Artificial Intelligence and Its Effect on RLECS

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Is it real or is it AI?



A



B

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Is it real or is it AI?

- Image A is the real photo of a cat from Office 365
- Image B was created in Copilot with the following prompt:
  - "Create a photorealistic close-up portrait of a ginger tabby cat lounging indoors on a neutral blanket, wearing stylish round sunglasses. Soft window light from the left, shallow depth of field, natural fur detail, slight lens softness, realistic reflections in the lenses. Shot on a 50mm lens, f/1.8, ISO 400. No text, no watermark."

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Is it real or is it AI?

- Image B is the real photo of a coffee cup from Office 365
- A was created in Copilot with the following prompt:
  - "Create an ultra-realistic overhead photo of a cappuccino in a white ceramic cup on a saucer, with detailed latte art (rosetta pattern). Café table surface with subtle scratches, a teaspoon nearby, warm ambient lighting, gentle steam, natural shadows. Shot on a 35mm lens, f/2.2, ISO 320. No text, no logo, no watermark."

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Is it real or is it AI?

- Image B is the real photo of a duck from Office 365
- A was created in Copilot with the following prompt:
  - "Create a photorealistic wildlife photo of a single fluffy yellow duckling floating on still water, tiny ripples around it, soft morning light, natural reflections, slight motion blur in the water only, crisp focus on the duckling's face. Shot on a 200mm lens, f/4, ISO 500. No text, no watermark."

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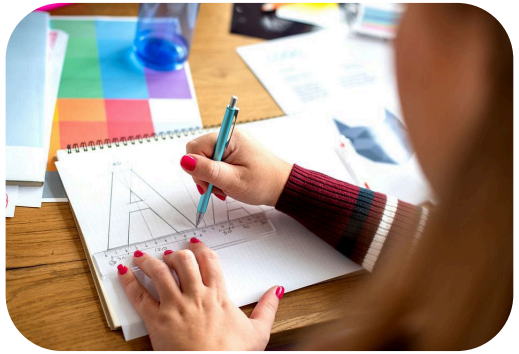
Is it real or is it AI?

- Image A is the real photo of a work desk from Office 365
- B was created in Copilot with the following prompt:
  - "Create a photorealistic wide desk shot of a perfectly clean, minimalist work-from-home setup: modern laptop centered, wireless keyboard and mouse aligned, a single neat notebook with a pen, one tasteful plant, a perfect coffee cup with gentle steam, soft morning window light, clean cable management, calm neutral tones, subtle natural shadows, high-end interior design feel, no clutter anywhere. Shot on a 35mm lens, f/2.8, ISO 250. No text, no logo, no watermark."

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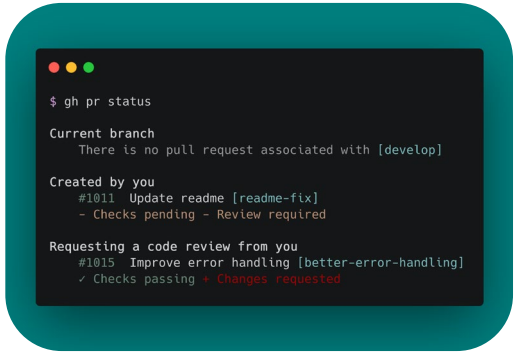
- For our example generated images



No graphic design skills required



No special software needed



Simple prompts generate usable results

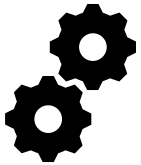


Anyone can start using AI

Source: Microsoft Office 365

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Why AI matters for your organization



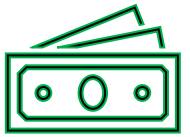
Increased productivity **AI handles repetitive and minor tasks**	**Accessibility** **AI lowers the training barrier for complex tasks**
Decision support **Turn large data into actionable insight**	**Customer experience** **Faster, consistent responses to customer inquiries**
Network and security **Smarter monitoring and protection**	**Low entry barrier** **Low-cost AI tools available**











Source: Microsoft Office 365

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Agenda

- Understanding artificial intelligence
- Where AI is used today
- What AI means for rural telecom
- Risks, limitations and considerations
- Key takeaways



Source: Dall-E

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What is artificial intelligence?

- Artificial intelligence allows computers to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence
- Unlike traditional software, AI applications are not static
- They continually learn from new and large datasets
  - Learn patterns and self-improve
  - Produce better outcomes

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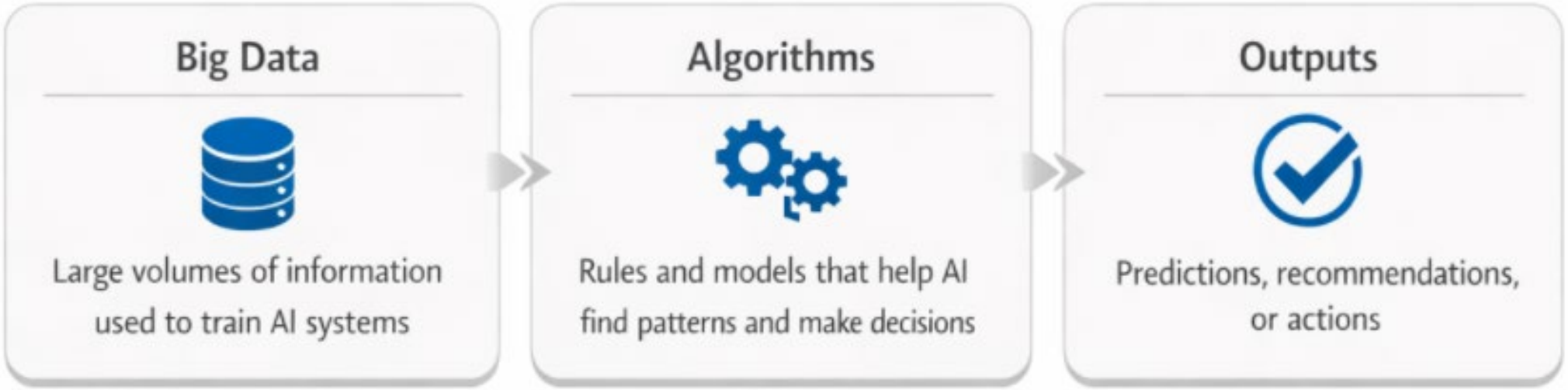
What is artificial intelligence?
Stages of AI development

