

EXCELLENCE MAGAZINE

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**Celebrating Company of the Year Awards
Midwest USA 2026**



Honoring Excellence



Dr Yasemin Yazan



Almaz Andezion



Mona Tenjo

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

in every industry, there are individuals with the courage to challenge the ordinary and forge new paths. These pioneers aren't afraid to take risks in order to drive innovation and shape the future. In this edition, we celebrate those who push the limits of what's possible with their dedication and vision.

They set new standards, inspire others, and lead the way toward change. Because for them, there are no limits. Discover extraordinary stories and groundbreaking achievements that show what can be accomplished when mediocrity is not an option.

Your Editors of Excellence

website: www.excellenceawards.global



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Behind **EXCELLENCE**



Dr YASEMIN YAZAN

Dr Yasemin Yazan is a seasoned expert in adult education, neuroscience-based transformation, and leadership development. With over 17 years of experience, the multiple bestselling author has worked with major companies like Lufthansa and Volkswagen. With her “brAln Key” approach, she combines neuroscience and AI with innovative learning and leadership methods and inspires a pioneering spirit in a world characterised by complexity and dynamism.



MONA TENJO

Mona Tenjo is a strategic expert known as the Scaler in Chief for her leadership in driving smart, sustainable growth. With over 15 years of experience, she worked with companies like Siemens and DHL and helped streamline processes and scale businesses of varying sizes efficiently. Through Work On Your Business, she trains businesses to optimize their operations and grow strategically using technology and AI.

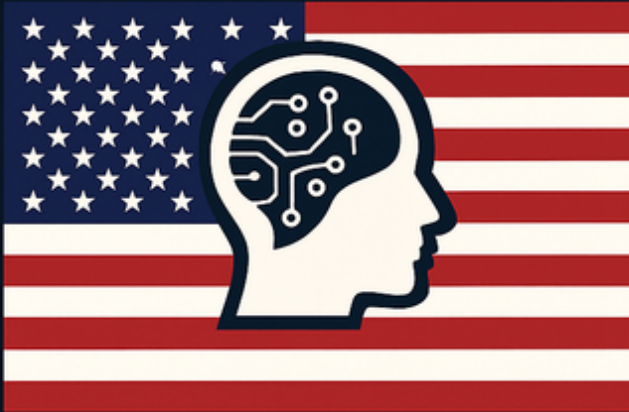


Almaz Andezion

Almaz Andezion is a marketing and AI expert who specializes in developing AI-driven customer experience strategies. With over twelve years of international marketing and product management experience, she helps companies enhance brand positioning and optimize marketing efforts through data-driven AI insights and personalized customer experiences.



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VS



US vs. CHINA's AI Race

Who Will Lead the Future of Artificial Intelligence?

Introduction

Artificial intelligence has become the defining technology competition of the 21st century. The race for AI leadership is no longer only about better algorithms or faster computers — it is about economic power, national security, innovation capacity, and the ability to shape the future of industries and societies.

At the center of this global competition are two superpowers: the United States and China. Both countries are investing billions of dollars into AI research, infrastructure, talent, and applications. But their strategies, strengths, and challenges are fundamentally different.

The United States: Leading Through Innovation and Ecosystems

The United States currently holds a strong position in the global AI landscape, largely because of its powerful technology ecosystem. Companies such as OpenAI, Google DeepMind, Microsoft, Meta, Amazon, and NVIDIA have become global leaders in AI models, cloud infrastructure, and semiconductor technology.

