

A Machine May Not Take Your Job, but One Could Become Your Boss

The goal of automation has always been efficiency. What if artificial intelligence (A.I.) sees humanity itself as the thing to be optimized?

When Conor Sprouls, a customer service representative in the call center of the insurance giant MetLife talks to a customer over the phone, he keeps one eye on the bottom-right corner of his screen. There, in a little blue box, A.I. tells him how he's doing. Talking too fast? The program flashes an icon of a speedometer, indicating that he should slow down. Sound sleepy? The software displays an "energy cue," with a picture of a coffee cup. Not empathetic enough? A heart icon pops up.

In all of the worry about the potential of artificial intelligence to replace workers, we may have overlooked the possibility it will replace the bosses, too. Mr. Sprouls and the other call center workers at his office in Warwick, Rhode Island., still have plenty of human supervisors. But the software on their screens — made by Cogito, an A.I. company in Boston — has become a kind of adjunct manager, always watching them. At the end of every call, Mr. Sprouls's Cogito notifications are tallied and added to a statistics dashboard that his supervisor can view. If he hides the Cogito window by minimizing it, the program notifies his supervisor.

Cogito is one of several A.I. programs used in call centers and other workplaces. The goal, according to Joshua Feast, Cogito's chief executive, is to make workers more effective by giving them real-time feedback.

Management by algorithm is not a new concept. But using A.I. to manage workers in conventional, 9-to-5 jobs has been more controversial. Critics have accused companies of using algorithms for managerial tasks, saying that automated systems can dehumanize and unfairly punish employees. And while it's clear why executives would want A.I. that can track everything their workers do, it's less clear why workers would.

There were no protests at MetLife's call center. Instead, the employees I spoke with seemed to view their Cogito software as a mild annoyance at worst. Several said they liked getting pop-up notifications during their calls, although some said they had struggled to figure out how to get the "empathy" notification to stop appearing. MetLife, which uses the software with 1,500 of its call center employees, says using the app has increased its customer satisfaction by 13 percent.

"It actually changes people's behavior without them knowing about it," said Christopher Smith, MetLife's head of global operations. "It becomes a more human interaction." However, Phil Libin, the chief executive of All Turtles, an A.I. start-up studio in San Francisco, recoiled in horror when I told him about my call center visit. "Why would anyone want to build this world where you're being judged by an opaque, black-box computer?"

Defenders of workplace A.I. might argue that these systems are not meant to be overbearing. Instead, they're meant to make workers better by reminding them to thank the customer, to empathize with the frustrated claimant on Line 1 or to avoid slacking off on the job.

But as more A.I. enters the workplace, executives will have to resist the temptation to use it to tighten their grip on their workers and subject them to constant surveillance and analysis. If that happens, it won't be the robots staging an uprising.

Adapted from Kevin Roose, "[*A Machine May Not Take Your Job, but One Could Become Your Boss*](#)" The New York Times June 23, 2019

A compréhension de l'écrit (10 points)

Vous rédigerez en français le compte rendu de ce document en 180 mots (+ ou – 10%)

Vous indiquerez impérativement le nombre de mots utilisés

B expression écrite (10 points)

Vous êtes Charlie BAKE, l'assistant(e) de gestion de Nicole PATTERSON, responsable du service clients de votre entreprise.

Vous rédigez en anglais une note interne à tous les employés pour annoncer l'utilisation d'un nouveau logiciel d'assistance :

- Vous commencez par expliquer ce qui va être mis en place en présentant brièvement le logiciel.
- Vous expliquez le type de conseils prodigués par le logiciel (donnez 2 exemples)
- Vous présentez les bénéfices de l'utilisation de l'intelligence artificielle pour les employés, pour les clients et l'entreprise.
- Vous rassurez les employés en minimisant le côté potentiellement intrusif du logiciel (illustrez par 2 exemples)
- Vous ajoutez que le système sera mis en place le 1^{er} Juillet 2020, qu'une journée de formation leur sera proposée courant Juin, suivie d'un questionnaire de satisfaction au mois de Septembre.
- Vous indiquerez être disponible pour réagir à toutes leurs interrogations.

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