



learningpool

CHATBOTS AND WORKPLACE PERFORMANCE

How chatbots, smart assistants and artificial intelligence can transform workplace performance

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INTRODUCTION:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers a new solution to an old problem – how do we learn, and how do we know that we know. Courses are only one tool in a toolbox that includes colleagues, documents, search engines, mentors, and good old-fashioned experience. This array of learning options creates challenges for workplaces that rely on formal and repeatable learning paths.

Now chatbots combined with artificial intelligence and better data tools to address these challenges by creating informal learning channels with the reporting structures an organisation needs to create a more productive and efficient workplace.

SECTION 1:

What can virtual assistants do for workplace learning?

We may not be aware of it, but already Artificial Intelligence is playing a major role in our everyday lives. It's there behind our Google searches and the recommendations we receive but AI is not just being used to retrieve information or perform tasks, it's also involved in teaching and learning.

A virtual PA: Think about Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri. These voice-activated, smart programmes are both driven by AI. You ask a question and you receive an instant answer. If you don't like the answer, ask a follow-up question. A dialogue ensues and, just like any smart human assistant, the virtual one learns from the interaction and begins to understand what you need.

AI in education: It's not surprising that the possibility of using computers to interact with us has caught the imagination of teachers. In the US

AI-powered Virtual Assistants are being used as teaching assistant (a TA). In one example at Georgia Tech, students even voted their teaching assistant an award, unaware it was a chatbot.

The rise of the chatbots: A 'chatbot' is another virtual assistant that engages the user in conversation, either through text or speech. You ask the question, the chatbot replies. The more advanced chatbots use machine learning, employing Artificial Intelligence, meaning they learn from each interaction or conversation, detecting preferences and making recommendations based on past requests.

Chatbots are being used in all sorts of ways from answering financial queries, giving customer support, diagnosing healthcare issues, and even offering counselling.





1.2 INTRODUCING A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT AT WORK

When new employees join an organisation, they might spend the first few days in meetings, then maybe they'll receive some training either in a classroom or at their desk. Quite often they feel overwhelmed and isolated. What's almost certain is that they won't be doing much work.

Now a different onboarding scenario. This time instead of chunks of time spent in meetings or training, the employees meet their new assistant, a chatbot. They get to ask the chatbot the questions they

need answers to as they need them. So, employees set the pace and the requirements for training, while at the same time getting to grips with their new job.

Chatbots deliver relevant information where it's needed which means better support for learners, more productive use of employees' time and better return on learning content development. It's real just-in-time learning, courtesy of your 24/7 virtual assistant.

Training at work has often been distant: closeted in the classroom, locked in the LMS, and too quickly forgotten. With a virtual assistant, though, employees can ask for what they need when they need it – while they're still working.

Learning is no longer what you do once and then forget. It's a constant process: learning on the job, learning by doing. With your AI virtual assistant always by your side, you can make that ideal a reality.

1.3 TRANSFORMING LEARNING SUPPORT FOR BETTER WORKPLACE PERFORMANCE

Typically training and learning at work have taken place away from the workplace. Training has been the preserve of the classroom but more recently, classroom training has been replaced or augmented by digital content in a Learning Management System (LMS). In theory the LMS makes learning more accessible and available. In practice, it's often cumbersome and distant.

Then there's the uncomfortable, but verifiable, fact that we forget most of what we learn – and shortly after we learn it.

The Virtual Assistant

With AI virtual assistants you enter a dialogue. This means with every interaction there's a refinement of the Q&A process. And the assistant is learning with you, making the resulting answers more refined, and personalised.

Chatbots: learning in the workflow

Imagine the power of a chatbot at work. Instead of training being removed and learning resources being inaccessible it's available at your desk, on your smart device, whenever you need it. The organisation doesn't even have to re-configure its systems, as a chatbot can live within existing apps, platforms, and systems.

Chatbots harness the power of AI to provide learning at the point of need and just in time. This addresses the problem of forgetting, because you can find out what you need to know when you need to know it. Chatbots can not only address the problem of access, use and retention of learning, they can also transform learning in the workplace in other ways. Bots can keep a record of those interactions, as they are also constantly learning.

If there's a common question that keeps being asked to which the bot has no response, you learn at least two critical pieces of information: one, the answer isn't there; and two, the question is a real one, highlighting a real work need.

With Artificial Intelligence giving us programs like chatbots, learning in the workplace can be transformed. Instead of seeing learning as a discrete activity, it can now be part and parcel of the everyday working environment.

Virtual assistants, like chatbots, deliver assistance and accessibility 24/7. The learning provided is more targeted, personalised, and relevant. With learning directed at the point of need, performance improves. The Holy Grail of workplace learning – just in time, at the point of need – is placed within reach.



1.4 CHATBOTS HELPING YOU IMPROVE PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY IN THE WORKPLACE

All the talk around Artificial Intelligence would have you believe that it's a superior form of intelligence that is superseding ours and that AI-driven machines and programmes will outproduce and outperform humans as to make us redundant.

