



## Reimagining the Employee Experience in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Leveraging the Power of Analytics, Automation, and Conversational Interfaces to Support the Workforce of the Future

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## Introduction

In this era of digital disruption, attracting and retaining customers through enhanced Customer Experience (CX) practices are top of mind with corporate leadership. But what about Employee Experience (EX)? Higher employee satisfaction certainly results in a motivated and efficient workforce, which directly impacts the quality of customer experience. Enterprises that drive initiatives to enhance EX are four times<sup>1</sup> more profitable than those that don't. The key to achieve this impact is to look at enhancing the experience of all employees including those customer-facing roles as well as those in middle- and back-office functions (Ex: HR, IT, Finance), as these roles are just as important to the customer experience lifecycle.

So how do enterprises drive better organization-wide employee engagement? We believe it is necessary to take a digital approach, which often involves leveraging technologies normally used for market- and customer-facing processes to create a better EX. Regardless of the approach taken, the technologies most relevant to improve EX involve the combined power of analytics, automation, and conversational interfaces with Artificial Intelligence (AI).

While individually these technologies offer value, the real impact on EX – and ultimately business value – comes from bringing them together. Together, these technologies support a next-generation workforce, with AI-enabled digital assistants to answer questions around the clock, meeting rooms equipped with conversational interfaces to provide real-time insights, automated task processing that extracts data from images or documents to speed and improve loan processing, and more.

This viewpoint examines how enterprises can drive value through an enhanced EX by engaging employees in the same way as they do with their customers.

Drawing insights from Everest Group's extensive research as well as recent discussions with service providers and enterprises, this study answers the following key questions:

- What factors are driving the adoption of analytics, automation, conversational interfaces, and AI to disrupt and improve existing employee experiences?
- What are the benefits for enterprises that leverage these technologies individually to enhance EX?
- Further, how can enterprises combine these discrete technologies to derive significantly improved business outcomes?
- What are the key business goals that enterprises want to achieve with their EX efforts?
- What are the key factors that enterprises need to consider to enable smooth deployment of these technologies across their internal processes?

1 As per the Harvard Business Review article - [Why the Millions We Spend on Employee Engagement Buy Us So Little](#) published in 2017

## Technology as an enabler to enhance the employee experience

Automation solutions can help enterprises scale rapidly without burning out their employees

Technology plays a critical role in the employee experience by helping to reduce skill gaps, create personalized training methodology, plan for organizational change and future growth. Adopting digital solutions to enhance EX is set to drive an 87%<sup>1</sup> increase in employee retention.

Organizations today need to think beyond customer experience and understand the key demand-side drivers and supply-side enablers that drive the need to adopt technological solutions to enhance EX.

### Demand-side drivers

- Growing acceptance of the technology: With increasing use of AI-based personal assistants in their personal lives, employees now expect AI-powered solutions, such as conversational interfaces, to boost productivity in their workplaces.
- Need to enhance decision making: Employees want to leverage advanced analytics solutions to get detailed customer, product, or operational insights to improve the quality and speed of decision making.

### Supply-side enablers

- Data availability: Large volumes of data (which is the premise of AI) are now available for analysis through the digitization of business and commerce, as well as the Internet and social media.
- Changing technology landscape: A growing number of vendors are developing technologies, especially automation- and AI-based solutions, to complement existing applications and processes.
- Cloud infrastructure: Easy availability of cloud infrastructure that offers organizations additional computing power and storage that they require to deploy AI-based solutions.

### Current state of technology in enterprises

Enterprises are at different stages of acceptance and adoption of technology to enhance EX. A majority of firms currently leverage the power of key technologies such as analytics, automation, and conversational interfaces on a standalone basis. However, this siloed approach limits the benefits that firms can derive.

By leveraging the integrated power of analytics, automation, conversational interfaces, and AI, forward-looking firms are opening up new opportunities to attract, engage, and retain talent, as demonstrated in the following case study.

Few forward-looking firms that understand the power of AI are reimagining the employee experience.

