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## **Synergist Technology and its AFFIRM Software is Empowering Commercial Organizations and Government Agencies to Monitor and Safely deploy AI Systems**



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**Interview conducted by:**  
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**CEOCFO Magazine**

**CEOCFO: *Ms. Morris, what is the idea behind Synergist Technology?***

**Ms. Morris:** At Synergist, our mission is to empower both public and private organizations to deploy AI systems safely, securely, and confidently. Organizations understand the benefits that AI technology brings, but they have concerns about how AI will impact their cybersecurity and compliance infrastructure. We exist to alleviate these concerns by supporting organizations

throughout the entire AI deployment lifecycle: from procurement through continuous monitoring of AI models. We help our customers implement best practices for security, governance, and compliance so they can deploy AI systems with confidence.

**CEOCFO: *Would you elaborate, please?***

**Ms. Morris:** Absolutely. The nature of much AI, particularly generative AI, and also the beauty of it, is that it adapts and learns. This is what makes it so powerful. AI can create incredible efficiencies and real cost savings in almost every industry. However, this capability to adapt and learn also creates very real risks to business. The performance of AI models can drift or decay over time if left unchecked, and it is possible they can gain access to unauthorized data if not governed properly. To mitigate these types of risks, we believe it is essential for organizations to procure the right AI for the right use case, understand and document the risks associated with the AI, and implement security and governance policies and procedures that create transparency into how the AI is performing and what data it is accessing.

I am sure by now you have heard stories of AI chatbots or AI-powered search tools returning outlandish and inaccurate responses and information. While these types of issues must be addressed, there are much more serious risks associated with AI and other business use cases. Banks are starting to use AI systems to underwrite loans and determine creditworthiness. How do they ensure these mission-critical AI systems don't lead to a large financial liability? How do they make sure these AI systems are following existing laws and regulations? Or take the healthcare industry. Radiologists are using AI to help diagnose and monitor cancer. What is the human impact if these AI models drift over time? How do we know these AI models aren't learning from private health data? From a security perspective, how do we manage and monitor unauthorized access to these AI models that could lead to malicious code or data leakage? These are the types of risks we want to help our customers address.

At Synergist, we believe that the first line of defense against these types of risks is implementing foundational policies and procedures that align AI use cases with the appropriate industry-specific risk tolerances, industry guidance, and laws.

Secondly, organizations must deploy continuous monitoring of AI models to monitor data access and performance throughout its lifecycle. We need and want AI systems in place globally because they are efficient, effective, and powerful tools. However, when left unchecked, they may cause severe financial, reputational, and data security risks that impact both businesses and individuals.

**CEOFCO: *How would AI learn that they should keep giving benefits or not?***

**Ms. Morris:** In some cases, it is not well understood. That is why continuous monitoring of AI is so important to create as much transparency as possible and to identify those anomalies or trends. On the surface, code is written by people that are doing their best work given their own experiences, which in some cases are biased or inexperienced. Data that is feeding the AI system may contain inaccuracies and related issues. In other cases, hallucinations and drift are not well-understood.

AI is comprised of mathematical & statistical equations. We gain sophistication with these equations as time passes. This type of technology is dynamic and, from a generative perspective, unlike anything that we have experienced in the past. This is what makes it a very different than traditional machine learning or blockchain, both of which return more predictable outcomes.

**“Our ability to provide real-time insights into the performance of AI systems and manage a complex web of local, state, federal, and international regulations sets us apart from our competition.” Elycia Morris**

**CEOFCO: *How does the AFFIRM platform work?***

**Ms. Morris:** An AI system has a lifecycle. It starts when an organization chooses to solve a business problem with AI. The business then goes through their data to assess what AI could be developed. Some AI is trained on data that could have accrued over many decades at a company. Other AI could be trained using real-time data to fine-tune for situational awareness. In both cases, the AI system is learning within regulatory and security environments that are constantly changing. Data governance is part of our initial professional services offering. For instance, a Microsoft Defender security product needs to be configured properly so an organization can use Microsoft 365 CoPilot and ensure that the appropriate access and data controls are in place before AI is implemented.

