

FEATURE

# Why AI will never replace EI in business

With the use of artificial intelligence (AI) growing exponentially, Ben Rooth speaks to one entrepreneur who believes companies overlook emotional intelligence (EI) at their peril...

It's the transformational technology that will rest at the heart of virtually every company's daily operations in the future. Artificial Intelligence - commonly referred to as AI - is changing the way that markets and workforces function across every sector.

It's based on the premise that automated systems can learn from data, identify patterns and make decisions with minimal human intervention.

And - for one Manchester entrepreneur - this is where the problems with AI potentially arise.

Reuben Singh, founder of Salford-headquartered alldayPA, remains convinced that companies overlook the importance of "human contact" - and specifically the emotional intelligence (EI) they bring to this dynamic - at their peril.

Certainly, Singh's view is reinforced by research conducted in America by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation and Stanford Research Center.

This concluded that 85% of workplace success arose from having well-developed people skills - while

and only 15% came from technical skills and knowledge. Nonetheless, employers spend only 28% on developing these people skills.

By contrast, alldayPA not only invests in its own employees' skill sets - and particularly EI - it also uses cutting-edge tech to handle calls and customer enquiries for thousands of customers across the UK.

The Salford-headquartered company also prides itself on bringing "a real human voice and touch to our clients' customers" by responding to calls in a "personal and customised manner" suitable for their business.

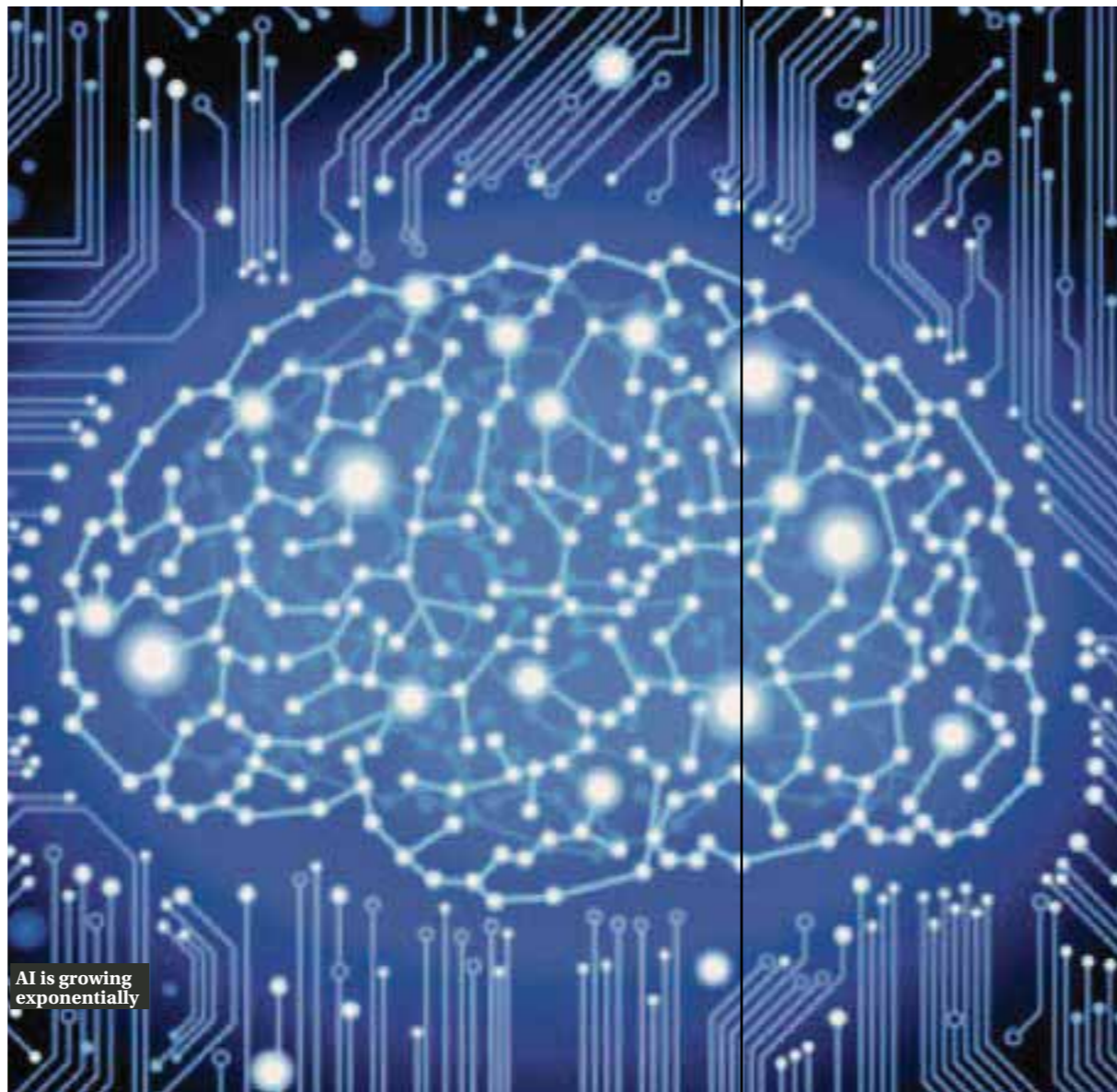
And this, Singh maintains, is something that AI will never be able to replicate.

