

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Artificial Intelligence

Evidence Meeting 6 - Trade

Monday, 15 October 2018 | 5:30-7:00 PM - Committee Room 1, House of Lords



Andrew Burgess, Author, The Executive Guide for AI

A management consultant, author and speaker with over 25 years' experience, Andrew is considered an authority on innovative and disruptive technologies including artificial intelligence and robotic process automation. He is a former CTO who has run sourcing advisory firms and built automation practices, and now advises senior executives on creating value from AI.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

I'm a strategic adviser on Artificial Intelligence, which means that I help organisations and enterprises develop their AI strategies so that they can best exploit these technologies. I am also the author of The Executive Guide to Artificial Intelligence.

AI is a technology that can potentially benefit all. With regard to trade, therefore, it should ideally be available easily and without restrictions. But we know that it is subject to many constraints, including the specialist knowledge required, data flows across borders or the rights to data privacy.

My vision to ease these constraints is for a democratised AI. This is where AI is being used everyday by citizens, consumers and businesses in an open, transparent way. Where access to the knowledge to create AI is easily available, where AI has moved beyond the hype-and-fear bubble, and is focused on delivering real value to society rather than click-throughs on adverts.

I know that it is easier and better to get data scientists from Estonia or Portugal than it is from the UK. I know that 99% of business people I speak to have no real idea what AI is and how it can help their businesses.

I firmly believe that it is a fool's task to try and create global standards for AI, particularly around ethics and trade. There are two huge hurdles to overcome: the diverse nature of AI technology and the different cultural approaches to privacy and ethics across the globe.

So we need to look for answers at the metaphorical coal face. AI will work best if it is a grass-roots movement: it will find its champions, advocates and sponsors in everyday business and everyday lives.

AI will succeed as a business tool only where it can be used easily and effectively. For the UK to become a go-to source of AI capability, and a central hub of trade in AI, then we really need to focus on the people, both the users and the creators of the technology.

We need business people who understand the capabilities and value of AI, and we need data scientists and developers that can build it. But fundamentally we need to make AI less sexy and less scary for people. Once AI can be seen as a tool - once it has been democratised - then we will see the real value flow.

A democratised AI economy will rely much more on self-regulation and domestic ethical codes. We need to give the small firms the voice and the breathing space to flourish in this environment.

So, this leaves the government's chief role in boosting trade in AI to supporting the necessary education and skills for our people, whether this is delivered on the job or much earlier on in the formal education process.

As everyone is aware, transforming education is not an overnight change. But, as Napoleon is reputed to have said, the best time to plant a tree is 25 years ago. The second best time is now.