MEGA *Trends*

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Bitesize Morsels to Stay Up to Date

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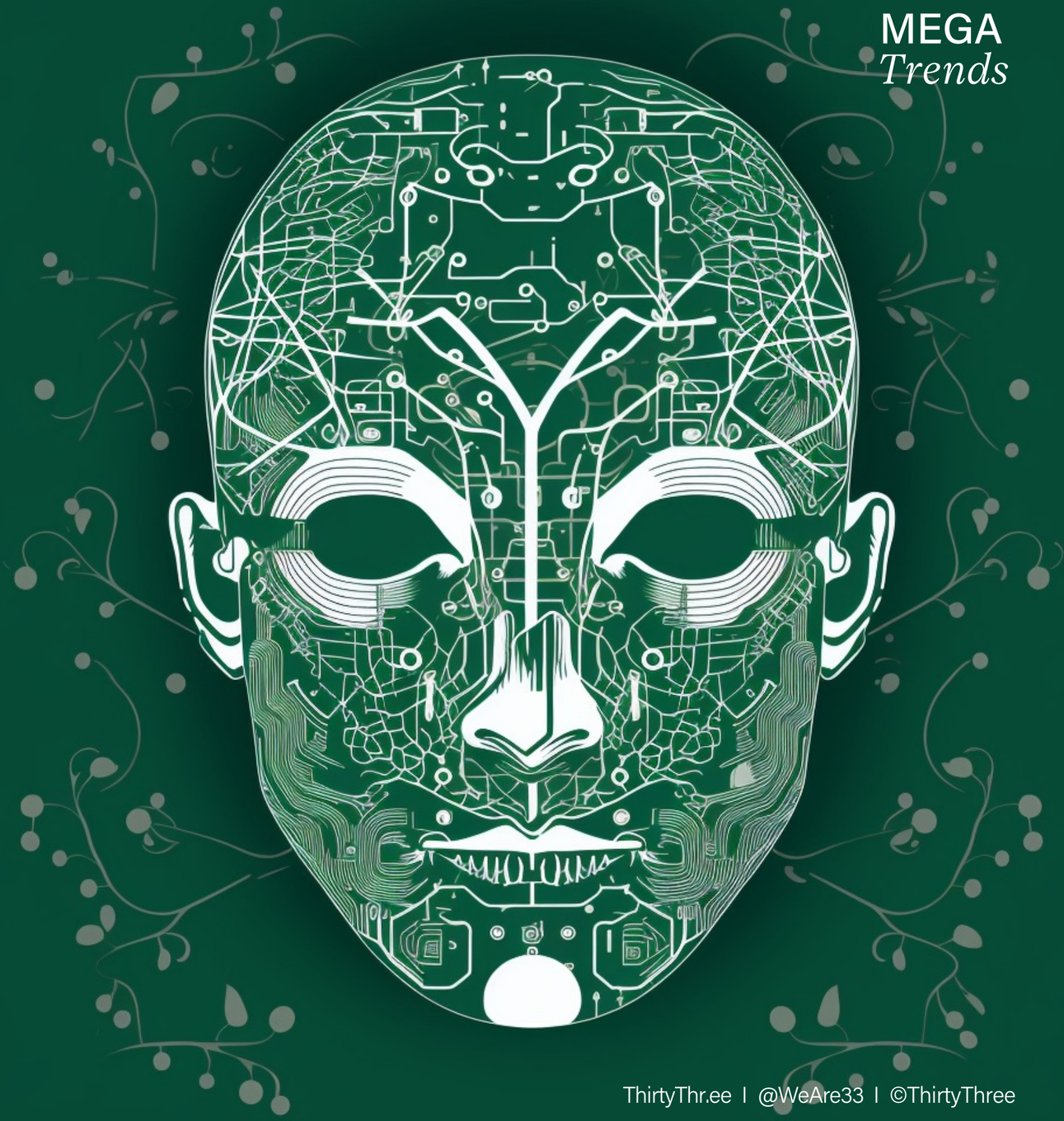
What is everyone *ChatGPTing* about?!

How is AI affecting the way we work?



What is AI?

