

2018: Are You AI Ready?

Artificial intelligence (AI) was top of mind for marketers in 2017. In fact, [AI was recently voted the 2017 Word of the Year](#) by ANA Marketing. The survey revealed that while AI is a guiding force shaping our industry, many marketers still want to know what it means for them. This need for a deeper understanding will be acknowledged at CES this year, where the first ever [AI Marketplace](#) will explore future AI innovations and their impacts on a variety of businesses.

Read on for a look at businesses that are already putting AI into action, as well as a future glimpse at what you can expect in 2018.

AI in Action

When marketers embrace AI, every business has the potential to become a technology operation. But are marketers ready to think like technology companies? Here are a couple of examples of companies who are applying machine learning capabilities to solve everyday marketing challenges.



[Staples has transformed its Easy Button](#) from a playful device to an embedded tool built right into its business customers' daily routines. Using IBM Watson APIs, the company turned the Easy Button into a cognitive ordering ecosystem that customers can use to order supplies using voice, text, or email - removing the friction of ordering from its stores and websites.



When Autodesk found themselves in need of real-time customer service and support, they [leveraged IBM Watson's Conversation service](#) to develop a virtual agent that interacts with customers, and speeds up customer response times by 99%. The solution returns answers quickly by applying natural language processing and deep learning techniques to recognize and extract the intent, context and meaning behind inquiries.

In these examples, both Staples and Autodesk leveraged AI to create hyper-personalized, dynamic experiences with their customers. Based on an eMarketer survey of marketing leaders worldwide, other top areas where AI will be applied include predictive journeys, programmatic advertising and media buying, business insights across data and systems, campaigns analytics, digital asset management, and customer segmentation.

Looking Ahead

[According to Forrester Research](#), 70% of enterprises expect to implement AI over the next 12 months. Most marketers will find that AI isn't just an option, it's a necessity - but getting there will take focused effort and prioritization.

In 2018, brands are likely to drive widespread adoption of AI based applications that better understand why AI engines make certain predictions, bring humans and machine intelligence closer together, and leverage natural language in new and exciting ways.



Today, it can be difficult to learn why an AI engine makes one decision over another. However, new advances in interpreting decision reasoning are on the threshold of our understanding and will give organizations greater confidence in the decisions the machines are making.



Closer integration of human and machine intelligence will likely be a trademark of 2018 enterprise adoption as AI is used not only to mimic human interactions, but also to inform person to person exchanges leveraging emotion recognition.



Scale will be driven in the most natural of forms - via natural language. Advances in natural language processing make conversations via machine agents a practical reality. [Gartner predicts](#) that by 2020, 30% of all consumer searches will be done without a screen.



Making AI Actionable

In 2018, brands will go beyond just merely using AI. The most successful marketers and advertisers will accelerate the number of applications using machine intelligence to bring out the best of human and machine integration. Are you ready to make AI actionable?