

# The potential of AI to enhance team decision making

While everyone of us is entitled to make a mistake, behavioural scientists have known for decades the core influences of poor decision making. Our biases, and how our changing environment and its impact on our emotions can affect our decisions hour to hour, week to week, month to month. Kahneman, Sibony and Sunstein coined this “[noise](#)” in their 2021 book by the same name.

For example, the same decision made a month apart might be made differently because you or the team are under much less, or much more, pressure than the month before. The result is a less than stellar scorecard for team decision making and team performance.

The stats range from a 50% success rate for strategic decisions according to various surveys from the likes of [McKinsey](#), to 86% for complicated decisions according to engineering reliability studies. This is a high distinction in universities. However, the 14% we get wrong is an immense cost to our productivity due to the impact on people’s time, energy and distraction from important work.

AI is already a proven antidote to sub-optimal decision making.

## Data driven decisions

The most obvious is data driven decisions. You will be familiar with the term “it’s a black box” which refers to a data model that you can’t see into, to know how it works. Yet study after study has shown, it provides answers that are more reliable than humans, provided they are built, tested and implemented correctly.

With rapid improvements in machine learning, the black box is now more like a black hole. An increasingly dense object in space sucking in data from all around it. Only the most advanced scientific brains are able to analyse it to understand some of its inner workings. Regardless, ignore their power at your peril.

## AI for the data starved

Unfortunately you, like many, many organisations, are not data ready. You don’t have data, or the data you have is not reliable or is in disparate systems that don’t talk well to each other. Notwithstanding the best time to start a digital transformation was yesterday, AI can help with team decision making.

The simplest and most beneficial use of AI in these relatively early days of AI tool availability at our fingertips, and at the sound of our voice, is to use AI to help us think and write. Take any decision and with an appropriately framed question to an AI tool like Copilot or Chatsonic you can get a summary of a diverse set of opinions on the topic. Chatsonic also allows you to utilise it’s AI to improve the question you are asking. See the call out for an example using Chatsonic.

Warning. The “facts” presented by AI need fact checking. Regardless, the real benefit is in the angles it ensures you consider. In this case, aspects of market growth, competition, consumer sentiment, inflation and economic trends. All things you are likely to have considered but with different stimuli to your thinking.

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**Original Prompt:** *Is not a good time to increase the price of my line of chilli sauces and condiments that I sell through major supermarkets in Australia?*

**Improved Prompt:** *You are the owner of a small business that produces and sells a line of chilli sauces and condiments through major supermarket chains in Australia. You are considering increasing the prices of your products, but you are unsure if this is a good time to do so.*

*Please provide a detailed analysis on whether it would be advisable to increase the prices of your chilli sauce and condiment products at this time. Consider factors such as:*

- *Current market conditions and consumer demand for your products*
- *Pricing trends and competition within the chilli sauce/condiment industry in Australia*
- *Potential impact on sales volume and customer perception if you increase prices*
- *Any other relevant economic or business factors that should be taken into account*

*Your analysis should include a clear recommendation on whether you should proceed with increasing the prices of*

## AI to counter “noise”

Neuromarketer Roger Dooley reported on a [study](#) of over 1400 advertising campaigns from a database held by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising in the UK, that ads selling on emotion only were twice as effective (31% vs 16%) as ads selling using rational only content, and even outperformed ads that combined emotion and rationale (31% vs 26%). That is, people make decisions on emotion over logic. If people are not emotionally ready to consider the logic, they don't.

The implications for your team's decision making are that you need to be aware of your team's emotional state and that is where AI can help, however, you could be entering a mine field. AI is increasingly capable of analysing written communications using natural language processing (NLP) tools to analyse emails, chat messages, and other written communications. Applications are available to help gauge the emotional tone of team interactions and sudden or slow burning shifts in sentiment that may indicate underlying issues.

AI is also capable of analysing facial expressions during video calls or in-person meetings to provide near real-time insights into emotional states. This [method](#) has shown promise in accurately detecting emotions such as happiness, sadness, and frustration.

AI can also be used to create the interventions required when a team's emotional state has shifted to a place where team decision making may be adversely affected. These can be in the form of a chatbot working as a coach.

Utilising these tools can create a minefield of ethical and regulatory challenges, not to mention some team members may simply choose to leave rather than be subjected to such a level of intrusion. A [Cornell University study](#) found that if you can positively frame the technology as assisting each team member and the team to develop, these approaches can be successful. Much depends on how the information is utilised and explained to the team to digest and act on.<sup>i</sup>

## Opportunity or Risk

There is no doubt that AI presents both an opportunity and a risk for enhancing team decision making. It is still early days for many organisations, while others have jumped at the opportunity. Mistakes have been made. However, no risk – no magic. Team decision making is critical to team performance, and you should start planning today how you are going to take advantage of the opportunity.

Bryan Whitefield has worked with hundreds of influential leaders across industries and is author of *'Risky Business'* (2021) and now *'Team Think: How Teams Make Great Decisions'* (2024). *'Team Think'* is a thoughtful guide to provide leaders with deep insights into team dynamics and practical strategies to enhance decision making processes. [www.bryanwhitefield.com](http://www.bryanwhitefield.com).

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