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AI Engineering Capabilities Study

Series: What's AI Storytelling?

WHAT'S YOUR AI STORY?

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AI storytelling:

It's all about business adoption and impact. But, where to start?

An example of AI storytelling- The AWS way

https://in-resources.awscloud.com/the-art-science-of-ai-storytelling

AI Storytelling #1: Start with defining your target state metrics

Effective AI storytelling is The Most Critical capability that can pivot an organization to the targeted and drastic changes in the ways their businesses and people work with AI leverage.

AI storytelling effectiveness is a multi-dimensional metric:

1. Time & Sequence: AI storytelling is relevant both in pre and post execution of your AI strategies, e.g. to define business-relevant leading and lagging metrics & impact indicators.

- **Pre/ planning phase/ leading indicators:** These are the target AI leverage indicators for strategic AI deployment opportunities identification, assessment, business case & use case prioritization, tech & talent resource planning.
  Examples include Productivity targets, reduced errors, improved quality of service/ work, improved business process accuracy & performance, improved profitability and operating margins.
  For instance, in BFSI clients' operations, with AI use cases in fraudulent KYC or claims identification, improved process accuracy and performance can significantly prevent or reduce losses, leakages, margin shrinkage and errors.
- **Post execution phase/ lagging indicators:** For example, targeted vs. actual CSFs and Change KPIs achieved, along with AI-driven explanations of variances. These can include
  - metrics-driven and proven success stories of clients- by functions/ teams/ business & service lines,
  - case studies of value realization & business impact articulation & communication in internal/ external markets,
  - customer & user feedback etc.
- **During implementation/ release & run metrics:** The targeted AI stories can keep the AI CoE teams, and their business users and executive sponsors integrated in terms of shared communication.
  This helps in collaborative project tracking & management of conflicts & complexities & potential overruns**. Thus, the AI stories keep all key stakeholders on the same page, focused towards achieving the Big Picture target impacts and group accountabilities.**

2. Good AI stories are all about 360 IMPACT across people-process-work practices

- AI leverage by a company is not measurable by what tech stacks it has bought, or how many use cases it has deployed, or how many people are there in the AI CoE and practice. The most critical culture change and adoption@scale aspects define real

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success of AI in a company. These are all People-driven including employees, customers, suppliers, partners- across entire enterprise ecosystems.
As per several 2023-25 surveys including global consulting firms, this soft-change dimension is perceived to be the toughest challenge faced by senior executives, in achieving their targeted AI leverage.

- The critical dimension of Process Improvements contributes hugely to AI impact, e.g. erstwhile manual decisions and actions processes getting hybrid agentified and the measurable direct and indirect impact of it.
  These process improvement metrics get captured in terms of speed, cost, quality, volumes, consistency and reliability, with machine reasoning, MoE inferencing & autonomous/ robotic AI leverage
- The relatively easier-to-achieve dimension of Technology changes include tools-captured metrics e.g. autonomous agents-assisted migrations from SAP to S4/ HANA. IT transformation success can also be measured on enterprise infra and apps stacks to IaaS & PaaS on hyperscaler cloud platforms like Azure/ AWS/ Google/ IBM and need-based combinations of their capabilities.

AI Storytelling #2: Current state is nascent at best

AI storytelling practice in nearly 95% organizations, is nascent at best. Given that AI is still viewed as a Tech-led initiative as opposed to a 'Business-led' one, many organizations showcase their AI use cases pilots as success stories.

Often, majority of business and functional process owners and users impacted by these AI stories, have neither any visibility nor any say in it.

Just having yet another tool in the organizational arsenal obviously doesn't guarantee its value, outcomes, or leverage.

It's almost like saying- "I have bought the exact swimsuit that Michel Phelps wears, or the costumes that Nadia Comaneci had, hence I am a swimmer like Phelps, or a gymnast like Nadia" :).

Of course, it's commonsense that such claims are clumsy. But, sadly enough, in the context of AI stories of many organizations and/or their TSP partners, it reflects current scenarios.

This is precisely a key reason why AI suffers from the huge Pilot-to-Production gap, as often reinforced by Andrew Ng. The only exceptions to this phenomenon are some of the early adopters e.g. a few US and EU BFSI companies like JPMC, CapitalOne, Citibank, Visa, UBS, Danske etc. and surprisingly even fewer global ITSPs like Accenture and IBM.