One of America's biggest advantages is its innovation ecosystem:

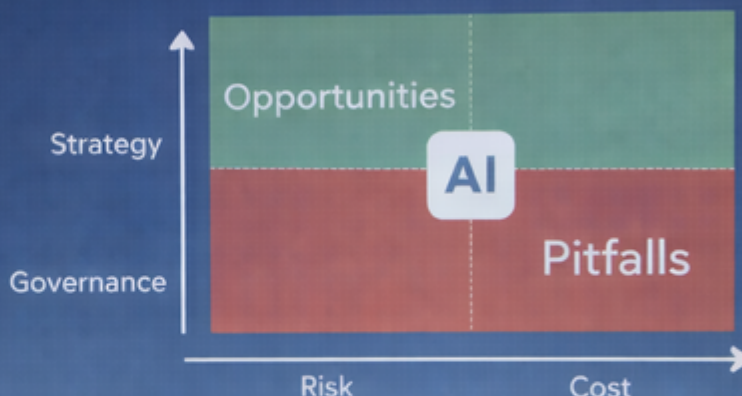
- World-class universities and research institutions
- Access to global AI talent
- Strong venture capital investment
- Leading semiconductor companies
- A culture that encourages entrepreneurship and risk-taking

The development of large language models (LLMs) such as GPT, Gemini, and Claude has demonstrated the strength of the US private sector. American companies are pushing AI capabilities forward at remarkable speed, creating tools that are transforming software development, healthcare, finance, manufacturing, education, and customer service.



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- Align with business objectives
- Mitigate risks and manage costs



US vs. CHINA's AI Race

Who Will Lead the Future of Artificial Intelligence?

China: The Power of Scale and State Strategy

However, the US faces challenges. The cost of AI development is extremely high, requiring massive computing power, energy resources, and specialized chips. The competition for AI talent is intense, and questions around regulation, data privacy, and responsible AI development remain unresolved.

China approaches AI competition with a different model. The Chinese government has identified artificial intelligence as a strategic priority and has made AI leadership a national objective.

China's strengths include:

- A huge domestic market
- Large amounts of industrial and consumer data
- Strong government support
- Fast technology adoption
- Manufacturing capabilities at scale

Companies such as Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent, Huawei, and DeepSeek are developing advanced AI systems and integrating AI into industries ranging from manufacturing to logistics and financial services.

China's advantage is its ability to implement technology quickly across a massive economy. Smart factories, autonomous vehicles, digital payments, and AI-powered services can be deployed at enormous scale.

However, China faces significant obstacles. Restrictions on access to the most advanced semiconductor technology have affected its ability to obtain cutting-edge AI chips. The country also faces challenges in attracting and retaining global AI researchers compared with the United States.

The Semiconductor Battle: The Hidden War Behind AI

Advanced AI models require enormous computing power, and the most powerful AI chips are produced by a small number of companies. NVIDIA has become one of the most important companies in the AI ecosystem because its GPUs power many of the world's leading AI systems.

The ability to design, manufacture, and access advanced chips will strongly influence which countries can build the next generation of AI systems.

The competition extends beyond software. It includes:

- Chip design
- Semiconductor manufacturing
- Data centers
- Energy infrastructure
- Cloud computing
- AI research talent

Different AI Philosophies

The US and China are also developing AI with different priorities.

The American approach is largely driven by private companies competing globally. Innovation often comes from startups, research labs, and venture-backed companies.

China's approach combines private-sector innovation with government coordination. Strategic industries receive strong support, allowing rapid deployment of technologies aligned with national goals.

Neither model guarantees victory. The US has creativity and technological leadership, while China has scale and execution speed.

Who Will Win the AI Race?

The answer may not be as simple as choosing one winner. AI leadership is likely to depend on several factors:

1. Innovation speed

The country that develops better AI models and applications faster will gain an advantage.

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The country that develops better AI models and applications faster will gain an advantage.

2. Computing infrastructure

Access to chips, energy, and data centers will determine who can train and operate advanced AI systems.

3. Talent

The ability to attract the world's best researchers and engineers remains critical.

4. Real-world adoption

The winner will not necessarily be the country with the most powerful AI model, but the country that successfully integrates AI into businesses, government, and society.

The Global Impact

A New Industrial Revolution

The AI race between the US and China will affect the entire world. AI will influence productivity, employment, defense, healthcare, education, and economic competitiveness.

For companies, the question is no longer whether AI will change their industry — it is how quickly they can adapt.

Manufacturing companies will use AI for predictive maintenance and automated quality control. Service companies will transform customer interactions through AI agents. Knowledge workers will collaborate with AI assistants to increase productivity.