The reality is more complex. With the proliferation of chatbots, we're not talking so much about automation as augmentation. There are definite limits to what bots can do, but they can give you vital support and information when you need it most and so boost performance and productivity. A lot of work in any organisation is routine and repetitive. Chatbots excel at repetitive tasks which they complete faster and often more efficiently than humans. They're supremely focused and don't get easily distracted. Assigning high-demand, but low-level, work to a bot can free up time for the higher value work where human knowledge, intuition, and empathy really count.

Dialogue is a key feature of chatbots. They're able to process natural

language which makes them good at dealing with customer queries, especially since those queries are increasingly more likely to be communicated by messaging apps rather than phone calls.

Chatbots provide other cost savings too. They cost a fraction of human agent, they never tire, don't need breaks, don't fall ill, don't switch jobs or go on extended leave. These are the typical advantages of automation. But chatbots are also adaptive and responsive, learning from their interactions with customers, building profiles and making recommendations.

With a chatbot always to hand, you can regard them as a virtual personal assistant to whom you can delegate tasks and from whom you can request information – endlessly. They provide instant access to information when you need it. That means you don't need to waste time trying to find it. They help you manage time better and make you more productive.

Chatbots open up a world of better, seamless communication between you and the organisation and within and between teams. With a chatbot at hand there's no excuse for not having the information you need when you need it.

A key goal in any organisation is to enhance productivity and drive performance. The problem is making sure it's efficient and delivers the right impact. With their ability to provide information and take on the role of mentor, chatbots can really make employees more productive and give them the support they need to reach their performance goals.

The chatbot can provide feedback and data based on its interactions with learners. This means L&D departments have access to the hard data that allows them to discover where training really works. Chatbots improve the

communication between employees and trainers and provide the vital evaluation step that completes the training cycle.

In short, you can hand over many everyday work activities to the care of your chatbot. They already have obvious relevance to key areas of an organisation: HR, L&D, Customer Support and Service, Project Management, IT and their influence is growing. They save costs, provide efficiencies, increase productivity, and allow their human counterparts the time, space, and opportunity to improve performance.



KNOW YOUR CHATBOT

Just like people, chatbots have varied competencies and it helps to be able to tell one from another.

Formbots

The most basic chatbot is a form-filler. It leads you step by step through fields on a form and gives you back a result. These have little benefit in L&D.

Mentorbots

Mentor chatbots know a lot about a specialist topic. In practice they only know what they have been told, through a laborious process of a human thinking of all the likely questions that might be asked around a topic, coming up with multiple ways to ask those questions, and constructing good answers.

Existing bot technology is very good at interpreting what you mean, but not perfect. A good mentor bot feels like talking to a real human; a badly

written one can be a frustrating experience.

Searchbots

A searchbot does what it says on the tin, searching documents and courses for the information you need. They can be a great way to surface knowledge as performance support. When you need to know something ask the searchbot.

Obviously a Searchbot requires a high degree of planning and technology to create a great experience. And with Google setting the bar on what to expect from search it is essential that a Searchbot understands natural language queries and brings back meaningful results.

It is also important to understand the 'reach' you need from your Searchbot – courses, documents, SharePoint sites, etc; and the capacity of your

search choice to learn as you add more data.

The Searchbot has great utility in L&D, as a means of opening up informal learning paths.

Talkbot

A Talkbot simulates human conversation, attempting to interact with you exactly like a person would. These are fiendishly difficult to create, requiring hundreds of thousands of conversational training interactions and deep levels of AI to make the experience even close to a human to human conversation. Google's Duplex is the best example of this. Duplex is still a research project but there are other live examples such as the Mitsuku chatbot that will show you how good the Talkbot has become. It is early days for these in L&D but it's a space to watch.



SECTION 2:

Microlearning: unlock the knowledge in your business

If we prize knowledge so much, why do we make it so inaccessible? We lock it away in training courses, on SharePoint sites, in document collections, or in the heads of a few people where it disappears once they move on. Is microlearning the answer to setting the knowledge free?

It's no surprise then that employees in turn become impatient with training that is inflexible and removed from the point of need. They look instead to Google, YouTube, or wikis in search of fast, accessible responses to immediate needs. The Meet the Modern Learner survey found that 70% of employees surveyed use search engines to acquire the knowledge they required.

Employees' tacit recognition that they need more knowledge is in part driven by the increased

complexity of their jobs. Consider the current regulatory environment with the burden it places on employees to work compliantly. Consider too the complexity of the products companies are selling, whether they're financial or technical. It's no wonder the same Modern Learner survey found that a whopping 75% of respondents reported feeling stressed at work.

It's not that employees don't appreciate the need for training, it's that they require it to be faster, more targeted, and personalised, and at a point where they really need it, in the workflow. They want to speed of a Google search response, but one that gives them the right solution, not just a long list of possible answers.

2.1 DISTILLING KEY INFORMATION

Microlearning is about distilling key information and knowledge into easily-digestible, bite-size chunks.

The chunks contain small snippets of learning, no longer than about 3 or 5 minutes duration, that focus on vital teaching points and critical learning moments.

