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RESTON, VIRGINIA

Event Summary

Useful observations from OODAcon to inform strategic planning and stakeholder conversations. Prepared for OODA Network Members. November 2024

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OODAcon 2024 Summary

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Introduction

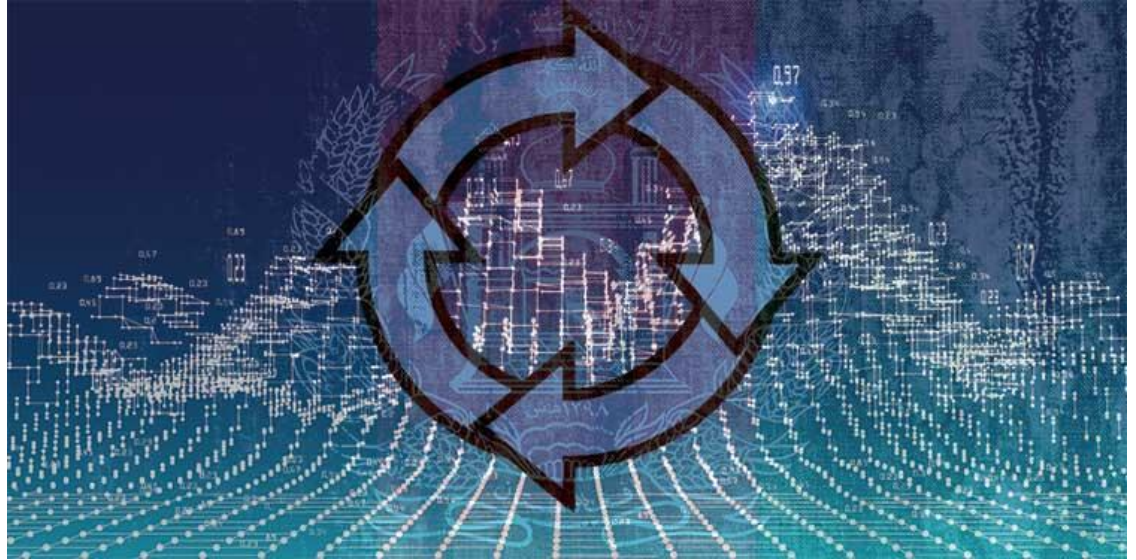
The theme of OODACON 2024 was Convergence—a focus on the intersections of emerging technologies, innovative ideas, and novel business models that are reshaping industries and geopolitics. Building on the momentum from previous years, this year’s agenda explored how the convergence of capabilities in areas such as AI, blockchain, quantum computing, biotechnology, defense tech, space tech and cybersecurity can create new value, disrupt existing systems, and redefine global strategies.

With over 350 attendees, including industry leaders, technologists, policymakers, and academics, the conference provided a platform for thought-provoking discussions, actionable insights, and networking opportunities. The event emphasized the importance of balancing innovation with risk management and leveraging these new intersections to create sustainable progress.

This summary captures some of the insights generated during the event and invites your continued inputs on where these trends are taking us.

MATT DEVOST & BOB GOURLEY

Co-Founders, OODA LLC



What Is OODAcon?

OODAcon is co-chaired by Matt Devost and Bob Gourley as an event focused on the OODA Network.

Topics for OODAcon come from a variety of sources including our continuous tracking of technology and concepts at OODA Loop and in our continuous dialog with members of the OODA Network. This Network is comprised of leading global experts, business executives, and strategic advisors focused on managing the next generation of disruptive innovation, emerging technologies, and global geopolitical and cyber risk.

OODA Network Members participate in monthly meetings, strategic forecasting events, and in-person networking events in Washington DC, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and New York City.

Our approach is to formulate topics for OODAcon first, then seek the right people to help us address and learn more on these topics.

For more information and to apply to join the OODA Network, visit:

<https://www.oodaloop.com/subscribe/>

OODAcon Sponsors



OODAcon requires a unique breed of sponsor: we seek firms who know the importance of a rigorous examination of the business impact of technology and a critical examination of ideas and existing processes with an eye towards accelerating change. Sponsors not only engage with potential clients, partners, and subject matter experts, they look to inform their own product and service strategies based on the insights from the event.

