DIGITAL WORKSPACE SOLUTIONS

Building an AI Strategy for Business Gains

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Introduction

The pace of AI development has seemingly accelerated overnight, bringing tremendous business opportunities and disruption. With the release of generative AI tools that produce words, graphics and audio, AI is no longer relegated to a behind-the-scenes product algorithm or chatbot. It's now being used daily by millions of people to increase productivity and transform the way we work.

Evolving your organization to deploy AI is no small task as seen in research by Gartner. In 2020, Gartner predicted that 75% of organizations would move from piloting to operationalizing AI by 2024[1]. Yet surveys found that even though 17-25% of organizations planned to deploy AI within the next 12 months every year from 2019 to 2024, annual production deployments only grew by 2% to 5% per year[2].

The rapid evolution of AI has left many business leaders scrambling to keep up with an ever-expanding number of large language models (LLMs), tools and use cases. Companies who can harness its power have an incredible opportunity for reinvention[3].

This eBook is designed to guide your AI implementation journey so you can chart a course that brings the most value to your organization. What follows are the key considerations every business leader should address to win with AI.

By 2025, generative AI will be a workforce partner for 90% of companies globally[4].

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[1] "Gartner Identifies Top 10 Data and Analytics Technology Trends for 2020," Gartner, June 22, 2020,
   https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2020-06-22-gartner-identifies-top-10-data-and-analytics-technolo

[2] "Get AI Ready — What IT Leaders Need to Know and Do," Gartner, https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/topics/ai-readiness

[3] Jack Azagury, Muqsit Ashraf, Oliver Wright, Karen Fang Grant, Mike Moore, "Reinvention in the age of generative AI," Accenture, January 12, 2024,
   https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/consulting/total-enterprise-reinvention

[4] "Map Your AI Use Cases by Opportunity: Ready the IT team to drive success," Scribd,
   https://www.scribd.com/document/715739723/map-your-ai-use-cases-by-opportunity-ready-the-it-team-to-drive-success

Why You Need an AI Strategy

The possibilities with AI are endless, which makes it important for CIOs and C-suite leaders to set the parameters and goals for its use. Without a clear strategy, business units and individual employees may end up driving their own agendas, which can distract from the use cases that matter most to the company.

AI also brings with it a host of privacy, safety and infrastructure considerations. Organizations that develop a company-wide strategy prior to deployment can mitigate these risks and set forth principles to guide what they will and will not do with AI.

Key Elements of An AI Strategy:

1. Define your business objectives

2. Identify AI solutions that support these objectives

3. Set forth guidelines for AI use

4. Review existing capabilities

5. Identify areas of additional investment needed to support AI

6. Perform risk assessments

7. Determine methods for measuring success

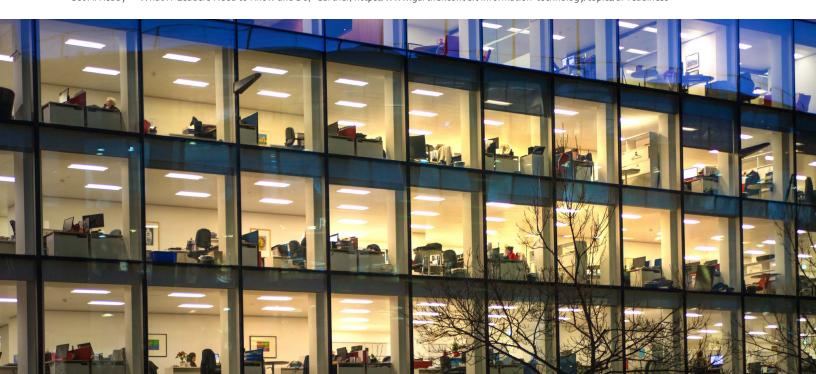# Identifying AI Use Cases with the Biggest Potential Return on Investment

Because the applications for AI are limitless, it's helpful to start with a specific use case. From there, you can identify which AI solutions work best for that use case. This process prevents shiny object syndrome and competing priorities from derailing your progress.

It's essential to review the parts of the business that, if they become more efficient and productive, could impact your operational overhead, improve customer service or differentiate your company in the marketplace. Overall, productivity gains are one of the best ways companies realize a return on investment (ROI) for AI implementations. The AI Opportunity Radar from Gartner provides a helpful overview of the various business quadrants where you may want to deploy AI[1].

