

3 steps to jumpstart enterprise AI transformation

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As AI takes hold in the workplace, both employers and employees believe it will benefit the enterprise and help workers to be more productive. Yet many organisations are moving very cautiously when it comes to implementing AI, despite the clear benefits. What's preventing them from adopting AI more quickly?



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For some companies, there is some uncertainty around cost or concerns about security. The biggest obstacle, however, as identified by a study conducted by Oracle and Future Workplace, is a gap in worker preparation. Organisations just aren't taking the steps they need to get their employees ready to make the AI transition.

They are missing a huge opportunity to get ahead of the AI curve. There's a huge pent-up demand by employees to change their enterprise software experience, to move from the cumbersome, form-filling designs of the past to using natural language to interact with data across (and outside) the enterprise.

The last change of this magnitude was the integration of mobile devices with enterprise software, a change that was at first responsive to customer demands. The AI transition is far more driven initially by the internal demands of employees and their need for information, insights and collaboration.

The best way for organisations to embrace AI is through Software-as-a-Service applications with embedded AI capabilities that span the entire enterprise - from enterprise resource planning (ERP) to human capital management (HCM) and customer experiences (CX) - to enable genuine digital transformation. So, what steps must enterprises take to jumpstart their AI transformation?

Incorporate AI into existing processes

To ease concerns, organisations can start internally; the HR help desk function is an ideal starting point, allowing employees to easily ask common questions with natural language, whether it's how much vacation time they have left to the procedure for handling a sensitive management issue.

Another area where HR can drive business value with AI is in recruiting, by making it easier for candidates to find the right job posting, to get personalised guidance through the application process, to be guided on the best next steps, all can make the difference in landing talent. The same technology can be extended to employees looking for the right opportunity within the enterprise to grow their career.

Taking this a step further, companies that have upgraded to an intelligent, connected ERP system will be able to take full advantage of these capabilities including AI-driven analytics, enabling users to assess the current state of operations, analyse information and decide the next course of action; and AI-powered digital procurement, which automates processes such as invoice processing, spend analysis, and contract analysis, and constantly runs analytics to forecast trends and drive process improvement.

When it comes to delivering better customer experiences, organisations are turning to intelligent bots across digital and social platforms to improve response times by answering basic queries. Over time, more interaction with customers can help the bot sense the tone of customers and pick up on what is most important to each customer in order to reference that and enhance the experience.

As an example, the organisers of the 2018 Mutua Madrid Open chose to go with the Oracle Intelligent Bots Platform to launch their AI-powered chatbot to help their fans with information on event access, players, schedules, results, sales, and guest services.

Employee training is key to success

Most people today have no problem following the route our navigation app chooses or asking Siri or Alexa to put together a music playlist. Employees are ready for that kind of experience to appear in the workplace. In fact, 93% of employees would be willing to take instructions from a robot, according to the same Oracle and Future Workplace study.

To take full advantage of AI, employees and leadership need to be on the same page. A workforce that doesn't have the chance to develop an AI-based skillset won't show the productivity gains or improved customer satisfaction that workplace AI can deliver. At the same time, when employees feel they aren't getting help to build those skills, it creates anxiety. Business leaders will have a critical role in addressing this skills gap - and, according to the study, many of them want to take on this task.

Move deliberately and gradually

Make easier changes first, focusing on building an experience for employees that mirrors the one they have come to expect as consumers. That's easiest to do with cloud technologies because they allow AI to be embedded quickly into existing enterprise applications. Done right, it will help to allay any anxiety (by employees or management) by demonstrating how AI can make repetitive or mundane tasks much more enjoyable and collaborative.

Once people experience the freedom they have to be creative and strategic, they will welcome it and want more; once management sees the productivity gains and the contribution to retention, they will more readily support a rapid transition to AI.

Bringing AI into the organisation is no longer a matter of if, but when. The benefits are too great, and companies that lag in its adoption may also find they are laggards in their industries as well. There are obstacles to overcome, but company employees are ready to jump in.

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