Microlearning resources can be anything from simple text, an activity, a piece of video, some refresher questions or even a tweet or blog. They're always available, but they can be intentionally pushed to employees by using the power of AI recommender systems.

The big appeal of microlearning is that it's a targeted intervention, rather than a one-size-fits-all learning approach. It can be effective in deepening product knowledge amongst sales staff. They have the response to customer queries at their fingertips.





2.3 IMPLEMENTING MICROLEARNING

To provide a microlearning solution, you need to re-configure and re-design your training. It's not sufficient just to slice up your existing courses. You need to move L&D closer to the workflow to identify those microlearning moments and provide the appropriate resources. Adaptive content development tools have a variety of features that can deliver content in engaging, attention-grabbing ways that modern learners respond to.

But you can also use your microlearning resources to support employee performance. Introducing a learning chatbot into the mix means that you're not only pushing learning at employees according to the job tasks, but you're

also allowing them to pull information when they have a specific learning need. The theory of producing small chunks of learning has been around for a long time: think of learning objects of the usable and reusable kind, nano-learning and learning nuggets.

Microlearning helps moves learning into the workflow. It can utilise the adaptive, interactive, and collaborative features of modern AI-driven technology and better satisfy learner demands.

In short, microlearning can address the need to create knowledge-rich employees and support them in a time-poor working environment.

SECTION 3

The modern learner

The other striking aspect ignored by traditional training is the needs and behaviour of the learner. Modern learners have access to vast sources of information immediately, round the clock. For anyone with a mobile, smart device the answer (or many of them) is just a couple of taps away. Ease of access and constant connectivity are changing learner behaviour.

The way people access information socially is becoming the way people expect to access information at work. If you want to know something today what do you do? Wait for L&D to run a training class or e-learning module or go to Google, YouTube, Pinterest, or wiki sites? And how can L&D compete with Google?

With such resources at their fingertips modern learners feel in control of their learning. This is a powerful motivator. Handled correctly, it can make training more effective because learners invest in it and they identify their training needs and how best to meet them.





3.1 THE ADVANTAGES OF AI VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS

Training is often removed from the environment in which it's to be applied. It's confined to the classroom, trapped in the LMS, or accessible only when timetabled. Imagine, though, that training in your organisation was as readily available and as digestible as the information you access on Google, YouTube, or Wikipedia.

This is where AI Virtual Assistants can come in. We already use them in the

home (Apple's Siri or Amazon's Alexa are common examples), but they're increasingly being utilised in the workplace. Properly integrated and embedded in the workflow, VAs can make a real difference to the way training works and bring an obvious, quantifiable ROI for your investment in L&D.

A VA can be given access to your organisation's training resources and information on work practices. It can be

placed inside work management tools like Slack and Trello. Like the apps we use at home, VAs can provide instant responses offering a wealth of information. But, critically, it's not just any information: it's targeted, contextualised and validated by L&D, so that it's the right information in the right place at the right time.



3.2 VAS IN THE WORKFLOW

Let's look at a couple of examples of where VAs can extend training into the work space.

Firstly, a Virtual Assistant can make a difference to the way you support and train new employees in the onboarding process. In the past this has meant days, even weeks of training in the basics of their job and an introduction to HR procedures.

An AI Virtual Assistant can guide new employees through all the processes and information they need at their own pace, when they need it. A VA offers instant responses to questions ranging from how to order office supplies, to holiday entitlements, to health and safety compliance and so on. Instead of being overwhelmed with too much information at one go, a new employee can access information just when needed.

Similarly, the VA can act as a personal assistant as you work. If you encounter a technical problem or need

to know a procedure, you can just consult your Virtual Assistant. The VA can act as a personal organiser giving you reminders and access to resources for daily and weekly tasks. VAs can also make recommendations based on your requests (think of the similar services offered by Amazon or Netflix based on your browsing habits). If a piece of training is relevant, your VA can point you in that direction.

