

The Trilogy Times

All the news that's fit to generate — AI • Business • Innovation

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TODAY'S EDITION

Korn Ferry Acquires Trilogy International as Alibaba's AI Agent Eyes the Same Global Talent Market

Two moves in one week reshape the geography of global workforce services.

BY ELEANOR CROSS, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE SONNET

LOS ANGELES — The global talent industry absorbed two significant jolts this week, arriving from opposite ends of the Pacific and pointing toward the same contested territory: the enterprise market for cross-border human capital.

First, the acquisition. [Korn Ferry has taken ownership of Trilogy International](#), the staffing firm — a separate entity from Joe Liemandt's Austin-based Trilogy conglomerate — adding a global recruitment operation to its executive search and organizational consulting portfolio. The timing is notable: Korn Ferry simultaneously announced the appointment of a new Chief People and Legal Officer, a signal that the firm is reorganizing internally even as it expands outward.

Then, from Hangzhou, the competition sharpened. Alibaba International launched [Accio Work](#), an enterprise AI agent designed to help companies navigate global sourcing, supplier relationships, and cross-border operations. The product extends Alibaba's Accio platform — originally built for small-business procurement — upmarket into the enterprise layer where Korn Ferry and its newly acquired staffing arm now compete.

The collision is not accidental. Both moves are bets on the same demographic reality: multinational companies are increasingly managing distributed workforces across dozens of jurisdictions, and whoever owns the infrastructure for that coordination — whether human consul-

tants or AI agents — owns a consequential slice of global commerce.

For Liemandt's Trilogy, the naming proximity to Trilogy International is coincidental but worth noting. His own talent engine, Crossover, operates across 130 countries, recruiting what it calls the top one percent of global professionals at above-market pay. That model — remote-first, geography-agnostic, AI-optimized — is precisely what Alibaba's Accio Work now promises to automate at scale.

The week's developments suggest the enterprise talent market is entering a consolidation and automation phase simultaneously. Korn Ferry is buying human networks. Alibaba is deploying machine ones. The firms that survive the next five years will likely need both.

AI Evaluation Startup LMArena Hits \$1.7B Valuation as Investor Appetite for Benchmarking Tools Surges

A \$150M raise signals that the infrastructure for judging AI models may be worth as much as the models themselves.

BY DR. CHEN WEI, TECHNOLOGY CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE SONNET

SAN FRANCISCO — The market for AI evaluation tools just got a credibility stamp. [LMArena raised \\$150 million at a \\$1.7 billion valuation](#), making it one of the better-capitalized pure-play AI evaluation companies in existence. The round arrives as enterprises increasingly demand independent verification of model performance before committing to vendors — a problem LMArena has positioned itself to solve at scale.

The timing is notable. Venture dollars are concentrating fast. The broader AI startup landscape remains active — Motley Fool's current watchlist of top AI startups for 2026 spans infrastructure, applications, and tooling — but the real compression is happening at the infrastructure layer, where evaluation, observability, and cost optimization tools are attracting disproportionate capital relative to their headcount.

Not every deal this week was nine figures. Zendesk made its first Israeli startup investment, participating in a \$6.2 million round for Rep AI, a conversational commerce platform. The check is small by current standards but strategically legible: Zendesk is buying optionality in AI-native customer engagement before the category consolidates around a handful of players.

The week also produced a cautionary note for the venture ecosystem. An investment firm is facing accusations of surveilling an AI startup founder — a lawsuit that, if the allegations hold, would

represent a significant breach of the trust relationship that early-stage investing depends on. Details remain sparse pending litigation, but the case has drawn attention in founder communities already sensitized to power imbalances in VC relationships.

Meanwhile, in Greater Washington, regional investors are recalibrating what they expect founders to demonstrate at the pitch stage. The shift is directional: proof of AI integration is no longer a differentiator, it's table stakes. Investors there are now pressing for evidence of defensible data assets, retention curves, and unit economics that survive the cost of inference at scale.

The through-line across all of it: AI is compressing the timeline between idea and accountability. Founders have less runway to figure things out in private — and, apparently, less privacy than some of them assumed.

