

AI Is Not Just About Speed -- It's About Smarter Business Decisions

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Many leaders focus on automation, but the bigger payoff may be better judgment: helping them explore options, test ideas, and make stronger calls in uncertain markets.

EDITOR'S NOTE: [Edosa Odaro](https://www.edosaodaro.com/) (<https://www.edosaodaro.com/>) is an AI and data transformation leader who helps organizations translate artificial intelligence into meaningful organizational and societal value. As Executive Advisor for Data & AI and Chief Data Analytics & Privacy Officer, he has worked with more than 35 international organizations—including Barclays Group, AXA, AIG and the European Commission—to turn data and AI strategies into measurable outcomes.

He is the author of "[Making Data Work, Value-Driven Data, and The Values of Artificial Intelligence](https://www.edosaodaro.com/books)." (<https://www.edosaodaro.com/books>) " His work focuses on helping leaders understand how data and AI can strengthen decision-making, drive innovation and create sustainable value. Edosa is also the founding steward of the [AI Values Institute](https://www.theaivalues.org/) (<https://www.theaivalues.org/>), which advances practical thinking on AI value creation, leadership accountability and responsible AI deployment.

In this interview with EIX, he shares how smaller, entrepreneur-led firms can harness AI to hold their own against larger companies with more resources.

Advantages for Small Firms

EIX: To some entrepreneurs, it might seem like big established companies have all the advantages when it comes to AI and that their own, smaller businesses might be left behind. How might entrepreneurs running smaller, newer businesses use AI to their advantage?

Large organizations often have advantages such as larger datasets, established infrastructure and greater financial resources. But smaller firms also have important advantages of their own.

Entrepreneurs tend to move faster, experiment more freely and adapt their business models more quickly. Artificial intelligence can amplify those strengths. Instead of trying to replicate the scale of large corporations, smaller businesses can focus on targeted applications where AI enhances insight, decision-making or customer engagement.

In many cases the most powerful use of AI for entrepreneurs is not automation alone but augmentation. AI can help founders analyze markets, understand customer behavior, explore multiple strategic scenarios and test ideas more rapidly than would have been possible even a few years ago.

The real opportunity lies in using AI to sharpen strategic thinking rather than simply speeding up existing processes.

Negotiating Trade-Offs

EIX: You've mentioned that successful AI initiatives must attend to multiple value dimensions simultaneously. This message probably resonates with entrepreneurs who are familiar with the tradeoffs involved in building a new venture (e.g., growth vs. focus). How can AI help early-stage entrepreneurs navigate these competing value priorities?

Entrepreneurs are already very familiar with trade-offs. Building a company requires constant balancing between competing priorities such as growth versus focus, speed versus sustainability or experimentation versus discipline.

Artificial intelligence introduces a similar dynamic. AI



systems can create value across multiple dimensions at the same time—operational efficiency, customer insight, innovation and risk management. But these benefits often affect different stakeholders in different ways.

One helpful way to approach this complexity is to start by asking a simple question: **Who?** Who benefits from the value the system creates, and who might bear the cost?

When entrepreneurs think about AI through this stakeholder lens, it becomes easier to design systems that align value creation with their broader strategic objectives rather than optimizing for a single metric. This perspective helps ensure that AI initiatives strengthen the business rather than creating unintended tensions.

Expanding the Range of Possibilities

EIX: Many startups use AI to speed up workflows (for example, in conducting analyses or generating forecasts). To what extent are AI-based advantages based on speed, or are there other ways AI can help?

Speed is certainly one advantage, but it is rarely the most important one.

AI allows organizations to process information faster, generate insights more quickly and automate routine tasks. Those improvements can be valuable. However, the deeper advantage of AI often lies in expanding the range of possibilities leaders can consider.

Artificial intelligence can help entrepreneurs explore alternative scenarios, identify patterns that might otherwise remain hidden and connect information from multiple sources. In that sense, AI is less about doing the same things faster and more about enabling different kinds of thinking.

For founders navigating uncertain markets, that ability to expand perspective can be far more valuable than speed alone.

Harnessing the Power of Data and AI

EIX: How did your own career journey inform your insights on AI?

My career has largely focused on helping organizations translate the potential of data and artificial intelligence into real-world outcomes. Over the past three decades I've worked across industries—from financial services and insurance to public sector and multilateral institutions—often at moments when organizations were trying to make sense of complex technological change.

Early in my career I was primarily focused on building analytical capabilities and data infrastructure. Over time, however, I began to notice a recurring pattern. Many organizations were investing heavily in advanced technologies, yet the value they expected from those investments often failed to materialize. The algorithms worked and the systems functioned, but the organizational impact was uneven. That observation gradually shifted my focus from technology itself to the broader question of value creation.

Today my work centers on helping leaders understand how AI initiatives succeed when technical capability is aligned with strategy, culture and stakeholder expectations. [My books](https://www.edosaodaro.com/books) (<https://www.edosaodaro.com/books>) reflect that journey and explore how organizations can translate AI potential into sustainable value.

AI as a Thinking Partner, Not an Authority

EIX: It's easy to imagine how AI tools could make founders feel more certain about the judgments they make. — For example, by enabling founders to access better data, or to conduct more analysis, or to consider things from multiple perspectives. But might this increased certainty be a problem too? In short, do you think AI helps or hinders our business judgment – or can it do both?

It certainly can.

AI systems are powerful analytical tools, but they can also create an illusion of certainty if their outputs are treated as definitive answers rather than informed inputs. The models we build reflect the data they are trained on and the assumptions embedded in their design.

For entrepreneurs, the most effective use of AI is not to replace judgment but to inform it. AI can surface insights, highlight risks and challenge assumptions, but

the responsibility for interpreting those signals ultimately remains human.

In that sense, AI can both strengthen and weaken decision-making depending on how it is used. When treated as a thinking partner, it can sharpen judgment. When treated as an unquestioned authority, it can narrow perspective.

The goal should not be to eliminate uncertainty, but to make better decisions within it.