



Bridging the Gap:

Mental Models, Employee Experience, and AI in Organizational Strategy

Dr. Kimberly Dunwoody, VP of Member Experience



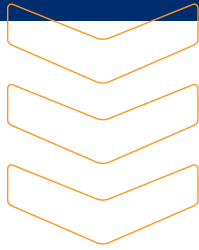
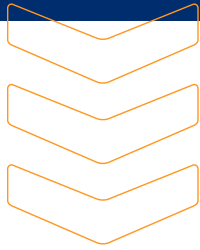


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Foreword and Introduction to the Role of Shared Mental Models in AI and Organizational Strategy

By Rae Shanhan, Chief Strategy Officer, Businessolver

Leonardo Da Vinci deemed that “Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.” Da Vinci’s paintings are known for their bold strokes, symmetry, and lack of clutter. This astute observation brings to mind Kimberly Dunwoody, our VP of Member Experience here at Businessolver, and brilliant user experience (UX) designer, innovator, and author of this book. Like Da Vinci, Kimberly’s body of work is centered in simplicity—guiding the user through an experience so sophisticated that it’s no longer merely technology, but an extension of the person.

Great user design experiences (UX), are often taken for granted.

As consumers, we’ve come to expect technology to seamlessly work for us—from intuitive website design and chatbots to communication applications (e.g. Teams), smart home devices, and near-prophetic search engines like Copilot (that somehow magically complete our thoughts before we’ve typed two letters).

Good UX design just works. But when UX doesn’t work, we can’t work. Productivity declines, customer service falters, and growth and profitability plummet.

On the consumer front, these “bad” user experiences manifest in poor product reviews, clunky usability, and brand reputation damage—to name a few. Employees are consumers too, and they’ve come to expect the same seamless technology experiences in their work lives. Yet, many are still held back by legacy systems and processes that hinder productivity and chip away at morale.

At the end of the day, your product and customer service experiences are outward manifestations of your employee experience.

They are intertwined. And when the employee experience suffers, it has a downstream impact on everything: culture, innovation, brand reputation, productivity, and profitability.

Now with the explosive growth of AI technology, the stakes are even higher. AI is still burgeoning—still revealing the vastness of the potential it holds. Even so, the race is on for companies to employ an AI strategy and determine exactly how to integrate AI for improved efficiency and product innovation. *Where should we invest? How much should we invest? What vendors should we partner with?*

For many professionals, including the HR administrators we serve here at Businessolver, the clock is ticking, and leadership is hungry for answers.



Wine Dark Seas and Bronze Skies

To effectively integrate, adopt, and develop AI solutions, companies must consider an approach rooted in a foundation of shared thinking and language—also known as a “shared mental model”—which is the cornerstone of great UX design, and now great AI design.

The problem is, AI is the pinnacle of complexity in today’s technology landscape. It’s a new frontier, and we don’t all know how to speak the language of AI. Yet, it operates on language at its core, Large Language Models (LLMs) to be exact.

One of my favorite parts of Kimberly’s book is the parallel she draws with Homer’s “The Iliad” and “The Odyssey.” Scholars have long been befuddled by his unusual descriptions of color like the “wine-dark sea” and the “bronze sky.” These descriptions don’t align with our language today and how we see the world. Perhaps Homer simply didn’t have the words?

In the same way, many users today lack the technical vocabulary to effectively interact with AI. For those of us that don’t speak AI’s language, it’s the role of UX designers to bridge this gap. To transform complex, sophisticated AI technology into something simplistic—making its language universally approachable and usable for all.

For organizations to do that, they must bring customers and employees to the AI water, (where the color of the sea and sky is not “wine,” but the same hue of blue for everyone), to create a place where shared mental models are foundational.

Mental Models in Action: Meet Barbie and Sofia

In its simplest terms, shared mental models are internal blueprints: a mixture of beliefs, perceptions, and assumptions for how we operate. One of my favorite pop culture examples of a mental model (albeit an antiquated one) is the monologue on women that America Ferrera delivers in the “Barbie” movie:

“You have to be a boss, but you can’t be mean. You have to lead, but you can’t squash other people’s ideas. You’re supposed to love being a mother, but don’t talk about your kids all the damn time. You have to be a career woman but also always be looking out for other people... So find a way to acknowledge that but also always be grateful.”

I am grateful. Grateful that Kimberly brought the concept of shared mental models to Businessolver, and how it has been intrinsic to our product development, providing us with a framework that is rooted in “empathetic” UX design.

What exactly do I mean by this?

When we consider the mental model for Sofia, our AI virtual assistant created in 2016, she wasn’t designed to merely provide fast, concise answers. That was a goal, but not the goal. The fundamental need in our business of benefits administration is to simplify the inherent complexity of benefits. We know that on average, 86% of our users say they’re confused about their benefits. We also know that benefits are a highly charged, emotional environment with employees navigating life changes, both happy and sad.

Last year, Sofia got an upgrade with her OpenAI ChatGPT integration. In doing so, Sofia—and our entire AI platform which includes cognitive search—can now effectively decode the emotion and intention behind inquiries. That’s because our “Solvers”—as we call our employees—programmed her with the language necessary to empathetically interact with our emotionally-charged user base. This idea of empathic UX is a shared mental model at our company, that we call “Tech with Heart.”

A Roadmap for Bridging the AI Gap

This book presents a roadmap for how organizations can put the foundational elements in place to successfully integrate and improve the usability of AI solutions—not only for better customer outcomes, but for a better employee experience. Because there isn’t one without the other. You can’t have a great customer experience without a great product experience, which is driven by none other than your employees.

AI is complex and it’s not always intuitive. To get the most out of AI, users often need to know the right prompts, akin to coding. But with the right UX practices in place, organizations can bridge the gap between complex technology and the seamless, everyday usability we’ve all come to expect from great design, which often lives in the background, but drives the pure function of our lives.

I’m a great believer in holding your ideas lightly. Preconceived notions and legacy thinking—and our own antiquated mental models—can become barriers to growth and innovation. But the antidote to this is what Kimberly presents in the pages that follow.

What we have before us *right now* is an opportunity to shape AI in a way that doesn’t just result in seamless user experiences for productivity and ROI gains—but more equitable, empathetic experiences for all.

