The potential and limits of AI

AI-enabled technologies stand to deliver substantial benefits across all sectors. What will be the impact on the maritime industry, and will the benefits outweigh the risks?

Andy Chun, Regional Director, Technology Innovation, Prudential Corporation Asia

The rise of AI has been made possible by the development of several supporting technologies. The so-called Internet of Things, where devices and people are connected digitally has resulted in a massive expansion in the availability of data. Coupled with the low cost of powerful cloud computing, it has become possible to analyze very big data sets, further contributing to the rise of development and application of AI.

Andy Chun highlighted several areas where AI can be of use in the maritime industry. First, considering the complexity of maritime logistics, AI could be applied to the analysis of very big data sets, enabling optimization in resource allocation and cost reductions.

AI can also be used to develop predictive analytics, where potential future problems and opportunities are identified based on current and historic data patterns. In this way, AI allows for more effective planning as well as the prevention or mitigation of potential accidents and risks.

In addition, AI is increasingly being used to perform natural language processing. Not only can AI help overcome language barriers, and thus reduce the risk of misunderstandings, it can also improve the customer experience e.g. through chatbots, which can be available to customers 24/7 at a negligible cost.
Working group outcomes

A new digital mindset

In order to be successful in the digital economy, it is not enough to adopt digital business models or use new digital solutions. According to this working group, it takes a mental transformation – a new mindset that is fit for the digital economy of the future.

The group also agreed that building a digital mindset in the maritime industry requires the right talent. This could both be in-house talent, where it was suggested that all companies should employ a “Data Lead”, but it could also bring in other stakeholders with experience and knowledge about digital opportunities.

The group pointed to data sharing – within the company and with external partners and stakeholders – as the foundation of digitalization, and lamented the fact that the maritime industry does not yet embrace data exchange. A question is whether the industry would be willing to share more data in the future. While there might be issues of information sensitivity and confidentiality, especially in the early stages, the group suggested that “the amount and variety of data that organizations are willing to share should improve as they realize the benefits that it will bring in increasing efficiency and improving performance.”

One potential area for data sharing identified by the group was safety, which was a topic with shared interests across the industry, and identified by other working groups as a focus area.

“There is a need to change the mindset in our industry.”

Mark Jackson, Chief Executive Officer, The Baltic Exchange, United Kingdom