There are consulting firms, such as Boston Consulting Group and Ernst and Young, and other AI development companies that have billion-dollar pipelines to build custom AI systems for businesses, as opposed to “off-the-shelf” AI like Microsoft 365 CoPilot. At Synergist, we help businesses to implement best practices for security, governance, and compliance to address the risks associated with their AI use cases, whether the AI is “off-the-shelf” or custom-built.

The majority of companies are outsourcing their AI development. Typically, that is a project with a development timeline and a defined project end. It does not include implementing and managing appropriate AI governance policies and procedures that are required to adapt to constantly changing security frameworks and local, state, federal, and international regulations. After the development is completed, it is up to the company to maintain the security, governance, and compliance of the AI system. This is where Synergist comes in. We help companies manage these ongoing requirements of AI systems and continuously surveil these systems for things like bias and drift.

Managing the security, governance, and compliance of an AI system can seem daunting, but through our AFFIRM software platform, we help companies tackle this problem in manageable, concrete steps. The first step is to understand what security and governance frameworks, such as NIST 800-53 and NIST AI RMF, the business wants to adhere to. We refer to this as foundational governance – these frameworks are the base infrastructure that businesses build their AI compliance on top of. Implementing and maintaining these security and governance frameworks helps businesses protect against unauthorized access by the AI to sensitive information, personal information, trade secrets, and IP. The second step is to identify what local, state, federal, and international regulations apply to the company’s AI based on their geography, use case, and industry, among other factors. Take for instance, bias. Obviously, a lending institution does not want to show a bias in the case of an equal opportunity housing eligibility decision or a mortgage origination decision. This could result in a fine from the FTC or some type of financial remuneration or brand degradation that is detrimental to

the business. This is just an example, but there are myriad existing and proposed regulations that are applicable to AI systems. We help companies identify these and implement frameworks to remain compliant.

Once a business has their security and governance environments established, how do they then evaluate how to procure an AI system? In our AFFIRM platform, we have a proprietary procurement framework that establishes best practices for identifying, categorizing, and documenting the various risks that a company would need to manage when implementing an AI system.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, things change. The AI learns, regulatory bodies revise laws, business needs evolve. This is why Synergist and other AI governance thought leaders believe continuous monitoring of these AI systems is required. AI monitoring is needed for human rights standards, quality standards, performance standards, state laws, federal laws, and international laws. Some AI use cases need real-time alert delivery if the associated risks are great. Others require a "human-in-the-loop" to review and assess the decisions made by AI. It is our job at Synergist to keep up with the latest globally recognized frameworks, such as those that are being developed by MIT Lab and others that are more widely known issued by bodies such as NIST. As companies gain more insight into their AI through using our AFFIRM platform, we also support deployment of customized frameworks and tactics that best address the specific needs of a company's AI.

**CEOCFO: *Do most companies recognize the need for something like AFFIRM?***

**Ms. Morris:** It is early in the process. If you ask the compliance, auditing, or legal divisions, they understand immediately. If you ask the operational folks, this is just something that gets in the way of their need for operational efficiency. It is the first time that an organization has to bring a lot of stakeholders to the table to decide to even go down the path of using AI for a real business need.

The industries that best understand it are the ones that are getting fined. That is FinTech, banking, and other highly regulated industries. Anybody who is operating internationally also understands the need because, in the international community, and specifically those that need to adhere to the EU AI Act, a system like AFFIRM that has repeatable processes helps them meet the strict monitoring demands for AI systems in a way that looks like GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) on steroids.

**CEOCFO: *What were some of the challenges in developing a platform that can monitor effectively?***

**Ms. Morris:** It is the research required to keep up with the constant changes in the way AI is used and deployed. Take, for instance, the use of AI agents. Some AI agents call upon 50 LLMs to achieve a complex use case. The AFFIRM system does not use AI to monitor AI, but we do use AI to research the best ways to attack our mission. We constantly need this funnel of thought to keep one step ahead of bad actors, move one step further on how we monitor fairness, and stay abreast of the latest developments in AI models and use cases.

