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INNOVATION

Why Business Leaders Can't Wait For AI To Kill The Dashboard



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for **Forbes Technology Council**, **COUNCIL POST** | Membership (fee-based)

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As *'s chief design officer and futurist, Chris Willis writes on AI and combining data, technology and emerging trends in innovative.*

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The days of hunting for dashboards to get business insights is coming to an end faster than most leaders realize. This familiar ritual of executives poring over dashboards will become as obsolete as flipping through the Rolodex.

While AI is already transforming how organizations process data, the next wave of AI promises something far more profound: the complete reinvention of business intelligence is generated and discovered.

For leaders frustrated with complex analytics tools or bottlenecked by data teams, this transformation offers something unprecedented—the ability to access any business insight through natural conversation.

The New Competitive Advantage: Conversational Business Intelligence

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Imagine you're in a board meeting, but there's not a single dashboard in sight. Instead, you're having a dynamic conversation with an AI system that knows your business inside and out.

"What's driving the uptick in customer churn?" you ask. Within seconds, the AI analyzes your entire data ecosystem, delivering a nuanced response that weaves together historical patterns, real-time data and predictive insights.

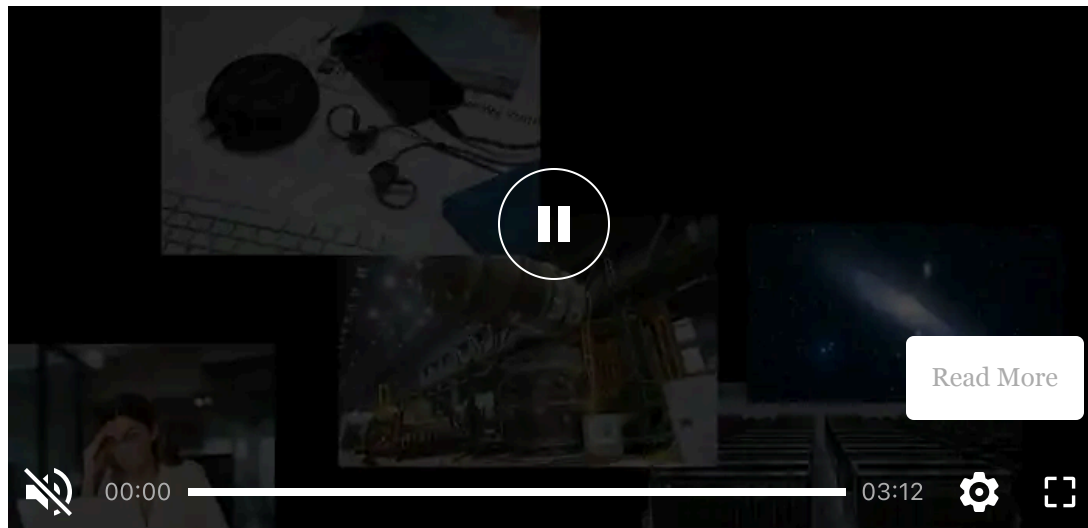
This isn't science fiction. Organizations with AI-ready infrastructure are already building these capabilities. Beyond just answering questions—these AI will learn from every interaction, becoming increasingly attuned to each user's needs and context. A regional sales director might receive AI-generated alerts about emerging market opportunities in their territory, while a supply chain manager gets early warnings about potential disruptions based on their specific supplier network.

The competitive implications are stark. While traditional organizations spend hours creating and interpreting static dashboards, AI-enabled competitors will be receiving and acting on insights in real time. From the C-suite to the front office, this expanded access and speed advantage will compound over time, creating an increasingly wide performance gap.

From Information To Action

This shift dramatically reshapes the role of data professionals. Rather than serving as information gatekeepers, data teams evolve into strategic

advisors who amplify the business impact of AI systems. Their focus shifts from building reports to ensuring AI models deeply understand business context and align with organizational objectives.

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This creates a powerful multiplier effect where data professionals can support more decision-makers since they're no longer constrained by report creation. More importantly, they become AI trainers and strategists, teaching systems to deliver insights that are not just accurate, but strategically relevant and appropriately tailored for each user's role. Imagine a retail floor manager who might receive AI-guided insights about product stock or optimizing staff scheduling, while a C-suite executive gets broader market analysis and strategic opportunities—all without manual intervention.

From an organizational level, expect to see:

- **Greater Strategic Focus:** Executive meetings evolve from reviewing status reports to deep strategy discussions, as AI handles routine analysis and proactively surfaces critical issues.
- **More Distributed Decision-Making:** Every employee, from front-line staff to C-suite executives, gains direct access to relevant insights through natural conversation, accelerating decision-making across all levels.
- **Cross-Functional Alignment:** AI breaks down traditional data silos by automatically connecting insights across departments, fostering better collaboration and more holistic decision-making.
- **Predictive Power at Scale:** Advanced analytics capabilities become accessible to everyone in the organization, enabling data-driven decisions at every level.

The Urgency Of AI Readiness

Here's the reality check: Organizations can't simply flip a switch to turn on this future. Success requires three foundational elements:

1. **Unified Data Architecture:** A clean, consistent data infrastructure that AI can effectively navigate, with modern integration capabilities spanning both legacy and current systems.

2. **Strong Governance Framework:** Clear standards and protocols that enable AI to properly interpret and secure data while ensuring appropriate access levels.
3. **Cultural Transformation:** A shift from dashboard-dependent thinking to an insight-first mindset across the organization.

The gap between AI-ready and AI-lagging organizations is already visible. I work with early adopters who are already seeing meaningful improvements in operational efficiency, decision speed and predictive capabilities. Organizations that delay risk falling permanently behind as AI-enabled competitors build insurmountable leads in market responsiveness and strategic agility.

How To Build Your AI-Ready Future

The journey to AI readiness begins with a thorough assessment of your current data landscape. Organizations must:

- **Audit** their data infrastructure to identify integration gaps
- **Implement** modern data integration tools capable of handling real-time data flows
- **Establish** clear governance standards that balance accessibility with security

- **Start** with focused pilot projects that demonstrate value and build momentum

Many organizations find success by starting small with pilot projects that demonstrate quick wins and build momentum. These early successes help secure buy-in for larger transformations while providing valuable learning opportunities for teams that are adjusting to new ways of working with data.

The future of business intelligence will be conversational, predictive and democratized. The question isn't whether this transformation will happen, but whether your organization will help shape it or struggle to catch up. The time to get AI-ready and start building your dashboard-less future is now.

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