

Center for Digital Transformation

Transforming Enterprises for the AI Era *Three essential steps to get started*

As the known capabilities of AI continue to change, businesses will need a playbook to correctly harness AI and overcome the challenges it poses. The journey begins with putting into place the key building blocks.

Democratization of AI is Expanding Human Possibility

Chris Nardecchia expressed his excitement about the opportunity that exists to unlock data and insights and improve processes now that the tools are becoming much simpler to deploy. “At Rockwell, we talk about expanding human possibility through these technologies. And generative AI is the perfect kind of thing to unlock that, right?”

Nardecchia, SVP and Chief Digital & Information Officer at Rockwell Automation, stated that transformation starts with people. “We like to start with the people first of saying how do we have to shift mindsets?” To that end, they have developed communities of practice around their data analytics capability and AI where people can come and experiment, learn from each other, and then extend the capabilities of the whole organization. “Building up those kind of technology capabilities have helped us move forward.”

Step 1: Developing Policies

Before jumping on the AI bandwagon, companies need to create clear policies around the use of this rapidly expanding technology.

Maletira, CEO of Rackspace Technology, said it’s important to formalize the “do’s and don’ts” of AI so that businesses can prevent the worst and harness the best of the technology. He also recommended the creation of a clear framework for governance and compliance so that companies can govern a secure, sustainable, and ethical deployment of AI.

Step 2: Building an AI Mindset

While policies help steer decision making, an AI mindset can also encourage growth and innovation. This has been a guiding principle for Verizon’s VP of AI Meghna Sinha over the last few years as she works to scale machine learning for one of the largest telecom companies in the U.S. During her journey, she’s found that it’s not just about building various models. Companies need to cultivate an environment where you can really think about how AI can serve business needs.

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Transforming Enterprises for the AI Era (cont.)

In order to think about the problems that AI can help alleviate, she divided use cases into four categories: growth, customer experience, operational efficiency, and data foundations. Sinha is looking for reusability and scale in everything she does. So, while focusing on a few techniques within these problem spaces, Sinha wants to ensure that they are highly reusable. Success in integrating these techniques also means scaling vertically and horizontally across the company to ensure that there aren't any siloed departments.

Sinha is also working on fostering a “growth and experimental mindset” in the company as it brings in new talent.

“We really focused on upskilling most of our team, making sure that we are hiring for the talent that can learn and brought in external new talent,” she said. “We’ve really focused on culture as well.”

Step 3: Developing AI Talent

While deploying AI at scale certainly demands core competence in AI, that's not enough. With the wide range of potential uses, all workers must be AI literate.

As Maletira posited “Businesses should drive improvement in AI literacy in the organization.” “That doesn't just mean in technical folks. It has to be across the board. Generative AI will impact every single business function in every single industry.”

Similarly recognizing the need for increased AI training, Marcello Damiani helped create an AI Academy at Moderna while formerly serving as its chief digital and operational excellence officer. The Academy educated workers on what was needed in order to use the technology appropriately.

“We have a huge amount of training that went into the organization,” Damiani, Senior Partner at Flagship Pioneering and Board Director for Cellarity and BenevolentAI, said. “We worked to implement what is needed for people to be able to achieve their job, whether this is the automation of the data flow, the quality of the data they need to generate, or the algorithmics that they need to use to analyze the data.”

While every organization must determine for itself where and how to leverage AI, these three steps are essential to get started.