Transcript

The Community Asks Trish: Tactical Actions

Question

Tara Aiken: I would love to hear from Trish, as learning leaders, what she predicts or what she thinks these technologies, especially the ones that are starting to emerge in the next year, in 2020, how they're going to impact decisions we might need to make for our team as learning leaders. So whether that's how we up skill for capabilities but also does she see new roles or new positions that maybe haven't existed before that we're going to need to be thinking of as leaders on our teams.

Answer

Trish: So that's a really good question. So, let's take a technology that where the terminology at least or where we're familiar with hearing it called out. And that's artificial intelligence.

And with artificial intelligence the thing that I would want everyone to consider is when we're talking about artificial intelligence we're almost talking about the thing behind the saying. Do you remember that commercial that used to be like, you know, "We're GE. We bring good things to life." You know, they weren't the front thing that we interacted with. They were the thing that made that thing good.

And that's kind of what artificial intelligence is all about, is that it just becomes this... whether it's computing power at speed and scale, or it's the ability of being able to leverage technology that is artificial intelligence to start mimicking the five human senses, right. So if you take a look around us, artificial intelligence can now see better than humans. It can now hear better than humans. It can now speak better than humans. It can now touch better than humans and can manipulate physical objects in many cases better than humans.

We can see that in surgical practice and in the medical field. We can see that in our warehouses and our factories where it is that we've got robots that are AI mediated, that are able to do literally the heavy lifting. We can see that with the voice and with with the listening. We can hear that with natural language processing that's happening with a lot of these devices, whether you're talking about Siri, or you're talking about Cortana, or you're talking about an Alexa device. We're talking to inanimate objects.

I mean it's kind of like Mickey Mouse and Fantasia come to life where everything around us suddenly is interacting with us in our environment. Those are all things that are that are being animated, if you will, through artificial intelligence, and if you think about it it's artificial intelligence being able to again mimic one or more of the five human senses.

And so, artificial intelligence is going to continue to advance in those domains, and very quickly, by integrating those senses together. So we're actually starting to see some computing platforms that are AI driven that actually start to do taste and smell, as well, and then what are the applications of those in the real world.

So what does that mean to us, as learning leaders, and to our teams within an organization? What does that mean to roles, is it going to create additional jobs? Does that mean there's going to introduce new roles to the team? Does that also mean that it's a threat, that there are possibilities that it's going to not only disrupt us but deconstruct us, right; take some things from us that are familiar that we make a living at right now. Quite frankly, it's going to go over to the machines, yes.

And so, one of the ways that I appeal to people to really think about it is: what are the tasks that you as a human being do within your role, within the L&D function right now, that have to do with sight, that have to do with listening, that have to do with speaking, that have to do with touch? Later on we're going to also introduce taste and definitely introduce smell.

But when we can start to see that artificial intelligence has mastered these senses and moved beyond human capability, then the tool that is going to take over those tasks, using those senses that you as the human use today, is going to be deconstructed and given to the machines, because it can excel at it at a cheaper cost.

So what does that mean to us? Well, specifically in the learning function, that means that there are already technologies that are out there that can actually listen in some ways better and read better and faster and analyze what it is that it's read faster than we have.

Well, okay isn't that part of instructional design? I mean isn't that part of like meeting with a subject matter expert? Being able to conduct the interview? Doing the analysis, doing the front-end analysis? Being able to figure out, you know, sift through the information that the subject matter experts gives us? Being able to assess what material then needs to move forward? What are the learning objectives? What are the performance objectives? What content are we going to need in order to then develop? Well, we have instructional design tools now that are actually AI driven that can take the instructional design process from something that evolves by humans over months and actually take that down to minutes. Because, the machine can read, the machine can listen, and the machine can now write.

So, what does that mean for humans? How do we reposition ourselves? I would submit not to compete, but to augment. And it was the CHRO [Chief Human esources Officer] of IBM who said it's not the machines that are going to take your job, it's the humans that know how to use the machine that are going to take your job. That's hundred percent, that's everybody, that's every part of the organization including us and L&D.

So, how do we get curious? How do we take an honest assessment of who we are and what it is that we do every day, and how do we take a look at the world around us and say "I'm assuming that these things that I'm doing, to some degree or another, are going to be automated. When do I think that it's going to happen and are those automated tools already out there and upon us?"

When it comes to these other technologies, blockchain, and 5G, and quantum computing, and Internet of Things, and conversational queries, and voice interfaces, and those types of things, think of that as layers to the same structure that's just going to enhance the machines superpowers. So, we don't necessarily need to understand all of those technologies right now today, but we do have to understand that that's just going to increasingly make the machines better at things that the machines are going to take over and do.

And the best thing that we can do for ourselves, for the families that we care about, for the people whom we serve in our organization, for the communities that were in, is to really get clear on what it is that we need to let go, and how it is that while we have an opportunity in this short space of time, that we can reposition the value that we bring to an organization to continue making a living by providing

value in new ways and figuring out how it is that we can leverage the machines and the solutions that they provide in order to be able to advance this forward.

The last thing on that is we're going to see new roles within the learning function that are not only going to be staffed by humans, but are going to be staffed by machines, in some cases robots, and when I think of a robot I think of a physical mechanical device that has some kind of intelligence to it or at least some kind of functionality to it. It's also going to be staffed by algorithms, and those are going to be algorithms and ensembles of algorithms that already in some cases exist in our productivity and business software, that can actually perform some of the learning and performance diagnostics and interventions better than many learning functions currently can.

So, the algorithms... and then also getting into things like chatbots, right. So taking a look at chatbots that are now becoming colleagues, if you will, within the enterprise.

If you want to take a look at something that might kind of knock your socks off on how technology might be the next staff member that you're onboarding, take a look at a company that's called Sol machine out of New Zealand. The reason why they're significant is that one of the co-founders, and the current CEO, was actually Mark Sager, who is the guy who won two Oscar Awards for the facial technology software that he created for two films. You've probably heard of them. One is King Kong and the other one is Avatar.

And he is now taken that, and his background in computational biology, and has started to create the first line of digital humans that are actually entering the workforce, usually in the customer service center, but these are entities that we are going to have to learn how to work with, and that we're going to have to learn how to manage, and we're going to have to learn as a learning function in order to onboard, in order to be able to support and help people get accustomed to and acclimated with over some period of time.

There's some, you know, really kind of fantastical stuff that's happening right now that is changing who we are and what we are to become, and the worst thing that we can do right now is to try to avoid this wave of automation that's happening.

The best thing that we can do for ourselves and for the people whom we support and whom we serve is to figure out how it is that we can participate with awareness and with understanding and how it is that we can help facilitate as we as we move through this new era and move through these transformations.