AI at Work – Supercharging Productivity
Detailed Insights

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Key Points:

- Discussion on using basic off-the-shelf AI tools to improve productivity in healthcare settings
- Analysis of New Zealand's sentiment towards AI adoption compared to global averages
- Exploration of specific use cases for AI in healthcare administration and clinical settings
- Evaluation of tasks based on impact and ease of implementation
- Identification of enablers and blockers for AI adoption in healthcare

Discussion Items:

AI Sentiment and Adoption in New Zealand

The meeting began with a discussion about New Zealand's sentiment towards AI compared to global averages. Data presented showed that New Zealand sits below the global average in terms of enthusiasm and confidence for AI, particularly in healthcare and government sectors. This sentiment was identified as a significant barrier to adoption, with the group noting that without addressing confidence and trust issues, implementation would remain challenging.

- The group discussed how sentiment and trust are key drivers for AI adoption, with many healthcare professionals hesitant to use AI tools due to lack of confidence or understanding.
- There was consensus that addressing the human side of implementation is crucial for successful adoption.
- Several participants noted that New Zealand's healthcare sector shows particularly low enthusiasm for AI compared to other sectors and countries.

Practical AI Applications in Healthcare

Participants identified and discussed various tasks where basic AI tools could improve productivity:

Clinical Documentation and Communication:

- Summarising patient notes was identified as a high-impact area where AI could help clinicians quickly understand patient histories across siloed health data systems.
- Preparing clinical documentation was seen as potentially transformative, with participants noting that clinicians spend significant time on administrative tasks that could be automated.
- Language translation was highlighted as an important application, particularly for refugee populations and diverse communities where language barriers impact care quality.

Administrative Efficiency:

- Managing customer inquiries through AI-powered chatbots was discussed as a way to reduce pressure on help desks and support staff.
- Streamlining patient booking and scheduling was identified as having high impact but moderate implementation difficulty due to the complexity of healthcare scheduling requirements.
- Improving accuracy of clinical coding was seen as having significant financial impact by ensuring proper billing and resource allocation.

Staff Development and Knowledge Management:

- Supporting employee development through personalised training plans was discussed as a valuable application with moderate implementation difficulty.
- Interpreting organisational policies was identified as a relatively easy implementation with high impact for staff efficiency.
- Learning new skills through AI assistance was highlighted as having high impact and being relatively easy to implement.

Data Analysis and Research:

- Identifying leading clinical practices through literature searches was noted as an area where AI could significantly improve efficiency.
- Analysing clinical data to identify patterns and insights was seen as having high impact and being relatively easy to implement with existing tools.

Enablers and Blockers for AI Adoption

Enablers:

- Knowledge sharing and education about AI capabilities and limitations
- Leadership support and continuous communication about AI initiatives
- Cross-sector collaboration and partnerships between public and private organisations
- Effective risk identification and mitigation strategies
- Positive leadership that encourages experimentation and innovation

Blockers:

- Funding constraints, particularly for licensing costs of tools like Microsoft Copilot
- Restrictive organisational policies preventing use of AI tools in clinical settings
- Basic digitisation gaps (e.g., paper-based systems still in use at some hospitals)
- Privacy concerns and data sovereignty issues
- Lack of trust in AI outputs and fear of job displacement
- Limited technical support for implementation and troubleshooting

Next Steps:

- Start with small, manageable AI implementations rather than attempting to solve entire system issues at once
- Focus on building trust and confidence in AI tools through education and demonstration
- Identify low-hanging fruit applications where AI can have immediate impact with minimal risk
- Consider public-private partnerships to leverage commercial sector expertise and funding
- Develop clear guardrails and governance frameworks for AI use in healthcare settings

Challenges:

- Balancing innovation with patient safety and privacy concerns
- Addressing the varying levels of digital maturity across different healthcare organisations
- Ensuring AI tools are relevant to New Zealand context and healthcare system

- Managing the transition from paper-based to digital systems as a prerequisite for AI implementation
- Overcoming resistance to change and fear of technology among healthcare professionals

Additional Notes:

The group noted that many healthcare professionals are already using AI tools in their personal lives but face restrictions in applying them professionally. There was discussion about the inequity in digital maturity across the healthcare system, with some organisations fully digital while others still rely on paper-based systems. Participants emphasised the importance of starting with small implementations and building on successes rather than attempting comprehensive solutions immediately. The risk of not adopting AI was also highlighted as a consideration that is often overlooked in discussions focused on implementation risks.