

# Why AI Isn't What You Think It Is



Sci-fi shows like “Westworld” and films like “Ex Machina”, while highly imaginative and entertaining to many, leave us with a distorted view of what artificial intelligence (AI) really is.

Most of the time, mixing AI with humans in these sci-fi tales produces consequences galore, ranging from mild uncertainty about the long-term future of humanity to downright peril in short order.

But this is the stuff of fiction. It’s important to pull back from the Hollywood version of AI for a reality check on what AI really is. Bots aren’t on the verge of taking over humanity.

When you separate fact from fiction and see how companies are integrating AI into their customer journeys, you find the exact opposite of “robots versus humans” dynamic that’s portrayed in film.

AI in the enterprise, most commonly in the form of intelligent bots, are used to make life better, not worse.

## AI Makes Life Better

The stories of real-life AI interaction with humans may not be anywhere near as dramatic as those portrayed on the screen, but they certainly illustrate exciting new ways that modern life is being made better.

Take the story of Google Duplex as just one example.

Google Duplex is a technology that allows customers to speak into their phone and carry out simple tasks using natural, conversational commands. For example, a person might say:

“Make me a hair appointment on Tuesday morning between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.”

And off goes Google Duplex, using its ability to understand natural language to get the job done.

These kinds of AI-powered interactions are ushering in never-before-seen levels of ease and convenience in everyday life. And because today's consumers use their phone and other digital devices to interact with companies whenever and wherever they like, smart companies are leveraging AI in the form of intelligent bots to offer the same kind of “get it done” convenience that makes life easier for customers and employees.

## AI: Assisting Your Workforce, Not Replacing It

AI is used most effectively when it's helping humans, not replacing them. When it comes to work replacement, a common misunderstanding is that bots will do away with live agent assistance. In fact, bots and agents both do their best work when they are allowed to work together in a collaborative way, to help bring one another to levels of performance that aren't achievable by keeping them separate.

Bots do the work agents don't want to do. The kind of low-complexity, menial and repetitive tasks that humans generally find boring and not stimulating. Tasks that, when removed from an agent's job description, free the agent to focus on delivering higher-value customer service. Like taking care of the finer points of a special request or managing a unique exceptions protocol where judgement and decision-making are required.

Bots also put necessary customer-specific information at the agent's fingertips, and can even prescriptively guide the agent to delivering next steps and complete the resolution.

In turn, agents help bots. In fact, AI in the enterprise depends on human parentage in order to learn and continue getting smarter. By adding content to a knowledge base that bots can learn from, and by flagging errors or inconsistencies in bot behavior, the system will learn and improve bot performance.

All along the way, the customer benefits. No signs of peril here.

## AI + Integration = Closed Loop Journeys

There is, of course, a large spectrum of customer journeys where bots can be used to deliver a purely autonomous experience, with no human involvement required whatsoever, again to the benefit of customer and company alike.

Where bots offer perhaps the most promising benefit to large enterprises is the ability to manage business workflows autonomously, without live assistance.

For example, a banking customer can use an IVR or chat to check balances, transfer funds between accounts and even apply for, and open, a line of credit account.

For the latter transaction to happen autonomously in a 100% self-serve manner requires integration with several back-end systems within the enterprise. With the proper integration work in place, this is a reality today.

Bots handle the customer-facing portion of the journey, and humans only need to be involved if the customer takes the journey in a new or different direction.

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With the right cross-channel customer experience platform, it's even possible for customers to complete these kinds of transactions across channels. Starting a journey in the IVR channel, for example, and finishing in chat.

So far, so good. And still no detectable threat to the human race.

## AI-Powered Sales Delivers Targeted Offers to Customers

A variation of the above banking scenario, is where bots proactively deliver targeted marketing offers to customers, based on the use of various types of known data.

For example, collecting customer account data such as income level, credit score, net worth, and wallet share, and combining it with web activity to identify candidates for loan products, as well as the right moment in the right journey to make the offer. All of this is possible with enterprise bots today.

In another example, an automobile manufacturer can use location data to match customers to product inventory at local dealerships and promotional and financing offers by region.

You can see that there are a wide breadth of customer engagement tactics that open up purchase paths, and move customers toward the sale with highly relevant offers, allowing them to complete the transaction on their own or switch to live assistance or physical storefront much more informed and prepared to make a purchase decision.

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## Knowing the Limitations of the Day

Bots do have their limitations, and it's important to know where their capabilities end, and where human assistance is required to ensure an ideal customer experience.



"... bots today do well so long as the customer stays on the 'happy path,' the ideal scenario where the customer says all the right things. That is when question A is well understood and leads naturally and predictably to question B and so forth.

Challenges begin when the questions deviate from this path—for example, if, while making a restaurant reservation, the customer deviates from routine questions by asking if their favorite waitress will be working, or if they indicate that this is a special occasion and ask if flowers could be brought to the table. Given the technology available today, the bot most likely won't be able to perform these tasks."<sup>1</sup>

While on the big screen those ominous bots may be plotting to overtake society, in the context of customer experience for the enterprise, you can see how bots are used to make life better for humans, not worse.

AI is an evolving technology, with a lot of learning still ahead, which means it's not necessary to prepare for (or guard against) a humanless state where bots are in control. What is clear, however, is that companies who are committed to learning and evolving at a pace that matches technology's evolution will be the winners as AI-powered journeys evolve.

Today, that means moving toward a blended human-agent collaborative environment that delivers better outcomes for customers, agents and companies alike.

## 100%

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