



Technology and Artificial Intelligence as a Strategic Edge: A Vital Need for Leaders



TECH & AI:
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Introduction

The speed of technological advancements is currently unprecedented. Countries worldwide are swiftly embracing Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation, and advanced analytics, such as Saudi Arabia through Vision 2030. Significant investments totaling \$7 trillion are being made, covering areas like national AI and data leadership, technology ecosystems, sovereign funds, and AI funding, alongside the establishment of research hubs and universities. The adoption of AI is fueling workforce development in various regions, like the UK, India, and the initiatives by the Trump administration to accelerate digital technology adoption through deregulation.

AI, automation, and advanced analytics have transitioned from being optional tools to essential competitive advantages. An observable shift in the AI landscape is emerging, known as "Reflective AI," focusing on creativity, augmentation, and human-centric design. Companies that proactively adopt these technologies are not only revolutionizing their offerings but also reshaping their decision-making processes and responses to disruptions. For leaders, the imperative is evident: fuse technology and innovation into their strategies or risk lagging behind.



The Strategic Influence of AI and Automation

The influence of AI and automation on the business environment is multifaceted:

- **Efficiency Enhancement:** Optimizing workflows, cutting costs, and reallocating human resources to more strategic tasks.
- **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Utilizing predictive analytics and real-time insights for quicker and more precise decision-making.
- **Enhanced Agility:** Swiftly adapting to customer demands, market changes, and competitive challenges.
- **Innovation on a Large Scale:** Developing new products, services, and business models driven by AI-generated insights.

Organizations integrating these capabilities are not merely enhancing their performance but also fortifying their adaptability and long-term viability.

The Leadership Prerequisite: Technological Proficiency and Innovation

To transform technology into a genuine competitive advantage, leaders must go beyond mere system investments. They should:

- **Enhance Technological Literacy:** Grasp the essentials of AI, data, and automation to make well-informed strategic choices.
- **Cultivate a Culture of Innovation:** Encourage experimentation and digital integration at all organizational levels.
- **Strike a Balance between Human and Machine:** Utilize AI for efficiency and accuracy while upholding human judgment, ethics, and creativity as core values.
- **Align Technology with Strategy:** View AI and automation as strategic enablers, not peripheral endeavors.

Possible Research-Based Opportunities

Exploring certain data points in AI research is intriguing. For instance, findings from the Gallup Research Organization's Special Competitive Studies Project (04-05, 2025) reveal varying levels of awareness and trust concerning AI among Americans. Similarly, a poll by The Canadian Press underscores the widespread demand for ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks governing AI usage. Notably, research by Oliver Schilke and Martin Reimann sheds light on how transparency regarding AI usage can impact trust levels. Their experiments consistently showed a decrease in trust when individuals voluntarily disclosed their AI utilization, indicating a prevalent distrust towards AI disclosures. Such insights highlight the growing necessity for leaders to possess behaviours and competencies around "Digital Fluency & Literacy" to navigate the evolving landscape effectively.



Call to Action

Leaders should contemplate how to leverage AI to amplify the impact of their talent, business strategies, and operations. *Are they treating AI as a tactical tool or embedding it as a strategic asset?* The time is ripe to invest in technological literacy, restructure operations for agility, and infuse innovation into organizational strategies. Tomorrow's victors will not just adopt technology—they will lead with it.

Conclusion

The integration of AI and advanced technologies is no longer a distant aspiration but an immediate requirement. Companies strategically embracing AI will excel in efficiency, innovation, and market adaptability. Hesitation could lead to missing the opportunity and facing the risk of becoming obsolete. As articulated by Professor Karim Lakhani from Harvard Business School in an interview with Harvard Business Review, "AI won't replace humans - but humans with AI will replace humans without AI."

References

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