

# THE DIGITAL AGENDA

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Monthly Newsletter



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# Welcome to The Digital Agenda Insights - Monthly Newsletter

Across the globe, a subtle shift is unfolding. Digital ID is being placed at the centre of every service. But it doesn't end there. The conversation is rapidly expanding beyond Digital Identity to an equally profound transformation: the move from cash to Digital Currency.

Each region and country frames it differently:

- In Europe, it's framed as a way to combat terrorism.
- In Uganda, it's about the high cost of printing physical money.
- In the USA, it's pitched as a way to speed up interbank transfers.

Yet the narrative is clearly uniform, with the death of cash, everything digital and a centralised digital ID actively positioned as the essential gateway of every service.

- HealthCare
- Financial Services
- Food and Sustainability
- Travel and Mobility
- Humanitarian Response
- E-commerce
- Social Platforms
- E-Government
- Telecommunications
- Education and E-Learning
- Energy and Utilities Access
- Smart Cities and IoT Integration
- Voting and Digital Democracy
- Law Enforcement and Border Security
- Employment and Workforce Management

## DIGITAL ID

### But the real question is, where is all this leading?

While it is sold as a matter of efficiency, convenience and security, is that the full story? Or are we witnessing the architecture of centralised control being quietly assembled in plain sight?

At The Digital Agenda Forum, we do not take narratives at face value.

### Our Core Values

- S** Stewardship
- P** Purpose
- A** Authenticity
- D** Dignity

We interrogate and scrutinise this global push toward identity centralisation and challenge any agenda that threatens to erode privacy, autonomy, financial freedom, rights and dignity.

The Digital Agenda Insights Newsletter delivers sharp perspectives on digital transformation to spark critical thinking, provoke deeper questions, and inspire informed action, reclaiming the conversation and the future.

We believe technology is neutral; its impact depends on how it's used. That's why we also celebrate innovation, spotlighting start-ups and visionaries driving real solutions and progress.

Join us as we navigate the questions that matter most.

Partner with us to build a digital future grounded in freedom, fairness, and transparency. Together, we can shape the systems that shape us.

Warm regards,



Team Leader, **Digital Agenda Forum**

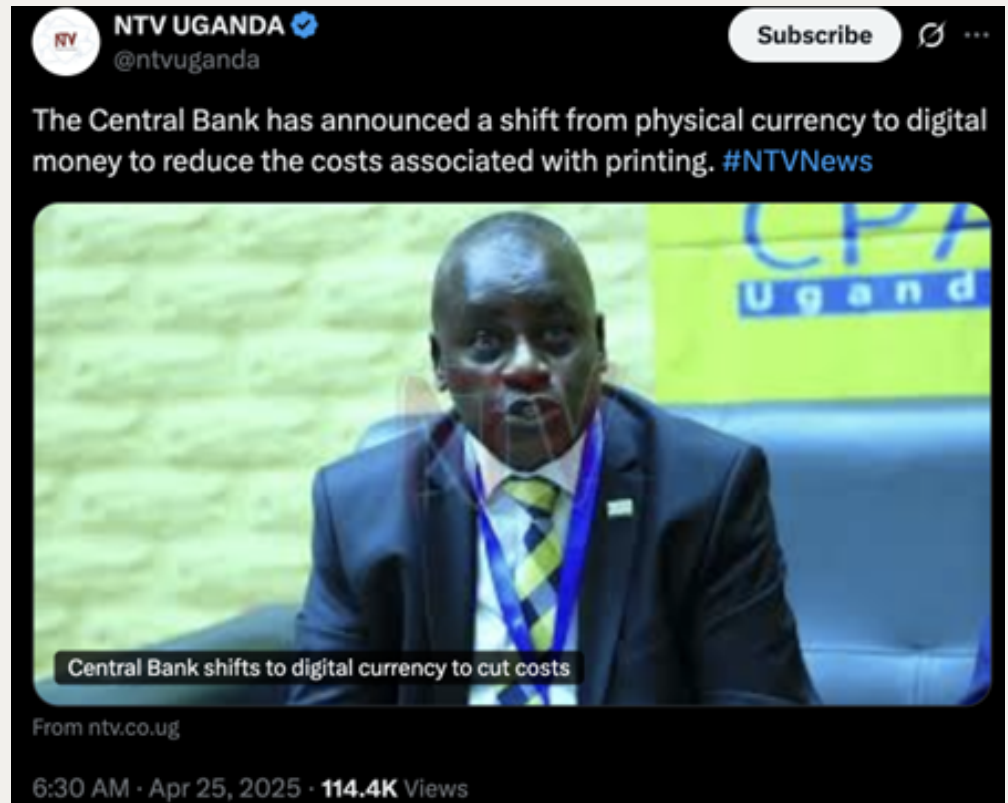
# The Shift to Digital Currency: Public Voices and Concerns

By **CLAIRE BABIRYE**, Data Scientist

Following a tweet made by NTV Uganda, on April 25, 2025, X (formerly Twitter) was awash with conversation after the Central Bank announced a shift from physical currency to digital money, citing the need to reduce printing costs. As expected, the tweet quickly gained attention. Replies poured in, reflecting a mix of curiosity, skepticism, and concern. But beyond the surface-level reactions lies a deeper national conversation about what this shift really means for people's everyday lives. To understand the public's mood, we analyzed the replies to the tweet, and reviewed recent commentary from policy experts.

The most common themes we found in replies were around **costs**, **network**, **privacy**, **access**, **infrastructure**.

Our word cloud analysis echoes these anxieties. Words like "**costs**", "**network issues**", "**control**", "**infrastructure**" and "**taxes**" appear prominently in replies flagged as



negative. The visual clustering of these terms paints a vivid picture: people aren't just afraid of change, they're afraid of losing their freedom as this system would introduce control, on how they spend their money and how much they could spend, concern of network and infrastructure, as some parts of the country have limited access to electricity and internet. And thus are afraid of being watched, restricted, or excluded from economic life.

## ABOUT THE SHIFT TO DIGITAL CURRENCY

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titled *"Replacing Cash with a Digital Dollar Would Pose a Grave Threat to Our Rights and Freedoms"*. The piece argues that once cash is eliminated, governments could monitor every transaction, restrict spending based on behavior, or even freeze accounts all without due process likening it to China's notorious social credit system. These aren't just theoretical possibilities; they are risks that citizens are already intuitively picking up on, as shown in our word cloud analysis.

