Article

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AI: FOMO? or FOMU?

When we talk to businesses about AI, people are generally feeling one of two emotions: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) or Fear of Messing Up (FOMU). Or sometimes a bit of both.



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Those with FOMO are dying to do more (or just get started). They've heard their competitors are using it. Are they going to be left in the dust? Could they fix that really annoying process with a sprinkling of AI? What about the essential AI skills they'll need for the future?

The FOMU gang are worried about the risks. Is data being leaked? Can the outputs be trusted? Is AI hurting rather than helping? What about the potential harms and impacts of AI, especially when considering young people or vulnerable users?

AI is moving quickly, so FOMO, FOMU, or a mix of both is totally right – but the key is to find the sweet spot.

Feeling the FOMO?

You should, because AI can have profound impact – even on a small scale – when done well. We've saved measurable time across our business and taken the dread out of month end admin with our simple AI expenses tool.

On a practical level, there's some key things you can do to ensure AI drives value, and not just noise, in your business:

- Make sure your staff and students know what tools they are allowed to use, what to use them for, and how to access training. A lot of people already have access to tools they might not be aware of and the simplest way to avoid missing out is by spreading awareness and encouraging people to have a go.
- Use AI with intention. AI works best when there is a defined purpose. We're big fans of agentic AI where you create specific 'agents' for specific tasks. Sure, you can throw an essay into any AI tool for feedback, but we'd prefer an agent that has been built for that purpose.
- Data is the fuel for AI and it's where you'll find your cutting edge. Without reliable data, AI will surface guesswork; with it, you get dependable decisions and measurable results. Have a think about where you have a load of data that's too much for a person to deal with (maybe a shared email inbox with 5000 unread emails!) and how AI could help.

Or, is it FOMU?

Good brakes let you go faster. Robust governance, security, and responsible use are what enable speed, not what slow it down. Putting guardrails in place will help you move quickly and safely and build confidence across your organisation.

We've helped businesses:

- Put policies in place to say what is acceptable and what is not. Be really clear about what people should and shouldn't be doing. What tools are approved for use? What data can and can't be used? Think of it like AI health and safety.
- Understand how ready your business is for AI. Readiness assessments are an excellent way to figure out where your gaps are before going full throttle on an AI project. You might have some brilliant AI use cases but if your data isn't in shape or systems aren't integrated, it's going to hold you back.
- Monitor and evaluate the tools you have in place. Some clients have been using AI tools for a couple of years, but are they actually helping? How do you decide whether to stick with a tool or try something new? We're seeing lots of people starting to evaluate their tools and thinking about things like environmental impact or the financial costs.

Use AI on what slows you down, not what makes you special

AI is a powerful tool to help you work faster, but it must be used with the right oversight, constraints, and expectations. One of our favourite pieces of advice is to *use it on what slows you down, not what makes you special.*

There's a good reason for the tension between innovation and risk aversion

So, whether you're camp FO*MO* or FO*MU,* think about how you can find the healthy middle ground in your organisation.

Waterstons

When it comes to AI, we help clients figure out what's worth pursuing, get the foundations right, and move from experimentation to something that actually sticks.

We cover the full picture – strategy, readiness, build, deployment, and supporting teams once tools are live.

Not sure where to start? For the FOMOs, a discovery workshop is usually the best first step. For the FOMUs, a readiness assessment is a quick and easy way to figure out what to do next. Head to www.waterstons.com/ai to find out more.