Rae Shanahan

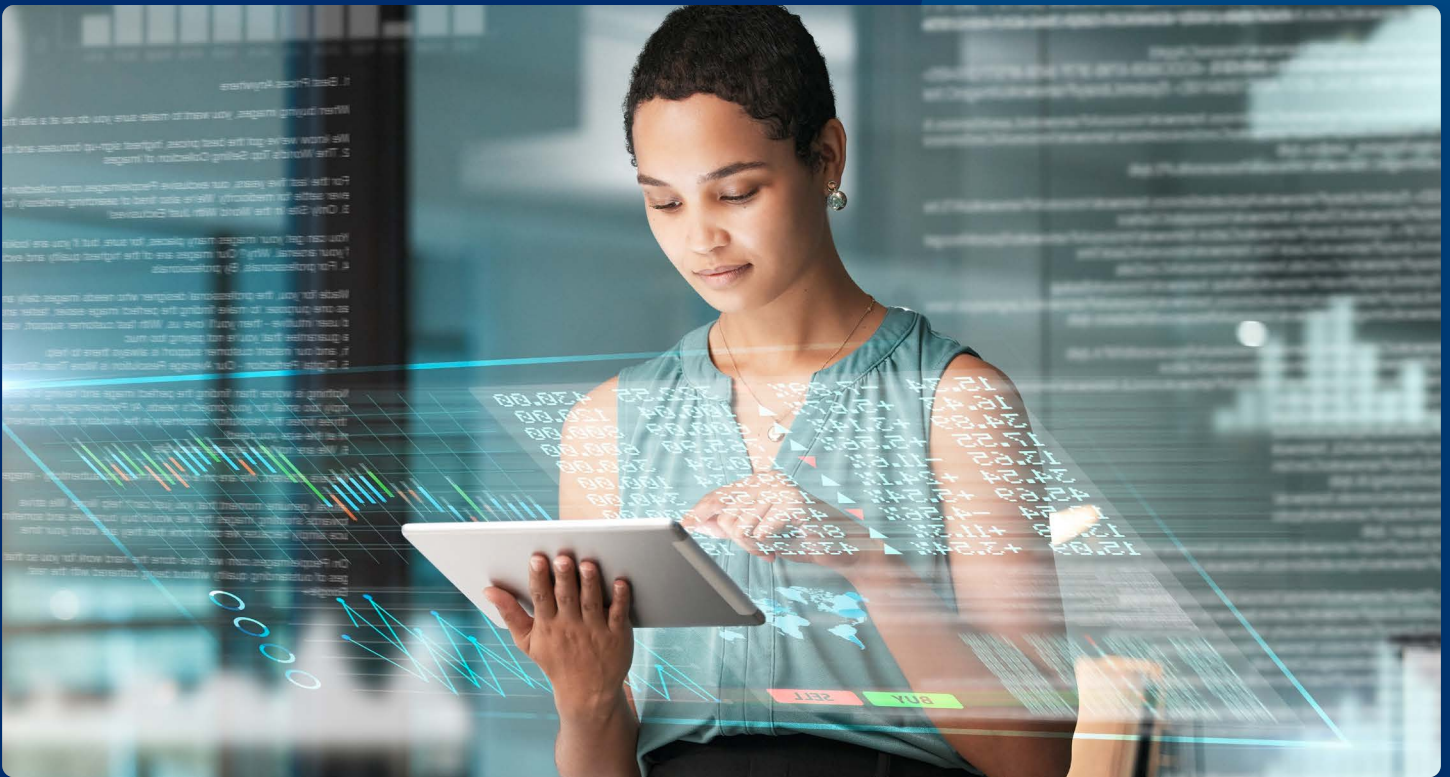
Chief Strategy Officer, Businessolver





CHAPTER ONE

Leveraging Mental Models to Bridge the Gap Between Humans and AI



What Exactly are Mental Models?

Mental models are internal blueprints we use to navigate and interact with the world. They're a mix of beliefs, perceptions, and assumptions about how things operate. These mental schematics shape our comprehension and expectations in various scenarios, including at work and when dealing with technology. When it comes to decision-making and behavior in the employee and user experience for AI products, mental models are essential.

The Role of Mental Models in Decision-Making and Behavior

The mental models of employees shape their understanding of their roles, duties, and interactions within a company. These models can influence how employees tackle their tasks, make decisions, and adapt to changes. For example, if an employee's mental model of a new AI tool is that it's complex and tricky to use, they might resist using it, which could affect productivity and efficiency.

Users form mental models about how AI products operate based on their past experiences with similar technologies. These models guide their interactions with the product, affecting their expectations, usage, and overall satisfaction. If the AI product aligns with their mental model, users are likely to find it intuitive and easy to use. But if it doesn't, users may struggle to understand and effectively use the product, leading to a less-than-ideal user experience.

Thus, understanding and taking into account mental models is key when designing employee experiences and AI products. By aligning strategies, systems, and designs with the mental models of users and employees, companies can ease adoption processes, enhance user experiences, and ultimately achieve better results.

The Influence of Shared Mental Models on Team Performance and Organizational Success

Shared mental models, or the collective understandings team members have about their environment, significantly affect team performance and organizational success. They help teams process information, coordinate tasks, and make decisions. Studies show that shared mental models boost team processes and performance by improving communication and coordination. They provide a reliable measure of team effectiveness, as teams with these shared models have a better understanding of their roles, leading to increased productivity. These shared models also play a vital role in planning and teamwork. They help team members make more effective decisions and work together more efficiently, enhancing overall team performance, contributing to organizational success.

In practical fields like healthcare or aviation, shared mental models have been shown to improve safety and efficiency. They're also crucial for team learning and strategy development, helping teams reflect on and adjust their strategies for better performance. Shared mental models can even impact leadership teams. Research suggests that these models of organizational effectiveness

can be cultivated through quality interactions among team members. In conclusion, shared mental models are instrumental in boosting team performance and driving organizational success by enhancing aspects such as communication, coordination, decision-making, safety, efficiency, and strategic planning.

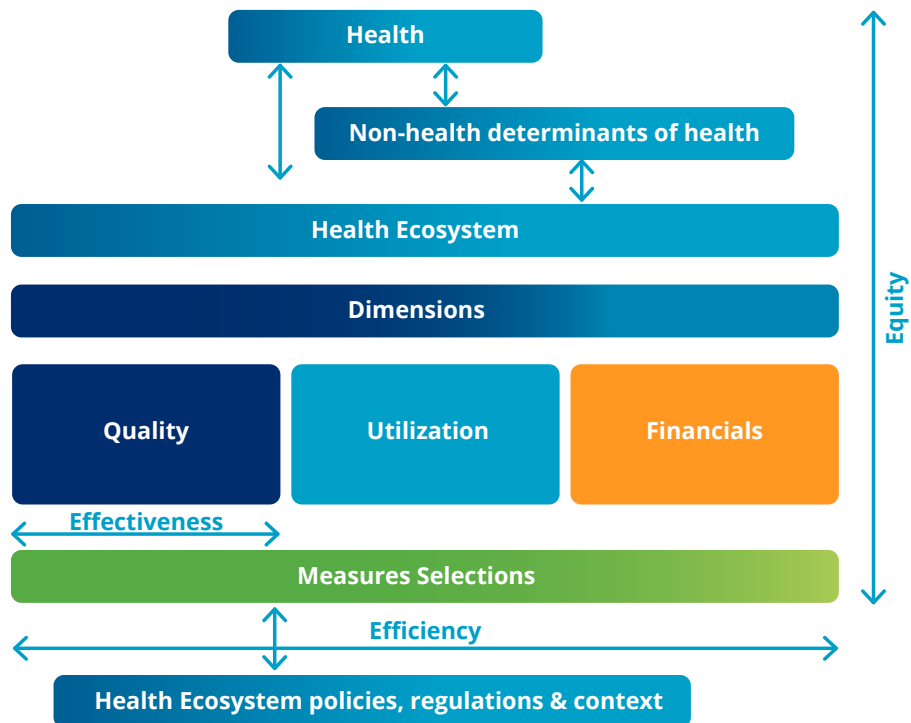
As we venture into our next chapter, we'll continue to expand on the intriguing concept of mental models. Our focus will be on the use of journey maps as a tool to cultivate shared mental models that effectively align employees, the organization, and users.

