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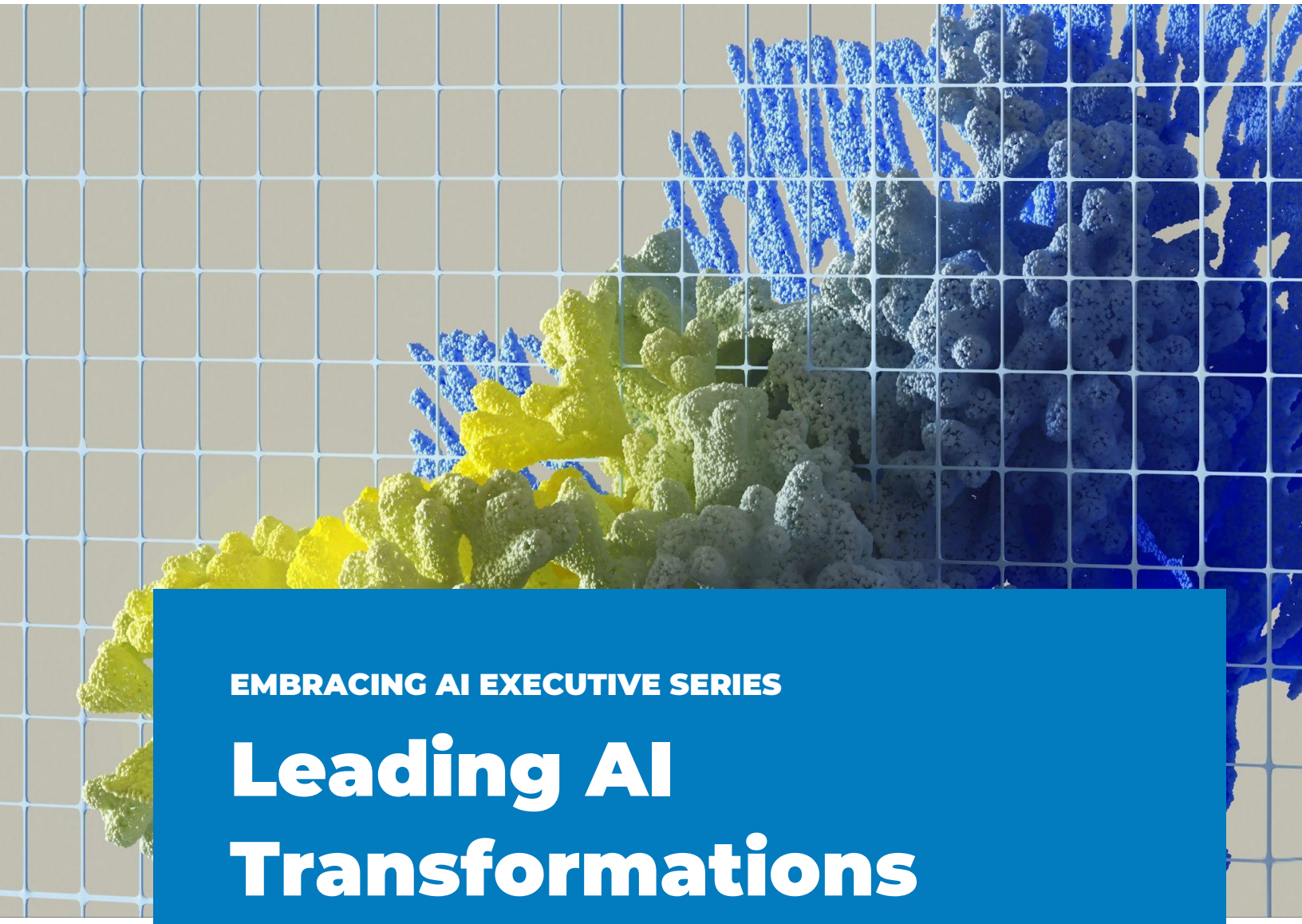

EMBRACING AI EXECUTIVE SERIES

Leading AI Transformations

November 2024
Discussion summary

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Acknowledgements

About the authors

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Breakfast Series Organizing Committee

We thank the following members of EY, SalesChoice and Bedford Group for their leadership contributions in organizing the series:

- Cathy Cobey, Global Responsible AI Co-Lead, EY
- Yvonne Zhu, Canadian Responsible AI Leader, EY
- Tanya Chadha, Assistant Director, Brand, Marketing & Communications, EY
- Roopal Dave, Senior Consultant, EY
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- Cynthia Milley, Project Coordinator & Executive Assistant, Bedford Group

Background

EY, SalesChoice and Bedford put together the **Embracing AI series: An Executive Guide to the Future**, a seven-session breakfast series, to:

- Help attendees build confidence to generate trustworthy, purposeful and sustainable AI business models that can stand the test of time
- Engage thought leaders and experts in the field, unboxing and sharing recent and groundbreaking AI research
- Gather insights to help attendees navigate their AI initiatives with increased confidence.

