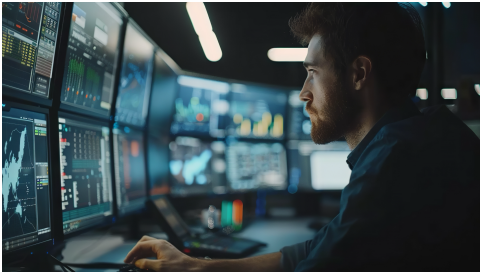


Adoption isn't a Technology Problem

To start with, it's important to remember one simple point: realizing value from technology isn't about a particular technology, it is about changing how people work. Starting with this basic principle, we get grounded in the idea that technology adoption is simply the process of changing how people work in a way that integrates that technology, and this holds true for pretty much any technology being integrated into industry today. Therefore, companies need to stop approaching technology adoption from an IT perspective and start approaching it from an organizational perspective.



Focus on the users. To be fair, the simple statement that “technology is about people and not software” is easy to make but what does that mean in practice? As we look into that question a bit more, we recognize that there are a few different aspects to this. First, how you get started is important. More specifically, your starting point and your ending point are rarely the same, so as you get started select applications that start your people on the adoption journey and try to avoid attempting to get to the end in one big step. Second, know who your primary users are and which employee groups should be getting the most value from the software. Armed with this knowledge, make sure the technology selection and adoption path is tailored to these employees. Lastly, remembering that technology is about people, you should consider how best to embed the knowledge and experience of your people into the technology. Overtime, this will allow your organization to better retain and continuing garnering value from that experiential knowledge.

For technology that feels evolutionary to people, this people centric approach is relatively straight forward because it just becomes a focus adjust existing work behaviors and practices. However, for technology that is disruptive in nature (i.e., it fundamentally changes how people work), a people centric approach becomes both significantly more important as well as often being more complicated. Take for example the integration of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning applications into an industrial work setting. The idea that a computer can analyze millions of lines of data and from that analysis generate novel or non-intuitive insights that change how an industrial process is managed is both exciting and scary to the employees responsible for that process. While the excitement comes from the promise of what can be accomplished with this kind of analysis and even more so when the insights are predictive in nature, the fear comes from the plethora of associated unknowns tied to the fundamental shifts in working norms. This is where taking a people centric approach to AI or any truly disruptive technology becomes critical to success. By overlaying the organizational change strategy overtop of a technical adoption plan, an overall adoption journey can be mapped that integrates the two and ultimately balances the needs of the business with the needs of the people to drive sustainable, transformational business value.

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The adoption journey starts with small steps. Exploring this concept further requires us to breakdown the two, somewhat, competing aspects of the adoption journey to start providing some insights into how to successfully marry the two. Let's start with the technical adoption element of the journey. When looking at the technical perspective, we must ask a number of questions ranging from data sufficiency to data management to which challenges/opportunities to focus on to AI/ML platform integration with other applications. For many organizations, the many technical questions can become a quagmire that either creates a level of paralysis or spins up corporate organizations into unwieldy groups that feel cut-off from the practicalities of facility operations. The key here is to start small with well defined, cleanly bounded opportunities that both provide a chance to showcase the capabilities of the platform while maintain a scope that helps IT/Digital teams sort through the mechanical aspects of managing this new platform.



Moving on to the organizational element of the journey, we first abandon the technology aspect all together and focus on some basic principles of changing the behavior of people. When people are faced with changing an existing behavior or adopting a new one, the first challenge is getting them to see the value in the change because adults are simple, if they don't see the value in changing how they do something they will actively resist the change. So, this becomes the first question you ask when looking at potential applications of AI/ML: what would have emotional value to the targeted user group? If you use this question to prioritize your starting point for AI/ML adoption, you will find employees approach the opportunity differently and with a more open, "we'll make this work" mentality.

The second challenge centers around the level of effort required by targeted employee groups. Specifically, is the benefit to me worth the effort and stress of implementation. This is often where organizations can get hung up as they quite often get enamored by the potential of AI/ML and with eyes that are bigger than their stomachs embark on ambitious projects intended to capture a meaningful portion of the significant value promise of the technology. When addressing this challenge, the focus is on the proverbial "easy button". Therefore, it is important to start with opportunities that are relatively easy to address and quite honestly may be perfectly suitable to more conventional technologies. Here it is important to remember that the objective isn't necessarily about capturing the greatest business value but starting to condition employees to the new technology such that the more complicated solutions that move the needle on business performance are easier to pursue later.

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The key is “what kind of small”. When you start looking at these two different aspects of the adoption journey, you realize there is a significant amount of overlap that can lessen the overall perceived change burden if activities are linked properly. The idea of starting small and expanding plays to both the technical as well as the organizational element. As you consider where to start for your organization, think about applications with strong correlations to more complex, higher business value

opportunities. For instance, starting with an AI/ML application focused on creating a soft sensor to better manage quality provides a more easily embraced starting point that easily transitions to proactive monitoring and early event detection applications. Similarly, starting with a simple gear box troubleshooting application can easily grow into an integrated predictive maintenance application. The key is starting small with a well-defined problem and clearly identifiable, accessible data streams. When overlaid with issues that are near and dear to the hearts of the personnel driving day to day process operation and target management, a clear starting point can emerge that adds day-to-day value to the target group(s). Then as you get started and employees get more and more comfortable with the predictive capabilities of AI/ML solutions, subsequent implementations and day to day utilization get easier and more value adding.

As with any organizational change, the ultimate key is simply to get started and not over analyze the situation, while remaining flexible enough to adjust your plan as you go. As stated earlier, start with a small scoped application with high emotional value to the targeted user group. By focusing on your people and what behaviors you are looking to enable and the full scope of what is required to enable those behaviors, you position yourself not only for initial success, but also to establish a strong foundation for adopting more complex, integrated AI/ML solutions in the future.

About the Author *Kevin Smith*



Kevin is the Founder and President of KES Global Advisors, LLC, and has spent almost 30 years driving business transformations for both his clients and with his own teams. His industry experience spans the globe, with direct work experience in over 40 countries across six continents.

Kevin can be reached at ksmith@kesglobaladvisors.com.