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National Technology News



From insight to impact: How SIs are navigating scale, integration and AI readiness



Special Report



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At a roundtable hosted by National Technology News and InterSystems in Central London, technology leaders, consultants, system integrators, and data specialists gathered to discuss the realities of AI adoption.

This special report evaluates the key talking points from the event including everything from data readiness and governance to organisational resistance, sustainability concerns, and the future role of humans in increasingly automated workplaces.

AI has moved beyond experimentation and into the mainstream. Across industries, organisations are racing to identify use cases, improve productivity, and demonstrate returns on investment. Yet while enthusiasm remains high, many businesses are discovering that turning AI ambition into

measurable operational impact is far more challenging than anticipated.

System integrators are navigating a market where clients demand rapid, measurable results while expecting distinct, differentiated value. Organisations across sectors are pursuing AI, real-time analytics, and large-scale digital transformation, yet fragmented data estates and weak data foundations often limit how effectively these initiatives can scale.

Resistance to AI adoption

The discussion started by examining the current state of data foundations across organisations and how AI initiatives have evolved over the past couple of years.

One senior IT leader who works closely with the insurance industry said that while getting access to good data is important, people need to ask why they need it and what problem they will solve using the data.

“From an AI perspective, you’ve got to look at what humans are good



at. Insurance brokers are good at empathy and great customer service,” they said. “You don’t need to use AI just because it’s AI.”

The consulting director – UK lead agentic transformation for marketing at a consultancy said that data is a massive challenge along with organisational readiness.

“Sometimes when you work with the teams, there’s a lot of resistance and they can be afraid to adopt AI,” they said. “People have great ideas in how to improve operations in their daily lives, but is that really going to move the needle and improve team workflows?”

A partner at a consultancy firm said that AI has been “on every CEO’s scorecard as a top priority” over the past 18 months. Yet there is a difference between how shareholders expect the company to use AI and how companies actually use the technology.

The head of banking and capital markets at an IT services company said that one of the biggest challenges is technology debt that has accumulated over the years.

“There is also a level of courage involved when you implement AI as you have to risk how the workforce works, how your original model works and how your delivery model works,” they said. “The usual way was to just throw bodies at the problem and now you have to shift your methods.”

AI implementation targets

The governance risk and compliance manager at an IT services company said the data foundations across many organisations are currently “a shambles,” as there is far too much legacy data. This means that their data is not structured correctly for AI use, so AI tools do not have access to the necessary organisational context when a company wants to implement a new system.

They added that there are governance issues around the implementation of AI in many organisations, and pointed out that many executives in charge set targets for AI but provide

no guidelines or restrictions to prevent the sharing of sensitive data. Often there is no human in the loop to turn off the technology or provide oversight.

“I am the last person anyone will ever come to around AI because I am a blocker. I think AI is amazing, I use Copilot every day, but the rest of my colleagues do not know how to use AI and we are expecting them to play catch-up without providing training,” they said.

The head of business infrastructure services at an IT services company said that their developers were “desperate” to implement and use AI as the technology is progressing rapidly.

“If you just let AI develop, where’s the control? When something breaks, you have no idea what’s going on and how to fix it,” they said.

Cost cutting

The discussion moved on to exploring what integration and data hurdles facing organisations making the leap from proof of



concept to working model.

One senior leader raised the point that while many executives see AI as a way to cut costs over the long term, in the short term the technology could drive them up instead.

“You need to consider that every developer is going to use about £1,000 worth of tokens per month and you may have around 500 developers,” they said.

Another industry expert said that some finance directors see AI implementation as good option to increase efficiencies and reduce costs by cutting the headcount. However, they warned that this does not always work.

“You may be saving on headcount, but how are you bringing in the next generation to make decisions and be the next c-suite in 20 or 30 years’ time?” they asked, highlighting a disconnect between perceived and actual cost efficiencies.

The senior vice president at an IT

services firm said that they could use AI to save time when putting a presentation together, compressing around seven hours of work into ten minutes. They understand the data and the content that goes into the presentation and have built up this knowledge over several years whilst working at the business. In contrast, they said those joining the workforce from school or university will not get the same opportunity to understand the business, as they will simply use AI to put the presentation together without understanding the full details and may have difficulty learning them in future if they rely on AI.

The executive director at a technology transformation firm agreed and said that many firms implementing AI wanted to see a fast return on their investment but lacked the skills necessary.

“It sounds very sexy to say that we are going to do AI, but the reality of training people, making it work and seeing the value is hard,” they said.

“I need all my clients to be comfortable before I can use AI.”

Another senior leader raised the issue that some clients, such as public services, are afraid of how much AI is being used for their projects and what controls are being implemented to protect their assets.

“When you are talking about governments, they are very risk averse in how much they want to be using because [of] how many controls there are in place,” they said.

Net Zero

The discussion moved on looking at some of the drawbacks that come with AI implementation along with measurable KPIs that could indicate if AI implementation is working.

The governance risk and compliance manager for a consultancy highlighted that AI uses a lot of resources such as water. They shared conversations with companies they had worked with

who want to be Net Zero by 2030 but are unwilling to give up AI to comply with this target or pay for additional carbon emissions.

“We can’t see the bigger picture. AI is great, but you will not be Net Zero by 2030, not unless you are going to plant trees and install 20,000 solar panels,” they said. “The UK government wants us to be saving energy, reducing our impact on the environment and yet they are also pushing AI which has a knock-on effect.”

Another senior leader pointed out that while many firms use productivity as a KPI to measure whether AI implementation is

working, reducing employees may counteract any productivity gains.

“The reality is that productivity takes time. You can either cut the headcount immediately and hope the business can catch up or you spend all this money on AI which means costs spiral and you don’t actually reduce the headcount,” they said.

The executive added that they had found success on the marketing side of the business where AI is being used to measure specific channels and audiences as well as generate content. They explained that the latter was “hugely valuable” when launching thousands of campaigns

across the world every day.

A partner at a consulting firm said that businesses do not always want to cut the number of employees when they deploy AI, rather they want to utilise the knowledge staff have accumulated and deploy them elsewhere in the business. This would free staff from the “grunt work” which could be done using AI and instead these staff could be retrained or given tasks which AI is unable to do.

Saurav Gupta, sales engineering team lead at InterSystems, said that healthcare is a great example of where AI has been deployed with success due to the healthy return on





investment and efficiency gains.

“During an outpatient appointment, a clinician will be looking at their system trying to understand who you are and what your medical history is. We are seeing a big transformation with AI,” he said. “The appointment is being transcribed and turning it into a medical report, which saves around five minutes. The impact it can have on a public service is huge.”

Conclusion

While attendees agreed that AI has enormous transformative potential, they also shared similar frustrations and faced the same challenges with

adopting the technology.

From the discussion, it is clear that organisations remain constrained by weak data foundations, unclear objectives, and a tendency to pursue technology before fully understanding the business problem they are trying to solve.

Summing up the conversation, Clive Rumsey, UKI sales director at InterSystems, said that “people like to pretend that we are further ahead than we are” in the race to install AI tools. He added that there were conflicts, such as organisations trying to demonstrate their eco credentials, which needed to be

resolved before scaling AI tools and utilising their full potential.

Companies are starting to make an impact in their data management and AI implementation, but still need to work on governance and compliance issues. They need to make sure they have the right policies and systems in place to make tangible progression.

As the volume of data continues to grow, systems integrators must help organisations integrate emerging technologies with existing legacy systems, enabling them to maximise the value of their data while maintaining compliance with regulatory requirements.