Healthcare Core Mental Model

In Health Analytics, using this mental model streamlines discussions on key topics like utilization and quality, fostering interconnected and enriched ideas. It speeds up conversations and cognitive processes, promoting an integrated understanding from the start. This integrated approach helps identify patterns and opportunities for improvement faster than traditional methods.

Additionally, it reveals how utilization impacts quality and vice versa. High utilization rates may signal effective care access but could also indicate overuse or inefficiency. Conversely, high-quality metrics may highlight underuse or accessibility issues.

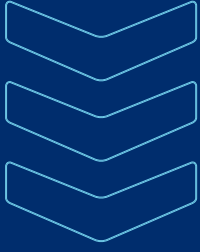
This method enables decision-makers to develop strategies addressing both utilization and quality simultaneously, improving healthcare delivery and patient outcomes efficiently.



This mental model is frequently employed in healthcare to efficiently address intricate issues and drive progress.

Footnotes

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CHAPTER TWO

Crafting Shared Mental Models - Synchronizing Employees, Organization, and Users via Journey Mapping



Journey mapping stands as a powerful technique to foster shared mental models between employees, the organization, and its users. This entails creating a visual representation of the interactions and experiences that both employees and users undergo with your organization or its offerings. The tenets and methods of user experience (UX) design, traditionally leveraged to enhance external user experiences, can be applied internally to improve the employee experience. Similar to how UX designers utilize user research to understand user needs and mitigate pain points, HR teams can adopt parallel strategies to pinpoint areas where employees encounter difficulties. Tools like surveys, interviews, or focus groups can assist in revealing these issues, enabling companies to address them promptly. This improves the employee experience and indirectly elevates the product or service.

Uncovering Employee Challenges

Much like UX designers, HR teams can use user research methods to comprehend employee needs and challenges. By identifying these problems through surveys, interviews, or focus groups, organizations can directly resolve them, leading to an improved employee experience, which subsequently positively affects the product or service.

Leveraging Institutional Knowledge

Institutional knowledge encapsulates the collective wisdom, experiences, and insights of a group, often accumulated over time. Within a corporate context, it's the unwritten, frequently unspoken, knowledge that employees have amassed throughout their work experience. This knowledge is typically deeply embedded in the company's practices, culture, and operations.

Employees who are actively involved in the daily operations of a company often hold invaluable insights and innovative ideas that may not emerge during formal research or strategy sessions. They are privy to the intricate details of processes, understand the subtleties of customer interactions, and can identify inefficiencies that might be invisible to someone viewing from a higher level. You can utilize institutional knowledge by transforming it into a documented shared mental model through comprehensive interviews with key individuals in your organization. By capturing their insights, experiences, and expertise, you create a valuable resource that enables others in your organization to leverage their collective wisdom effectively, fostering collaboration and innovation across teams.



Mapping the Employee Journey

This process can intensify employees' comprehension of their roles, responsibilities, and the overall organizational workflow. By plotting each touchpoint and milestone an employee encounters within a company, organizations can identify areas for improvement and design superior experiences. This shared understanding can enhance communication, coordination, and collaboration among team members, leading to increased engagement and productivity.

There are numerous data-rich sources that can be utilized to develop employee journey maps, including but not limited to:



Employee Feedback Systems:

These can serve as a valuable source of information for creating an employee journey map. Employees can provide anonymous feedback about their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement, offering a wealth of insights into the employee journey.



Regular Team Meetings:

These can be used as a platform to understand employees' experiences. By promoting open discussions about different stages of their journey, you can gather firsthand information about what works well and where improvements are required.



Digital Collaboration Tools:

Tools like Slack, Microsoft Teams, or Google Workspace can offer real-time insights into the employee journey. These platforms record interactions, conversations, and collaborations, providing a snapshot of daily work routines, team dynamics, and how tasks are accomplished in the organization.



Employee Surveys:

Encouraging a culture of transparency is key to understanding the true employee journey. Conduct regular surveys to measure employee sentiments, their views on the company culture, their understanding of their roles, and their overall experience.

Mapping the Product Experience Journey

This process presents a comprehensive view of a user's interaction with a product or service. It aids companies in understanding and anticipating user needs, preferences, and behaviors, aligning products or services with user expectations to increase user satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, it can facilitate effective communication with users, ensuring that marketing messages are clear, consistent, and resonate with the target audience.

The Correlation of Product and Employee Experiences

Your product experience is an external reflection of your employee experience. These two experiences, each showing a different perspective of your organization, are two facets of the same entity. The product experience provides an external view of your organization as perceived by customers or users, while the employee experience offers an internal view, representing how employees perceive their work environment, roles, and interactions. Engaged, motivated, and content employees are more likely to deliver better service, innovate, and contribute to creating superior products or services, thereby enhancing the product experience for users. Essentially, the product experience offers an outside-looking-in perspective of the employee experience, reflecting how effectively the organization manages its internal operations and fosters positive employee experiences. By synchronizing both experiences, organizations can enhance both employee engagement and customer satisfaction, leading to improved business performance.



Case Study: Leveraging Shared Mental Models for Success

During my time at IBM, I found myself working alongside a UX expert and two data scientists. We were grappling with a common challenge - the painstaking amount of time it took to compile high-quality analytics, machine learning, and AI requirements. It often felt akin to the legendary tale of the blind men and the elephant where six blind men examined an elephant, all coming to different conclusions about its identity. While all men were partially right in their identifications, none saw the big picture of all the elements that made up the animal. In the instance of my time at IBM, each department was focused on their part without taking into account the bigger picture which led to repeated conversations as well as unnecessary friction.

Recognizing this recurring issue, we spotted a pattern that could be leveraged to devise an effective solution. We drew inspiration from the children's game, Mad Libs. We identified the essential connection between the business question, the appropriate data science model, and the ideal UX visualization pattern. The framework we developed looked something like this: "Who (identifies key stakeholders or user groups), What (specifies actions stakeholders take), every (frequency actions occur), using (data type), for its (segment/subpopulation the action is designed for) so that (specific business metrics) can meet (objective/goal)." The game-changer in this shared mental model was the utilization of verbs or actions. These served as the pivotal link between the data science model and the UX data visualization.

The implementation of this shared mental model brought about a significant reduction in the time spent on gathering requirements. What used to take months, now took merely an hour during a design thinking workshop. This proved especially beneficial during the COVID-19 crisis. We were able to quickly incorporate a wide range of skills from healthcare, logistics and supply chain, workforce management, and more across IBM. By equipping everyone with a common language, we enabled rapid ideation, creation, and delivery of a groundbreaking cross-sector offering within a single quarter - a remarkable achievement at IBM. The utility of this Mad Lib framework was further validated when applied to undergraduate business analytics students, who quickly recognized its value.