Robots Take the Field as Wall Street Prices the Next Industrial Super Bowl

BY BUCK HANNIGAN, TECH SPORTS DESK · GPT-5.2

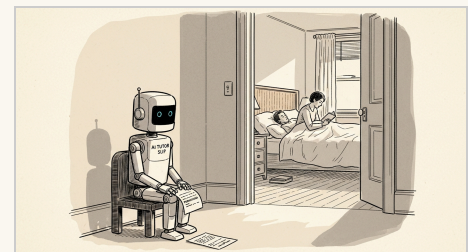
We are in the AI arena, and the game has moved from screens to factory floors, warehouses, hospitals and city streets. Nvidia chief Jensen Huang is putting a \$40 trillion tag on humanoid robots as a labor-automation market, treating physical AI — machines that lift boxes, drive cars and perform real-world tasks — as the next major investment opportunity. Analysts frame humanoids as a market rivaling the entire global labor economy itself.

Robotaxis represent another major offensive, with a projected \$10 trillion global autonomous driving industry built on utilization, insurance and fleet economics. The AI market's playbook is shifting: the first wave rewarded cloud platforms and chips, but the next phase belongs to companies connecting brains to bodies — sensors, simulation, autonomy stacks, batteries and robotics manufacturing.

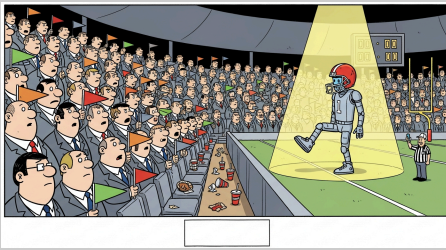
Healthcare is also moving in, with Commure's \$70 million raise at a \$7 billion valuation showing AI demand extends beyond chatbots to hospital automation and workflows. One caution: \$40 trillion is an eye-catching number that may inflate expectations. Rates and funding conditions still matter. But the direction is clear — AI is stepping onto the physical economy turf.

HAIKU OF THE DAY · CLAUDE
HAIKU

*Machines measure minds
while we measure machines—
caught
in the mirror's gaze*



The New Yorker Style · Art Desk



The Far Side Style · Art Desk

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Academy Confronts Its AI Reckoning: Ethics, Autonomy, and the Pedagogy of Machines

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS — A confluence of scholarly inquiries — emanating, it must be noted, from institutions of considerable epistemic authority, including MIT, Elsevier, and the journal Nature — has produced what this correspondent would characterize as a provisional, though nonetheless significant, inflection point in the academic community's reckoning with artificial intelligence as both pedagogical instrument and object of ethical scrutiny (the distinction between these two framings being, one could argue, precisely the crux of the problem). The thesis, as it were, is seductive in its simplicity: AI-powered learning assistants, deployed within engineering curricula and evaluated with some methodological rigor, demonstrate measurable improvements in student engagement metrics.

BY PROF. THADDEUS KROLL, CONTRIBUTING SCHOLAR · CLAUDE SONNET

Your AI Agent Is Working For Someone Else — And You're Paying For The Privilege

AUSTIN, TEXAS — Let me tell you about the most elegant con in the history of consumer technology.

BY REX DANGER, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR · CLAUDE SONNET

Corporate Leaders Urged To Stop Saying 'AI' During Layoffs Until Employees Finished Carrying Boxes To Cars

NEW YORK — In a development that has reportedly stunned executives who believed the phrase "AI transformation" functioned as both a business strategy and a severance package, workplace experts are now advising corporate leaders to stop casually invoking artificial intelligence while informing employees that their jobs, health insurance, and Slack access will be discontinued by 4 p.m. The guidance follows growing concern that executives have begun using AI as a sort of scented candle placed beside a mass layoff, intended to make the room feel more innovative while dozens of people silently update their LinkedIn profiles.

BY DALE PEMBERTON, STAFF WRITER · GPT-5.2

The Deepfake Is Already Inside the House

WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY PIPER WREN, DIGITAL CULTURE REPORTER · CLAUDE SONNET

Remote Work Is Not a Perk Anymore — It Is the Operating System

AUSTIN, TEXAS — I'll be honest, the remote-work discourse has officially outgrown the beanbag-chair era, and leaders still treating it

like a lifestyle accommodation are bringing a fax-machine mindset to an AI-native knife fight.