AI Storytelling #3: Why, Where and How to start?

Why do the AI users/ developer teams need to hone their AI story-telling skills?

The starting point of AI storytelling is data storytelling. Gartner has predicted that by 2025 data storytelling is slated to become a multi-billion-dollar tech-stack and practice business in itself. Data storytelling is already a big tech supply-side portfolio, in terms of combined capabilities from various related technology dimensions e.g.

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- **Data and model visualization platforms with canvas & toolboxes:** Features range from simple charts and scatterplots to regression models, time series and moving average plots, to multi-dimensional visualization
- **Use-cases of NLG/ GPTs/ LLMs for autonomous deep research**: Data analysis, relevant long-context RAG-based report generation from data, contexts and model outputs
- **Easily interpretable and comprehensible model output:** Model descriptions in mixed forms combining graphs and narratives. These have the target audience of business users and decision makers who do not have any math-stat background, to be able to decipher and interpret the outputs of a model during the inferencing phase.

These tools and tech-stacks have existed for quite a few years now and have been adopted by several organizations that were early starters in the analytics and data technologies space.

Even then, adoption of AI@scale across the enterprise, has still remained a distant dream. In more than 90% organizations, AI initiatives have failed to move beyond POCs and pilots. Data storytelling has worked well within specific application contexts in some pockets / siloes e.g. specific tasks, activities, decisions, processes.

But it has not yet been able to make an organization-wide transformational impact of strategic relevance. A mature data storytelling practice in terms of people-process-tools and business impact, will set an enterprise up for AI storytelling.

Are data story-telling tools and techniques enough for creating & delivering effective AI stories?

NO. That’s the starting point of the AI storytelling journey of an enterprise.

Andrew Ng highlighted this major gap in one of his most current interviews, that the POC-to-Production gap in enterprise AI-ML-data science applications, is only increasing, no matter what tools and platforms are used. This is happening primarily because of 2 reasons, one feeding into the other:

- Model accuracy values and relevance achieved during the POC/ pilot stages are going down the drain the moment enterprises are trying to scale them up beyond the controlled experimental environments of the POCs and stretching them into the real world.
- Due to the rapid erosion of model accuracy and value when deployed in-prod, they're soon becoming unusable and redundant. Naturally, therefore, the business users literally at the receiving end of these model outputs, are not trying out and relying on the models any longer. This is triggering the vicious cycle of decreased adoption, even before the adoption had actually hit the targeted usage-scales in-prod.

Are the current AI storytelling practices, as mere extensions of data story tools, delivering targeted strategic value?

For no fault of the excellent data story-telling tool-stacks, the adoption of the models in production still remains low.

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Interesting to note: These use cases are often NOT the high-risk, never-tried-before, disruptive and super-innovative ones. Most of them are the me-too use cases, ranging from customer churn predictors to loan default prediction models to revenue forecasting to claims fraud detection kind of mainstreamed models.

Showing strategic AI leverage in terms of strongly differentiated competitive advantages, is an impossible feat to achieve till the companies get the AI story development practices right.

How is AI story-telling much broader and bigger in terms of scope, objectives, capabilities and strategic relevance, than vanilla data story-telling tools?

Based on the analysis above, it can be deduced that, machines are learning to learn better thanks to newer algorithms and techniques being invented every day. But we the humans who are designing these learning machines, aren't learning much from our own past mistakes e.g. failure to convert AI applications from POCs to production assets of key strategic relevance for a company.

This is the huge void in AI-ML adoption, rather a chasm, that AI story-telling needs to address and fulfill. As Andrew Ng pointed out: Most of the pilot/ POCs that enterprises conduct in early-stage adoption of these relatively new technologies, use homogeneous training and test datasets, often drawn from controlled data environments.

The diversity, heterogeneity and richness of the contexts that businesses (and their representative models) face in the production environment, are not captured in the POC versions. These critical but missing dimensions are the AI strategic value levers that good AI story-telling practices enable, from the ground 0 of AI-ML adoption in any organization.

What are the top 3 dimensions of a good AI storytelling practice?

