

Does AI bring more threats to the world?



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BusinessTime in Essex sought the views of three experts in the AI field: Professor Mohammad M. Ali, Pro Vice-Chancellor & Dean, Anglia Ruskin University; Professor Kirk Chang, Professor of Technovation & People Management, University of East London and Dr Alina Vaduva, Leader of Business Advice Centre, University of East London. Here's their viewpoint.

LAST month's AI Safety Summit held at Bletchley Park brought home just how divided opinions are on the subject, with

tech heavyweights, Elon Musk and Nick Clegg begging to differ on the level of threat AI poses to humanity.

King Charles also weighed into the debate, hailing AI as no less significant than the discovery of fire and warning it would also bring significant risk. Clearly the great and the good have strong

views on the subject, which is to be applauded because AI, one way or another, is going to become a bigger and bigger influence in all aspects of our lives – business and social.

What should never be forgotten is that AI is a man-made intelligence, accumulating people's knowledge and experiences and making predictions. In doing so, it brings

benefits and drawbacks.

On the positive side of the coin, AI outperforms human beings in two ways: massive cognition and unlimited coordination. It can handle repetitive tasks faster, cheaper and with better outcomes. This could be like a super-efficient virtual assistant and co-pilot that doesn't make mistakes or gets tired. It can analyse massive amounts of data,

The AI quandary

THE role of AI (Artificial intelligence) is rapidly becoming one of the most divisive issues facing society. How business embraces it (indeed, already is embracing it) is a major talking point. So BusinessTime in Essex has sought the views of Essex businesspeople to try and get a feel for what people are thinking, and those views are unveiled over the following four pages.

My humble view, for what it is worth, is that ever since man began inventing groundbreaking tools and technology, there's been divided opinion on whether they have been a force for good or bad. In truth, in more recent times, the issue is that they tend to have the potential to be both. Splitting the atom brought us nuclear power – but thanks to the 'ingenuity' of man, it also brought us nuclear bombs. As man developed life-saving medicines, we also developed the capability to kill individuals or thousands with germ-warfare.

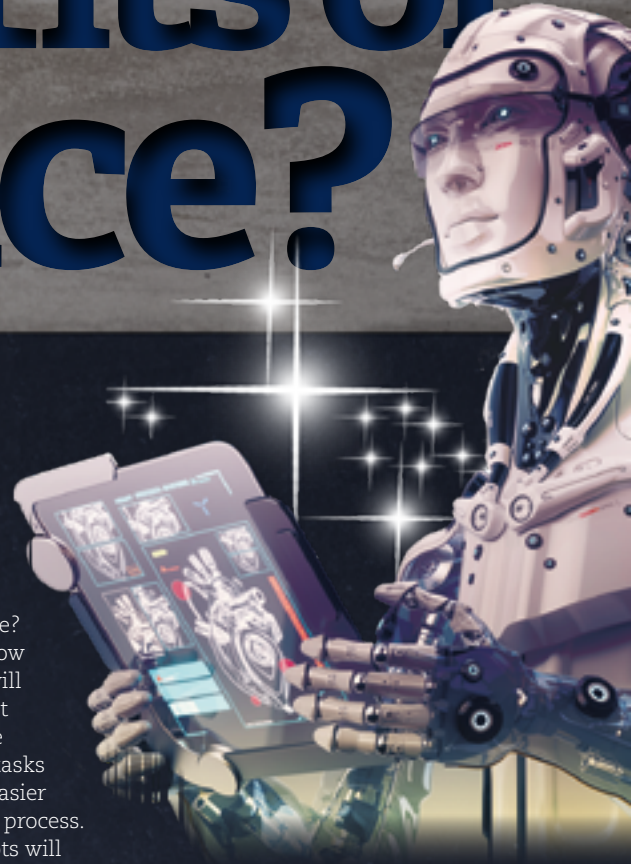
AI provokes similar quandaries for many people. Yes, it could make our lives so much easier in so many ways – but in the wrong hands, what harm could it do?

