

I, FOR ONE, WELCOME OUR AI OVERLORDS | Author Keith Davis

If you've ever spent time in London, you'll know one of the slowest ways to get around the city is by car. So, I spent over five years without driving and then moved out of London and needed some hot wheels. And soon realised the prospect terrified me. Before picking up the car I had nightmarish visions of failing brakes, loss of control on bends, and forgetting how to use gears. Getting back into the driving seat for the first few rides was nerve-wracking, but also exhilarating, upon realising I had to get over my personal boundaries to break on through to the other side.

Now despite what you might imagine from reading this I'm not a bad driver and this fear might sound extreme. Perhaps it might be more familiar in relation to fear of presenting, dealing with difficult people or meeting new ones, going back to work after an extended absence, or learning a new technology? Anytime we give in to such fears and don't challenge ourselves, we put up mental walls that limit our growth. Life's too short to live small, and our lives can be as big as we allow them to be - especially as we live in an equal and prosperous part of the world with enviable personal freedom. Continuing to learn and overcome challenges also means we're ready to seize future opportunities.

So for 2018 a personal challenge is to learn how to use artificial intelligence. I'm up-skilling on developing virtual assistants for internal organisational use to help connect people with the information and support they need to deliver. Now this might sound out-there, but if you take a quick look at your colleagues of the future, you'll see that in five years our new co-workers and clients will be those whose go-to preference for finding out information won't be to type, or ask people, but to ask a virtual assistant. I came to this realisation when cooking with one of my kids where a recipe needed an imperial to metric conversion. As I reached for the phone to open my usual calculator, the tween commanded Siri to convert it for her with the awesome power of her voice, and ever since I have done the same, not least because of Siri's bonus hands-free hygiene.

As intelligence, knowledge, information, or records professionals we are well-placed to fast-track development of such tools and undertake ongoing review of their use to continue to refine the algorithm-supported responses people have to their questions. Search engines and their usage analytics provide a limited experience for users in enterprise except where we try to personalise search results according to an individual's function, geography or similar. However by reviewing questions asked of virtual assistants we can be more proactive in terms of what additional support and guidance we provide, enabling us to fill organisational knowledge gaps, helping make the organisation more efficient.

But we also get to have fun - setting intents that develop the style, tone and attitude of virtual assistants helps develop their 'personality' which leads to people wanting to connect with it (just as they might with Siri, Alexa, Google Assistant... Cortana). Taking the time to understand the culture of the people you're trying to assist also helps. For example, you'll know if you've imbued your virtual assistant with enough personality and overcome language limitations in Korea when it's asked about its blood type.

As with any new skill there are the fundamentals to get on top of, new jargon to learn, the pros and cons of different approaches, the difference between hype and reality, but all that takes is time. The first step is getting out of your comfort zone to embrace the challenge (and our future AI overlords).

If you're interested in learning more about the solutions and actions organisations need to adopt to remain competitive during the Fourth Industrial Revolution and will be near the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre on 18-19 September 2018 why not attend the CSIRO Data61 annual free showcase event D61+ LIVE (<http://data61live.cvent.com/events/d61-live/custom-18-ee1e508a50ae4ba2b55db59e802a7555.aspx>). CSIRO's Data61 is Australia's data innovation network that transforms existing industries and creates new ones through the application of science and technology.

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