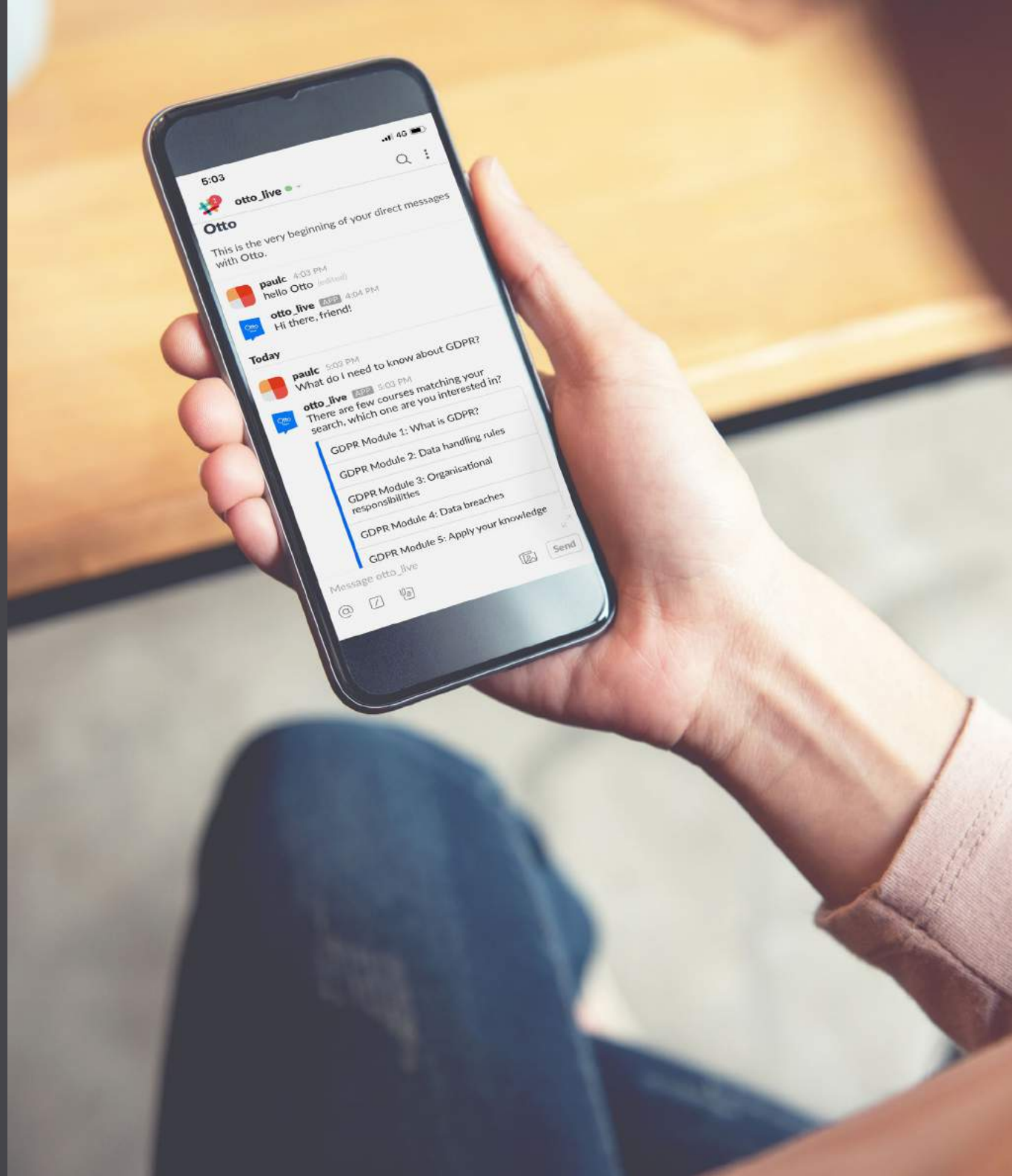
VAs help to manage learning, but also empower learners to take control and responsibility for their own training. Having a VA always on means there's no reason to forget. They break the costly cycle of learning and forgetting that undermines all formal training. By being there in the workflow acting as mentor, VAs make learning a continuous process, rather than an episodic event. AI Virtual Assistants offer just-in-time learning at the point of need.

3.3 REPLACE TRAINERS WITH VAS?

Despite the popular narrative of artificial intelligence replacing human beings in the workforce, VAs aren't about to replace trainers. Rather they're going to redefine the role of L&D and give it greater, rather than less prominence within an organisation.

For VAs to be effective they need to have information in a format that's accessible and usable by them. This means L&D producing bite-size forms of learning and making content resources available to intelligent searching. They need to liberate the content from the classroom or the LMS.

You also need to train the VA, just as you would a real employee. Over time, however, a VA is capable of training itself by recognising patterns of enquiry and adapting to the requests it receives.





A learning designer can produce what learners are really asking for, instead of designing according to some notional idea of what learners ought to learn.

3.4 A NEW ROLE FOR L&D

Integrating a Virtual Assistant in the workflow makes training more accessible, but it isn't the complete answer. You need to move L&D into the workflow too and remove the barrier that often lies between training and the workplace. With L&D within the workflow trainers and learning designers can see more clearly where their intervention can make a difference.

The VA in turn isn't just providing vital information to the employee, it's also about delivering useful, quantifiable, hard data on learners' requirements back to the learning designer. The data gives learning designers clearer insight into how training is applied.

With this feedback a learning designer can produce what learners are really asking for, instead of designing according to some notional idea of what learners ought to learn.

With this approach learners are at the centre and learning designers move closer to where actual learning takes place.

This shift towards training in the workflow allows a virtuous circle to be established whereby learners learn when they need to, and learning is reinforced. The circle is completed as the learning designers learn from the learner.



3.5 VAS OFFER REAL ROI

Instructional design models like ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) emphasise the need for constant evaluation, but that final element is often taken for granted or ignored as too hard to measure. With a VA in the workflow, you can directly measure the impact and effectiveness of L&D based on the evidence of employees' on-the-job needs. Also, VAs offer the opportunity to re-use and re-purpose pre-existing content in a way that gives it more impact.

Both these outcomes are direct evidence of ROI. Evaluation becomes more than responses recorded on 'happy sheets'. Learners are listened to and L&D responds effectively.

