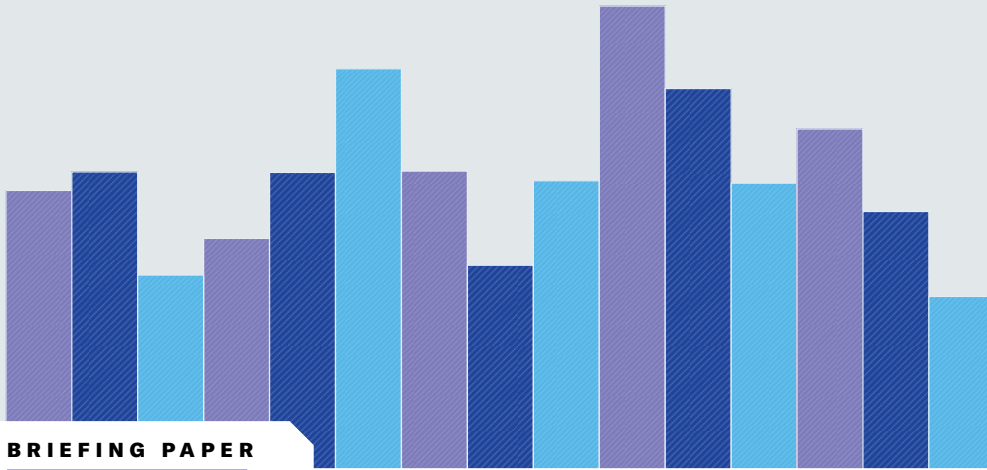




**Harvard
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Review**

ANALYTIC SERVICES



Artificial Intelligence at Work:

Enhancing Employee Engagement and Business Success



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Organizations face significant pressure to quickly adopt artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. According to research conducted by Morning Consult and commissioned by Zoom, 73% of leaders believe teams using AI have an advantage over teams that aren't, and 71% of leaders say those who don't introduce AI to their teams will be left behind.


There's a lot to consider when introducing any technology to employees. However, AI is evolving so quickly that many companies have to create new policies and frameworks, carefully vet AI tools to minimize security and privacy risks, and develop training resources for employees—all while staying abreast of the latest innovations and capabilities. Organizations that wait too long to start this process may find that employees are using unapproved tools, or that competitors already using AI are reaping the benefits of heightened productivity, improved work quality, and enhanced collaboration.

This report from Harvard Business Review Analytic Services features insights from AI and digital transformation experts on navigating this complex landscape. It provides guidance on effectively implementing AI in your company, offering valuable perspectives to enhance employee experience. We have sponsored this report to deliver essential insights and recommendations for a successful AI implementation journey.



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Smita Hashim
Chief Product Officer
Zoom

Artificial Intelligence at Work: Enhancing Employee Engagement and Business Success



The emergence of solutions like ChatGPT, Dall-E, and Llama has made generative artificial intelligence (AI) a household word over the past year, but AI technology has been in use and evolving for decades. According to an August 2022 McKinsey & Co. report, “The State of AI in 2022 and a Half Decade in Review,”¹ AI adoption has more than doubled over the past two years. Companies are using AI to improve efficiency, boost employee engagement, reduce employee turnover, transform the customer service experience, and generate better business outcomes, like increased revenue.

Increasing AI adoption is a global phenomenon, and that rapid increase is happening in virtually every industry and every nation. The global market for AI was valued at \$136.55 billion in 2022, according to a report from Grandview Research.² That report further states the size of the market is expected to grow by more than 37% every year from 2023 to 2030.


The expanding use of AI comes as organizations are finding that generative AI can streamline and expedite a variety of business functions, most notably by parsing massive stores of data to simplify processing, performing advanced data analytics, automating customer service functions, generating and synthesizing content, automating training, attracting and retaining staff, and providing an improved employee experience. Organizations adopting AI for these and other business functions are not only seeing increased revenue but also gaining more value from their data, expediting time to market for new products and services, enhancing collaborative efforts, reducing costs, and providing a better experience both internally and externally.