Overview

In today's dynamic business environment, AI is crucial for driving significant transformations across sectors. This whitepaper explores leading AI transformation, focusing on pioneering organizations' AI strategies and practices.

It highlights their innovative approaches and AI's impact on operations and growth. Through case studies and professional insights, the paper examines successful AI integration into business models, emphasizing cross-functional collaboration, strategic partnerships and brand integrity. It aims to provide leaders with actionable insights and leading practices to guide their AI transformation journeys, enhancing efficiency, customer satisfaction and market competitiveness.

The event involved participants from across industry and government, including C-suite executives and board directors. The insights presented in this paper were derived from the presentations, panel discussions and participant feedback during the event.

The remaining sessions in this series will take a deeper dive into specific areas needed to support an AI strategy, including capabilities, technology infrastructure, regulatory compliance and value metrics. Register here.

CEOs' top 7 lessons

#1: AI is a critical leadership skill foundation for digital literacy know-how.

#2: Leading from the top really matters.

#3: Developing a strategic AI journey framework and new AI operating practices is imperative.

#4: An AI strategy must be grounded in corporate purpose.

#5: AI entry — right use case — must demonstrate value given low ROI trends.

#6: Building agile muscle — AI lab enablement for early demonstration of proof of concept and minimal viable product.

#7: People really matter — diversity in AI teams and focus on mindfulness. More humanness.

The importance of corporate purpose and AI integration

Corporate purpose is a key governance priority to manage AI responsibly. Research by Dr. Gordon and Dr. Sara Diamond can be found here.

Currently, AI use cases are generating a disappointing return on investment, with a global ROI of around 5%. Key challenges include a lack of leadership direction, selecting impactful AI use cases and building sustaining momentum. In addition, 80% of AI models are exposed due to flawed datasets and unsustainable results.

Participants discussed mitigating risks through agile minimal viable products (MVPs) and proof of concept (POC) methods and ensuring "human in the loop" practices are applied in all AI modelling.

Workforce challenges were also discussed, including the importance of upskilling talent and supporting the mental health and wellness of young workers.

In addition, the session addressed the importance of rethinking traditional HR processes to augment annual surveys with employee regular reflection check-ins.

SalesChoice shared its AI employee engagement innovation, MoodInsights, developed with support from the Ontario Centre of Innovation (OCI), the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Purolator.

AI governance is more than oversight

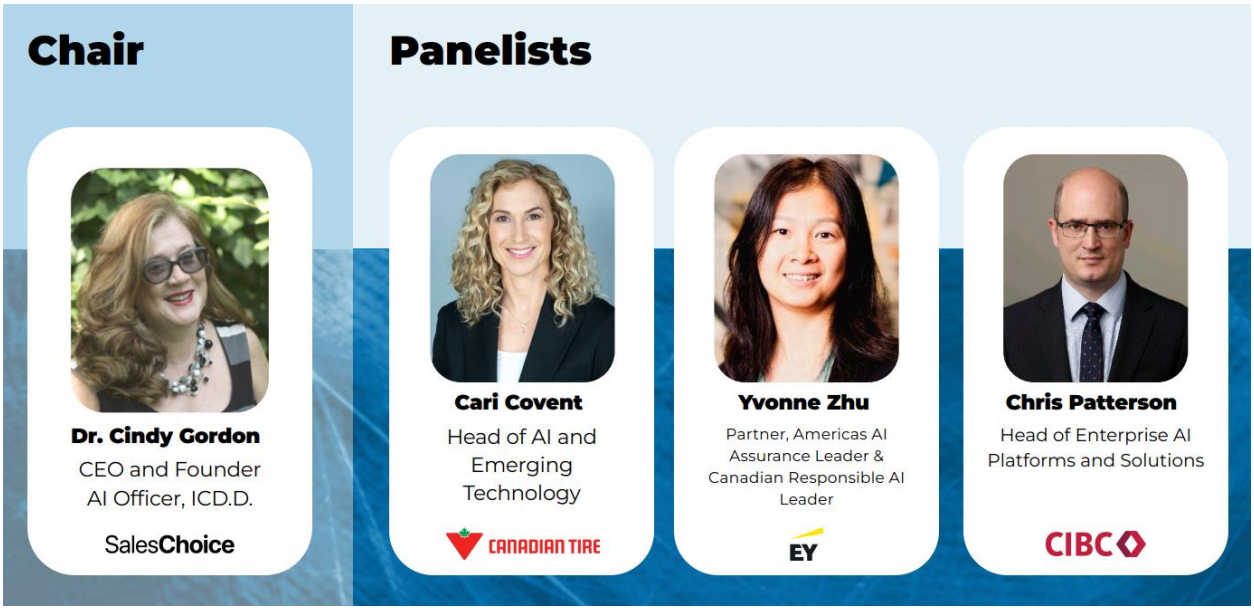
In a deep dive, we discussed lessons learned in the deployment of generative AI capabilities at a global institution. Data scientists strategically deployed AI to enhance client service and reduce fraud, while adhering to regional regulations. Rigorous governance ensures a cautious approach to generative AI.

