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Opening doors of opportunity:
AI as a vehicle for diversity and inclusion

By Deloitte AI Institute

About the Deloitte AI Institute

The Deloitte AI Institute helps organizations connect all the different dimensions of the robust, highly dynamic and rapidly evolving AI ecosystem. The AI Institute leads conversations on applied AI innovation across industries, with cutting-edge insights, to promote human-machine collaboration in the "Age of With".

Deloitte AI Institute aims to promote the dialogue and development of artificial intelligence, stimulate innovation, and examine challenges to AI implementation and ways to address them. The AI Institute collaborates with an ecosystem composed of academic research groups, start-ups, entrepreneurs, innovators, mature AI product leaders, and AI visionaries, to explore key areas of artificial intelligence including risks, policies, ethics, future of work and talent, and applied AI use cases. Combined with Deloitte's deep knowledge and experience in artificial intelligence applications, the Institute helps make sense of this complex ecosystem, and as a result, deliver impactful perspectives to help organizations succeed by making informed AI decisions.

No matter what stage of the AI journey you're in; whether you're a board member or a C-Suite leader driving strategy for your organization, or a hands on data scientist, bringing an AI strategy to life, the Deloitte AI institute can help you learn more about how enterprises across the world are leveraging AI for a competitive advantage. Visit us at the Deloitte AI Institute for a full body of our work, subscribe to our podcasts and newsletter, and join us at our meet ups and live events. Let's explore the future of AI together.

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At the start of the dot-com era, the innovators and experts who built computers, software, and systems had something in common: They could all write computer code. From JavaScript to C++, the esoteric-sounding computer languages took specialized learning, experimentation, and programming experience. The result was that, while computer engineers, programmers, and developers found lucrative and exciting careers in technology, the field was largely inaccessible to people with other skills. For the most part, they were not needed.

Today's AI era is different. AI, by definition, requires broad subject-matter expertise because it is intended to approximate human thinking and decision-making. When you automate intelligence, you are, in fact, automating human experience. For AI to reach its full potential, it typically needs input from people with a diversity of backgrounds, lived experiences, and real-world experience. In this, AI can be a vehicle for diversity, opening doors of opportunity for people in every industry and walk of life.