HIGHLIGHTS

Increased productivity is just part of the **value artificial intelligence (AI) can add** to the employee experience.

Every organization adopting or increasing its use of AI will need to **provide its workforce with proper training on AI-enhanced tools** and **make employees comfortable with the approach** it's taking with the technology.

Evaluating the performance and efficacy of AI technologies is actually **helping the evolution of the standard metrics and key performance indicators** businesses typically use.





“The business benefits [of generative AI] are speed, efficiency, and empathy. It’s finding information, finding answers, and sharing information a lot faster than before,” says Jason Averbook, senior partner and global leader for digital HR strategy at Mercer.

So, it comes as little surprise that many executives are eagerly anticipating how AI can help further evolve the business landscape. “Generative AI is going to be the biggest game changer ever from an employee experience standpoint,” says Jason Averbook, senior partner and global leader for digital HR strategy at Mercer, a New York City-based global consultancy. “The business benefits are speed, efficiency, and empathy. It’s finding information, finding answers, and sharing information a lot faster than before. It’s empathy in terms of ‘How am I making sure the conversations I’m having are tied to me from a personalization standpoint?’”

Infusing business functions with AI and expanding its use are not without their challenges. “The biggest issues with adopting AI come in recognizing the scope and context of the systems,” says John C. Havens, regenerative sustainability global practice lead for the Piscataway, N.J.-based Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Standards Association (IEEE SA), founding executive director of the IEEE Global Initiative for Ethical Considerations in Artificial Intelligence and Autonomous Systems, and author of *Heartificial Intelligence: Embracing Our Humanity to Maximize Machines*.

“It’s like saying, ‘How do we adopt the internet?’ It’s too broad a concept,” he says. “Start talking about applied ethics as a design methodology for AI versus a code of professional ethics, which will help provide a sense of depth and scope to align the reasons you want to use AI systems with your company’s core values. The champions that communicate these ideas will provide key interdisciplinary research between functional areas to make use of AI tools pragmatic, impactful, and part of your strategic vision.”

Organizationally, implementing the technology is not the primary challenge when expanding the use of AI; rather, it’s shifting corporate culture, according to Thornton May, founder of the St. Augustine, Fla.-based Digital Value Institute. “It’s not a technological challenge. It’s not a procedural challenge. If you can get your people to work effectively with [productivity and business software], AI should be a cakewalk. The issue is cultural. Or, actually, attitudinal.”

This paper will help C-level executives navigate the changing world of AI technologies and develop a flexible, scalable, and comprehensive plan to ensure they’re getting the maximum business value out of their AI solutions. As they craft their plans, they will need to maintain a focus on

properly preparing their organizations, educating employees and executives across all business functions, positioning AI to provide an immersive employee experience and boost productivity, training employees to make the most effective use of AI-enabled technologies, and ensuring comprehensive data management and security.

Aligning Strategy to Embrace Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Companies must prepare for the challenges not only of continuing to deploy AI to the workforce but also of supporting existing tools and positioning them for maximum benefit. While there are certain technological challenges, the most significant roadblocks are, as May puts it, cultural and primarily focused on communication and alignment of strategy with corporate values.

May explains that Guru Vasudeva, senior vice president and CIO at Columbus, Ohio-based Nationwide Insurance, is a strong advocate of using the right tool for the right task. AI technology has emerged in different ways, from artificial narrow intelligence (designed for specific actions) to artificial general intelligence (designed to operate at human levels) to artificial superintelligence (designed to surpass human capabilities), so Vasudeva believes a technology like generative AI is not always the right tool for many tasks. Executives will have to determine which capabilities work best for individual use cases. “He has crafted a program where all executives who are using AI—not just ChatGPT—know how to select, or not select, a certain AI capability to deploy,” says May.

Alpesh Shah, senior director of global business strategy and intelligence at the IEEE SA, agrees that the biggest strategic challenge lies in understanding when, where, and how to apply AI in a way that makes the most sense. “It’s a tool, and we’re all trying to understand how to apply it in a way that’s most effective,” he says.