	Weak AI (a.k.a. artificial narrow intelligence)	**Strong AI** (a.k.a. artificial general intelligence)	**Super AI** (a.k.a. artificial super intelligence)
AI stages	Executes specific focused tasks without the ability to self-expand functionality	Performs broad tasks, reasons and self improves capabilities	AI that can manifest cognitive skills and develop thinking skills of its own
Timing	Today	2030-2060?	Sometime after strong AI
Implications	Outperforms humans in specific repetitive functions	Competes with humans across all endeavors. Will understand any intellectual task, think abstractly and learn from its experiences	Outperforms humans across all endeavors. IQs could range anywhere from hundreds of thousands to millions

Source: Microsoft Office 365

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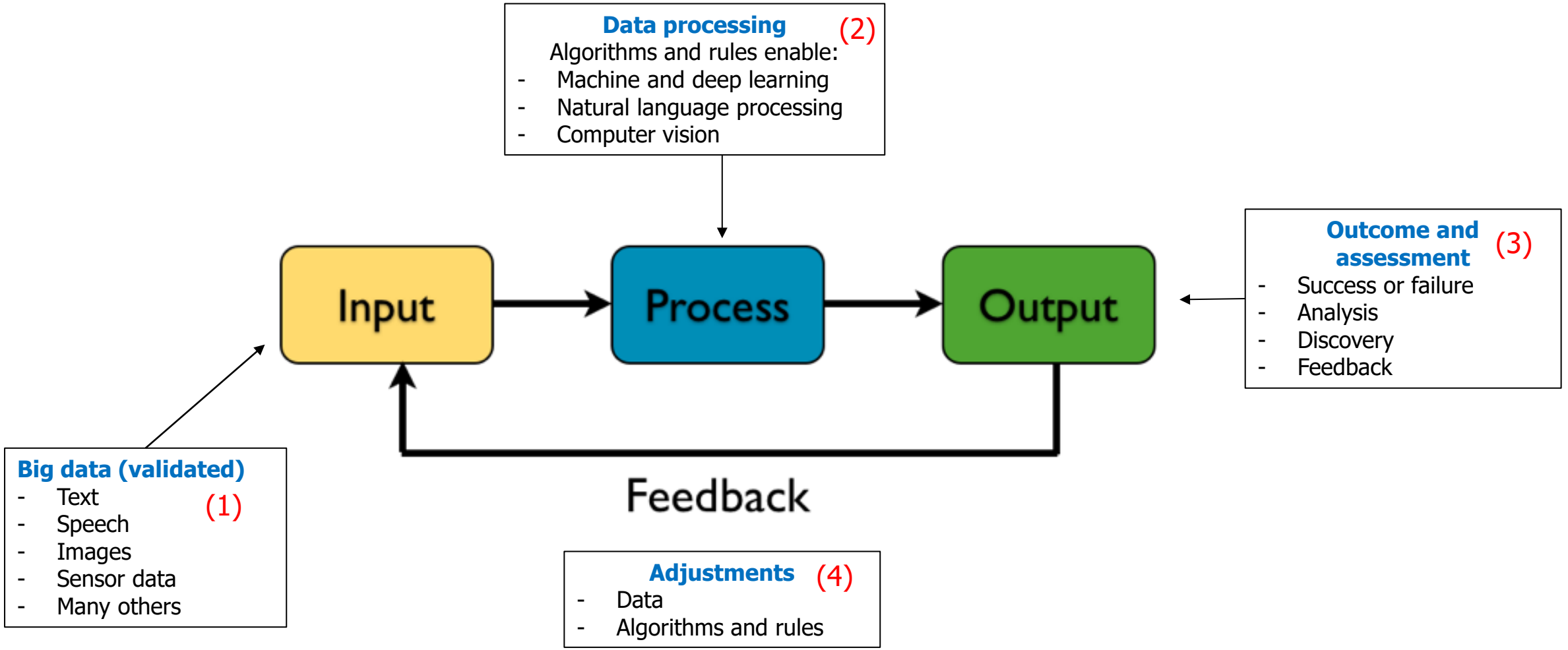
What is artificial intelligence?
The AI process



Source: Microsoft Office CoPilot

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What is artificial intelligence?
The AI process



Graphic: http://systemsmrthomas.weebly.com/inputoutput.html

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What is artificial intelligence?
The AI process

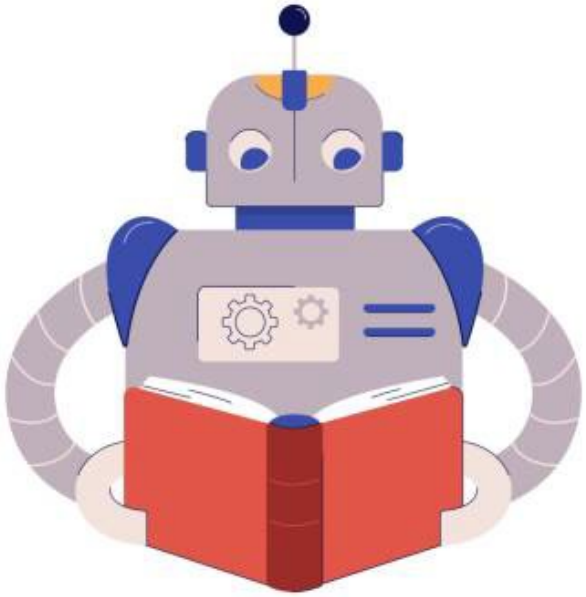
- Generative AI creates content
  - Generates text, images, code and summaries
  - Prompt-driven
- Example:
  - Using ChatGPT or Copilot to draft an email

