

LEADERSHIP FOR GROWTH

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NEW WAVE

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RISE OF THE MACHINES

One of the big decisions leaders are beginning to face is where to use artificial intelligence – and where not to.

STORY SALLY PATTEN

Companies may be racing to incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) in their day-to-day operations, but leaders must be aware of the technology's limitations and decide where its application is appropriate, says leading technology consultant Emma Martinho-Truswell.

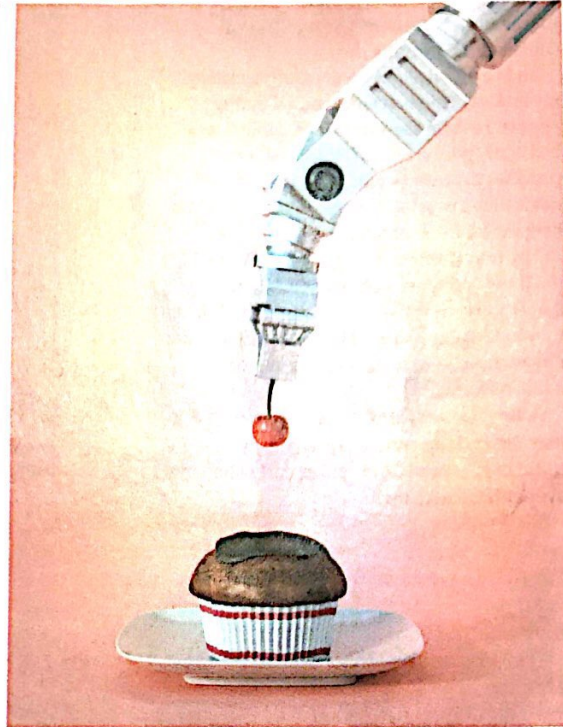
Where to use AI – and where not to – is one of the big decisions facing companies and public institutions, she says.

"Companies should define themselves not only by how they are using AI, but by how they will not use AI," says Martinho-Truswell, co-founder and chief operating officer of Oxford Insights, a British-based consulting firm that advises public and private institutions globally on AI strategies.

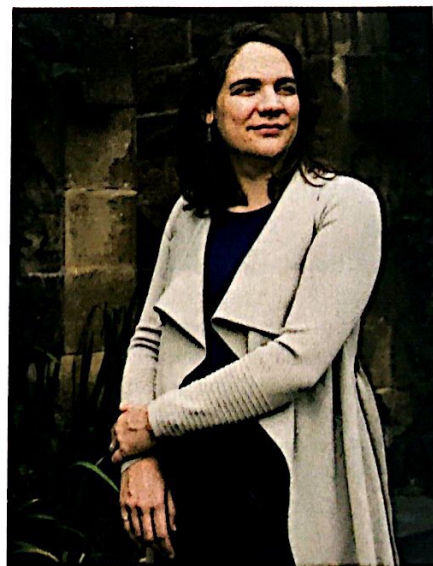
Deciding its appropriate applications will require business leaders to have a basic understanding of machine learning and the inputs that underpin the development of everything from virtual assistants to employment tools, credit assessments, safety tools and content analysis.

"Any leader should have a clear sense of AI's capabilities and limitations. You need to be able to interrogate the basics. If the data going in is not complete, inaccurate or reflects biases, the decisions [that come out the other end] will not be right," Martinho-Truswell says.

If AI is used too much in dealing with



AI could harm as well as help a business, says Emma Martinho-Truswell, right.



an organisation's stakeholders so that relationships became depersonalised, a company's reputation among clients and suppliers could be damaged. In the human

resources function, AI may be inappropriate in the last stages of hiring staff, settling employment disputes and the granting of sick leave.

"AI is trained on a series of examples. AI will not come up with a novel solution," says Martinho-Truswell, who completed a master's degree in public policy at Oxford University and worked at the Open Data Institute, which helps companies and governments to build an open, trustworthy data ecosystem, before setting up Oxford Insights in 2017.

RISKS AND CHALLENGES

Last October Amazon scrapped a "sexist" tool that used AI to decide the best candidates to hire for jobs. Members of the team working on the system said it effectively taught itself that male candidates were preferable.

In 2016 Microsoft shut down its artificial intelligence chatter bot because it was unable to recognise when it was making offensive or racist statements. In its 2018 annual report, Microsoft warned investors of possible consequences of its increased investment in AI.

"Issues in the use of artificial intelligence in our offerings may result in reputational harm or liability ... AI presents risks and challenges that could affect its adoption, and therefore our business," the report says.