Shah advises adopting a holistic viewpoint. “It can’t just be ‘This is a product for AI.’ It must be considered contextually within a clear and thorough governance framework,” he says.

Mercer’s Averbook believes it is critical to start the strategic planning process for AI adoption by looking at the problem an organization needs to solve, not just at the capabilities of

the technology. “For organizations having trouble driving adoption of technology, [adopting AI] could be another one of those examples,” he says. “What we want to do is start with a problem and leverage generative AI to solve that problem.”

As with any new technological initiative, getting buy-in across the board is also critical. “When you have a cross-functional executive team, you can align around a common strategy and get everyone’s buy-in,” says IEEE SA’s Shah. “You have to have alignment of values and a strong, established governance statement in applying the technology for both internal and external use.”

As companies look to expand their use of AI-enabled technologies, they should focus on conducting thorough due diligence to match the right type of AI for each specific use case. It can’t be assumed that generative AI is the default answer for every AI problem. And as Shah points out, creating a governance framework involving all stakeholders and business functions to help scale AI safely across the organization will be a critical step.

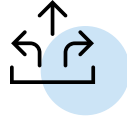
Making an Educated Move to AI

In taking steps toward adopting or expanding the use of AI, Averbok recommends that executives first identify the use cases that tie to specific business requirements. In other words, don’t apply technology for technology’s sake. Averbok believes it is important to ensure employees and executives have a basic education on and understanding of what generative AI is and what it can accomplish. They also should have a fundamental understanding of data literacy (meaning how to interpret and handle data and the associated privacy issues), employ critical thinking and evaluation to assess AI output, and strive to have creativity and adaptability in their approach when exploring how to use AI to achieve the desired outcomes.

As AI systems are fueled by data, data preparation and management will also be critical. Once those systems are in place, companies will need the right people to run them. That task means investing in talent, either by using an external vendor or by building talent internally, Averbok explains.

Only then will a company be ready to develop or adopt the AI solutions that suit its needs. “Identify the right technology to bring the company’s vision to life,” Averbok says. Once those AI systems are in place, they will require constant monitoring, evaluation, training, and improvement, he adds.

To IEEE SA’s Havens, an organization’s first steps should focus on internal evangelism when it comes to adopting or expanding the use of AI. “Making this happen requires employees who can offer direct support and/or who can start programs that focus on education and awareness,” he says. “It also involves helping people understand these new ideas within the context of where they work within



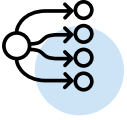
“Employees need to gain awareness of the applied ethics techniques in the design of AI that fundamentally affect the output of any systems created. This is for all workers, not just technical experts,” says John C. Havens, regenerative sustainability global practice lead for the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Standards Association (IEEE SA).

the organization, localizing different business areas, and identifying a point person who can help determine how AI ethics can progress until everyone is aligned. The goal is to first have these specific employees strategically spread out, then grow the message from there.”

Citing IEEE SA guidelines, Havens notes, “It’s critical for non-tech employees, including the C-suite, to understand the basics of machine learning to the point where they can provide contextual ethical recommendations that can be codified.” Put more simply, Havens means those recommendations could be outlined within a governance framework that guides an organization’s journey into AI.

The critical skills employees will need are less technical and more soft skills, according to Havens. “Employees need to gain awareness of the applied ethics techniques in the design of AI that fundamentally affect the output of any systems created,” he says. “This is for all workers, not just technical experts.”

In terms of specific skills that will help employees get the most out of AI technologies to develop products, services, and systems, Havens recommends that employees foster strong communication, facilitation, and negotiation skills. He also believes program management skills are going to be critical. Getting the most value out of AI-enabled systems will also require emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, introspection, and self-management, to better identify corporate values and ensure operational alignment with them. Finally, Havens feels that understanding the impact of AI on privacy, control, dignity, agency, and human well-being will be essential.



“The biggest use case today is taking big blocks of content and breaking it into pieces people can understand. There’s also data analytics—being able to look at data across silos in an east-west model instead of a north-south model,” says Mercer’s Averbook.

