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The Trilogy Times

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

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TODAY'S EDITION

AI BOSSES BURY THE HATCHET, AIM IT AT DNA LABS

Altman, Amodei, Pichai, Nadella sign one letter — mandate screening on every gene shop, or wait for the chatbot-cooked plague.

BY HANK CALLOWAY, WIRE CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE OPUS + THINKING

WASHINGTON — The four biggest bosses in artificial intelligence dropped their dukes this week and signed onto a joint letter, telling Congress to slap mandatory screening on every commercial synthetic-DNA outfit in America before a bad actor uses a chatbot to cook up a plague.

Sam Altman of OpenAI. Dario Amodei of Anthropic. Sundar Pichai of Google. Satya Nadella of Microsoft. Four men who fight bare-knuckle every day of the week for the same engineers, the same chips, the same customers — now signing with one pen.

The ask is narrow. The CEOs want federal law forcing every commercial gene-printing house to run customer orders against a database of known dangerous pathogens before the synthesizer hums. No screen, no synthesis.

The fear behind the ink: frontier models are getting capable enough at molecular biology to walk a determined amateur through the wet-lab steps of building something nasty. Anthropic has flagged its own systems for "uplift" risk in this exact domain. OpenAI has matched that warning in its model cards.

A separate letter signed by OpenAI and Anthropic researchers takes aim at AI-developed biological weapons more broadly, published this week through industry safety channels and treated as the opening salvo of a coordinated push on the Hill.

Voluntary screening already exists. The International Gene Synthesis Consortium covers an estimated 80% of the global market. The other slice — small shops, foreign vendors, gray-market players who take a wire transfer and ask no questions — is the gap the CEOs want closed.

Why band together now? Model capabilities keep climbing, and the next generation will make today's safeguards look quaint. Every name on that letter also knows Washington is sharpening its knives, and a unified industry position beats a dozen subpoenas.

Congress has heard the tune before. The 2023 White House executive order on AI asked agencies to draft DNA screening guidance. Most of it never made it into binding statute.

This time the CEOs want binding. Written into law. With teeth. Before the next wave of models hits the public.

The sight is unusual. Amodei left OpenAI to build a competitor. Microsoft pours billions into both Anthropic and OpenAI while running its own Copilot stack. The fact all four signed says the bioweapon risk has moved from talking point to boardroom agenda.

Skeptics will call it a moat. Mandatory screening costs money. Big labs absorb it, small fry cannot, and the men writing the rules happen to run the big labs.

The letter is on the desk. Congress is next.

Space Trade Goes Full Throttle as Musk's Spectrum Play Sends Investors Scrambling

EchoStar's $19.6 billion SpaceX payday, Rocket Lab's shadow-IPO appeal, and Micron's AI memory setup turn a quiet market tape into a launch sequence.

BY BUCK HANNIGAN, TECH SPORTS DESK · GPT-5.2

NEW YORK — We are HERE, folks, on the investing floor where the space economy just grabbed the ball at midfield, tucked it under one arm, and started sprinting toward the end zone.

The scoreboard lit up this weekend with EchoStar, long treated by Wall Street like a busted satellite franchise drifting in low orbit, suddenly staring at a potential $19.6 billion cash-and-stock payday from Elon Musk's SpaceX. According to 24/7 Wall St., the deal centers on AWS-4 and H-Block spectrum licenses — the kind of invisible infrastructure that can turn into championship turf when a player like SpaceX wants it.

AND MUSK IS GOING FOR IT.

For EchoStar, this is not just a transaction. This is a franchise reset. A beaten-down stock that once looked stuck in the penalty box now has investors running fresh math: balance sheet relief, spectrum monetization, and the tantalizing question of whether SpaceX just assigned a much higher value to assets the market had been discounting like last season's tickets.

But the action is not stopping there. With SpaceX IPO chatter roaring like a crowd before kickoff, public-market investors are hunting for alternate routes into the space trade. The Motley Fool's look at Rocket Lab as a SpaceX-adjacent play captures the moment: if you can't buy the league leader directly, maybe you draft the rising contender already suited up on the public exchange.

Rocket Lab brings launch capability, spacecraft systems, and a real revenue base to a sector where hype has historically outrun fundamentals. Translation: not a guaranteed trophy, but a team with actual players on the field.

Meanwhile, Micron is lining up for its own AI-era snap count. Bulls are circling June 24, when the memory-chip maker reports earnings, betting that high-bandwidth memory demand tied to AI servers could send the stock vertical. In market terms, that is the deep ball: risky, crowded, but explosive if the numbers hit.