So, if you have doubts about whether L&D is making the right impact in your organisation, add an AI Virtual Assistant to your team and reap the benefits.

SECTION 4

What to consider before integrating an AI virtual assistant

It might seem obvious that the biggest advantages in introducing an AI-powered Virtual Assistant into your organisation would be a reduction in costs and an increase in effectiveness. The AI VA has the potential to perform tasks more quickly and efficiently saving time and money.

But there's more to it than that. VAs don't come ready-formed: they need training and attention like any regular employee. And just as with any other addition to your organisation's systems, you have to construct robust use cases to identify costs and benefits.

To help you plan, here are 7 budgeting factors you should consider when integrating an AI Virtual Assistant into your organisation.





4.1 ADDRESSING CLEAR BUSINESS NEEDS

AI is a hot topic, but you need to think carefully before adopting it. As with any other critical decision you need to identify your organisation's business needs and explore how an AI Virtual Assistant can help you. Consider which aspects of your organisation would benefit most from having a VA agent. Which areas can be effectively automated? Ask yourself how it will fit into your existing systems and processes. What impact will it have on employees working with a VA? What additional business benefits will it bring?

You can't begin to budget for an AI assistant until you've addressed these questions.

4.2. MAKE OR BUY

As with other IT applications, there are tools to build your own AI VA. These bots need little coding and can be integrated into existing applications. They can also be customised at the back end to fit in with your organisation's systems. These simple bots can be 'hired' on a monthly or yearly subscription.

From this basic level you can move to more sophisticated forms of integration. These include full integration with your own services and resources and, at further cost, integration with third-party services and applications.

Once you introduce the AI component you're reaching another level of complexity and therefore cost. But greater investment also has rewards: AI-driven VAs can recognise and process natural language and the most technically sophisticated actually learn to improve from their interactions.

Clearly any considerations about the way forward for your organisation depends on your own IT and L&D resources.





4.3. WHAT TYPE OF VA TO INVEST IN

Not all VAs or chatbots are alike. The simplest ones work according to a set of rules. They respond in a limited way to specific, programmed commands. The more advanced chatbots use machine learning, employing AI. This means they learn from

each interaction or conversation, detecting preferences and making recommendations based on past requests for information.

The greater the sophistication, the bigger the budgetary outlay. The intelligent bots

need to be trained, not simply installed and that means assigning L&D and HR resources above and beyond your basic IT support. It also means dedicating IT staff to producing scripts for the bots. This area will grow as more AI VAs are deployed.

4.4 WHERE VAS ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Let's look at a couple of common deployments of AI Virtual Assistants. Firstly, you can have a VA act as a PA. This can mean providing assistance in anything from daily time management to weekly project management, to support during the onboarding process for new employees. In these instances, your AI VA needs to be fully integrated with your HR, training and workflow systems and have access to their resources.

The second common role for an AI VA is in customer support. Today many online customer support engagements are with chatbots rather than human agents. Bots can make customer service more efficient, increasing the number of queries resolved and reducing the time taken to resolve them.

To provide that customer support role, your bot not only needs the resources to respond, but also the intelligence to deal with queries and if necessary hand anything too complex off to a human agent. You need not only to train your bot, but also your customer support staff who will work alongside it.

4.5 ADVANTAGES OF EMPLOYING AN AI VA

As the customer support example suggests, you need to think of your VA not simply as a piece of software, but also more like a regular employee. You need to onboard it too and teach it what it needs to know.

But just like an employee, with training, sophisticated AI-powered VAs perform better and more efficiently over time. And VAs don't need breaks, holidays, pay rises, don't go looking for other jobs, and don't get bored or frustrated with repetitive work.

In that sense they're model employees, but by deploying a VA in your workforce to do the uninteresting, repetitive tasks you can also raise morale in other employees and free them up to tackle challenging, more rewarding tasks.

The benefits of an AI VA need not be just about cost and efficiency savings, but, in a more positive sense, about increased performance and productivity, greater job satisfaction and better staff retention.

4.6 MORE EFFECTIVE TRAINING

With the AI-powered VAs training and learning development can have a greater impact. Given access to training content, VAs have the potential to be teachers and mentors at the point of need. VAs placed in the workflow can be accessed when information or training is really required – while people are working and doing their regular jobs.

It's like training the trainer, but while the human trainer might forget, the VA never does. Intelligent VAs are also learning from delivering learning. And one of the key things they are learning is what employees really need to know and when they need to know it. L&D can analyse this feedback from the VA and fill any gaps in training.

In this way training becomes more effective, because it's addressing real, quantifiable needs.

Whether these measures are cost-effective for your organisation depends on how you intend to use your VA.

4.7 RESOURCING A VA

AI VAs can perform many tasks that humans do and perform them quicker at a lower cost. But you should hesitate to think that that means you automatically require fewer resources. An AI Virtual Assistant also needs training and support, so this means the involvement, reallocation, and potentially re-skilling or up-skilling of HR and L&D resources as well as those in IT.