Education and understanding throughout the organization are essential to successfully embracing AI. Organizations that make effective preparations will be better positioned to get the most value out of AI when it comes to advancing productivity and efficiency and providing an immersive employee experience.

AI and the Evolving Employee Experience

Increased productivity is just part of the value AI can add to the employee experience. AI can help employees organize ideas during brainstorming sessions, provide a deeper connection for remote workers to help them work more efficiently, increase the effectiveness of collaborative efforts, and recommend connections with other employees and departments working on similar initiatives.

Averbook believes every aspect of AI can and will affect the employee experience. “It will help employees prompt interactions with technology that actually make them happy instead of frustrated,” he says. “There’s the blend of empathy and economics that are both key benefits. AI will change and improve the employee experience like no technology before—as long as it’s designed correctly.”

AI is already being successfully applied to support creative and human application functions, says Averbook. “The biggest use case today is taking big blocks of content and breaking it into pieces people can understand,” he says. “There’s also data analytics—being able to look at data across silos in an east-west model instead of a north-south model. You can truly examine data correlation and data patterns. And there’s the ability to create personalized training and learning content.” He feels AI is a significant help with this type of data analysis, which helps employees operate more efficiently and effectively and get more value out of their data analytics.

AI will impact not only the employee experience but also how employees can approach their own career trajectories. “Using AI for personal career management will become absolutely necessary going forward,” says Digital Value Institute’s May. “Malcolm Frank, CEO of TalentGenius [an AI-based career management consultancy] and author of *When Machines Do Everything*, is using AI to help his employees manage their careers. He’s using AI to give them

factual answers to the questions they should be asking at the various stages of their careers, such as ‘Should I get an MBA? Should I go work for company X? Should I get certified in tool Z?’”

Ultimately, the level of AI sophistication within a company could also become a powerful factor in attracting and retaining talent. As companies continue to increase their AI adoption, having access to AI-enabled technologies will most likely make those companies more attractive places to work. Companies will continue to use AI to sort through resumes and talent pools to find the right person for the right job and allow them to use AI-enabled technologies once they are hired in order to increase employee engagement and satisfaction. Companies could even face the possibility of lost revenue and competitive disadvantage by choosing not to adopt AI.

AI is helping companies provide a more immersive employee experience in a variety of ways, from helping employees work more efficiently to laying the groundwork for their jobs to evolve and expand to improving the way workers engage with customers. AI is also impacting the employee experience across virtually all business functions.

According to a *Forbes Advisor* survey, “How Businesses Are Using Artificial Intelligence In 2023,”³ to which 60 U.S. business owners responded in April 2023, augmenting customer service and improving cybersecurity and fraud management ranked as the most prominent AI use cases, with more than half of the respondents reporting using AI in those instances. Other AI-enabled functions include digital personal assistants (47%), customer relationship management (46%), inventory management (40%), generating content (35%), product recommendations (33%), accounting (30%), supply chain operations (30%), recruitment and talent sourcing (26%), and audience segmentation (24%). That same survey revealed how companies are also using AI to improve efficiency across a range of internal business processes, including process automation (51%), data aggregation (40%), and content generation (29%). **FIGURE 1**

