The Top Five Myths About Artificial Intelligence

**Myth 1:**

AI algorithms can magically make sense of any and all of your messy data.

**Reality:**

AI is not “load and go,” and the quality of the data is more important than the algorithm.

The most important input for an AI tool is data—not just any data, but the right data. That means data that is relevant to the problem being solved and specific to a set of use cases and a domain of knowledge. Many in the technology industry erroneously claim that an AI solution can just be pointed at data and that the right answer will be produced by powerful machine learning algorithms. The term I have heard used is “load and go,” where “all” the data is ingested into the system.

**Myth 2:**

You need data scientists, machine learning experts, and huge budgets to use AI for the business.

**Reality:**

Many tools are increasingly available to business users and don’t require Google-sized investments.

Some types of AI applications do require heavy lifting by Ph.D.s and computational linguists; however, a growing number of software tools that use AI are becoming more accessible to business users. AI technology at one end of the spectrum does require deep expertise in programming languages and sophisticated techniques. Most organizations will opt to leverage business applications developed on top of tools that companies such as Google, Apple, Amazon, Facebook, and well-funded startups build.

**Myth 3:**

“Cognitive AI” technologies are able to understand and solve new problems the way the human brain can.

**Reality:**

“Cognitive” technologies can’t solve problems they weren’t designed to solve.

So-called “cognitive” technologies can address the types of problems that typically require human interpretation and judgment, which standard programming approaches cannot solve. These problems include the use of ambiguous language, image recognition, and execution of complex tasks where precise conditions and outcomes cannot be predicted.

**Myth 4:**

Machine learning using “neural nets” means that computers can learn the way humans learn.

**Reality:**

Neural nets are powerful, but a long way from achieving the complexity of the human brain or mimicking human capabilities.

One of the most exciting approaches to powering AI is the use of “deep learning,” which is built on so-called “artificial neural networks.” This design allows computer chips to emulate the way biological neurons learn to recognize patterns. The approach is being used to address a number of challenges, from improving language translation to speech recognition, fraud identification, image recognition, and self-driving cars.

**Myth 5:**

AI will displace humans and make contact center jobs obsolete.

**Reality:**

AI is no different from other technological advances in that it helps humans become more effective and processes more efficient.

Technology has been threatening jobs and displacing jobs throughout history. Telephone switching technology replaced human operators. Automatic call directors replaced receptionists. Word processing and voicemail replaced secretaries, email replaced inter-office couriers. Call center technology innovation has added efficiency and effectiveness at various stages of standing up customer service capabilities—from recruiting new reps using machine learning to screen resumes, to selecting the right training program based on specific learning styles, to call routing based on sentiment of the caller and disposition of the rep, to integration of various information sources and channels of communication. In each of these processes, technology augmentation enhanced the capabilities of humans. Were some jobs replaced? Perhaps, but more jobs were created, albeit requiring different skills.

**Conclusion**

The bottom line is that while you should not believe the myths, you should believe in AI. It is part of the inevitable evolution of how humans use tools and technology. Your organization needs to continue the blocking and tackling of core customer service while thoughtfully investigating new approaches to adding efficiency and effectiveness to call center processes. Digital workers powered by AI are here—they are already working for you with existing technologies that use AI under the covers. Now the job is to bring that augmentation to the next level.