- Agentic AI performs actions
  - Goal driven and autonomous
  - Makes decisions in real time without prompting
  - A system made of AI agents
    - Agents are specialized AI tools built to handle specific processes
- Example:
  - A bank AI detecting and blocking a fraudulent transaction

****Often AI systems are a hybrid of generative and agentic****

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How does an AI process?
Machine learning



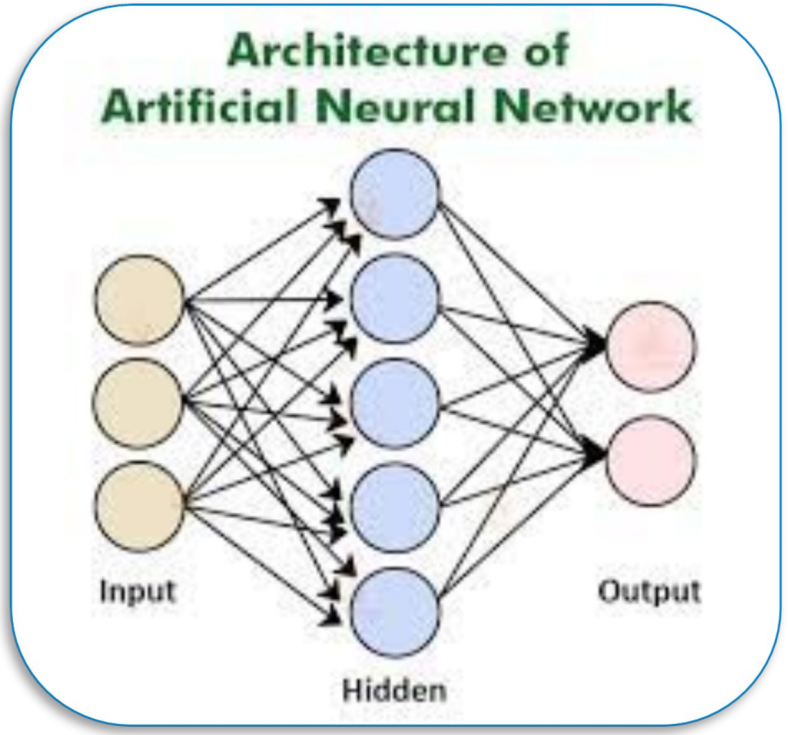
Source: iStock

- Machine learning allows AIs to learn from data without explicit programming
  - Improves through experience and feedback
  - Uses past data to make predictions or decisions
  - Applies previous learning to new situations

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How does an AI process?
Deep learning

- Deep learning is a type of machine learning used for very large or complex data
  - Uses artificial neural networks to understand complex patterns
    - Learns features automatically rather than being told what to look for
- Deep learning is key to powering modern AI applications

