# Tech CEO David Tyler urges businesses to forget AI exists and focus on core problems



In a business environment increasingly characterised by the allure of artificial intelligence, the prevailing narrative often emphasises the potential of AI tools to revolutionise operations. However, David Tyler, founder and CEO of London-based Outlier Technology, presents a starkly different perspective, suggesting that the focus should shift from the mere incorporation of AI to addressing the core problems businesses need to solve.

Tyler argues that the question, “How can I use AI in my business?” is fundamentally misguided. Instead, he asserts that companies should begin by examining their actual needs before contemplating technological solutions. Speaking to BusinessCloud, he stated, “The worst thing you can do is ask… ‘How can I use AI in my business?’ It’s a non-question… guaranteed to help you waste a lot of time and money on white elephants.” This sentiment reflects a broader critique of the tech-first approach that has dominated many corporate strategies, where the adoption of new technologies often overshadows the essential understanding of business operations and goals.

Outlier Technology aims to counter this trend by promoting a human-centred approach to system design. Tyler emphasises the importance of focusing on decision-making processes and aligning technology with organisational needs instead of getting lost in the convoluted landscape of buzzwords and tech jargon. He noted, “Our objective is to make technology actually work for organisations by using less of it rather than more.” This approach posits that technology should be a means to an end—an enabler of better decisions rather than a goal in itself.

As AI systems evolve, moving from simple application tools to complex agents capable of autonomous decision-making, it is crucial for businesses to navigate this transition judiciously. These so-called "agentic AIs," which leverage large language models and sophisticated machine learning, are designed to analyse data and fulfil defined objectives independently. Nevertheless, experts caution that the promise of full autonomy remains largely unfulfilled when it comes to practical applications. Many companies are still grappling with foundational issues—such as data quality, computing limitations, and ethical implications—that hinder the effective deployment of these technologies.

Despite the rapid pace of AI development, Tyler warns of an impending correction in the tech landscape. With the rise of open-source solutions, traditional models—like those used by OpenAI or Anthropic—are under pressure to adapt. “The hype cycle in AI is massive,” he remarked, suggesting that as larger corporations like Microsoft and Amazon offer smaller businesses the ability to implement private models, a reset in expectations is likely on the horizon. This shift aligns with broader sentiments from industry professionals who highlight the importance of not just acquiring AI tools, but implementing them effectively to enhance productivity, retain talent, and foster innovation.

According to reports, many organisations, particularly in sectors like legal and finance, exhibit a reluctance to fully adopt AI technologies. This hesitation stems from concerns about job displacement and the need for substantial structural changes. As businesses consider integrating AI into their operations, leaders must address workforce anxieties effectively, balancing technological advancements with a commitment to employee security and value.

Furthermore, the challenges of AI implementation extend beyond individual companies. Smaller enterprises often lack the resources for upfront training and support, hindering their ability to navigate the complexities and responsibilities associated with AI tools. Christina Janzer from Slack pointed out that inadequate training remains a significant barrier, underscoring the necessity for businesses to not only adopt AI but also to cultivate a workforce adept at utilising these technologies responsibly.

Tyler's assertion that businesses should 'forget AI exists' in their initial assessments is a poignant reminder of the need for clarity in strategic decision-making. By prioritising a thorough understanding of their operational challenges and focusing on the details of the problems they wish to solve, organisations can better position themselves to leverage technology effectively. Those able to clearly define their objectives and needs will ultimately gain the most meaningful insights and advantages from AI, thereby transforming a once daunting integration into a strategic asset.

