

COLUMNS

## AI: Standing out in a sea of buzzwords

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As we enter the first stages of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a whole new sea of buzzwords has emerged: IoT, Big Data, virtual reality, 5G, Blockchain, cryptocurrency, machine learning, deep learning and others have crept outside of the scope of the technology realm and into daily life. But the biggest one of all is not on the list above.

Although it has been around for years in various stages and has been featured in movies and television shows over the past two decades think *The Terminator*, *The Matrix*, *Westworld*, A.I. artificial intelligence (AI) is recently dominating headlines. That is causing many companies to jump on the bandwagon and use the term in their marketing strategies. And that makes it harder for companies with pure-play AI solutions to stand out.

As the publication *AI Business* puts it, vendors must "develop solutions that go beyond paying lip service to AI because it sounds smart, or is part of the language the competition is using."

The same can be said for marketing: Companies must tell stories about those products and solutions that go beyond paying lip service to AI and show customers why they should be doing business with them.

What does today's AI look like?

Through AI, we can create machines that perform tasks much faster than humans and, at some point when they have learned human behavior can replace humans completely.

The two biggest components of AI in use today are machine learning and deep learning (machines get smarter as they learn more) and natural language processing (the ability to "read" the human language and process it think chatbots and virtual assistants).

AI has already disrupted several industries and we have only scratched the surface of what is in store in the future.

Perhaps the best example comes from how an automotive assembly line runs and how it has changed over the last decade far fewer humans and more robotics.

Expect that level of disruption in many more industries over the next few years.

How can my company stand out?

The good news is that if your company is part of the AI industry, it is likely that your products and solutions are in-demand or soon will be. But now for the hard part: letting customers and potential customers know exactly what you have to offer and the difference you can make in the success and growth of their businesses.

In a crowded market, it is all the more difficult to convey your positioning and messaging. You must think carefully about what you want to say and how you can show that your company is different from a sea of seemingly alike companies or those companies making AI claims to get on the bandwagon.

There are buyers out there who are looking for your product, solution and expertise, but because of the industry noise about AI, it may be harder to find you.

Here are some ways to break though that noise and show the value of what your company can bring to your potential customers:

Review your positioning and messaging. Is the language you are using run of the mill aka, buzz-wordy or are you communicating your true market differentiators to your potential customers?

A review of your positioning and messaging, incorporating value propositions, strategic positioning, key messaging and proof points can make a big difference in how you are perceived.

Conduct some unique research. Engage with a third-party analyst firm to conduct a study of AI users, and report the findings.

The resulting release of the survey, supported by a strong public relations campaign that incorporates key findings, can help elevate your industry stature significantly.

Create a content marketing program that educates your audience. You know your customers and their needs best. You understand their pain points, so take it a step further and offer a solution.

For example, if your part of the AI industry is edge security, create a series of blogs, contributed articles, social media posts, infographics and even larger assets detailing different challenges and solutions within this section of the industry.

Build awareness and trust by helping your prospects learn what they need to know.

As you become more sophisticated in your content, strive to create different content for each stage of the buyer's journey the process a potential buyer goes through leading up to their purchase.

Eventually you should have content for each of the awareness, consideration and decision stages.

Pump up your PR. With your updated positioning and messaging in place and a content marketing program underway, it is time to get started in public relations.

Work with your PR firm to brainstorm storylines that can be used for pitching for interviews as well as contributed articles. This can help both with awareness for the company as well as thought leadership for its executives.

Do not forget your current customers. Consider your current customers as potential customers for your next big thing.

Create content just for them by establishing a customer newsletter that points to what you have in the works, case studies from other customers about how they are using your solutions, and capabilities of your products of which your customers may not be aware.

By keeping them engaged, you are ensuring loyalty to your brand.

AI IS NOT a meaningless buzzword, but it has become a bandwagon for any company looking to capitalize on the industry's latest "trend." The pace at which the market is moving is creating even more industry fervor.

Although the AI market can be a bit daunting, everyone is looking for some help in understanding what is out there.

By clarifying your positioning and messaging, conducting unique research, establishing a strong content marketing program, developing a winning public relations program and focusing on existing customers as well as prospective ones, you will be well on your way to standing out in a sea of AI noise.

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