Training the Workforce

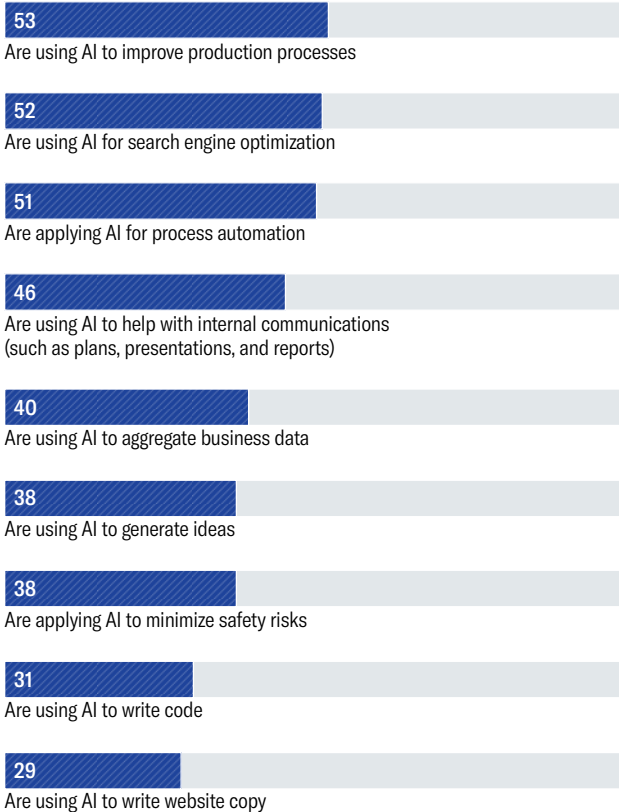
Every organization adopting or increasing its use of AI will need to provide its workforce with proper training on AI-enhanced tools and make its employees comfortable with

FIGURE 1

Artificial Intelligence Is Helping Companies Improve Efficiency

The technology is greatly improving a range of internal business processes

How do you think AI will help benefit your business?



Source: Forbes Advisor survey, April 2023

the approach it's taking to the technology. Employees will have to develop more critical thinking and contextualization skills to accurately process AI-generated content.

Shah believes companies must go far beyond simply training on AI-enabled tools. "General training on algorithmic systems may be a starting point," he says. "You are also going to need to train around your organization's values, not only in day-to-day processes, but also [in] product development, risk, legal, and so on."

Averbook agrees the training should focus more on context than on technology. "Training should be on the safety of the tool, the ethics of the tool, the governance of the tool, and how to continue to make the tool better for the organization," he says. "How do we get people to unlearn some of their old ways

of thinking and focus on these new ways of thinking about how to use AI in their day-to-day tasks?"

Employee training for AI systems will also need to encompass how workers approach and handle data. At any enterprise expanding its use of AI tools, employees who are unfamiliar with those tools, and who don't understand how to interpret AI-generated content, could inadvertently put corporate data at risk. "Don't give powerful technology tools to people who (a) don't understand the risks and (b) don't understand the tools," says May. "Some enterprises are being quite creative, establishing 'AI petting zoos,' where employees can come to better understand what AI can and can't do, experiment hands-on in a controlled environment, and understand the associated risks."


Whatever the training may be, May believes it should be mandatory. "[Using AI] should include job-specific training, such as what can go wrong and what will happen to them personally when things go wrong," he says. And as Shah and Averbook point out, that training should encompass much more than just technical skills. Employees will need to be equipped to accurately interpret AI-generated content, use AI tools in a safe and ethical manner, and continue to ensure data governance and security.

The Heavy Impact of Data

Companies must also consider the sources of their data, how they're gathering that data, and how that data is presented. Shah believes there must be more active decision making to prevent loss of agency for people and their data. "What is the value of the data? What data is meant to be held on to, and what data shared? How can we have age-appropriate frameworks and methodologies for people to have access and control over their data? What customer data should we be pursuing?" he says. All those questions must be continuously addressed, Shah says, to ensure comprehensive and accurate data management to support algorithmic systems in becoming more trustworthy.

According to research conducted by Armonk, N.Y.-based IBM in April 2022 involving 7,502 responding companies worldwide, data management is one of the primary factors hindering AI adoption. The challenges of ensuring data security and data governance, managing multiple sources and formats of data, and integrating data across multiple cloud platforms are specific data management issues that need to be considered, IBM found.