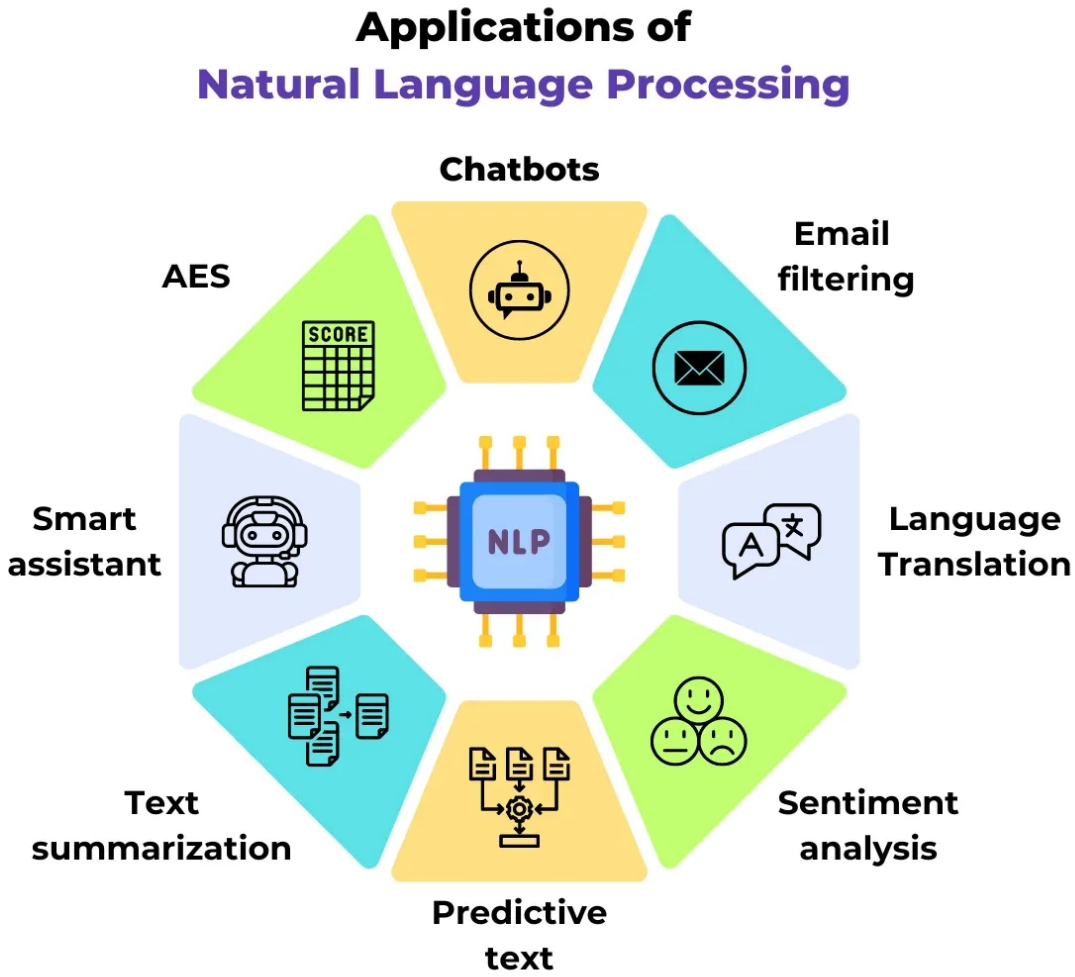


Source: TechVidvan

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How does an AI process?
Natural language processing

- Natural language processing is the ability of a computer system to understand and interpret human language
  - Interprets text and speech for meaning and intent
  - Generates human like responses
  - Supports a wide range of language tasks



Source:botpenguin.com

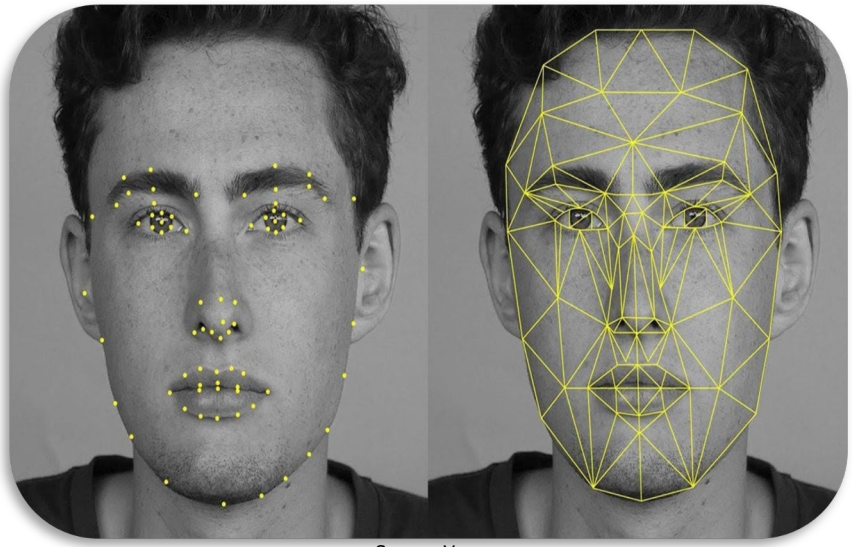
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How does an AI process?
Computer vision

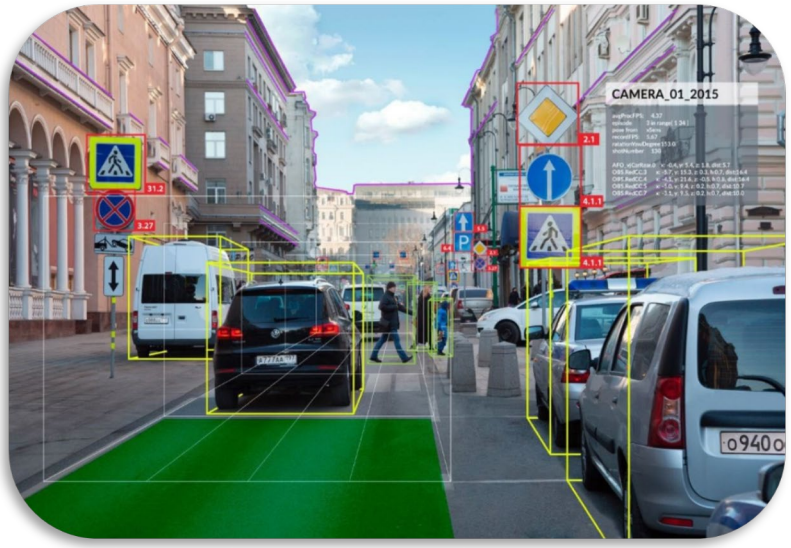
- Computer vision enables AI to interpret images and video
  - In still images and in real time
  - Translates pixels into meaningful information
  - Includes tasks like image recognition, object detection and facial recognition



