Northwest Software Inc
The help you need

Artificial Intelligence - How it helps human race

What is AI? Maybe a better question might be: what exactly is "intelligence"? The simplest descriptor is collecting data about the world and using that data to make predictions in the short and long term. That applies to both people and machines.

Artificial intelligence has gone from a science-fiction dream to a critical part of our everyday lives. We use AI systems to interact with our phones and speakers through voice assistants like Siri, Alexa, and Google; cars made by Tesla interpret and analyse their surroundings to intelligently drive themselves; Amazon monitors our browsing habits and then serves up products it thinks we'd like to buy; and even Google decides what results to give us based on our search activity. Artificially intelligent algorithms are here, and they've already changed our lives – for better or worse. But this is only the beginning, and one day we'll look back at AI now and laugh about how primitive it was. Because in the future, AI is going to change everything.

When we talk about AI in our lives, we're talking about everything from a computer being able to read a handwritten document, like an OCR reader, to a robot performing complex surgery on its own or a massive database categorizing your personality based on what you've written and looked at online. Because the world of AI is so incredibly large, let's take a look at some of the most ground-breaking developments we expect to see in the near future, and whether that's a step forward or backward for society.

AI systems are already primed to take over thousands, if not millions of jobs. Any job that consists of a human taking down information from other humans and inputting it into a system is likely to go obsolete. So, cashiers, receptionists, telemarketers, and bank tellers are all on their way out. As self-driving cars, self-operating drones, and other conveyors from A-to-B get more complex, we'll also lose jobs like truck drivers, postal workers, courier services, and even pizza delivery. Factories are also becoming fully automated, so are car washes, and movie theatres. Even our jobs as journalists are threatened by rapidly improving news algorithms that can gather information and deliver it faster, and more accurately.
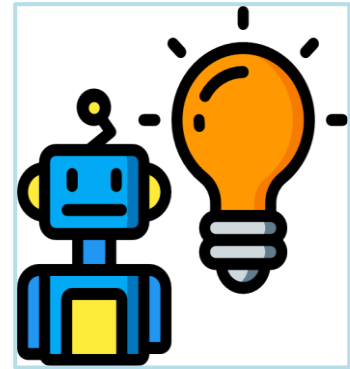
But as society changes to accommodate an all-machine service world, it'll also open up new jobs for the next generation. Writing software, repairing and maintaining robots and developing new and better systems. Notably, machines are also primed to take over dangerous jobs. Firefighting, mining, deep-sea oil drilling, construction, and other careers with high mortality rates will be replaced by machines that can't get sick or hurt. We don't know what an all-AI workforce will look like yet, but many economists believe that the world might be a brighter and more rewarding place with machines taking over the more dull and hazardous jobs.
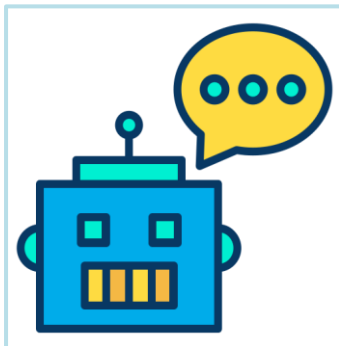
Key Point

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How is AI helping us? AI will help work, not steal your job

Individual workers may have a suite of AI agents that act on their behalf, typically to perform mundane tasks, AIs are creating "a whole slew of professions that don't exist". The revered STEM role of data scientist barely existed a few decades ago. Its current ubiquity belies that fact. In turn, some jobs probably will be wiped out. In 2013, researchers from Oxford laid out the types of roles most susceptible to computerization. In truth, people in these professions do have some reason to be alarmed.
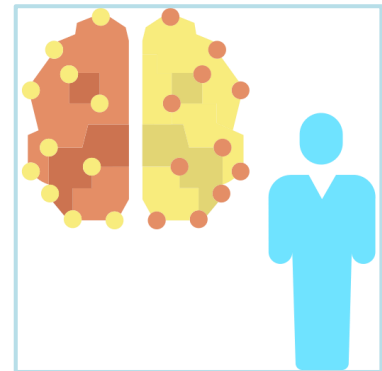
Chatbots are making lives easier

The rise of chatbots is a particular trend. Their implementation will reduce human-to-human interaction for people who work in professions such as customer service or even sales. This is what many businesses are moving towards. If you have clicked into the 'chat' function on a company website, you have likely been speaking to an AI. Not that this is news to anyone – in their current, rudimentary form, they are easy to spot.

Today's chatbots attempt to match certain keywords from what you type and then follow a pre-scanned script to guide you to what they think the answer is They are very task-oriented and still tend to hand-written queries as glorified if-then-else programmatic statements. Chatbots are good at fielding low-level queries, things a human employee may go into autopilot while doing anyway.

You'll help AI's work, too

The relationship between AIs and workers is set to be a symbiotic one. Though incredibly powerful and brimming with potential, these machines and mechanisms are bootless without our input.

Many of the most popular techniques, such as machine learning, are data driven. They're powerful techniques, sure, but they typically require large amounts of indicative data to learn. Much of this data is the result of human decisions, which are influenced by sometimes difficult-to-quantify things such as compassion or bias. The AI learning will absorb all of this but tends to be very task-focused and can be brittle when required to act outside of what it has learned."

An AI programmed to approve mortgages can be trained based on the reams of data created over the past five, even 10 years. It will perform well until the market inevitably undergoes significant change and its knowledge base becomes less relevant. Humans are very much needed to generate the data upon which the data-driven AI will learn.

Key Point
AI is developing each day, every minute and it is here not to ruin, but help the human race in every aspect.

The AI workplace has eyes

Monitoring in the workplace is a definite bone of contention and isn't given enough airtime in the AI discourse on future of work. In particular little attention is given to how AI will influence the office as an environment. AI-enabled office of the future is one where the walls – and every other thing employee interact with – will have eyes.

"AI will allow the constant monitoring – perhaps bordering on surveillance – of the workplace and the employees in the workplace. This has many potential downsides with regard to employee freedoms and privacy, but has lots of benefits both for the employer and employee … It will lead to a more effective and productive work environment."

AIs could be used to monitor how employees interact with and move around their working space "to identify the best office layout to support collaboration and teamwork". Though the privacy implications are disquieting, it could be a great way to discover trends that can steer office design.

What to expect about AI

Although we don't know the exact future, it is quite evident that interacting with AI will soon become an everyday activity. These interactions will clearly help our society evolve, particularly in regard to automated transportation, cyborgs, handling dangerous duties, solving climate change, friendships and improving the care of our elders. Beyond these six impacts, there are even more ways that AI technology can influence our future, and this very fact has professionals across multiple industries extremely excited for the ever-burgeoning future of artificial intelligence.