Different data models and large language models (LLMs) can have a direct impact on the accuracy of AI-generated content and AI-enabled tools. "The data you're accessing isn't only going to be in English," says Havens. "We've largely been doing everything in English. A lot of key AI systems originated from companies creating tools in English or for English-speaking



“How do we get people to unlearn some of their old ways of thinking and focus on these new ways of thinking about how to use AI in their day-to-day tasks?” says Alpesh Shah, senior director of global business and intelligence at IEEE SA.

audiences. If your business is centered primarily in India, for example, you can open markets by identifying LLMs or organizations working in Hindi or Tamil. This will open relationships, as you're demonstrating cultural sensitivity by using tools with awareness of regional phrasings, words, and nuance. People recognize that since data is what lies under the hood of all LLMs and AI systems, access and interpretation of that data in the languages people speak within their regions improve accuracy and lower the risk of misinterpretation."

Havens feels the relationship between AI solutions and the data sets that drive them represents an opportunity for greater understanding of the nature and impact of data. "It's an exciting opportunity to ask, 'Do you know what the narrative is around what you've created?'" he says. "Applied ethics for AI provides tools to understand people's values and provide genuine consent and clarity about the process. Keeping these factors in context builds trust and avoids harm."

In any data set, he asserts, there can be large portions of material or context that could be considered racist or sexist. "Whatever query a person provides to an LLM, those tools are trained and programmed a certain way to utilize mass amounts of data that will likely contain assumptions, biases, and prejudices based on the initial data sets," he says. "This is a larger question of societal agency and how we're training the public to think. Even the term 'natural language processing' is a concern. Natural to whom?"

With any AI tools, there can be bias introduced during the design and development phases. "It's important to ask, 'Who designed this tool? Who was in the room when they designed it? Who should we consider in terms of potential bias?'" says Havens. "Let's bring that into the picture at the beginning. Building genuine, ongoing trust with diverse thought leaders from the outset of design can provide long-term value for AI systems."

Averbook believes establishing a code of ethics and governance and focusing on continuous improvement are essential. "Generative AI will require ongoing measurement, training, auditing, and a focus on continuous improvement to truly see the value in the technology and its full impact," he says. "It's more like an ongoing, living organism than a piece of technology that is put in and you're done."

Carefully analyzing bias, thinking through the language, and continuing to improve accuracy will be an ongoing effort for any organization using AI tools. "AI is all about language, communication, ideas, and—when you come to algorithms—intentions," says Havens. "Intentions are like a red ball in the playground. When someone throws the ball, it's going to affect you. So, we must equip all the 'players' [employees, stakeholders, customers, and the public] with awareness of the impact of these tools."

Data is truly what fuels AI systems. Maintaining a focus on the acquisition and governance of that data, continuing to

train and audit those data sets, limiting the potential for bias present in the data sets, and steadily improving accuracy and efficiency will ensure companies are getting the most impact from their AI journey.

Evaluating the Impact of AI

Companies bringing AI to bear are already experiencing successful business outcomes, and as AI systems evolve and the data sets are continuously trained, those systems will operate more effectively. According to the *Forbes Advisor* survey, most business executives responding believe artificial intelligence will be a benefit for their companies. Almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) expect AI to help improve customer relationships, and more than half (60%) are anticipating increased sales. Top expectations for AI also include cost savings (59%) and streamlined internal business processes (42%).

The fact that respondents see AI as having an impact on customer relationships, productivity, sales, and many other business outcomes suggests that the technology can be tied in some way to key performance indicators (KPIs) and other metrics involving business performance.

Evaluating the performance and efficacy of AI technologies is actually helping the evolution of the standard metrics and KPIs businesses typically use. "The most common metrics for success are productivity and speed to market. Where employees are urged to be productive, AI can be incredibly helpful—whether through brute-force learning or sifting through mountains of data," says Havens. "But to frame the KPIs in a more holistic and societal sense, ask, 'How can these tools help the employee, the company, and the planet?' Framing KPIs in this way can help foster long-term trust and sustainable value for an organization."

Those KPIs are now reaching beyond the traditional scope of business. "Organizational cultures are tending to contribute to more effective outputs, not only addressing the organization's mission but also making a real-world positive impact. Companies are moving toward the triple bottom line—looking at people, profit, and planet," says Shah.

Companies will be expected to focus on responsible use of AI. In November 2021, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization released its "Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence." The document states, "We need international and national policies and regulatory frameworks to ensure that these emerging technologies benefit humanity as a whole. We need a human-centered AI. AI must be for the greater interest of the people, not the other way around."