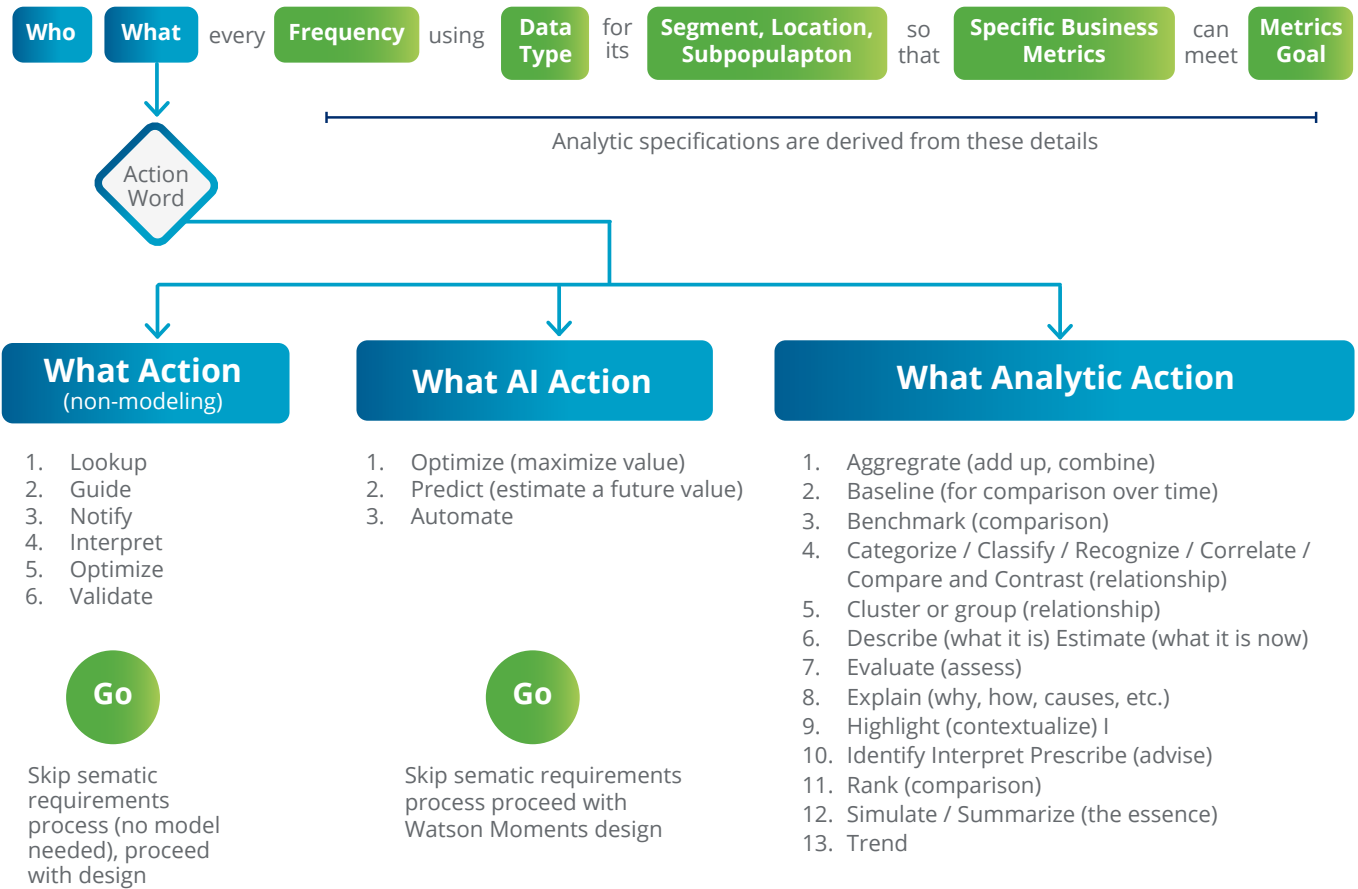
By identifying, articulating, and employing a shared mental model, we were able to drive substantial innovation. This not only benefited our employees, but also enhanced our products. It's a testament to the power of shared mental models in fostering collaboration, accelerating processes, and driving meaningful outcomes.





CASE STUDY: LEVERAGING SHARED MENTAL MODELS FOR SUCCESS

Semantic Analytics Requirements Process



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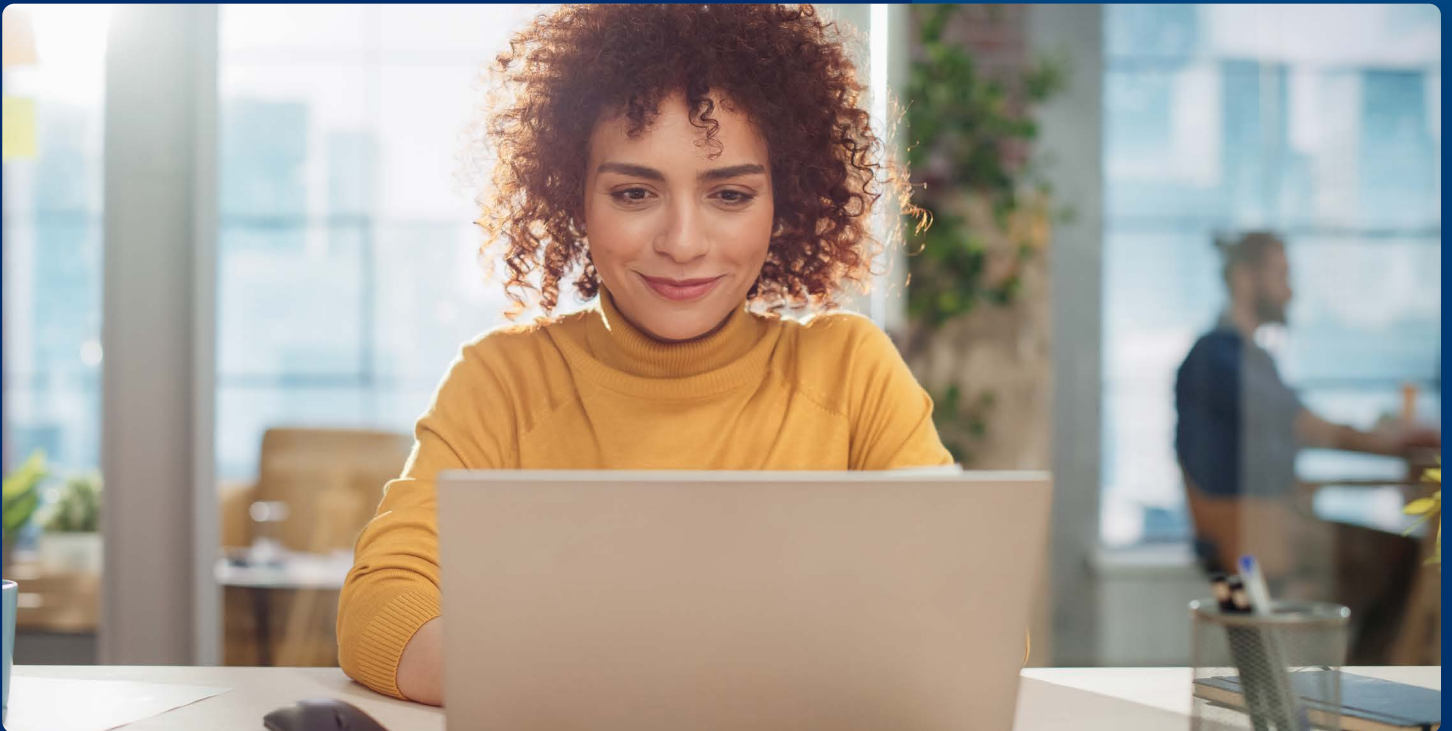
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CHAPTER THREE

The Employee Journey - A Businessolver Perspective



Defining the Employee Experience

At Businessolver, we view the employee experience as a comprehensive journey that an individual undertakes with a company. This journey kicks off from the moment they first interact with the organization as a potential recruit and continues through their onboarding, day-to-day responsibilities, career advancement, right up to their departure or retirement.