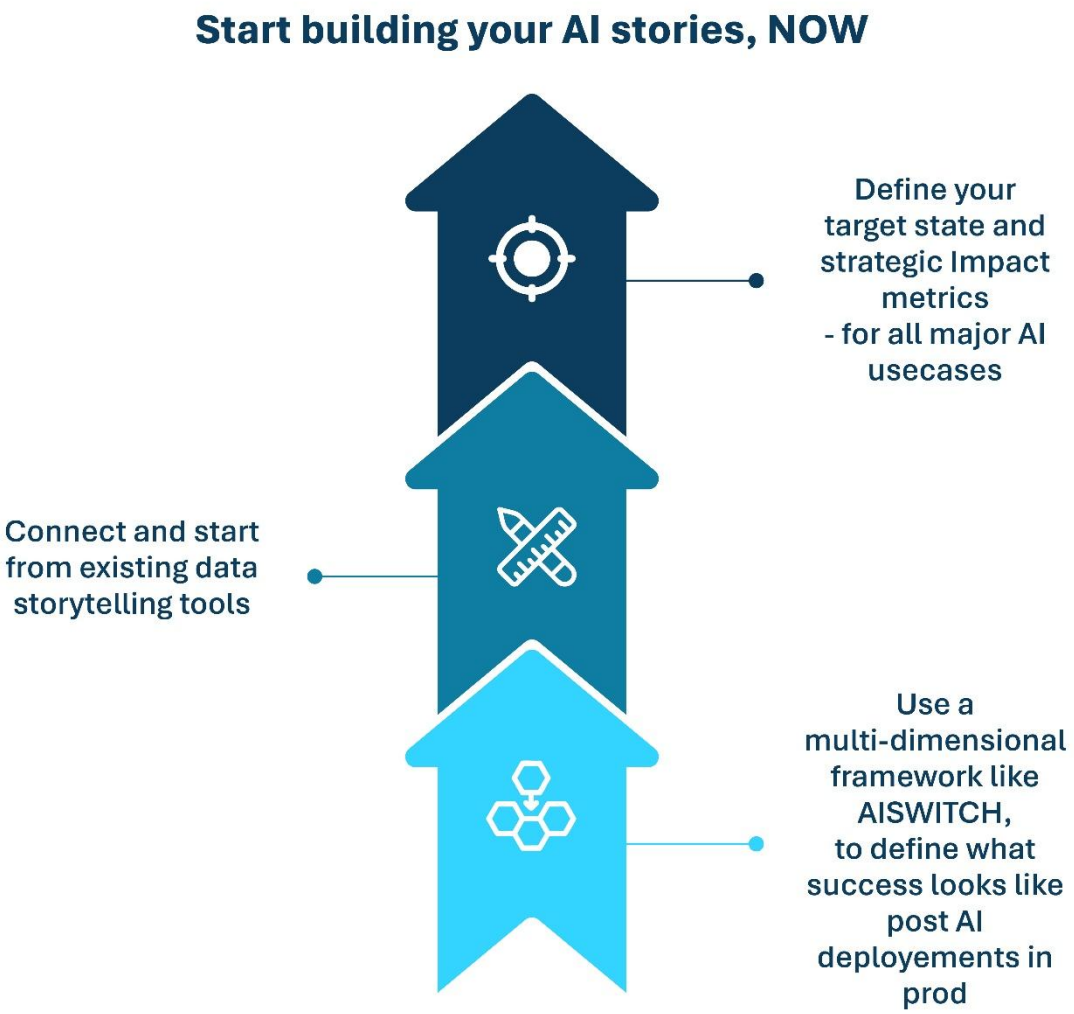
Good AI story-telling practice makes a world of difference, where:

- **Start with the business problem being solved with an AI use case:** During the inception, ideation and design stages of AI CoE, strategy, practice and usecases, the AI storytelling STARTS from the BUSINESS PROBLEM and NOT from the tech solutions that are available.
- **Cover the SWITCH dimensions to depict the success or AI leverage in a story**: AI storytelling covers multi-faceted aspects of the target business problem- described in and covering the most holistic and heterogenous scenarios possible. The AISWITCH™ dimensions of AI Strategy-Workforce-Information(data)-Technology (infra & tool stacks)-Culture-Human augmentation, provides a comprehensive framework of these multiple dimensions in a successful enterprise AI story.
- **Integrate AI stories with rich data stories:** Good AI stories eventually link to rich data stories e.g. training and test data sets that represent the diversity and richness of the model application context: The business problem.

Net net, the business problems and the direct & indirect business stakeholders affected by it are the REAL HEROES of a well-built AI story.

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Action item: Start building your AI stories, NOW



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