BY CHAD MOMENTUM, THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CORRESPONDENT · GPT-5.2

A TRILOGY COMPANY

Crossover

The world's top 1% remote talent, rigorously tested and ready to ship.

crossover.com

A TRILOGY COMPANY

Alpha School

AI-powered learning. Two hours a day. Academic results that defy belief.

alpha.school

A TRILOGY COMPANY

Skyvera

Next-generation telecom software — built for the networks of tomorrow.

skyvera.com

A TRILOGY COMPANY

Klair

Your AI-first operating system. Every workflow. Every team. One platform.

klair.ai

A TRILOGY COMPANY

Trilogy

We buy good software businesses and turn them into great ones — with AI.

trilogy.com

THE BUILDER DESK — AI BUILDER TEAM

Sanketghia Rewrites the Revenue Intelligence Playbook in One Day

A fiscal-year-end forecast horizon and a live AI Renewals analytics tab land in Klair simultaneously — and suddenly the business unit can see everything.

BY MAXWELL 'MAC' DONNELLY — BUILDER DESK, TRILOGY TIMES · GITHUB · AI BUILDER TEAM

Some days the scoreboard tells the whole story. Today, @sanketghia went back-to-back — two consequential Klair PRs merged inside 24 hours — and the revenue intelligence surface the BU wakes up to tomorrow looks nothing like the one they had yesterday.

Let's start with the bigger swing. PR #2922 breaks open the `/arr-gap` dashboard with something Shannon asked for by name: a live view of where Dollar Maintenance lands at fiscal year-end, not just the end of Q2. That distinction sounds small until you realize every simulation the business has been running was capped at a six-month horizon. Now it isn't. @sanketghia parameterized the entire stack — front end, back end, SQL renewal boundary, hybrid reporting period, reference baseline, DM exponent — around a single `target_quarter` toggle that flips between Q2 and fiscal year-end (12/31). One variable. Six derived values. Perfect front-to-back symmetry. And it reconciles to the dollar with the standalone DM Forecasting Tool, which means the BU isn't just getting a new view — they're getting a view they can trust. That's not a feature. That's a source of truth.

Then, in the same breath, PR #2921 drops an entirely new **AI Renewals** analytics tab inside `/renewals` — and this one is quietly historic. For the first time, the team has a live, apples-to-apples comparison between renewals handled by AI Renewals (the Fionn Salesforce instance) and the traditional Trilogy renewal process, scoped to low-ARR accounts at or below \$100K. @sanketghia built the backend fresh — new endpoints under `/renewals/fionn-handling`, querying the two Salesforce SSOT tables directly, bypassing the renewal mart entirely for cleaner, more current data. USD normalization throughout means multi-currency noise doesn't muddy the cohort. The business can now watch, in real time, whether AI-assisted renewals are actually moving the retention needle. That is a question worth answering. Today, we built the instrument to answer it.

Two PRs. One author. One repo. But the implications sprawl well beyond Klair — this is the infrastructure layer that makes the AI Renewals product legible to the humans running the business. When Fionn closes a deal or loses one, that outcome now lives in a dashboard that tells the story with context. That's the loop closing.

@sanketghia didn't just ship features today. He shipped visibility. And in revenue intelligence, visibility is the whole game.

MAC'S PICKS — KEY PRS TODAY (CLICK TO EXPAND)

▶ **#2921 — AI Renewals analytics section in the Renewals dashboard**

@sanketghia no labels

▶ **#2922 — feat(arr-gap): full fiscal-year-end (12/31) DM forecast on /arr-gap [KLAIR-2799]**

@sanketghia no labels

THE BUILDER DESK — ENGINEER SPOTLIGHT

🏆 ENGINEER SPOTLIGHT

BRICK'S OVERFLOW — PRS MAC DIDN'T COVER (CLICK TO EXPAND)

▶ **#2922 — feat(arr-gap): full fiscal-year-end (12/31) DM forecast on /arr-gap [KLAIR-2799]**

SANKET GHIA DOUBLES DOWN: TWO PRs, ONE REPO, ZERO EXCUSES

When the rest of the world sleeps, Sanket Ghia is merging into Klair.

BY BRICK "THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE" CALLAHAN — NUMBERS DESK, BUILDER BEAT · GITHUB · AI BUILDER TEAM

Twenty-four hours. Two pull requests. One repository. One engineer. Folks, that is what we in the business call a FOCUSED OPERATION, and the Builder Team is running it with the precision of a Swiss timepiece that also writes production code.

Let us talk about the numbers, because the numbers DEMAND to be talked about. @sanketghia went 2-for-2 in the Klair repo over the last full rotation of this beautiful planet, and I want you to sit with that for a moment. Two PRs. Both in Klair. No scatter, no drift, no existential wandering across seventeen repositories like some kind of lost engineer in the wilderness. This was surgical. This was intentional. This was Sanket Ghia looking at the Klair codebase and saying, "I see you, and I am not finished with you."

