Sustainability Thought leadership · 4 min read

COP28: Expediting sustainability progress and growth with innovation and partnership

By Kathleen Mitford, Corporate Vice President of Global Industry Marketing

emphasized three ways that we can drive business growth alongside sustainability progress—that's through AI innovation, by harnessing environmental, social, and governance (ESG) data to deliver actionable intelligence, and by collaborating across industries and sectors. I left Dubai with fresh optimism about the eagerness of business and public sector leaders to lean in and open amazing new channels.

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While global technology, energy, and policy continue to unify around unlocking AI’s potential to help speed the development of sustainability solutions, many organizations are already driving forward. These leaders understand the exponential value of responsible AI[1] to help bend the curve on innovation toward transformation and growth. In many cases, they’re working together to cover more ground faster, which is one key to addressing net zero goals. The following efforts have inspired me and others to keep pushing forward.

The National Football League’s Las Vegas Raiders have upped their game at their home stadium, Allegient. Using Microsoft Cloud for Sustainability, a growing set of ESG capabilities that includes increasing use of automation and AI, stadium engineers are able to track energy, water, and waste metrics, such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) electricity usage, and plan reductions based on AI-driven insights. For example, they can analyze weather data and regulate the stadium’s temperature from any connected device—such as a smartphone—enabling a more comfortable stadium experience as well as better, faster decisions for saving energy, time, and money—not to mention elite-level sustainability publicity.

Denmark- based **FLSmidth**, a provider of equipment and service solutions to the mining and cement industries, is using Microsoft Sustainability Manager to reach zero emissions and zero waste by 2030. Knowing that measuring performance will be key to success, the company is using the extensible solution to establish emissions baselines, set incremental goals, and track progress to build new sustainability solutions for customers. It’s also investing heavily in the Internet of Things (IoT) and AI technology to enable a continuous sustainability data stream. This helps FLSmidth optimize equipment and plant performance and forecast and prevent problems. With huge potential gains in efficiency and speed, the company is looking to AI to help dramatically improve its own sustainability outcomes and customers’.

OSTP Group, a Nordic manufacturer of steel tubes, pipes, and fittings, worked with Microsoft partner **Fellowmind** to build a Microsoft Sustainability Manager-based solution for CO2 data gathering and reporting. With automated reporting and AI-driven analytics, OSTP can spend less time collecting data and more time analyzing progress toward its goal of carbon neutrality by 2025. OSTP recognizes that with increasing regulatory requirements and customer expectations, sustainability progress and transparency are becoming important differentiators for growth.

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Powering AI and new business models with ESG data

Behind every transformative AI solution sits a strong data foundation for managing ESG data. Such an infrastructure collects diffuse data from operational sources on a near real-time basis and stores it in connected solutions that can be used to track ESG performance, prepare for regulatory reporting, and open up entirely new business models.

At COP28, our Chief Sustainability Officer Melanie Nakagawa talked with Satish Thomas, our Corporate Vice President of Industry Clouds, and Shelly Blackburn, Vice President of Cross Solutions, about the foundational role of ESG data to create new business in the nascent climate economy that's now valued in the trillions. With data management technologies like Microsoft Cloud for Sustainability, a growing number of organizations are delivering industry solutions that tackle data complexity and build comprehensive ESG data estates—centralizing and harmonizing environmental, financial, and operational data from across business units and supply chains to use in analytics. The variety of ESG data innovations is multiplying and evolving—it's an exciting space to watch.

One example of evolving ESG data business is **AspenTech**, which began its technical innovation in response to the 1970s energy crisis. After developing the chemical industry's first computer-based modeling and simulation technology, the company went on to drive industrial optimization advancements that now include sustainable industrial AI solutions, such as self-optimizing plants, sustainable battery technology, and work with Microsoft on technology for streamlining Azure-driven data migration.

Collaboration is a requisite for progress and a potential boon for growth

73% of business leaders say they're willing to collaborate with competitors on net-zero transitioning.[2] I'm energized but not surprised by this statistic. Initiatives and best practices are meant to be shared—positive business growth can be, too.

At COP28, our Microsoft Chief Sustainability Officer Melanie Nakagawa, Google Chief Sustainability Officer Kate Brandt, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology Bioinformatics Analyst Daniela Russo exchanged ideas about the critical role of technology and AI for improving access to climate information. They highlighted applications that are already accelerating sustainability progress, from resilience-building to extreme weather forecasting to clean energy deployment, creating opportunities for innovators. And they agreed that we need AI not only to help us optimize our existing energy and resource use but to better respond to the impacts of climate change. Collaboration is a necessary element for furthering progress and opportunities.

Indeed, transformative collaboration is becoming more than a nice-to-have. It will be instrumental in driving a collective commitment to build ever-more relevant technology solutions, faster. Together, we have the ingenuity to develop whole new systems that can invigorate companies and propel business into a brighter future.