Questions to Help Identify Use Cases

1. Which repetitive tasks can AI automate?

2. How can AI improve collaboration among employees and our partners?

3. Where can AI enhance the quality and accuracy of our work?

4. How can AI help us better serve our customers?

5. Where can AI help us differentiate in the marketplace?

[1] "Get AI Ready — What IT Leaders Need to Know and Do," Gartner, https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/topics/ai-readiness

Microsoft recently studied Copilot for various use cases, providing helpful examples of what they achieved with generative AI. Their research will hopefully spark ideas for deploying AI in your organization.

Use Case: Customer Service
The use of Copilot in Dynamics 365 Customer Service in Microsoft's Customer Service and Support (CSS) team saw a 12% reduction in time spent resolving a case[2].

Use Case: Cybersecurity
New-in-career security analysts using Copilot were 44% more accurate and 26% faster across all tasks[2].

Use Case: Sales
Microsoft's sales team users reported saving 90 minutes a week with Copilot[2].

Determining AI use cases with a portfolio management plan increases the likelihood of reaching 'mature' levels of AI implementation by 2.4 times[3].

[2] "What Can Copilot's Earliest Users Teach Us About Generative AI at Work?" Microsoft, November 15, 2023, https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/copilots-earliest-users-teach-us-about-generative-ai-at-work

[3] Ethan Cohen, Afraz Jaffri, "Quick Answer: What is the True Return on AI Investment?," Gartner, April 26, 2023, gartner.com

Preparing Your People and Organization for AI

AI has the potential to cause significant disruption in your organization without an effective change management process. It's important to understand that while many employees are excited about how AI can help them reduce mundane tasks to focus on higher-value work, there is also a fear that AI could take their job. A workforce survey by CNBC and SurveyMonkey found that one in four workers fear AI may make their jobs obsolete[1].

The importance of communication
Communication with employees is critical. Being open and honest with them about your plans for AI use across the organization can build trust and keep employees engaged and excited. If the goal is to augment people versus replace them, communicating that will help reduce fear among your workforce.

Upskilling your existing workforce
AI deployment will likely require upskilling your workforce. For instance, prompt engineering, or learning how to prompt AI for the result you want, is an invaluable skill. Software engineers may also need additional training on how to work AI into products. Thankfully, there are training resources on platforms like Coursera and LinkedIn that can make it easy for team members to improve their skills. The bottom line is that AI's effects on the workforce can be far-reaching, depending on the use cases and solutions you select.

Providing a test environment
Allowing your workforce to test and learn AI in a safe, non-production environment can be very beneficial—while also protecting the core functions of the company. Hands-on experience in an AI lab is one of the best ways for teams to learn and for leadership to encourage innovation.

Hiring AI specialists
Many organizations are now hiring Chief AI Officers (CAIOs) to lead their company's AI efforts. Companies that want to build their own solutions will also require new talent such as data scientists, linguists, UX designers and other specialists. With the recent proliferation of AI, competition for AI talent is fierce.

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[1] Laura Wronski, "CNBC|SurveyMonkey Workforce Survey," CNBC|SurveyMonkey May 2023, https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity
cnbc-workforce-survey-may-2023/

Preparing Your Data and IT Infrastructure for AI

AI learns on data, so the more data you can feed it, the more effective the AI deployment will likely be. However, data should be of high quality, meaning it is accurate, well-organized, secure and governed by ethical data management policies. Once you have quality data, you'll need to integrate it into the AI solution using APIs or integration platforms.

96% of IT leaders feel their data isn't AI-ready[1].

Running AI models and applications can be resource heavy. Embedding generative AI, like ChatGPT, within an application will require fewer resources than building your own model. To build an AI solution, you'll need to invest in high-performance computing (HPC) systems and decide whether to host on-premises or in the cloud, which provides more scalability. You may also want to leverage AI frameworks or libraries that provide existing modules on which to build.

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[1] "Map Your AI Use Cases by Opportunity: Ready the IT team to drive success," Gartner, https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/topics/ai-readiness

A Primer on Off-the-Shelf AI Technologies, Including AI PCs

Major device manufacturers and software companies like Microsoft, Google and Apple are beginning to embed AI into the devices we use every day. Beyond that, there are a host of off-the-shelf AI options already available to help your company leverage AI. Deploying an off-the-shelf solution can allow you to deploy faster, save money on R&D, scale with business needs and make AI more accessible to non-experts within the organization. What follows is an overview of the major categories of off-the-shelf solutions.

