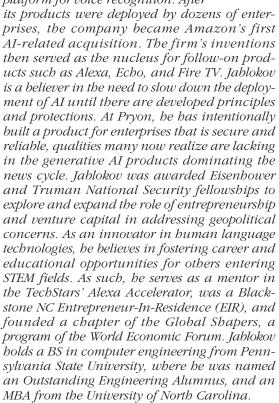# An AI Knowledge Platform

An Interview with Igor Jablokov, Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Pryon

EDITORS' NOTE *Igor Jablokov is the CEO and Founder of Pryon, an AI company focused on businesses. Named an "Industry Luminary" by* Speech Technology Magazine, *Jablokov has long been advocating for smarter, safer deployments of AI and built Pryon to offer valuable technology to enterprises that, most importantly, can be trusted. He previously founded industry pioneer Yap, the world's first high-accuracy, fully automated cloud platform for voice recognition. After its products were deployed by dozens of enterprises, the company became Amazon's first AI-related acquisition. The firm's inventions then served as the nucleus for follow-on products such as Alexa, Echo, and Fire TV. Jablokov is a believer in the need to slow down the deployment of AI until there are developed principles and protections. At Pryon, he has intentionally built a product for enterprises that is secure and reliable, qualities many now realize are lacking in the generative AI products dominating the news cycle. Jablokov was awarded Eisenhower and Truman National Security fellowships to explore and expand the role of entrepreneurship and venture capital in addressing geopolitical concerns. As an innovator in human language technologies, he believes in fostering career and educational opportunities for others entering STEM fields. As such, he serves as a mentor in the TechStars' Alexa Accelerator, was a Blackstone NC Entrepreneur-In-Residence (EIR), and founded a chapter of the Global Shapers, a program of the World Economic Forum. Jablokov holds a BS in computer engineering from Pennsylvania State University, where he was named an Outstanding Engineering Alumnus, and an MBA from the University of North Carolina.*

Igor Jablokov

COMPANY BRIEF *Pryon (pryon.com) is an AI company that delivers augmented intelligence for the enterprise. Driven by the inventors of core natural language technologies, the company is developing a platform that connects employees to digital transformation, extending their ability to find and use knowledge, drive workflows, and make better decisions from wherever they are. Pryon streamlines AI adoption to dramatically reduce complexity, costs, and deployment times.*

What was your vision for creating Pryon and how do you define its mission?

In 2017, we created Pryon to provide enterprises with a secure way to get accurate and trusted answers based on their own proprietary content. Through our background of building Yap, a company which became the foundation of Alexa after its acquisition by Amazon, it was clear that the experience of being able to ask a question and get an instantaneous answer was groundbreaking in the consumer world, but was missing in support of corporate and government operations. We set out to solve that and unlock the most critical and differentiating knowledge that is captured in the archives and knowledge bases of the most important institutions in the world.

Pryon's mission is to eliminate the friction that exists between people and the information they need to do their jobs accurately, confidently, and productively. In addition, it is foundational to our mission to do so securely and in a way that drives forward the value of the institutional knowledge that so many companies have created, but have not been able to leverage as a competitive advantage.

Will you provide an overview of Pryon's business?

Pryon provides a knowledge operating system for enterprises – that is, an end-to-end AI platform that safely and securely reads, organizes, and understands the collective knowledge of an organization and delivers accurate, reliable, and trustworthy answers to natural language questions in a subsecond.

Pryon integrates with the existing systems of record such as applications, knowledge bases, and repositories an organization already uses. It reads and understands the information – whether it's captured in text form, documents, presentations, photographs, videos, or old, handwritten sets of instructions – by leveraging proprietary computer vision technologies, large language models, and natural language processing. This process creates a fabric of knowledge that delivers trusted answers directly from this content with greater than 90 percent accuracy on day one, without any need for custom code, model training, or rules.

Our customers and partners are using Pryon to dramatically improve the productivity of their workforce, the quality of their work, as well as overall end-user satisfaction. We have been deployed across many use cases including customer services and IT help desk applications, virtual sales engineer applications, as well as use cases that support technical operations in highly engineered environments such as energy, manufacturing, or semiconductors. The ability for our clients to get accurate and fast answers is revolutionizing the way they do business.

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> **"Pryon is transforming the way enterprises manage their knowledge while also ensuring attribution, safety, and security. Because our platform operates as a closed system, it takes in and shares only trusted and vetted information confidentially."**

What have been the keys to Pryon's growth and how do you describe the Pryon difference?

Pryon is transforming the way enterprises manage their knowledge while also ensuring attribution, safety, and security. Because our platform operates as a closed system, it takes in and shares only trusted and vetted information confidentially. By extracting answers and providing full provenance to sources, it avoids the "black box" approach that underlies too many AI models.

