is it always is right? So careers are like, a lot of ups and downs and things that you need to manage. I think my work in big data, this technology that I was just explaining at ISU, essentially jump started my career, and in a very strong way, because when I joined Accenture, I basically, you know, helped build our big data practice within Accenture, and that's, you know, how we basically helped a lot of, you know, larger practice companies around the world tackle the challenge of processing larger data sets that they have, right? So basically bringing that to a global scale and upskilling the talent that we had at Accenture to be able to go and actually do it for these companies. And, you know, quickly after that, focusing on AI as well was big move that really helped me, because, you know, all that foundation that the data that we were able to process now, you know, created the ability for these companies to actually run larger models and use AI to actually, you know, kind of go into the future of, like predicting, you know, scenarios that could happen. And, you know, kind of being at the forefront of the data revolution. And AI afterwards, you know, helped me, you know, quickly move into some leadership roles, and eventually leading to helping me define the technology innovation and strategy for some of our clients.



06:47

So if you had the chance to describe your job to somebody outside of the industry, how would you drill down and explain it, thinking about how we have listeners from all across the college and all across the university. If you had the opportunity to explain it, how would you do that?

R

Ramtin Davanlou 07:04


I'd say I'm essentially a professional problem solver, right? That's how I'd like to get it. And this is about looking at the challenges global companies face, and solve those problems using AI or otherwise. You know, technologies that we have available, so starting from the problem and thinking how technology applies, and we call it business reinvention, especially after, you know, after AI has become that powerful. For example, we might use AI to predict supply chain breaks right before they happen, so that we can keep items on the shelves right. Or another example is the warehouse of the future. We recently worked on a project called which is around the AI powered robots and digital twins, and creating a virtual replica of a warehouse so that, you know, these robots can actually use that to learn and optimize how, how goods should move. You know, it's about, you know, making the world, you know, some of the world's biggest industrial machines run smarter and faster.


K

Kara Snyder 08:17


Professional problem solver, I love that so much. I think you should order new business cards.


 Ramtin Davanlou 08:24
Yeah, I should put that up there.

 Kara Snyder 08:27
And I know earlier you talked about how you have been able to evolve throughout leadership positions, throughout your career. Can you tell us about your leadership philosophy?

 Kara Snyder 08:37
Yeah, I think I am a big believer in joint learning, you know, in a especially in a field as fast as what we have in AI, no one is the sole expert for long, I try to envision the future and empower my team to build it right, if you have, you know, Smart people on your team, and the right tools and a clear vision, they usually surprise you, something better than you originally imagined. That that has happened to me a lot, and, you know, I love, you know, and it's very, you know, I think it increases productivity as well, because people feel like, you know, they're actually part of the game, right? As opposed to just doing what you're told to do.

 09:26
What would you say your favorite part of your job is?

 09:29
there are a few things, but I specifically like the workshops that we do. This is, you know, when you bring a group of best talent from different domains together in a room to tackle a real world challenge. And you know when that aha moment happens, you know you discover something together, and you're, you know, shaping things or writing things on a whiteboard. I love those moments.

 Kara Snyder 09:58
And on the flip side, I like to ask what is the most challenging thing about your job?

R

Ramtin Davanlou 10:03

That's an interesting one. I mean, I think we're a global company and a multinational team, usually, like across different projects, and the sun never sets for somebody right in your team. So managing time zones is a constant puzzle, but we've learned how to how to deal with that over time and beyond that. I think it's also uncertainty in this industry. You have to be comfortable with the fact that you know what you knew yesterday might be obsolete tomorrow, and you know you gotta love the constant learning aspect of of the job.

K

Kara Snyder 10:39

Let's unpack that a little bit the uncertainty that's so interesting to me. How would you advise somebody to think about that, especially if it's somebody starting off early in their career, uncertainty can for some personalities and some people, be a really scary thing. So how do you advise somebody to frame that in their mindset to make it less scary.