The expert perspective in this article directly aligns with what we saw in our analysis of public replies. The words people used: **'control', 'mark of the beast', 'freedom', 'costs', 'autonomy', 'bondage', 'excluded'** weren't random. They revealed deep-rooted concerns that this shift isn't just about technology, but about power and control.

What the data reveals is that this isn't simply a policy change, it's a shift in the values. While some welcome the convenience and cost-saving benefits, others fear losing a core aspect of personal and financial freedom.

As Uganda takes steps toward a digital economy, these public voices and expert warnings should not be ignored. They remind us that financial innovation should serve the people, not surveil them.

### CONCERNING THE SHIFT TO DIGITAL CURRENCY

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### BE A PANELIST

#### Join Our Webinars and Town Hall Panel

Are you an expert or enthusiast in digital technology? The Digital Agenda Forum welcomes knowledgeable individuals **(Technology Experts, Policy Makers, Legal Experts, Regulatory Bodies, Academics and Researchers, Civil Society Representatives, International Organisations, Ethics Experts, Industry Associations and Data Protection Authorities)** to join our panel discussions during our online Webinars and Town Halls.

Our focus is on exploring the latest advancements in digital tech, with a key emphasis on digital IDs. As a panelist, you'll have the opportunity to share your insights, engage with thought leaders, and contribute to shaping a balanced and inclusive digital future.





# How a Cashless Society Threatens Financial Freedom and Economic Stability.

By **Asha Wandulu**, Policy Analyst, CEO of Ashalumi Governance Network

The global financial landscape is undergoing a radical transformation, with governments and financial institutions aggressively promoting a cashless society. Framed as a step towards modernization, efficiency, and security, the shift toward digital currencies particularly Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) masks a far more troubling reality: the erosion of financial autonomy, privacy, and economic resilience.

Uganda's recent exploration of a CBDC, following the lead of countries like Nigeria and China, raises critical governance concerns. While digital transactions offer convenience, they also centralize monetary power, enabling unprecedented surveillance, financial exclusion, and authoritarian control, in the following ways;

## Loss of Financial Privacy and Increased Surveillance

One of the most alarming consequences of a cashless society is the death of financial privacy. Cash transactions provide a layer of anonymity, shielding individuals from excessive monitoring. In contrast, digital payments especially those processed through CBDCs create a permanent, traceable financial record. Governments and corporations can exploit this data to monitor spending habits, restrict



transactions, and even punish dissent.

China's digital yuan (e-CNY) offers a chilling precedent. The system links financial behavior to "social credit" scores, blocking purchases for citizens deemed politically unreliable. If Uganda adopts a similar model, the Bank of Uganda (BoU) could freeze accounts, impose spending limits, or cut off access to funds for opposition figures, activists, or ordinary citizens who fall out of favor.

Beyond government surveillance, corporations also stand to benefit. Financial institutions and Big Tech firms already harvest transaction data to manipulate consumer behavior. In a fully digital economy, personal spending habits become a commodity, sold to advertisers and lenders without meaningful consent. Without cash as an alternative,

individuals lose the last vestige of private economic activity.

### **Exclusion of the Vulnerable and Unbanked Populations.**

Uganda's economy heavily relies on cash, with only 43% of adults having formal bank accounts (World Bank, 2021). A forced shift to digital currency would:

**Marginalize Rural and Elderly Citizens:** Many lack smartphones or reliable internet and without cash, they are shut out of the economy.  
**Harm Informal Sector Workers:** Market vendors, boda-boda riders, and small traders depend on cash and digital exclusion could devastate their livelihoods.

### **Systemic Fragility and the Risk of Centralized Control**

A cashless economy replaces decentralized transactions with a single point of failure such as;  
*Cyberattacks & Technical Failures:* A digital shutdown (like Nigeria's eNaira glitches) could paralyze commerce.

**Programmable Money:** CBDCs allow governments to impose expiration dates, spending limits, or negative interest rates, effectively dictating how citizens use their own money. Uganda's history of financial instability (e.g., bank failures, inflation) makes reliance on a centralized digital currency particularly risky. If the BoU gains absolute control over money flow, it could weaponize finance against political opponents or mismanage

into crisis.

### **Threat to Dissent and Freedom of Exchange**

Cash is a tool of resistance as it enables:

Donations to banned causes (e.g. opposition groups, NGOs).  
 Survival during financial censorship (e.g., when banks freeze accounts).  
 Avoiding de-platforming (e.g, payment bans on activists).

In Nigeria, the government used CBDC trials to crack down on protestors by blocking their funds. If Uganda follows suit, dissent could be financially suffocated. Additionally, in Uganda, where mobile money fraud is already rampant, replacing cash with CBDCs won't reduce waste, it will just shift power to regulators.

The push for a cashless society is not merely a technological evolution, it is a governance challenge with profound implications for democracy and economic stability. While digital currencies offer efficiencies, they also centralize power in ways that threaten privacy, inclusion, and freedom. Uganda must critically evaluate whether adopting a CBDC aligns with its commitment to financial autonomy or risks entrenching a new form of monetary authoritarianism. Cash must remain a protected form of money not just as a transactional tool, but as a safeguard against control. Without it, the very foundations of a free and resilient economy are at stake. Cash should be preserved as legal tender!

# Is Digital Currency Cheaper Than Physical Cash for the Bank of Uganda?

By **Digital Agenda Forum**

In April 2025, the media went abuzz following a speech made by the Deputy Governor of the Bank of Uganda, Professor Augustus Nuwagaba, at the Certified Public Accountants' Conference. His remarks sparked a national conversation on the real cost of printing money.



**Deputy Governor, Bank of Uganda speaking at the Certified Public Accountants' Conference** | NBS Television

The Central Bank announced that it is to shift to digital currency to reduce reliance on physical cash, citing the high cost of printing currency as a major concern.

"You wouldn't believe how much currency we destroy every day," Professor Nuwagaba said. "And every time we destroy it, we must print again. And that comes at a cost. You don't pay in shillings, you pay in dollars."

He added, "If people were more careful, we wouldn't be spending so much. But you see them, even in church, pulling money from their pockets, squeezing it carelessly before giving it. Do that ten times and the note is ruined. We have to print again. That is why printing currency is actually our biggest expense."

Millions are spent replacing damaged notes. He also pointed to inefficiencies in government operations, including corruption and project delays, as further sources of financial waste. "When we budget, we operate a cash budget, not a credit one. If money isn't spent in time, it is returned to the treasury. That is a lost opportunity."