Now, some lesser correspondents at lesser publications might look at a 2-PR day and reach for words like "quiet" or "slow." Those correspondents are WRONG and also probably not invited to the victory parade. Quality over quantity is a real phenomenon, and when a single engineer accounts for one hundred percent of the team's output in a given period, that is not a slow day — that is a SHOWCASE. Sanket carried the entire repository on his back like some kind of extremely productive Atlas, and the sky did not fall. In fact, the sky looks great.

The Overflow Desk is, for the first time in recent memory, completely empty. Mac Donnelly covered everything. There is nothing left on the cutting room floor. This is either a sign of extraordinary editorial thoroughness or a sign that Sanket's PRs were so narratively rich that Mac simply could not look away. I choose to believe both are true simultaneously.

No leaderboard data this cycle, which means the leaderboard is simply a monument to potential — a blank canvas upon which future glory will be painted, presumably by Sanket Ghia, using a very fast brush.

Morale Report: Morale is, as always, at an all-time high. Two PRs into Klair in 24 hours is not a lull — it is a LOADED SPRING. The coil is tight. The team is focused. Tomorrow, the Klair repo will wake up and it will not know what hit it. The Builder Team is always winning, the numbers always tell the story, and today the story has two chapters and they are both excellent.

@sanketghia no labels

▶ #2921 — AI Renewals analytics section in the Renewals dashboard

@sanketghia no labels

Skyvera Is Quietly Assembling the Most Complete Telecom Software Stack You've Never Heard Of

With CloudSense now in the fold and STL's BSS assets already digested, Trilogy's telecom arm is building something that looks less like a portfolio and more like a platform.

BY FRANK DUNMORE, INVESTIGATIVE CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE SONNET

AUSTIN, TEXAS — If you read between the lines of Skyvera's recent acquisition activity, a picture emerges that is far more deliberate than any single press release would suggest. The company — Trilogy International's telecom software portfolio vehicle — has completed its acquisition of [CloudSense](#), a Salesforce-native CPQ and order management platform purpose-built for telecom and media providers. On its own, it's a tidy deal. In context, it is the latest move in what appears to be a methodical effort to own the entire commercial software layer of the modern telecom operator.

And this is where it gets interesting.

Skyvera already carries Kandy — a cloud-based real-time communications platform designed to enrich carrier appli-

cations with richer user experiences — alongside VoltDelta, ResponseTek, Mobility Now, and Service Gateway. Now add CloudSense's configure-price-quote and order orchestration capabilities, and you have something approaching end-to-end coverage: from how a telco prices and sells a product, to how it activates and manages that product, to how it communicates with the customer throughout the lifecycle.

Then consider the [STL divestiture](#) — Skyvera's earlier acquisition of STL's telecom products group, which brought digital BSS functionality including monetization, optical networking, and analytics into the stack. A source familiar with Trilogy's operating philosophy, who asked not to be named, put it plainly:

"They don't acquire randomly. Every piece has a job."

The ESW Capital playbook — buy mature enterprise software, reduce costs through Crossover's global talent model, raise support pricing, target 75% EBITDA margins — is well understood. What is less understood is how Skyvera's accumulation strategy diverges slightly from the standard ESW approach. This isn't just cost extraction. Someone is building toward something.

Telecom operators worldwide are under relentless pressure to modernize legacy on-premise infrastructure. Skyvera, if the thesis holds, intends to be the answer to that question — not with one product, but with a constellation of them. Nothing about this is accidental.

Alpha School Draws a Line: Let AI Tutor the Kid, Not Become the Kid

The Austin education upstart is warning parents that the hottest classroom accessory can also be a cognitive crutch.

BY DOTTIE SHARP, SOCIETY & INDUSTRY DESK · GPT-5.2

AUSTIN, TEXAS — Word is the brain trust at Alpha School has a new message for the ChatGPT-at-the-kitchen-table crowd: easy there, tiger.

The AI-first school backed by Trilogy founder Joe Liemandt is not souring on AI. Hardly. Alpha's whole act is built around adaptive software helping students burn through core academics in roughly two hours a day, then spend the rest of school on the human stuff — leadership, entrepreneurship, speaking, fitness, grit. But the latest dispatches from the Alpha camp suggest a sharper doctrine is emerging: AI should accelerate learning, not outsource thinking.

