AI: Italy is also leading innovation

Imagine having an entire data team working at lightning speed, delivering results in just a few hours. Except the team is actually software—Italian, and powered by artificial intelligence. It's called Elai, and it specializes in predictive AI, explains Antonio Sciuto, co-founder of the Rome-based company together with Lorenzo Luce.

This is not a start-up, but a well-established company founded in 2018 under the name BigProfiles, Sciuto explains. A seasoned executive with 25 years of experience in multinational corporations, he adds that Elai is the new name of a software platform that already works with around one hundred major partners across 15 countries worldwide. These include Italian companies Edison and Intesa Sanpaolo, as well as the French telecommunications giant Orange—and even UNICEF. The project has also been backed over the years by investors such as Zest and Cassa Depositi e Prestiti.

The company has recently announced the closing of a €3 million investment round, marking a new phase of growth. This milestone coincided with the appointment of Antonio Sciuto—formerly Global Business Development Officer at Salesforce and President of Nestlé North America—as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Elai.

Sciuto joined the company, founded in 2018 by Lorenzo Luce and Roberto Visceglia, and has since dedicated himself fully to this new entrepreneurial venture. The company is already well established: for eight years it has been developing predictive artificial intelligence solutions, at a time when very few were even discussing AI, and even fewer were actively working on it. Luce, who was just 25 at the time, was already recognized as an extraordinary talent in the field.

The collaboration between Luce and Sciuto marks the start of a new phase of development, aimed at democratizing predictive artificial intelligence across all business functions, making it both accessible and scalable worldwide. After a year of focused work, this vision has been realized thanks to a €3 million investment from AI Acceleration, a vehicle created by Sciuto and supported by a group of senior international executives. The operation positions the company globally as a software-as-a-service platform for businesses—an enterprise-grade SaaS—and officially marks the launch of Elai.

So what does it actually do? According to Sciuto, Elai is an autonomous data science agent that leverages generative artificial intelligence to build predictive AI models. The software collects company data, cleans and integrates it, and develops predictive models, drawing on more than 650 socioeconomic indicators across 185 countries. It then generates tailored predictive models to support different business functions, providing managers with the insights they need to make better decisions. The result is a significantly higher—and growing—number of correct decisions that create measurable value for the company: for a multinational, even a 1% optimization can translate into millions in savings.

Sciuto emphasizes that this solution is unique worldwide: it can generate predictive AI models in just a few hours instead of months, reducing costs by 90% compared to traditional approaches, while delivering a tangible business impact.

The investment round, combined with the advanced AI, product, and technology expertise developed by Lorenzo Luce at BigProfiles and Antonio Sciuto's international managerial experience, now enables the company to accelerate an ambitious product roadmap, enhance its organizational structure, and reinforce its competitive position as an enterprise-ready company, prepared to compete globally in the technology and artificial intelligence sector.

BIGPROFILES
Founded in 2018 by Lorenzo Luce and Roberto Visceglia, BigProfiles began operations immediately with a focus on developing predictive artificial intelligence solutions, serving more than 100 clients across 15 countries.

THE INVESTORS
Since 2018, Zest and Cassa Depositi e Prestiti have backed BigProfiles, recognizing early on the potential of artificial intelligence applied to data analysis.

From dusty soccer fields in Sicily to the skyscrapers of San Francisco, this is the story of Antonio Sciuto, a manager who rose through the ranks of the world's largest multinationals and has now returned to invest in an all-Italian venture: Elai.

His personal journey begins under Mount Etna, in San Giovanni La Punta near Catania. The son of a family of entrepreneurs, he grew up between the classrooms of Leonardo da Vinci School and the locker rooms of Aquila Puntese. It was in this contrast—between an elite educational environment and the rough reality of local soccer—that he learned his first lesson in management: resilience. "Learning how to get by in any context is one of the greatest values of Sicily," he reflects.

He then attended Bocconi University in Milan, and after graduating, he quickly found himself managing sales teams with four times his level of experience in Campania. "Leadership is not imposed; it is earned by taking care of people," he emphasizes.

His career has been a sprint. After managing €5 billion businesses for Nestlé and leading digital transformation as a strategic advisor at Salesforce—during which the company grew from €10 to €30 billion in revenue—Antonio felt in 2021 the call of his roots. "It's not a retreat, but a desire to give back experience to Italian talent," he explains.

A phrase often heard, but in Sciuto's case the facts speak for themselves: he met Lorenzo Luce, a young IT prodigy who had already founded a company at 25 and collaborated with the G7 on artificial intelligence. Sciuto was not facing a simple idea, but a mature technology capable of addressing one of the most complex challenges of modern business: the scalability of predictive artificial intelligence.

He explains, "Today, 95% of generative AI projects do not deliver real value to companies." While the world is captivated by chatbots that write poetry or respond empathetically to individuals, the true business value—supported by data—lies in the ability to predict the future: forecasting sales, optimizing inventory, and freeing up cash flow. Until recently, building predictive models required teams of data scientists, months of work, and significant budgets. Elai, however, cleans the data, integrates scattered sources, enriches information, and constructs complex predictive models in just a few hours. In fact, Sciuto recalls, he has seen a model created in only 35 minutes for a multinational.

Faced with this technology, the former Salesforce executive's response was immediate: "If you do what you say, I'm coming to work for you." And that is exactly what happened. He did not simply join as CEO; he also created an investment vehicle, AI Acceleration, involving international executives to support the company's growth. Today, Elai has a post-money valuation of €18 million, serves clients including Intesa Sanpaolo and Edison, and is preparing to expand into the United States with the opening of a North American office.

But for someone whose managerial vision is based on human relationships, investing in AI is not a paradox: “It doesn’t replace humans; it enhances their capabilities. Garbage in, garbage out,” he reminds us. The recent success at CES in Las Vegas serves to confirm this vision.