The countries and organizations that successfully combine human creativity with artificial intelligence will define the next era of economic growth.



by Almaz Andezion



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Company & AI in the Midwest USA

Where Industrial Strength Meets Intelligent Transformation

Introduction

The Midwest has long been one of the economic engines of the United States. Built on manufacturing, agriculture, engineering, healthcare, logistics, and a strong tradition of entrepreneurship, the region has played a defining role in shaping how America produces, moves, and creates value.

Today, that foundation is entering a new era. Artificial Intelligence, automation, and data-driven technologies are transforming industries that have powered the Midwest for generations — while creating entirely new opportunities for growth.

What makes this transformation particularly significant is the combination of two worlds: **Deep industrial expertise and emerging intelligence.**

Across the region, companies are discovering that innovation does not always mean replacing what already works.

Sometimes, the greatest opportunity lies in making existing strengths smarter, faster, more connected, and more adaptable.

The question is no longer: **“How do we preserve what made us successful?”**

The question is becoming: **“How do we transform our strengths into competitive advantages for the future?”**

“The most powerful transformation happens when organizations do not abandon their strengths, but use technology to reinvent what those strengths can become.”



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From Digital Transformation to Intelligent Transformation

The Midwest is home to some of the world's most established industrial ecosystems.

Manufacturing, automotive, agriculture, energy, transportation, and logistics have created generations of expertise, infrastructure, and economic value.

Artificial Intelligence is now adding a new layer to that foundation

Companies are increasingly using intelligent technologies to:

- optimize production and operations
- predict equipment failures
- improve quality control
- strengthen supply chain visibility
- automate repetitive processes
- support faster decision-making

This is not simply automation.

It is the evolution from **industrial strength to intelligent industry**.

Organizations that successfully combine operational expertise with data and AI can create something difficult to replicate:

Experience enhanced by intelligence.

Innovation Beyond the Coasts

For decades, conversations about technology and innovation in the United States have often centered on the coasts.

But innovation has never belonged to geography.

Across the Midwest, established companies, universities, research institutions, entrepreneurs, and emerging businesses are building solutions in fields ranging from advanced manufacturing and AgTech to healthcare, mobility, energy, and digital services.

One of the region's greatest opportunities lies in connecting these ecosystems.

When traditional industry meets entrepreneurship, research, and emerging technology, innovation becomes practical.

It solves real problems.

It improves real systems.

And it creates measurable value.

AI as a Tool for Practical Transformation

The real value of Artificial Intelligence is not the technology itself.

It is what organizations can do with it.

For Midwest companies, this often means applying AI to practical business challenges:

- increasing productivity
- managing workforce shortages
- improving forecasting
- reducing operational inefficiencies
- accelerating product development
- strengthening customer experiences

The organizations that benefit most will not necessarily be those using the most technology.

They will be those using it with the clearest purpose.

“Innovation is not defined by how much technology an organization uses. It is defined by how effectively technology turns real challenges into better outcomes.”

From Resilience to Adaptability

Resilience has long been associated with the Midwest.

Industries have evolved.

Markets have shifted.

Supply chains have changed.

Communities and companies have repeatedly adapted.

But in a world shaped by rapid technological change, resilience alone is no longer enough.

Organizations must become adaptable.

AI enables companies to:

- identify changes earlier
- respond to disruption faster
- make better use of existing knowledge
- anticipate customer and market needs
- create new business models
- scale innovation more effectively

Yet technology alone does not create adaptability.

Leadership does.

AI can reveal patterns.

Data can provide insights.

Technology can accelerate decisions.

But people still determine direction.

The strongest organizations will combine both:
Technological intelligence and human judgment.

Looking Ahead

The future of business in the Midwest will not be defined by abandoning the industries that built the region.

It will be defined by reinventing them.

The organizations that stand out will be those that:

- combine industrial expertise with emerging technology
- transform operational knowledge into intelligent systems
- connect innovation with practical business value
- invest in people alongside technology
- remain adaptable in rapidly changing markets

Artificial Intelligence will continue to evolve.

