# Shiva Chandrashekhar urges rethinking genAI product strategy emphasising structured decision-making



In the evolving landscape of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), product development is witnessing a paradigm shift spearheaded by industry experts like Shiva Chandrashekhar. An award-winning product leader and AI strategist, Chandrashekhar emphasises that the creation and deployment of GenAI products require a foundational emphasis on product judgment, rather than merely engineering excellence.

With over 15 years of extensive experience across sectors such as e-commerce, enterprise platforms, and conversational AI, Chandrashekhar has been instrumental in several high-profile initiatives at Amazon, including Rufus—its generative AI shopping assistant—and enhancements for Alexa's conversational capabilities. His insights are seen as setting a new benchmark in AI product leadership, as he blends deep technical expertise with long-term strategic vision.

The push for GenAI products has often led teams to adopt an "AI-first" development mentality, which prioritises automation over careful consideration of user needs and potential pitfalls. However, Chandrashekhar argues that this approach can result in fragile products. He states, “When you push decisions to runtime, you introduce uncertainty. The role of the product team is to decide what should be decided before inference time.” This approach advocates for an understanding of user requirements, defined guardrails, and a perception of the model as a probabilistic assistant rather than a deterministic tool.

The release of Rufus exemplifies this philosophy. Instead of relying entirely on the model's generative capabilities, the development team integrated structured constraints, such as product taxonomies and fallback pathways, enhancing the system's reliability. “Structure makes scale possible,” he notes, underlining the importance of a controlled environment for AI decision-making.

Chandrashekhar's views are backed by his academic insights, including his scholarly paper titled *Generative AI in Fashion Retail: Driving Customer Engagement Through Contextual Recommendations*. His research reinforces the notion that effective AI design should enhance user experience rather than overwhelm it. Industry counterparts like Notion and Stripe have similarly adopted structured AI integrations that support human workflows rather than replace them, characterised by precise scopes and defined failure modes.

In the context of building initial versions (v1) of GenAI products, swift execution must be coupled with rapid learning rather than mere speed. “Building with GenAI is like debugging a system that hasn’t been built yet,” he asserts, suggesting a reliance on structured feedback to guide product evolution. At Amazon, he has advocated for operational learning loops that merge qualitative feedback with real-time adjustments. He notes, “You don’t launch a GenAI feature; you launch a system for continuously learning what that feature should become.” This philosophy resonates with the iterative approaches taken by companies like Canva and HubSpot in developing their AI features—emphasising ongoing feedback and adaptation as core to product development.

Chandrashekhar's perspective extends to the role of AI in customer support, which he claims has traditionally been viewed as a back-office function ripe for automation. “Support is part of the product journey, it’s not a separate experience,” he says, arguing that a well-integrated AI can enhance support by anticipating user needs rather than simply responding to them. Leading companies, such as Intercom and Zendesk, are beginning to incorporate AI more holistically into their customer support frameworks, fostering a synergy between technology and human input.

However, Chandrashekhar highlights that many failures in GeneAI stem not from technical deficiencies but from misaligned leadership. Executives often perceive AI systems in binary terms—automated or not—ignoring the complexity and nuances that characterise real-world applications. “GenAI doesn’t let you avoid complexity. It makes ignoring complexity more expensive,” he cautions.

Recently honoured with the ICMR’s Most Innovative AI Application Presentation award, Chandrashekhar's focus on real-time insights in AI-driven customer support and scalable solutions underscores the necessity for continuous improvement in technology and user engagement.

As product leaders navigate this new terrain, Chandrashekhar advises them to prioritise foundational decision-making and systems thinking. “This new age won’t reward hype. It will reward teams who can build trust, structure, and adaptability into their systems from day one,” he emphasises, underscoring the essential balance between innovation and pragmatism in the deployment of generative AI.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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