> *Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a field of computer science that aims to create machines that mimic human intelligence. This involves tasks such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and language understanding.* ~ Definition via ChatGPT

Artificial intelligence (AI) is by no means simple. It's not even just one thing. AI Editor of the FT, Madhumita Murgia, describes AI as "software that needs tonnes and tonnes of data to be trained on and then it's able to draw patterns out of that data to come up with some kind of output."

The AI we are familiar with has two main kinds: **generative** and **predictive**.

Generative AI can be used for both imagery and text. The definition seen on the left was provided via ChatGPT and the imagery used throughout this report was created by the AI art generator, Midjourney. These AI programmes are trained on large datasets to understand patterns and generate new content (hence the name), such as images, text, or music, by leveraging their learned knowledge.

The second type of AI, Predictive AI, uses machine learning to go through data and make forecasts or predictions based on existing information.

Some areas where we have already seen AI take off are within the recruitment and communications worlds, where this new technology can automate tasks, produce reports, draft communications and make recommendations. This Mega Trends looks to explore some of the debates around AI and the concerns and possibilities it brings. However, it's worth noting, this report will only explore its application within white-collar work.

How will AI *impact my job?*

Google have been testing their own Beta chat bot LaMDA and found that, in theory, they would hire the bot as an entry level coder if it were to interview with them.

With stories like this, and the rapid innovation of generative AI, employees and employers alike are beginning to look at what the impact will be on employment. Will people lose their jobs? Will it create new jobs or will things stay the same?

The answer varies depending on who you are talking to and what sector they are in. The view, however, seems to be that it won't out-right replace you, but it will more than likely change the way you work.

The key will be to learn to work alongside AI and utilise it to your advantage. AI has the potential to tackle aspects of our jobs that are tedious and take up a lot of valuable time such as processing large data sets or proofreading lengthy reports. Understanding which aspects of your job could be done more efficiently by AI will allow you to focus on the aspects that are often more enjoyable and creative as it can automate the monotonous tasks that take up time and brain power.

The skill set *of the future*

> *Job growth will be more concentrated in high-skill jobs (for example, in healthcare or science, technology, engineering, and [STEM] fields), while middle and low-skill jobs (such as food service, production work, or office support roles) will decline.*
>
> ~ McKinsey 2023 'What is the future of work?'

Within discussions of how AI will impact working, the idea of the 'skill set of the future' is a recurrent theme. But what does this actually mean? And how can someone prevent their skills from becoming obsolete?

In a 2021 report conducted by PwC for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, it was predicted that those with a degree-level qualification are less likely to see their jobs automated, thus potentially widening social inequality.

A skills gap is highly likely to be created between the demand for the ability to work alongside AI and those who possess this skillset. We know it's happening already but the WEF Future of Jobs Report 05/23 suggests that nearly half (44%) of workers will need to update their skills.

There seems to be two main categories of skills that will be most in demand; the more human skills that AI can't replicate and the digital skills that will allow you to utilise or develop AI. McKinsey outlined 56 skills that will help citizens thrive in the future of work. Some of note are:

Storytelling

Empathy & humility

Collaboration

Digital literacy

Entrepreneurship

Public opinion on AI: *3 strands of opinion*

Perhaps one way of addressing the popular fear of AI is to challenge some assumptions. Some suggest that the name 'AI' is itself misleading: the software we have at the moment is not actually conscious. Ted Chiang, an American Sci-Fi writer, in an interview with The Financial Times, suggested a better name would be 'Applied Statistics.' This suggests that what we're looking at is really just a growth from the field of Big Data.

This topic attracts a considerable amount of media attention. This public debate has a profound impact on how people in the workplace view AI.

The majority of the discourse within the media takes one of three standpoints on AI.

1. **The Utopian View**: 'AI making jobs obsolete will give us so much free time for leisure.'
2. **The Pessimistic Counterargument**: 'AI will replace all of our jobs and we will be left as slaves to the computer.'
3. **The Good Faith Argument**: 'as long as AI isn't used with malign intentions, everything will be OK.'

The Utopian View

> *Ignore the doom-mongers, AI will give us more leisure time.*
> ~ Roger Bootle, The Telegraph, June 2023

Cast your mind back to the introduction of computers within our homes and our work places at the end of the last century. It was a revolutionary moment. With this introduction of new technology came talk of how this was going to change our working lives: computers were going to be able to take on tasks and lighten our workloads, freeing up valuable time for leisure. With this promise came talk around how we will fill all the leisure time we were going to have.