The problem is, as with all inventions throughout time, you can't uninvent them. Once the genie is out of the bottle, there's no way of squeezing him back in. All we can do is hope AI is embraced for all the right reasons. In the world of business, we are already reaping many benefits – some obvious, some not so. Many more will rapidly come into play as AI evolves. Our challenge, as businesspeople always looking to move our businesses along with the times, is to take the good bits and not be blinded by the potential bad bits. Let's see how that plays out!

Peter Richardson

BusinessTime in Essex Editor

more benefits or workplace?



Kirk Chang

Professor of Technovation & People Management, University of East London

identify patterns and trends in a more effective manner than humans helping make informed and evidence-based decisions.

On the negative side of the coin, there is the possibility of privacy breaches and fraudulent behaviour.

AI is not an elixir to fix all problems. It can bring both positive and negative impacts to the workplace. More education is needed to maximise the value of AI in the workplace. Organisations need to recognise the importance of AI skills, such as training the existing workforce, and recruiting the candidates with AI skills.

Adopting a more optimistic attitude is important, such as embracing AI as a job assistant and career opportunity agent, rather than a replacement of labour. AI can support the inclusion and implementation of EDI, making the workplace more inclusive and productive.

In business, AI has a wide range of uses. In fact, most of us interact with AI in some form or another on a daily basis. From the mundane to the breathtaking, artificial intelligence is already disrupting virtually every business

process in every industry. As AI technologies proliferate, they are becoming imperative to maintain a competitive edge.

Before examining how AI technologies are impacting the business world, it's important to define the term. Artificial intelligence is a broad term that refers to any type of computer software that engages in humanlike activities – including learning, planning and problem-solving.

Rather than serving as a replacement for human intelligence and ingenuity, AI is generally seen as a supporting tool. Although AI currently has a difficult time completing commonsense tasks in the real world, it is adept at processing and analysing troves of data much faster than a human brain could. AI software can then return with synthesised courses of action and present them to the human user. In this way, we can use AI to help game out possible consequences of each action and streamline the decision-making process.

Some of the most standard uses of AI are machine learning, cybersecurity, customer relationship management, internet searches and personal



Dr Alina Vaduva

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assistants.

Artificial intelligence is also changing customer relationship management (CRM) systems.

How might AI be used in the future? It's hard to say how the technology will develop, but most experts see those 'commonsense' tasks becoming even easier for computers to process. That means robots will become extremely useful in everyday life.

With all these new AI uses comes the daunting question of whether machines will force humans out of work. The jury is still out: some experts vehemently deny that AI will automate so many jobs that millions of people find themselves unemployed, while other experts see it as a pressing problem.

While there is still some debate on how, exactly, the rise of artificial intelligence will change the workforce, experts agree there are some trends we can expect to see. Some experts believe that, as AI is integrated into the workforce, it will actually create more jobs – at least in the short-term. The shift toward AI-based systems will likely cause the economy to add jobs that facilitate the transition.

This is a transition that will take years – if not decades – across different sectors of the workforce. So, these projections are harder to identify, but some experts are worried that once AI becomes ubiquitous, those additional jobs (and the ones that had already existed) may start to dwindle.

As AI becomes a more integrated

part of the workforce, it's unlikely that all human jobs will disappear. Instead, many experts have begun to predict that the workforce will become more specialised. These roles will require a higher amount of that which automation can't (yet) provide – like creativity, problem-solving and qualitative skills.

Essentially, there is likely to always be a need for people in the workforce, but their roles may shift as technology becomes more advanced. The demand for specific skills will shift, and many of these jobs will require a more advanced, technical skill set.

Whether rosy or rocky, the future is coming quickly, and AI will certainly be a part of it. As this technology develops, the world will see new startups, numerous business applications and consumer uses, the displacement of certain jobs and the creation of entirely new ones. Along with the Internet of Things, AI has the potential to dramatically remake the economy, but its exact impact remains to be seen.