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AI: The 21st Century Model-T

In 1908, Ford's Model T became the first mass-produced car using moving assembly lines.

No one could have expected its impact.

It changed production — not just for cars but for industry in general. It also changed infrastructure, electricity, and the way we live and work across the board.

I look at the state of AI today and see the same potential.

AI's ramifications as a tool, resource, and mechanism by which we live and conduct business will be enormous. It will affect the way we communicate, how we understand the world, and how we predict things. It will transform not only the technology industry but nearly all other industries over time.

It will touch robotics, food production, quantum computing, and logistics. AI will have a profound effect on our lives.

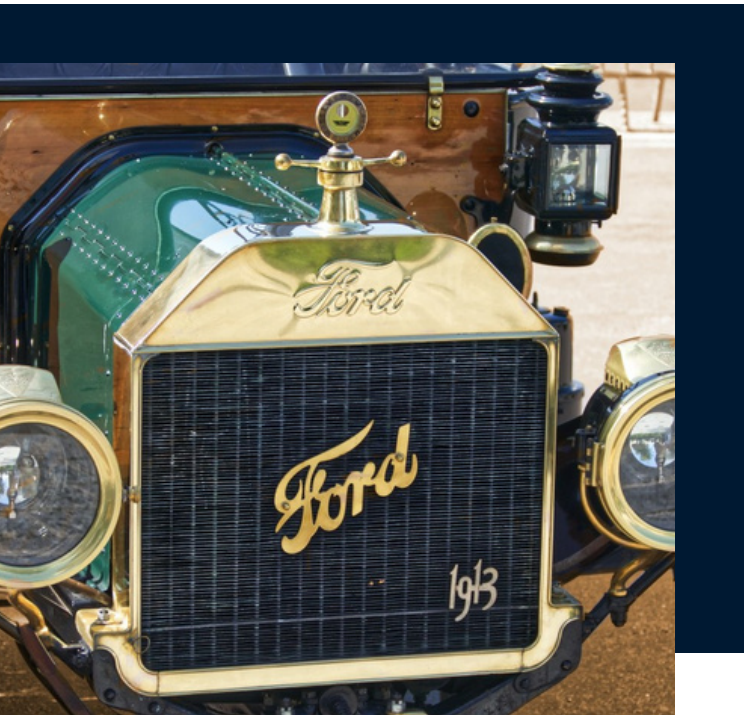
It's also being talked about everywhere. So much so that my mother — yes, my mother — is now asking me about it.

Every boardroom in the world is discussing AI right now. Here are four ways that we're helping our clients think about AI.

1. Think of AI not as a single monolithic entity but as a series of tools that can be utilized in different ways.

With the Model T, there was one version in one color in 1913. No one anticipated that there would ever be something like a Bugatti Chiron down the road. When it comes to AI, we will go from Model T to Bugatti Chiron within 10 years — as opposed to 120 years. Along the way, we will see many different iterations as new use cases are discovered.





AI is often considered one singular development since it's been implemented in very cursory ways (such as in content generation or signal analysis). However, thinking of AI as a horizontal tool that will increase utility and accelerate innovation across industries is more helpful. It is also constantly iterating and improving over time. Various algorithms and training methods are becoming distinct enough in application to warrant distinctive study as well. We might see a period where AI dips in prominence. But corporations should not lose sight of its massive potential in the long run.

2. Current discussions around AI focus heavily on productivity alone. Corporations looking beyond these will become leaders.

Think about AI's role in enhancing traceability across the food supply chain or aiding a boat manufacturer in sourcing materials cost-effectively in real-time. AI can notice when things go awry in production, cutting costs, saving time, and enabling responses to customer needs in novel, independent ways. AI's true value lies in these areas — not just in churning out better content.

The question is: how can AI make your processes more efficient? How can it help you interact with customers better? How can you drive production forward? Recognize that AI is not one thing; it's lots of use cases.

3. Corporations must become flexible, particularly those resistant to change and new technologies.

Firms have to be willing to pilot projects that may or may not work. They have to be willing to try things and engage with new ventures to spur innovation. The companies that will be successful will be willing to dive into a pool of uncertainty and embrace the change that AI can bring.

Not since the creation of the internet have we seen something that will be so profound. It's not just about creating efficiencies or cost savings; this is a new tool that will require a new way of management, a new way of thinking about business, and new strategies for growth.

4. Corporations must actively decide how AI fits into their investment strategies, partnerships, and collaborations.

Not every new venture will have an AI component, but many will. Unfortunately, today, confusion abounds. Every venture using even a sliver of data is branding itself as an AI company. This is reminiscent of the early 2000s when every business tacked a "dot com" onto its name. The venture ecosystem is saturated with self-proclaimed AI-centric companies.



Corporations should critically evaluate the AI element of ventures they are engaging with — whether through conversation, collaboration, or pilot projects — and consider the actual impact of AI on their business models and operations. This is especially important when considering the large proprietary data sets that the corporation owns. These data sets are invaluable to the future of AI and should be guarded as such.

Companies in our investment portfolio use AI to solve real business problems.



Assembly AI uses audio and AI to help businesses make better decisions. That means listening to a machine's noises and ensuring it's working correctly. They've also developed state-of-the-art systems for transcribing and understanding human speech.



Shopgenie uses AI to help auto shop owners run their businesses more efficiently. It allows more significant and optimal interaction between customers and the auto repair industry.



Zensors developed AI-powered visual sensors that enable users to understand video and optimize in-person experiences to boost revenue, customer satisfaction, and productivity. They can digitize your physical environment in seconds, turning spaces into smart, reactive experiences.



Native Voice is the distribution solution for voice-enabled AI, delivering multi-voice connectivity accessible across connected devices. Last month, [they announced a partnership with Walmart](#) to bring Voice AI to vehicles through their .onn FM transmitter.

Ultimately, AI will be as ubiquitous as the automobile today. The key is to be ready, flexible, and open to where this road will take us.