

FROM THE EDITOR

AI may be the future of work, but *caveat emptor*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) could well become the phrase *du jour* for 2024. For one, ChatGPT, the Generative AI (GenAI) software created by OpenAI, has become arguably the best-known AI-driven app. Microsoft founder Bill Gates observes that ChatGPT “will change our world”, while Google co-founder Larry Page describes AI as “the ultimate version of Google” that “would understand exactly what you wanted, and it would give you the right thing”.

Such profound change provokes inevitable concerns of AI replacing humans at the workplace, or even humanity itself, with the late Stephen Hawking once expressing concerns that AI “could be the worst event in the history of our civilisation”. Nonetheless, AI-enabled technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and digital home assistants are increasingly embedded into our daily lives, generating ever more data and competing for broadband bandwidth with the ubiquitous mobile phone.

With all that in mind, Singapore will invest up to S\$100 million to improve the nation’s broadband infrastructure over the next two years. Mrs Josephine Teo, Singapore’s Minister for Communications and Information, and Minister-in-charge of Smart Nation and Cybersecurity, tells us how the country’s 10-year-old Smart Nation initiative aims to put the island at the forefront of the AI wave while guarding against security risks and negative social impact. While being open to global talent is key to developing cutting-edge technical capabilities, governments must create a safe online environment to build the trust necessary for a technology-enabled society, she adds.

That positive combination of human intellect and technology is the essence of what Thomas W. Malone calls ‘Collective Intelligence’. In the debut of Asian Management Insight’s Pulse Point section, Malone articulates how Collective Intelligence can help build ‘Superminds’, which are “groups of individuals acting together in ways that seem intelligent”. Despite all the hype about technology, human values must and will remain central to mankind, he says.

Fans of the Marvel Cinematic Universe might imagine a Supermind to be something like the character JARVIS (Just A Rather Very Intelligent System). Archan Misra examines recent advances in ‘cognitive augmentation’, ranging from software that understands human gestures to holographic devices that relay real-time information. Misra believes successful AI-human co-working could become a reality in less than 10 years, especially with an intuitive human-machine interface. Like JARVIS.

Even before all that happens, AI has already seen plenty of action in the real world. Shoeb Kagda comments on how the rise of GenAI models is revolutionising traditional sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and education in developing nations across Asia. He gives an example of how Indonesia plans to use AI and drones to monitor rice fields and increase rice production. All that depends on building the requisite data and digital infrastructure, which is a pressing need not just in the country but the region at large.

Still on the topic of AI, Lau Hoong Chuin and his collaborators developed a data-driven AI supply chain optimisation model that helped predict COVID-19 lockdowns and realise millions of dollars in savings, while Steven M. Miller, David Gomulya, and Mahima Rao-Kachroo chart out Singapore-based start-up EyRIS’ journey to

commercialise SELENA+, an AI algorithm for eye disease detection. Whereas the former showcases a triumph of software design and data usage, the latter details the lessons learnt in overcoming commercial obstacles and navigating regulatory frameworks.

Continuing on the topic of healthcare, Lim Tow Keang believes business executives can make better decisions by taking reference from how clinicians arrive at a diagnosis and treatment plan. Doctors and business executives can both benefit from generating hypotheses to account for observed phenomena and adjusting their course of action depending on any given situation. The best solutions though integrate scientific evidence with personal experiences.

Many situations allow for the methodical integration of experience and data into what are effectively heuristics or simple rules learnt repeatedly. Jochen Reb, Shenghua Luan, and Gerd Gigerenzer point to the value of simple rules matching the requirements of any given situation. Smart heuristics, they claim, can be useful for decision-makers operating under time pressure or in times of crisis.

Addressing the climate change and global warming crisis is what last November’s United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai, otherwise known as COP28, was all about. Franziska Zimmermann shares her thoughts on the crucial role of decisive leadership in transitioning away from fossil fuels and keeping global temperatures in check. While increased accountability provides hope of success to that end, she points to engaging the youth of today as one avenue of sustaining an environmentally-conscious business landscape for the future.

Technology is not the only mechanism for transformation. Neeta Lachmandas-Sakellariou argues that a service mindset that enhances the customer experience can make all the difference. By viewing service delivery as a profit-making tool, organisations adopting the customer’s perspective can enhance their relationship with their customers by delivering a superior level of service. At the core of it all: Leaders must set the tone and cultivate the company culture to support this.

We round out this issue with AI once again, but of a less glamorous nature: chatbots. Tamas Makany and Felicia Goh dive through how Singapore SMEs (small and medium enterprises) use chatbots and the way customers perceive them. They conclude that chatbots are business tools, not entertainment sources, and successful chatbot implementation is all about balancing AI and the human touch.

Talking to an advanced form of AI like you would to a human being, and it delivers exactly what you need? Sounds like JARVIS.

On a celebratory note, as we mark a decade in publication, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our readers for their unwavering support. Here’s to the next 10 years of delivering enriching content, and continuing to inspire and engage our audience!



DR HAVOVI JOSHI
Editor-in-Chief
Asian Management Insights
havovijoshi@smu.edu.sg