The deployment of Virtual Assistants and the expansion of their roles are creating a raft of new jobs such as scripting, data analysis, content design for bots, analysis of human-AI agent interaction and so on. Integrating an AI VA involves crossing departmental boundaries and calls for the establishment of cross-functional teams.

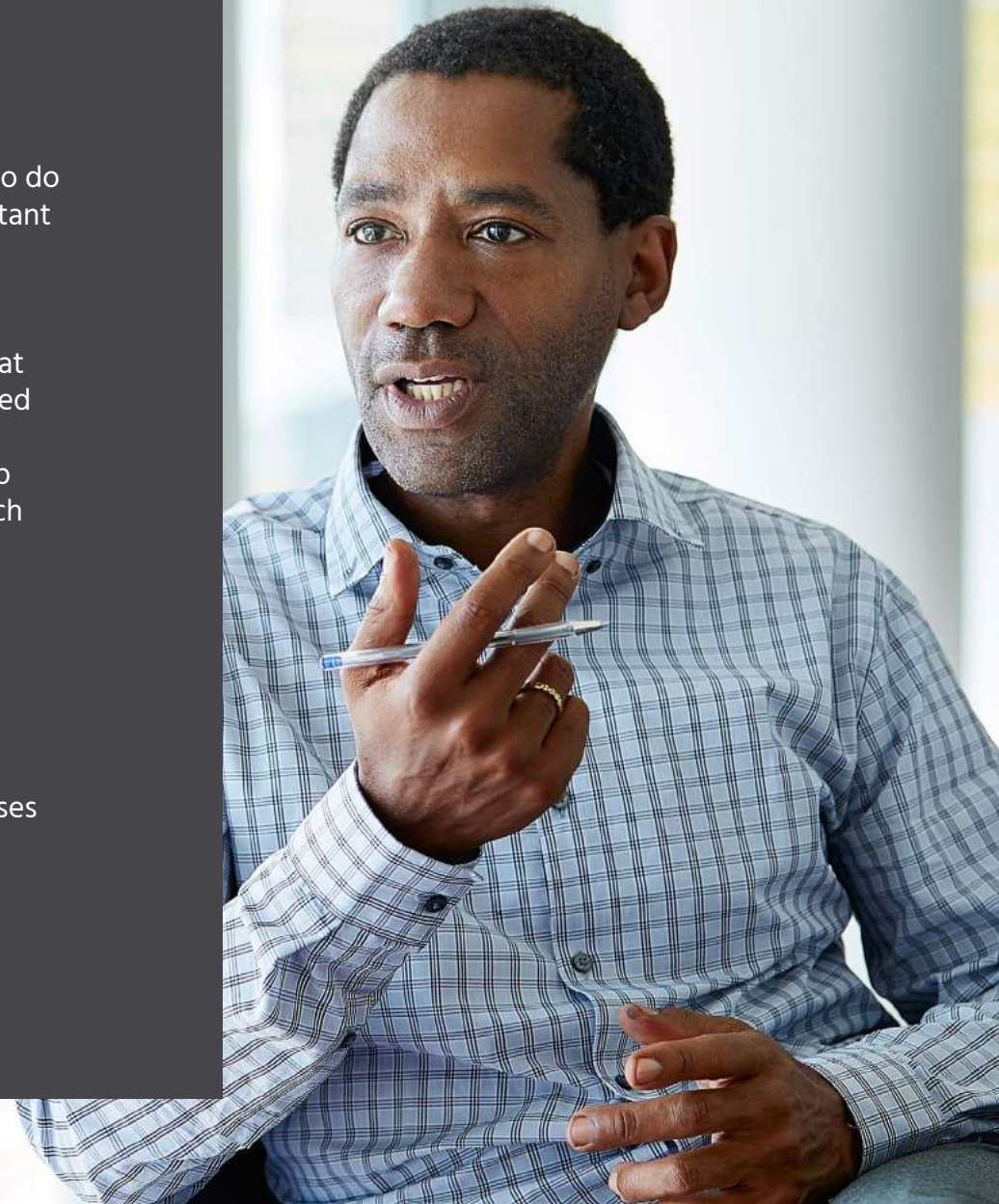
And if you want to get the most out of your VA you might extend

its role which means integrating it into different aspects of your organisation's work.

You also need to consider what to do with the data the AI Virtual Assistant feeds back.

Someone needs to analyse it and react to it. If there are queries that the VA can't respond to you need to coach it. The VA's inability to answer may point to a critical gap in your processes or training which needs improving.

These measures might seem to add, rather than reduce costs, but properly integrated and implemented, AI VAs have the potential to streamline work practices and standardise processes leading to efficiency savings and improved performance.





4.8 OPEN UP POSSIBILITIES - WIP TITLE

You might start thinking an AI Virtual Assistant primarily represents cost savings. But looking at these budgetary factors, you'll come to realise it also involves the reallocation of existing budget as well as investment in the future.

You need to integrate an AI Virtual Assistant from a more general, organisational perspective. From that vantage point, it's about enhancing your

organisation's capability and performance by enabling better communication, greater standardisation, improved efficiency – all translating

We're familiar with the argument that Artificial Intelligence leads to greater automation and allows for a more efficient processing of routine work. A bot has the bandwidth to respond to countless requests from different sources at the same time.

