

Profit from AI today

Five quick AI wins for your business



An Xpedition White Paper

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Executive summary

Find out how you can put artificial intelligence (AI) tools and technologies to work in your business today for competitive advantage. Practical applications are **already** game-changing for B2B and B2C SMEs in sales, marketing and customer service. We share five immediate wins your firm can make using existing, affordable, proven AI solutions, and describe exactly what they might look like in your business.

83%

of early AI adopters
have already achieved
substantial or moderate
economic benefits.¹

AI will boost
profitability by **38%**
and generate
\$14 trillion
of additional revenue by 2035.²

Introduction

We all hear a lot in the media about AI's future potential. But the fact is, it's here today. And businesses are already using it in sales, marketing and customer service.

Do you know what AI could do
for you already?

Not in five years' time, but
today or tomorrow.

AI is not just for automated customer call centres and helplines – it's an intelligent service application for a range of digital touchpoints. It can take CRM marketing to the next level and is emerging as a key technology for sales.

Can smaller businesses hope to access and afford this sophisticated, high-powered capability? Yes they can. The huge computing power needed for AI is now available in the cloud. That means that technology providers own the

infrastructure. You don't need a host of expensive servers – just pay for what you need as a service. That means even the smallest organisations can now take advantage of this game-changing technology. Applications like Microsoft Dynamics 365 make transformative AI and the analytics and data that drive it available to everyone.

In every industry sector, AI has exciting and immediate potential, because it creates truly personalised and relevant experiences. Whether your customers represent their business or are consumers, they're humans - drawn to convenient, fulfilling experiences that show an understanding of their needs and priorities.

AI helps us provide more consistent, personalised and relevant engagement through building knowledge and continually applying new learning.

It's within your grasp today. Find out how.

You're closer than you think

Everyone knows that data is a key weapon for businesses in every sector, in today's competitive market. Know your customer and you can deliver the goods.

"If data is the new oil, then companies who can capture the data, analyze it, and generate actionable insights will have salespeople who'll be able to close more deals, more often."
Victor Antonio, co-author of *Sales Ex Machina: How Artificial Intelligence is Changing the World of Selling* ³

You have the data, you have the insights. You recognise the value of analytics. You want actionable information that can direct your marketing and sales efforts most profitably and discover opportunities for growth.

The down-side is that some teams are getting bogged down in maintaining data and records and interpreting intelligence. There's still a lot of human intervention. You're not getting value back from the investment in the data itself.

From automation to AI

Process automation and an effectively managed database help cut down on time spent. You may already have invested in these tools. The good news is that AI takes automation a step further. It applies continual learning to improve processes and outcomes. Your data is working all the time to improve performance – as you add to it, AI modifies and optimises processes and activities accordingly.

It sounds sophisticated – and the results are incredibly powerful. But AI is actually just another step in our digital evolution. Just as intelligent humans do, it makes sense of data and applies experience-based learning to inform future actions. But it does it infinitely faster, more consistently, objectively and continuously than humans can. Our five quick wins are tangible examples of how you can harness that right now in your day-to-day business operation.

What's the difference?

A cake needs cooking for 20 minutes at 180 degrees, according to the recipe.

Automation: Know the time and temperature, put the cake in when the correct temperature is reached and remove it when 20 minutes is up.

AI: Review data from previous cakes to determine the best cooking time and temperature to produce a cake of optimal colour, texture and popularity. Heat the oven, put the cake in and remove it accordingly. Evaluate the success of this cake and adapt the model for next time.

Win #1

Optimise content

So, what can you do, right now, today, to get benefit from AI in your business? There are established apps and functions in Microsoft Dynamics 365 that are easy to use and already delivering AI outperformance for B2B and B2C organisations of all sizes processing high volumes of data and applying sophisticated analysis using the computing power of the Microsoft cloud.

Years of experience with Microsoft Dynamics means our consultants know where it really packs a punch and how businesses can get real value and impact from it. Based on their knowledge, here are our top five ways to exploit cloud AI to drive revenue, loyalty and profit in your business.

1 Optimise marketing content – it directly impacts revenue

“Buyers have increasing demands for relevant, personalised and immediate information.” That’s according to Forrester’s recent report on AI-driven technologies. And it’s not just a wish-list. Forrester’s analysis of survey responses from sales technology decision makers continues: “Failing to provide customers with the experiences they seek often results in missed conversions and ultimately lower revenue.”

Dynamics 365 for marketing uses AI to evaluate insights from all your marketing campaigns and resources as well as social data. Use it to refine individual customer experiences based on previous interactions with the same or similar customers and to adapt based as new behavioural data is added.