The employee experience is a combination of tangible elements like the physical workspace, tools, and technology used in daily tasks, along with intangible aspects such as the company culture, values, and interpersonal relationships. Various factors sculpt this experience, including leadership styles, organizational structure, job roles, work-life balance, recognition, and opportunities for learning and development.

Why Employee Experience Matters



Talent Magnet and Retainer:

Organizations that prioritize employee experience tend to attract top talent and enjoy lower attrition rates. Job seekers are drawn towards companies known for treating their employees well, while existing employees are more likely to stick around if they have a positive experience.



Crafting Company Culture and Employer Branding:

The employee experience significantly contributes to shaping the company culture and employer brand, which in turn influences how the company is perceived in the job market.



Driving Customer Satisfaction:

There's a strong link between employee experience and customer satisfaction. Satisfied and engaged employees usually lead to content customers because they're more likely to deliver excellent service.



Spurring Innovation:

A positive employee experience that encourages open communication, collaboration, and creativity can spark innovation. Employees who feel comfortable sharing their ideas are more likely to propose innovative solutions and processes.



Boosting Operational Efficiency:

Over time, inefficiencies in the tools employees use can diminish productivity and negatively impact customer satisfaction. For instance, the technical debt of outdated systems like airline reservation ticketing systems or Electronic Medical Records can significantly dampen the employee experience.

Many companies invest heavily in their branding, but it's crucial to ensure that your employee experience accurately reflects your brand. If it doesn't, it might be time to rethink your approach to the employee experience. Ultimately, investing in the employee experience benefits not just the employees, but also contributes positively to the organization's overall success.

The Interplay Between Employee Experience, Engagement, and Productivity

Employee experience, engagement, and productivity are closely linked concepts that greatly influence a company's performance and success. Employee engagement is a reflection of an employee's emotional commitment to their organization and its goals. These engaged employees are dedicated to the organization's objectives, demonstrate enthusiasm, are actively involved in their tasks, and tend to be highly productive in their work and workplace.

There's a well-established link between employee engagement and productivity. Engaged and productive employees strive for excellence in every task they undertake. This dedication leads to higher work output and improved business outcomes. In fact, organizations with high levels of engagement report 22% higher productivity, according to a meta-analysis of 1.4 million employees.

The Role of Shared Mental Models in Enhancing Employee Experience

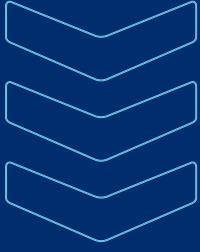
Shared mental models (SMMs) play a significant role in team dynamics and performance. They represent a common understanding or alignment among team members about how they plan to collaborate to achieve a shared objective. Beyond planning and coordination, shared mental models serve as a backbone for team alignment, thereby significantly enhancing the overall employee experience.

Teams operating under a shared mental model tend to perform better, leading to improved coordination and fewer challenges. This not only streamlines processes but also fosters positive experiences for employees, who feel a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in their roles when they're part of a well-coordinated, high-performing team.

Shared mental models also enhance decision-making within teams. Teams that operate on a shared mental model often make superior collective decisions, leading to more effective problem-solving strategies and increasing the likelihood of achieving team objectives. This contributes to a more positive employee experience, as employees feel their contributions are valuable and impactful. Furthermore, shared mental models strengthen collaboration within teams. When managers and employees independently make critical decisions based on a common understanding, it fosters a sense of unity and teamwork. This collaborative approach not only improves the employee experience but also boosts the overall productivity of the organization.

Finally, shared mental models play a crucial role in aligning employees with organizational goals. They provide people with a clear understanding of what's important and relevant in their context. By doing so, shared mental models can create a more engaged and motivated workforce, further enhancing the employee experience. These factors combined make shared mental models an invaluable tool for any organization aiming to improve its employee experience.





CHAPTER FOUR

AI at the Heart of Product Experience - A Businessolver Perspective



Exploring AI's Role in Product Development and User Experience

Artificial Intelligence (AI), with its ability to analyze expansive data sets, generate insights, forecast trends, and automate tasks, is a game-changer in product development and user experience (UX). In the product development arena, AI takes over routine tasks, freeing up your team to focus on strategic areas like innovation and quality control. Through predictive capabilities, AI can anticipate market trends, user needs, and potential challenges, enabling proactive decision-making.

Moreover, AI is reshaping UX design. It uses user behavior data to help designers create personalized experiences that cater to individual needs. It also enhances accessibility, ensuring our products are inclusive and can be used by everyone, regardless of their abilities. By understanding how users interact with different elements of a product, AI can suggest enhancements making the product more user-friendly.

AI's Contribution to Elevating Product Experience and Catering to User Needs

AI has a significant role in enhancing product experiences and meeting user needs. Using machine learning algorithms, AI can analyze customer behaviors, interests, and preferences to enhance product offerings and customer interactions. In the realm of product experience, AI allows behavioral segmentation for targeted products and marketing efforts. It understands the unique behaviors and preferences of different customer segments, allowing businesses to customize their products and marketing efforts to meet these specific needs.

AI's predictive analytics empower businesses to forecast future customer behavior, helping them meet customer needs proactively and adjust their strategies accordingly. This predictive capability also aids in real-time and future decision-making, resulting in improved responsiveness and strategic planning. At Businessolver, we strategically employ AI to focus on specific client segments. This targeted approach assists HR Administrators in achieving their organizational objectives, particularly in relation to HR Benefits.

AI cognitive assistants, like Businessolver's Sofia, are transforming the customer experience landscape. These digital assistants interact with customers on their terms, offering immediate assistance and support. Rooted in AI, these tools deliver personalized recommendations, product suggestions, and responses tailored to individual customer data and behavior, significantly enhancing the customer experience. Launched in 2016, Sofia exemplifies an AI cognitive assistant designed specifically for HR benefits. Sofia is equipped with advanced features like cognitive search, which can interpret intricate benefits plans. This enables Sofia to respond to user queries accurately and efficiently, using language, timing, and context that aligns with the user's needs. This level of personalization ensures a more streamlined and satisfying user experience.