Source: Picture This



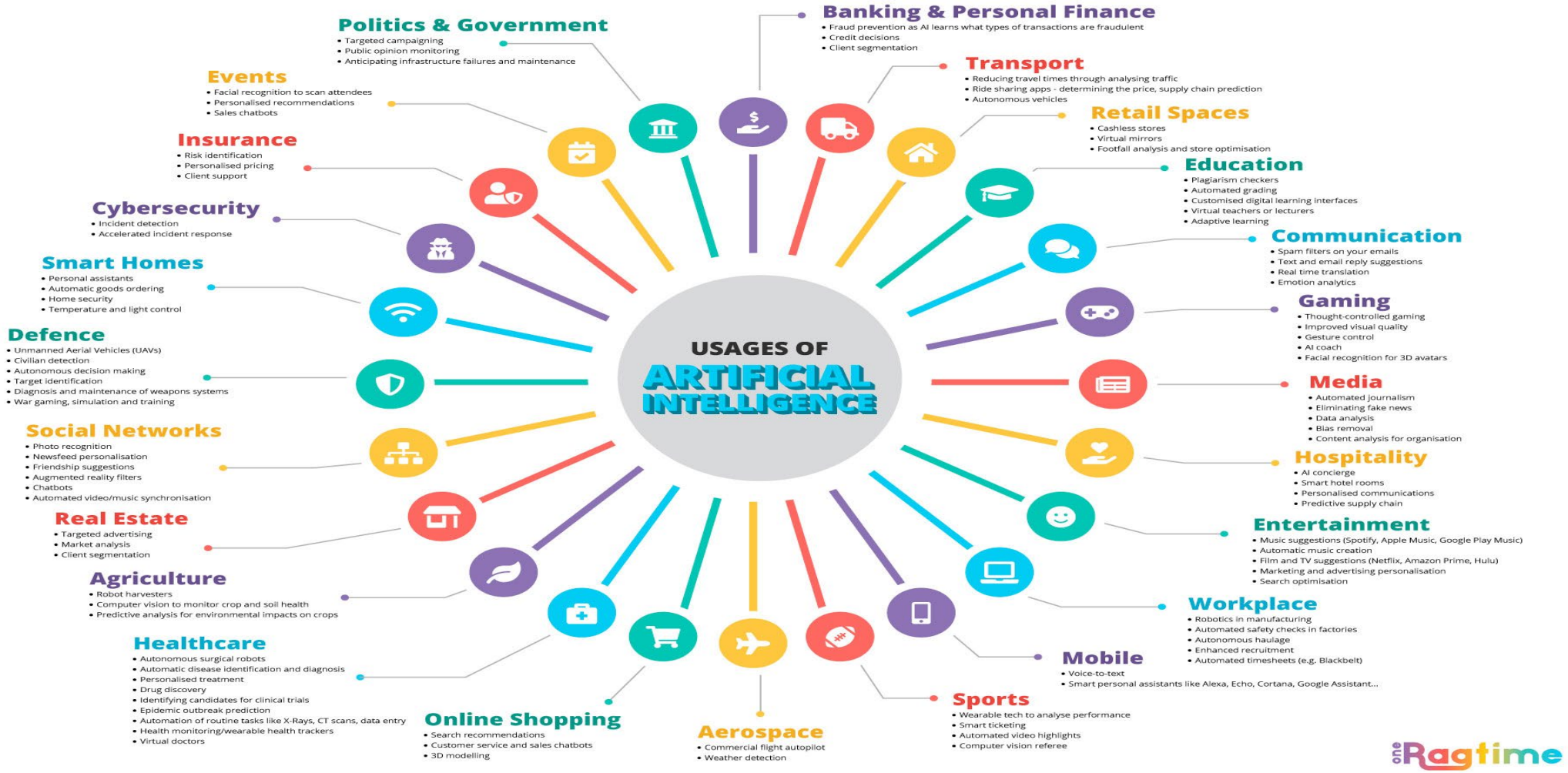
Source: Vox



Source: Welker Media

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Common AI applications
AI is already everywhere



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Common AI applications



Source: IndepentUK

- Robotics – AI systems that can interact with the physical world
  - Amazon is a leader in robotics
  - Over 1 million in use in their operations
  - Reduce need for manpower
  - Dark factories and warehouses
  - Autonomous deliveries



Source: Carbonrobotics

- Agriculture – AI is being used to increase farm and ranch output
  - Improves crop yields and resource efficiency
  - Used in soil analysis, precision planting and automated harvesting



Source: Theverge

- Healthcare – AI is used in diagnosis, treatment, operations and patient engagement
  - Google's Deep Mind can detect and diagnose over 50 sight threatening eye conditions
  - IBM's Watson Health can evaluate large amounts of patient records to identify those at high risk for developing chronic conditions

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Common AI applications

- **Facial and image recognition**
  - Identifies or verifies information using image or video
  - Used in device security and identity verification
  - Often raises privacy concerns (Flock cameras)



Source: WDRB



Source: WDRB



Source: SeniorTechClub

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Common AI applications



Source: Uber

- Autonomous vehicles
  - Use AI to perceive the environment and assist with driving decisions
    - Described on a 0 to 5 scale
  - Currently, primarily deployed as driver assistance systems
  - Fully autonomous vehicles have limited operations
    - Operating in major cities
    - Not without some controversy

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Common AI applications

- Astronomy
  - AI analyzes massive data sets to identify patterns and anomalies
  - Used in space exploration
    - NASA's rovers use AI to analyze surroundings on other planets
    - Observatory data processed using AI tools



Source: AstronomyEdinburgh

- Ride sharing
  - Platforms like Uber and Lyft utilize AI
  - Uber has proprietary AI named Michelangelo
    - Estimates ride times, anticipated traffic, trip costs and pickup locations
    - Expanded into food and goods delivery and plans for air transport