Fast forward to 2023 and this is not the case at all. People are now working harder than we ever have. While computers have taken on jobs previously completed by teams of employees, we do not have less work, In fact, tools such as email actually increase the volume of work we do*, as well as create an expectation of responsiveness, further pressurising office workers.

We are seeing these same arguments resurface with the implementation of AI, with software such as Chat GTP completing tasks that would normally take hours in a matter of seconds. Some even state that as much as 40% of our daily tasks could be automated or augmented by generative AI.

While this shift does suggest workloads could reduce, the lessons from the Computer Revolution are it is unlikely to mean we will be working less. If we look at the impact of the pandemic and work-from-home technology, the promise was that it would give us back time due to the elimination of the commute, but we saw many struggling to find the balance between the working day and leisure time, leaving many burnt out.

*see Cal Newport's *A World Without Email* (Penguin, 2021)

The Pessimistic Counterargument

> *The developing of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race.*
>
> ~ Stephen Hawking, quoted by the BBC.

On the other hand, some people and commentators are wholly against AI. Contrary to the Utopian View, they present apocalyptic predictions where AI eliminates all jobs and becomes the dominant form of intelligence in the world. Although the idea of a world taken over by computers and robots is a trope found repeatedly in the history of Sci-Fi, notable tech moguls and opinion leaders in science and technology such as Max Tegmark, Nick Bostrom, Bill Gates and Elon Musk have also shared these concerns.

Fears around technology are as old as technology itself, so it's not surprising we are seeing this again with the rise of AI. However, when thinking about the world of work, this argument overlooks the fact that jobs, as with technology, evolve over time. The lesson from the past is that with new technology comes new jobs.

When encountering this view, we need to make sure that we are aware of where this information is coming from. Even journalists themselves in this instance are not an unbiased parties. In fact, they are increasingly a biased source as their jobs become under threat from this very technology. Confirmation bias, as seen in this story, leads to more fear, and we have already seen sensationalist newspaper stories that repeat these fears without taking into account other factors that lead to job losses, such as poor management and workplace culture.

We don't know what effect AI could have on our lives, and this is leaving some people fearful and pessimistic towards its prospects and how it may be implemented.

The Good Faith Argument

> *AI may help make the roads safer, reduce waste, improve accessibility, stem the spread of misinformation, and more. On the scary side, though, many fear the technology may be used to create more targeted cyberattacks, aid government surveillance, and power killer drones.*
>
> ~ Angela Moscaritolo

Doesn't this feel familiar? With every technological advancement, you will have those who are strongly against and those who are die-hard fans, and as with many things in life, you have those who sit in the middle.

As discussed in 'Innovation and its Enemies' by Calestous Juma, it's a common phenomenon that humans have a habit of hindering their progress as it brings fears around losing a part of one's identity or lifestyle. For many, their decision around whether to accept new technology is based on gut over evidence.

Media moral panics take over and fearmongering begins and it's not until we begin to understand the impact of a new technology that wider acceptance happens and we move into business as usual.

The fear of the unknown will always bring out doomsday predictors just as much as the wonderment about the future will inspire those who are hopeful that AI could be the thing that fixes everything. The likelihood, as with many things, is it will end up being somewhere in the middle.

The general consensus is that as long as you are aware of the potential negative impacts that the software could have if abused and take precautions to avoid this, then it could have a beneficial and positive impact on our working life by reducing the time we spend on inefficient activities and processes.

Effective communication
Moving to acceptance

The reality of AI is that it already is, and will be, a part of our working lives. However, not all employees are at the stage of acceptance due to fear or lack of understanding. Education on the practical uses of this new technology will help a low friction, smooth implementation of AI so people reach a point where they are comfortable with it, helping us effectively harness its potential.