New technologies will emerge.

Competition will become increasingly global.

But the Midwest enters this transformation with something valuable already in place:

Experience.

Infrastructure.

Entrepreneurship.

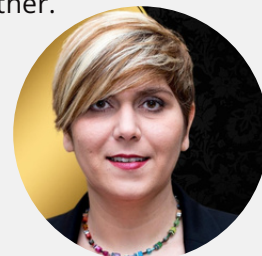
Practical problem-solving.

Resilience.

Combined with intelligent technologies, these strengths can become the foundation for a new era of growth.

The next chapter of the Midwest economy may not be about choosing between **traditional industry and technological innovation.**

It may be about discovering how powerful they become together.



by Dr Yasemin Yazan

“The future will not belong to regions that simply adopt new technology. It will belong to those that transform existing strengths into entirely new possibilities.”



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Shadow AI in the Workplace

The Risk You Can't Audit and the Productivity You Can't Ignore

Shadow AI Is Already in Your Company

Shadow AI is already inside your company. It is the sales leader polishing outreach in a chatbot, the HR manager rewriting performance feedback with an AI plug-in, the analyst summarizing a confidential deck in a browser tab, the engineer asking an unapproved model to debug code. None of this shows up on an IT roadmap, yet it can reshape how work gets done in weeks.

The CEO Trap: Ban It or Bless It

For CEOs, the mistake is binary thinking: ban it, or bless it. A ban drives usage underground. A blanket green light creates invisible exposure. The winning move is controlled enablement: make the safe path the fastest path.

Why Shadow AI Becomes a Data Leak (Quietly)

What makes Shadow AI uniquely risky is that it is easy to normalize and hard to see. Employees are not trying to break rules. They are trying to move faster. The danger is what gets fed into the system. In a data leak scenario, the "incident" is rarely a dramatic hack. It is routine behavior: a customer email pasted into a public tool, a contract clause summarized for speed, a spreadsheet described in a prompt. One moment of convenience can trigger confidentiality breaches, regulatory reporting, or customer churn that costs far more than the time saved.

"Shadow AI isn't a tech problem. It's a governance problem: your people will use AI anyway, so your job is to make the safe path the fastest path."



The Opportunity Signal You Should Not Ignore

Yet Shadow AI is also a clear signal: your people are actively searching for leverage. The CEO job is to turn that unmanaged behavior into a measurable productivity advantage without turning it into a legal and reputational liability.

The Practical CEO Playbook (5 Moves)

Here is the practical playbook.

- **Run a 14-day AI reality check.** Skip the policy workshop. Ask business unit leaders to list where AI is already used: sales, recruiting, finance narratives, customer support, product, software. Map use cases, not tools. Identify what data is being used and who touches it.
- **Create a simple data rule:** Green, Amber, Red.
 - Green: public or low-risk content (drafting, formatting, idea generation).
 - Amber: internal operational content with moderate sensitivity.
 - Red: customer data, financials, legal materials, anything under NDA, and source code.
 - Publish one non-negotiable line: Red never goes into public AI tools.
- **Build an approved “fast lane.”** Shadow AI thrives when procurement is slow. Provide vetted tools with SSO, logging, and retention controls. If safe AI is one click and unsafe AI is frictionless but risky, adoption moves where you want it.
- **Put guardrails in the workflow.** Replace posters with controls: secure internal AI for company knowledge, prompt templates for sensitive functions, and lightweight warnings when Red data might be pasted.

- **Measure compliant speed.** Track approved usage, top use cases, and cycle-time improvements. Reward teams that ship faster inside the rules.

The Bottom Line

Shadow AI is not a trend to fear. It is a capability to operationalize. Move first, and you get productivity with protection. Wait, and you learn about it through a data leak.



by Mona Tenjo

“Most AI data leaks won’t look like a hack. They’ll look like an employee trying to be efficient with the wrong tab open.”