Software

Chatbots and Virtual Assistants:
Pre-built conversational agents are particularly useful for CX and customer service applications. Many companies deploy these for first interactions with a customer and then transfer to a human agent as needed. (Examples: IBM Watson, Google Dialogflow)

Predictive Analytics Tools:
These tools rely on historical data and machine learning algorithms to identify patterns and predict trends. (Examples: RapidMiner, IBM SPSS, Microsoft Fabric)

Image, Video and Audio Generation:
AI tools like these have far reaching uses for businesses, including the production of marketing materials, promotional videos, background music and educational corporate content. (Examples: DALL-E, MidJourney, Synthesia, Open AI's Jukebox)

Image and Video Analysis:
This software can be used for various use cases because it can pull information and insights from your photo and video assets. It can become an asset in data management processes like face detection, labeling and content moderation. (Examples: Amazon Rekognition, Google Cloud Vision AI)

Hardware

Copilot+ PC with NPUs:
Introduced to speed AI processing at the edge, these high-performance computers with powerful GPUs and AI processors help manage resource-heavy AI applications.

Additional deep learning processors or neural processing units (NPUs) allow these PCs to improve the efficiency of AI computational tasks. (Examples: Microsoft Surface, Samsung Galaxy Book4 Edge, Dell XPS 13, Microsoft Surface Pro)

Connection

What You Should Know About Security and Compliance for AI

The use of AI can open up organizations to new threat vectors and requires careful planning and monitoring. AI regulation is still evolving, but several frameworks have emerged, such as the NIST AI Risk Management Framework (RMF)[1] for the U.S., the EU AI Act[2] in Europe and the international framework ISO 42001[3].

When building your AI strategy, consider these five areas of risk:

1. Data privacy
Organizations need to consider the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) when managing data for AI. Companies in regulated industries like finance and healthcare will also need to consider The Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Currently, there is a risk that users may feed sensitive information or intellectual property into an AI model that can then surface that data to other users.

2. Data security
With so much data being fed into AI solutions, it makes them a target for cyber criminals looking to exfiltrate or tamper with data. Continuous monitoring and cybersecurity efforts can help prevent a compromise of your data integrity.

3. Managing third party solutions
There are added complexities when leverage off-the-shelf AI solutions. Just as your company might vet third-party software vendors, you'll want to assess the compliance and security of AI solution providers to make sure they don't expose the organization to unnecessary risk.

4. Accuracy of AI outputs
Because AI can hallucinate (make up answers) or produce incorrect answers based on bad data, companies must have a plan for assessing the validity of AI outputs. Also, there are still concerns about the potential for third-party copyright infringements, especially when using generative AI solutions trained on the IP of the internet at large.

5. Employee confidentiality and compliance
With AI, there is a risk that too much information could be shared with users in your company. It's important to provide ongoing employee training on how to use AI tools effectively and in a way that aligns with company policies.

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[1] "At Risk Management Framework," NIST, https://www.nist.gov/itl/ai-risk-management-framework

[2] Morgan Meaker, "The EU Just Passed Sweeping New Rules to Regulate AI," Meaker, https://www.wired.com/story/eu-ai-act/

[3] Landon Inman, "Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity: What to Know Right Now," Schellman, https://www.schellman.com/blog/cybersecurity/artificial-intelligence-and-cybersecurity-what-to-know-right-now

Measuring Success

The success of AI deployments should be measured by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that relate to the business objectives set forth in your AI strategy. For instance, you might look at your customer satisfaction score (CSAT) or First Call Resolution (FCR) numbers if customer service is an area where the organization leverages AI.

Operational efficiency is a big reason many organizations deploy AI. For this, you might measure how long specific tasks took before versus after AI automation or how AI was able to reduce human errors.

Identifying the right KPIs in the strategy stage allows you to create a baseline of data to compare against the results of your AI use. The organization can focus on what matters most and avoid getting sidetracked measuring data points that don't directly speak to your goals.

How Connection Can Help

Connection is your partner for AI-readiness. From hardware and software to consulting and customized solutions, we're leading the way in areas critical to AI success.

Explore Our Resources
Digital Workspace
Artificial Intelligence
Microsoft Copilot

Reach out to one of our Connection experts today:

Contact Us
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