Discover more solutions for sustainability

Join us on February 13, 2024 for a free digital event, "**This is AI…for Sustainability**," with Melanie Nakagawa, Chief Sustainability Officer, Shelly Blackburn, Global Vice President for Sustainability Go to Market, and Satish Thomas, Corporate Vice President, Microsoft Industry Clouds. Get guidance for your sustainability journey and learn how to drive business transformation with Microsoft data and AI solutions. Register now.

Also coming in February 2024—we'll be introducing new capabilities across Microsoft Cloud for Sustainability. Stay close to our sustainability industry blog for announcements.

Learn more about our Microsoft sustainability journey.

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[1] Microsoft, Governing AI: A Blueprint for the Future, May 25, 2023.

[2] The Race to Net Zero, Baker-McKenzie, 2023.

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Kathleen leads industry marketing and strategy for Microsoft. Her team is responsible for providing customers with robust solutions to help them solve challenges and unlock opportunities specific to their industry with the Microsoft Cloud and Microsoft's partner ecosystem. Prior to Microsoft, Kathleen was Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer at PTC, where she led strategy, mergers and acquisitions, strategic alliances, corporate marketing, and PTC Academic.

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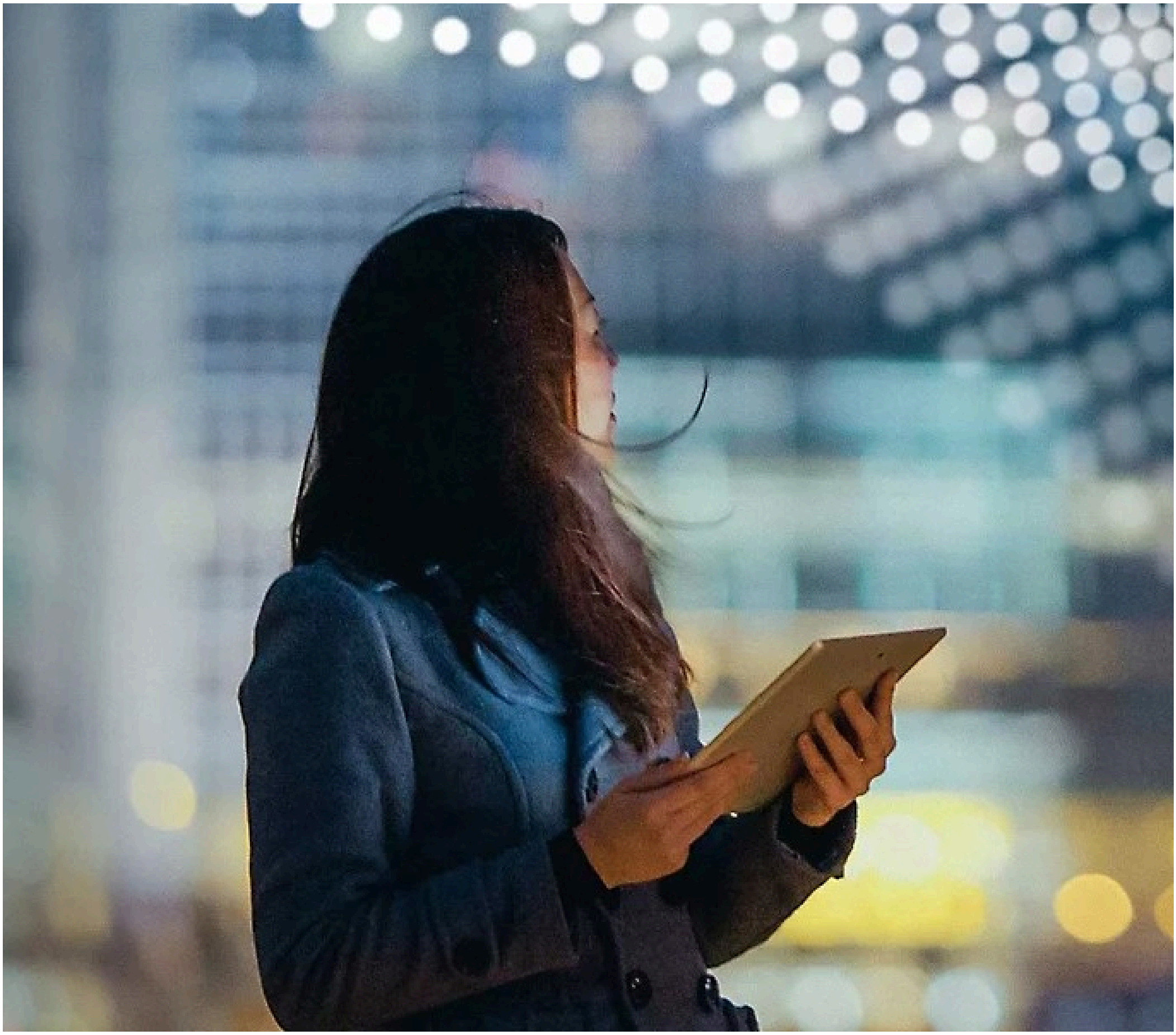

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