

MEET THE MAESTROS

Meet the Maestros: Jonathan Anscombe, Kearney Partner

In this episode of Sensei Labs' "Meet the Maestro" series, Jay Goldman, CEO of Sensei Labs, interviews Jonathan Anscombe from Kearney.

Jay Goldman March 20, 2023



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Topics covered:

- Continuous transformation in organizations
- The shift in technology's role in strategic transformation
- Integration of data and real-time insights into organizational processes
- Automating low-value work to focus on high-value strategic tasks
- Evolutionary approach to technology adoption and partnerships in consulting

Introduction and Summary:

In this episode of Sensei Labs' "Meet the Maestro" series, Jay Goldman, CEO of Sensei Labs, interviews Jonathan Anscombe from Kearney. The conversation centers on the challenges and opportunities organizations face in the era of continuous transformation, as well as the evolving role of technology in strategic consulting. Anscombe shares insights on how Kearney helps clients align their people, processes, and technologies to navigate this new, fluid business landscape.

Anscombe notes that transformation has shifted from being a response to specific external triggers to becoming a continuous, agile process. Organizations now must be adaptable, using technology not only for operational improvements but also for strategic advantage. This involves a fundamental change in how businesses operate, moving away from fixed-point transformations (from "Point A to Point B") towards a state of ongoing evolution. Technology plays a crucial role in this process, particularly in enabling real-time insights, fostering collaboration, and supporting decision-making with data-driven intelligence.

Kearney, traditionally a strategic advisor, has evolved its consulting model to incorporate new technologies that enhance efficiency and provide clients with advanced tools to manage their transformations. Anscombe emphasizes the importance of integrating best-in-class technologies, such as data management and AI-driven platforms, into consulting engagements. This allows clients to automate low-value tasks and focus on higher-value, strategic initiatives, thus optimizing both the consulting process and the outcomes for clients.

One major challenge addressed is the need for organizations to adopt technologies that enhance flexibility without locking them into rigid systems. Anscombe explains that clients expect consulting partners to bring innovative technology solutions but remain wary of becoming overly reliant on any single tool. This has led Kearney to focus on identifying and working with flexible technology partners that can adapt to evolving business needs.

Anscombe further explores how real-time data and predictive analytics are becoming essential in managing organizational transformations. The ability to monitor progress and measure the impact of transformation initiatives in real-time has revolutionized how leadership teams make decisions. The use of platforms that provide these capabilities, such as Sensei Labs' Conductor, is highlighted as a key component in successful transformations, ensuring transparency and faster, more reliable results.

In concluding, Anscombe advises organizations embarking on transformation journeys to view the process as evolutionary, emphasizing the need for flexibility, adaptable partnerships, and the gradual development of capabilities. He stresses that over-specifying technology requirements upfront can be counterproductive, as both business needs and technology itself are continually evolving. The journey toward agility, he suggests, is itself an agile process, requiring organizations to build trust and collaboration with their technology and consulting partners over time.

Frequently asked questions

What is continuous transformation?

Transformation that runs as an ongoing, agile process rather than a one-off response to an external trigger. Jonathan Anscombe, Partner at Kearney, describes the shift from fixed-point transformations, moving from Point A to Point B, to a state of continuous evolution in which technology provides real-time insight, collaboration, and data-driven decision support as a permanent capability.

Why is over-specifying technology requirements up front a mistake?

Because both the business need and the technology keep changing. Anscombe's view is that over-specifying requirements is counterproductive; organizations should treat the journey toward agility as itself an agile process, choosing flexible partners and building capability gradually rather than locking into a rigid specification at the start.

How do organizations adopt transformation technology without vendor lock-in?

Through partners that adapt rather than platforms that lock them in. Anscombe notes that clients expect consulting firms to bring innovative technology but are wary of over-reliance on any single tool, which has led Kearney to prioritize flexible technology partners that evolve with the client's needs.

How do consulting firms use technology inside engagements?

By automating low-value work so both the consultants and the client can focus on strategic initiatives. Anscombe explains that Kearney integrates best-in-class technologies, data management and AI-driven platforms among them, into engagements to remove manual effort and improve outcomes, rather than staffing that effort with people.

What does real-time data change about managing a transformation?

It changes how leadership teams make decisions. Anscombe says the ability to monitor progress and measure the impact of initiatives in real time, using platforms such as Conductor, has revolutionized transformation governance by making results transparent and faster to trust, and by letting leaders act before problems compound.

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