1 As per a study by Deloitte - [The digital workplace: Think, share, do](#) that focuses on transforming your employee experience

## Case study – leveraging the combined power of technologies

### Overview: Deploying virtual agents to support fast resolution of employee queries

#### EXHIBIT 1

**Case study:** Leading hotel company

Source: Everest Group (2018)

“This AI-powered solution plays the role of a personal assistant to our employees to enhance their productivity and gain valuable time to handle high-value tasks.”

*Director of Global IT Services, Leading hotel company*

#### Business need:

- One of the world’s leading hotel companies wanted a prompt and efficient way to answer IT support queries from employees 24x7 but had limited resources.
- IT leadership was tasked with supporting a growing employee-base without the addition of new IT support staff.
- They wanted to start with an AI-powered solution to answer commonly asked questions without dependence on live IT support staff.
- With time, they wanted to ensure that the AI-powered solution continued to learn and observe human behavior, add to its knowledge base and become more efficient to address large number of employee queries without human intervention.

#### Solution:

- The enterprise engaged a leading technology vendor to deploy its AI-powered solution (IPsoft’s Amelia) to provide employees with IT support requirements, a self-help solution that can work as a knowledge base as well as a direct engagement platform.
- Amelia had the capability to read, interpret, and answer employee queries quickly and with reasonable levels of accuracy.
- The solution automatically routes exceptions to human agents, but it continues to learn from the human agents’ actions so that it can resolve similar queries in the future.

#### Business outcomes:



30% increase in First Contact Resolution (FCR) rate



More than 80% reduction in time taken for identity authentication



More detailed and efficient business process mapping



Holistic analysis of employee queries



Increased consistency in response



Route queries to a suitable agent to maintain user satisfaction levels

## Key technologies and their benefits for enterprises

### Analytics

Enterprises generate increasingly large volumes of data during their day-to-day operations. This includes process-, activity-, and employee performance-level data that can be mined to generate actionable insights for decision makers. Predictive and prescriptive analytics on this data can provide insights into the as-is state of the business or to-be business situation and be presented back to the decision makers using business intelligence dashboards.

### Automation

Enterprises are leveraging automation solutions to replace a series of rule-based and repetitive human actions. Automation can help realize cost savings, as well as improve employee satisfaction.

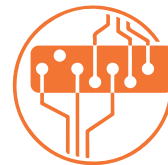
### Conversational interfaces

Conversational interfaces can process large amount of natural language, in the form of either text or speech, to respond to queries. They are powered by Natural Language Processing (NLP) technologies that can go beyond answering questions based on pre-defined rules to understanding context and generating real-time response.

#### EXHIBIT 2

Benefits of analytics, automation, and conversational interfaces for enhancing EX

Source: Everest Group (2018)



- The ability to find insights from data faster by streamlining workflows**  
 For example, firms can quickly analyze which retirement plans meet employee needs and adapt processes to get easier sign-up
- Enable greater employee visibility on common queries and help discover key friction points in the employee journey**  
 For example, firms can leverage analytics to capture common HR queries and put together a proactive communication plan for all staff. With an added layer of conversational interface, employees can directly ask an assistant who will push them to the right information
- Reduce workload of manual and highly repetitive tasks**  
 Enterprises can automate repetitive transactional processes, such as employee data management, allowing employees to handle more challenging work and stay motivated
- Improve efficiency and drive more job satisfaction**  
 Automation increases speed and accuracy of tasks by reducing the number of steps that employees have to take to complete the tasks and increases satisfaction with work
- Enhance employee skillset by personalizing training**  
 Automating transactional tasks allows employees to focus on building more strategic skillsets to handle more judgment-intensive tasks
- Increased engagement**  
 These interfaces allow employees to have natural conversations and increase engagement without increasing the cost of service for operational tasks. Employees can use chat or voice to communicate and find information rather than searching applications
- Convenience**  
 These interfaces can provide increased speed and better accuracy – balanced with a human touch – to resolve queries in the easiest and most efficient manner.
- Call to action**  
 These interfaces eliminate the need to go to a web browser or switch application to perform certain tasks. Integrating with automation solutions will allow these interfaces to handle a set of related tasks