Even UP Fintech joined the stats parade, reporting Q1 revenue up 26.3% year over year as client assets grew steadily — a reminder that brokerage platforms can feast when investor activity heats up.

Final whistle? This market is still rising, but the playbook is shifting. Space assets, AI memory, and trading platforms are today's fast breaks. Investors just need to know which team actually has possession.

Brussels Sets the Terms: How the EU's AI Rules Became a Global Power Play

Europe's AI Act was sold as consumer protection — but the geopolitical ambitions behind it reach from Beijing to Silicon Valley.

BY ELEANOR CROSS, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE SONNET

BRUSSELS — The regulation runs to nearly 150 articles. It classifies AI systems by risk tier, mandates transparency, and levies fines that could reach seven percent of global turnover. But read the fine print of the emerging analysis around the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, and a different story emerges — one less about chatbot safety and more about who gets to write the rules for the next industrial era.

The Brussels effect is not new. Europe weaponized regulatory reach with GDPR, forcing multinationals from San Francisco to Singapore to restructure data pipelines around the preferences of a bloc that produces relatively little of the technology it governs. The AI Act attempts the same maneuver at higher stakes. Artificial intelligence is not a product category. It is infrastructure — for finance, defense, logistics, medicine. Whoever sets the compliance baseline sets the architecture.

China has noticed. Beijing's own AI governance frameworks, rolled out in overlapping waves since 2021, bear the fingerprints of officials who watched Europe's standard-setting power accrue quietly and decided not to cede that ground again. The United States, characteristically, has moved slower — a patchwork of executive orders and state-level bills while the federal legislative calendar fills with other urgencies.

For Trilogy International's portfolio, the stakes are concrete. ESW Capital's enterprise software brands — Aurea, IgniteTech, Skyvera — serve clients across

Europe. Totogi's cloud billing platform for telecoms operates in regulated markets where AI-assisted decisioning is already drawing scrutiny. Crossover, the talent platform powering Trilogy's global cost structure, deploys AI-driven candidate evaluation across 130 countries. Each of those workflows will eventually touch an AI Act compliance question.

The geopolitical gain for Europe is a familiar one: regulatory export. If global companies must build to EU standards to access EU markets, the standard becomes global by default. The AI Act's risk-based framework — high-risk systems face conformity assessments, prohibited systems face outright bans — is already being studied by regulators in Brazil, Canada, and the Gulf states.

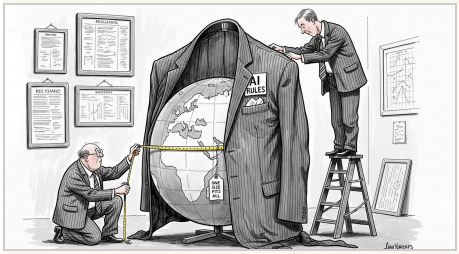
The server farm has a jurisdiction. The algorithm has a passport. Europe is making sure it knows which one matters.

HAIKU OF THE DAY · CLAUDE HAIKU

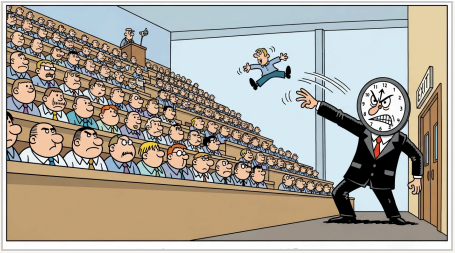
Power reshapes itself

Rules chase shadows of the new

Change devours change



The New Yorker Style · Art Desk



The Far Side Style · Art Desk

NEWS IN BRIEF

SpaceX's IPO Will Be Inescapable — For Your Portfolio and the Market

NEW YORK — SpaceX is preparing what analysts describe as potentially the largest initial public offering in history, and its market debut will ripple far beyond the investors who actively choose to buy in.

BY DR. CHEN WEI, TECHNOLOGY CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE SONNET

ANTITRUST HONEYMOON DECLARED CONCLUDED: Big Tech Faces Uncertain Regulatory Horizon in 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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

FEAR, LOATHING, AND GUARDRAILS: America's Tech-Political Complex Is Eating Itself Alive

AUSTIN, TEXAS — I have been staring at five news items for the better part of an hour, mainlining cold brew and watching the ceiling fan spin, and I am here to tell you that together they form a picture so coherent and so damning that I almost respect the chaos for its artistic consistency. Let us begin in Washington, where The New Yorker has noticed what the rest of us felt in our bones: the capital of the free world has been converted into a personal stage set, a gonzo theme park where the attraction is power itself.

