

Outside Insight debate: AI is not intelligent

By  Juanita Pienaar

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Meltwater CEO, Jorn Lyseggen, recently launched his new book, *Outside Insight*, and as part of the promotional book tour the company hosted a panel discussion last week, where Lyseggen joined the likes of John Sanei (trend and innovation specialist), Brett StClair (CEO, Siatik), Dave Duarte (founder of Treeshake) and Reona Bassudeo (data scientist, Thomson Reuters) to talk about the impact of AI on corporate decision making. Here, I highlight a few of the points that came out of the debate.



Speakers on panel (from left to right): Brett StClair, Dave Duarte, Jorn Lyseggen, Reona Bassudeo and moderator, John Sanei.



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Sanei, who was the moderator for the evening, started the dialogue by asking StClair his perspective on what's going on in the world of AI. He also asked him to talk a bit about his experiences working for Barclays where he used to be the head of digital product management. StClair responded and agreed that AI is currently a massive topic. He shared that the term AI has been used for about 50 years and that there are a million different segments that the world of AI can be divided up into, but that you would have to try and understand your data.

StClair said that when he entered the world of banking he found that data was a complete disaster. "When I started, I said to myself the first thing I'm going to do is to look at our analytics data, only to find out that we had not a shred of analytics data." He said he was told they had a lot of data around payments and customers but that they couldn't even match up their payments data and their customer data. The data was all over the show.

It's important to look at your data intensely as a large corporate on the internal side but perhaps banking's saving grace will be looking at data from the outside in, said StClair. However, he reiterated that the first step is to look at the data, and the second step would then be to ask what problem you are actually going to solve. "AI is a fantastic set of tools that is still far from any kind of maturity. Currently we're doing really cool stuff because a number of big technology shifts are starting to enable us to accelerate the art of science to understand what we can do with data and get responses from it."

The future of jobs

Next Sanei asked the panel to elaborate on the question of jobs. He said every time there is a discussion about AI, the question is raised, "What is going to happen to people's jobs?" He asked Duarte where he sees education playing a role in this. Duarte responded that one of the things they are struggling with is the fact that people are swimming in information. "We are dealing with increasingly smaller shares of attention with regards to people. So, the future of learning might not be insight, it may be equipping people with tools to take decision-making off their hands."



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When it comes to the future of jobs, he says, he doesn't believe that AI is going to replace jobs. "If you take something like the use of *Outside Insight*, where you are going to first go through a conditioning period simplifying the complexities of the information into manageable dashboards and then have highly educated individuals use that insight to be better decision-makers, we might get flooded with too much information, and we will then have to make decisions too quickly – and the role here for humans to play, is to give insight to the machine," he explained.

Duarte continued on and told the audience that Toyota invested really heavily in automation in the first part of the last decade, and what happened is that they had an immediate surge in productivity and output. However, their innovation then flatlined because to increase innovation they had to match that investment in capability to improve that innovation. In other words, in equal levels, they needed to increase their creativity, their skills, their market insight and their interpersonal learning experience - which machines are not able to do. He said if you do this, it enhances what machines are capable of and that's basically what Toyota has done now. So everything that they have invested in automation, AI and machine learning, they had to match with capability building.



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AI is a very sophisticated calculator

At this point, Lyseggen chipped in and said that what he's learned, to his surprise, is that artificial intelligence is not intelligent at all. It's a computer that processes a large amount of data in certain patterns. "And it's not this being inside of a computer, it's just a very sophisticated calculator. A calculator can calculate data extremely fast. That doesn't mean it's intelligent. It doesn't mean it's smarter than you. It has 0 intelligence. But it doesn't mean that artificial intelligence hasn't got incredible potential. I think AI will eventually invade every inch of our lives. It is powerful but it is not intelligent. It's algorithms and computers that we program to process a large amount of data."

StClair said he likes the analogy of a scientific calculator. Artificial intelligence is time. Before it use to take us ages to process the data. Whatever we had to process we never had the computing power we have today. Lyseggen agreed and said AI is data that outsources all the boring data, which allows humans to be creative and unpredictable.



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Sanei continued and asked the panel what the executive of the future looks like? Bassudeo responded and said that she thinks a good leader will have to have an exceptionally high EQ. “You have to have the time and patience to really understand who it is you are working with. You have to have the capability and the creativity to boost your employees’ performance,” she said.

Duarte also reacted and said if you look at the data, you know that the executive of the future is going to be far more imaginative, he said. “They’re going to have to have far higher levels of empathy and more importantly, is that they will be highly collaborative. I know that what we are looking for when we go into organisations is that we can transform, specifically at a leadership level – the first thing that executives need to understand is that transformation isn’t a moment, it’s more a footnote; the capability to plug into a network of change. So, the executive of the future is able to plug into networks of intelligence,” he said.

Lyseggen said that he believes that humans will be playing a very important role in the future. “AI, contrary to popular belief is biased. Humans drive intelligence,” he ended off.

The event took place at the Woodstock Exchange in Cape Town on Thursday, 22 November 2017.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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