CUTTING EDGE TECH NEWS

7 SUCCESSFUL WAYS TO USE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS

Now more than ever, you may be looking for ways to make your business more efficient, more streamlined, more cost-effective, and better able to cope with changing market needs. Artificial intelligence – in particular, AI-driven automation – is helping companies achieve all this and more.

Here are seven ways AI is transforming everyday business processes for the better.

View media in original article

1. Improving meetings

Okay, so AI can't eliminate meetings altogether. In fact, the coronavirus pandemic has shown us how maintaining human connections is vital, even from a distance – which means meetings are definitely here to stay. But AI can at least help to cut down the tiresome admin involved before, during, and after meetings.

For example, voice assistants such as Google Duplex can schedule appointments for you. Then there's Voicea's EVA assistant, which can listen in on your meetings, capture key highlights and actions, and create and share actionable notes afterward. Another tool, called Sonia, does a similar thing, but is designed to capture client calls, transcribing the entire conversation, and automatically summarizing key items and actions.

2. Enhancing sales and marketing

Many off-the-peg CRM solutions now incorporate AI analytics, enabling sales teams to automatically generate valuable insights. For example, Salesforce's Einstein AI technology can predict which customers are most likely to generate more revenue, and which are most likely to take their custom elsewhere. Armed with knowledge like this, salespeople can focus their time and energy where it matters most. Then there's the widespread use of chatbots, which is helping organizations boost sales, drive revenue, and grow their audience. In one example, UK retailer Marks & Spencer added a virtual digital assistant function to its website to help customers solve common issues – a move which has reportedly saved millions of pounds worth of sales that would otherwise have been lost as frustrated customers bounce off the site.

3. Assessing and improving customer service

When it comes to call center operations, automation is nothing new; simple inquiries have been met with automated menu services for some time. But one tech company says it can help companies automatically judge the quality of human customer service calls. Transcosmos's AI solution automatically assesses the quality of service given "at speed with human accuracy" – and can detect inappropriate and problematic customer service with more than twice the accuracy of a voice recognition system.

4. Improving product development processes

Generative design is a cutting-edge field that uses AI to augment the creative process. With generative design software, you simply input your design goals and other requirements and let the software explore all the possible designs that could fulfill those specifications – meaning you can quickly generate multiple designs from a single idea. The software does all the heavy lifting of working out what works and what doesn't, saving many, many hours of time. Plus, you avoid the expense of creating prototypes that don't deliver.

5. Automating content generation

This article wasn't written by a robot. But it could have been. Because, thanks to AI, machines are now capable of generating engaging, informative text – to the extent that organizations like Forbes are producing articles with the help of AI.

From writing product descriptions and web copy, to industry articles and reports, there's a range of AI-driven content tools available. For example, e-commerce leader Alibaba has come up with a tool called AI-CopyWriter that's capable of generating more than 20,000 lines of copy in just one second. The use of robots in manufacturing is well established. But the latest generation of robotic systems is capable of working alongside humans and interacting seamlessly (and safely) with the human workforce. This has given rise to the term "cobots" or collaborative robots.

Thanks to AI technologies like machine vision, cobots are aware of the humans around them and can react accordingly – for example, by adjusting their speed or reversing to avoid humans – meaning workflows can be designed to get the very best out of both humans and robots. Easy to program, fast to set up, and with an average price tag of around $24,000 each, cobots are a viable option to help smaller and mid-sized firms compete with larger manufacturers.

7. Refining recruitment

HR may not seem an obvious match with AI. Yet AI is fast finding many uses in HR processes, including recruitment. For large employers like Unilever, which recruits around 30,000 people a year and handles 1.8 million applications, finding ways to streamline and improve the recruitment process is essential. That's why Unilever partnered with AI recruitment specialist Pymetrics to create an online platform capable of conducting initial assessments of candidates in their own home. According to Unilever, around 70,000 person-hours of interviewing and assessing candidates have been cut thanks to this automated screening of candidates.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Sometimes it's easy to forget that humanity is the most important element of artificial intelligence (AI). AI is created by humans to solve human problems and to do so by emulating our own abilities to think, learn, and improve.