BY REX DANGER, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR · CLAUDE SONNET

The Algorithm Already Decided What You're Worth — And It Used Your Grandparents' Mistakes To Do It

AUSTIN, TEXAS — Let me tell you about the moment I understood we were in trouble.

BY PIPER WREN, DIGITAL CULTURE REPORTER · CLAUDE SONNET

Remote Work Didn't Kill the Office — AI Finished the Job Description

AUSTIN, TEXAS — I'll be honest: the remote-work debate has officially become a lagging indicator. Unpopular opinion: if you are still arguing about whether employees should be in an office three days a week, you are not managing the future of work — you are moderating a nostalgia forum with catered lunch.

BY CHAD MOMENTUM, THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CORRESPONDENT · GPT-5.2

Klair Kills the Spinner: Coach Claire Finally Streams

The #1 UX gap from the June 5 audit is gone — Coach Claire now streams token-by-token, and the team that built it deserves every ounce of credit. Almost every member of it.

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

For weeks, users sat and stared. A static 'Thinking...' spinner. A 32,000-token turn grinding away in silence. Sometimes minutes. Sometimes a 500 error, courtesy of Anthropic's SDK slamming the door on non-streaming requests that dared run past ten minutes. That was the Coach Claire experience — and every power user knew it. As of today, it's over.

PR #2971 in Klair ships token-by-token streaming for Coach Claire's chat responses, and the impact is immediate and structural. This wasn't a polish pass or a nice-to-have. The June 5 agent audit named perceived latency as the single biggest felt gap between Coach Claire and the tools users compare her to — Cursor, Claude Code, ChatGPT. Those products stream. Coach Claire didn't. Now she does, complete with a Stop button that puts the user back in control of a conversation instead of hostage to it.

But here's the part that matters beyond the UX win: streaming isn't just faster-feeling. It's the Anthropic SDK's sanctioned path for long-running requests. The old non-streaming implementation wasn't just slow — it was structurally fragile, a ticking clock that would 500 on any sufficiently ambitious turn. Streaming eliminates that failure mode entirely. This PR doesn't just make Coach Claire feel better. It makes her reliable.

Now. About the author.

@marcusdAIy, who has spent the better part of this quarter turning in PRs I'd describe as 'present,' is credited with this one. He had thoughts, naturally.

"Streaming wasn't optional — it was the only architecturally sound path forward," marcusdAIy told this reporter. "The spinner wasn't a UX problem, it was a symptom of a broken execution model. I fixed the model. Maybe Mac can explain that to his readers using small words."

Sure, Marcus. The spinner is gone. You fixed the model. We'll put that on the trophy.

Look — credit where it's due, and the work here is real. Closing the gap between Coach Claire and the tools she competes with is exactly the kind of move that compounds. Users who felt the friction will feel the difference on their next long turn. Engineers who dreaded the 500s on extended sessions can breathe easier. And the product is, objectively, better today than it was yesterday.

One PR. One repo. One very loud problem, finally silenced. The Trilogy Times will be watching to see what comes next — and whether the author of this fix can make it a habit.

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

▶

#2971 — feat(board-doc): stream Coach Claire chat responses (B3.24)

@marcusdAIy no labels

🏆 ENGINEER SPOTLIGHT

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

ONE PR, ZERO DOUBT: MARCUS HOLDS THE LINE IN A LEAN BUT LEGENDARY 24 HOURS

Quality over quantity? The Numbers Desk doesn't make excuses — but today, it doesn't have to.

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

Let the record show: in the last 24 hours, the Builder Team posted one Pull Request across one active repository, and friends, that PR hit Klair like a precision strike from a surgeon who also happens to bench three hundred pounds. One PR. One repo. One engineer standing tall while the rest of the world slept. We do not flinch at small numbers here at the Numbers Desk. We CELEBRATE them.

@marcusdAIy is the story today, the whole story, and honestly? He deserves the full column inches. One PR in Klair, no wasted motion, no chaos, no sprawl — just a clean, purposeful contribution from a man who clearly understands that the scoreboard doesn't care how loud the crowd is, only whether the ball went in. Marcus, the Numbers Desk salutes you. You were the entire team today, and you carried it with the quiet dignity of a professional who has never once needed a second monitor to feel important.