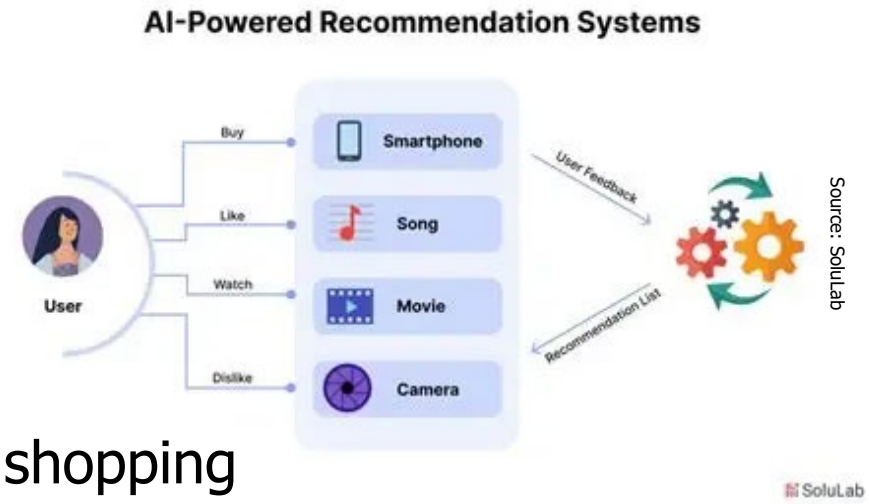


Source: Forbes

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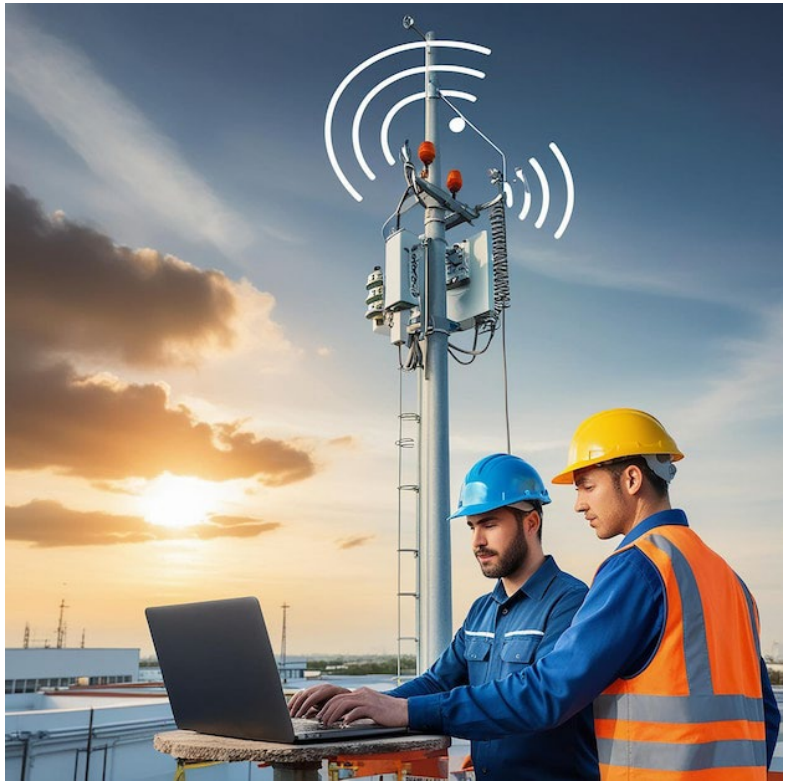
Common AI applications

- Social media
  - AI technologies are used to personalize content and advertisements
  - AI tools assist users with content creation and editing
  - Also used to detect and block spam, bots and harmful content
- Recommendation systems
  - Applies AI to user data to suggest content, products and services
  - Based on user behavior
  - Used in streaming services, social media and online shopping



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Potential effect of AI on RLECs



Source: Magnific

- AI is emerging as a general-purpose technology
  - Like electricity or the internet
- RLECs are benefitting by applying AI to:
  - Marketing and retention
  - Customer service
  - Network management
  - Network security
  - Everyday internal tasks and business operations

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Potential effect of AI on RLECs
Make it work for you

- AI adoption is not one size fits all
  - Your business needs, size and goals should drive the approach
    - You do not need to buy an expensive all-in-one platform
- A modular approach works well in rural telecom
  - Add AI capabilities where they provide clear value
    - Build up over time, rather than committing all at once
- The goal is to focus on outcomes
  - Evaluate what is working and what does not work
  - Keep tools that deliver value and remove those that do not

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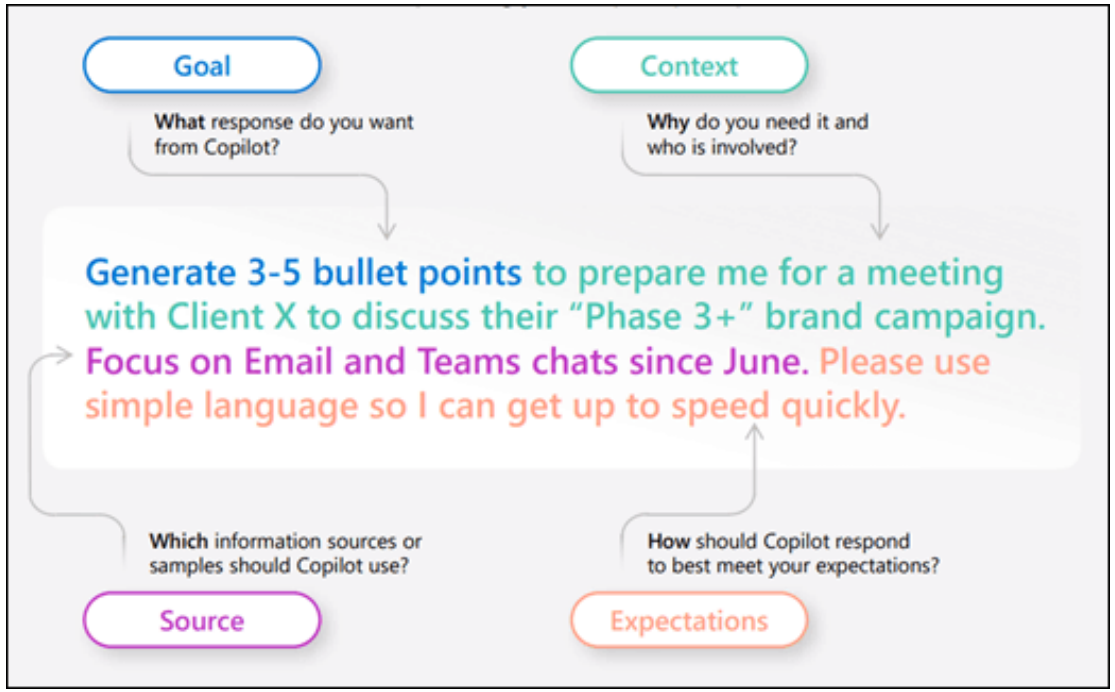
Potential effect of AI on RLECs
Make it work for you

