

Hey! What's New? 2026 – 27

Five Ways to Track the ROI of AI

Alexandra Cai writes in *INTHEBLACK* that realizing gains from AI is about more than just saving time – it's a chance to rethink how a business runs. "When used well, AI becomes a catalyst for deeper insight and more informed decision-making over the long term." And, she adds, there are ways to measure the impact AI is already having in an organization that will likely become more sophisticated over time. Here are five."

1. Link AI investment to problem solving, not task completion. According to Cai, "many organizations struggle to track the return on AI because they measure activity — such as the number of tasks automated — rather than outcomes. A more effective way to assess ROI is to look at whether AI is helping people solve real business problems and changing how work gets done."

Cai quotes Dr. Sean Gallagher, future-of-work expert Dr Sean Gallagher, founder of Humanova, as saying that "organizations are treating AI as a special-purpose technology to be applied to specific tasks. AI's full benefit comes from enabling your workforce to apply it to an ever-increasing range of work — not from automating a handful of predefined use cases. AI delivers real value when it is deployed as an enterprise-wide initiative aligned to strategy. If it does not link to strategy, it should not proceed."

2. Use integration and compliance metrics. AI has promise across many applications, but three aspects need to be addressed before AI can deliver a return: data silos, security and trust. Cai says that "AI delivers the greatest value when it is scaled across the organization, not implemented in departmental silos, with impact measured at an enterprise level. It should be noted that different AI engines have different strengths, making it important to match the tool to the task. For example, some AI platforms excel at generating and reviewing code, while others are better suited to tasks such as content creation, data analysis or workflow automation."

3. Monitor AI performance metrics to understand where it creates capacity. Understanding how AI is freeing up capacity and saving time can help with forward planning. "Measuring ROI for artificial intelligence adoption requires careful alignment with expected benefits. For most organizations, the primary benefit from enterprise AI tools is time saving," she quotes Dr. Michael G Kollo, chief AI transformation officer at Qualitas, an ASX-listed Australian alternative real estate investment manager, as saying. "Tracking metrics such as the number of messages, projects or custom GPTs [generative pre-trained transformers] helps technology leaders identify where capacity is being created across teams and activities," he adds.

4. Calculate additional value that is being added. It is important to avoid asking AI to perform unfamiliar tasks, because it is impossible to evaluate the output without extensive human involvement. "Think about the task you're using AI for, because that is going to drive the outcome," says Michael Davern, professor of accounting and business information systems at The University of Melbourne. "I get worried about macro measures such as hours saved. It might be OK to measure AI's effects that way from an efficiency perspective, but there is a lot

that could mess up EBITDA and make it impossible to meaningfully interpret what you're getting out of AI."

Adds Cai, "the real value of AI lies in how well it connects people, processes and technology to improve productivity, efficiency and resilience. A practical example is using AI to retain the knowledge of a retiring employee, which reduces disruption and supports faster upskilling of new staff."

5. Evaluate customer-facing innovation. Cai says achieving ROI on AI is about the nexus of intelligence, data and humans. Retail credit underwriting is an example, as it involves multiple micro-decisions such as gathering applicants' data, assessing risk and pricing products. According to Dr. Dimitrios Salampasis, a Swinburne University associate professor, "tasks such as interpreting incomplete documents, verifying income irregularities or resolving ambiguities in credit histories that were once performed manually can now be enhanced with AI. It is more than just accelerating steps to yield measurable returns, which are not only financial, it is also about customer-facing innovation that, in turn, improves customer retention and customer acquisition."

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