R

Ramtin Davanlou 11:02

Yeah, it's about the nature of the job. And I think increasingly, for every job, this is going to be the case where you know you need to learn how to how to ask the right questions and stay curious and try to be as articulate as you can about, you know, posing your ideas or asking the right questions. Because I think what we have right now is, in addition to search technologies that we had for two decades or more, right now, you have this intelligence that you can just go to and ask questions, direct questions, right? And this is you have a PhD level expert in every subject that can respond your questions you know, which is like, you know, puts us at this situation where we just need to learn how to bring this interdisciplinary intelligence together. And, you know, sometimes you ask a question and you don't even understand the response that you're getting. So like, you know, keeping with the pace of that and asking follow up questions and putting it together in your mind in a way that you're comfortable. You know, re articulating that, I think is a key expertise.

K

Kara Snyder 12:25

That's great advice. Thank you so much. Well, Ramtin, we are going to finish with a speed round. So I want you to just your first instinct on these questions, are you a morning person or a night owl?

R

Ramtin Davanlou 12:37

Definitely a night owl.

K Kara Snyder 12:40
What is your go to snack?

R Ramtin Davanlou 12:42
Ice cream. There is no contest.

K Kara Snyder 12:44
Oh, that's unique. I've actually never heard that before. So what's what's your favorite flavor?

R Ramtin Davanlou 12:49
It's weird, but vanilla. I just like the taste of ice cream.

K Kara Snyder 12:55
I love it. You're a purist. That's fantastic. What's your coffee order?

R Ramtin Davanlou 13:02
Simple, strong Americano, or maybe like a cortado when I'm feeling fancy,

K Kara Snyder 13:10
see, I was curious if we'd hear afogato from you. Then,

R Ramtin Davanlou 13:14
yeah, that's a good point. Yeah.

K Kara Snyder 13:18
What's the best trip you've ever taken?

R Ramtin Davanlou 13:20
Skiing trips or big family reunions.

K Kara Snyder 13:24
Where do you recommend to have a big family reunion? I'm curious, is there a certain location that works well for that

R Ramtin Davanlou 13:31
last time we did Dubai, which was amazing. It's amazing how fast you know that city is growing.

K Kara Snyder 13:38
I love that. That's a great change of scenery. That's so fun.

R Ramtin Davanlou 13:42
Yeah,

K Kara Snyder 13:43
and I ask everyone who comes on the podcast Avantis gondola or pub two cheese balls?

R Ramtin Davanlou 13:49
You know, as a non traditional student, I think I never developed a taste for those specific delicacies. But, you know, I'd say I'd probably go for cheese balls.

K

Kara Snyder 14:02

That's fair. That's fair. Thank you for that perspective. Is there something when you travel back to campus that you just have to have, or a place that you feel like is a must stop for you?

R

Ramtin Davanlou 14:12

Yeah, there were a few restaurants that you really liked. I don't remember exactly all the names, but for example, this still was one of the ones that we really liked, so probably visiting that and some of the friends that we made during those two years we were there, we'd like to revisit.

K

Kara Snyder 14:28

Oh, that's fun. Well, I have one last question for you. If you could give one piece of advice to a college student, what would you say?

R

Ramtin Davanlou 14:36

I think it's just about learning to learn, and, you know, not thinking that, hey, I learned, for example, a programming language or a tool, or, you know, any concept right, and that's enough for for future career. I think it's more important to learn how to formulate the right questions. That we discussed right and you know, because the technology will change, but the ability to ask the right question is what will make people, you know, more successful, and you know, be able to become a leader.

K

Kara Snyder 15:14

That's great advice. I love that the ability to form the right questions, and that's something that you can take with you into any job and any career. So thank you for sharing and thanks again for being here.

R

Ramtin Davanlou 15:27

Yeah, of course, my pleasure Kara.



Kara Snyder 15:30

that was Rampton Devan low, Chief Technology Officer for the Accenture and Intel partnership.
Join us next time on the podcast for more stories from our cast alumni