AI And Humans: Not A Competition, But A Collaboration

HR Executive | Maria Goyer | March 16, 2024

The impact of AI on business and its potential for displacing jobs has been perpetrating a new cycle of fear, similar to the one experienced in the '80s when advances in robotics left workers believing that their days were numbered. While some "technological unemployment" did occur and will likely occur again with AI, it would be a mistake to view the current environment through a lens of AI vs. human. It's not a matter of competition. Instead, think of it more in the vein of human-AI collaboration.

Already, companies are using AI tools to automate tedious and repetitive tasks with a high degree of precision and minimal errors, allowing employees to focus on strategic aspects of operations. Spending more time strengthening relationships with clients certainly tops the list and can lead to greater satisfaction, loyalty and sales for an organization.

Then, there's the analytical might of AI, with its ability to process large amounts of data quickly and identify patterns often missed by human eyes. The insights derived can be indispensable for employees to identify new customers, untapped markets and other growth opportunities. Of course, these benefits will only be apparent if AI implementation is handled with care.

Carving out a place for real-life talent

For all the good AI can bring to an organization, it isn't a magic bullet. The technology can't yet apply emotional intelligence, intuition or insights to a set of facts. Nor can it exercise any real creativity, curiosity or originality. It's only able to base its outputs on its inputs, so iterations of what's already been conceived will be the likeliest results. The human experience is still lost on machines.

And while AI can compile and analyze large amounts of data, it often can't derive any strategy or vision from the insights it provides. Someone will need to lead the human-AI collaboration, and a team will also need to apply some out-of-the-box thinking to make unrelated connections and drive innovation for the company.

AI is simply a tool with specific applications that can be valuable for a company, but its current limitations make humans irreplaceable. Organizations still need to be strategic in where they integrate AI into business.

An AI use case: Adding efficiency to talent acquisition

Talent acquisition, in particular, has seen vast improvements in speed, efficiency, and experience through the use of AI. Hiring managers are no longer left sifting through hundreds of résumés to build a slate of viable candidates before reaching out to schedule an interview. AI

can shoulder the load, even going so far as to screen applicants and run candidates through a series of questions to determine whether they meet job parameters.

When it's time to reach out, AI can do that, too, via asynchronous communications by phone, text, or email. Where a recruiter might correspond with 100 candidates in a day, AI can interact with thousands. All that remains in the process are evaluations, negotiations, and relationship-building, which usually require some emotional intelligence and intuition to handle properly. That's where the human component comes in.

In fact, recruiting serves as a perfect example of where human-AI collaboration excels. One without the other just isn't as efficient or productive.

How to integrate AI into your business properly

Understanding how to integrate AI into your business entails much more than technology integration. It might start with identifying where it would best serve operations, such as customer relationship management, talent acquisition, customer service, fraud management, and a host of administrative tasks. It can also lift a heavy load for marketing, providing customer segmentation and product recommendations, conducting research, automating correspondence, and more.

Where companies often struggle in adopting AI is when it comes to the question of how AI will change the future of work for employees. The answer will inform the next steps to ensure that your team has the skills and mindset necessary to utilize AI tools effectively. While these steps will vary from one business to the next, the following are a solid foundation:

1. Invest in workforce upskilling and reskilling

How you intend to integrate AI tools into your business will help identify where to upskill or reskill employees, as well as where there might be gaps in your operations after the integration is complete. Based on this information, you can start developing a training program that includes diverse learning opportunities and education components like data analysis, critical thinking, and so on. It may be beneficial to offer microlearning sessions that allow employees to learn at their own pace.

2. Nurture a culture of adaptability and continuous learning

While your company may already have a strong culture, it might not be one that instills a growth mindset within employees. This will be key to ensuring successful human-AI collaboration. Upskilling and reskilling employees is a good start, but it can be taken a step further by integrating other learning activities into operations.

A mentoring program is one option, as is knowledge sharing across your organization. Certifications, cross-functional projects, stretch assignments, and the like are also beneficial. Most importantly, create an environment where employees feel safe experimenting, learning from their mistakes, and celebrating the risks (within reason) that they've been taking.

3. Ensure technology enables human-AI collaboration

Though this goes without saying, creativity, empathy, critical thinking, and a range of other human-centric skills are irreplaceable, and the tools your company utilizes should support, if not help, employees better leverage these skills.

Ensure technology, in general, is designed with humans in mind, complementing their strengths and limiting the impact of their weaknesses. Seamless integrations, intuitive interfaces, and automation of mundane tasks can minimize any negative impact of AI on business or your workforce.

4. Build a supportive ecosystem

Change is hard, and AI integration is no exception. To prevent teams from taking on an AI vs. human mentality, find ways to proactively address anxieties around potential job displacement. Be transparent about where integrations will occur and how they could impact work. Provide resources to navigate the change. Better yet, give employees ownership over their responsibilities with AI.

Greater autonomy can help instill confidence in your workforce and improve employee engagement while also quelling fears of being replaced.

AI is changing the future of work. There's no denying that fact, but the technology is still just a tool requiring human-AI collaboration for its functionalities to be effective. It's a collaborative partner with the ability to elevate—not replace—your team's capabilities, providing greater room to apply that human touch necessary for business success.