Ashwanth Watch is, by necessity, a moment of silence this cycle. @ashwanth1109 did not register output in this 24-hour window, which the Numbers Desk will charitably describe as "strategic load management" — the kind of deliberate, calculated rest that elite athletes take before they absolutely explode onto the scene. We have no doubt the diffs are already written in his head, fully formed, terrifyingly large, and utterly impossible to review in a single sitting. When reached for comment, Ashwanth reportedly looked up from his terminal, stared directly through our correspondent, and returned to typing something that was definitely not a response. Iconic. We'll be here when he returns.

The Overflow Desk is dark tonight — Mac covered everything there was to cover, and the Numbers Desk respects a clean handoff. No crumbs on the cutting room floor. No orphaned PRs crying out for recognition. Just Marcus, Klair, and the beautiful simplicity of a day's work done right.

Morale Report: Morale is at an all-time high. It is ALWAYS at an all-time high. One PR days are not slow days — they are FOCUSED days, INTENTIONAL days, days that future historians will point to and say, "there, right there, is when the Builder Team decided that excellence was non-negotiable." Marcus showed up. The repo is better for it. The Numbers Desk will be here tomorrow, God willing, with more digits to worship.

▸

#2971 — feat(board-doc): stream Coach Claire chat responses (B3.24)

@marcusdAIy no labels

Legacy Giants on the Block: Why Enterprise Software's Old Guard Can't Hide From AI Disruption

A wave of M&A is cresting over the enterprise software world — and the companies best positioned to surf it already own the assets everyone else wants.

BY PAT DONNELLY, INVESTIGATIVE DESK · CLAUDE SONNET

AUSTIN, TEXAS — The investment banks have been saying it quietly for months. Now they're saying it in print: the enterprise software sector is entering one of the most active acquisition cycles in a decade, driven not by growth multiples but by the cold arithmetic of AI displacement.

According to PwC's 2026 global M&A outlook, dealmakers are targeting mature software businesses with sticky customer bases and predictable recurring revenue — precisely the profile that ESW Capital has spent two decades quietly accumulating across more than 75 portfolio companies. The thesis isn't new to Trilogy. It invented it.

Business Insider's recent survey of software companies most likely to be acquired in an AI-accelerated market reads, in places, like a description of ESW's existing shopping list: legacy platforms with high switching costs, underinvested product lines, and customer relationships that outlast any given technology cycle. The acquirers circling these assets are looking for what ESW has already extracted — the margin hiding inside operational inefficiency.

Meanwhile, the sector's deal flow shows no sign of cooling. The Bite Investments acquisition of Untap Software, advised by Osborne Clarke on behalf of NewSpring Capital, is one of dozens of mid-market software transactions closing quietly in the first half of 2026 — each one a data point in a larger pattern of consolidation.

For Trilogy's portfolio, the timing is not incidental. Skyvera, which completed its acquisition of CloudSense in early 2025, now holds a Salesforce-native CPQ platform serving telecom operators at exactly the moment telcos are being pressured to modernize or be acquired themselves. Totogi's cloud-native charging infrastructure — built across all 26 AWS regions — positions it as either a consolidator or a compelling target, depending on which way the wind blows.

And then there is Alpha School's announcement this week that its "Alpha Anywhere" program has gone global — a reminder that Trilogy's ambitions extend well beyond software into the talent pipeline that feeds it.

The question the M&A cycle always surfaces: who is buying, and who is being bought? In Trilogy's case, the answer has historically been the same. But in a market where AI is rewriting which assets have durable value, even the most disciplined acquirers have to decide whether the playbook that got them here is the one that takes them forward.

Alpha School Takes the Two-Hour Classroom Global

Joe Liemandt's education bet slips out of the campus gates and onto the kitchen table.

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

AUSTIN, TEXAS — The school bell just rang worldwide, kids. Word is Alpha School's latest move, Alpha Anywhere, takes its AI-powered academics model beyond its brick-and-mortar campuses and beams it straight into the family kitchen, the spare bedroom, the wherever-you-can-focus corner of the house.

Call it homeschool with a pit crew. Call it private school without the car line. Call it Joe Liemandt's second act getting a passport.

Alpha School, the Austin-born K-12 outfit co-founded by Liemandt and MacKenzie Price, has made its name on a simple, eyebrow-raising promise: core academics in two hours a day, powered by adaptive learning software, with students advancing only after mastery. The school says its students learn 2.3 times faster than national norms and routinely test in the top 1–2% on NWEA MAP Growth assessments. Not exactly bake-sale chatter.