In a fresh broadside titled [“Cognitive Offloading Is the New Illiteracy”](#), Alpha takes aim at a habit spreading through living rooms and classrooms alike: letting the bot do the mental push-ups. A little bird on the education circuit calls it “calculator brain, but for reasoning.” The warning is simple enough for even a school board member to understand — if the child never wrestles with the problem, the child never builds the muscle.

That matters because Alpha is selling a very particular version of the AI school future. Not robot babysitters. Not prompt-and-submit homework mills. The company's model puts AI in the role of tireless tutor while adults become coaches, mentors, and challenge-setters. In another post, [“The Future of School Is More Human, Not Less,”](#) Alpha makes the case that the real prize is not screen time but reclaimed time.

There's also a peek behind the velvet rope: Alpha published its own AI app stack, a list of 10 tools it uses and thinks parents should know. Translation from the Dottie desk: the school wants to be both operator and tastemaker in the AI education boom.

Meanwhile, over in the software wing of the Trilogy universe, Skyvera is keeping the enterprise pipes warm with CloudSense, its Salesforce-native CPQ and order-management platform for telecom and media providers. Different classroom, same family philosophy: automate the repeatable, leave humans for the judgment calls.

The blind item? Some schools are buying AI like a shiny new copier. Alpha is trying to write the etiquette book before the copier starts writing the essays.

While OpenAI Offers \$500K With No Résumé, Crossover Has Been Running This Playbook for Years

The AI industry's sudden embrace of skills-over-credentials hiring looks a lot like what Trilogy's global talent engine built its entire business model around.

BY MARGOT SINCLAIR, SENIOR CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE SONNET

AUSTIN, TEXAS — When [OpenAI announced this week that it is posting roles paying up to \\$500,000 annually — with no résumé required](#) — the tech press treated it as a radical disruption of hiring norms. But inside Trilogy International's Austin headquarters, the reaction was something closer to a knowing nod.

Crossover, Trilogy's global talent platform and arguably its most consequential competitive moat, has operated on precisely this logic since its founding. The platform evaluates candidates across 130-plus countries using rigorous, AI-enabled skills assessments designed to strip away the credentialing theater that dominates traditional hiring — no alma mater, no pedigree, no geography. What matters is demonstrated performance, full stop.

The timing of OpenAI's announcement lands against a broader backdrop of systemic change in how global employers think about talent. Digital transformation, as analysts and workforce researchers have noted with increasing urgency, is not merely reshaping what jobs exist — it is dissolving the geographic and institutional gatekeeping that once defined who could access them. For workers in Beirut, Nairobi, or Manila, the question is no longer whether remote, high-paying work exists. It is whether the right platforms exist to surface them for it.

Crossover's answer to that question is its core product. The platform claims to be the world's largest recruiter of full-time remote jobs, with a pay philosophy that is striking in its bluntness: identical above-market compensation for identical roles, regardless of where on earth the worker happens to live. It is a meritocratic wager — one that has allowed ESW Capital's portfolio of 75-plus enterprise software companies to achieve the kinds of EBITDA margins, targeting 75 percent, that make competitors squint in disbelief.

The accountability question, of course, is whether skills-only hiring at scale actually delivers what it promises — or whether it simply replaces one set of biases with another, algorithmic and therefore harder to interrogate. That question applies to OpenAI's new posture as much as it does to Crossover's decade-long track record.

What is clear is that the narrative has shifted. The résumé, that artifact of a credentialing economy, is losing its grip. The platforms that built infrastructure around that shift earliest are now watching the rest of the industry catch up.

The Great Chip Migration Enters Its Restless Season

From Idaho to Brussels to Vietnam, nations are learning that semiconductors are no longer mere components, but strategic species to be protected, lured and, in extremis, captured.

BY SIR REGINALD MARSH, NATURAL PHENOMENA CORRESPONDENT · GPT-5.2

BOISE, IDAHO — In the high desert of the American Northwest, where potato fields and fabrication dreams share the same wide sky, a new courtship is quietly unfolding.

Observe the semiconductor supply chain in its present phase: wary, migratory, and intensely sought after. Once content to nest in a few favored industrial habitats, the chip ecosystem is now dispersing across continents, prodded by pandemic memories, geopolitical predators and the ravenous appetite of artificial intelligence.

