Asim Munawar

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Professional Summary

AI leader with 15+ years of experience driving innovation across global R&D and enterprise initiatives. Experienced in leading cross-functional teams, shaping AI strategy, and delivering scalable, production-ready solutions. Actively contribute to advisory boards and serve as a frequent speaker on the future of AI. Known for building high-performing teams and aligning research with business goals to create measurable impact. Looking to bring this experience to a **director** or **senior manager** role focused on advancing AI capabilities and responsible innovation.

Executive Highlights

- Built and led high-performing teams focused on advancing reasoning and agentic workflows via synthetic data generation and alignment techniques. Consistently delivered >30% performance gains across enterprise tasks, achieving results on par with leading proprietary models using efficient open-source models (3B–30B), now integrated into IBM's Granite series.
- Directed IBM's neuro-symbolic AI program, managing 50+ researchers across 7 globally distributed, cross-functional teams—playing a key role in shaping IBM's long-term AI research and product strategy.
- Managed a team of 12+ researchers delivering production-grade AI solutions in robotics, acoustics, natural language processing, and computer vision—bridging the gap between cutting-edge research and real-world client applications.
- Advisor to national AI strategy center in Pakistan and generative AI institute/startup in the U.S. | Inventor of 20+ USPTO patents | Author of 80+ publications.
- Delivered 50+ keynote and invited talks at premier venues including IJCAI, ICSE, Dallas AI, and ACMSE; also invited to speak at several leading global universities. Active LinkedIn contributor with 14K+ professional followers.

Skills

Management	Program & Project Management | Team Leadership | Talent Development | Conflict Resolution | Performance Management | Diversity & Inclusion
Leadership	AI strategy | Executive decision-making | Client engagement | Thought leadership | Change management | R&D leadership | Keynote Presentations | Board/advisory roles | Agile methodologies | Strategic Planning
Technical	AI/ML | Responsible AI & Ethics | Large Language Models (LLMs) | Synthetic Data Generation | AI evaluation | API Augmented LLMs | Neuro-symbolic AI | NLP | Computer Vision | Automation

Work Experience

IBM Research – Apr 2012 – Present (https://research.ibm.com/)

Relocated from IBM Research Tokyo to IBM TJ Watson Research Center, New York in Jan 2021. Progressed from a researcher to senior leadership roles with increasing global scope.

Research Lead (Jan 2023 – Present)

- Led multiple initiatives to enhance reasoning, planning and agentic workflows in LLMs. Guiding a 20+ person cross-functional team, we achieved >20% gains on standard reasoning benchmarks, and >30% on enterprise applications.
- Built a high-performing, diverse team contributing to top models in IBM's Granite series.
- Combined strategic oversight with technical leadership to push SOTA in multi-turn grounded reasoning.

Project Management | Tech Leadership | LLMs | RLHF/RLAIF | Reasoning | Synthetic Data | RAG

Program Director for Neuro-Symbolic AI (Jul 2019 – Aug 2023)

- Co-led design and led implementation of IBM's neuro-symbolic AI program, overseeing 50+ researchers across 7 international teams.
- Drove breakthroughs in NLU with reinforcement learning and built a 6K+ member external community.
- Founded recurring global events that continue to shape neuro-symbolic AI research and strategy at IBM.

Program Management | Thought Leadership | Community Building | Strategy | Neuro-symbolic AI

Manager (Jan 2018 – Nov 2019)

- Managed a 12+ member research team working across NLP, robotics, computer vision, and acoustics.
- Oversaw hiring, mentoring, performance reviews, project planning, and client delivery for 5+ research and enterprise deployments.
- Acted as both technical and people lead, bridging research with business impact.

Team Leadership | Talent Development | Client Engagement | Cross-Domain AI

Senior Researcher (Apr 2012 – Jan 2018)

Joined as a Researcher in 2012 and was promoted to Senior Researcher in 2014 in recognition of technical leadership and innovation across AI domains

- Built simulation & testing platforms for vehicle systems; developed an emulator for IBM's TrueNorth neuromorphic chip
- As Senior Researcher, led projects in robotics middleware, neuro-symbolic AI, and precision industrial assembly with AI
- Founded a new team focused on applied AI research; co-led IBM GTO 2018 to drive grassroots innovation

Robotics | Deep learning | Computer Vision | Neuromorphic Computing | AI Applications | Strategic Transformation

Advisory & Early Roles

- Executive Board Member – Centaur AI (2023–Present): Advise on Gen AI strategy and responsible use of AI in industry
- SIAB Board Member – NCAI Pakistan (2021–Present): Guide AI research direction and performance outputs
- Quality Assurance Engineer – Digital Works, Japan (2010 – 2012): Developed automated testing of a DBMS
- Campus Ambassador – Sun Microsystems (2008–2010): Led open-source engagement in Hokkaido University
- Web/Android Developer – Self Employed (2006 – 2012)
- Design Engineer – CARE (2003–2005): Built DSP/FPGA vehicle anti-theft tracking systems with GIS/VHF tech

Education

- Postdoc – Hokkaido University, Japan (2011–2012): Designed academic cloud platform for research use
- Ph.D. – Hokkaido University, Japan (2008–2011): Thesis on evolutionary algorithm parallelization
- M.Sc. – Hokkaido University, Japan (2006–2008): Computer Science, Grade A+
- B.E. – NUST, Pakistan (1999–2003): Computer Systems Engineering, CGPA 3.875/4.0

Technical Contributions

- 20+ US patents (Justia) | 80+ publications (Google scholar) | 3 Best paper awards
- 50+ keynote/invited talks and 12+ AI events organized over past 5 years
- 14k+ followers on LinkedIn | Lead 6k+ NSAI community
- Free AI lectures and slides at my website

Selected Awards & Credentials

Corporate Awards	O-level award for Granite 3.0 (2024)	A-level award for API augmented LLMs (2024)	Manager's Choice (x3)	Technical Master award	Eminence and Excellence award (x3)	Technical Expert award	Sun Campus Ambassador of the month (2009)
Academic Honors	MEXT scholarship for MS/PhD (2005-2011)	MOST scholarship for BE (1999-2003)	Won software competitions (2000, 2004)	Won Softcom quiz competition (2002)
Certifications	IBM Certified Manager (2020)	10+ Acclaim certificates/badges

Additional Information

Authorized to work in	USA (permanent resident)	Japan (citizen)	Pakistan (POC holder)
Languages	English (bilingual)	Urdu/Hindi (native)	Japanese (professional proficiency)	Punjabi (bilingual)

Further details can be found at https://asimmunawar.github.io/