+44 345 094 0945
www.waterstons.com

News article

Aug 2023

Showcasing Our People In San Fran - Databricks Data + AI Summit

One of Waterstons best and brightest, Andrew Blance was invited to speak at this years summit, keep reading to find out more.



This prestigious honour is a direct result of Andrews amazing work with our UK Client, North Star Housing Association.

Here's what Andrew had to say about the trip:

"Databricks is a cloud platform for doing big data engineering, data science, and developing AI models so the Data+AI Summit was focused on generative AI and the value of democratising data. It was the first time I have been in the states, so it was a really amazing experience.

"The main reason for me attending was to talk about our work to make Social Housing accommodation safer from mould and damp. This tech-for-good project involves developing a set of sensors to detect mould growth, ethics research into putting sensors into people's homes, and a software streaming system. We built a prototype of this software stack in Delta Live Tables, which is Databricks' data streaming tool. The talk led to some great discussions, and meeting some folks who really resonated with the project's data-for-good ideology and wanted to get involved.

"The rest of the conference was fascinating too. We got the chance to meet a lot of amazing people and hear about the wonderful work they do.

"The Wednesday keynote focused on the democratisation of data and AI, and the upcoming updates to Databricks. They spoke of a vision to have 'Data democratised for every employee; AI democratised in every product' - a compelling guiding principle for Databricks. There were lots of exciting announcements making it easier for more people to create secure and responsible generative AI models within Databricks, who make a good argument that training your own model gives you more control, privacy, and cost savings. I'm looking forward to trying some of the new stuff out soon!
"The keynote had a huge number of cool speakers - including Satya Nadella, who called in on what was the crispest, most 4K/60fps, high-quality Skype call I have ever seen.

"I got to go to Alcatraz, I went to a diner, and across the Golden Gate Bridge. The receptionist at the hotel told me all I needed to know about California culture was that you need to say 'hella' a lot - so I definitely fitted in. I knew I was definitely in a place with lots of tech people after overhearing more conversations about Andreessen Horowitz than I ever heard before in my life.

"Finally, around the streets of SF self-driving cars roam free. You can get lifts in them using specific apps (sadly our UK Apple accounts barred us from downloading these!). It was always a slightly surreal experience seeing them pottering about. Usually they did great but there was the odd time when they got very confused..."

Find out more about Andrew here.