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Artificial Intelligence in the business world - where are we now?

Everyone's talking about the potential for artificial intelligence in the enterprise, but what's actually been achieved to date? Are the majority of companies comfortable with the technology and how it can be used, and are many already using it? Or, are the majority of organisations still unclear as to exactly what it is and what it offers to the business? DW asked a range of experts for their thoughts, and there was no shortage of responses, and plenty of food for thought. Part 7.



Dawn Dent – Managing Associate – Oliver Wight EAME, offers the following thoughts:

Organisations have habitually turned to new technology in the workplace, in a bid to stay ahead of the competition and to continue to satisfy customers, efficiently and profitably. Of course, many companies have the financial muscle to invest in the latest technology but often do so without sufficient planning and preparation, or crucially making the necessary investment in the staff who will be using and managing these systems.

Now business leaders are eyeing the latest generation of technology innovations - think artificial intelligence and machine learning - as a new opportunity for their companies to realise their full potential in demanding consumer markets. However, future success is rooted in the lessons of the past. Before jumping on the latest technological bandwagon or picking up the phone to the systems provider, companies need to first determine which new systems they really serve to benefit from and how they want to use them. A one-size-fits-all mentality can lead to a downfall, and for decision-makers to assume technology is the new panacea for all their problems, is a Groundhog Day faux-pas.

It is people who determine the success of your systems. They can't just be dictated to use AI, they need to be given enough time and education to take the benefits on board, to understand 'what's in it for them,' and only then will they start to engage with it willingly.

So, the leadership team considering investing in AI, could do worse than to start by having discussions with team leaders, supervisors and the HR department, who can shed light on a number of factors. What education and training need to be provided for staff to understand the potential of the new technology and how it can be applied to improve processes? Leaders will also have to acknowledge that they may need to accommodate a smooth transition from long-standing practices and that the transition may result in a short-term loss of performance.

It's a good idea to find out what people already know. And it's free! Bringing staff who have some experience of these new technologies together as a focus group, to discuss the successes or failures of technological implementations in their previous organisations for example - what was good about it and what could have been done better?

The question of whether and when to invest in new systems should be considered within the context of Continuous Improvement. Involve people in designing and modifying the processes to leverage the benefits of the new systems and enhance business performance – and ensure that this is done before the systems are implemented.

It is an undeniable truth that the latest technology, such as analytics, AI and machine learning, present real opportunities for businesses. However, business leaders have to recognise that if technologies are truly going to be optimised in the workplace of the future, then the workforce of the future will have to receive the education it needs for new ways of working.