

Seven habits of successful implementation of (Generative) AI

The world of AI is evolving at a pace that feels like trying to catch a speeding train — the developments and opportunities are vast. But, like any great adventure, there's also undiscovered territory and potential pitfalls. Organizations, in their quest to embrace and implement AI, face many challenges. How does one navigate this AI wonderland, and what prerequisites and measures are needed for a successful and controlled implementation of generative AI? Covey has his '7 habits for highly effective people.' Now, imagine if organizations had their own '7 habits for throwing an epic party with (generative) AI.' We've kicked things off – take a look below.

1. A learning organization begins by beginning

Accept that learning about AI is a journey not a destiny.

Don't wait for the utopic 'AI textbook' to have your organization learn from. Provide a safe learning environment and encourage employees to just start and be hands-on.

Stimulate and facilitate learning in groups, preferably cross-functional. Result: better oversight over both the opportunities and risks of AI for the organization.

Involve employees in developing ground rules for responsible use of AI. Make it a crowdsourced effort about desirable business conduct. Keep it simple, don't make the rules a black-box.

2. No music without tone-at-the-top

AI is first and foremost a business matter, and here to fundamentally shape the organization in the short, mid- and long term. Success in AI requires vision, an appetite for change and a let's do mentality. It requires leadership, to look beyond the technology, see the future of the business and be a driver of positive change.

3. Make AI safety primarily a business responsibility

Avoid making AI opportunities solely a business matter, and AI risks solely a staff function matter. There is no 'we' and 'they' in dealing with AI risks. The daily micro-decisions taken on and trade-offs made between the opportunities and risks of AI are a strategic business matter. In doubt? Ask your data scientists about the dilemmas they dealt with today.

4. Teach people to work with a 'clever assistant'

When technology is at its best, people make the difference. Learning to work with a 'clever assistant' is the next big skill in a majority of professions. A foundation model based AI assistant is just like a new colleague. In order to become a dream team, you and your new wired colleague must become attuned to each other. Starting yesterday, rather than tomorrow.

5. Don't go down the technical rabbit hole

Frontrunner organizations excel in their understanding that success in responsible deployment of AI goes beyond technical expertise. Recognize that AI implementation requires a holistic approach that considers health, safety, and fundamental rights of natural persons.

Not sure what that means? Not to worry, you're in the good company of a majority of organizations. Acknowledging that this skills set is new to the organization and expertise and experience needs to be built, is a leap towards addressing the matter in daily practice. Support employees in building awareness on responsible AI and teach them to recognize daily situations that require consideration, discussion or consultation. Facilitate them through accessible AI governance processes.

6. Walk the AI ethics talk

'Hard measures' to ensure digital safety, such as technical checks and balances in the development process of AI applications, are only effective if they have a 'soft breeding ground' in the organizational culture. This means that strategic priorities for digital safety cannot go hand in hand with solely commercial, financial KPIs in the workplace. Anyone who says strategic A must say operational B.

7. Open your windows to a community of perspectives

The most important risk when it comes to AI? The unknown unknowns.

What to do to address these risks?

- Form and involve diverse, cross-functional teams throughout the AI lifecycle.
- Create a safe learning environment where employees can speak up when they don't know or don't agree.
- Acknowledge that your organization has 'collective blindspots'. Involve third parties in your organizational ecosystem to bring in outside-in perspectives and help you by shedding light. Invite society in.