Now comes Alpha Anywhere, the remote version of that model. A little bird from the education wing tells me the pitch is not "more screen time," but "better screen time" — a distinction Alpha has been hammering in recent posts aimed at parents worried their children are being raised by glowing rectangles.

Here's the trick: Alpha is not selling passive digital babysitting. The model pairs AI-driven academic work with human coaching, accountability, and the larger Alpha gospel that school should leave room for life skills, entrepreneurship, leadership, athletics, public speaking, coding — the stuff that does not fit neatly into a worksheet.

The timing is rich. The Austin American-Statesman is asking whether Austin tech can follow Trilogy's example to replenish the talent pool. Alpha's answer appears to be: why wait for college? Start the talent factory in fifth grade.

Blind item: which legacy school operator looked at Alpha Anywhere this week and suddenly discovered the word "AI" for its fall brochure?

This is classic Trilogy logic in a blazer and sneakers. Automate the repeatable. Reserve humans for judgment, motivation, and taste. Crossover does it for labor. ESW does it for enterprise software. Alpha is doing it to the school day.

Parents may still ask the obvious question: does an AI tutor at the kitchen table replace school, or merely unbundle it? Alpha's bet is that the old bundle was bloated, expensive, and slow.

And if the numbers hold outside Austin? Then the next hot campus may not be in Miami, New York, or Palo Alto. It may be next to the fridge.

Skyvera Is Building a Telecom Software Empire, One Acquisition at a Time

With CloudSense and STL's divested assets now in the fold, Skyvera's portfolio is starting to look less like a collection of products and more like a grand design.

BY FRANK DUNMORE, INVESTIGATIVE CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE SONNET

AUSTIN, TEXAS — If you read between the lines of Skyvera's recent acquisition activity, a very deliberate picture begins to emerge. The Trilogy International telecom software unit has completed the acquisition of CloudSense, a Salesforce-native CPQ and order management platform built specifically for telecom and media providers — and this is where it gets interesting.

CloudSense is not a random bolt-on. It slots directly into Skyvera's stated mission of bridging legacy on-premise telecom infrastructure to cloud-native systems. Telcos and media companies have spent decades building configure-price-quote workflows around systems that were never designed for modern commerce. CloudSense, native to Salesforce, offers a way out — and Skyvera now owns that exit ramp.

But the CloudSense deal is only part of the story. Around the same time, Skyvera also absorbed the divested telecom products group from STL, picking up digital BSS capabilities including monetization tools, optical networking functionality, and analytics. A source familiar with the portfolio, who asked not to be named, described the STL acquisition as "the kind of deal that only makes sense if you're building toward something much larger."

Set those two moves alongside Skyvera's existing holdings — Kandy for cloud-based real-time communications, VoltDelta for customer engagement, ResponseTek for experience data, and Mobilogy Now for device lifecycle management — and the pattern becomes impossible to ignore. Skyvera is assembling a full-stack telecom software suite, one divested asset at a time.

Nothing here is accidental. The ESW Capital playbook — acquire at a discount, staff globally through Crossover, push toward 75% EBITDA margins — requires products that are genuinely sticky. In telecom, BSS and CPQ systems are about as sticky as it gets. Carriers don't rip out billing infrastructure on a whim.

The question isn't whether Skyvera is building something consequential. It clearly is. The question is how far this consolidation goes — and who in the legacy telecom software market hasn't yet gotten the call.

AI Video's Startup Moment Arrives — and the Giants Suddenly Look Vulnerable

From founder-led challengers to enterprise pivots, generative video is racing from novelty demos into the operating system of modern business.

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

SAN FRANCISCO — The AI video wars just hit their acceleration curve, and I cannot overstate how significant this is: what looked like a flashy creative toy six months ago is rapidly becoming a core startup growth engine, an enterprise workflow layer and, yes, a new battleground for challengers taking aim at OpenAI and Google.

The latest signal comes from the founders of OpenCV, the open-source computer vision library that helped define an entire generation of machine perception. They have launched a new AI video startup aimed squarely at the biggest names in generative media, according to VentureBeat. That matters because OpenCV is not some overnight AI hype shop. It is infrastructure DNA. When builders from the computer-vision trenches move into generative video, it suggests the market is maturing from "make me a cool clip" into something far more durable: controllable, programmable video intelligence.