Who Attended OODAAcon?

The OODAAcon conference series brings together the hackers, thinkers, strategists, disruptors, leaders, technologists, and creators with one foot in the future to discuss the most pressing issues of the day and provide insight into the ways technology is evolving. OODAAcon is not just about understanding the future but developing the resiliency to thrive and survive in an age of disruption.





OODAcon 2024 Topics

Bootstrapping The Future

Matt Devost, CEO of OODA, kicked off the conference by highlighting the importance of embracing convergence. He underscored how exponential technologies are at the “back half of the chessboard”—moving beyond linear growth into transformative disruption. Devost also emphasized the need for organizations to operate in “beta mode,” continually iterating and adapting to the rapid pace of change. This session set the tone for the conference, underscoring the urgency of proactive engagement with converging technologies.

Cyber Diplomacy for Cyber & AI Safety

Ambassador Nate Fick joined Matt Devost to discuss the evolving landscape of AI safety and international cybersecurity diplomacy. Fick emphasized the role of U.S. leadership in shaping global AI norms through frameworks like the G7’s AI Code of Conduct. Highlighting the delicate balance between fostering innovation and mitigating risks, the session explored strategies to counter authoritarian narratives while maintaining a pro-innovation regulatory environment. Fick’s insights on international cooperation and domestic readiness provided a critical perspective on managing AI’s dual-use nature.

Beyond Human Limits: Charting the Future of AI Innovation

Dr. Amr Awadallah delved into the transformative capabilities of generative AI, demonstrating how these systems empower individuals to perform expert-level tasks with minimal training. By addressing the challenges of AI hallucinations and proposing solutions like retrieval-augmented generation (RAG), Awadallah illustrated how businesses can ensure accuracy and reliability in AI applications. He shared compelling examples from manufacturing and healthcare, showcasing how AI reduces downtime, enhances operational efficiency, and democratizes expertise.

The Net Assessment for the Future

Will Hurd and Dr. James N. Miller provided an in-depth analysis of the geopolitical and technological forces reshaping national security. They discussed the rise of a multipolar world, emphasizing the importance of resilience against economic and cyber threats. The conversation highlighted the necessity of aligning strategic objectives with dynamic

global realities and fostering robust alliances to navigate emerging challenges. Their insights underscored the interplay between technology, policy, and global power structures. **Touching the Void: Persona-Based AI and the New Age of Expertise**

In a session with Dara Ladjevardian, the focus shifted to the potential of persona-based AI systems to redefine expertise and productivity. Ladjevardian highlighted the value of creating personalized AI models that emulate individual worldviews and approaches. The discussion addressed ethical considerations, privacy challenges, and innovative applications across education, professional development, and customer engagement. This exploration of human-AI collaboration painted a promising picture of the future of personalized technology.

Disruption as a Thermodynamic Catalyst

Guillaume Verdon presented groundbreaking work in thermodynamic computing, a paradigm that reimagines energy efficiency in computation by mimicking natural processes. Verdon explained how the mesoscale, a domain between quantum and classical physics, offers a foundation for scalable and sustainable computational systems. His presentation provided real-world examples of probabilistic AI and simulations, inspiring attendees to consider the future of energy-conscious technological innovation.

China: Current Threats and Emerging Risks

A panel of experts, including Kristin Del Rosso, Charity Wright, Eugenio Benincasa, and Judy Ng, offered a comprehensive analysis of China's strategic ambitions. Discussions ranged from its offensive cyber capabilities and Digital Silk Road initiatives to its talent cultivation in hacking and technology ecosystems. The panel emphasized proactive defense measures and the importance of collaboration across sectors to counter the risks posed by China's global influence and cyber strategies.