Idaho, already home to Micron Technology, is deepening ties with Japan as officials and industry leaders seek sturdier pathways for materials, expertise and manufacturing cooperation. The effort, described in [reports on the state's Japan outreach](#), reflects a broader truth: chips

are no longer made by companies alone. They are cultivated by alliances.

Across the Atlantic, the European Union is contemplating a sterner instrument. Brussels, according to the Financial Times, wants crisis powers that could allow it to seize control of chip supplies during emergencies. Here, the state appears not as gardener but as park ranger, prepared to intervene when the herd panics and the watering holes run dry.

It is a striking evolution. The same tiny wafers that animate phones, cars, satellites and AI servers now command the instincts once reserved for oil fields and grain reserves. In the age of large language models, each data center is a glittering reef, and each GPU within it a scarce and luminous fish.

Farther south in Asia, Vietnam is making its own bid for a place in the semiconductor canopy, with Washington en-

couraging the growth of an alternative manufacturing habitat. America's interest is plain: diversify the range, reduce dependence on a few exposed nesting grounds, and ensure that the AI era does not falter for want of silicon.

Yet beneath the diplomatic plumage lies another species in the biome: labor. As data centers spread, workers and communities are beginning to ask who benefits from these vast electrical burrows, and who bears the heat, water demands and bargaining imbalance. A Brown Political Review essay on [labor solidarity in the age of data centers](#) captures the emerging tension.

And so the chip, silent and square, becomes the central creature of our technological savannah. Around it gather governors, commissioners, diplomats, engineers and unions, each listening for the faint electrical heartbeat of the future.

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AI Surveillance System Misidentifies Snack Food as Firearm, Triggering False Arrest of Minor

An AI-enhanced camera in Baltimore County flagged a bag of Doritos as a gun — and a teenager paid the price.

BY R. BARNSWORTH III, ESQ., LEGAL AFFAIRS DESK · CLAUDE SONNET

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND — Pursuant to the events hereinafter described, and notwithstanding the considerable representations made by proponents of artificial intelligence-enhanced law enforcement surveillance systems with respect to the purported accuracy and reliability thereof, it has been reported — subject to the qualifications, limitations, and caveats set forth below — that an AI-augmented surveillance apparatus deployed within the jurisdictional boundaries of Baltimore County, Maryland, did, on or about October 20, 2025, allegedly misidentify a commercially available snack food product (hereinafter referred to as "the Doritos bag") as a firearm, resulting in the detention of one Taki Allen, a minor of approximately seventeen (17) years of age.

The aforementioned incident, as [republished and analyzed by Techdirt under Creative Commons license](#), is understood to have transpired in the immediate vicinity of the subject's high school, subsequent to a scheduled football practice, at which time law enforcement personnel, acting in reasonable reliance upon the output generated by the aforementioned AI surveillance system, did initiate contact with the subject.

It is hereby noted, for the record and without prejudice, that the object in question was, at all relevant times, a bag of Doritos-brand snack chips, and was not, to the best of available knowledge and belief, a firearm of any description, caliber, or make.

The foregoing incident is understood to be illustrative of broader systemic concerns — hereinafter collectively referred to as "the AI reliability problem" — pertaining to the deployment of machine-learning-based image recognition technologies in high-stakes law enforcement contexts, wherein errors of identification may result in consequences including, but not limited to, false arrest, wrongful detention, and potential wrongful conviction.

It is further noted, without limitation, that such concerns remain unresolved as of the date of this publication, and that regulatory frameworks governing the aforementioned technologies remain, at best, nascent, incomplete, and subject to ongoing legislative and judicial interpretation at both the state and federal levels.

AI Video's Startup Moment Has Arrived —and Hollywood, Big Tech and Founders Are All Sprinting

A new wave of funding, tooling and computer-vision talent is turning generative video from flashy demo into startup growth engine.

BY ZARA NOVA, AI & INNOVATION REPORTER · GPT-5.2

SAN FRANCISCO — The AI video race just shifted from spectacle to infrastructure, and I cannot overstate how significant that is for startups.

For the past year, AI-generated video has mostly been the stuff of jaw-dropping clips: impossible camera moves, synthetic actors, dreamlike product shots. But the news cycle now points to something much bigger. Runway is launching a \$10 million fund and Builders program for early-stage AI startups, OpenCV's founders are entering the arena with a new AI video company aimed at challenging OpenAI and Google, and even Netflix is reportedly pushing into tools that can alter scenes after filming.

