



Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence, Customer Experience and Innovation from Adobe's Chris Duffey

Updated 25 September 2018

It can be hard to separate hype from fact when it comes to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it will impact business. To better understand the importance of AI to Customer Experience and how it will fit into the overall business ecosystem, The Conference Board sat down with Chris Duffey, Adobe's Senior AI Strategic Development Manager and a speaker at our October 22 seminar [CX and AI: Truly understand your customers and build better interaction](#).

According to Duffey, AI as it is currently deployed is best classified as “narrow” and “task oriented.” But it is still exceptionally effective at unlocking data, finding patterns, and accomplishing tasks. Through AI systems like [Adobe Sensei](#), organizations can “amplify, accelerate, augment and automate” tasks, which means AI can fuel human innovation. And this has enormous future implications for businesses and customers alike.

Five themes for AI and business

So how does AI fit into the business ecosystem, and what does it mean for the future of work, especially its impact on customer experiences? Duffey isolates five main themes:

- Customer empathy
- Collaboration with respect to business innovation

- Platform thinking
- Creativity and data
- AI and the future of work

On customer empathy, Duffey notes the digital marketplace has “given rise to the need for the experience economy and at the core of the experience economy is putting the customer first.” This means having “empathy for the customer” through personalization. With more and more data being captured, AI can play a greater role in personalization through real-time implementation of customer interactions.

Duffey sees AI at the “center of collaboration in terms of business innovation.” In fact, he notes that Adobe is now predicting “what the workplace of the future might look like,” based in part on how AI is facilitating better analysis, and provoking innovation within organizations—ultimately enhancing human intelligence.

For example, “AI can democratize the innovation and creation process” through something as simple as interacting with smart boards to help drive creativity and ideation. With AI running in the background, “analyzing the conversation and whiteboard sketches” after ideation sessions, themes, terms, and concepts mentioned most often can surface. Indeed, Duffey views AI as a “muse,” “predicting and suggesting places where the conversation and design could flow.” This is a very different model from the current one, in which quite often the most senior person in the room delivers his or her strategy, and junior team members carry it out.

On platform thinking, the “technology landscape is becoming so complex the need to partner and stitch together technology stacks is more important than ever.” For that reason, Duffey sees more and more partnerships taking hold. And those that are leaders in AI will of course find the most fruitful partnerships.

Creativity in data

Data is also inspiring creativity in new ways, according to Duffey. For example, in organizations deploying more advanced AI applications, some of their greatest innovations are being led by “traditionally non-creative disciplines.” This of course has huge implications for organizations that are innovation driven, because it can mean innovations in products, services, or customer experiences can come from anywhere, increasing the opportunity for business success.

Which brings us to Duffey’s final point: AI and the future of business. One of the initiatives he is most excited about is “augmented reality (AR) now that it is embedded into mobile OS systems.” Adobe’s [Project Aero](#), previewed this summer, involves collaborating with Apple on a new AR authoring tool and multi-platform system to create “great immersive experiences.” And while these immersive experiences will have immense implications for customer engagement, they will also fuel bigger jumps in innovation as we get “even more digital exhaust from AR experiences,” such as contextual data points to drive

personalized content.

All this is possible through AI. Yet we are only at the beginning of the AI innovation cycle. AI is still in its infancy, in this so-called “narrow” stage, yet still capable of producing great innovations. Right now, Duffey notes, we are “not only creating the AI grid system, meaning the infrastructure,” but we are simultaneously able to “tap into that grid system and see tangible, exciting outputs from the AI grid.”

But it’s important to remember, that AI is not simply about the technology; AI is really about what “humans can do with the technology.” Human abilities will be profoundly amplified by AI.

Learn more about Adobe’s work how other companies are improving customer experience at [the CX and AI workshop \(October 22 in NY\)](#) of our [14th Annual Customer Experience Conference \(Oct. 23-24\)](#).

AUTHORS



Terrence Sooley

**Program Director,
Customer Experience
Leadership Conference,
Supplier Relationship
Management Conference
and Procurement Seminar**

The Conference Board

The Conference Board is the Member-driven think tank that delivers **Trusted Insights for What's Ahead**[®]. Founded in 1916, we are a nonpartisan, not-for-profit entity holding 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status in the United States.

© 2025 The Conference Board, Inc.