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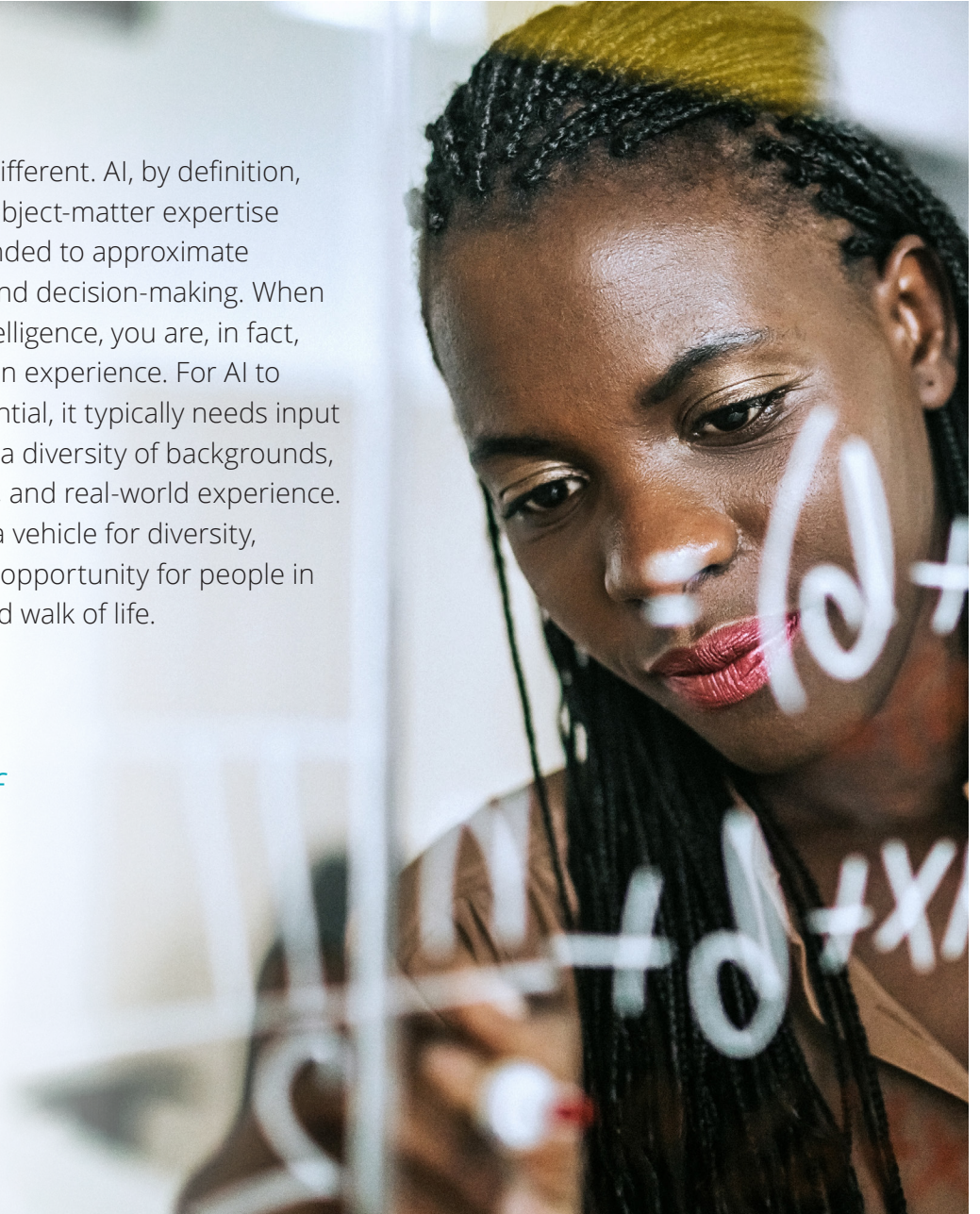
The economic value of AI is measured in trillions of dollars. In 2021, AI augmentation (i.e., people and AI working together) will generate $2.9 trillion of business value, according to a Gartner estimate. Longer-term, AI is estimated to yield nearly $16 trillion in GDP growth worldwide by 2030. This is an enormous economic opportunity for businesses and communities, to say nothing of the productivity and efficiency gains and the potential for game-changing innovation.

To achieve these massive benefits and develop and deploy AI tools to our greatest advantage, we will need everyone taking part—but that doesn't mean everyone ought to become an AI expert or PhD-wielding data scientist. To the contrary, the need is for people to come from all fields to apply their knowledge and labor. We need people who are passionate about math and those who are not. There is need for testers; for people to label data sets; to consider ethics, philanthropy, enterprise strategy, and all the industry roles that will be (or already are) affected by AI. And we need the perspectives and guidance of all genders, of every ethnic heritage, and from all socioeconomic strata.

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Consider an AI tool that reviews a patient's hospital intake assessment, consults all relevant medical literature, and produces a recommendation to a doctor on the likely malady and best course of treatment. That is a complex system, to be sure, and it requires data scientists and AI engineers to piece together the algorithms, data, and infrastructure that permit valuable recommendations. Yet, if the only decision-makers on AI development are those with narrow expertise in encoding AI, the resulting tool may fall short of its potential value. Development requires input from medical professionals, hospital administrators, experts in patient advocacy and information privacy, and many others.

This broad participation is necessary for potentially every AI system. The coming together of backgrounds, experiences, and ideas is fodder for useful and trustworthy AI. One cascading benefit is that drawing so many people into the effort creates opportunities and promotes diversity and inclusion in an emerging professional field, something with which the technology industry often struggles.

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Every person can be affected by AI. Jobs will change, new services and products will emerge, and benefits will compound. Yet, for AI to provide equal value, the teams developing, deploying, managing, and using AI should reflect the diversity of the population it serves. Even as diversity in data science is an ongoing challenge, we have an opportunity to build and encourage diverse nontechnical teams around data science.

AI is a unique technology in this respect. It is perhaps the only technology field that not only provides opportunity for nontechnical professionals, but actually requires their input. Knowing that, we can invite the legions of people needed to grow AI to its greatest potential—and do so early in the AI era. This can set a standard and expectation for the AI field going forward. AI can be for the benefit of all, and everyone has a role to play.

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