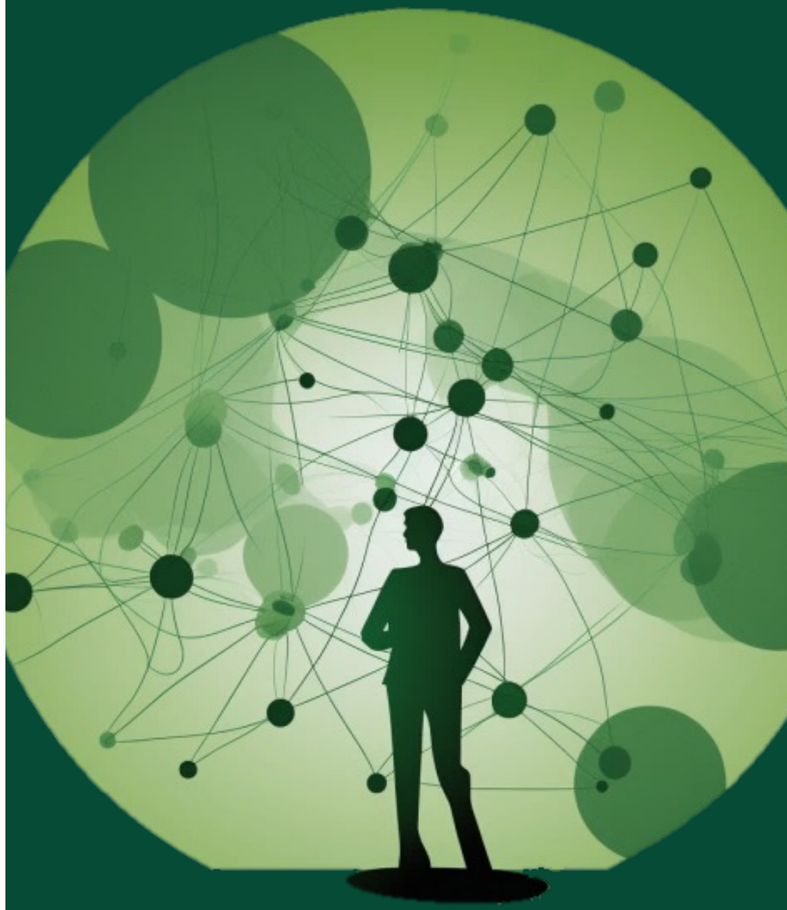
A useful model to help get us to this point is the **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).** TAM was developed to help understand the process in which consumers become comfortable with new technology and they can be eased into a desired usage behaviour. The model was later adapted for the application with rolling out new technologies within a business setting.

Three key actions within the TAM for the implementation of AI:

Trialling: testing AI with a small group to help understand where the potential pain points are, and areas of concern, can help you gauge how employees may react to the new technology.

Relevance: helping employees understand how AI would be used within the workplace by detailing AI's benefits in relation to an employee's day-to-day work.

Communication: being clear in your intentions with AI will help reassure people and create a culture of transparency and openness. Clear and honest dialogue around AI can also help to alleviate anxieties individuals may have around its potential future impact.



One final point…
The implications of AI for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

As the innovation and use of AI increases rapidly, the more we are seeing governments and other regulatory bodies step in with aim of providing guidance and policies on the fair use of this new technology.

On the one hand, AI use has been shown to create unintended bias as it learns from biased data, leading to decisions that perpetuate social inequalities. This is significant given that AI is increasingly being used to automate HR and recruitment processes. To mitigate this, careful curation of training data, diverse development teams and rigorous testing are essential in addressing bias in AI systems. But on the other hand, if these steps are taken, AI can actually facilitate DE&I progress, as human-bias and previously unidentified patterns of inequality can be exposed and removed from these processes.

Furthermore, AI can help to make workplaces more equitable in particular for neurodiverse colleagues. For instance, AI-powered tools can provide personalised accommodations, such as speech-to-text software, visual aids or sensory-sensitive interfaces to help individuals with specific needs effectively communicate and engage in their work. By tailoring experiences and offering need-based support, AI can contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive work environment for neurodiverse individuals.

However, when aligning AI and DE&I policy, it's not only important to consider how the company will use the software but to also take into account the audience you are speaking to.

There are many factors that will influence the way and ease at which we accept technology into our lives. However, age can often be an important factor. Research indicates that some demographics, in particular, older colleagues, often feel less confident in their technology-related skills and thus might be more hesitant adopting new technologies. Adapting change management communications to suit the different needs of your colleagues is a consideration that must be addressed.

Thank you!

Any comments or questions?

Please get in touch with your **ThirtyThree** contact. We look forward to hearing from you!

We'll be back in Q4 2023 with another Mega Trends update.