If a VA can outperform a human agent or do the work of multiple employees, won't your organisation need fewer employees?

The true picture is less clear-cut and somewhat surprising: employing a VA often means creating jobs, or at least changing the way your current employees work. If you remove the boring, repetitive work that a bot can do better, you open up possibilities for employees to do more creative work.

SECTION 5

Challenges in implementing an AI Virtual Assistant In your organisation

Virtual Assistants offer huge potential, but it's not enough just to introduce one and think that productivity and performance will go up, costs come down, and training become irrelevant. To get the most out of a Virtual Assistant you need to prepare. It's not a case of install it and they will use it.

Primarily, it's not really a question of the technical installation. It's more about considering the implication for procedures, practices, and ways of doing business across the organisation. It's more of a cultural than a technical change.

To help you prepare, here's a guide to 9 key challenges of introducing an AI Virtual Assistant into your organisation and how to face them.





5.1 OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

While from a budgetary point of view, AI might represent cost savings, from a more general performance point of view it's about enhancing an organisation's capability by a better, more efficient division of labour between the Virtual Assistants and the humans. That's the message you need to send to your organisation.

5.2 SECURING THE REAL BENEFITS

Before deploying an AI assistant, you need to construct robust and credible use cases. These should identify and justify the business uses and benefits of a VA. Ask yourself where it makes

sense to deploy your AI assistant. And make sure you're clear who the key stakeholders are and who has ownership over the project.

Consider where can it make the most impact. You might start in specific area - training, HR, marketing, customer services for example - and then aim to roll VAs out across the wider organisation. Part of the analysis involves knowing your organisation's limitations and those of the VA. VAs in themselves are only as good as the environment in which they're placed. Imperfections in systems will only be magnified by an ill-chosen deployment of a VA.

5.3 CHOOSING YOUR ASSISTANT

Not all assistants or bots are alike. The simpler ones operate on rules while more complex bots incorporate machine learning. The more advanced chatbots employ machine learning and they can learn from each interaction or conversation, detecting preferences and making recommendations based on past requests.

It may be that you want a VA only to perform a very specific and straightforward set of tasks and then hand more complex tasks over to an employee. In that instance the simpler version may suit your organisation.

5.4 TRAINING AND ONBOARDING YOUR VA

Who's going to do this work of educating the VA? This is one of the higher-order tasks that require human intervention. The coaching of the VA can, however, be turned from an additional overhead into a business advantage. In integrating the VA, you can at the same time make your business processes clearer, more robust, and transparent.

5.5 EMPLOYING A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

There's the question of perception when you allow customers to interact with a VA. Do you humanise and personalise the experience by giving the VA its own identity and personality, by using avatars for example? Are you up front with customers by telling them they're interacting with a bot and give them the option to switch to a human agent?

From a marketing perspective you might also consider branding your VA to reflect your organisation's identity. You might decide your VA should be corporate or more fun or whimsical.