With these challenges in mind, he argued that digitalisation, especially in public finance management, is an essential next step. Advances in artificial intelligence are already simplifying accounting processes and improving oversight.

But the truth is far more complex. While the shift to a Central Bank Digital Currency might seem cheaper on the surface with no printing presses, no armoured trucks, and no physical note destruction or replacing worn-out notes, it introduces a new



set of expenses. A secure, always-on digital currency system does not run on magic. It runs on infrastructure, servers, electricity, cybersecurity, and skilled human oversight.

## A digital currency saves on ink and trucks, but racks up costs in code and cyberdefence.

To put this in perspective, Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, recently shared that something as simple as users typing “thank you, ChatGPT” costs the company millions of dollars in electricity each year. Every word processed by ChatGPT involves powerful data centres filled with thousands of energy-hungry servers operating continuously and consuming large amounts of power.

These machines need electricity not just to run but also to stay cool. The cost of powering and maintaining these systems adds up quickly, even for small interactions.

Now scale that up to a national level. Imagine replicating that level of demand across Uganda for every transaction, every day, for everyone.

A Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) would require secure, high-availability systems operating 24/7. Every transaction, from buying milk to paying salaries would need to be processed, verified, stored, and protected in real time. Add in cybersecurity measures, fraud monitoring, disaster recovery systems, and nationwide accessibility, and suddenly, the cost of “going digital” starts to resemble the energy bills of a major tech company.

Here’s a quick comparison for Uganda’s context:

Factor	Physical Cash	Digital Currency (CBDC)
Setup Cost	Low (existing systems)	High (new tech infrastructure required)
Operational Cost	High (printing, transport, storage)	High (servers, cybersecurity, upgrades)
Power & Internet Needs	None	Essential and continuous
Resilience to Blackouts	High	Low (unless offline systems are built)
Inclusion	High (anyone can use cash)	Risky (excludes those without smartphones)
Security Risk	Theft, counterfeiting	Hacking, data breaches

In countries like Uganda, where electricity is unreliable and internet coverage is uneven, the financial and technical burden of running such a system continuously, for millions of users, could far outweigh the costs of printing cash. It's not just about saving money on paper; it's about being able to afford the digital alternative.

So, is digital currency truly cheaper for Uganda? Not yet. The transition requires more than just policy and code. Without reliable infrastructure, affordable connectivity, and robust cybersecurity, a CBDC could cost the country more financially and socially than the physical currency it seeks to replace.

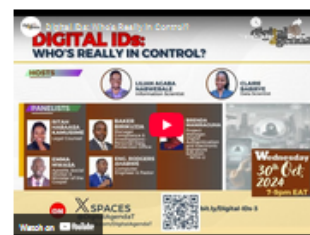
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### Online Town Hall of 26 March 2025



**THE YOUTH ARE SPEAKING: Their Take on Digital IDs**  
Young experts from diverse fields shared their perspectives on digital identification systems. It explored whether digital IDs promote inclusion or reinforce exclusion, especially for marginalized groups. The youth engaged as analysts, advocates, and technologists, offering critical insights on policy, infrastructure, privacy, and ethics.

### Online Town Hall of 30 October 2024



**Digital IDs: Who's Really in Control?**  
A discussion to investigate the governance of Digital ID systems, focusing on accountability, transparency and user rights.

### Ask an Expert Session of 28 February 2025



**The Future of Money and Identity: Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) and Digital ID - Session 2**  
Session 2, where a Trade Finance Expert answers public questions on Central Bank Digital Currency, what it means and what it means for the future if implemented.

### Online Town Hall of 21 August 2024



**Digital IDs: Can they live up to their promise?**  
**Digital IDs: Can They Live Up To Their Promise? – XSpace discussion**  
On 21st August 2024, a vibrant and lively discussion was held on XSpace under the title 'Digital IDs: Can They Live Up to Their Promise?' This session brought together experts from various fields to discuss the emerging issues surrounding digital identification systems, and their implications on society. Moderated by Claire Roberts. © Claire Roberts, Ben Roberts – Continuous reading

### Ask an Expert Session of 07 February 2025



**The Future of Money and Identity: Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) and Digital ID - Session 1**  
Session 1, where a Trade Finance Expert answers public questions on Central Bank Digital Currency, what it means and what it means for the future if implemented.

### Online Town Hall of 18 July 2024



**Digital IDs: Convenience or Control?**  
A discussion to weigh in on whether the push for Digital IDs is for Convenience or Control.

### Online Town Hall of 04 December 2024



**Digital IDs in the era of AI: Digital Dependency: How much is too much?**  
A discussion to explore how the implementation of Digital IDs in the era of rapid AI advancements could lead to potential overreach, highlighting the risks of excessive digital dependency and the dangers of governments relinquishing control over our identities to AI.

# The Day a Blackout Taught Europe the Value of Cash

By **Lilian Agaba Nabwebale**, Information Scientist

## POWER OUTAGE PARALYZES EUROPE: TRAINS, AIRPORTS, PHONES DEAD!



**Massive Power Outage Cripples Spain, Portugal, and Parts of Europe** | Times Now World

In Africa, power outages are hardly news. They happen so often that if electricity stays on too long, we wonder if something's wrong. In some villages, power is still a rumour, talked about fondly like an old legend. So, when we heard that Europe, the mighty land of efficiency and innovation, had a blackout in April 2025 that brought life to a standstill, we blinked twice. Not in disbelief, but in mild amusement.

Shops couldn't process payments, banks were unreachable, trains halted mid-journey, airports went dark, and hospitals struggled to keep machines running. Even boiling water or charging a phone became a challenge. The internet which is the lifeline of modern life, vanished in an instant. People couldn't buy fuel, food or medicine unless they had physical cash. For a

continent built on digital systems, the blackout didn't just switch off lights; it unplugged daily life itself.

Apparently, it wasn't just the lights that went out. Digital payments failed in many cities. Internet traffic dropped by a dramatic 83%, as if the continent collectively decided to log off. People couldn't buy fuel, food or medicine, unless they had this strange ancient object called cash. Seven people tragically died, some linked to not being able to access essential services or make payments. That's how deep the digital dependency had sunk. Without electricity and a strong network, the entire system folded like a cheap camping chair.