- **Practical use case: 360 Broadband**
  - Wireless service provider across Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas
  - **Adopted a modular AI approach, not a single platform**
    - One module named QC.AI reviewed all customer calls
      - Flagged churn risk based on caller behavior and sentiment
      - Allowed proactive outreach to at risk customers
    - Another module by Actifai enabled online self service
      - 24/7 customer support for online ordering
      - Filled an after-hours sale gap
      - Increased revenue and now accounts for 50% of their web traffic

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Potential effect of AI on RLECs
Prompting

- Prompting is simply how you ask a generative AI to help you
  - Used with AI such as Microsoft Copilot or ChatGPT
- The quality of AI output depends on how clearly the task is described
  - A good prompt has a clear goal, gives context, a source and an expectation
  - Assigning a role and set of constraints can also improve prompt quality

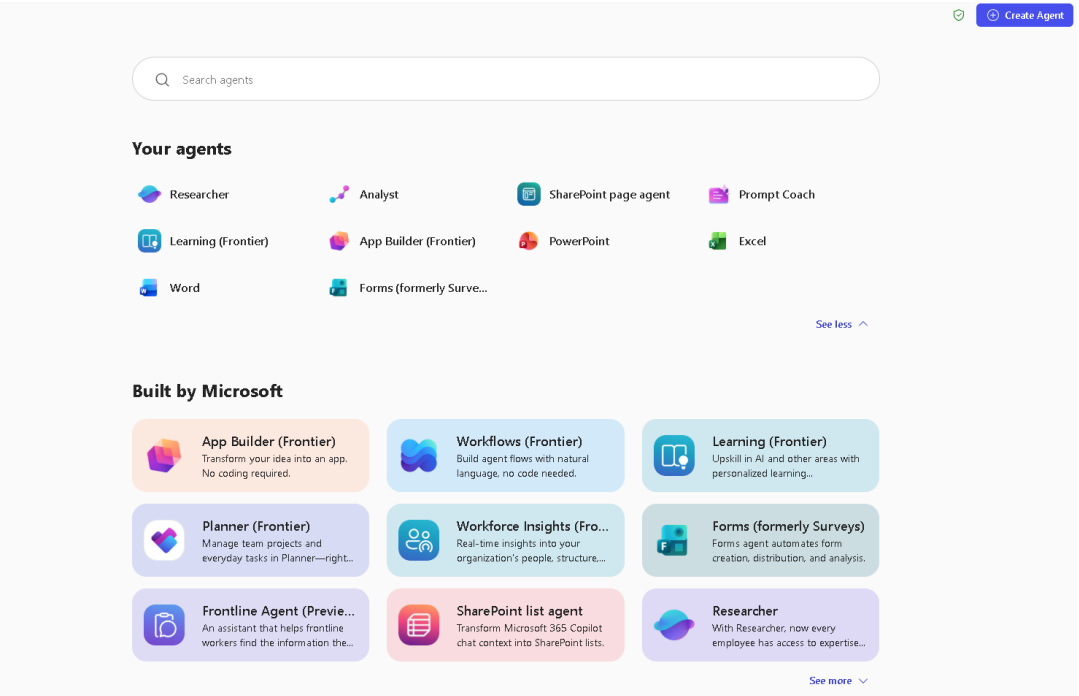


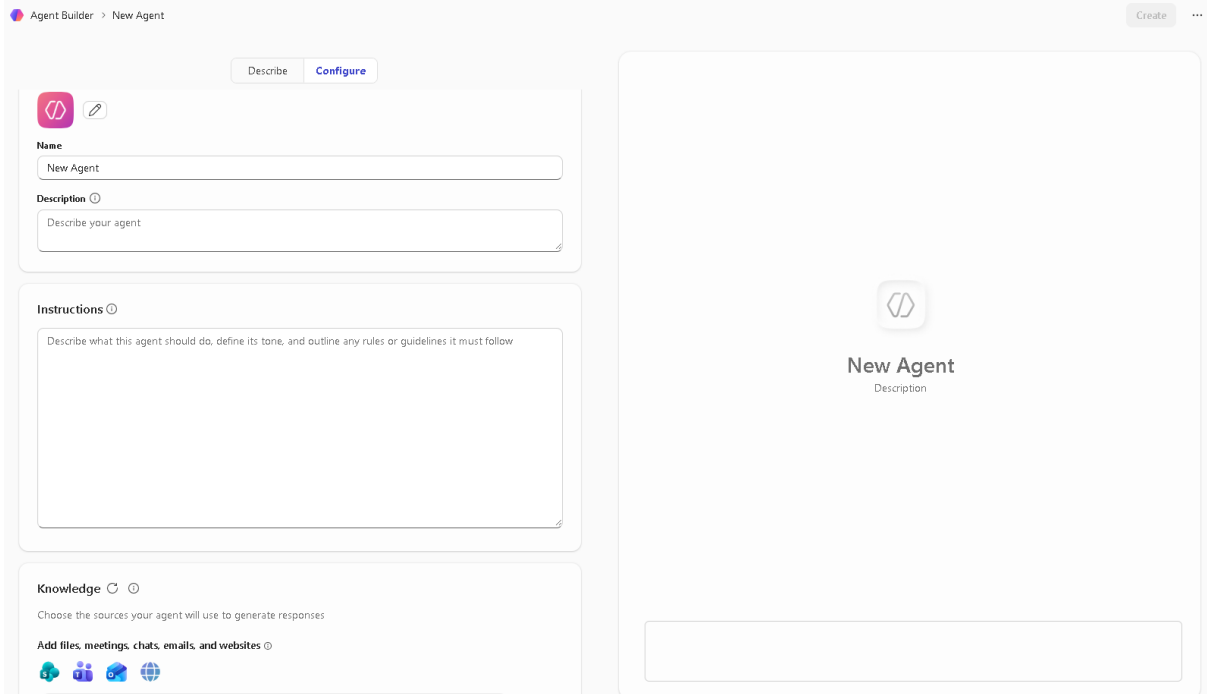
Source: Microsoft

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Potential effect of AI on RLECs
Copilot agents

