Getting along with AI at work

STAYING updated through learning and training will help employees deal with concerns about artificial intelligence (AI).

Asia School of Business Assistant Professor Alex Eng said people became frustrated with technology at work because they expected it to be perfect.

He added that this disappointment arose when AI or machines made mistakes, leading to a perception of these tools as flawed.

"When people make mistakes, we would say 'to make a mistake is human', but when it comes to machines making mistakes, we call it 'flawed'," he told the 'New Straits Times' recently.

BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Eng said it was crucial to educate employees and managers about the nature of AI, its capabilities and the reasons behind dissatisfaction with technology if they wanted to implement it in their workspace.

He said training should focus on setting realistic expectations and understanding how to interact with AI, and helping employees and organisations adapt to and manage technological tools better.

He said employees and managers needed to be educated about the basics of AI, including what it was and the ability required to interact with it.

"Businesses must understand the factors that lead to dissatisfaction with AI, especially the differences in how people perceive mistakes made by AI compared with those made by humans."

He added that companies should train their employees to recognise that the expectations for AI and human responses differed, such as the time taken to provide advice or solutions.

"Training boosts employees' perception of AI, making it easy to use and useful by increasing accessibility and relevance to their tasks."

Eng said it could also help build confidence and reduce computer anxiety.

IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

Training reduces resistance to new technologies by increasing familiarity, making employees less anxious or threatened by AI.

Managers or business leaders need to be educated on a broader framework of technology adaptation, whereas employees should be sent for training to get first-hand experience.

"Going for training can get people to start using these things, and the more people are trained, the more likely they are to use this adoption.

"Business leaders should be trained to understand technology adoption by focusing on factors that influence its perceived ease of usefulness, enabling them to champion AI and address employee concerns.

"Training should be tailored to the roles and tasks of employees.

"For instance, if AI is used for data entry, training should focus on how AI simplifies and improves that task."

He said the spectrum of AI-enabled machines was different in terms of their social presence and functionality.

Asia School of Business Assistant Professor Alex Eng says it is crucial to train employees and employers about the nature of artificial intelligence.

"On one end of the spectrum, you have machines that are functional and task-oriented, such as industrial robots or simple automated systems.

"These machines perform specific tasks, but don't interact socially or engage with humans in a conversational manner.

"On the other end of the spectrum, you have AI systems designed to be more socially interactive.

"These might include virtual assistants, chatbots or robots with human-like features intended to engage with people on a more personal or conversational level."

He said the difference lay in how these machines were perceived and interacted with people — whether they were seen as tools for specific tasks or as entities capable of more nuanced social interactions.

"AI adoption and acceptance are influenced by task subjectivity and moral considerations.

"People are more likely to embrace AI for objective tasks, like math, where technology is expected to excel.

"In contrast, for subjective tasks or morally charged areas, there is often resistance because AI is perceived as lacking the human qualities needed for nuanced decision-making."

Also, he said, people tended to accept AI more when they had control over its output and when there was transparency in how AI decisions were made.

Training reduces resistance to new technologies by increasing familiarity, making employees less anxious or threatened by artificial intelligence. PIC BY DC STUDIO ON FREEPIK

Bots

By Fatin Nurul Najihah and Ramyeea Janaor