Debit and credit cards rendered useless. No Mobile money as phones were dead, towers struggling. Banking apps inaccessible without internet. ATMs became fancy boxes taking up



space. The only thing that stood tall, unbothered by the chaos, was cash. Good old wrinkled, dirty, hand-to-hand cash that our Central Bank Officials are blaming us for mishandling hence costing them a lot in printing more. The kind we keep under mattresses, between pages of the Bible, or tucked in bra straps. In Europe, when the power came back, cheers reportedly erupted louder than a New Year's celebration. Imagine surviving a war and being reunited with your microwave.

Now, over here, while sipping tea by candlelight or charging phones at Musa's kiosk using solar panels, we wonder aloud; can this digital currency thing even work for us? Or are we just signing up for a beautiful, fragile dream that breaks down the moment the generator fuel runs out?

Let's keep the fantasy alive. But maybe, just maybe, we shouldn't throw away our coins and paper money just yet.

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[www.thedigitalagenda.org/newsletter](http://www.thedigitalagenda.org/newsletter)



# Biblical View of Digital IDs and a Cashless System

By **Prophet Agnes Arom Waeno**, Pastor Great Commission Fountain Church and Bob Waeno Ministries



With all the advantages of Digital IDs and a Cashless System being swung at our faces, humans are being lured to embrace them with promises of better security and economic development. Access to online services like banking, online shops, and markets is being presented as the way forward. It all sounds good, easy, and for the betterment of humanity.

From times past, we have seen humanity doing what it takes within her means to come up with ideas that improve life and help people take charge of their own lives.

Take, for example, Genesis 11. Man deemed it right to build a tower that reaches up to heaven. Their mission was to find God. A brilliant idea, a great cause, a way of reaching the Creator. However, even though it

seemed noble and promising, it was not the way God intended to be found. He had another way. So, God had to step in and disrupt their well-thought-out plan to build a tower to heaven.

Another example is found in Exodus 32. While Moses spent 40 days seeking the face of God on the mountain, he came back only to be dismayed, astonished, and disappointed. The Israelites had negatively influenced Aaron the priest to make a golden calf for them to worship, saying Moses had delayed on the mountain with God. Imagine that. Moses was spending quality time with the Creator of the universe, receiving precepts and guidelines for the betterment of humanity. Meanwhile, the people were devising their own way of doing life, their own way of worship. Yet it led to destruction, and they didn't even realise it.

Just like the warning in Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death."

What if Digital IDs and a cashless system are among those great human-devised ideas that are not actually God's way of improving the economy or our security?

What if this whole idea is a wolf in sheep's clothing? Promising access to social services, better financial tools, and improved security, while subtly creating a system designed to control humanity?

There are things happening in the world today, and Scripture urges us to be discerning and wise in how we respond.

Think back to COVID-19. It was presented as a health crisis, but many later realised that it was also a carefully planned strategy to control governments, economies, and even human behaviour. Wise priests and prophets sounded the alarm. They warned people not to look at it as just a disease outbreak but as a dark and sinister plot with deeper motives.

This is why Revelation 13:16–18 is so important. It gives us a warning that helps us see the hidden dangers behind Digital IDs and Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs). Here is the clue. Right now, fingerprints, facial recognition and iris scan biometric data is being used. But

the plan is to go further into human DNA. The goal is to ultimately introduce an implant inside the body. Whether someone accepts it knowingly or unknowingly, the damage at that point is serious, and it becomes a point of no return.

Can you imagine waking up one day and realising that your senses, your emotions, your memory, your conscience, and even your IQ have been completely altered? That you are no longer the person you once were? That you can never go back? That is the subtle, hidden, dark plan that Revelation 13 is trying to warn us about. It is calling us to be wise, prepared, and ready to resist.

This tampering with human DNA is one part. The other is financial control. CBDCs are being promoted as the future of finance. But in reality, they are tools that will allow central banks full control over where and how you spend your money. Your Digital ID will be directly linked to the financial system. This means that whoever controls the system can determine whether or not you can buy or sell. Just as it is written in Revelation 13.

Imagine a situation where those in control decide to shut down your digital data. Your money disappears completely. That would be terrifying. This is why it is safer to have a financial system that still allows the use of physical cash. In that way, you keep some control over your own life and finances.



As He did before through prophets like Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John the Baptist, God continues to speak through His prophets today.

One such person is Prophet Elvis Mbonye. He has a proven record with over 240 fulfilled prophecies. In December 2022, he prophesied the fall of Silicon Valley, which is a region in the United States known as the world's centre for technology and innovation. It is home to many of the biggest tech companies like Apple, Google, and Facebook, and is seen as the heart of modern digital advancement. Prophet Elvis Mbonye described its fall as a sign, a precursor to the fall of Babylon. That fall represents the collapse of human or demonic systems that stand in opposition to God's will. Remarkably, just three months after this prophecy, Silicon Valley Bank, which for decades had been the key financier for tech start-ups and life sciences, collapsed.

Prophet Elvis Mbonye has also warned clearly about the dangers of Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs). He described them as a dark system that fits exactly with Revelation 13:17. That Scripture warns of a time when no one will be able to buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast—symbolising full allegiance to a godless system of control. In this context, CBDCs are not just a financial tool but a

mechanism that can be used to track, restrict, and ultimately control people's ability to transact unless they comply.

Quoting the prophet's own words:

***"The Lord—actually it's one of the prophecies He gave me during the beginning of this year—the Central Bank Digital Currency... You see that whole digital currency system, where the whole cashless world is birthed. Now, if He puts you there, He has rightly fitted everything. The whole environment rightly suits Revelation 13, where you can neither buy nor sell unless you pay allegiance to this system. So they can block you out. You can't just go, 'I have my money.' They block you out. They track you. But the world is groping on in darkness. The leaders of this world groping on in darkness, just embracing everything, chewing upon it like they're chewing burgers... It's a very deadly system."***

I share Prophet Elvis Mbonye's deep concern and disappointment in the world leaders who are blindly embracing CBDCs, unaware of the destruction hidden behind this seemingly advanced and modern system.

We would do well to pay attention to God's warnings in Scripture and to the prophetic voice in our generation.

We would do well to stay alert, to listen, and to discern. The prophetic voice helps us to recognise and resist the subtle movements of godless systems and ideas that are leading humanity toward destruction.

# Why Ransomware Attacks Still Work: Lessons from the Marks & Spencer Breach

By **Abaasa Peace Ella**, Cyber Security Analyst

Marks & Spencer (M&S) is one of the UK's most recognisable multinational retailers, listed on the London Stock Exchange (LSE) and is a constituent of the FTSE 100 Index. Founded in 1884, it is known for its quality food, clothing, and homeware. With over a thousand stores globally and a strong online presence, it is a household name trusted by generations.

