AN INFOGAIN EVENT

HOW CAN GENERATIVE AI

HELP DRIVE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE?

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This article is written by [Roger Camrass](#), Director of Research for CIONET International, based on a dinner at the Savoy Hotel on the 24th of July, 2023. The event was attended by business leaders and sponsored by Infogain. [Vivek Sharma](#), Infogain Europe CEO, welcomed the delegates and described how new client expectations on AI could help deliver improved core services.

What are the preoccupations of business leaders?

The guest speaker, Dr Sumit Mitra, CEO of Tesco Business Solutions and winner of the Shared Services & Outsourcing Network (SSON) award for the world's best GBS (Global Business Services) operation, described how traditional outsourcing models based on labour arbitrage have evolved rapidly into value-creation models. One of the powerful catalysts here has been the widescale deployment of intelligent BOTs that exploit advances in AI. Sumit believes that digital transformation is here and now. It allows GBS to automate any task or rule-based processes, which helps deliver better governance, control and accuracy whilst allowing colleagues to move up the value chain to create value. Retention rates amongst his offshore centres have risen dramatically.

Other delegates spoke about the impact of Generative AI, or GAI (a subset of AI that generates new data or content based on patterns and information learned from existing data) on product development and customer experience and how GAI has enabled a greater focus on business innovation. According to Sumit, even traditional functions such as procurement have received a significant boost from machine learning and predictive analytics. However, some delegates appeared more cautious about introducing GAI techniques. Concerns centred around the quality of the input data, the ability to track the workings of 'black box' GAI models, and the scarcity of skills required to apply such techniques.

How might Generative AI affect the business of business?

Digital leaders have spoken about how their organisations are becoming 'technology' businesses for many years. As Mark Andreessen said,

"Software is eating the world."

According to one delegate, the advent of GAI is once again challenging traditional business models and further questioning our understanding of what is meant by the 'business of business. A financial services delegate stressed that "bankers should do banking" and avoid peripheral activities. He believes organisations should work within an ecosystem of players, each contributing to the overall customer experience. In this respect, banks should use GAI primarily to innovate their products ahead of their competition.

Another critical factor discussed is the way digital techniques are disrupting planning cycles. According to Tyson Hartman, CTO of Infogain, the five-year plan is no longer tenable in a world of extraordinary volatility and change. The combination of COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and consequent energy and supply chain crises require Boards to focus on quarterly plans and RoI objectives rather than multi-year horizons. Using GAI to concentrate on the correct business problems and outcomes is today's driving factor for business leaders.

Louisa Perry, senior partner of search firm ZRG, shared her observations about how many of her major clients are redefining their businesses. She quoted examples drawn from the health and tobacco sectors. She anticipates that GAI will prompt further business model innovations over the coming decade.

Where does AI sit on the business maturity curve?

Roger Camrass described how e-commerce became the vogue topic for boards of global 1000 companies at the end of the nineties. But at that time, very few executives knew how e-commerce would impact their organisations. Most thought that e-commerce was about creating a website. The same may be true today about GAI and machine learning. Anil Kaul, Chief AI Officer at Infogain, mentioned how GAI had entered the public consciousness when IBM's Deep Blue beat the world's chess master, Garry Kasparov, in 1996. He saw GAI entering the business world more broadly in 2014 when expert systems began to replicate human capabilities.

According to Sumit, robotic process automation (RPA) signifies that GAI is becoming mainstream in large businesses. He referred to the ongoing process of simplifying and automating business processes across Tesco's supply chain, from suppliers to retail stores. He also mentioned how GAI is helping procurement officers obtain the 'should cost model' for the contents of shoppers' baskets. GAI is improving negotiating power by analysing the actual cost of bought-in items. He emphasised that digital leaders should combine critical content, or data, to get the most out of new techniques, such as GAI, with business context.

Organising to exploit AI capabilities

Delegates debated where to start in deploying AI techniques within their organisations. Some recognised that setting priorities at the organisation's top was essential before embarking on the AI journey. Others recognised that employee empowerment would fuel a revolution in how work is conducted, bringing productivity and related benefits more quickly. The availability of training on open-source platforms accompanied by open-source standards for GAI could favour a 'people-led approach.

Sumit emphasised that combining machine and human intelligence produces the best business outcomes, what he calls 'smart' decisions. He cited how BOTs can calculate VAT returns in seconds, but only humans can negotiate successfully with HMRC.

Can we trust AI?

There was considerable debate about whether we can trust GAI outputs today and if it is a force for good in the world. Anil Kaul believes that there is a balance to be achieved between relying on machine intelligence output and that of human workers. His conditions for best practice include validating the quality of data inputs and our ability to trace computations, or as he put it, 'to mark GAI's homework. One delegate referred to blockchain as a mechanism for validating data sources. This could be important in pharmaceuticals, construction and scientific research.

How to progress the AI agenda within your organisation

Infogain's CEO, Ayan Mukerji, concluded the session by offering some GAI best practices. He recommended a layered approach to GAI where experimentation in the short term can bubble up to long-term vision and strategy. Leaders should:

- Begin experimenting with how to adapt off-the-shelf GAI models for enterprise use. These experiments should be designed so that their learning can scale to the whole organisation.
- Consider consulting outside experts to identify hidden vulnerabilities and opportunities that GAI could address.
- Start building a strategic vision for maximising the productivity that GAI can unleash. For many, this will be a radical shift and entail training across the business to ensure that the utility of their data is fully understood and unlocked.

He concluded the event by thanking Dr Mitra for his valuable input and the delegates' time and interest. He summarised Infogain's primary service areas: product innovation, predictive analytics and customer experience.

More information can be obtained from www.infogain.com and by contacting Vivek Sharma, European CEO of Infogain, at Vivek.Sharma@infogain.com

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A pioneer of today's Internet as an ARPA research fellow at MIT in the seventies, Roger has spent over forty five years helping corporations harness the power of new technologies such as cloud, mobile communications, e-commerce, voice recognition and satellite. He was a partner at EY responsible for e-commerce during the dot.com boom. He is a graduate of Cambridge University and MIT, and a visiting professor at the University of Surrey.

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