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AWARDS

Honoring Excellence Across the Globe



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AWARDS Methodology

The **Excellence Awards** team works proactively to discover market leaders, innovators, and rising start-ups, often driving nominations themselves to highlight those making significant strides in their industries.

Nominee Shortlisting

All nominees are formally invited to accept their nomination. If any individual or organization chooses to decline, they are simply removed from consideration.

Evaluation and Judging

Our dedicated research team carefully reviews all materials submitted by nominees, ensuring that winners are chosen based on merit rather than popularity. In addition, the team conducts independent research using publicly available sources to gather further insights and make well-informed decisions.

Winners

Once the winners are selected, they are personally informed before any public announcement is made. This allows time for internal communication and coordination of marketing strategies before the news is shared with a wider audience.

Additional Promotion

We offer a variety of promotional options for Excellence Awards winners, ranging from inclusion in the free winners' directory to digital certificates and advertising opportunities. These packages are designed to help winners showcase their achievements and enhance their visibility across various platforms.



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**CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE: COMPANY OF THE YEAR AWARDS MIDWEST USA
2026**

The Winners are:

- **1Starr Enterprises** – Media Production
- **A.I.M. Coach Consult LLC** – Healthcare Leadership Coaching
- **Aronetics LLC** – Cyber Defense
- **Bailey Bug LLC** – Adaptive Outerwear
- **Banrion Capital Management Inc.** – Investment Technology
- **BedConnect** – Care Coordination Technology
- **Best Practices Consulting Services, LLC** – Business Consulting
- **BestBodiesforLife** – Property Management
- **Billboardbug** – AR & Billboard Advertising
- **Biznatron LLC** – B2B Lead Generation
- **Boys & Girls Club of West Chester/Liberty** – Youth Development
- **Columbus Apparel Studio. LLC** – Apparel Development
- **Cops Direct** – Law Enforcement Support





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COMPANY AWARDS

**CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE: COMPANY OF THE YEAR AWARDS MIDWEST USA
2026**

The Winners are:

- **Corporate Connections LLC** – HR Consulting & Talent Acquisition
- **DAS & Associates, Inc.** – Leadership Advisory
- **dba Mad Island Communications** – Conflict Revolution
- **Elite Indoor Air LLC** – Indoor Air Solutions
- **Graphic Alliance, Inc.** – Graphic & Print Services
- **Heritage Corridor Destinations** – Destination Marketing
- **IlluminaOps Solutions** – Operations Consulting
- **impeccable Rideshare llc** – Transportation Services
- **Innocence Freed** – Survivor Support Services
- **jpgfairbairn marketing, llc (DBA Capacity)** – Leadership Development
- **KAMB&C Enterprises dba Quality Pest Control** – Pest Control
- **Lighthouse Wealth Management** – Financial Planning
- **MDP Nanometer Design, LLC** – Telecommunications Services
- **New Hope Fertility Institute of Texas** – Fertility Medicine
- **Oxygen Orchard, Inc.** – Home Water Oxygenator
- **Papa's Kitchen LLC.** – Dressing Manufacturing





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COMPANY AWARDS

**CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE: COMPANY OF THE YEAR AWARDS MIDWEST USA
2026**

The Winners are:

- **Pinnacle Process Solutions**, International, LLC – Operations Consulting
- **Postvention Collective, LLC** – Suicide Bereavement Education
- **Spirit Tours LLC** – Transformational Journeys
- **Stacey Hanke Inc.** – Speaking & Consulting
- **Steele Advisory Group, LLC** – Franchise Development
- **STEM It Up Sports** – STEM Education
- **Surge Solutions** – IT & Cloud Services
- **Tamasha Group, LLC** – Community Marketing Platform
- **The Bright Mentality** – Mental Wellness
- **The Business Team, llc** – Operations Support
- **Troops Direct** – Military Equipment Support
- **True North Therapies PLLC** – ABA Therapy Services
- **Veaux Professional Services** – HR Service
- **White Diamond Events LLC** – Event Management
- **WINNIEDEL ONCOLOGY** – Oncology Clinical Research
- **With Framework LLC** – Brand & Web Design





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