## AI: The key ingredient that brings together these discreet technologies to enhance EX

### Artificial Intelligence

AI, also referred to as cognitive automation, is the critical ingredient that enables the other technologies discussed so far to be applied in a way not possible historically and with greater impact. AI involves a machine that can mimic human thought processes to perform tasks that require intelligence. It can “learn” or change its behavior over time without being explicitly programmed, based on structured, semi-structured, and unstructured data. Typically not used on a standalone basis, when AI is embedded with each of the technologies discussed above, the impact in delivering a better EX is notably enhanced. Virtual agents are good examples of how analytics, automation, and conversational interfaces can be brought together in a single solution to enhance EX.

### Understanding “chatbots” vs “virtual agents”

There are multiple types of automated solutions and tools that enterprises can deploy in their work environments to enhance EX. These tools vary according to the sophistication levels of the underlying technologies powering them.

**Rule-based chatbots:** This tool leverages a rules-based engine with NLP capabilities to provide quick responses to standard employee queries involving discrete tasks.

**Virtual agents:** In addition to NLP, this tool leverages machine learning, deep learning, analytics, and computer voice and vision to address ambiguous and unfamiliar customer queries. They can also be integrated with other back-end processes / IT systems to drive end-to-end completion of tasks.

### Key benefits of virtual agents:

- **Comprehend employee sentiment:** Similar to customer queries, virtual agents can determine the employee mood and understand when an escalation is required.
- **Analyze answers and suggest responses:** The solution can “listen” as a live agent handles exceptions and provide the agent rapid access to answers and advice by searching knowledge bases. It can also learn from the agent behavior and enhance the knowledge base of questions it can address in the future.
- **Digital assistance for employees:** The solution can assist employees to quickly perform certain tasks, such as document submission, expense and leave management, and performance feedback submission, via a dialog-based interface.
- **Personalize interactions:** The solution can leverage analytics solutions to drive employee-specific contextual conversations via conversational interfaces.

The following exhibits highlight some of the use cases for firms to leverage the combined power of these technologies to provide value for businesses and employees across multiple touch points in the employee journey.

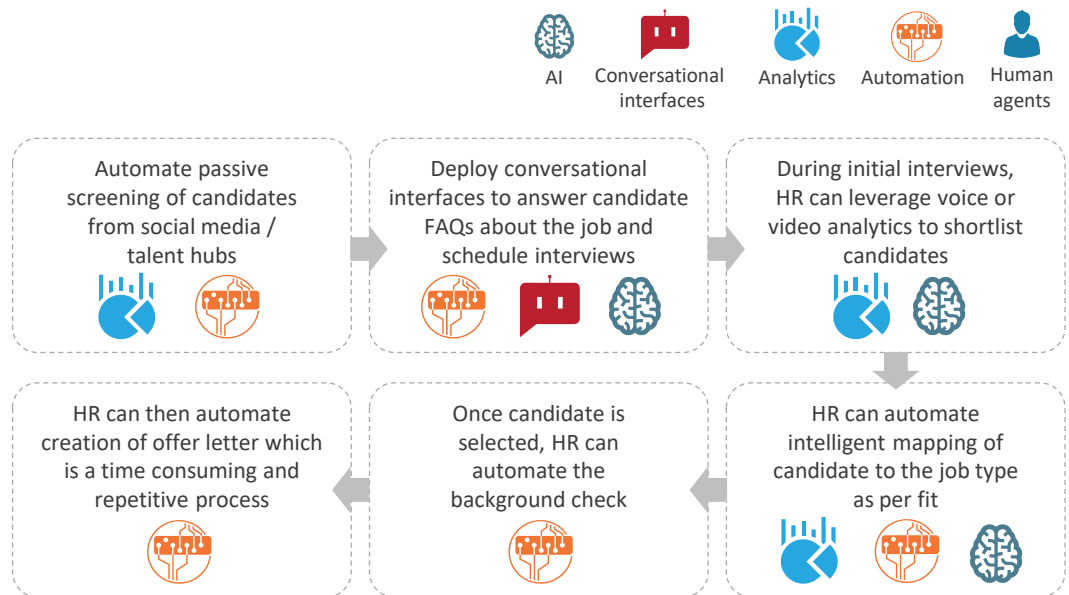
**Key objective: Shorten the hiring process**

