



# AZIMUTH

LEGAL SOLUTIONS, PLLC

# Lessons from the Vine

What can tomatoes teach us in an age of AI?



# Wisdom v. Knowledge

- Knowledge is awareness that tomato is a fruit.
- Wisdom keeps it out of fruit salad.

“

*‘Is it really a fruit?’*

*‘Can you put it in  
a smoothie?’*



# Why attorneys have trouble making friends...

## TOMATO IS A FRUIT

- Botanically speaking
  - From a vine, contains seeds, starts as a flower.
  - Cucumber, zucchini, watermelon, beans
  - US Supreme Court, **Nix v. Hedden**, 1893
- Miles Kington quote

## TOMATO IS A VEGETABLE

- Culinarily Speaking
  - Served savory
- **Nix v. Hedden**, 1893
  - Common use, subject to 1883 Tariff
- Congress, 2011, 2 TBSP tomato paste
  - on pizza = school lunch vegetable serving

# Is this relevant to AI?

- AI is a knowledge focused tool
- Unique impact on fundraising
- AI lacks wisdom, but may be able to augment yours

# Disclaimer/ Awareness # 1

- AI use disclosed by charities reduced charitable giving, even when the same disclosure did not affect for profit corporations.
- Donors expect more from charities-
  - Authenticity
  - Reduced altruism

-Journal of Business Ethics, Zhao, Zhou, Chen- 21 Jan 2026

*“AI’s Hidden Price: AI Tools Reduce Donor Engagement Through Extrinsic Motivation Inferences”*