Martinho-Truswell argues it is important that all employees are given basic training on machine learning, giving them the ability to suggest where automated processes might be appropriate and where they are not.

Google is training thousands of employees in basic decision-making science, while governments in Canada, France, Britain and South Korea are embarking on large general AI education programs.

"I think team members who know processes well will be better at spotting improvements, and will find it engaging to be part of that process, rather than a passive recipient of change. They might also spot risks more quickly and it will help them to map their own job pathways too," she says.

Emma Martinho-Truswell will speak at the Creative Innovation 2019 Asia Pacific conference in Melbourne on 1 April, creativeinnovationglobal.com.au.



Angus Grigg is a former China Correspondent for *The Australian Financial Review*.

HOUSE OF CARDS

The ritual of exchanging details is just waiting for an overhaul driven by technology.

It's been a year since I handed over my last business card. It was at the Japanese Prime Minister's office in Tokyo, where I filled an awkward silence with an explanation that the title, phone number and address on my card were no longer correct, but my name hadn't changed – an aside lost in the halting translation that followed.

After that cultural misstep, I returned to Sydney and twice failed to correctly submit the online form required for new cards, and so in frustration quit.

That's how I came to give up business cards, as I now smugly tell people.

I recommend it. For starters you'll automatically elevate yourself into the class of properly important people who don't carry business cards. Chief executives don't slip you a card, nor does the Prime Minister – just like ScoMo doesn't actually have keys to the Lodge.

Indeed, when someone genuinely important – the chairman of a state-owned steel mill in China – gave me a business card a few years back, I later realised it didn't contain a phone number, even for the switch.

In Australia, passing over a business card is equally no guarantee the person will hand back something useful. Another chairman once gave me a card with the wrong phone

number on it – he later told me it was a card especially for the media.

So I've hit on a new tactic. After declaring my lack of business cards when meeting people, I ask for their mobile number. I type it into my phone and call them, which provides my number and saves a stack of cards filling my pockets only to end up on the bedside table never to be looked at again.

The only problem is that my new system is a little clunky, which got me thinking that surely some clever Millennial can crowd-fund a technology solution – business card scanners are not much use when you don't have a business card.

Actually, there's already a solution out there. It's called WeChat and it's brilliant, if you don't mind the Chinese Communist Party knowing everything you're up to.

This is really where my issue with business cards started. In China, no one uses them much any more, doing away with the overly formal custom of handing over your card with two hands and bowing deeply.

The exchange of details in China is now done almost entirely through WeChat and the scanning of QR codes. It's a slightly awkward process as you work out who's going to scan who, then fumble around completing the act.

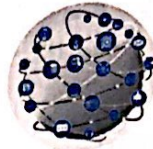
“You'll be automatically elevated into the class of properly important people.”

But once that's out of the way, in a few seconds you know the person's name and can contact them either through WeChat or via their mobile phone number, which is also available – in China you can't use fake names or phone numbers when setting up a WeChat account as that would make it harder for the government to spy on you.

WeChat also offers mobile payments, a social network, messaging and an online shopping platform. Why WhatsApp or Twitter hasn't simply copied WeChat's digital business card is beyond me.

In the meantime I will continue my accidental crusade against the business card, at least until I next go to Japan.

Events



FEBRUARY 25-26

Emergence Conference, Brisbane
eventbrite.com.au

Explore the latest investment trends and opportunities in start-ups, crypto, emerging and listed companies.



MARCH 8-9

Meet the Makers: Women in Beer, Wine and Spirits, Sydney
cellarmasters.com.au, BWS.com.au

Some of the best female winemakers, brewers and distillers from Australia and New Zealand offer opportunities to sample their wines, ciders, beers, gin and other spirits.



MARCH 18-21

Public Sector Ethical Leadership and Governance Summit, Canberra
liquidlearning.com

Australian public-sector professionals will explore the impact of ethics, culture and the role of leadership in building, promoting and embedding governance frameworks.



MARCH 20-21

Global Iron Ore and Steel Forecast Conference, Perth
informa.com.au

Obtain the latest global outlook for iron ore and steel demand and supply as industry leaders discuss plans and challenges. Speakers include Fortescue Metals' Greg Lilleyman.



APRIL 1-3

Creative Innovation 2019 Asia Pacific, Melbourne
creativeinnovationglobal.com.au

Global leaders and thinkers offer forecasts, strategies and practices to help leaders adapt to a rapidly changing world.