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# WHERE TO BEGIN WITH GENERATIVE AI?

## AND WHERE MIGHT IT TAKE US?

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Discussion Documents January 24

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# And where might it take us?

*On 12th December, we brought together senior executives from multiple industries to explore where to begin with Generative (Gen) AI and the possible outcomes for businesses. It was the second event in an annual CIONET series sponsored by Google and Cognizant around the theme of new technologies. The evening kicked off with a fireside chat between Duncan Roberts of Cognizant, Deb Lee of Google and Roger Camrass, Research Director at CIONET, in a fireside chat. This chat was followed by in-depth conversations across three tables.*

## Setting the scene on Gen AI

Gen AI has sparked massive interest among technologists and laypeople alike. Digital leaders describe it as the second 'iPhone' moment.

Organisations recognise that these tools offer vast potential. But they don't know how to deploy them without creating serious risks. Reactions have varied massively across the business world. Some executives have endorsed Gen AI, while other organisations have introduced blanket bans on popular tools.

Fundamentally, this new technology poses two questions for digital leaders:

1. What's the best way to start with Gen AI?
2. What value can we unlock from Gen AI in the coming years?

As the discussions began, it quickly became clear that the use of Gen AI is relatively immature in enterprise settings. That's in stark contrast to the strong uptake seen among consumers.

## What waves of change is Gen AI likely to unleash?

The discussion revealed several broad trends around Gen AI that participants are seeing across industries.

There was a real buzz around the prospect of using Gen AI to boost productivity. Today, automation is often deployed in siloes within organisations. This limits its potential to deal with complex queries and transactions. And it means employees often need to work across several different systems to complete tasks. Gen AI could become the integrating force that connects all these touchpoints together, enhancing the user experience and improving productivity.

The conversation also explored the potential to use Gen AI as a powerful learning tool. This is an exciting prospect, as companies will be challenged to undertake large reskilling programmes as AI scales across enterprises. Gen AI could be a game-changer, as it can compress learning times from weeks and months to hours or days. Our experts' view is that organisations that can harness Gen AI at scale will be the ones that survive the next decade.

## What impacts are we seeing in different sectors?

Delegates were eager to share the effects they're witnessing as AI becomes increasingly pervasive in their industries. There was broad agreement that despite confusion amongst enterprises, AI has already disrupted many sectors and will continue to do so at an accelerating pace.

Some industries are already tapping into the vast potential that AI can offer. For instance, retailers and banks are using it to personalise offers to suit individual consumers.

The advent of Gen AI is also transforming the way consumers wish to interact with their service providers, from media companies and retailers to banks and insurers. They expect providers to be able to answer complex requests and resolve issues by interpreting unstructured information and computer-generated data. This consumer push will force organisations into action, just like people's changing habits spurred the advent of e-commerce in the nineties.

It was highlighted and confirmed that marketing agencies and digital media companies are now on the frontline of such disruptive forces. A delegate from a leading agency confirmed that AI is having a massive impact on the entire media sector.

## A snapshot of current use cases

Driven by employees who are using Gen AI to enhance their personal experiences, organisations are mobilising around this new technique to respond to staff expectations. Delegates provided several use cases:

- For a major government department, Gen AI is being deployed to reduce the number of work steps in decision-making. A delegate pointed out that he signed off a multi-million-pound investment after seven staff members had given their approvals. Multi-level approvals could be automated by employing AI at every stage, saving time and money.
- For an insurance company, introducing AI systems to support case workers enables claims to be processed in a fraction of the time. For instance, Gen AI can bring together computer-generated data, text-based correspondence and images of damage to drive better customer interactions.
- At a global pharmaceutical company, bringing experts together to share experiences is common practice, but consolidating and publishing key findings is often cumbersome. One delegate organised an event involving 10,000 experts to discuss how AI can benefit Pharma. He recorded the discussions and used AI to produce shared insights. As a result, he could share learnings with attendees in days rather than weeks or months.

## What are the obstacles to mass adoption?

Delegates shared a range of experiences in how best to deploy Gen AI. Some have established 'Centres of enablement' that encourage the sharing of best practices and help accelerate collaboration across work groups. Most admitted that adoption was being driven bottom-up by enthusiastic individuals due to an absence of policy from the top.

However, at a global logistics company, the Executive Chair has taken full responsibility for implementation. In fact, he's already instituted a large language model across his firm. Why? Because he sees Gen AI as a key competitive advantage in an overcrowded market.

But cases like these are the exception, not the norm. When asked about the barriers to mass adoption of Gen AI, many delegates mentioned a lack of digital savvy at Board level. There was also talk of concern among internal legal departments about the potential risks of these new technologies. Legislation is evolving and lawyers are reluctant to approve schemes until clear policies are established.

Furthermore, there's significant concern around the issue of trust in AI. This is less about technology and more about culture. Establishing trust will be key to rolling out Gen AI at scale.

Companies face some difficulties at the operational level, too. For instance, there are now so many different large language models to choose from, it's becoming harder for organisations to select the right providers and IT platforms to meet their business needs.

## What to do next?

Rounding off the evening, the key challenges and opportunities presented by Gen AI were summarised, and practical advice offered on how to approach this new wave of technologies:

- Look for business problems that Gen AI could address. This requires educating general management on the technology's capabilities.
- Organise pilot schemes to determine the benefits of deploying Gen AI within critical business processes – for example, to increase speed, accuracy and efficiency.
- Agree policies on platforms and tooling to ensure consistency of adoption and to accelerate roll-out across organisations.

To get more information or to discuss the challenges and opportunities that Gen AI presents for your business, please contact Duncan

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A pioneer of today's Internet as an ARPA research fellow at MIT in the seventies, Roger has spent over forty five years helping corporations harness the power of new technologies such as cloud, mobile communications, e-commerce, voice recognition and satellite. He was a partner at EY responsible for e-commerce during the dot.com boom. He is a graduate of Cambridge University and MIT, and a visiting professor at the University of Surrey.

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