AI in action: marketing and prospecting

Your marketing team is constantly sending out mailers and e-DMs, customers and prospects are hitting your website, attending seminars and contacting you via IM, Skype, email or phone. AI means you can identify the value of each contact, scoring them for their interaction across all these channels. You’ll see who has the propensity to buy and what’s the next best thing you can do to move them towards a purchase.

AI crunches the data to spot prospects showing patterns of behaviour that have previously led to sales. It continually reviews and refines that algorithm based on the latest customer activity. It uses experience to propose a likely sequence of events and highlight the next best action – for example a seminar invitation or a promotional offer, or an up-sell or cross-sell to existing customers.

Win #2

Get focused

2 Focus on the right prospects

According to Forrester¹, one of the top five current sales challenges in B2B is “Identifying the appropriate individuals at target accounts to speak with.” They may have a database and a wide range of information about prospects within it, but turning that into a manageable, actionable list of immediate targets is hard. They can search and sort by different criteria but managing the interplay between different influencing factors requires complex analysis and a great deal of time.

In Dynamics 365, AI can carry out the rigorous analysis needed to understand success factors from previous wins and apply them to future prospects to prioritise them. As new wins come in, AI builds that knowledge into its algorithm, continually updating your lead scoring to match changing customer behaviours and needs.



AI in action: prioritisation

No matter what products or services your business sells, there will be key indicators that show a customer is ready to buy. If you sell business services for example, and a prospect has spent time on your website, watched a couple of videos, and downloaded one of your whitepapers, this prospect is showing that they're considering a purchase. Your sales team may have already reached out. If that prospect then comes back to your website the following week, your past sales data may tell you that a call at that moment in time will move them further through the sales funnel. Not making that call because your sales team are chasing prospects that aren't ready to move forward could mean you miss out and your competitors make that call instead.

There's no better way to understand future sales than through analysing past ones. With AI performing the analysis of what has worked and what hasn't, your sales team will become more effective at closing, knowing exactly where their time is best spent - on the customers that have the highest likelihood of converting.

Win #3

The next best action

3 Always carry out the next best action – don't let sales slip away

In a high performing sales environment, time is of the essence. Reps juggle many accounts and prospects at different stages in the pipeline. Online engagement with e-commerce sites is at a high volume. It's easy for a simple next step to be missed or delayed... the customer moves on and you're left behind.

Machine intelligence doesn't get diverted or overwhelmed. With an AI-driven sales tracking process, you'll always know the next best action and be able to see a clear list of what the team needs to do. Where information provision or contact can be automated, AI makes it happen. Where direct contact is needed, AI can prompt the right person and provide the context and contact information so they can act immediately. AI continually optimises next best actions, responding to uptake or conversion data and relating it to the most effective approach for each client that's most likely to prompt a sale.



AI in action: personalisation

“The Amazon experience” is often cited as an example of highly personalised marketing engagement. The retail platform offers recommendations that directly relate to customers' previous purchases and search history. Now it's no longer the exclusive privilege of major corporates with huge data centres: every business can offer the same kind of customised experience using cloud-powered AI. You can provide relevant information and experiences for individual prospects and customers, rather than trying to push them down a pre-determined marketing route.

AI can examine data about that individual and their interactions with you across a wide range of channels, from web to social media to phone calls and emails. It calls up similar patterns of behaviour shown by other customers and predicts the favourable interaction you can offer. As well as being appealing to the customer, this saves money on marketing campaigns. You're not taking a bulk, scattergun approach but targeting marketing spending where it's most likely to deliver a return.

Win #4

Make tools available

4 Make AI sales tools widely available to help reps and account managers

“Sales force automation creates some of the greatest potential for AI solutions due to its role in storing customer data and driving buyer-seller engagement.” (Forrester, 2018⁴)

In most organisations, reporting and analysis tend to be management functions. Account teams don't have access to the dashboards and tools that produce insight. But they're the people who need them, to influence their everyday priorities and actions.

With Dynamics 365, AI democratises information across your whole business. Within individual accounts and opportunities, AI can apply relevant experiences and recommend effective approaches, from the best time to call a certain contact to the discussion topics most likely to engage the prospect.

The complex analysis taken care of. At the front-end, your sales people see clear priorities and the right information and resources to use effectively with their prospects. With less time spent managing and searching data, reps can spend more time directly engaging with well-qualified prospects to respond and influence personally.

AI in action: relationship management

When a customer has been with you for some time, it's easy to assume they're locked in. It's a surprise when they defect to another supplier. With AI, you could potentially predict and prevent this. Analysing data about how and when emails are exchanged or calls returned, patterns of visiting your website or contacting customer service are just some of the factors that could flag a customer at risk. With early warning, your account teams can step in to engage with the customer, offering them the services, experiences or discounts that AI's historical evaluation shows are most likely to keep them satisfied and loyal.

