

# Be Ready to Reap the Benefits of AI, But Wake Up to the Risks Too

As GenAI boosts efficiency, concerns grow over job shifts in traditional IT and BPO sectors unless India evolves from backend services to a global AI innovation hub

## Team ET

Artificial intelligence will bring disruptions in many ways as its adoption grows, including improved efficiencies, better user experience for consumer electronics and job losses in the traditional IT and BPO sectors, said industry stakeholders. They exhorted India to be prepared to embrace the benefits as well as face the challenges the evolving technology poses.

Companies across sectors have been using some form of AI for many years but with generative AI, things have started to leapfrog. As GenAI brings unprecedented efficiencies, some have sounded the alarm over a massive shift in jobs across the traditional IT and BPO workforce unless India upgrades from being the backend engine of the world to being an innovation hub with world-class AI products.

"There's going to be absolute job displacement. Everybody in India should wake up to that. The country's leaders, government and population who have been dependent on the BPO sector to do lower-level programming jobs, should wake up to that," said Prashanth Chandrasekar, chief execu-

tive at Stack Overflow, the most popular global platform for programmers and developers. He was speaking at a discussion on 'AI Disruption: The New Industrial Revolution or the Next Bubble'. Truecaller CEO Rishit Jhunjunwala, Clearwater Analytics CEO Sandeep Sahai, Tredence chief Shubh Bhowmick and Akis Evangelidis, president at Nothing, were the other panel-

lists at the discussion moderated by ET's Surabhi Agarwal.

AI is not only being used for increasing productivity but also to tackle online frauds and scams. But the situation becomes complicated as scammers are also using AI to innovate newer means to scam people. "It's like a cat and mouse game that we are playing right now. We are trying to create trust

in communication and AI has been on both sides, as it erodes trust as well because there are AI cloned calls that take place, there are scammers that use AI to get even better. And we must then use AI ourselves as well to try and find those scammers," Jhunjunwala said.

The platform gets millions of signals from its 450 million users globally, and it has to

process these signals, create models out of them, and try to predict scams, he said. "We try hard to predict scams before they even take place."

GenAI has helped software-as-a-service company Clearwater Analytics improve its gross margin by 300 basis points, CEO Sahai said. "The reason you don't invest in Japanese steel bonds is because you don't know about it. Gen-AI allows you to send a swarm of agents to look at 10,000 investment opportunities and bring it back, based on who you are. It's unmatched," he said. While classical machine learning-based AI has been around for a while, GenAI applications have leapfrogged, said Tredence's Bhowmick. "Companies have invested a lot in building data infrastructures over the last 5-10 years. The ability to find insights from this data has been limited so far, but with the conversational and natural language aspects of GenAI, now even an 18-year-old cashier has an opportunity to actually mine that data."

AI-enabled smartphones have been the latest buzzword among tech circles, but the technology is yet to be fully utilised by device makers in offering a personalised experience. "We have been using AI for quite some time as part of our camera, bat-

tery management," said Evangelidis, who is also co-founder at the smartphone brand. But it is yet to bring specific use cases from a smartphone standpoint. He expects it to change. "If you think about it, over the last 20 years, since the first iPhone was launched, till today, the whole user experience has been siloed like users tapping through home screens, apps, etc., whereas AI will be able to aggregate everything and offer a more dynamic and personalised experience to the user," Evangelidis said. When it comes to India, the country has unique opportunities to take a lead in not only creating the foundational model layer, but also the enterprise or domain layer of AI. "A huge amount of first party data will be created by the 700 million smartphone users in this country," Bhowmick said.

Sahai said the large talent pool in India's huge diaspora should be leveraged.

Unlike many countries, India is also a lot more open to adopting AI. "About 80% of our users actually use AI. But the trust level dropped this year for millions of users. It's now about 29%. Indian users trust AI outputs a lot more, at almost double of global figures," Chandrasekar said.



L-R: Rishit Jhunjunwala of Truecaller, Akis Evangelidis of Nothing, Prashanth Chandrasekar of Stack Overflow, Sandeep Sahai of Clearwater Analytics and Shubh Bhowmick of Tredence