But in April 2025, M&S became the latest victim of a ransomware attack. The incident disrupted online orders and key in-store services like contactless payments and "click and collect." Over the Easter weekend, many customers found themselves unable to complete purchases or access accounts. The company confirmed that personal data, such as names, addresses, and order histories, had been compromised. Thankfully, no payment information or passwords were stolen.

The attackers are a cybercriminal group called Scattered Spider, which has targeted several major organisations using similar tactics. What is worrying is that these techniques are not new. So why do they keep working? Despite all the



awareness campaigns and security software, the same problems keep resurfacing.

Let's break it down clearly and simply.

## What Is Ransomware?

Ransomware is a type of malicious software that locks or encrypts your files so you can't access them. The attacker then demands money, often in cryptocurrency, to unlock your data. It's like having your house locked from the inside, and the thief is holding the only key. You're forced to pay to get back in.

How does this software get into a system in the first place? Usually through everyday activities that don't seem suspicious at the time.

## How Does Ransomware Spread?

Here are the three main ways

ransomware gets into a system:

### 1. Phishing Emails

These are fake emails that look real. They may seem to come from your boss, the IT department, or your bank. They urge you to click a link or open an attachment. Once you do, the ransomware is installed without your knowledge.

People are often busy and distracted. An employee quickly scanning emails might see one marked “URGENT – Invoice Overdue” and click without thinking. That is often all it takes.

### 2. Malicious Websites

Some websites are set up specifically to infect your computer. Others are genuine websites that have been compromised. Simply visiting them can trigger a download.

Before clicking on a link, especially one shared on WhatsApp or social media, take a moment to check the URL. A tool like [URLVoid](#) can help you check if a website is safe.

And no, MTN is not giving away UGX 3 million just for tapping a suspicious link.

### 3. Exploit Kits

Exploit kits are tools that take advantage of weaknesses in outdated or vulnerable software. Sometimes, when IT staff ask for funding to buy licensed software, someone in finance may ask, “Isn’t there a cheaper option?” The cheaper version is often cracked

software downloaded from untrusted sources. These may contain hidden malware or backdoors.

The hard truth is this. Pirated software may look like a bargain, but it often ends up costing much more.

### Why Prevention Starts With You

Whether you’re a student, a business owner, or a public servant, the moment you connect to the internet, you are a potential target. This is not a battle you choose. It is a battle that chooses you.

Every online account you create—whether for email, banking, or social media—requires a password or PIN. How you store and protect this information really matters.

A **password manager** is one of the safest ways to keep your login details secure. Writing them in a notebook or sticking them to your computer is like putting a sign out that says “Please hack me.”

### Why Every Employee Needs Cybersecurity Training

It is not just the IT department that needs to know about cyber threats. Anyone using a device connected to the internet should understand the basics.

Even the best security system can be undone by one simple mistake. A well-meaning employee who clicks a suspicious link could open the door to a ransomware attack.

Cybersecurity training should be a priority for everyone in the



organisation. And staff should feel comfortable asking IT for help. A simple question could prevent a serious incident.

### What M&S Teaches Us

The M&S incident shows that even large, established companies are not immune to cyberattacks. Hackers are not just targeting banks or tech companies. They are going after anyone with data to steal or systems to disrupt.

### So what lessons can we take away?

- Keep all software updated.
- Avoid using cracked or pirated software.
- Train everyone in your organisation, not just the tech team.
- Use strong, secure passwords and store them properly.

Ransomware thrives when we make the same mistakes over and over. But with better habits, awareness, and support across the board, we can greatly reduce the risk.

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# A Critique of the Kenyan National AI Strategy

By **Quency Otieno**, Advocate, Inhouse Counsel at Parliamentary Commission of Kenya

Kenya's *National AI Strategy 2025–2030*, unveiled amid fanfare, has sparked a mix of hope and doubt. Touted as a transformative roadmap to position Kenya as Africa's AI leader, the strategy ambitiously targets socioeconomic advancement through artificial intelligence in agriculture, healthcare, and public services. Flagship initiatives, such as

AI-powered crop disease detection tools and maternal health chatbots in local languages, underscore its potential to address systemic challenges. Built on three pillars infrastructure, governance, and talent development the plan emphasizes inclusivity, ethical innovation, and public-private collaboration. Notably, it envisions geothermal-powered data centers, leveraging Kenya's renewable energy prowess, and prioritizes local startups through data residency rules to curb reliance on foreign tech giants. Yet, beneath this visionary surface lie critical gaps in regulation, infrastructure, and ethics, casting shadows over its feasibility when compared to robust frameworks in the EU, U.S., and regional peers like South Africa.



The strategy's regulatory shortcomings are stark. While it nods to ethical impact assessments and bias mitigation, it lacks the enforceable rigor of the EU's AI Act, which mandates risk-based categorizations and real-time monitoring for high-risk applications. Kenya's reliance on the *Data Protection Act (2019)* leaves glaring voids in algorithmic transparency, AI-generated content disputes, and liability for errors issues already addressed in the EU and China. This regulatory ambiguity risks exploitation by global tech firms mining Kenyan data without reciprocating local benefits. Similarly, infrastructure ambitions, though bold, clash with reality. Projects like semiconductor manufacturing and advanced data centers stumble over funding and

expertise deficits. Unlike the U.S. and EU, which deploy public-private alliances like the *CHIPS Act*, Kenya's strategy offers no clear funding pathways. Even its geothermal advantage is undercut by an unreliable grid, exemplified by a crippling 14-hour blackout in April 2025, which the strategy sidesteps. Meanwhile, Morocco and South Africa surge ahead with solar partnerships and NVIDIA collaborations, exposing Kenya's precarious position.

Talent development, another pillar, reveals a mismatch between vision and execution. Despite a youthful, tech-savvy population (median age 19) and plans to integrate AI into education, specialized programs remain underfunded and misaligned with industry demands. Brain drain exacerbates the issue: 43% of Kenyan AI engineers work remotely for U.S. firms, lured by higher pay and advanced research. Proposed tax incentives for local hiring linger in draft form, failing to stem the talent exodus. By contrast, Rwanda's Smart Africa Initiative partners with global firms to offer certifications and internships, showcasing actionable models Kenya might emulate.