**Problem statement:** HR employees are taking too long to find and hire new recruits.

**EXHIBIT 3**

Leverage the combined power of technologies to shorten the hiring process

Source: Everest Group (2018)



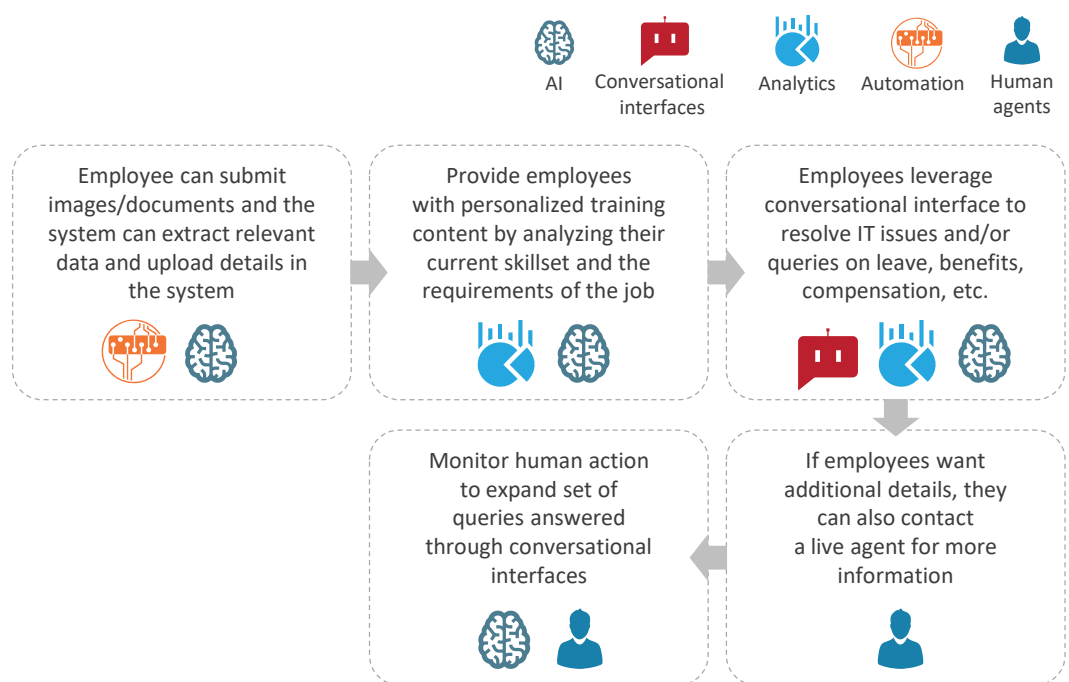
**Key objective: Finish the onboarding process quickly and build skills with tailored content**

**Problem statement:** An employee is spending a lot of time submitting documents, understanding company policies, and getting ready for the new role.

**EXHIBIT 4**

Leverage the combined power of technologies to quickly finish the onboarding process of employee

Source: Everest Group (2018)



