

How automation unlocks human potential

By [Mohammed Amin](#)

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Those who worry that automation is going to upend our lives are forgetting that we already live in a largely automated world. When was the last time you visited the teller at your bank to withdraw money? Does anyone send hand-written letters to their friends and family around the world anymore? And who lands in a new city and drives around looking for a suitable hotel that may have a room? Automation has touched, transformed, and disrupted each of these examples in ways unimaginable just a few decades ago.



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Elisha Graves Otis, founder of the elevator, brought automation to the public eye in 1857, with the first commercial production line of elevators that brought humans and machines next to each other in a coordinated process with well-defined roles of just moving up and down and stopping at certain points.

This concept is therefore not new and has only grown in complexity and in pervasiveness, bringing us to a world where we have AI writing news articles and movie scripts, directing the performance of physical tasks in inhuman conditions and helping humans scale heights of achievement never thought possible.

Of course, it is true that the daily impact of automation is probably going to touch our lives in more obvious ways in the days to come. A recent study conducted by Dell Technologies found that 83% of business leaders from Saudi Arabia and UAE expect that they will restructure the way they spend their time, through automation.

Imagine the potential that a business unlocks by freeing up some percentage of executive time, to be invested towards planning, skill-building, or relationships. It is natural to say that the time for action is now, but the truth is that we are all well on our way on this journey, and it is business processes and the customer experience that was the first in line to be transformed.

Disruption is driving positive change across industries

Take the case of the banking sector. From the ATM being the multi-purpose, multi-location face of the bank, we moved to internet banking and now mobile applications. If you call your bank these days, chances are an AI system will guide you through most common transactions and requests for information, and only transfer you to human support for extraordinary and complex requests.

We also see the same concept in the healthcare sector. Just a few years ago, telemedicine was all the rage, as growing bandwidth ensured that doctors in cities could interact with patients in rural areas via high-definition video conferencing and provide the local healthcare teams with prescriptions and instructions for care.

Today, with AI, a healthcare group can match the patient with the right doctor, and even automate some of the base diagnoses so that the doctor is only brought in on critical cases.

Empowering the workforce of tomorrow

Machines and AI are not here to take our jobs; they help us function and perform better. I am very enthused about the emergence of solutions such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA), which automates recurring tasks and frees the human to focus on higher-value efforts. Effectively, RPA removes the monotony from the workday, a demand that is as old as the formal work environment.

This also sets the tone for what Dell Technologies sees as the 'Networked Reality' of the future, wherein cyberspace connectivity will be an always-on overlay to our existing reality, with experiences becoming more immersive, and designed to enhance efficiencies. This transition is comparable to the display immersion evolution we've seen in our lifetimes; from static televisions, through responsive computers, to interactive smartphones.

Imagine the impact that an equipped and empowered workforce can have on your customer experience. A well-defined and designed automated interaction solution enables your customer to get information and guidance at a time and method of their choice, without being limited by working hours and human availability.

As these interactions are designed with the most typical cases in mind, it is easy to factor in the milestones at which the interaction will be immediately flagged for human intervention. And this will be a constant top-of-mind expectation for the customer in 2030, according to our research, as the digital cities we know today will become sentient cities, with AI-powered analytics running the infrastructure as well as the citizen experience of every connected individual.

This is why you hear that data is the new oil, the new gold, or the new moon dust, depending on who you ask. No question about the value, though. If AI is the rocket-ship, then data is the fuel.

The insight uncovered from a well-executed data analysis program is at the very core of ensuring the quality, relevance, and impact of an AI-enabled automation strategy.

Paving the way for a digital future

Every conversation around the user and customer experience ultimately ties back to the technology at the heart of it. Investing in the blueprint for automation and human-machine partnerships is a sound business strategy from an employee as well as a customer perspective. And the beauty of this strategy is that it is not about defining the right resource – human or digital – for the job; it is about the immense additional potential such as artificial intelligence through big data analytics that the ‘machine’ can provide to the human, enabling them to perform at a much higher plane.

As with any significant technology transition, transformation is not a destination, but a never-ending journey. But there are three things to keep in mind when embarking on an organisation’s human-machine partnership journey.

- **Define strategic outcomes:** This process is not only about the technology infrastructure, but about finding the right partner to consult on potential risks and required steps towards a successful AI journey
- **Creating the Framework:** Technology components alone do not make a solution. Identical technology infrastructure, in two different organisations, can serve very different purposes. The fact to remember is that you’re not buying a solution, you’re creating a framework for the solution to run
- **Grow organically:** There will be missteps and learnings in the early stages but get past this and you will find that successful models can often be replicated in other contexts too. Once the mindset is established internally, the next step is market dominance

There is no doubt that technology is changing the ways in which we work, live, and play, and this will only get more evident in the future. We should be enthused by the power and potential of technology to change lives for the better and help us move beyond inefficiencies towards inclusive prosperity.

Organisations around the world have taken steps – within their contexts – to adopt and adapt the most promising emerging technologies to secure their futures. A new chapter in technology-led human progress is within our grasp, waiting to be unlocked.

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