The organization employed LLMs to align AI initiatives with business strategies. Internally, LLM and copilots boosted productivity, despite challenges in measuring benefits. While the copilots have underperformed, the bank's LLM showed better results and will be rolled out to 40,000 users.

High costs have hindered chatbot projects, but tailored AI solutions have proven valuable, emphasizing the need for customized over vendor-provided options.

Panelist discussion

We had an informative discussion on the challenges and opportunities of AI, providing insights into what has worked and what needs to come next.



How do you ensure AI initiatives are in harmony with the organization's strategic goals? What processes are needed to regularly align AI projects with business priorities?

To ensure AI initiatives align with strategic goals, the Head of AI and Emerging Technology at both CIBC and Canadian Tire lead a Centre of Enablement (COE) that identifies, measures and deploys AI use cases. Talent from the COE is embedded into the business, integrating projects back into operations.

The COE focuses on upskilling and responsible AI deployment. The Head of AI ensures governance aligns with strategic objectives, moving use cases from feasibility to scale. A governance council reviews AI projects pre-pilot, tracking metrics and integrating risk, privacy and cybersecurity considerations, ensuring consistent alignment with business objectives.

Share an example of an AI project that significantly added value to your organization, and the key factors that contributed to its success?

Canadian Tire successfully implemented an AI project with ChatGPT to create a generative shopping assistant for tire purchases, marking a retail first. Launched

within a year, this cross-functional effort involving automotive, digital, AI and COE teams significantly increased ROI by doubling user cart additions and purchase completions and raising average order value. This success enhanced market speed and capitalized on the company's brand strength for future deployments.

How has your organization been advancing leadership and culture adoption of AI?

Advancing AI leadership and culture was a priority in all organizations. Key initiatives like cultural evolution, talent cycle management and upskilling programs were viewed as must-haves vs. nice-to-haves.

While leaders drove these cultural changes and advocated for necessary investments, concerns remain about adequate funding for change management, especially after incidents like code compromise due to improper AI tool use.

What is the single biggest challenge you have faced when managing AI transformations in your organization and how have you overcome it?

The biggest challenge in managing AI transformations has been navigating regulatory and compliance hurdles. Persistence and strong leadership were key, as shown by a recent compliance call that turned a skeptic into an advocate.

This experience underscores the importance of strategic investment and commitment to overcoming barriers, ultimately facilitating broader AI adoption. The upskilling of executives is key to operational success since the "language of AI" requires professional development commitments and continual learning.

Additional resources

Register for the remaining sessions of Embracing AI series: An Executive Guide to the Future.

Visit EY and SalesChoice for additional resources on AI.

Event hosts

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All in to shape the future with confidence.

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SalesChoice Inc. is a **SaaS AI and Data Sciences company** with a vision to enable human advantage using Trusted AI Methods to accelerate growth. Its **InsightEngine**™ is an Award-winning AI platform that brings B2B sales and employee productivity apps to organizations. While **SalesInsights**™ helps B2B sales teams to end revenue uncertainty and sales inefficiencies to increase top-line revenue, **MoodInsights**™ helps organizations reduce costs by tackling employee or customer churn, operational and safety risks, workforce wellbeing, and diversity equity and inclusiveness. The company also offers **AI Services** (design, build, run), across diverse AI use cases and industries to achieve its overall vision of Ending Revenue Uncertainty for Human Advantage, using Trusted and Responsible AI practices, with robust AI audit trails.

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