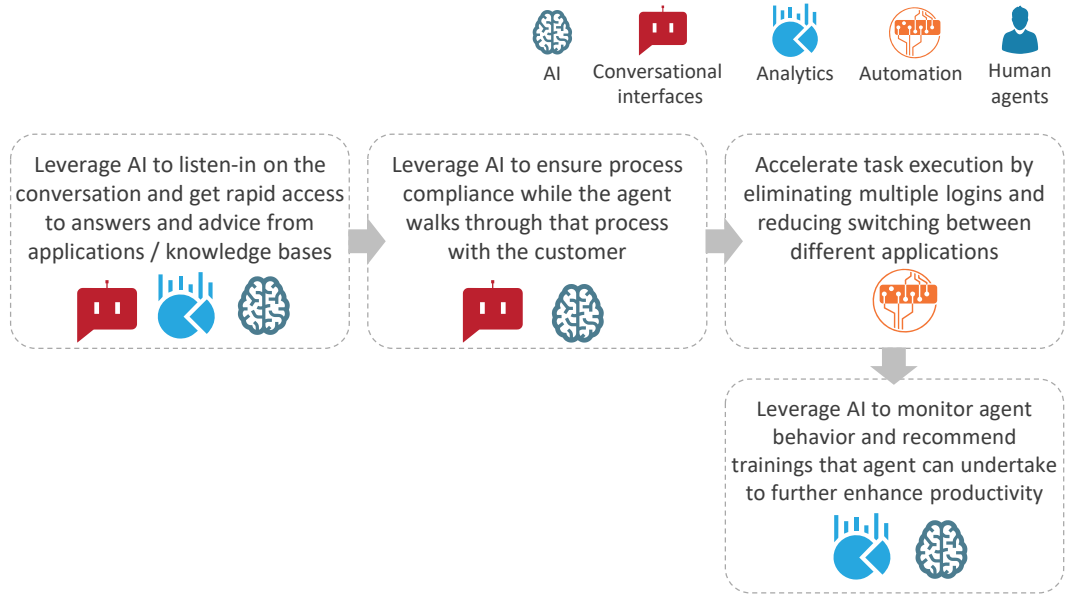
**Key objective: Equip customer service agents with a digital colleague to solve queries**

**Problem statement:** A customer service agent is taking a long time to resolve queries which is negatively impacting the customer experience.

**EXHIBIT 5**

Leverage the combined power of technologies to equip customer service agents to be more efficient

Source: Everest Group (2018)



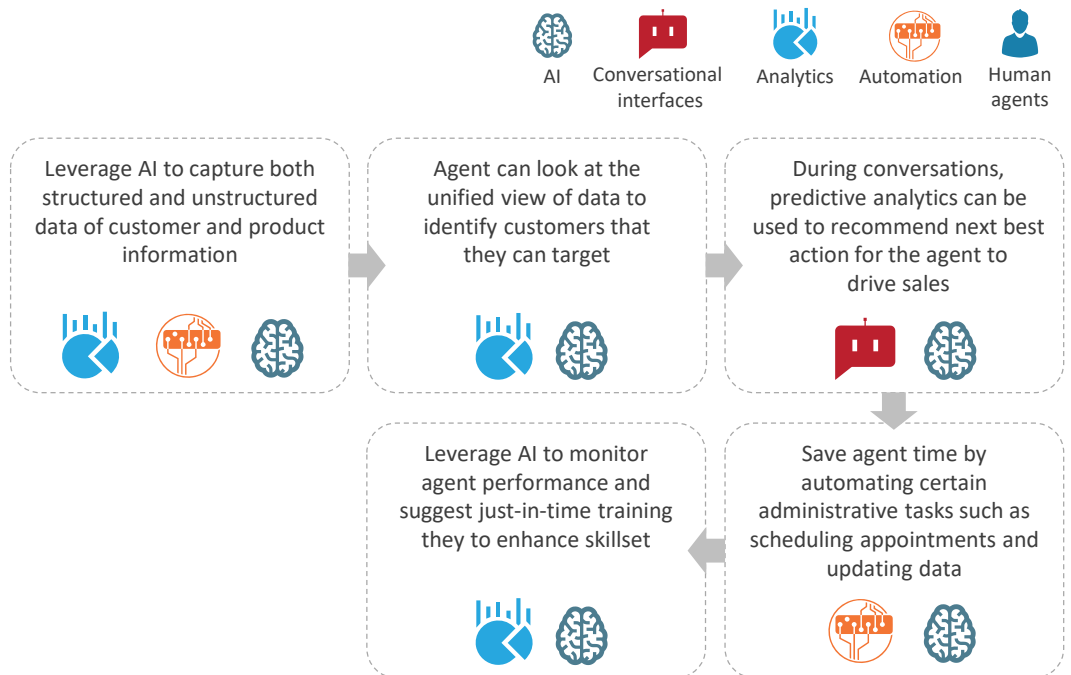
**Key objective: Equip sales staff with the right data and recommendations at the right time**