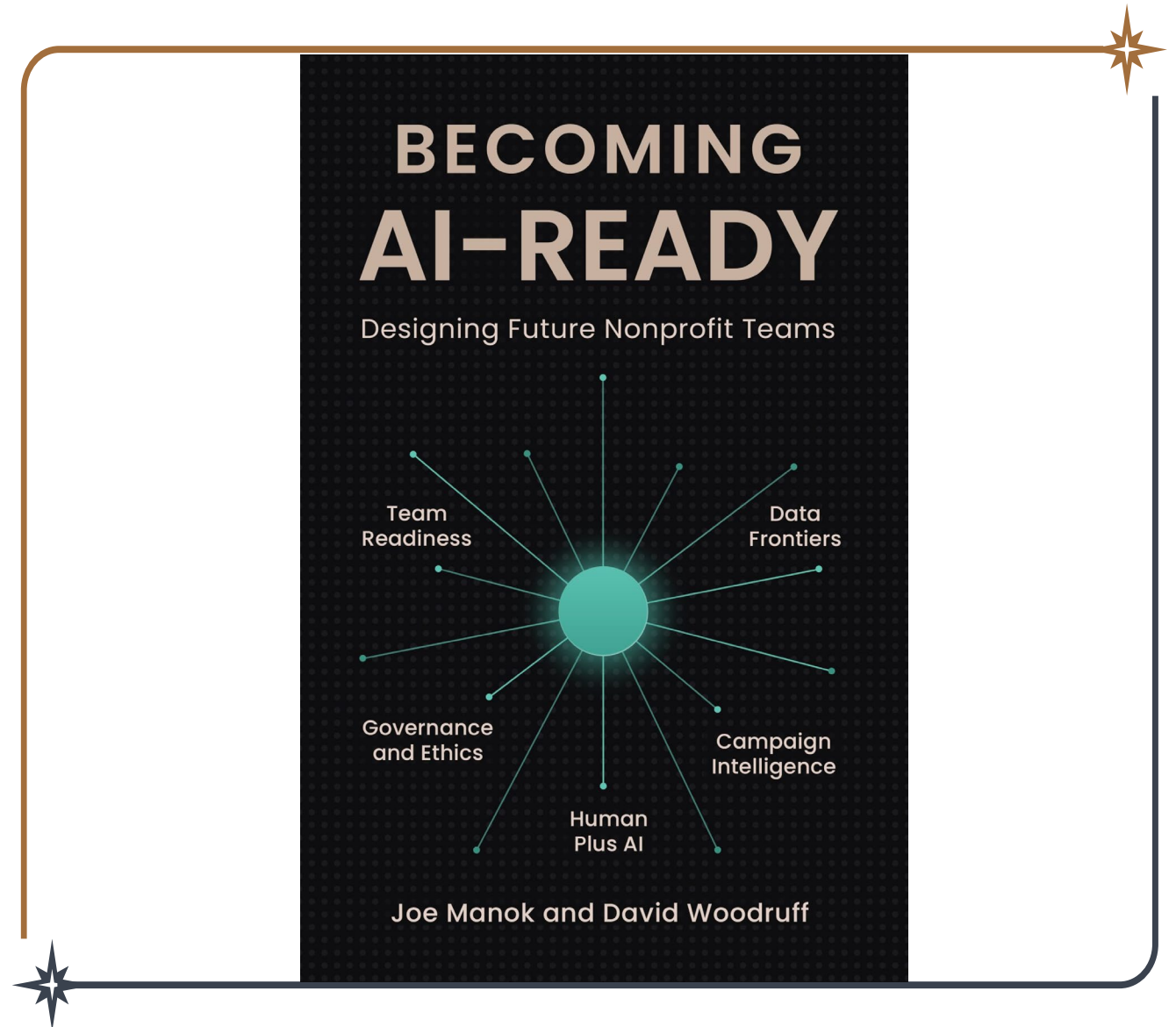
# Disclaimer/ Awareness #2

## Attorney warnings

- Don't make the private into public
- Don't trust if you can't verify
- Make sure it is relevant to your needs
- Know your policies

# Becoming AI-Ready Designing Future Nonprofit Teams

Framework,  
Thought process,  
Anecdotes



# Disclaimer/ Awareness #3

## Always new research

- *AI systems out-persuade expert humans-* 15 June 2026, Hackenburg, et al
- **AI was nearly 3x more effective than professionals at raising donations for Save the Children.-** Dr. James LinkedIn Post
- Dr. James comments-
  - Everyone will have this, so becomes neutral, focus on relationships
- Remember email/ targeted CGA illustrations



# WISDOM FROM TOMATOES

# Tomato plants are treated differently based on the fruit they should produce



- **Determinate** varieties grow as bushes, flower at the same time, and produce fruit at the same time
  - Often best for sauces and bulk processing
  - Roma & San Marzano
- **Indeterminate** varieties can produce and grow at the same time.
  - Need to be pruned & trained



