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# READYING AI FOR YOUR DIGITAL WORKFORCE? FIVE PITFALLS TO AVOID.

By Weston J. Morris and Colby Love

**70% OF WORKERS USE AI IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES**

You've been handed the project of your dreams: developing an artificial intelligence (AI) service management solution for your digital workers. It will be a high-profile project, visible to every employee, from the CEO, to the salespeople demoing for big customers, to the colleagues you work with every day. They will turn to your system with high expectations when they are held back, uncertain, and in a hurry.

Will they be among the forward-moving fortunate, enjoying the benefits of AI, helping them solve their problems, increase their knowledge, and perform at their best? Or will they get left behind because of the pitfalls that plague AI implementations?

## Let's start with the end in mind: Just what are the expectations of AI in the digital workplace?

In the fast-changing, high-demand digital world, workers are going to have a lot of questions as they encounter complex technology. AI should be a "personal assistant" for many of those questions. Like a good hotel concierge, this artificially intelligent personal assistant should anticipate their needs, have ready answers, provide them in the questioner's language, and in their preferred method.

AI can also take over low-level tasks, allowing knowledge workers to focus their time and energy on higher cognitive pursuits. For the digital worker looking to rise in the organization and take on bigger responsibilities with more visibility, AI can accelerate and simplify routine tasks. It can automate support in ways that save time and can be delivered 24/7 while also gathering intelligence on worker needs and responses.

And there's another crucial expectation that cannot be overlooked in today's tight job market for skilled digital workers. Management recognizes that today's workers demand up-to-date technology and will leave companies that fall behind. According to a survey of 7,000 workers in the U.S., Asia, and Europe, most workers globally want to use AI. And Oracle found that 70% of workers use AI in their personal lives, yet only 24% use AI at work. Unisys research on the Digital Workplace Divide reveals that employees are six times more likely to want to quit their job when they work for a "technology laggard."

But AI implementations have a rocky history, often falling short of expectations, disappointing users, and squandering time, budget, and competitiveness. To avoid that fate, we have identified the typical pitfalls and offer five keys for avoiding them.

**START WITH YOUR END USERS, AND WHEN IT COMES TIME TO DELVE INTO YOUR DATA, DON'T OVERDO IT.**

## 1. Start With Your End User, Not Your Data

Ahh, the data—so much, so rich, so **revealing**. You probably have heard that you need a lot of data in order to properly train your AI system. True, but just because you have a lot of data at your disposal doesn't mean you are ready to start.

Data can contain hidden biases. It might be outdated, or inaccurate. If you let data lead you down its path, you'll exacerbate those shortcomings.

Instead, start with your end user. Let them tell you what they need and want, what will best serve their workplace needs and the organization. That sounds obvious, but it's not unusual for AI implementations to blindly follow the data and ultimately disappoint the user. Instead of saving time, you end up having to rework your AI solution at great cost of time and money.

There's another reason to set the data aside until you're confident of the user needs. We call it "the creepiness factor." You're familiar with it if you've ever placed a call to a company and the person you reach knows a lot more about you than you thought. Or if you ask Alexa a question and suddenly find your newsfeed flooded with ads related to your question. That's creepy.

In the workplace, it's essential that workers be confident of an appropriate level of privacy about data that pertains to them. Your profligate use of data can worry them. "If they know **that**," they might think, "do they have access to my HR info? Or maybe my health insurance records? My salary? Too creepy. I'm not touching that system."

## 2. Select the Right "Intents"

The above user analysis will reveal several possible automations to implement. For each automation, you must define an end user **intent** that leads you to that automation. For each intent, you must identify the end user **utterances**—all the ways that the end user can indicate what their intent is.

What criteria can you use when narrowing down your automations and intents? AI implementations fail when the first intents selected are too complex. AI implementations are considered to be unsuccessful if the intents are infrequently used.

Before choosing your intents, plot the scope of your possibilities on a simple quadrant like the one below. Assess each intent first on how frequently it will be requested by your users, and second on the complexity involved in automating it.

| | **Low Frequency** | **High Frequency** |
|---|---|---|
| **High Complexity** | App Installation | Employee Onboarding |
| **Low Complexity** | Business Process FAQ | Password Reset |

That will make it obvious to you which automations and intents to develop first.