**Problem statement:** An field sales agent is not able to meet sales target as he/she does not have the right information at the right time – there is too much scattered data.

**EXHIBIT 6**

Leverage the combined power of technologies to equip sales staff to meet their targets

Source: Everest Group (2018)



These use cases demonstrate how enterprises can unleash a notably superior value proposition by combining technologies to drive an enhanced EX and, in turn, significant business value. Next, we outline the steps that enterprises need to take to realize the benefits of these technologies to enhance EX.



## Key steps for enterprises to realize the benefits of these technologies

### 1. Map the employee journey

The first key step for enterprises to enhance EX is to map the employee journey. While a high-level mapping of the employee lifecycle will provide limited insights, process-level mapping will provide a detailed look at each step in the process.

### 2. Leverage analytics to identify pain points in the journey

The key to unlocking maximum value from journey mapping is identifying employee pain points that can be measured and improved, and then leveraging analytics solutions to prioritize basis impact on customers, employees and business.

### 3. Bring together discreet technologies

Invest in relevant tools to compliment existing solutions and drive integrated implementation of technological solutions across all touchpoints to enhance EX, such as those described in the previous section.

### 4. Ensure employee buy-in to embrace the change

Getting buy-in from employees by making sure that they understand the positive impact that AI could bring to their jobs is crucial to drive greater benefits. Further, enterprises could also create new roles such as cognitive specialists, bot trainers etc., and train existing employees to effectively work alongside AI.

### 5. Monitor the effectiveness of EX efforts

Enterprises should measure the impact their EX improvement efforts have on achieving their business goals. The results can help them continue to adapt and improve the process to ensure they are going in the right direction.

#### EXHIBIT 7

Key goals enterprises look to achieve with their employee experience efforts

Source: Everest Group (2018)

Goals	Primary drivers	Business value
<b>Reduce time-to-hire</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faster requisition creation</li> <li>Quick search for potential candidates</li> <li>Digitized resume screening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open positions filled more quickly</li> <li>Efficient HR department</li> </ul>
<b>Reduce time-to-productivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalized onboarding experience</li> <li>Quick response to queries</li> <li>Targeted training programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More immediate value from new hire</li> </ul>
<b>Reduce turnover rate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match the right skills to the most suitable job</li> <li>Reduce repetitive tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced staff attrition</li> </ul>
<b>Increase employee performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customized training programs</li> <li>Detailed performance insights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced employee skillset</li> <li>Reduce time managers spend looking for data</li> </ul>
<b>Improve employee engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalized digital assistance to resolve queries 24/7 across channels</li> <li>For escalations, agents enabled to work together with technologies to quickly resolve queries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More satisfied employees</li> <li>Improved helpdesk employee efficiency</li> </ul>
<b>Increase benefits enrollment rate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map employee needs to best possible benefits plan</li> <li>Encourage sign up for retirement etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employees get most suitable benefits plan</li> </ul>

## Key steps for enterprises to realize the benefits of these technologies

Most enterprises face challenges when deploying and operationalizing the technologies discussed here. To smooth out the implementation process, it is helpful understand these challenges and consider potential solutions.