Be mindful of which  
program you are  
working & what the  
goals are

# Bequests come in varieties too

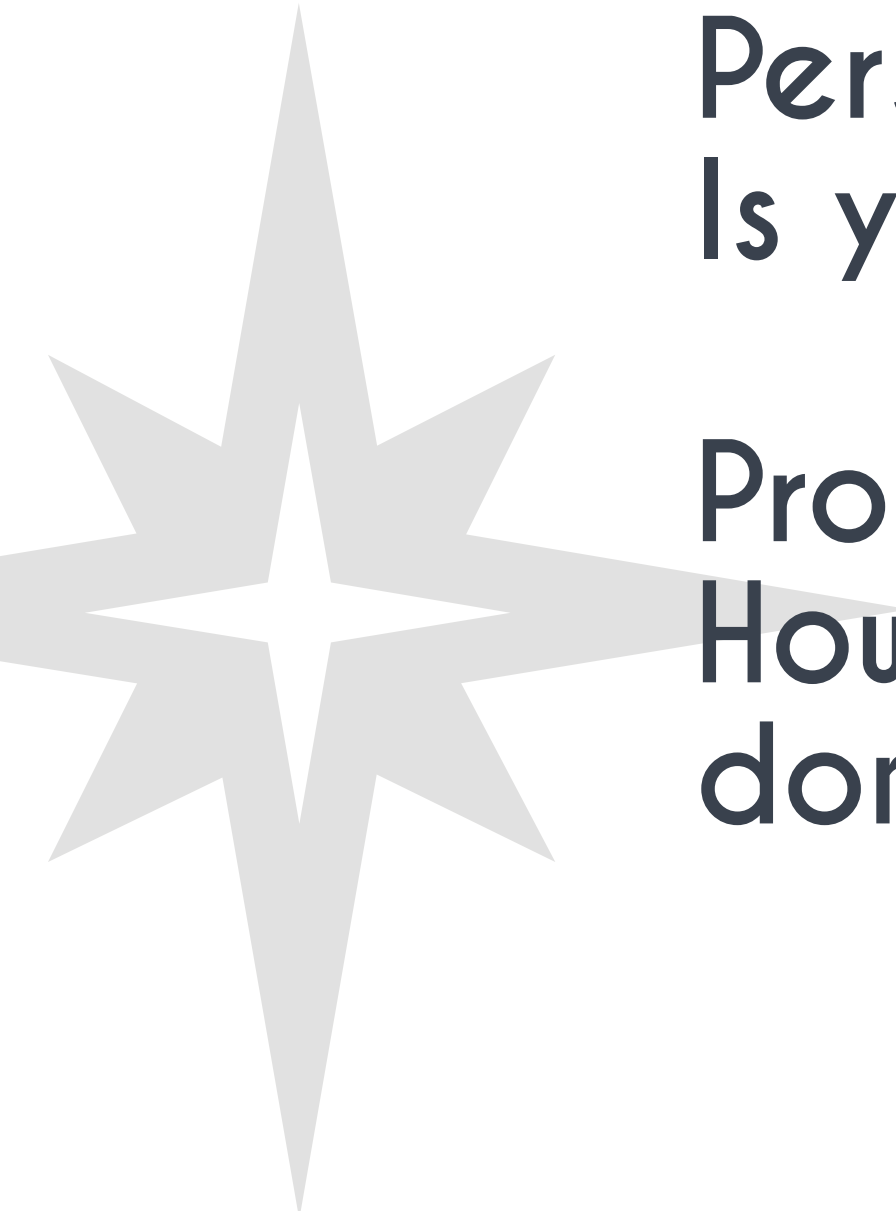
Money Attitudes Driving  
Charitable Bequest  
Intentions: Understanding  
Legacy-Gift Segments to  
Inform Nonprofit  
Communication Strategy

- Russell James & Claire Routley  
Journal Of Philanthropy, 17 Feb 26

- Money-Status
  - Likely bigger 'share' of the estate
  - Legacy impact
- Bargain-Seeking
  - Tax savings, good value
- Financial-Planning
  - Master plan
- *AI will likely increase our ability to track & analyze marketing interactions*

# Better results come from planting sideways

- Creates a stronger root system
- Focuses early growth
- Feels like losing ground
- Stronger plants, better fruit



Personal-  
Is your core strong?

Professional-  
How rooted are your  
donor relationships?

# The Meaning of Your Life: Finding Purpose in an Age of Emptiness

Dr. Arthur C. Brooks



Rapid technological and cultural shifts have reduced our ability to perceive depth, causing widespread feelings of emptiness and a lack of purpose



# Pruning the plant affects the outcome

- Early pruning can create 2 plants from one root system
- Removing suckers and flowerless stems focuses energy back to the fruit
- Cutting off the end of the vine results in larger fruit



What are you doing  
now that pulls energy  
but doesn't produce  
fruit? What looks pretty  
but doesn't produce?

Even if AI can reduce the energy spend, still ask if it is worth it.

# On the Folly of Rewarding A, While Hoping for B

- *Steve Kerr*

Also consider,

## ‘The Truth about Employee Engagement’

-Patrick Lencioni

- Do our values, behaviors, and incentives align?
- This is a double benefit-
  - Part 1- we stop ‘spending’ on the fruitless
  - Part 2- we ‘invest’ more in the areas that produce

# You say 'tomato', I say 'is it really?'

## Heirloom v. Hot House

- The difference between commercial tomatoes grown for supermarkets and locally grown varieties can feel like completely different items.
- Commercial are focused on appearance and durability.
- Heirloom can be more delicate & less visibly appealing, but are amazing.





AI, by design, seeks out  
the average. It focuses on  
the common.

Authenticity will stand out.