Ethical commitments, though rhetorically strong, lack teeth. Unlike Canada's binding *AIDA* or Brazil's draft AI laws requiring third-party audits, Kenya delegates oversight to

a nebulous *National AI Advisory Council*. Sector-specific guidelines for high-stakes fields like healthcare remain absent, risking biases akin to South Africa's flawed AI welfare systems. This contrasts with South Korea's transparency mandates and Singapore's granular fintech guidelines, highlighting Kenya's regulatory inertia.

Globally, Kenya's strategy mirrors nascent efforts in Nigeria and Tunisia but lags behind India's \$1 billion innovation fund or Morocco's \$200 million AI investments. The EU and China exemplify how binding laws can balance innovation with accountability a balance Kenya has yet to achieve. To bridge this ambition-reality gap, urgent steps are needed: enacting AI-specific laws inspired by the EU's risk-based approach, forging partnerships with tech giants like Microsoft, and overhauling education with industry-aligned curricula and retention incentives.

In conclusion, Kenya's strategy is a bold stride toward tech sovereignty, rare in a region often overlooked. Yet without swift action, it risks joining a graveyard of unrealized policies. As global AI hubs accelerate, Kenya faces a pivotal choice: evolve into Africa's beacon of innovation or succumb to unmet potential. The world watches, waiting to see if Kenya can transform its blueprint into reality.



# The AI Rapid Rise and What It Means

By Digital Agenda Forum

## THE EVOLUTION

From workplace bots to AI-generated videos, artificial intelligence has gone from tech buzzword to global disruptor in just three years. In a sweeping analysis, Granville Tech CEO Nayebare Dominique charts how AI has moved beyond the lab and into our daily lives, reshaping industries, jobs, and geopolitics.



## THE WORKPLACE SHIFT

Inside companies, AI is slashing busywork and boosting productivity. But it's also displacing freelancers and automating roles once thought safe. At the same time, new jobs are emerging, from AI ethicists to prompt engineers, demanding a major workforce reskilling push.

In the following article, tech entrepreneur Nayebare Dominique takes a deep dive into the evolution of AI from 2022 to today, unpacking its impact on corporate productivity, and offering a forward-looking view of what's coming next.

## THE TIMELINES



The timeline? Explosive adoption kicked off in 2022 with tools like ChatGPT. By 2023, "generative AI" was everywhere, writing, designing, even coding. Now in 2025, AI systems can handle complex tasks on their own, raising both excitement and alarms.

## THE REGULATORY RUSH

Governments are racing to catch up. Europe is leading with sweeping regulation, while tech giants and policymakers debate how to keep powerful AI systems safe and fair.

## SHAPING THE FUTURE

AI is here already, but how we shape it now will decide whether it empowers or overwhelms us.

# The Evolving Landscape of Artificial Intelligence: Trends, Productivity, Corporate Impact, and Future Horizons

By **Nayebare Dominique**, Founder and CEO, Granville Tech ([www.granvilletech.com](http://www.granvilletech.com))

## Introduction

The relentless acceleration of artificial intelligence (AI) development has transitioned from a futuristic concept to a pervasive force reshaping industries, economies, and the very fabric of daily life. While AI has been a field of study for decades, the period since 2022 marks a particularly transformative era, characterized by breakthroughs in generative capabilities and a rapid expansion of AI applications into the mainstream. The launch and widespread adoption of models like ChatGPT served as a catalyst, sparking global fascination and intense investment, pushing AI firmly into the public consciousness and corporate strategy discussions. Understanding this dynamic landscape requires examining not only the technological advancements but also their tangible effects on productivity, the structure of work, and the trajectory of future innovation. This article delves into the significant AI trends observed from 2022 through 2025, explores the burgeoning ecosystem of AI tools designed to enhance corporate productivity, analyzes the profound and often complex impact AI is having on the workplace, and synthesizes expert predictions for the coming years.

By providing this comprehensive analysis, we aim to illuminate the path AI is carving and equip readers with the insights needed to navigate its evolving influence.

## The Shifting Tides: AI Trends from 2022 to 2025

The period between 2022 and 2025 has witnessed an unprecedented acceleration in artificial intelligence development and adoption, moving AI from specialized labs into the global spotlight. This era began with foundational shifts and culminated in the widespread integration and societal grappling that defines the current landscape.

In **2022**, the groundwork for the generative AI revolution was firmly laid. While discussions around AI ethics and the need for responsible AI frameworks gained traction, the technological focus centered on the increasing capabilities of Large Language Models (LLMs). Concurrently, early generative models, particularly in image creation, began showcasing their potential, capturing public imagination and hinting at the creative power AI could unlock. Gartner's 2022 Hype Cycle reflected this, highlighting emerging AI technologies while emphasizing the nascent stage of many practical applications and the importance of

governance. Forbes and other analysts pointed towards AI augmenting human workers and improving decision-making as key trends, alongside the growing importance of AI in cybersecurity and process automation.

The year **2023** marked an inflection point, largely driven by the phenomenal public adoption of OpenAI's ChatGPT, released in late 2022. This triggered a global "Generative AI explosion." Suddenly, advanced AI capabilities were accessible to millions, leading to widespread experimentation and a surge in investment. Development rapidly expanded beyond text to include multimodal AI, capable of understanding and generating content across different formats like images and audio. This rapid advancement, however, intensified concerns about AI safety, alignment with human values, and the potential for misuse, prompting increased research and public discourse on these critical issues. Enterprises began cautiously exploring GenAI integration, moving from curiosity to pilot projects, as noted by outlets like the MIT Technology Review which anticipated broader AI integration and the challenges therein.

By **2024**, the initial frenzy began to mature into a more focused effort on practical application and enterprise integration. While consumer-facing tools continued to

evolve, businesses sought tangible value, leading to the development of more specialized AI models tailored for specific industry needs. This period also saw a rise in awareness and concern regarding AI security vulnerabilities, such as prompt injection attacks and the potential for data poisoning, making AI security a critical consideration. Regulatory discussions intensified globally, with governments recognizing the need to establish guardrails for powerful AI systems. Trend Micro's 2024 review highlighted these security challenges alongside the continued push for GenAI in areas like software development and customer service, emphasizing the dual nature of AI as both a productivity booster and a potential risk vector.

