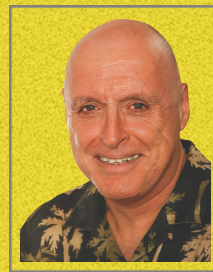


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1785 The Truth About AI is not What Business Wants to Hear

We began talking about artificial intelligence, AI, well before any other media in Guam. We've given AI a slap on its digital back when it deserved it, and we've spanked it when it's had that coming. We don't like the fear that some people have tried to spread, that AI is going to eventually replace everybody and we'll all be standing around looking at each other, not sure what to do next. We also raise an eyebrow when others claim that AI will never have an impact on their job. I'm Jerry Roberts, and the straight fact is that we're still in the first inning of a very long game, and nobody really knows where AI is going to take us. That being said, I'll talk about one area where it's struggling. That's coming next on The Extra Point.

There's a form of artificial intelligence known as "Agentic AI", and it refers to something you have likely already encountered as you move around the Internet.

Agentic AI is represented by those chat bots that engage us when we want to communicate with a company, either to learn about a product or service, or perhaps to solve a problem.

You click open the chat, start a message, and the bot begins to try to decide what we want and if it can handle the issue. If it can, we get our answer and exit. If it can't maybe we get switched over to a human being. Or, more likely, we leave our name and email, and wait for a response.

These bots first began showing up about 10 years ago, and were heralded as a massive breakthrough for organizations, that the bot technology would allow employers to cut payroll, saving millions of dollars, and still providing service that customers would appreciate. The reality is a big mixed bag.

A recent global study by Cisco Systems predicts that agentic AI will manage 68% of all interactions with technology vendors by 2028. This transformation, highlighted in the report titled *The Race to an Agentic Future*, is based

on insights from nearly 8,000 business and technical leaders across 30 countries.

The findings reveal robust support for agentic AI — intelligent systems capable of learning, reasoning, and acting with minimal human intervention.

The report claims that 93% of companies believe that agentic AI can enhance customer experiences by making them more proactive, predictive, and personalized.

However, there is now a bit of pushback against the idea that humans won't be needed for direct dealings with customers.

I can tell you that I deal with the bots daily, and this has not been my experience. The bot almost never is able to solve my issue and I need intervention by somebody with a pulse.

Klarna Group, a Swedish company that provides payment processing and other financial services, has had a rocky time with bots.

CEO Sebastian Siemiatkowski noted that the company ceased hiring a year ago, as AI began to perform tasks previously managed by hundreds of employees. Klarna reduced its workforce by 22%, now employing around 200 people who work alongside AI.

They took a unique approach, stating publicly that a big chunk of the savings generated by AI would go for increases in salary to workers.

However, recent developments reveal a shift in Klarna's strategy. After facing challenges with AI customer service agents, the company is now seeking to again hire human workers to address performance issues.

Siemiatkowski once said that AI could replace human jobs entirely. Now, he has had to walk that statement back.

(Con't.)

He emphasized the importance of maintaining a human element in customer service, recognizing that while AI can automate routine tasks, the human touch remains vital for customer satisfaction.

There's more. In his statement, Siemiatkowski may have revealed where the tech industry is taking this conversation. He compared human customer service to high-quality, handcrafted goods, suggesting that clients will always value the option for personal interaction.

Did you catch the word "option"? Critics of chatbots as a replacement for humans now believe that companies like Klarna will eventually make us pay if we want a human being to enter the conversation.

"To continue spinning your wheels on this issue, getting nowhere with Margie, our state-of-the-art chatbot, click "continue". To be spared the torture we are putting you through, scan our QR code to go to our website, and for only \$14.95, someone with DNA will be right with you."

Any company that makes human contact a paid-for upgrade, is a company that loses my business. Period.

Customer service in Guam is still a personal, human-based matter, and I suspect it always will be. However, when we must deal with people who live elsewhere, things change.

We need to send a strong message to all sellers. We expect high quality service, and we need to let them know when what they've been giving doesn't fit that description.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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