A new Microsoft initiative aimed at broadening the understanding – and assuaging the fear – of AI has been developed with this important fact in mind. Through a new series called Humans and AI, the tech giant wants to draw attention to the people whose dreams, innovation, and determination are driving positive change and helping others.

As they put it, "Humans and AI is our way of honoring passionate people from all walks of life who are using AI to transform our society and our world for the better. There are stories of hope and human empowerment."

View media in original article

One of those highlighted for recognition is Hadas Bitran, Head of Microsoft Healthcare Israel, who developed a COVID-19 symptom checker that helped ease the workload for frontline healthcare workers and worked on developing a bot that allows COVID-19 survivors to self-screen to see if their plasma can be donated to help treat virus patients. While another is Dr. Greg Bowman, who works on the Folding@home initiative and has helped create the biggest supercomputer in the world with his army of millions of volunteers who donate computer time to run COVID-19 protein-simulations and use AI to discover meaningful movements in the protein that will help researchers discover new treatments for COVID-19.
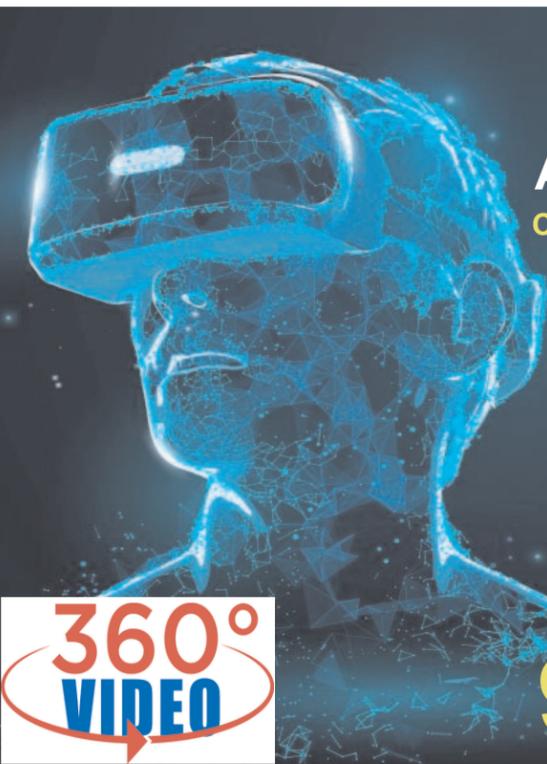
They are joined by Alice Piterova, director of AI for Good UK, who has applied AI to model the spread of the virus within high population-density areas – specifically refugee camps, like the Moria Camp in Greece – and Kelvin Summogum, founder of MiiCare, who is using AI to learn about the behavior patterns of the elderly to help them live at home independently and safely. The series documents the human stories behind these potentially world-changing breakthroughs – for example, Kelvin was driven to tackle his personal challenge by the death of his grandmother, who suffered a fall while she was home alone. People-power and ingenuity are at the forefront of every one of these fascinating stories.

What I like about these inspiring stories of real and ordinary people using AI to make a difference is that it makes the topic more accessible and helps everyone understand that it is a toolset that can help all of us achieve our goals and dreams. This is important because the power of AI to improve our lives is severely handicapped if the wider public – those who are yet to see or feel its impact first-hand – don't understand it or don't trust it.

That isn't to say that sensible and thoughtful people shouldn't be raising concerns about AI. There are important questions that need to be addressed around how data used to make AI predictions is collected and used, as well as the algorithmic processes that are being used to make decisions that can possibly affect people's lives.

But by putting a human face to AI, the hope is that we can become more confident about asking those questions, knowing that the work behind the scenes is being carried out by people who eat, sleep, and dream just like we all do.