Rotary Club of Charlotte

William McKee,
CEO, Knowmad Digital Marketing

by **Susie Masotti**

Charlotte Rotary Club welcomed William McKee, CEO of Knowmad Digital Marketing, focusing on AI and how it is not only changing our world but can be helpful in helping companies grow their business.

Robert Shaw introduced William to the Club. He noted that William is a Charlotte Native and UNC-Chapel Hill graduate. William is married to Elizabeth Key, CEO of Leadership Charlotte. He has 25+ years of experience analyzing data that integrates marketing and sales. Today, he is here to speak about AI.

William thanked the Club for having him speak at today's meeting. He began his comments by stating that it is his belief that technology should improve our lives. He believes we are in a unique place in history – he calls it the 24th century with the advent of AI. He announced that as he was speaking, he had an App recording him in real time to provide a transcript that he can then use AI to enhance future presentations.

He provided examples of how AI – he asked his co-worker Jerry to research articles for Knowmad's website. AI can design marketing materials, and you can even ask AI to provide some exercises to help decrease shoulder pain, and it will provide you with exercises that should help. AI is all around us and is going to impact all our futures. A year from now, we will be using it more, and it will do more for us than we realize.

The implications are vast – generating podcasts, reasoning models for research, an AI Agent can automate work for you. Those who adapted AI early will use this to grow their business faster than those who have not yet started

utilizing this valuable technology. His PSA for AI is to learn how to engage in AI and be a part of lifetime technology.

William sees five trends with AI:

1. 75% of organizations do not have an AI road map (and they need one). An AI roadmap will help you adopt a plan within the institutional guidelines that you provide it.
2. Knowledge work is at risk. Companies are replacing some staff with AI, but not always in the way you think. They are training current employees willing to learn to use AI, and those employees are more productive, reducing the need for more employees.
3. AI is collapsing the cost of computing by driving advancements in hardware and software.
4. Trust in AI is dropping. Sycophancy, but he believes that it tells you what you want to hear by what you use technology for (it learns about you from your own activity).
5. AI is widening the gap between leaders and laggers. Leaders are fundamentally changing how they do business, how they train staff, and are surging ahead. Laggers are doing exactly that – lagging.

We aren't on the verge of destruction; we are in it. Sam Altman, Co-Founder & CEO of OpenAI, stated, "AI will handle 95% of marketing work done by agencies and creatives." That's a huge statement.

AI is a knowledge amplifier. You and your business need to use AI to create an AI Road Map. If you ask why, the answer is that if you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there. AI is designed to get you there more efficiently.

Roadmaps signal organizational maturity. Without a road map, teams experiment without direction and have less chance of having a competitive advantage. AI can help you maximize your return on investment by creating efficiency by focusing on incremental improvement.

Now, why is this so hard to implement – below are some reasons:

1. Lack of vision/leadership – there is no "head" of AI. Someone needs to set the "controls."
2. It is easier to just jump into engagement.
3. Time, or lack thereof.
4. Fear of change, including how AI will impact jobs.
5. Privacy and security
6. AI initiatives led by individual contributors rather than strategic decision-makers.

With all that said, the key to successful AI usage is having a road map, which is a sign of success. Things such as the AI Institute's Marketing Strategy Kit or the Kendall Framework that provide workshops for teams on where and how to start.

AI can prioritize projects and use known cases, establish clear timelines, improve resource allocation, and set up success metrics.   But after saying all that, William advises that you shouldn't just build a

road map, you should tell a story. Your story provides purpose. Strong leaders introducing AI to their business need a communications tool kit that can provide internal communication that hopefully builds trust and adoption rather than instilling fear. External communication needs to include customers, partners, investors, etc., to provide structure for your communication. Having an AI Voice Governance Plan lets you know what content you want to use (and what not to use).

Service Above Self is a model that William shares with the Rotary 4-Way Test for the age of AI. The Rotary model is the best standard as it cannot determine fact from fiction. It has no judgment. It can simulate a partnership, but can also show up.

William's advice is to utilize AI to build your road map, use it as a tool since it cannot be human and keep that in front of mind.

William then took several questions.

One member said that he had used AI by putting medical test results into ChatGPT and have it explained in lay terms. Then he asked what the craziest thing he has seen via AI. The answer is photo realism – it is so hard to tell truth from fiction. The same is true of voice copying. AI can adopt the voice of the person talking and must be told NOT to do that.

Another member asked about suggestions for non-profits. William replied that the easiest way to enter is to create a partner utilizing thought and advice rather than asking it to do a task.

One guest asked about utilizing AI to develop marketing plans to market Rotary to help grow membership. Specifically, he asked about Williams's experience in transforming a business by using AI. He replied that the next step is more challenging by asking yourself who is going to implement and guide from there. Marketing plans are leading the AI world right now and can be a very useful tool in growing any business, including Rotary.

William was asked about the impact on our younger generation. He replied that they are growing up in an AI world – our job is to teach them about the real world. He added that future generations could lose the ability to write or compose. We must continue to push real skills so that the road map is built by humans.

William was asked about the quality of AI (specifically when correcting grammar). William simply replied that it behaves like people, but it is still technology and does not understand the real world. It mimics and can make errors. Remember, it has no judgment and only knows what it is taught.

Here are the recordings:
With Slides: https://vimeo.com/1143550113?fl=pl&fe=sh
Without Slides: https://vimeo.com/1143550875?fl=pl&fe=sh
The speaker's introduction starts at about 26 minutes and 35 seconds.