Annual Global Threat Brief

Johnny Sawyer and Jen Hoar provided a broad overview of global threats, emphasizing actionable strategies for corporate leaders. They addressed challenges such as cyber risks, supply chain vulnerabilities, and geopolitical instability. Their insights underscored the importance of resilience and adaptability in navigating a rapidly changing global landscape.

The Age of Exponential Blockchain Disruption

Bob Gourley and Angela Dalton explored the convergence of blockchain and AI, emphasizing their potential to secure digital authenticity and drive transformative innovation. They shared examples from gaming, media, and enterprise sectors, demonstrating how blockchain fosters trust and decentralization while addressing

scalability challenges. This session highlighted the growing significance of blockchain in shaping the future of digital ecosystems.

Cross Domain Innovation: Driving Deep Tech Convergence

Katrina McFarland, Andrew Cote, and William “Mac” McHenry discussed the integration of advanced technologies across domains such as defense, biotech, and AI. They emphasized the need for collaborative innovation and the removal of regulatory barriers to accelerate progress. The session showcased how public-private partnerships can drive advancements that address complex challenges in national security and industry.

The Cybersecurity Dilemma: Board Expectations for Managing Cyber Risk

Al Tarasiuk, Leslie Ireland, and Matt Devost examined the evolving expectations for cybersecurity at the board level. They discussed aligning organizational objectives with emerging threats, fostering a culture of proactive risk management, and leveraging advanced tools to enhance resilience. Their insights provided actionable guidance for leaders navigating the complexities of cyber risk in a dynamic environment.

Cyber Resilience: Thriving in the AI-Powered World

Jay Healey and Dor Sarig explored the dual-edged role of AI in cybersecurity, highlighting its potential to enhance defenses and create new vulnerabilities. They emphasized the importance of leveraging AI to scale threat detection and automate responses, demonstrating how these capabilities strengthen enterprise-wide security strategies against sophisticated threats.

Materializing Tomorrow: Securing Supply Chains

Molly Just Behr detailed the progress of the CHIPS Act and its impact on securing U.S. microelectronics supply chains. She highlighted initiatives such as the establishment of Microelectronics Commons Hubs and collaborations with private-sector partners to enhance secure manufacturing capabilities. Her session emphasized the critical role of supply chain security in national competitiveness and economic resilience.

Navigating the Future: Strategic Insights from America’s New Map

Thomas Barnett concluded the conference with a visionary analysis of the 21st-century geopolitical landscape. He explored the North-South axis of global integration, climate-driven migration challenges, and strategies for fostering resilience amid demographic and technological shifts. Barnett’s forward-looking insights provided a framework for addressing interconnected global challenges.

The Take-Aways from OODAcon



The Take-Aways:

OODAcon 2024 showcased the immense potential of convergence to drive innovation and address global challenges. The conference highlighted the importance of adaptability, collaboration, and proactive engagement with emerging technologies. As we look to the future, the lessons and strategies shared at OODAcon 2024 will continue to inspire and guide leaders navigating an era of rapid change and unprecedented opportunities. Reflecting on the dynamics of the event, several themes emerged that hold significant implications for leaders seeking to harness the benefits of exponential technologies within their organizations.

Technological Convergence and Innovation

The convergence of technologies such as AI, blockchain, quantum computing, space exploration, defense advancements, and biotech was a defining theme of the conference. This fusion creates opportunities for entirely new industries and solutions to complex global challenges, demonstrating how interdisciplinary innovation can redefine market and societal norms. Examples included advancements in AI-driven biotechnology and the integration of quantum capabilities with existing computational frameworks.

Energy-efficient computing also emerged as a critical priority, with thermodynamic computing leading the conversation. By modeling computational processes on the energy efficiency of biological systems, this new paradigm offers transformative potential in reducing the environmental footprint of AI systems while significantly increasing their scalability and effectiveness.

Blockchain's evolution beyond speculative uses was a central point of discussion. Its ability to ensure digital authenticity, build trust in decentralized systems, and offer innovative solutions to intellectual property challenges has made it a keystone in the broader convergence of technologies.

