

The trust factor

Uncertainty is the new norm. But if it was the other way around—if our norm was certainty—would it be boring?” Can we turn pressure into energy?

Trust. Easy to say, hard to earn, and getting even more difficult as generative AI technologies bring the importance of data—trustworthy data—to the fore. As with everything in life, there is no magic wand, but the CSCO Thinkers agree on a few things:

- Decide what problem you want to solve
- Collect **ONLY** the data you need to solve it (don't get distracted by the rest)
- Be sure the data is believable (and assign a Chief Advocate to be sure there are no “data deniers” lurking around)
- Solve the problem, and thereby demonstrate the value of trusted data
- Repeat.

Here's how they do it

Trustworthy data, which powers generative AI systems and tools, is only possible with data transparency, reliability, accountability, and security.

These are critical considerations as supply chain leaders are building more agile and responsive supply chains.

“The data is wrong’ is becoming an accepted excuse. As leaders we have to stop nodding to that and start challenging that way of thinking.”

“I’m afraid we will get a lot of data but not a lot of information. We need to go from big data to microdata that allows us to think big but start small.”

“The human in the chain will be responsible for gaining trust while most of the information can come from AI.”

CSCO Thinkers pondered a move away from data perfection to directional decision making, based on data that is “accurate enough” to drive good decision making.

In some organizations, it has become sport to derail meetings by nothing more than questioning the data. Does it have to be 100% right, or is 80% good enough? 70%?

By segmenting processes into those where AI is accurate and decisions are binary, and those where the data is not going to be perfect (and may never be perfect), especially as unstructured data is increasingly used—professionals need to be comfortable with directional decision-making, as they rely on humans to make the final decision and use generative AI as an input to inform that decision.

“It is a great ‘check and balance’ to ensure that we use Gen-AI as an ‘Assistant’ to help make the professional better, making faster and more accurate decisions, but not replacing them. It keeps the human in the driving seat and in control.”

Many CSCOs are exploring the use of generative AI through pilots, checking the value metrics, and then scaling—or not—accordingly.

The most common first-up use cases include use of intelligent assistants, supplier risk assessments, inventory optimization, and cyber-threats among others.

“We have invested a lot into our digital infrastructure. We’ve stitched numerous data sources together. It looks good, but what is the value to the bottom line?”

“There’s some value in building trust to help with implementation. One use case that doesn’t scale may help build confidence, while another may be more complex but deliver value. Can those sit next to each other? I think yes.”

“Sometimes I feel like we’re going through a journey that looks less like a road and more like a pendulum. How far do I want to swing?”

Balancing AI generated data decisions and recommendations against the risk of being wrong starts with defining the goal.

Without an understanding of how the outcome will be measured, no amount of data, at whatever level of accuracy, will ever be sufficient.

“Setting the clear goals is important—consider the Odysseus moon mission. If the goal was going to the moon and collecting data for 7–10 days the mission failed (because the spacecraft tipped over on landing and had to shut itself off after only five days). If the goal was just getting to the moon, it was a success. We need clear goals and expected outcomes for AI.”

“As long as you define the value and define the risks, you can see if the value is worth the risk. That’s where some of the data fidelity questions come in—that is where the decision process has to dictate what you are going to go after, and then try to mitigate those risks however you can—with eyes wide open.”

“In our organization, there’s a lot of emotion around data. That emerged even in something as simple as badge swipes. It’s a binary thing, you’ve either badged in or you haven’t. It’s pretty easy to record that data, but because of the emotion, people still question what the reports show. To short circuit this distraction, we assign ownership of the data. When there is an issue, a leader—who is pretty high up in the organization—comes to address it. We don’t make it a digital conversation. We don’t make it a process, decision, discussion. Instead of debating data that we know is correct, we are able to address the root cause which is that some don’t like the fact that we have a badge report.”

Demonstrating AI value to users that solidifies trust and accelerates adoption emerged as a growing area of focus.

One CSCO Thinker reflected that “this is good old change management.” One way some are speeding the change process is to actively enable intergenerational engagement—embedding digital pioneers in the organization working alongside “self-aware antibodies.”

“If we don’t speed up change management, I’m afraid that the antibodies will continue to persist. Leaders must become a self-aware antibody and acknowledge we can only disrupt so much.”

“How do we start driving to inter-generational collaborations and get insights into new ways of working from people entering the workforce? Gen Z is the future.”

“We have a bias against what we don’t know. Breaking down barriers leads to pushing against checks and balances. Challenge the cultural norms and let the digital natives help drive change.”

For more insight:

- [5 trends for 2024](#) is our look at the trends shaping the world today—and the bets that can help propel business forward.
- [CEO’s guide to generative AI](#)—A book, or 12 individual reports highlighting what executives need to know and do as they embrace generative AI, with a deep dive on generative AI in supply chain.

- [Seizing the AI and automation opportunity: The moment is now](#)—a comprehensive investigation into the potential use cases and impact of AI and automation, exploring intelligent workflows, productivity and agility and proactive IT automation.

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