This blend of thoughtful analysis and focused implementation may well be the key to unlocking the true potential of artificial intelligence in the corporate world—driving not just innovation, but a greater alignment between technology and human capabilities.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3: [[1]](https://businesscloud.co.uk/news/the-best-thing-a-business-can-do-is-forget-ai-exists-tech-ceo/)
2. Paragraphs 4, 5: [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/3e862e23-6e2c-4670-a68c-e204379fe01f)
3. Paragraph 6: [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/boards-policy-regulation/comment-why-reluctance-deploy-ai-could-cost-firms-dear-lost-talent-2024-07-15/)
4. Paragraph 7: [[4]](https://www.axios.com/2024/12/19/ai-sf-expert-voices-roundtable-using-ai-advatange)
5. Paragraph 8: [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/f742dcdc-41ef-415d-adad-d828d23f739c)
6. Paragraph 9: [[6]](https://i4.com/blogs/news/the-challenges-of-implementing-ai-in-business-operations)
7. Paragraph 10: [[7]](https://blog.aiperity.com/challenges-and-opportunities-of-implementing-artificial-intelligence-in-businesses)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://businesscloud.co.uk/news/the-best-thing-a-business-can-do-is-forget-ai-exists-tech-ceo/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/3e862e23-6e2c-4670-a68c-e204379fe01f> - This article discusses the evolution of AI agents from simple co-pilots to sophisticated autonomous systems, referred to as 'agentic AI.' These agents, powered by large language models and enhanced machine learning, can analyze data, understand context, and make decisions independently to achieve user-defined goals. Their capabilities range from automating routine tasks to performing complex functions across industries such as healthcare, finance, law, and retail. However, full autonomy remains theoretical, with most agents currently functioning at lower autonomy levels. Despite transformative potential, challenges remain, including high-quality data, computing constraints, trust, cybersecurity, and ethical concerns. Companies must strategically adopt agentic AI, starting with simple, well-defined tasks, and ensure transparency, oversight, and employee involvement. AI-native firms may gain a competitive edge by integrating agents into operations from inception, while legacy firms face resistance due to workforce disruptions and integration issues. Successful implementation can deliver productivity gains, cost savings, and eventually top-line growth. However, risks include unintended consequences, system vulnerabilities, and accountability issues. Early adopters stand to benefit from compounding intelligence advantages as AI agents continuously learn and improve, emphasizing the need for clear goals, robust governance, and a long-term strategic approach to AI integration.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/boards-policy-regulation/comment-why-reluctance-deploy-ai-could-cost-firms-dear-lost-talent-2024-07-15/> - This article highlights the growing impact of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and the necessity for businesses to innovate rapidly to remain competitive and retain top talent. Organizations must not only adopt but also effectively implement AI technology, tools, and training. Despite the known potential of AI, many firms, especially in legal, tax, accounting, risk, and compliance industries, are perceived by their professionals to be slow in AI adoption, risking competitive disadvantage. Current data shows a significant number of professionals believe AI will have a transformative impact on their work, saving time and improving job satisfaction. Business leaders also recognize AI's impact on operational, product/service, and talent strategies. Companies that quickly and efficiently integrate AI into their operations are seen as innovators and are more likely to attract and retain skilled employees. Delay in AI implementation, however, risks falling behind in the rapidly evolving business landscape.
4. <https://www.axios.com/2024/12/19/ai-sf-expert-voices-roundtable-using-ai-advatange> - At the AI+ SF Summit held on December 17, experts highlighted the challenges small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs) face in safely implementing AI tools. The primary challenge identified was the lack of upfront AI training, which is necessary for responsible and secure application of these tools. Christina Janzer from Slack emphasized that inadequate training and information are significant barriers preventing businesses from leveraging AI effectively. Corey McMahon from HopSkipDrive mentioned that businesses need access to tools that assess the appropriateness of AI usage. Despite these challenges, there is notable innovation within SMBs that helps bridge the gap with larger companies in California. The event, sponsored by Intuit, brought together technology, government, and business leaders to discuss how SMBs can navigate AI opportunities and challenges.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/f742dcdc-41ef-415d-adad-d828d23f739c> - This article discusses the evolving roles of managers in the era of AI, emphasizing the necessity to adapt to new challenges. Managers must juggle seven roles: providing 'business hospice' for obsolete positions, acting as possibility catalysers, mapping uncertainties, redesigning organizations, amplifying growth, moderating ambitions, and evaluating ideas. These roles require balancing advocacy for AI capabilities with ensuring employees' sense of value and security. Effective AI implementation also hinges on high-quality data and foundational technological frameworks. Leaders should focus on educating and motivating the workforce while addressing the implications of AI on job roles and compensation fairly.
6. <https://i4.com/blogs/news/the-challenges-of-implementing-ai-in-business-operations> - This article outlines several challenges businesses face when implementing AI technologies. Key issues include data quality and availability, cost of implementation, lack of AI talent, integration with existing systems, regulatory and ethical concerns, scalability and flexibility, and security risks. AI systems rely heavily on data to function effectively, but businesses often struggle with the quality and availability of necessary data. Implementing AI can be costly, requiring significant investment in software development, hardware infrastructure, and training. There's also a shortage of skilled AI professionals, making it difficult for businesses to find and retain talent. Integrating AI technologies with existing systems can be complex, especially when dealing with legacy systems. Regulatory and ethical concerns, such as data privacy and algorithmic bias, must be addressed to build trust and avoid legal issues. Ensuring that AI systems are scalable and flexible to meet evolving business needs is essential. Additionally, AI systems introduce new security risks that businesses need to address to protect sensitive information.
7. <https://blog.aiperity.com/challenges-and-opportunities-of-implementing-artificial-intelligence-in-businesses> - This article discusses the challenges and opportunities of implementing artificial intelligence (AI) in businesses. Key challenges include data quality and quantity, talent shortage, integration with existing systems, cost of implementation, ethical and legal considerations, and resistance to change. AI systems require vast amounts of high-quality data to function effectively, but many businesses struggle with data collection and cleaning. There's a significant talent gap in the AI field, making it difficult for businesses to hire or upskill existing employees. Integrating AI into legacy systems can be complex and disruptive. Implementing AI can be expensive, involving costs related to hardware, software, and training. Ethical and legal concerns, such as data privacy and algorithmic bias, must be addressed. Employees may resist AI adoption due to fear of job loss or lack of understanding of how AI will impact their roles.