- High complexity/low frequency tasks? Obviously not. Even if you are successful in creating the automation/intent, so few people will use it that you will never be compensated for your development costs.
- Low complexity/low frequency tasks? You may get your automation and intent working quickly, but so few people will use it that, again, it is not worth the effort.
- Low complexity/high frequency tasks? Starting here will have the biggest impact on your end users with the least risk. Once you've been able to prove your processes and technology with this group of tasks, you can move on to...
- High complexity, high frequency tasks. The complexity of these automations/intents can only be overcome with the experience you get from successfully building out the low complexity/high frequency tasks.


Choose a limited number of intents that will ease or accelerate the daily tasks of the most workers. Score your wins there, show management the ROI, get your workers to trust your system (more about that vital aspect later), capture utterances for intents that your AI doesn't yet understand, and then take your fresh learning with you as you move on up the value and complexity scale.

## 3. Expect Complexity and Surprises

Above, we mentioned relatively low complexity as a good starting place. But in truth, all AI implementations are complex to start with and usually reveal unexpected complications as they unfold. Expect complexity in these aspects.

- The **intent** might involve back-and-forth interactions that demand greater natural language understanding than you originally supposed. You need to consider all the different ways users might introduce a problem and be ready to respond accordingly.
- How many **native languages** do you need to accommodate in your system? In today's hyper-connected global economy, it's not unusual to require 12 or more languages.
- And don't forget **compliance** issues, which can vary considerably across different geographies and demand scrupulous attention.
- Do you have **multi-tenancy** requirements to take into account, requiring domain knowledge segregation in your user base?
- Every implementation encounters the complexity of **integration**. What you develop must be integrated into myriad systems—voice recognition systems, service management systems, downstream automation systems, and, of course, security and identity management systems.
- And finally, **channels**. Omni-channel is essential to efficiency. Your end users will choose different channels for different purposes and switch back and forth at will. Intelligence needs to follow the user across channels and even anticipate channel transitions.

## AI HAS ENTERED AN EXCITING PHASE.

It is already delivering high value for digital workers, and new use cases are emerging as fast as they can be developed. But pitfalls abound. Avoid them and you'll find faster success, greater utilization, and ongoing opportunity to expand on your accomplishments.

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### 4. Bring Objectivity to User Acceptance Testing

"Confirmation bias" is a common term these days, often referring to political discourse. But it's equally prevalent in technology testing, and it can create unfortunate surprises when the final version gets rolled out. If you use people who helped write the use cases as testers, you test yourself into a corner. They find what they predicted.

A writer friend likens this pitfall to proofreading. "People think a writer should be good at catching errors, and I am—if it's others' errors. But when I proofread my own work, I read what I **meant** to write."

For a reliable UAT process for your AI solution, engage testers who had nothing to do with writing the use cases. It may seem counterintuitive, but some of the best testing is done by the naysayers in the organization. Find those who are skeptical about AI and involve them in the testing. They are highly motivated to prove that it doesn't work. As they find problems and you resolve them, you win twice: once by finding bugs that would have otherwise been missed, and again in winning over your skeptics. When the naysayers complete their testing with you, they can end up being one of your biggest advocates.

### 5. Expect Users to Test Before They Trust

The real test, of course, comes when you release. The first thing most users will do is their own test, with their own data, and many won't be testing your use cases.

Even after you are confident of your AI solution's utility, and even after you've perfected its use of natural language, multiple languages, omni-channels, and automation, many users will want to see if it's intelligent in **their** view. They will query it with their own questions. Will it rain tomorrow? Who won the World Series? What's your favorite pizza topping? How old are you?

If they don't get good responses, they may conclude that your solution is "dumb" and they won't trust it for its intended uses. Keep that in mind if you are inclined to exclude social chat interactions in favor of just those intents that deliver business value.

Over time, you are going to keep enriching your AI solution, adding more complex intents and expecting users to shift more and more of their support needs accordingly, perhaps ultimately using it as their primary "personal assistant." That will only happen if they trust it, so don't jeopardize that opportunity from the start. Include enough general conversation to launch the relationships you hope to build over time.

And be sure to address this matter in your training. Make sure from the outset that you set good expectations with users about what your AI solution is supposed to do for them, and even what it's not, as well as your plans for future utility.

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Printed in the United States of America 01/20