
Leveraging AI in the business

While some might think that AI is a new technology, the concept has been around for many years, and its impacts are already well established in the enterprise.

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One of the earliest examples of AI in Africa is USSD on mobile phones, where businesses used programmatic language to respond to end-users, giving options and then providing an appropriate response based on input received.

So says Douglas van Wyk, regional manager at Infobip, adding that, contrary to the Hollywood-informed perceptions, in reality, AI is not necessarily a walking, talking robot. It takes many forms and has many use cases and can be simple or complex depending on the application. Currently, AI is commonly used to take mundane, repetitive and low intelligence tasks away from human agents, automating them and vastly improving efficiency. This is especially useful for static information such as location data and frequently asked questions, which can easily be offered to users in a self-service manner. It is also used in predictive analytics, something that is valuable for solutions such as customer engagement.

Paula Sartini, founder and CEO at BrandQuantum, says technology advancements and adoption are driving customer expectations, which are trickling from traditionally non-IT industries into a broad range of sectors such as real estate and financial services. AI is transforming the

way in which companies do business, with several departments reaping the benefit of AI solutions. In addition, while AI and automation offer time- and cost-saving benefits for companies, the real benefit of these solutions lies in the ability to improve customer services. Customer experience is driving digital transformation and the customer should be central to every technology decision a company makes.

“However, the technology solutions should not replace the human experience and these technologies should remove repetitive functions from employees so that they’re able to focus more attention on being strategic and meeting customer expectations. Equally important is proving tools and solutions that empower the entire organisation to deliver a consistent brand experience across every department,” adds Sartini.

Exponential volumes of data

According to Glenn Noome, director at Smart Integration, AI and IoT go hand in hand. “Over the next few years, we’ll see billions of devices added to the internet, creating exponential volumes of data, too much data for us to analyse and use to make proper business decisions. AI can assist here, by analysing all of this data and helping make informed decisions based

on the best outcome. A simple example of this is AI built into CCTV cameras. Instead of an operator trying to focus on multiple cameras, AI will monitor footage and advise on pre-programmed events. In addition, AI could be used in law cases, where data from previous cases is analysed instantaneously and give the correct outcomes predicted. Furthermore, and importantly, in the field of medicine, robotics could potentially perform certain operations under certain circumstances using AI.”

AI offers significant value to businesses, adds Kevin Dherman, SYSPRO’s chief innovation officer. “It eliminates repetitive tasks, better predicts trends, and can take action before problems occur. It also enables businesses to provide a consistent customer experience. AI and machine learning (ML) give computers the ability to make sense of and learn from data to perform specific tasks without manual interference. AI provides analysis and insights to users, addressing the large amounts of structured and unstructured business and industry data that companies increasingly need to consider as part of their decision-making process. With AI in place, interactions with customers will move from straightforward transactional models to multidimensional conversations spanning a variety of complementary channels.”