Now, in **2025**, several key trends define the AI landscape. The shift towards "agentic" AI systems, capable of autonomous task completion, is accelerating, moving beyond simple chatbots to virtual assistants that can interact with digital environments to perform complex workflows, as predicted by TIME and Microsoft. Multimodal AI is becoming standard, with models seamlessly processing and generating text, images, audio, and video. This enables richer interactions and broader applications, including the mainstreaming of AI video generation tools like Sora and Veo 2. There is an intense focus on demonstrating real-world value and return on investment (ROI) for



enterprise AI deployments. Simultaneously, AI governance frameworks are solidifying, exemplified by the impending enforcement of the EU AI Act, setting precedents for global regulation. The strategic importance of AI is also increasingly viewed through a national security lens, influencing international relations and technology access policies. Across this period, the overarching themes remain the rapid democratization of AI tools, the transformative power of generative capabilities, the strategic imperative for enterprise adoption, and the persistent, complex challenges surrounding safety, ethics, and governance.

### **Amplifying Efficiency: AI Tools Enhancing Corporate Productivity**

Beyond the high-level trends, the practical impact of AI is most acutely felt through the proliferation of tools designed to augment human capabilities and automate tasks within the corporate environment. These tools are no longer niche novelties but are increasingly integrated into daily workflows, promising significant gains in efficiency and freeing human capital for more strategic endeavors. The core value proposition lies in AI's ability to handle repetitive, time-consuming tasks, analyze vast datasets for insights, and assist in creative and communication processes, thereby amplifying

overall productivity.

A diverse ecosystem of AI-powered productivity tools has emerged, targeting various aspects of corporate work:

- **Communication and Collaboration:**

The friction often associated with meetings and correspondence is being smoothed over by AI. Tools like Otter.ai, Fireflies.ai, and integrated solutions within platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams offer real-time transcription, automated summaries, and action item identification, saving hours previously spent on note-taking and follow-up. AI is also enhancing email communication, with assistants capable of drafting replies, summarizing long threads, and managing inboxes. Furthermore, advanced AI translation tools are breaking down language barriers in global teams, facilitating smoother collaboration.

- **Content Creation:** Generative AI has revolutionized content creation across multiple domains. AI writing assistants such as Jasper, Copy.ai, and Writesonic help generate marketing copy, blog posts, reports, and other written materials rapidly. Image generation tools like Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, and DALL-E allow users to create custom visuals from text prompts, bypassing the need for extensive graphic design resources in many cases. Emerging AI video generation tools, including OpenAI's Sora and Google's Veo 2, promise to streamline video production for marketing, training, and internal communications

Even presentation creation is being automated with tools that can generate slides based on input text or data.

- **Data Analysis and Insights:**

Businesses are leveraging AI to extract meaningful insights from complex datasets far more efficiently than traditional methods allow. AI-powered analytics platforms can identify trends, anomalies, and correlations, while predictive modeling tools assist in forecasting and strategic planning. These capabilities empower data-driven decision-making across departments, from finance to marketing.

- **Software Development:** The software development lifecycle is being significantly accelerated by AI. Code generation tools like GitHub Copilot assist developers by suggesting code snippets or entire functions, reducing development time and potential errors. AI can also aid in debugging, code review, and testing processes, improving overall code quality and developer productivity.

- **Workflow Automation:** The rise of AI agents and sophisticated automation platforms (like Zapier, which heavily integrates AI features) enables the connection of disparate applications and the automation of complex, multi-step workflows without extensive coding. These tools can monitor triggers, process information, and execute actions across various software, automating

• routine business processes.

- **Customer Service:** AI chatbots and virtual assistants are handling an increasing volume of customer inquiries, providing instant responses 24/7 and freeing up human agents for more complex issues. AI-driven sentiment analysis tools also help businesses understand customer feedback at scale, identifying areas for improvement in products or services.

The collective impact of these tools is transformative. By automating routine tasks, AI allows employees to redirect their focus towards activities requiring higher-level cognitive skills, such as strategic thinking, complex problem-solving, creativity, and interpersonal interaction. Workflows become more streamlined, reducing bottlenecks and accelerating project timelines. Access to AI-driven insights enhances decision-making quality and speed. While the integration requires adaptation and learning, the potential for significant productivity enhancement across the corporate landscape is undeniable, marking a fundamental shift in how work gets done.

### **Reshaping the Workplace: AI's Impact on Corporate Environments**

The integration of artificial intelligence into the corporate world extends far beyond mere productivity enhancement; it is fundamentally reshaping the nature of work, the structure of organizations, and the skills required to thrive. While AI offers unprecedented opportunities for

innovation and efficiency, its impact is multifaceted, presenting both significant challenges and transformative potential for the workforce.

One of the most discussed aspects is the interplay between **job displacement and creation**.

Research, such as the study highlighted by Harvard Business Review focusing on online freelance platforms, provides concrete evidence of AI-driven displacement in specific, automation-prone roles. Following the introduction of ChatGPT, demand for writing freelancers saw a steep decline (over 30%), with significant impacts also observed in software development (over 20%) and engineering (over 10%). Similarly, image-generating AI tools led to a notable decrease (around 17%) in demand for graphic design and 3D modeling freelancers. This data suggests that tasks involving pattern recognition, content generation, and certain types of coding are susceptible to automation by current AI capabilities. However, this displacement is counterbalanced by the emergence of entirely new roles centered around AI itself. Positions like prompt engineers, AI trainers, AI ethicists, AI auditors, and AI integration specialists are becoming increasingly common as organizations seek expertise to develop, manage, deploy, and govern these powerful technologies.

Beyond the creation or elimination of jobs, AI is profoundly **changing existing job roles and the skills** required within them. Routine, repetitive tasks are increasingly being automated, shifting the focus of human workers towards activities that leverage uniquely human capabilities. Critical thinking, complex problem-solving, creativity, emotional intelligence, strategic decision-making, and effective communication are becoming more valuable than ever. Furthermore, a baseline level of AI literacy – understanding how AI tools work, how to interact with them effectively, and how to interpret their outputs – is becoming a prerequisite in many fields. The HBR research indicated that even as demand for certain freelance roles decreased, the complexity of the remaining jobs increased (by over 2%), and employers were willing to pay more (over 5% increase), suggesting a shift towards higher-skilled tasks involving AI collaboration. This necessitates a significant focus on **upskilling and reskilling** the existing workforce. As highlighted in the McKinsey report on “Superagency,” organizations that invest in training programs to equip employees with the skills to work alongside AI – not just use the tools, but understand their capabilities and limitations – are better positioned to unlock AI’s full potential. This involves fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptability.