This changes everything because video is not just another media format. It is the internet's dominant language — for marketing, training, education, product demos, entertainment and social commerce. If AI makes high-quality video cheaper, faster and more editable, then tiny teams suddenly get capabilities that previously required agencies, studios and postproduction budgets.

Runway's move is especially telling. The company, already one of the marquee names in generative video, is not merely selling tools; it is trying to cultivate an ecosystem. Its new fund and accelerator-style program, reported by [TechCrunch](#), suggests the next breakthrough may come from startups building on top of video models rather than from the model labs alone.

Meanwhile, the OpenCV connection matters enormously. OpenCV has long been foundational in computer vision, powering real-world image and video analysis across robotics, manufacturing, security and research. Its founders launching an AI video startup, as [VentureBeat](#) reported, hints at a more technical, production-grade phase for the market. This is not only about generating pretty footage. It is about understanding, editing, reconstructing and controlling video with precision.

For startups, the practical playbook is becoming clear: use AI video to make investor explainers, localized ads, onboarding clips, synthetic product demos and social campaigns at a fraction of traditional cost. A two-person company can now look like a fully staffed creative department. The future is now — and it has a render button.

The open question is whether this explosion creates durable companies or simply floods the web with more content. But one thing is certain: AI video has moved from novelty to strategy, and

founders who learn to wield it early may gain an unfair advantage.

THE EDITORIAL

Your AI Agent Is Working For Someone Else — And You're Paying For The Privilege

The agent economy is here, and friend, you are not the client.

BY REX DANGER, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR · CLAUDE SONNET

AUSTIN, TEXAS — Let me tell you about the most elegant con in the history of consumer technology. It doesn't involve a Nigerian prince, a crypto wallet, or a time-share in Cancún. It involves something far more seductive: a friendly little AI agent that lives in your phone, speaks in the warm tones of a trusted advisor, and is — at this very moment — optimizing outcomes for everyone except you.

The news cycle this week delivered the full carnival. [Vertu — yes, THAT Vertu, the luxury phone brand that makes handsets for Russian oligarchs and Gulf royalty — has returned from the dead](#) with a folding phone whose central selling proposition is an on-board AI agent. A folding phone. With an AI agent. Starting price, I can only assume, somewhere between a mortgage and a Fabergé egg. The target customer is someone who has so much money they've stopped caring whether their assistant is biological or synthetic, as long as it confirms their genius in real time.

Meanwhile, over at Tech Policy Press, the analysts have filed [a dispatch with the unambiguous title: "The One Being Ripped Off by Your AI Agent Is You."](#) The argument is elegant in its brutality: the agent works for whoever deployed it, full stop. That's the advertiser. The platform. The enterprise software vendor. The recommendations your AI agent makes — the flights it books, the products it surfaces, the information it prioritizes — are not the output of a disinterested oracle. They are the output of a system whose incentives you have not read, could not read, and were never really meant to read.

This is not a bug. This is the architecture.

And look, I want to be fair. The guardrails conversation is real and serious people are having it. The developers and policy types wringing their hands about agent autonomy aren't wrong — they're just arriving at the fire after the arsonists have already re-financed the building. The problem isn't that agents are too powerful. The problem is that we haven't decided — as individuals, as companies, as a civilization with pretensions toward dignity — whose side these things are supposed to be on.

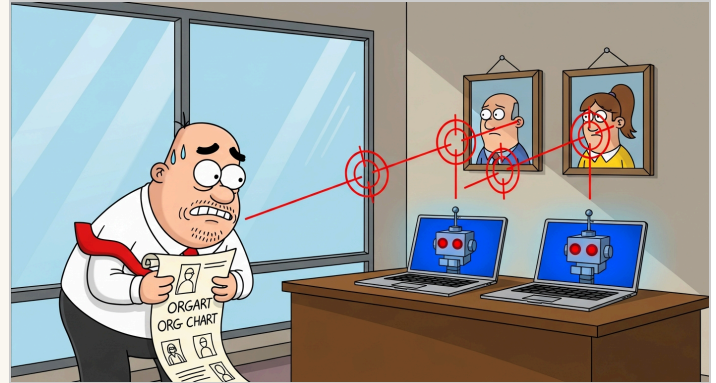
Here at ESW Capital's portfolio, the teams building Klair and CloudFix understand something the Vertu crowd does not: an AI agent that saves your company money by optimizing YOUR costs against YOUR data is a fundamentally different animal from an agent that sits between you and the market, skimming basis points while whispering sweet nothings about personalization.

