Ask the AI experts: What advice would you give to executives about AI?

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As executives consider where artificial intelligence can unlock business value, they'll need to cut through the hype and find talent with both technical and business acumen.

With the enormous impact of artificial intelligence on business becoming increasingly clear and imminent, executives face critical (and quick) decisions on their AI strategy. The impact of these decisions will have far-reaching, long-term implications on the profitability and continued viability of organizations around the world. Earlier this year at the AI Frontiers conference in Santa Clara, California, we sat down with AI experts from some of the world's leading technology-first organizations to learn what advice they would give to executives as they determine how to best employ AI across their business. An edited version of their remarks follows.

This video is one in a five-part Ask the AI Experts series that answers top-of-mind questions about the technology:

- What's driving today's progress in AI?
- What are the applications of AI?
- Should we be afraid of AI?
- What will take AI capabilities to the next level?

Interview transcript

Li Deng, *chief AI officer, Citadel:* I think everybody should embrace these modern AI capabilities. On the other hand, they also have to think about business-specific problems. Not every single tool that people in the AI community develop can suit them correctly.

Mohak Shah, *lead expert, data science, Bosch Research and Technology Center, North America:* Look into how the people-change will happen. I think the biggest challenge is not really technology—it is people.

I think the biggest gap that we currently need to address is the people who can connect the dots between technology and business impact. That's where I think we are really missing the boat. We need people who can look at a business problem, and have a technological solution, and essentially can see how the solution can be brought to value.

Adam Coates, *director, Baidu Research Silicon Valley AI Lab:* AI is substantially driven right now by three critical pieces. One is data, another is computing power, and the third is talent. As much as the field is hot, there still are not enough engineers who know how to apply these machine-learning algorithms with a really high level of skill. It's getting better, but it's still a scarce talent.

If you're interested in solving AI problems for your business, then I think it's important to think hard about whether you want to try to construct a machine-learning team within your company to solve a specific problem or whether you can now use enterprise platforms.

I think for drop-in AI technologies, like if you want to use speech recognition to help with a call center, I think this is still at a stage where you need some engineering help, possibly some experts to apply them. But I think in the future, the enterprise platforms for this are going to get very good.

Rajat Monga, *engineering director, TensorFlow, Google:* I see AI as a tool that should be in every CEO's tool belt, in every executive's tool belt. While it's a tool that's going to be in *everybody's* tool belt, it's a very, very powerful tool. Just like the Internet changed things in the last two decades, similarly, AI is going to be that big thing that's going to change a lot of things over the next couple of decades. It's going to be important to think about that as a key ingredient to whatever you build, whomever you serve, and however you manage and help your customers.

Gary Bradski, *chief technology officer, Arraiy*: You cannot not take this seriously. It's going too fast, it's spreading, and it's too fundamental to ignore. ◻

Simon London is the director of McKinsey digital communications and is based in McKinsey's Silicon Valley office. **Gary Bradski** is the chief technology officer for Arraiy, **Adam Coates** is the director of the Baidu Research Silicon Valley AI Lab, **Li Deng** is the chief AI officer for Citadel, **Rajat Monga** is the engineering director for Google's TensorFlow, and **Mohak Shah** serves as the lead expert in data science at the Bosch Center for Artificial Intelligence in North America.