You can also use AI to predict accurately a customer's lifetime value. This can help you make decisions about investment in sales or services. If a customer is unlikely to be profitable, you can avoid expending too much time and effort.



Win #5

Better support

5 Support your customers and prospects better

Nowadays, buyers use multiple touchpoints to gather information and progress towards a purchase. 66% of respondents to a Microsoft survey said they actively use three or more channels⁵. Many like the convenience of online interaction. You need to make sure the experience is as personalised and engaging digitally as in person or by phone.

Using AI tools, virtual assistants and customer services reps can speed up response times and give customers great service tailored to their requests and enquiries. You can build a database of common reasons for contact and refine the answers and actions continually, incorporating customer feedback and behaviour to make sure you are always improving and adapting to new demands. Done well, customers value the convenience of 24/7 digital service and it reinforces their confidence in your brand: 96% of Microsoft respondents say it's important in their choice of and loyalty to a brand⁴.



AI in action: customer service

AI in customer service doesn't necessarily mean voice recognition IVRs or chatbots – though these are useful applications. It can mean making sure that human customer service reps have the information they need to deal with a particular customer's query. Rather than having to hand a customer on to another specialist department, or search a database manually, AI can review the customer's case file and deliver relevant help screens or prompts to the agent so they can provide expert assistance immediately, even if they're not specialists in the particular topic.

Your website could deploy AI for bots to handle simple queries, permissions or account changes. Of course, these won't always be able to resolve the customer's issue 100% of the time. In that case, the AI can at least provide a clear history of what's happened and suggest to the agent what might be needed next. This means the customer doesn't have the frustrating experience of having to recount their problem again from the beginning.

Democratising AI

You can access it affordably

Given free rein, who wouldn't want to put this sophisticated and effective AI functionality to work in their business?

But how much does it cost?

For the Googles and Apples of this world, technology innovation is in their DNA... and reflected in multi-billion-dollar financials. But it's not just for corporates and tech giants. Cloud solutions now bring sophisticated AI functionality to SMEs.

Microsoft has made it a mission to democratise technology for its users. Microsoft Dynamics 365 is an accessible and trusted business platform for SMEs that embraces the latest AI technology and processing power and makes it available through cloud services and AI apps.

Dynamics 365 has the scope to extend its capability as technology evolves rapidly, and to provide specialist and niche functions that your individual business might require. Taking the out of the box features and customising them to address your sector and market priorities means you can mould AI to your exact requirements. For example, you could add cognitive services for speech, vision or translation, depending on what your customers needs.

When's a good time?

This democratisation means it's easy for anyone to get into AI. Eventually, everyone will. And that's why you need to act now. If you've seen how AI could deliver for your business, get it now, while it gives you competitive advantage and you can embed it into your organisation in sales, marketing and customer service.



Let's do it - next steps

1 Get your data in order

You need clean data, consistently formatted and legitimately held (make sure you're compliant with GDPR.) Review what data you hold and make sure it's relevant. You may need to supplement it with outside data. Get it all joined up in a single, trusted database.

2 Set up your AI model

Select and implement the AI apps and functions you want in Microsoft Dynamics. Set parameters for the AI model and train it with historic data. AI will establish predictive patterns

3 Evaluate and evolve - continually

Data changes and so do the AI predictions. Set checkpoints to review accuracy and make sure the parameters and context (new external factors) are working effectively.

4 Get expert help

For the fastest ROI, find a specialist cloud AI technology partner to review, advise and deploy your AI tools to suit your organisation's exact needs and meet business goals. You'll get better impact, faster and with minimal disruption.

¹ Deloitte State of Cognitive Survey, August 2017
<https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/cognitive-technologies/dispelling-five-myths-about-cognitive-technology.html>

² Accenture research: Future of AI 2017
<https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insight-ai-industry-growth>

³ How AI is Changing Sales, Harvard Business Review, July 30 2018

⁴ The Future of B2B Sales Is Built on Predictive Tools – Forrester Consulting, February 2018

⁵ Global State of Customer Service – Microsoft 2017

At Xpedition we guide your path to growth, through the implementation of intelligent cloud-based business applications. We help our clients to understand how technology can empower their business in real terms, and we deliver.

Previously known as TouchstoneCRM, we offer so much more than CRM and business software. We deliver real business value through expert consultancy. We're known for our questioning nature and for challenging the status quo.

We succeed when you succeed, inspiring clients with insight led guidance. Our market leading expertise and industry knowledge will help your business to reach its goals.

We understand your industry. Our experts are passionate about sharing their knowledge, revitalising client experiences and improving operational efficiency. At Xpedition, we'll show you the way.

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