Our challenge, which was one that we knew we had early on, was to develop a deep bench of incredible thinkers, thought leaders, and PhDs who would be on the forefront of these challenges and researching them every day. Through Synergist Labs, we have connections to universities, research arms, and think tanks around the world that we can lean on for ideas and the latest and greatest ways to tackle these challenges.

AI and uses cases are changing so rapidly that we can't even anticipate what may happen months from now. Our bench of AI thought leaders is a key asset that helps us stay as current as possible on new trends. At Synergist, our goal is to become a source of truth for businesses to govern their AI for the best outcomes possible.

**CEOCFO: *How are you reaching out when there is a vast market? What industries are best targets for Synergist?***

**Ms. Morris:** We have peppered the market with education on the need for an AI security, governance, and compliance solution. Procurement professionals, CIOs, CAIOs, and CTOs understand the need. We are actually seeing the U.S. Federal government and the Department of Defense as some of the fastest movers in terms of developing and implementing AI and thinking about their frameworks, directives, executive orders, and memorandums that mandate what it means to have a responsible, safe, and continuously monitored AI system. We have started in this channel and we have gotten great traction.

Our AFFIRM system is going through FedRAMP certification and the top-secret clearance process. We live on Azure Government Cloud and are currently in their various marketplaces. We also have traction with state governments and the insurance and banking sectors. Highly regulated industries are typically audited from a compliance standpoint through a trusted audit or compliance partner. We have sought out those partners to use AFFIRM for their audit customers.

States are asking for help with the procurement of safe AI and with adherence to various compliance directives by those sanctioned AI solutions. With continually changing state standards, statutes, bills, and laws, state CIOs are moving with great intention in the space of AI security and governance to protect their constituents.

**CEOCFO: *Are you seeking funding or investment?***

**Ms. Morris:** We were successful in our seed round, fully subscribing our \$5 million offering. We plan to launch a Seed-II round in Q1 of this year to raise additional capital to support our growth and continue investing in a best-in-class software platform. We anticipate bringing in our first institutional investor in 2026 when we pursue our Series A.

**CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about your time at the Air Force Academy? What did you learn from that experience as well as working with the government that has been helpful in your business efforts?***

**Ms. Morris:** The Air Force Academy breeds leaders. The training and discipline, even though I arguably had that in my life as a student-athlete in high school, is certainly at a different level at an Academy. One must juggle many different responsibilities and it is certainly not for the faint of heart. The sense of character, doing the right thing when no one is looking, and the discipline it takes to be Division 1 athlete, that also has military and leadership responsibilities, is certainly something that has shaped my life in very positive ways. My leadership style was honed during my years at the Academy and in military service. I attribute the lessons I learned as a young leader of mainly men, who were ten or twenty years my senior, as those that carry me forward in an industry of mainly men. You learn your physical and emotional limits at the Air Force Academy, and I believe I can adapt and overcome most challenges because of those experiences. I am now a humble leader of a dynamic group of people at Synergist. We are a tight group of technologically savvy people with a great sense of character. I am truly honored to be leading and learning from them.

**CEOCFO: *How do you spend your time daily as CEO?***

**Ms. Morris:** In a startup, one must do what needs done, so I dabble in a lot of things. My role is to set strategy with our leaders and enable them to do their best work. I, of course, evangelize the need for our product. I also am called upon as a thought leader in the space, so I speak on topics spanning from how to best get started with AI to the national security implications of AI. I am a very big proponent of welcoming, embracing, and tackling the AI revolution.

**CEOCFO: *We reach readers in the investment community, business community, and government, as well as globally. Why pay attention to Synergist? What sets the company apart?***

**Ms. Morris:** Our vision is to be synonymous with responsible, safe, and secure AI systems. Our holistic approach to AI security, governance, and compliance spans the entire AI deployment lifecycle, supporting both public and private organizations from procurement through ongoing continuous monitoring of AI systems. Our ability to provide real-time insights into the performance of AI systems and manage a complex web of local, state, federal, and international regulations sets us apart from our competition. We were founded by a team of experienced and successful entrepreneurs that understands what it takes to solve problems on behalf of our customers. Between our team and our solution, we are positioned for growth in this burgeoning market. The ability to continuously monitor and keep current with cyber threats and international laws sets us apart.