Here, Singh answers questions on AI versus EI... **Can AI ever replace EI to ensure the smooth running of a business?**

AI can never replace EI - not totally. It can enhance a human service, but AI will never replace human emotional intelligence.

As technology advances within the business world, AI will no doubt need to be embedded into business structures, but it certainly can't replace EI.

AI software speeds up business



AI is growing exponentially

**“AI can never replace EI - not totally”**  
Reuben Singh

affairs and the workloads of human beings as information becomes more readily available.

It's become clear that the presentation, processing and delivery of information has improved through advances in AI.

However, when it comes to human interactions, AI simply replicates EI, without managing to replicate the organic nature of human interactions.

At the very least, AI will replace the most basic, technologically dependent jobs but the specialist techniques that are derived from EI will remain in the hands of human beings.

**Do some sectors need AI more than EI?**

Down the years, I've seen the manufacturing world become ever more reliant on AI.

I believe that the customer service world will follow the same path.

This transition is being accomplished to reduce the "per head" costs of businesses. But what about their emotional core?

We need to accept that human beings ultimately want to communicate with other human beings and whilst AI provides speedy and immediate solutions, it still needs to be paired with a human approach to be complete.

Hence, when introducing AI software into a business, you need to be mindful of maintaining enough scope for EI to strive - and take precedence.

**How do you successfully promote emotional intelligence in a workplace?**

Emotional Intelligence and the human conversation is at the core of alldayPA's ethos.

We place the value of educating employees on our overall customer

## CASE STUDY: CRYSTAL DOORS

A manufacturer of vinyl-wrapped doors and accessories is one step closer to becoming a smart factory after successfully installing robotics, 3D modelling and a hi-tech dust extraction system.

Rochdale-based Crystal Doors specialises in bespoke made to measure furniture parts for kitchen, bathroom and bedroom retailers.

Over the past two years, it has installed a self-teaching spraying system that constantly adapts to the different shape of furniture parts.

In addition, the company has installed a cutting-edge dust extraction system that continuously monitors and controls the air throughout the factory ensuring optimum working conditions.

The company's success resulted in

its starring role at the launch of a new £20m government-backed programme called Made Smarter, which aims to help 3,000 North West manufacturers embrace industrial digital technologies such as robotics and artificial intelligence.

By acting as a test-bed for these technologies, it is estimated that the north west region's manufacturing sector could generate a 25% boost in productivity while adding £115m to the regional economy.

The programme is backed by several major manufacturers with a presence in the region, including Siemens, Rolls Royce, BAE Systems, Airbus and Jaguar Land Rover.

Richard Hagan, managing director at Crystal Doors, said: "When I tell people we make doors many of them

picture a sawdust-filled workshop, tins of wood stain and boxes of door handles.

"However, when they visit our facility and see the level of automation we utilise, and the precision technology which we apply to production, they are genuinely stunned.

"I would encourage any manufacturer in the region, from any sub-sector, to explore how an initiative like Made Smarter North West could change the way they work through the adoption of highly advanced manufacturing techniques."

Made Smarter is being delivered by the regional Growth Hubs across the North West and co-ordinated by The Growth Company in Manchester.



Crystal Doors owner Richard Hagan (right) shows former Rochdale council leader Richard Farnell around the site

satisfaction goals at the forefront of our agenda.

In order to run a successful business that specialises in customer service, there needs to be a strong element of staff loyalty and a commitment to EI.

Our skilled and professional operators are always available to handle our clients' calls at all hours of the day, providing a real and genuine human interaction.

Acting as a virtual office for businesses requires so much more than what AI can offer as mechanical procedures cannot cater for and react to human queries.

For example, with incoming calls - our operators have guidelines and questions that need to be asked on behalf of our clients; such as name, number and reason for calling.

These questions vary according to our client's industry sector and the

information they want us to capture from callers.

AI software mechanically asks these questions while a human operator can prioritise the act of listening.

EI is responsive and we train our operators with the knowledge required to be understanding and where necessary, sympathetic to callers.

**Can AI and EI work together effectively?**

Undoubtedly - people accept the fact that technology has become more and more involved with our everyday lives, which means that as more human beings interact with technological devices, the more value they place on human interactions.

Most businesses will have a website, which by definition implies that they're open for business 24/7, which is where customer service outsourcing provides the support that in-house staff cannot.

Indeed, with a telephone handling business like ours, for example, you need both AI and EI to succeed.

We cannot operate without combining AI and EI, which is why we display a perfect combination of how AI can be integrated with EI, without the former dominating the latter.

Technology is now an everyday phenomenon and the foundations of alldayPA are based on cutting-edge tech. But I still believe that human interactions must lie at the heart of our services.

Technology undoubtedly helps businesses like ours to improve the level of service provided - but the expertise, skills, and knowledge of human operators adds a personal element to customer interactions that brings a higher added value to their overall customer experience.



Reuben Singh