### EXHIBIT 8

Enabling smooth technological deployments

Source: Everest Group (2018)

	Key implementation challenges	Recommendations
 <b>Data management</b>	Not able to fully leverage the potential of data to support decision-making; there is too much data coming from siloed applications which firms are unable to quickly analyze as input to an automated system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define a clear data management strategy for technological deployments</li> <li>Build the computing power and infrastructure required to process large amounts of data</li> <li>Capture data from different sources into a common platform and define security levels</li> <li>Monitor compliance with data privacy rules</li> </ul>
 <b>Lack of stakeholder buy-in</b>	Up-front investments in technology and an unclear/uncertain ROI may discourage enterprise leadership from fully supporting investments in internal digital initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure key stakeholder involvement early in the process</li> <li>Map the EX journey to highlight use cases to key stakeholders to drive support of investment</li> </ul>
 <b>Technology integration requirements</b>	Deploying the latest digital technologies requires reworking legacy systems and might require an upgrade of the existing IT infrastructure, which can escalate cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start small and focus on specific requirements</li> <li>Once pilot projects achieve results and associated benefits, move on to complex processes</li> </ul>
 <b>Incomplete implementation roadmaps</b>	Unclear mapping of as-is and to-be processes can increase costs during and post implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan the implementation roadmap in consultation with experienced specialists</li> <li>Be cognizant of internal readiness and circumstances</li> </ul>
 <b>Sub-optimal results post exhaustive testing rounds</b>	Testing environment is not able to replicate the way employees interact with cognitive interfaces, leading to sub-optimal result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Test less as SMEs can't always predict how people will communicate</li> <li>Start with an employee group that is enthusiastic about using the technology, before launching enterprise-wide</li> <li>Explain the group need for AI-based conversational interface to learn and evolve based on real interactions</li> </ul>
 <b>Team resistance</b>	Concerns regarding job loss and new skillset requirements might discourage employees from adopting these technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate employees on the benefits of deploying digital technologies</li> <li>Evolve recruitment and training strategies to ensure the talent pool can easily interface with these technologies</li> <li>Build a future-ready employee pool               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upskill employees to handle the judgement-intensive work pieces</li> <li>Reskill employees to perform roles of similar complexity in a different area</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Conclusion

The path ahead for enterprises is clear: Providing a differentiated EX is going to be the key factor for enterprises to attract and retain talent. Technology will disrupt businesses in a positive way as it will bring about new and different methods of working. The technologies most relevant for this changing dynamic typically include analytics, automation, conversational interfaces, and AI.

In today's world, employees interact with many different applications to find information, or learn new processes to get things done. Analytics is mostly used on applications in a siloed manner with few processes running in the background. However, in the new cognitive world where these tools work together, employees instead will have one place to go – the cognitive interface, where all processes and application integrations run in background and which empowers employees to significantly improve their work efficiency.

Organizations should take advantage of AI's capability in creating a work environment that supports broader corporate goals of increased employee satisfaction, product/service speed-to-market, improved customer experience and loyalty, and faster revenue growth. To start on the process, enterprises need to map the employee journey and identify and prioritize addressable pain points. With this information in hand, they can then look at the holistic deployment of technological solutions across the employee landscape, rather than in silos, by selecting key components of AI to leverage.


Enterprises can begin with pilot projects and prioritize critical EXs. At the same time, they need to be cognizant of internal readiness and educate employees on the benefits of deploying technologies to ensure their support and buy-in. In addition, enterprises need to have a clear data management strategy. The important thing is to get started and evolve over time with more projects. Innovative enterprises that take initiatives to make frustrating tasks simpler for employees, as well as provide them timely access to information and relevant training opportunities, will drive increased employee engagement and retention - which in turn helps drive significant business value.

## About Everest Group

Everest Group is a consulting and research firm focused on strategic IT, business services, and sourcing. We are trusted advisors to senior executives of leading enterprises, providers, and investors. Our firm helps clients improve operational and financial performance through a hands-on process that supports them in making well-informed decisions that deliver high-impact results and achieve sustained value. Our insight and guidance empower clients to improve organizational efficiency, effectiveness, agility, and responsiveness. What sets Everest Group apart is the integration of deep sourcing knowledge, problem-solving skills and original research. Details and in-depth content are available at [www.everestgrp.com](http://www.everestgrp.com).


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