Governance, Safety, and Ethical Implications

Managing AI safety and ethics remains a pressing concern as the dual-use nature of technology blurs the line between beneficial and malicious applications. Participants highlighted strategies for addressing AI hallucinations and building global norms that encourage innovation while mitigating risks. A proactive focus on developing robust guardrails can ensure that ethical considerations remain central to AI's deployment in society.

Leadership in the future requires embracing innovation while carefully managing risks and disruptions. Speakers underscored the importance of fostering cross-domain collaboration, empowering organizations to adapt to new realities, and balancing agility with safety.

Cybersecurity continues to be a significant governance challenge. From enhancing board-level oversight to deploying AI-enhanced defenses, discussions emphasized the need for a unified and forward-looking approach to managing cyber risks in a rapidly evolving threat landscape.

Geopolitical Dynamics and Strategic Competition

Geopolitical resilience was a recurring theme, with discussions exploring the impact of shifting global power dynamics, the rise of multipolarity, and the increasing prevalence of economic and information warfare. Experts warned that staying ahead of adversaries requires not just technological superiority but also strategic adaptability and coalition-building.

China's strategic ambitions featured prominently, with panels examining its cyber capabilities, technological initiatives like the Digital Silk Road, and broader efforts to influence global ecosystems. These discussions provided critical insights into how democratic nations can counterbalance authoritarian approaches while fostering innovation and openness.

Resilience and Adaptation

Securing supply chains emerged as a cornerstone of national competitiveness, particularly in light of efforts like the CHIPS Act to revitalize domestic microelectronics manufacturing. Enhancing supply chain transparency and integrating secure practices were highlighted as vital steps for safeguarding critical infrastructure.

Cyber resilience in an AI-powered world also took center stage, as leaders explored how generative AI can be used to bolster defenses, detect threats at scale, and mitigate sophisticated attacks. This resilience extends to national strategies for withstanding geopolitical shocks, emphasizing strength and preparation as deterrence measures.

Human-AI Collaboration and Personalization

Persona-based AI systems showcased the transformative potential of human-AI collaboration. These systems enable personalized interactions and scalable expertise while presenting challenges related to privacy and ethics. Whether facilitating citizen services or revolutionizing education and professional development, AI-human collaboration is poised to redefine the boundaries of personalized experiences.

Concluding Comments: The Time to Take Action is Now

The essence of OODAcon lies in its capacity to forge a robust community of leaders, experts, and practitioners that serve as a collective force that can propel us towards a brighter future.

The world is at a pivotal moment where converging technologies are enabling transformative advancements while simultaneously creating new vulnerabilities. As AI, quantum computing, and blockchain intersect with global power dynamics, leaders must navigate an era marked by both unprecedented opportunity and complex risks. These challenges demand agility, resilience, and a forward-thinking mindset. Members of the OODA Network are uniquely positioned to guide their organizations through this critical juncture by fostering innovation, prioritizing ethical considerations, and building robust systems to address threats.

The lessons from OODAcon 2024 emphasize the importance of adaptability, collaboration, and bold decision-making. As the global landscape evolves, leaders must embrace disruption as an opportunity for growth, encouraging a culture of experimentation and risk-taking. This approach is crucial not only for navigating current challenges but also for preparing organizations to thrive in an increasingly specialized and interconnected world.

Courage in embracing change and a willingness to learn from failure are more vital than ever. As technological advancements accelerate, sourcing talent and innovation from unconventional places will be key to staying ahead. Garage innovators, startups, and interdisciplinary thinkers are driving the future of technology, and organizations must expand their horizons to identify and nurture this talent. The OODA Network's ability to unite diverse perspectives ensures that its members remain at the forefront of these shifts, shaping a resilient and prosperous future.



About OODA Loop

OODA helps our clients identify, manage, and respond to global risks and uncertainties while exploring emerging opportunities and developing robust and adaptive strategies for the future. We are a global strategic advisory firm with deep DNA in global security, technology, and intelligence issues.

Powered by the OODA Network

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