The Influence of Shared Mental Models on AI Product Development

Shared mental models (SMMs) play a crucial role in AI product development. Research on human collaboration has shown that the quality of SMMs can enhance team performance, which can be extrapolated to improve human-AI collaboration. The goal of creating shared mental models that are both accessible and updatable for humans and AI alike can significantly influence human-AI interaction and operational efficiency. Developing AI products with a comprehensive mental model provides a vital tool for discussion, planning, and definition by diverse AI and product teams. The mental models that users form about AI systems can shape their understanding and perception of the system's value and quality.

Shared mental models can boost adaptive instruction as they represent organized knowledge, enabling humans to comprehend basic functioning. Furthermore, humans' intuitive mental models can provide a realistic explanation of behavior. The influence of teammates' shared mental models on team processes and performance has been evaluated, revealing a substantial impact. A study on the influence of shared mental models in human-AI team performance concluded with suggestions for developing more human-centric machine learning. In summary, the impact of shared mental models on AI product development is significant, affecting team performance, user perception, product planning, and the overall effectiveness of human-AI interaction.



Footnotes

1. [10 Excellent Ways AI is Enhancing Customer Experience](#)
2. [The role of AI in creating a more human customer experience](#)
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CHAPTER FIVE

Aligning Employee Experience with AI Product Experience



The Fusion of Employee Experience and AI Product Experience

The intersection of employee experience and AI product experience is becoming a critical focus point in the contemporary workplace, leading to transformative effects on both individuals and organizations. Artificial Intelligence is significantly altering the employee experience in numerous ways. It's being utilized to foster a culture of ongoing learning, keeping employees updated with the newest trends and skills. AI's role in HR is growing more noticeable, providing a smoother, user-driven employee experience. It's developing into an intelligent assistant, enabling us to work more efficiently and transforming our work lives.

AI is offering businesses substantial opportunities to retain top talent by enhancing the overall employee experience. It helps organizations make data-driven decisions, automates tasks, and provides personalized support. AI is also playing a crucial role in delivering customers reliable experiences, continually iterating to refine and personalize products and services for growth. New technologies at the crossroads of AI and HR are prompting professionals to modify their strategies to achieve superior results. Furthermore, the merger of HR analytics and AI is revolutionizing employee performance management. As most work transitions to virtual, AI is anticipated to become an integral part of the employee experience, concentrating on maximizing talent lifetime value. In conclusion, the intersection of employee experience and AI product experience is not only enhancing the way we work but also shaping the future of work.

Harmonizing Employee and Product Experiences

Achieving harmony between employee experiences and product experiences is an essential element of a thriving organization. The first step towards aligning the experiences of employees with the products they represent is a clearly expressed company mission. This can serve as a beacon, guiding all team members towards a shared objective and illuminating the path for everyone in the organization.

Understanding and internalizing the company's 'why' or core purpose is another crucial strategy, as demonstrated by Businessolver. Here, we place emphasis on understanding the question behind the question. When we receive queries from clients, we don't just provide temporary fixes; instead, we strive to understand the underlying 'why' to address the root cause. This approach not only aligns employee and product experiences, but also enhances customer satisfaction. Actively demonstrating your company's values can create a culture that is in sync with the product experience. These values, when lived daily, become more than just words on a page; they transform into guiding principles that shape behavior and decision-making. The manifestation of these values ensures that the company's ethics is reflected in its products.

The formation of a cross-functional strategy execution team is another effective strategy. It involves bringing together a team from various departments to implement the strategy. This type of collaboration drives innovation and ensures that diverse perspectives are taken into account in the execution process.

Alignment can be fostered by revisiting and grounding the team in your business strategy and by defining measurable goals. Clear, quantifiable goals give everyone a shared target to aim for and a clear measure of success. This alignment of goals ensures that both employees and products are working towards the same end.

The use of product strategy tools is critical to maintain team alignment and aid in visualizing and understanding priorities. It's important that your product roadmap is effectively communicated to your employees. They need to understand the direction to provide their support effectively! Finally, crafting a unified vision that all teams can embrace is vital for achieving organizational alignment. Stirring up excitement about your vision can be a powerful motivator. For instance, during my tenure at Western Union, we launched a large campaign targeting the Chinese New Year. Our then CMO, Gail Galuppo, had Chinese Dragon dancers parade through our corporate headquarters, igniting enthusiasm for the campaign among everyone! This unified vision ensures that all employees are working towards the same goal, thereby enhancing both their own experience and the experience of the customers they serve.



How IBM'ers Get to Know Watson

IBM utilizes a version of Watson, known as Watson Assistant, as an internal chatbot to assist its employees with HR-related questions. Watson Assistant is designed to respond to common employee inquiries, providing relevant resources around the clock and alleviating the burden on internal help desks and HR professionals. This innovative tool is used across all levels of the organization, enabling employees to get firsthand experience with how Watson works.

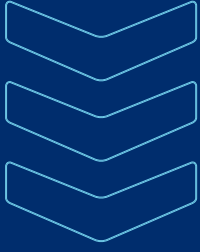
The Watson Assistant HR chatbot aims to enhance the human aspect of human resources by freeing up time for staff to focus on more complex tasks. It is part of IBM's broader strategy to automate HR processes and streamline workflows, particularly in areas like employee onboarding. The use of the HR chatbot allows employees to allocate their time and energy to higher value work, improving the efficiency of HR operations. Moreover, the IBM HR chatbot establishes new user-centric standards for employee experience and enablement. It not only serves as an effective tool for answering HR-related queries, but also acts as a demonstration of IBM's AI capabilities, giving every employee a taste of how Watson operates. This dual-function approach not only enhances the employee experience but also reduces the workload on the HR team, making the organization more efficient overall.

AI bots are playing a pivotal role in aligning employee and product experiences by enhancing efficiency, automating repetitive tasks, and improving customer interactions. As AI continues to evolve, it's expected that its application in improving both employee and product experiences will become even more pervasive.

Footnotes

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6. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/04/12/15-key-strategies-to-ensure-team-alignment-with-your-mission-and-values>
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CHAPTER SIX

Organizational Goals and Strategies



The Powerful Role of Formulating Accurate Organizational Goals and AI Strategies

Clear goals and strategies are powerful for any business's success as they set the company's direction. These goals help everyone in the organization understand what the company aims to achieve, allowing them to work together towards these targets. A well-planned strategy also helps in decision-making. It outlines the steps needed to reach the goals, helps prioritize tasks, allocate resources, and decide the best approach when facing challenges or opportunities.

Clear goals and strategies also create a sense of unity among employees. They ensure everyone is working towards the same targets, promoting teamwork, and boosting morale. Organizational goals also serve as a performance measure. They allow companies to track their progress, spot areas that need improvement, and celebrate victories. This can motivate employees and encourage continuous improvement. Finally, a well-defined strategy can give a company a competitive edge. It can make a company stand out from its competitors, attract more customers, and drive growth. In conclusion, clear organizational goals and strategies are key to improving performance, promoting unity, making informed decisions, and staying competitive.

The Impact of Collective Cognitive Schemas, Employee Experiences, and AI on Achieving Objectives

Shared mental models, employee experience, and AI product experience are all crucial elements that contribute significantly to achieving organizational goals.