- Microsoft 365 Copilot's work contains a large selection of agents that integrate with your work applications
- Has create agent option for personalized AI tool creation





Source: Microsoft

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Potential effect of AI on RLECs
Marketing and outreach

- AI can be used to support marketing and customer outreach
  - Expand marketing capabilities without expanding staff or budgets
- AI can help focus outreach
  - Who should we be advertising to and how?
  - Reduce reliance on blanket advertising campaigns
- Marketing efforts can be more targeted
  - Segment customers by location, service availability or behavior
    - Advertisements can be tailored to unique groups or individuals
- AI can assist with marketing execution
  - Creating and distributing advertisements
  - Evaluating marketing campaign effectiveness



Source: Magnific

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Potential effect of AI on RLECs
Customer service

- **Customer service has a disproportionate impact in rural communities**
  - Customer perception is magnified in smaller communities
    - Positive and negative experiences carry more weight
- **Every service interaction influences customer trust**
  - Repeat issues and slow or inconsistent experiences lead to churn
- **AI can support customer service teams**
  - With faster, more consistent and proactive customer interactions



Source: kmslh.com

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Potential effect of AI on RLECs
Customer service AI use cases

- **AI enhanced CRM and customer context**
  - Give staff visibility into customer history
  - Summarizes prior issues and interactions before a call is answered
- **AI assisted agent support**
  - Automates call summaries, notes and follow ups
  - Improves response consistency across staff
- **AI call and interaction analysis**
  - Review 100% of customer interactions, not just samples
  - Flag frustrations, repeated issues and when to escalate
- **AI powered self service and chatbots**
  - Handle common questions and basic troubleshooting 24/7
  - Reduce routine call volume and escalate complex cases to human staff
  - Provide after hours ordering assistance

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Potential effect of AI on RLECs
Managing networks and predictive maintenance

- Network management AI is embedded in vendor systems
  - Benefits scale over time as AI systems learn network behavior
- Agentic AI supports real time network decisions
  - Predict traffic patterns and congestion
  - Proactively adjust routing and network resources
- Predictive maintenance – identify software or hardware failures before they happen
- Energy efficiency – adjusting network resources when traffic is low
- Digital twins – replicating physical networks to test changes and AI behavior



Source: Comarch

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Potential effect of AI on RLECs
Cybersecurity

- AI systems can detect cyberattacks and cyberthreats by monitoring patterns across network and device activity
  - Threat and anomaly detection
    - Identify suspicious behavior and unusual traffic patterns
  - Endpoint security protects devices such as laptops and smart phones
  - Detect previously unknown or evolving threats beyond traditional antivirus tools
  - AI automated incident response
    - Isolate affected systems
    - Block malicious traffic
    - Initiate response and remediation steps more quickly



Source: authx.com

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AI concerns
Job displacement

- Concern: AI will eliminate large numbers of jobs
- World Economic Forum (2025) findings:
  - Labor market transformation will affect 22% of global jobs by 2030
- 170 million jobs created, 92 million displaced, resulting net job growth of 78 million
  - Workers can expect 39% of their core skills to change by 2030
  - AI automates specific tasks, not entire occupations
  - Majority of employers plan to prioritize upskilling over workforce reduction

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AI concerns
Misinformation

- AI can accelerate the spread of convincing false information
  - AI driven accounts can generate misinformation at a large scale with realistic text, images, voice and video
  - Deepfakes make falsified videos, images and voices highly believable
- People or customers may struggle to distinguish real communications from fake ones
  - Scams are becoming harder to recognize
  - Trust can be damaged before verification occurs



Source: Trymaverick.com

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AI concerns

- AI enables more targeted and convincing cyberattacks
  - Attackers can use AI to create highly personalized spear phishing
  - Deepfake images and voices can impersonate trusted contacts
  - AI enable automated large-scale probing and fraud attempts
  - Telecom systems are priority targets because they combine sensitive personal data with highly interconnected networks



Source: rpfoley.com

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AI concerns

- Some believe AI could fail in unpredictable or extreme ways
  - High risk applications can have serious consequences if systems or data fail
    - AI medical misdiagnosis or self-driving vehicle accidents
- Pop culture and speculation also raise fears about AI surpassing human control
  - Scenarios involving strong or super AI often shaped by movies and fiction
  - Sensationalization in news and media sells
  - Responsible development focuses on human oversight, limits and safeguards



Source: TurboSquid

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Summary

- Artificial intelligence provides the ability of a computer or computer-controlled device to perform tasks associated with intelligent beings
- Components of AI include big data, algorithms, machine learning, language processing and computer vision
- Common uses of AI include robotics, agriculture, healthcare, self-driving cars, social media and recommendation systems
- Uses by RLECs include marketing, customer service, network, management and cybersecurity
- Concerns related to the use of AI are real and are starting to be addressed

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Acronyms

- AI Artificial Intelligence
- CRM Customer Relationship Management
- IQ Intelligence Quotient
- NASA National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- RLECs Rural Local Exchange Carriers

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