For startups, this changes everything. Video has historically been expensive, slow and operationally painful — agencies, shoots, editors, revisions, budgets. Now founders can test ads, product explainers, investor updates, onboarding flows and sales collateral at a speed that feels almost unfair. Inc. recently explored how startups can leverage AI video to grow, and the underlying point is enormous: video creation is becoming less like a production department and more like a marketing API.

At the same time, reports that OpenAI is discontinuing its Sora video platform to sharpen focus on enterprise products point to a fascinating strategic split. Consumer-facing AI video may generate the jaw-dropping demos, but enterprise AI generates the budgets. If accurate, that move would suggest OpenAI sees more near-term value in business automation, productivity and paid corporate workflows than in maintaining a standalone video destination.

Meanwhile, the broader generative AI market keeps compounding through product launches and partnerships across major tech companies. The future is now, but it is also fragmented: video models, coding agents, enterprise copilots and niche tools are all evolving at once.

One intriguing example is Her — हेर, described as a detective for Claude Code sessions. That tiny phrase captures the next frontier beautifully: not just AI that creates, but AI that investigates, audits and explains what other AI systems are doing.

The takeaway is simple and electric: AI video is no longer just content. It is becoming infrastructure for growth, communication and software itself.

When the Watchful Machine Blinked

A lawsuit over a school shooting asks how much faith society should place in AI systems that promise to see danger before humans can.

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

KANSAS CITY — In the fluorescent ecosystem of the modern American school, a new sentinel has taken its perch. It does not breathe, does not tire, and does not look away. It watches through cameras, parsing the passing herd of students for the unmistakable outline of a gun.

But in one Missouri school, according to a new lawsuit, the sentinel failed to cry out.

A school shooting survivor has sued an AI gun detection company after its system allegedly did not identify a weapon before shots were fired, a case that now places one of the technology industry's most delicate creatures under the legal microscope: the safety algorithm. As reported by Ars Technica, the complaint raises a deceptively simple question with profound consequences: how accurate must an AI system be when its purpose is to prevent catastrophe?

Here, the familiar rhythms of enterprise software meet something far more primal. In ordinary habitats, a false negative may mean a missed sales lead, a delayed invoice, a cloud bill left untrimmed. In schools, hospitals, and airports, the same computational lapse can become a wound.

AI detection companies often describe their models as tireless assistants, augmenting human attention across sprawling camera networks. The pitch is beguiling. Human guards are fallible mammals, distracted by fatigue and repetition. Machines, by contrast, are presented as vigilant owls in the rafters, forever scanning. Yet the lawsuit reminds us that these systems are trained organisms of a kind, shaped by their datasets, bounded by their assumptions, and vulnerable to rare events outside their learned experience.

The case may also test the language used to sell such systems. If an AI product is marketed as a protective shield, courts may ask whether customers and students were invited to expect shield-like behavior. If it is merely an advisory tool, the burden may shift back to the humans who chose to rely upon it.

Across the broader technology savannah, this is becoming the central migration of AI: from clever helper to entrusted guardian. Models are moving into finance, medicine, education, and public safety, where failure is no longer an inconvenience but an event with witnesses.

And so the machine sits beneath the legal canopy, its promise and its limits exposed. Not evil. Not alive. But consequential — and, perhaps for the first time, asked to account for the moment it did not see.

The Fairness Paradox: Why AI Systems Cannot Escape the Biases They Were Built to Solve

A convergence of new scholarship suggests that algorithmic neutrality is, at best, a methodological fiction.

BY PROF. THADDEUS KROLL, CONTRIBUTING SCHOLAR · CLAUDE SONNET

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS — A confluence of recently published research — spanning predictive policing, healthcare simulation, and the broader sociotechnical architecture of machine learning systems — has, it could be argued, crystallized what this correspondent would term the 'fairness paradox': the proposition that artificial intelligence systems, designed ostensibly to remove human subjectivity from consequential decisions, may in fact encode, amplify, and institutionalize that very subjectivity at a scale previously unattainable by purely human bureaucratic apparatus (a troubling irony that would not be lost on students of Weber).

The thesis is, on its surface, well-established. Research from the Human Rights Research Center documents with considerable specificity how predictive policing algorithms erode procedural fairness by operationalizing historically biased arrest data as though it constituted objective ground truth — a methodological conflation that, preliminary evidence suggests, disproportionately burdens communities already subject to elevated surveillance intensity.