The impact on **productivity and**



**performance** is significant, but nuanced. AI can dramatically boost efficiency by automating tasks and augmenting worker capabilities, leading to what McKinsey terms “superagency” – where humans, empowered by AI, can achieve significantly more. However, realizing these gains requires more than just deploying technology; it demands thoughtful integration into workflows and effective human-AI collaboration. Managers need to develop new competencies, particularly in AI task delegation – strategically deciding which tasks are best suited for AI and which require human oversight or intervention, as noted in the HBR analysis. Simply providing access to AI tools is often insufficient; targeted training and support are crucial for employees to leverage them effectively.

Finally, AI adoption necessitates significant **organizational changes**. Proactive and transparent communication about AI implementation plans is essential to manage employee concerns and foster a culture of adaptability. Leadership must champion the integration of AI, aligning it with strategic goals and ensuring ethical considerations are paramount. Addressing potential biases in AI algorithms and ensuring equitable access and outcomes are critical governance challenges. Companies need robust frameworks for

responsible AI deployment, considering fairness, transparency, accountability, and privacy. The journey involves not just technological implementation but a holistic transformation encompassing strategy, culture, talent development, and ethical governance.

### **Gazing into the Crystal Ball: Future Predictions for AI**

As artificial intelligence continues its rapid evolution, peering into the future reveals a landscape brimming with both transformative potential and complex challenges. While precise long-term forecasting remains inherently difficult, current trajectories and expert insights offer valuable glimpses into the directions AI development and its societal integration might take in the coming years.

One of the most significant near-term shifts anticipated for 2025 and beyond is the rise of **agentic AI systems**. As predicted by futurists like Ray Kurzweil and highlighted in the TIME analysis, AI is moving beyond reactive chatbots and image generators towards proactive agents capable of autonomously understanding goals, planning steps, and executing complex tasks within digital environments. Early examples, like Anthropic enabling its model Claude to use computer interfaces, are just the beginning. These agents could function as virtual co-workers, handling tasks like scheduling, research, and even software

development, leading to further shifts in workflow automation and human-AI collaboration. However, this increased autonomy also raises concerns about potential errors and the consequences if agents mishandle sensitive information or tasks.

Technological advancement is expected to continue unabated, with models becoming progressively **smarter, faster, cheaper to run, and more deeply multimodal**. The integration of text, image, audio, and video processing will become standard, enabling more natural and sophisticated interactions. AI video generation, currently emerging with models like Sora and Veo 2, is predicted to become mainstream and more accessible as costs decrease. Furthermore, video is anticipated to become a crucial input for AI, potentially enabling real-time analysis and assistance via devices like smart glasses.

On the geopolitical stage, AI is increasingly being framed as a matter of **national security**. Governments worldwide recognize the strategic importance of AI leadership, leading to heightened competition, technology controls (like US restrictions on chip exports to China), and closer ties between AI developers and national intelligence agencies. While competition is expected to continue, experts like the UN Secretary-General's envoy on

technology emphasize the critical need to maintain channels for international collaboration, particularly between major players like the US and China, to manage risks associated with powerful AI systems.

In response to these rapid advancements, **governance and regulation** efforts are intensifying globally. The European Union's AI Act, particularly its Code of Practice targeting frontier models set for enforcement in 2025, represents a landmark attempt to establish comprehensive AI regulations. While the US federal landscape appears slower, state-level actions and the global influence of regulations like the EU AI Act will likely shape how companies develop and deploy AI responsibly worldwide. Establishing effective, globally coherent governance remains a critical challenge.

The immense investment poured into AI development is also facing increased scrutiny. Experts predict a **"year of reckoning"** where AI companies and applications will face growing pressure to demonstrate tangible return on investment and clear consumer or business value. While areas like healthcare show promising applications (e.g., diagnostics, drug discovery), the push for profitability might lead to the premature or flawed deployment of AI systems, particularly in regions with less regulatory oversight, raising ethical concerns about exploitation or

harm.

Looking further ahead, predictions become more speculative but point towards profound societal shifts. Some foresee AI enabling ambitious goals like **carbon-neutral enterprises** by optimizing energy consumption and resource management. Others envision the rise of **augmented human intelligence**, where AI seamlessly integrates with human cognition, potentially becoming mainstream by 2040. The concept of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) or the **Singularity** – a hypothetical point where AI surpasses human intelligence, leading to unpredictable changes – remains a topic of debate and concern among experts like Geoffrey Hinton, often dubbed a “godfather of AI,” who has issued warnings about the potential risks.

Navigating this future requires confronting persistent **ethical challenges**. Ensuring fairness, mitigating bias in algorithms, maintaining transparency in AI decision-making, safeguarding privacy, and managing the broader societal impacts of automation and intelligence augmentation will remain critical areas of focus for developers, policymakers, and society as a whole.

## Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is no longer a distant technological horizon; it is a

present-day force actively reshaping our world at an accelerating pace. The journey from 2022 to 2025 alone demonstrates a remarkable evolution, from the foundational breakthroughs in large language models and generative capabilities to the rise of sophisticated multimodal systems and autonomous agents poised to further integrate into our professional and personal lives. AI has transitioned from a tool for specialists to a widely accessible platform driving innovation, enhancing productivity, and prompting fundamental questions about the future of work and society.

The proliferation of AI tools offers tangible benefits, streamlining workflows, automating mundane tasks, and unlocking new levels of efficiency and creativity across corporate functions. Simultaneously, AI integration is profoundly impacting the labor market, displacing certain roles while creating demand for new skills centered on human-AI collaboration, ethical oversight, and strategic implementation. This necessitates a proactive approach from individuals and organizations alike, emphasizing continuous learning, adaptability, and investment in reskilling initiatives to navigate the changing landscape successfully.

Looking ahead, the trajectory points towards increasingly powerful and autonomous AI systems, further blurring the lines between human and machine capabilities. While the potential for progress in areas from



scientific discovery to personalized healthcare is immense, it is accompanied by significant challenges related to governance, national security, economic disruption, and ethical considerations. The pressure to demonstrate value from AI investments will intensify, demanding thoughtful deployment strategies that prioritize not just efficiency but also fairness, transparency, and human well-being.

Navigating the AI future requires a

balanced perspective, embracing the opportunities while proactively addressing the risks. Responsible development, ethical deployment frameworks, robust governance structures, and a steadfast commitment to human-centric values are paramount. As AI continues its relentless advance, the choices made today by developers, policymakers, businesses, and individuals will collectively shape whether this transformative technology ultimately serves to augment human potential and foster a more prosperous and equitable world.

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