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AI Engineering Capabilities Study

Series: What's AI Storytelling?

ELASTIC AI STORIES: HOW TO PIVOT TO AI BUSINESS NARRATIVES

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Right AI storytelling makes you stand out of the service provider crowd

Our enterprise AI adoption surveys show that 85% of senior business and tech leaders at director and CXO levels consider AI initiatives to be strategic, long-term differentiators. Given that every business now is an intelligence and data business, consideration of AI and data resources and capabilities as key strategic assets is hardly a surprise for any organization, be it in the TSP or ITSP space or in any of the end-user domains/ verticals/ functions.

There are two USPs of having a robust AI story development practice, especially relevant for the SI and ITSP partners:

1. **AI elasticity:** Given the strategic and expensive investments in AI by the end-user CXO and LOB leaders, the longevity of value of the AI story boards is a critical USP. The longevity of impactful AI comes from AI elasticity and resilience, e.g.:
    a. How flexible the AI solutions are, to the changes in the target business problem, underlying training data/ context, underlying knowledge context e.g. changes in regulations and rules or customer and market segments
    b. How agile the AI stories are, to new innovations in tech stacks and algorithms
2. **Pivoting the AI buying center persona from tech to business leaders:** AI capabilities and services have a core difference from IT services. AI evolves out of the data and intelligence that reside within the business operating models and processes, whereas IT is mostly within the scope and control of the CIO organization. Hence, the AI storyboards also need to be pivoted around the business impact and outcomes visibility and must be told from the business leaders' viewpoint. The CIO teams remain critical capabilities in execution i.e. in dev and ops.

Q1. Why is The Big AI Story still conspicuous by its absence?

When an overwhelmingly large section of business leaders considers AI as strategically imperative for business success, the AI narratives of their organizations must also reflect this leadership priority and competitive reality.

But current-state AI adoption maturity surveys show that 90%+ of the enterprise AI narratives are still limited within the scope of small POCs and pilots, in specific task/ process/ functional siloes, rather than spanning across critical end-to-end business processes.

Consequently, most of these AI narratives can at best demonstrate short-term operational cost savings and often completely miss out on the Big AI Stories across the entire enterprise, in terms of the strategic and competitive impacts that they COULD create, if they were built with a strategic vision- that BIG STORY.

Starting small with specific POCs and pilot initiatives, in terms of AI execution strategy, is NOT a bad idea at all. But NOT HAVING the Big Story in the organizational visual cortex, is a strategic miss that most of the competitive organizations can ill afford, if they want to stay relevant in today's markets.

Q2. What are the state-of-the-art AI story-telling capabilities, in the supply-side of AI-data-cloud tech-stacks?

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The supply side is just as bleak as the end-user scenario, when it comes to AI storytelling. 2021 onwards the Stanford University AI research index report clearly shows just how much cluttered and non-differentiable the AI tech supply-side world has become:

"The number of AI journal publications grew by 34.5% from 2019 to 2020—a much higher percentage growth than from 2018 to 2019 (19.6%)". US contributed to 19.2% of the total publications, whereas China (15.6%) and the European Union (17.2%) contributed significant research output. " In past six years, the "number of AI-related publications on arXiv grew by more than sixfold, from 5,478 in 2015 to 34,736 in 2020."

Clearly, from a technology research standpoint, AI has fast captured the world's imagination:

- Massive incremental & application innovations and few disruptive & core progressions are seen e.g. in the generative AI tech-stacks and applications space, with AI generating everything from deep fake videos to synthetic data, to media- music & videos/ news/ chat messages/ tweets and what-not.
- AI image processing prowess is increasing exponentially, in computer vision applications to semantic extraction and narrative generation from images and video-streams, with the advent of algorithmic techniques ranging from CSC to Capsule Networks and I2A. Recent advancements in multimodal generation, mixed modal agentic AI reasoning, inferencing and autonomous actions, even video analysis with machines, are creating disruptive use cases e.g. autonomous campaign development.
- In the language AI space, every other day some of the larger folks are claiming to have cracked the proverbial AGI challenge- the Holy Grail of AI- reflecting the classic Turing Test challenges.
- Most of the incremental innovations are banking more and more on the availability of cheaper compute & storage on cloud, hence the performance benchmarks are flattening rapidly. Real disruptions in the Greener AI landscapes are also becoming visible, slowly but surely.

Q3: Why is an integrated AI narrative so hard to find, across the tech supply-chain and the end-user adoption space?

Thanks to the seemingly infinite no. of siloed narratives in the AI tech and applications space, the AI leaders are often made to feel like The Ancient Mariner: 'Water, Water, Everywhere, Not a Drop to Drink'.

Along with the core tech vendors in the intertwined tech-supply world of AI-data-hybrid cloud, namely the AWS, IBM, Google, Microsoft, Alibaba et al, the ITSP market is also flooded with tech application patents, e.g. IBM clocking 9130 patents in 2020 alone, Accenture clocking 7900+ patents applications in the same year.

It is clearly evidenced that the AI tech supply-side is witnessing its hay-days or AI Springs. However, it has also created a never-seen-before tech-supply clutter in the AI tech-stacks space. For every small piece of AI tech-stack or use-case, there are easily at least 20 to 100+ 'me-too' vendors, starting from small bleeding-edge start-ups to the usual Biggies. And even the

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biggies are unable to articulate and communicate the Big AI Story, of the integrated value chain powered by AI-data-cloud integrated tech stacks.

Q4. Why is no one clearly telling what strong AI value they are bringing to the table/ market, of the end-user businesses?

Just think of conversational AI agentic development platforms/ tools, or their use-cases, or simple OCR to handwriting recognition functions, mathematical computations to document filtering/ clustering/ classification, semantic extraction and response/ new knowledge generation etc.