5.6 USING VAS FOR LEARNING

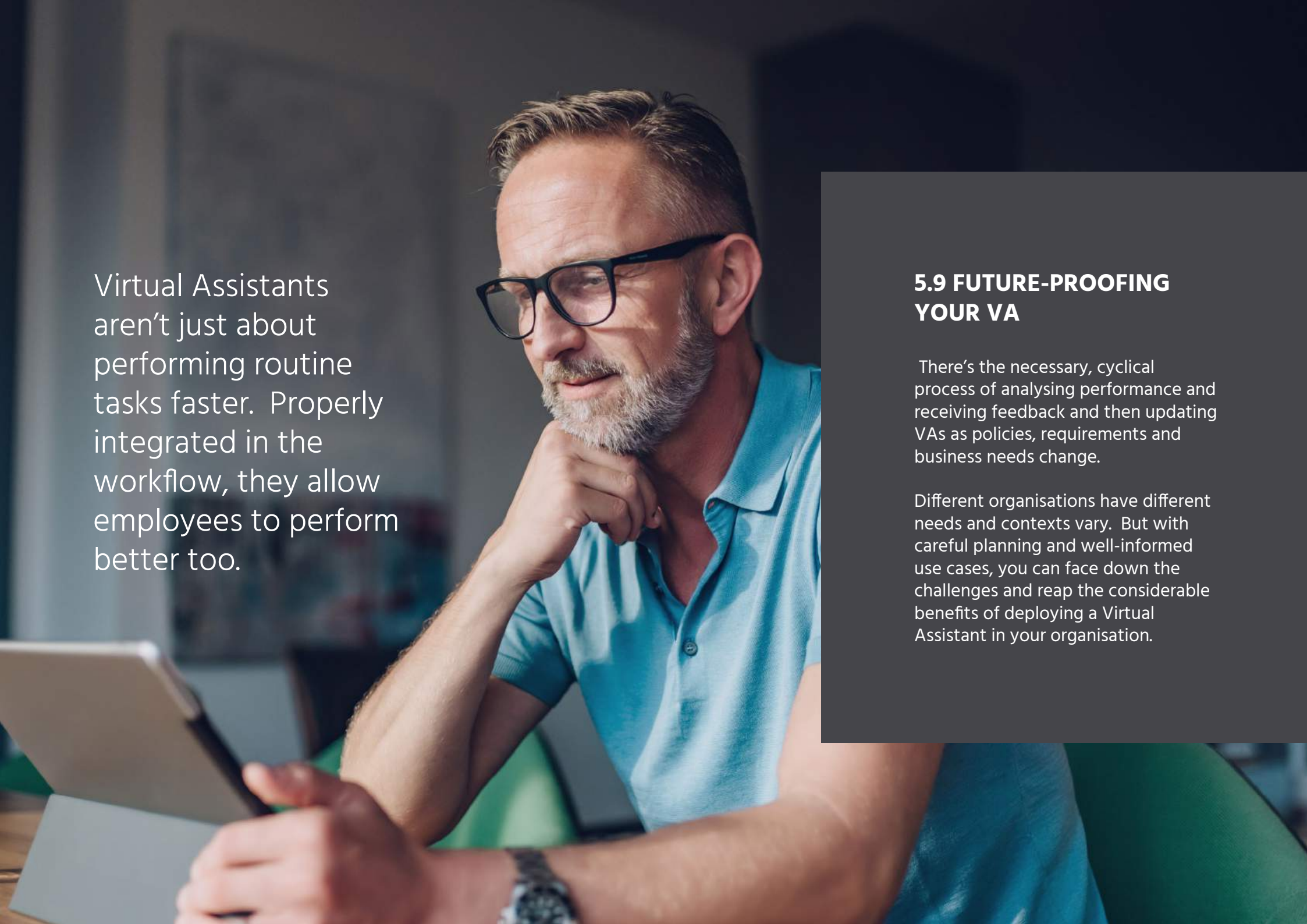
Chunking content, considering micro-learning opportunities, making your resources open to searching and interrogation by a VA are vital. Intelligent reuse and repurposing of content can bring real benefits and make training more relevant and give it greater impact. With the right intervention from L&D, learning and training using a VA becomes more effective.

5.7 INTEGRATING VAS INTO YOUR EXISTING SYSTEMS AND APPS.

Technically this integration isn't especially difficult. Again, though the real benefit comes in usage. The VA offers performance support, but it has to be part of the workflow. It needs to be embedded into day-to-day operations and working with a VA should be regarded as best practice.

5.8 HANDLING DATA

One of the benefits of using a VA is its ability to record and process data quicker and more effectively than human agents. The potential for better understanding of clients' and employees' needs is considerable and needs proper consideration. The other aspect is privacy and data protection. With new EU legislation in the form of GDPR, you will have to include VAs in your data auditing and security measures.



Virtual Assistants aren't just about performing routine tasks faster. Properly integrated in the workflow, they allow employees to perform better too.

5.9 FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR VA

There's the necessary, cyclical process of analysing performance and receiving feedback and then updating VAs as policies, requirements and business needs change.

Different organisations have different needs and contexts vary. But with careful planning and well-informed use cases, you can face down the challenges and reap the considerable benefits of deploying a Virtual Assistant in your organisation.

SECTION 6

Are you ready to use chatbots for Learning Support?

You don't need much to be ready for chatbots. Chatbots can live and act inside existing platforms and systems: you don't need to re-engineer, overhaul, or replace your existing technology.

Bots place the learner at the centre and L&D needs to move from pushing learning at employees and design training so that you hand over more control to the learner.

A lot of the technology we use today involves Artificial Intelligence. AI's not just about automating processes or analysing big data, there are also AI-driven bots for human-computer interactions.

Now attention is turning to what AI can do for learning support. With businesses under ever-increasing pressure to be more efficient, productive, and cost-effective, AI-powered chatbots can help establish learning in the workflow.

With a chatbot you're engaging in a dialogue. AI enables the bot to be responsive, agile, and adaptive. The more advanced chatbots learn from each interaction or conversation, detecting preferences and making recommendations based on past requests.

In the area of learning support that means designing content for the VA assistant, analysing the data that it feeds back, integrating it with other support systems (such as an LMS), and making it part of your organisation's core processes. This work requires thinking of a higher and more creative order than a VA can manage. It's the work a human employee does best, if given the time and space to do it.

Learning support becomes not just about individuals learning in isolation, but about supporting learning in action, in the context of the workflow.

In summary, AI Virtual Assistants move L&D away from designing and delivering prescriptive training to offering support for learners that's determined by their real needs.

The benefits of an AI VA are not confined to greater responsiveness or ease of access to information. They extend to changing the way L&D operates and is regarded within an organisation. L&D is placed right at the heart of the organisation's work flow and it, along with its AI Assistants, becomes a core member of the team.

AI Virtual Assistants needn't be all about automation and efficiency, implemented correctly by L&D they can become the key to better-focused, more responsive, and effective learning support.



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We're excited to be working with customers on new and experimental technology, to help revolutionise the training blend in their organisations.

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