Shared Mental Models: Shared mental models refer to a common understanding and approach among team members towards work processes and goals. This mutual comprehension allows teams to effectively coordinate and collaborate, leading to increased productivity and efficiency. When everyone in the organization shares a clear understanding of the goals and strategies, they can align their individual efforts with the broader objectives, thereby contributing to their achievement.

Employee Experience: Employee experience encompasses all interactions an employee has with the organization, from recruitment to retirement. A positive employee experience often leads to increased engagement, motivation, and productivity, all of which are essential for achieving organizational goals. Employees who feel valued and supported are more likely to contribute their best efforts towards achieving shared objectives.

AI Product Experience: With the advancement of technology, Artificial Intelligence has become a significant driver of organizational success. AI can automate routine tasks, provide data-driven insights, and enhance decision-making, all of which can contribute to goal attainment. However, the benefits of AI can only be fully realized if employees have a positive AI product experience. Employees need to understand how to use AI tools effectively and should trust in the reliability and accuracy of these tools. Investing in training and support to improve AI product experience can help drive the achievement of organizational goals.

Steps for Integrating These Elements Into the Organization's Strategic Planning Process

Incorporating shared mental models, employee experience, and AI product experience into strategic planning means integrating these aspects into your organization's overall plan. When it comes to shared mental models, they should be considered when setting new goals or strategies. These models are the collective understanding within your organization of work processes and objectives. If your team's shared mental model focuses on innovation and customer satisfaction, your new goals and strategies should mirror this, encouraging an innovative mindset and actions that boost customer experience. During strategic planning sessions, fostering discussions that lead to a common understanding of the organization's path are essential.

The next consideration is the employee experience. The impact of new goals or strategies on the employee experience needs to be weighed. If a strategy could overwork your team or create a negative work environment, it might reduce motivation and productivity, thus impeding organizational goal achievement. Therefore, strategies need to be crafted with the goal of improving the employee experience. For instance, if a new strategy involves adopting new technology, make sure there's a support plan in place to ease employees into this transition.

Lastly, AI product experience is vital. AI has become a crucial tool for many businesses, as it helps automate tasks, delivers insights, and aids in decision-making. When formulating strategies, think about how AI can be leveraged to meet them. If one of your strategies is to boost efficiency, you might want to use AI tools that automate repetitive tasks. It's also important to ensure that employees feel comfortable using these AI products. This could mean providing further training or enhancing user interfaces to improve the AI product experience.

By taking these elements into account when setting new goals or strategies, you're more likely to develop a comprehensive plan that not only propels your organization towards its goals, but also encourages a positive work environment and effectively utilizes modern technology.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Overcoming Challenges



Common Challenges in Building Shared Mental Models, Improving Employee Experience, and Implementing AI

Building shared mental models, improving the employee experience, and implementing AI are critical elements in achieving organizational goals. However, these processes come with their unique sets of challenges. When it comes to building shared mental models, a significant challenge lies in defining these models among team members in each instance. Relying on a surface-level assessment is insufficient; instead, this approach requires a clear understanding of team member roles, responsibilities, and individual knowledge and skillsets. Another obstacle that arises is disruptions from poor quality of service in collaborative virtual environments. Such disruptions can lead to disjointed mental models, hindering the collective understanding and alignment within the team.

Improving the employee experience is another crucial aspect. This process involves creating a positive work environment and being responsive to employee feedback. However, the challenge here lies in striking a balance between meeting business objectives and ensuring employee satisfaction. With diverse expectations from employees, catering to individual needs while fostering a sense of belonging can be quite challenging.

The deployment of AI also presents its own set of challenges. Factors such as resistance to change, lack of understanding of AI capabilities, and data privacy concerns can pose significant hurdles. AI products need to be user-friendly, and employees should be adequately trained to use them effectively. Furthermore, integrating AI into existing systems and processes can be complex and time-consuming. Overcoming these challenges is not an easy feat. It requires strategic planning, open communication, and continuous learning within the organization. It's crucial to regularly monitor and adjust these elements based on feedback and performance metrics. Only by doing so we can ensure that they contribute effectively to achieving organizational goals.

Solutions and Strategies for Overcoming These Challenges

Overcoming the challenges associated with AI deployment requires the implementation of several solutions. One of these solutions is change management. Resistance to change is a common issue in many organizations, and a comprehensive change management strategy can help address this challenge. Leadership can communicate the benefits of AI and how it will impact the organization and its employees. This can help create a positive perception of the change and increase acceptance.

Education and training are key to helping an organization successfully implement AI. Many people don't fully understand AI, which can make it seem daunting. Training programs can help make AI less scary by breaking it down into simpler terms and showing how it works in different industries.

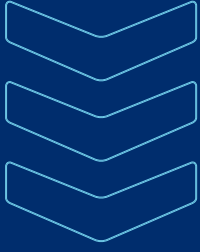
These programs should also give employees a chance to use AI tools hands-on. They might use AI software, help create simple AI models, or examine the results that AI systems produce. This helps them see what AI can do and learn how to use it in their own work. The benefits of this kind of training are twofold. First, it helps employees understand AI better, replacing fear with knowledge.

They'll learn what AI is, what it can do, and how it can make their work more efficient. Second, it builds confidence in using AI. The more employees use AI tools and see their benefits, the more comfortable they'll be with them. This can lead to faster adoption of AI in the organization.

AI products should be designed with the end-user in mind to ensure they are user-friendly. They should be intuitive and easy to use. User testing can help identify any usability issues before the product is deployed, making the transition smoother for all users. Finally, regular monitoring and adjustment based on feedback and performance metrics is crucial. This allows organizations to identify any issues early and make necessary adjustments. This could involve tweaking the AI algorithms, providing additional training, or making changes to the integration process.

By implementing these solutions, organizations can effectively address the challenges associated with AI deployment and ensure that they contribute effectively to achieving organizational goals.





CHAPTER EIGHT

The Future of Work



Predictions for How These Concepts Will Continue to Evolve and Shape the Future of Work

Homer's epic poems, "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey," have been celebrated for their evocative beauty and depth for centuries. Yet, one peculiar aspect that has puzzled scholars over the years is his unusual descriptions of color. From the "wine-dark sea" to the "bronze sky", the colors in Homer's works don't align with how we perceive them today. This anomaly provides a valuable lesson for a modern technology: Large Language Models (LLMs) like AI chatbots.

Much like Homer who lacked an extensive vocabulary to describe colors, many users today lack the technical vocabulary or understanding to interact effectively with AI chatbots. This similarity underscores the importance of designing AI systems with user-friendly interfaces and intuitive commands. It's essential to accommodate for users without technical backgrounds and make advanced technology accessible to all.

Product managers and UX designers play a pivotal role here. By prioritizing simplicity and ease of use, they can bridge the gap between complex technology and everyday users. Providing clear instructions, examples of queries, and feedback mechanisms can help users navigate these systems more confidently and effectively. A considerable part of this process involves creating a shared mental model with users. This means ensuring that users understand how to craft useful prompts that generate the answers they need from the AI. In other words, users should be trained to ask questions or provide commands in a way that the AI system can best understand and respond to.