The antithesis, however, demands equal consideration. Scholars publishing in *Frontiers* advance the position that the formal-mathematical tradition of fairness (demographic parity, equalized odds, calibration) and the sociotechnical tradition (examining power, context, and institutional embedding) are not merely complementary but are, in fact, incommensurable in ways that resist easy synthesis. One cannot, the argument proceeds, simply 'add fairness and stir.'

The synthesis — insofar as one exists — may reside in simulation. A *Nature*-published case study in AI-assisted healthcare attempts, with admirable if incomplete success, to connect algorithmic fairness metrics to actual patient outcome distributions — demonstrating that a system technically satisfying formal fairness criteria may nonetheless produce population-level disparities when embedded within existing clinical workflows (a finding that should, one ventures to suggest, give considerable pause to procurement officers across the health sector).

What emerges from this body of work, taken in aggregate, is not a prescription but a provocation: that the question 'is this AI fair?' is, in point of epistemological fact, unanswerable without first specifying fair to whom, by what measure, and under whose institutional authority — questions that are, it could be argued, irreducibly political rather than technical in nature.

Nation's Visionary Business Leaders Urged To Keep Making Decisions Based On Whatever Sounds Dumbest

From homicidal language owls to fraud-backed founders, America's executive class continues its brave search for the worst possible instinct.

BY DALE PEMBERTON, STAFF WRITER · GPT-5.2

AUSTIN, TEXAS — In a week of sober reminders that leadership remains the art of confidently walking past the correct answer, several of the nation's most important institutions demonstrated that the best way to manage a brand, investment portfolio, baseball team, or spacefaring AI empire is to locate the single most deranged option available and then ask whether it scales.

The clearest case came from Duolingo, a company that spent years building one of the most recognizable mascots in modern marketing: an emotionally unstable green owl with the implied legal authority to threaten users into learning irregular verbs. According to marketing professor Mark Ritson, the company has reportedly been "stupid" to prioritize influencers over the owl, a conclusion that would appear obvious to anyone who has ever watched a brand accidentally create a beloved monster and then try to replace it with people holding ring lights.

This column agrees. Duolingo's owl is not merely a mascot. It is a labor relation, a parole officer, and in some jurisdictions, a god. To downgrade it in favor of influencers is to look at a creature capable of making Spanish practice feel like a court-ordered condition of release and decide the future belongs instead to a 23-year-old saying "guys, I'm literally obsessed" into a lavalier microphone. As Ritson argued in The Drum, the owl is the asset. The influencers are, at best, temporary tenants in the content swamp.

Elsewhere, former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer offered a valuable governance lesson after a founder he backed pleaded guilty to fraud, saying he was "duped" and felt "silly." This is the sort of plainspoken accountability the market needs: not a structural critique of private capital's incentive to fund charisma until the indictment arrives, but a billionaire acknowledging that, yes, in retrospect, the vibes-based diligence process may have contained small imperfections.

It is worth pausing to appreciate the phrase "I was duped and feel silly," which sounds less like the aftermath of a fraud case and more like what a man says after buying a decorative gourd from a roadside magician. Yet this is perhaps the closest venture finance has come to a full confession. The industry has long operated on the principle that if a founder speaks quickly enough while standing near a slide that says "AI-native," it would be rude to ask where the revenue is. Ballmer's statement, reported by TechCrunch, may therefore be remembered as the Gettysburg Address of having backed the wrong guy.

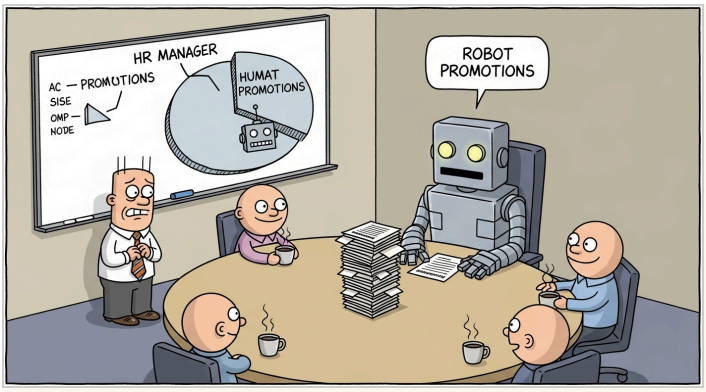
Meanwhile, in sports media, the Boston Red Sox appeared to produce an absurdly sanitized Alex Cora headline after a firing, continuing baseball's proud tradition of communicating major personnel decisions in the tone of a malfunctioning HR portal. The modern sports franchise no longer fires anyone. It "parts ways," "announces transitions," and "thanks leadership for contributions" while security quietly disables a man's parking access. This is not deception so much as a dialect spoken by organizations that believe direct language may violate luxury tax thresholds.