There are 1000's of vendors of different sizes and shapes, telling forced and fake/empty-sounding narratives of differentiators, offering pretty much same core functionalities. Their so-called "Stories" or marketing narratives are literally non-differentiable and add no value to anyone:

- The AI narratives from tech vendors/ ITSPs are usually written with any One Tech as the Hero. It's either an AI algo story, OR a secure cloud data-storage story, OR compute-infra cloud story.
  But the audience- the businesses, need a team, not individual tech heroes. Businesses are team games. Success in just one tech-stack adoption doesn't guarantee business impact.
- Consequently, the pure-tech narratives are hardly relatable or enjoyable, for any targeted business persona- leaders or users. Only profiles that can relate to these narratives are coders or model developers and solution architects, NOT businesses & decision makers.
- For business users, these tech-heavy AI narratives have zero story-value, as they don't see what difference these amazing tech-stuff with steep learning curves can make in their work outcomes e.g. quality, efficiency, consistency, less errors, productivity, initiative.
- The AI tech-stories are often written in reverse order for their targeted decision-making audience. The tech solutions Cart is put before the Horse- the Business Problem. Business leaders- decision makers don't find it relevant, lose interest fast, invest their time & energy (and money) in something else. Enterprise Adoption remains a perennial challenge.

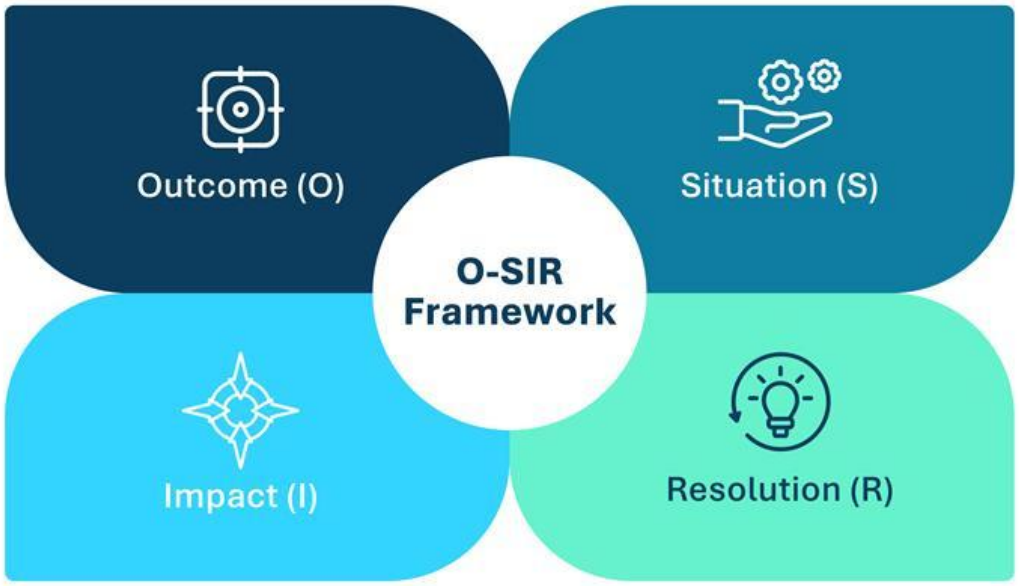
Net net, the current-state narratives are unrelatable and irrelevant for business decision maker persona. The AI tech narratives from 1000's of similar solutions vendors, have such high degrees of similarity scores, that it's actually very easy to cluster them as nearly same products/ platforms, in just about 5-6 broad AI tech/ use case buckets.

Q5. How will good AI story-telling help both the vendors and the end-users stand out of the crowd?

To stand out in this extremely crowded tech marketplace with near-zero distancing, the vendors will have to sell their value propositions- by Value, for their customers/ users, and not by tech marvel stories. Vendors that can create a good AI story, in terms of Impact and Value to their

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clients' businesses and not just for developers/ geeks, will win the budgets/ funds. Similarly, end-users that build their AI stories keeping the key Human Stakeholders (e.g. suppliers/ partners/ employees/ customers) at the center, will win in their competitive market.



For end-users, given that every business is an AI business today, every AI story HAS GOT TO BE A GOOD BUSINESS STORY, e.g. like the HBS Case Studies, with:

- business stakeholders & decision makers as Heroes and Key Characters (story must allude to WIIFM),
- business problems as Contexts/ Plots,
- strategic business outcomes as Value/ Impact metrics, much beyond just operational cost savings.

For example, the AI solutions providers may utilize the O-SIR framework during their AI storytelling:

- The AI solutions portfolio of a business organization is fundamentally about telling a story about change. **An effective structure for change stories is called outcome-situation-impact-resolution, or O-SIR.**
- The core of O-SIR is a structure that starts with the customer situation, describing the impact of the current state and then closes with how the tech provider's vision will resolve it.
- **Outcome (O):** Opening with a short, outcome-oriented headline, sentence or passage that establishes the value that is achieved when the vision is realized. This effectively prefigures the rest of the story, creating a reason for the reader/listener to pay more attention and to think.

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- **Situation (S):** Describe the current situation before the new vision is implemented. What are the business problems that the AI solutions are addressing for the clients?
- **Impact (I):** This is the story element that is most omitted. The impact is the clear articulation of cost or risk that the current situation is causing. It should help to create urgency and establish why an AI-driven change is important. It provides an opportunity to make an emotional appeal for change.
- **Resolution (R):** Once the situation and impact metrics are established, tech providers can depict the target outcomes and state, i.e. what success will look like, post the AI solutions development and deployment.

This simple format creates a framework that establishes context and helps the target business audiences see their role in the enterprise AI vision and strategy. Once tech providers have the structure, they can generate immediate interest in the LOBs of the client enterprises in terms of the art of the possible with AI.

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