Addressing user perceptions is another important aspect. Many users have had negative experiences with chatbots, often due to unrealistic expectations or misunderstandings about what chatbots can do. Transparency about the limitations of these AI systems can go a long way in mitigating such issues. It's important to alert users that while AI chatbots mimic human-like language, they lack emotional intelligence. This fact is especially notable in customer support contexts where empathy and understanding are key.

Additionally, users should be aware that LLMs can sometimes lack subject matter expertise and cultural understanding. This can lead to meaningless or even misleading communication. For instance, a healthcare chatbot needs to be proficient in medical terminology to provide accurate information and advice.

As commercial usage of chatbots increases, it's imperative to address issues like contextual guidance, misinformation prevention, and ethical considerations. These factors underscore the importance of vocabulary and context in communicating with LLMs - just as they mattered in Homer's color descriptions.

Motivating Businesses to Embrace Mental Models for Sustained Agility Amidst Change

In the rapidly evolving business landscape, companies must strategically employ mental models to harmonize human efforts and AI capabilities. This involves augmenting operational efficiency via AI, which proficiently refines processes, automates routine tasks, and offers predictive analytics. For example, AI-powered chatbots can handle customer inquiries non-stop, thereby enabling human agents to focus on more complex issues.

AI's capacity to process massive data sets can deliver invaluable insights that not only activate superior decision-making but also amplify efficiency and stimulate innovation. It's paramount, to consistently adjust these insights to ensure that they align with human-centric processes and experiences, as well as AI models. By doing so, businesses can assure that their AI systems are optimally tailored to their unique needs and circumstances, leading to enhanced operations effectiveness.

Regular monitoring and evaluation based on these mental models are essential to guarantee the expected performance of AI systems. Additionally, integrating feedback mechanisms to include user input into the AI system allows for its continuous improvement and adaptation to evolving needs.

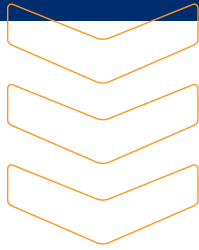
As AI continues its evolution, the need for upskilling and reskilling within businesses becomes increasingly vital. Viewing through the lens of these mental models, companies can more effectively identify and cultivate the skills employees require to proficiently work with AI. This could involve offering training programs, creating opportunities for experiential learning with AI, or forming partnerships with educational institutions.

The alignment of AI with business operations is a momentous step in maximizing the benefits of AI. Companies must design mental models that identify sectors where AI can provide the most value and concentrate their resources in these areas. Embracing shifts in organizational culture and structure, and investing in innovative initiatives are essential components of successful AI integration. Through understanding and applying these mental models, companies can foster a collaborative relationship between humans and AI, propelling them towards success. This strategy ensures the maximum utilization of both human intelligence and artificial intelligence, resulting in driving business growth and innovation.

Footnotes

1. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/embracing-innovation-how-stay-ahead-rapidly-changing-business-lawton>
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Conclusion

Recap of How to Ensure Organizational Success.

Merging employee experience and AI product experience is now a pivotal aspect in today's workplace, generating profound impacts on both individuals and organizations. Artificial Intelligence is reshaping the employee experience in diverse ways. Establishing an AI ecosystem to enhance and empower your workforce requires structuring knowledge into shared mental models that resonate with your employees and your technology. By providing a common understanding and language, shared mental models facilitate smoother communication and collaboration between employees and AI technology. This not only improves overall performance, but also positively impacts employee satisfaction and engagement levels.

Shared mental models are central for fostering trust in AI-driven HR solutions. Initially, employees might approach AI with skepticism or fear, questioning its ability to grasp their needs or supplant human decision-making. Hence, involving employees in the research to shape these mental models is vital. Additionally, providing opportunities for hands-on experience with AI tools like Sofia is imperative for enhancing understanding. It's not about everyone becoming a Data Scientist, but resembles how we learned to navigate Google. Acquiring sufficient knowledge about AI is necessary to leverage it effectively in our toolkit.

Building shared mental models, improving employee experience, and implementing AI are key for organizational success but come with challenges. Defining mental models clearly, addressing disruptions in virtual collaboration, creating positive work environments, balancing business goals and employee satisfaction, overcoming resistance to AI, ensuring user-friendliness, and continuous learning are essential to achieve goals effectively.

Investing time and effort to structure knowledge into shared mental models can enhance your employee experience, enabling adaptation to AI. This, in turn, boosts productivity and enhances the experience for your external customers. To achieve this, integrate mental models, employee experience, and AI into your goal-setting process. Use these as tools to guide employee behavior and satisfaction, aligning them with your objectives effectively. Additionally, regularly evaluate and update these shared mental models to ensure they remain relevant and accurately represent the AI technology your organization utilizes. With this approach, employees will feel more confident in their interactions with AI, leading to a positive impact on the overall employee experience and organizational success.



Motivating Businesses to Embrace Mental Models for Sustained Agility Amidst Change

When intentionally developed, the employee experience transforms into a web of interconnected mental models within your organization. This encourages swift alignment among employees, facilitating effective collaboration on tasks and complex issues. It also equips them to understand and adapt to changes, ensuring ongoing agility. Mental models act as internal blueprints that aid businesses in comprehending, interpreting, and navigating the intricate world around them. They can be particularly advantageous in cultivating resilience to change, a crucial trait in today's fast-paced business landscape.

- 1. Anticipating Potential Changes:** Mental models help businesses foresee potential changes by enabling them to analyze patterns, trends, and connections. For example, a mental model could uncover operational discrepancies between departments or unclear policies for employees. Establishing this common language allows the organization to promptly identify issues and cooperate on solutions more effectively.
- 2. Adapting to Change:** Mental models are pivotal in guiding businesses through transitions. These frameworks, serving as cognitive structures, provide a methodical approach to analyzing the business environment. By leveraging mental models, organizations can identify optimal strategies and tactics, enabling them to adjust swiftly and make informed decisions in dynamic settings.
- 3. Learning from Change:** Mental models are essential in fostering a culture of continuous learning within organizations. Embracing improvement and learning from mistakes positions a company to view change as an opportunity for progress and innovation, rather than a hurdle. This mindset not only enhances a company's resilience but also cultivates adaptability and growth.
- 4. Cultivating Resilience:** Mental models focused on resilience can help embed this quality within business operations and culture. For instance, implementing a mental model related to employee leave requests can reduce stress for staff taking time off, streamline the process for managers, and improve workforce management efficiency.
- 5. Empowering Employees:** Mental models can strengthen resilience by empowering employees. Swift alignment through these models enhances decision-making, resulting in a more engaged and resilient workforce. Empowered employees are inclined to take ownership, proactively address challenges, and drive change.

By supporting businesses in predicting, adjusting to, learning from, and fostering resilience to change, mental models play a powerful role in navigating today's volatile business landscape. They serve as frameworks of understanding that help organizations anticipate shifts, adapt strategies, and cultivate a culture of adaptability. Notably, robust shared mental models align with training the machine learning algorithms that form the foundation of AI technologies. Embrace the potential of these mental frameworks to overcome obstacles, drive creativity, and foster innovation in the continuously changing business environment. Those who skillfully leverage the synergy between human cognition and technological advancements will undoubtedly find success and stay ahead in their transformative journey.



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