# Happiness -

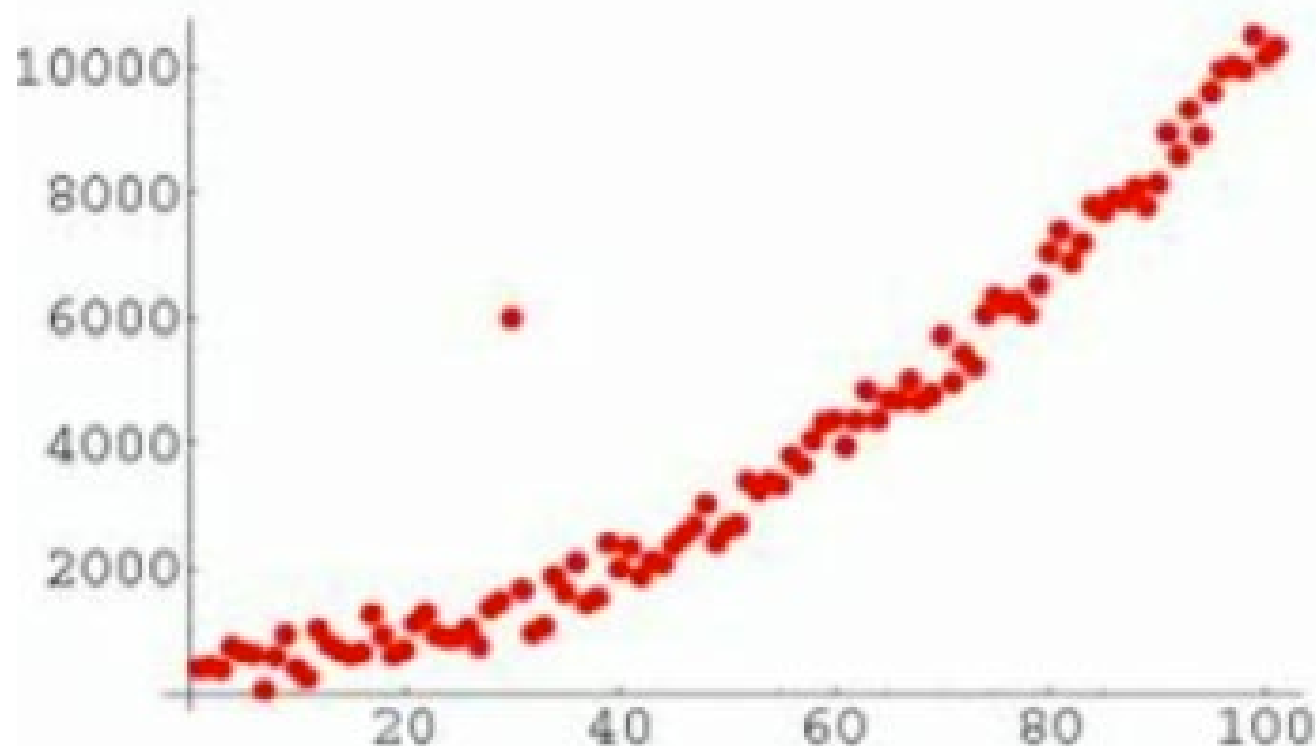
## TedX, Shawn Achor

Also,

The Happiness  
Advantage: Seven  
Principles of Positive  
Psychology

-Shawn Achor

### Escaping the Cult of the Average



# Lessons left unexplored

- **Cherry tomatoes-** plant them once, and never need to again
- **Tomato blight-** too much water and too little water produce the same outcome
- **Training the vine-** the structure you create may or may not help plant production, but always helps with harvest, health, maintenance.



As fundraisers and  
charitably focused  
professionals, we must be  
wise, harnessing AI to  
focus our authenticity.

Use tomatoes at your own discretion.



AI can do things faster-  
doing what doesn't work  
faster  
isn't better.

Not the same as 'failing fast' – Marshmallow Challenge & Rapid Prototyping



# BE HEADLINE SAVVY

**“AI was 3x more  
effective than  
professional fundraisers”**

‘Donors’ were study participants who were presented with a choice to allocate part of their 1£ reward.

Human persuader, 6.4pp, Claude Opus 6.4, 17.2pp

# Thank you

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