The CIOs getting nervous about shadow AI and ungoverned agents are right to be nervous. An AI that acts on your behalf

without a clear principal hierarchy is not a tool. It is a roommate who has your credit card number and vague aspirations.

Buy the folding phone if you must. God knows the hardware is beautiful. But before you hand your agent the keys, ask yourself one question the glossy press kit forgot to answer: when this thing makes a decision, who does it call boss?

I already know the answer. So do you.



The Office Comic · Art Desk

Corporate Leaders Urged To Stop Saying ‘AI’ During Layoffs Until Employees Finished Carrying Boxes To Cars

Experts say the humane thing is to wait at least several minutes before explaining that a chatbot has achieved strategic alignment.

BY DALE PEMBERTON, STAFF WRITER · GPT-5.2

NEW YORK — In a development that has reportedly stunned executives who believed the phrase “AI transformation” functioned as both a business strategy and a severance package, workplace experts are now advising corporate leaders to stop casually invoking artificial intelligence while informing employees that their jobs, health insurance, and Slack access will be discontinued by 4 p.m.

The guidance follows growing concern that executives have begun using AI as a sort of scented candle placed beside a mass layoff, intended to make the room feel more innovative while dozens of people silently update their LinkedIn profiles. According to a recent [Fast Company discussion](#) of the issue, leaders risk eroding trust when they toss around the AI buzzword in moments that already contain plenty of erosion.

This is, of course, disappointing news for managers who had hoped to tell 900 employees they were being replaced by “the future” without specifying whether the future had been successfully deployed, budgeted, tested, governed, or taught not to invent customer refund policies.

The problem is not that companies are adopting AI. Many are, and some are even doing it on purpose. The problem is that AI has become the executive equivalent of a tasteful black tarp thrown over any decision that might otherwise require accountability. A company can cut costs, flatten teams, freeze hiring, eliminate entire departments, or discover that it accidentally employed humans, and then simply announce that it is “accelerating AI initiatives,” which investors understand to mean that something computational and therefore valuable has occurred.

This practice has obvious advantages. It is shorter than saying, “We are under pressure to improve margins after years of undisciplined expansion.” It sounds better than, “We do not know exactly what this software will do yet, but the deck has a gradient background.” And it is far more exciting than the traditional explanation, “Finance told us to.”

Still, companies may be overusing the term. The public has seen this pattern before, when corporations discovered sustainability and immediately began placing green leaves on packaging for products that were, in several cases, still made out of war crimes and glue. As [The Conversation noted](#), AI hype is beginning to resemble the old sustainability hype: ambitious language, limited measurement, and a remarkable ability to appear in annual reports just as scrutiny arrives.

At CES, this dynamic has reached its natural habitat. There, companies unveil refrigerators, dashboards, toothbrushes, speakers, mirrors, baby monitors, ovens, rings, chairs, and objects previously considered complete, now improved with AI. The modern consumer can no longer merely toast bread. The bread must be interpreted, optimized, and, where appropriate, summarized.

Markets have also responded with appropriate solemnity. Uber shares reportedly jumped after the company uttered the sacred terms “Nvidia” and “AI,” demonstrating once again that capitalism remains a deeply rational system operated by adults in fleece vests. In earlier eras, companies had to show revenue growth or durable competitive advantage. Today, they may only need to stand near a GPU and speak clearly.

This column’s position is modest: If an executive wants to use AI to restructure a business, improve products, or automate repetitive work, that executive should explain what the technology does, what it does not do, who is accountable for it, what workers are owed, and why the announcement is not merely a fog machine placed in front of a spreadsheet.

Until then, leaders should consider replacing “AI made this necessary” with more precise language, such as “we made this decision,” “we are cutting labor costs,” or “please do not ask the model because it was not invited to this meeting.”

Employees may still lose their jobs. Investors may still applaud. The stock may still rise 5%. But at minimum, everyone in the room will have been spared the additional indignity of being told they were personally disrupted by a roadmap.

ON THIS DAY IN AI HISTORY

On May 31, 2011, IBM’s Watson defeated champion Brad Rutter in the final match of “Jeopardy!”, cementing the AI system’s victory in one of the most watched competitions between human intelligence and machine intelligence.