Unlike other systems that are currently generating decidedly mixed headlines, Pryon's technology offers authoritative, reliable, and trusted answers in seconds, dramatically improving productivity, work quality, and overall access to knowledge for our customers. Pryon is a complete end-to-end solution that can be deployed in days or weeks, providing greater than 90 percent accuracy out of the box. Enterprises recognize the difference and are able to see value right away, and we've seen a lot of demand as a result.

That need for a trustworthy and deployment-ready AI solution for enterprises has driven Pryon's growth. As new generative AI technologies hit the market, businesses are evaluating the risks and are looking to adopt the most reliable and secure solution for their internal data. We built Pryon over the past six years on the foundation of accuracy and security and, as a result, we have an AI knowledge platform enterprises can trust.

Will you discuss your views on the need for smarter, safer deployments of AI?

Broad awareness around the potential for AI has arrived. Despite decades of thoughtful rule development and efforts to construct these technologies ethically, these guidelines have often been ignored by the companies that are haphazardly trying to grab the largest market share across the AI landscape. The lack of safe and ethical infrastructure and oversight renders many AI tools too risky for business use, especially in core workflows.

We have not yet seen the extent of the risks of AI technology that is not created responsibly, but we know that without rules, AI can expose and undermine intellectual property (even when it's not the user's intent), it can introduce legal issues for companies as it delivers generative works based on copyrighted content or patented technology, and it can spread misinformation in ways that can affect outcomes and our very sense of what is true and what is false.

Pryon is advocating for businesses and society to reprioritize reliability, security, and trust in the adoption of AI technologies. Pryon's own proprietary technology was built around a core set of ethics that guides the function of our company and technology. This is the model all AI creators should follow if AI is to become a central driver of business transformation.

What do you see as Pryon's responsibility to be a force for good in society?

Pryon is setting the bar high for the ethical development and deployment of AI. This isn't lip service and builds on the way that we interacted with the world at IBM and at Yap. AI should be a force for good and it can be when built with strong guidelines, with us having to lead by example. Technology can uplift humanity, but when built with loose expectations and standards, it can become detrimental to businesses and society.

AI is more than capable of empowering a safer and more prosperous world for all – anyone who says otherwise is lazy – and at Pryon, we feel a responsibility not only to produce private and secure AI technologies, but to be a voice championing a clear set of ethics in AI development that can empower people and empower the best in our society, responsibly.

How important is it for Pryon to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?

When creating a new business or technology, it is important to incorporate diverse perspectives from day one to maximize the aperture. An inclusive workforce helps to ensure that the company and its technology are agile and responsive to as many needs as practically possible. That way our creators are a team best set up to successfully invent products that are free from bias and can help the broadest range of individuals.

We've seen technology with egregious blind spots that alienate people, or that create a poor experience for a segment of users. The only way to avoid that is to draw from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences and create a product fit for all. We accomplished this in our previous company before this was a known imperative.

Did you always know that you had an entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build your own business?

I've always had that desire to tinker and create given my parents being artists. I enjoy building something impactful to everyone's day-to-day experiences versus catering to niches. My interests and work has been rooted in research so that it's a unique proposition that hasn't been tried before. This passion for invention has driven me from one team at the cutting edge of AI to the next until I recognized the value that AI could create for society. From there I knew that I had to act, and if I didn't turn my ideas into reality, no one else would. I wanted to see this idea come to life, and I was committed to doing it the right way, with privacy and security embedded into our technology from the start.

What do you feel are the keys to effective leadership and how do you describe your management style?

An effective leader empowers others to lead in their own right since one should be hiring subject matter experts in their respective fields. Providing necessary resources, lifting people up, and challenging them to be the best version of themselves drives us all to work smarter, to think more creatively, and to be better human beings. It also requires building trust and establishing high expectations given the serious applications we could be supporting.

I strive to be a transparent and frequent communicator as I've learned that's the best way to distribute intelligence across a team. In addition, hiring the best people – surrounding great people with other great people – empowers and motivates the team to work together to accomplish amazing things. In a work environment where we are creating the next generation of AI technologies, practicing what we preach is an essential motivator that nurtures innovation and growth. We should relish things that are difficult, because that means those become impossibilities for others.

What advice do you offer young people beginning their careers?

Put your efforts and energy into what you believe will make the world a better place, but be at peace that there are no shortcuts to such things coming to fruition. Think boldly – you will hear many object to your world views in the process of disruption. Think beyond the limits of the current applications and instead consider ways that technology can be adapted and improved for a greater and positive impact. Apply what you know to what you believe and what you support for the good of humanity. Assume what you know is but a snowflake on a tip of an iceberg and be insatiable in knowledge acquisition, and remember that you don't know what you don't know yet. Start small but think big. ●