



AI – the case for asking the right question

by Jeroen Bet, Director of Strategy, Luxoft's Smashing Ideas

In Brief:



In his latest blog post, Jeroen Bet, Director of Strategy at Luxoft's Smashing Ideas, argues that instead of asking how to use AI in a business, a more effective question to ask is what customer and business challenges exist and how they can be solved using any tool, AI included.



Drawing on his experience with Augmented Reality, Jeroen underscores that technology should be viewed as an enabler rather than a predefined solution, to avoid getting stuck in the problem-solving process.



A technology-first approach can sometimes lead to inefficient solutions and even solving the wrong problems. Better outcomes can be achieved by understanding the underlying problem first, then exploring potential solutions

Many organizations are asking themselves, "How can we make use of AI in our company?" However, there is a higher-value question that needs to be answered first.

The buzz around **AI and ChatGPT**

If there's one buzzword in the corporate world today, it must be artificial intelligence - AI for short. AI is not new. It's been around for a while but has picked up steam lately, not least because of ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence bots. And with good reason, for anyone who has ever tried ChatGPT has found it to be an extremely useful tool. You can have a conversation with it, learn

something from it and use it to support your day-to-day tasks. It seems all knowing, and its supporters think it's the best thing since sliced bread. So, it's no surprise that many business leaders are jumping on the AI / ChatGPT bandwagon and asking themselves, "How can we use it in our company?" But is that the right question?



The struggle to find use cases

About three or four years ago, my team was asked to find a use case for this new thing called Augmented Reality (AR), the tech buzzword of the day. Our client, a technology museum on the west coast, wanted to have a more interactive experience around a first generation of personal computers. AR was the predetermined technology of choice. However, after brainstorming and meeting for two weeks, my team was struggling to find the right AR experience to design.

Why? We didn't know what our customers would enjoy. We didn't know what an engaging museum experience looked like. If we wanted to build something with Augmented Reality, we had to find out what engaging museum experiences were out there, and whether those involved technology or not. Furthermore, we needed to think about AR as an enabler, not as a solution.

In our work of strategy and design consulting, we've seen many examples of using a new technology as the starting point for solving business challenges. The phrase "silver bullet" sometimes comes to mind. But starting with this technology-first mindset often frustrates business owners, as they struggle to find use cases for the application. As with the previous museum example, this pre-described solution way of thinking often leads to teams getting stuck as they are trying to find the right problem to solve.

Why we keep doing this

The answer may be part psychology, part business logic. From a psychology point of view, we humans concentrate heavily on solutions and we want to resolve things fast. In addition, business leaders often feel the pressure to fix things quickly - so what better than to start with a solution and just find a problem, right?



Business leaders believe that technology solutions are more efficient and cost-effective than other approaches, and they may be influenced by industry trends and expectations, including pressure to adopt the latest technology. However, this technology-first approach can sometimes be problematic. For example, businesses may implement technology solutions without fully understanding the underlying problem, leading to

mediocre solutions, or even solving the wrong problem. It also leaves no room to look for other solutions to a problem, such as process improvements or changes in organizational culture.

So, how can we find opportunities for new technology without having this technology-first mindset? The answer lies in the question we ask and how we see AI.

A better question to ask

To start thinking about a better question to ask, we need to re-define AI. We need to move away from “AI is a solution” to accepting that AI is merely one of the many tools in our toolbox. This thinking effectively moves the discussion away from focusing on one technology – AI, in this case - leaving room for AI and all other tools or processes to solve a problem. So, if we see AI as an enabler, we can concentrate on the real problem. The question then changes from, “What can we solve with AI?”, to, “What are our customer and business challenges and how may we solve this - using any tool in our toolbox?”

In our museum example, a better approach would have been to get more data around museum visitors. Who are they? What do they enjoy? What is their motivation? What challenges do they encounter visiting museums? If we’d have had the answers to those questions, we would have been able to build our insights and create questions with more than one answer. Then, we could ideate solutions that could be solved by technology.

The same applies for any business that wants to adopt a new technology. AI is there, we just need to apply it to solve the right problems.



About **the author**



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Jeroen is a strategy director with a solid background in customer experience. Over the course of his 25-year career, Jeroen has worked with companies such as Chempoint, Expedia, Costco, Amazon, and Microsoft. He has collaborated with a variety of stakeholders, including scientists, engineers, plant managers, marketers, conservationists, end-users, and business leaders. Jeroen has successfully led project teams in developing human experiences that incorporate AI and other cutting-edge technologies.

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