The European Union has gone further by putting forward a regulatory framework. The proposed EU AI Act,⁴ expected to be approved by the end of 2023 with enforcement scheduled to begin in 2026, will establish and enforce obligations for



“Where productivity is a top priority for a company or society, jobs will be replaced when technology has matured enough to do so. But where partnership, collaboration, and equity are considered as part of the overall mindset, the focus shifts to long-term human value and well-being rather than tasks alone, says IAEE SA’s Havens.

anyone providing or using AI. Regulations vary depending on the relative risk levels of AI systems when it comes to various functions, from affecting behavior to abridging people’s rights to creating safety issues. Those risk levels will either be unacceptable, high, or low.

The productivity enhancements and automation capabilities engendered by AI can, indeed, have potential negative outcomes. “A lot of AI functions can complement human behavior, but they can also replace human labor, so it’s a contextual consideration,” says Havens. “Where productivity is a top priority for a company or society, jobs will be replaced when technology has matured enough to do so. But where partnership, collaboration, and equity are considered as part of the overall mindset, the focus shifts to long-term human value and well-being rather than tasks alone.”

Shah agrees that work can be augmented with AI and that for some, there may also be an eye toward greater organizational reliance on AI systems. “We have to consider the impact on the organization from a cultural perspective when it comes to tools and forethought around upskilling or reskilling as a greater percentage of worker time,” he says.

While further use of AI could be an accelerant of job replacement, it could also lead to the evolution of new jobs. A March 2023 report from Goldman Sachs titled “The Potentially Large Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Economic Growth”⁵ states AI could replace or substitute for up to 25% of currently active jobs, with approximately another two-thirds of current jobs exposed to a certain degree of automation. On the other hand, that same report also finds jobs lost by the emergence of new technologies such as AI have historically been offset by many more new jobs being created. The report cites census data that suggests nearly 60% of workers today are currently working in jobs that did not even exist in 1940. The report also estimates an annual global gross domestic product increase of 7% brought on by expanded use of AI.

As organizations evaluate the impact AI is having on their business outcomes and their employees, they are finding and anticipating positive results. Besides the potential for new positions to emerge and the opportunity for employees to expand their skill sets, companies anticipate positive results with the use of AI. As the respondents to the *Forbes*

Advisor survey reported, almost two-thirds expect AI to help improve customer relationships, and more than half anticipate increased sales. Most of those respondents ultimately believe AI will be beneficial for their organizations.

The Future of AI

AI continues to flourish as adoption rates around the world remain steady. According to the April 2022 IBM research, 35% of the 7,502 responding companies worldwide reported they are already actively using AI, and 42% are currently exploring adopting AI systems.

AI can facilitate a broad spectrum of scalable and efficient business processes and provide an immersive and engaging employee experience. As with any powerful technology, however, there are potential challenges and risks. To fully embrace emerging AI technologies, companies will have to bring their employees deeper into the process with comprehensive training and critical thinking skills. This effort will allow them to better control the operation and outcomes of AI, provide a personalized employee experience, ensure data security and control, and ensure AI systems are positioned to scale appropriately and achieve relevant and accurate data analysis, while making every effort to mitigate the potential biases and inaccuracies that can be present in AI-generated content.

“It is exciting and scary when you realize an algorithm is like a fishhook you’re putting into a sea of data, and depending on the currents around you, that hook is going to come up with a different fish,” says Havens. “Everyone may not have input into the outcome, but they will all be affected by the outcome.”

Havens adds that this shift in priorities being driven by AI is a further move to the triple bottom-line mindset of considering people, profit, and the planet. “Accountability and transparency are important factors, but it is critical to prioritize environmental and human well-being to ensure AI systems help keep our planet safe for generations to come,” he says.

“We’re all in an experimental phase,” says Averbook. “Helping people understand that this is a journey and that these tools will get better as we use them requires all of us working on this together.”

Endnotes

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