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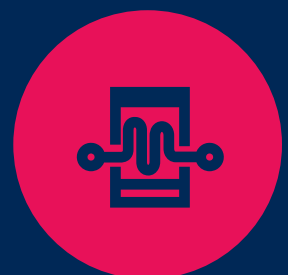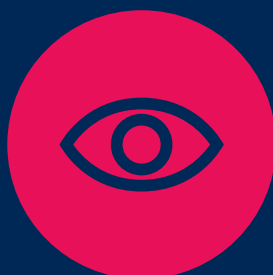
Tech CEO Insight: Convey Unique AI Capabilities in Product Messaging

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Initiatives: Marketing and Sales Execution for Tech CEOs

Most tech startups claim to have AI (including generative AI) capabilities in their products and services; however, the term "AI" means different things to customers. This research offers tech CEOs guidance for specifying the problem being solved and the type of AI used to communicate its value.

Overview

Key Findings

- Nearly every tech provider is now using the term "AI" or "generative AI" in their product naming or messaging, making it difficult for customers to compare solutions and understand the problem it solves.

- Tech providers that use product names (or taglines) with descriptors of the type of AI technology used, and the targeted user role, create more differentiation in their products. This leads to higher customer traction.

Recommendations

- Lead with the unique and relevant ways AI in your product improves decision making, processes or the user experience by addressing the specific business problem AI will solve more effectively or efficiently than other solutions that don't use AI.

- Articulate the type of AI solution you offer to the right audience by including a descriptor or qualifier with AI, such as "AI-enabled image recognition," "AI-powered customer support" or "AI sales assistant."

Analysis

This document uses "AI" as an umbrella term for artificial intelligence, including generative AI.

As AI milestones continue to unfold, tech CEOs are using AI to augment operations and develop cutting-edge functionalities in their products and services. As outlined in Leadership Vision for 2024: Tech CEO, one of the top challenges facing tech CEOs in 2024 is staying ahead of AI trends.

For tech providers, it seems nearly every vendor is adding some AI technology to its product portfolio. In addition, because of the generative AI (GenAI) hype, tech providers are jumping on the bandwagon to add some type of GenAI assistant to their product or service. However, AI itself is a collection of innovations rather than a specific technology, as demonstrated in Emerging Tech Impact Radar: Artificial Intelligence, which describes nearly 30 individual AI-centric innovations.

Therefore, with seemingly every tech provider using the AI term in its marketing materials, everyone sounds the same, making it difficult for customers to compare different vendors when choosing a solution. As a result, the term "AI" has become less meaningful and no longer a hook by itself to get end users interested in vendor products. This is a reflection of the market maturity common with emerging technology terms. Now that "everyone" has it, it is not inherently differentiating.

Tech CEOs must understand that labeling products as "AI" or "generative AI" doesn't increase the competitive value of a product. It may distort a product's value if the benefits aren't clearly articulated. To stand out, they must now focus on the business impact and value and specify the type of AI solution they are offering. Tech CEOs should also be in a position to showcase customers who are benefiting from applying the technology as validation. As a result, end-user organizations are now more interested in speaking with tech providers that can describe how the AI-enabled capability solves business problems they care about. They also want the provider to be able to describe what enterprise guardrails are offered with the AI solution to ensure accuracy and explainability of the output along with privacy and security protection capabilities.
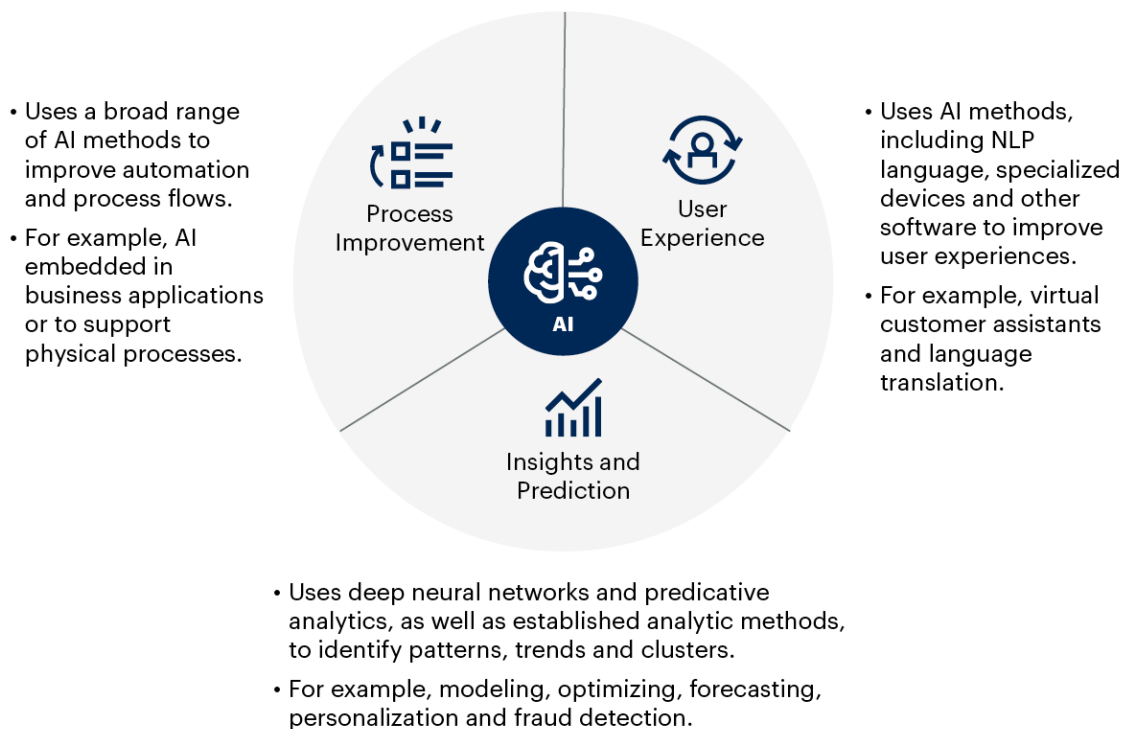
Convey Product Value by Focusing on the Business Problem Solved by AI