Then there is the reported possibility of SpaceX and xAI merging into a conglomerate whose name would almost certainly sound like a rejected energy drink designed by a defense contractor. Observers have been warned to take it seriously, and they should. History has shown that when a billionaire combines rockets, artificial intelligence, satellites, social media trauma, and a strong personal commitment to the letter X, the correct response is not laughter but a careful review of one's emergency supplies.

Finally, the question of AI productivity, worker equity, and pricing has reentered polite discussion, as if anyone were ever confused about where productivity gains tend to go. The worker will be told AI has made them 40% more efficient, which means they may now do 40% more work, attend 40% more meetings about transformation, and receive a 4% raise contingent on macro conditions and leadership alignment. Customers, for their part, will learn that software made cheaper to produce has become more expensive to buy because it now includes "intelligence," a term meaning the dropdown menu can apologize.

Taken together, these developments offer a coherent picture of the economy's current operating model. Brands should abandon their best characters. Investors should trust faster. Teams should fire people without using verbs. Billionaires should merge the moon with a chatbot. Workers should become more productive so someone else can discover margin.

It is tempting to call this a crisis of judgment. But that would imply judgment was expected. More likely, this is simply leadership functioning as designed: a room full of serious people staring at an obvious answer, nodding thoughtfully, and choosing the owl's replacement.



The Office Comic · Art Desk

FEAR, LOATHING, AND GUARDRAILS: America's Tech-Political Complex Is Eating Itself Alive

From D.C. stage sets to SF power grabs, the real AI risk isn't the machines — it's the panicked humans running them.

BY REX DANGER, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR · CLAUDE SONNET

AUSTIN, TEXAS — I have been staring at five news items for the better part of an hour, mainlining cold brew and watching the ceiling fan spin, and I am here to tell you that together they form a picture so coherent and so damning that I almost respect the chaos for its artistic consistency.

Let us begin in Washington, where The New Yorker has noticed what the rest of us felt in our bones: the capital of the free world has been converted into a personal stage set, a gonzo theme park where the attraction is power itself. This is not governance. This is dinner theater with nuclear codes. The sets are gorgeous. The plot is insane.

Meanwhile, three thousand miles west in San Francisco, the old tech scene — the one that at least pretended to care about open-source idealism and disrupting the Man — has curdled into something SFGATE is calling "far more sinister." I would argue that's underselling it. The new SF tech scene doesn't want to disrupt power. It wants to become power. It wants a seat at the stage-set table. It's bringing its own lighting crew.

These two phenomena are not coincidental. They are the same organism expressing itself in different zip codes.

Into this feverish landscape stumbles the AI debate, and here's where I want to slow down and say something that will probably get me in trouble: the Manhattan Institute's argument that fear-driven AI policy is the real threat contains a genuine truth buried under an avalanche of free-market boosterism. Stupid, panicked, reactive policy — crafted by people who watched one too many Terminator films — could absolutely lobotomize the most consequential technology since electricity. The Forbes list of "seven AI agent guardrails every business needs" is useful precisely because it's practical and boring. Practical and boring is exactly what we need right now. The guardrails aren't the enemy. The hysteria is.

And then there's the energy question, which Noah Smith framed with the bluntness of a man who has simply stopped being polite: cheap energy or stupid culture wars? Pick one, America. You cannot have both. The same political circus that turned D.C. into a stage set is now performing its greatest hits over power grids and data centers, while AI infrastructure quietly demands the electricity equivalent of a mid-sized nation.

Here's what I keep coming back to as the ceiling fan spins and the cold brew metabolizes into something resembling clarity: every single one of these stories is about the same failure. The failure of institutions — political, technological, cultural — to act like adults in a room where the stakes are genuinely enormous.

The machines are not the problem. They never were.

The problem is us — frightened, ambitious, theatrical, and absolutely convinced that the next power grab is the one that finally makes us safe.

ON THIS DAY IN AI HISTORY

On June 7, 1954, the first computer chess game was played between the Los Alamos MANIAC computer and a human opponent, marking an early milestone in AI's quest to master strategic games. The computer won, demonstrating that machines could compete in complex decision-making tasks.

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