Tech CEOs must reorient their focus to describing the value of the embedded AI capability in their product rather than overusing the "AI" term in marketing materials and product descriptions. They must describe how their AI-enabled solution solves a particular business problem better than other solutions, whether they are AI-enabled or not.

Overusing the generic "AI" term in messaging and content marketing can lead to buyer fatigue or confusion. It could also undersell any innovative approaches to delivering AI and create the perception of being a follower of other solutions in the market.

Figure 1 highlights three common business focuses for AI that tech CEOs can use as a framework to describe the value of their AI solution.

Figure 1: Three Common Business Focuses for AI Solutions

Three Common Focuses for AI Solutions

- Uses a broad range of AI methods to improve automation and process flows.
- For example, AI embedded in business applications or to support physical processes.

Process Improvement

User Experience

AI

- Uses AI methods, including NLP language, specialized devices and other software to improve user experiences.
- For example, virtual customer assistants and language translation.

Insights and Prediction

- Uses deep neural networks and predicative analytics, as well as established analytic methods, to identify patterns, trends and clusters.
- For example, modeling, optimizing, forecasting, personalization and fraud detection.

Source: Gartner
Note: NLP = natural language processing
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Illustrative examples include:

- Does the AI capability automate certain menial or time-consuming user tasks so users can focus on activities that require more mental processing?

- Does the AI provide more accurate insights, predictions or prescriptive recommendations to help humans make better or faster decisions?

- Does the AI act as a virtual assistant to improve specific user experiences?

Add a Qualifier to Emphasize AI Capabilities

When promoting AI capabilities as part of their product or portfolio, tech CEOs must consider five key messaging elements to clearly define and differentiate their product (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: AI Messaging Elements

AI Messaging Elements

		Impact
1	Use of AI term in product description and website	Conveys advanced analytics or automation capability
2	Value that AI provides as part of the product	Communicates the value AI offers in solving the business problem
3	The specific AI technology used in the product	Imparts information about the uniqueness of the underlying AI technology and how it works
4	Built-in mechanisms to ensure accuracy and responsible use	Conveys what guardrail mechanisms are built in for accuracy, privacy protection, security and more
5	What is required to set up and maintain the AI product	Informs the buyer on the effort and resources required to deploy and manage the product

Source: Gartner
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- **AI in product description** — Conveys to the target buyer that the product embeds some type of AI technology, which implies that AI makes the product better than solutions without AI. For example, "AI-enabled image recognition," "AI-powered customer support" or "AI sales assistant."

- **Value that AI provides** — Communicates the specific value that the AI in the product provides in solving a specific business problem the buyer cares about. For example, "Reduces the time to take an MRI by over 75% with the same image quality. Improved patient experience realized through less patient time spent in the MRI machine."

- **Specific AI technology used** — Imparts information about the specific AI technology, which adds credibility to the premise that the product is using what would be considered a real AI approach, such as machine learning, computer vision or natural language processing. For example, "Uses an AI deep neural network pretrained on scans of human bodies, which reduces the need to collect large amounts of MRI data." Or in the description "RapidMRI: AI-based image scanner," adding a qualifier such as "generative," "conversational," or "responsible" in front of "AI" to better communicate the type of AI capability. This can be further magnified in cases where tech CEOs have developed unique intellectual property that isn't available from other vendors.

- **Guardrails provided with the AI solution** — Communicates the built-in mechanisms within the AI solution to regulate the behavior and outcomes within an enterprise to help ensure compliance with legal, ethical and operational standards while minimizing risks and maximizing business benefits. For example, "Implements encryption, access controls and anonymization techniques to protect sensitive data. Provides techniques to understand and interpret AI model predictions, allowing users to understand the reasoning behind the algorithmic decisions."

- **AI setup and management requirements** — Informs the buyer about the timeline and technical requirements on both the vendor and end-user sides to deploy and manage the AI product. For example, AI-enabled applications can be quick to deploy, while configuration complexities associated with traditional market solutions can require many additional months. It also addresses how risk and explainability are handled by the AI solution. For example, "Training data for the AI solution uses deidentified MRI scans, and no patient scans are stored in the product."

Using this approach allows tech CEOs to position their product as technically advanced by using the "AI" term in their messaging and product description. It also reduces confusion while helping prospects understand the business value provided by AI capabilities. This enables the differentiation of AI capabilities through an outcome-led, use-case-supported and capability-enabled messaging approach that resonates with buyers.

Document Revision History

Quick Answer: Should Tech CEOs Still Use 'AI' as a Headliner in Their Messaging? - 24 April 2023

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